

## EXHIBITIONS » BEAVER TALES: CANADIAN ART AND DESIGN

A new show in Toronto examines the prominent role of flora and fauna in Canadian design. **Danny Sinopoli** offers highlights from a range of eras

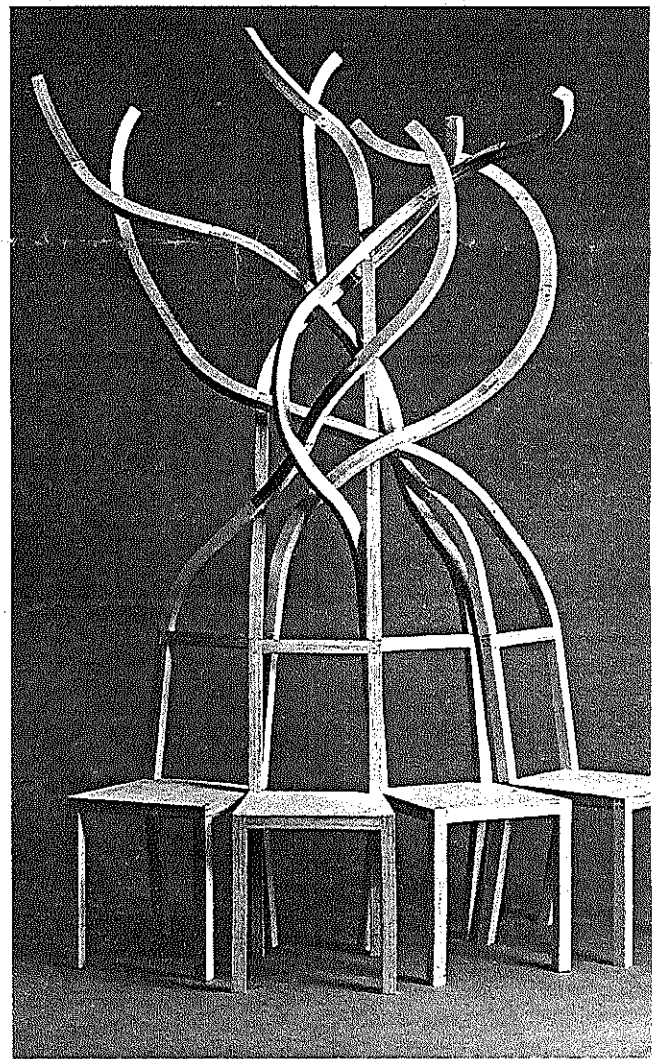
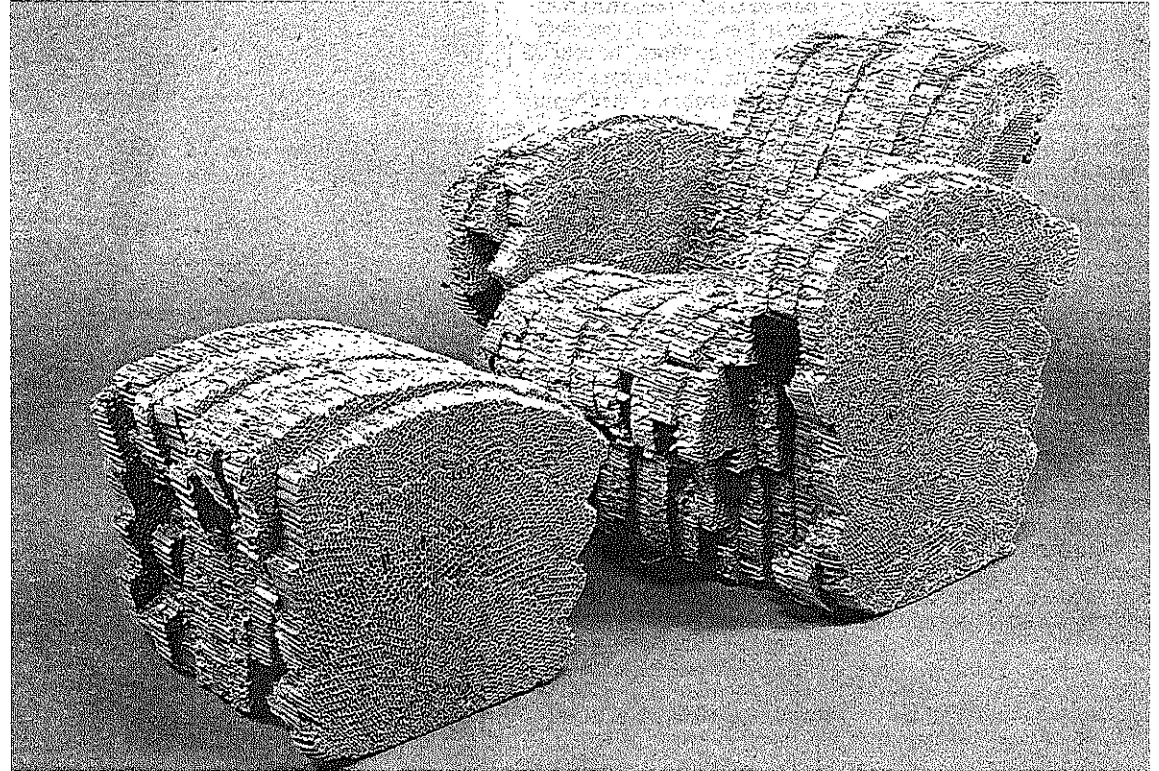
# INTO THE WILD

## MOOSE FACTORY

As the 145-year-old walnut chiffo-nier with moose-head detail (be-low) shows, animal motifs have been key elements of Canadian art and design since before Con-federation. Made by Halifax's Gor-don & Keith, the ornate chest of drawers is one of the oldest pieces in Beaver Tales: Canadian Art and Design, a new exhibition at the University of Toronto Art Centre ([www.utac.utoronto.ca](http://www.utac.utoronto.ca)). The show, which examines how icons such as the beaver and the trillium came to be mythologized as regional and national symbols, opens on Tuesday and runs through December 6.

## GEHRY'S TAKE

"Today," says Marthe Kelleher, who curated the show with Ra-chel Gotlieb, "these now-iconic flora and fauna images help to form a rich and diverse heritage that provides us with a greater understanding of our culture." One such icon – expatriate Cana-dian architect Frank Gehry's Little Beaver armchair and ottoman from 1979 (right) – reflects its in-spiration less overtly than others. Made of corrugated cardboard, the items have a suede-like tex-ture and feathery edges – not un-like a beaver pelt. The furniture is on loan to the exhibition from the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.



## HORNS APLENTY

Created last year, young Toronto designer Robert Southcott's showstopping United We Stand bench (left) brings the antler motif full circle, evoking a tangle of elk or moose horns through its riot of interlocking chair backs. As its name suggests, the bench may also be a meditation on Canadian federalism; the twisting birchwood pieces, which are held together by discreet brass hardware, support each other structurally. In a country as consumed with the land as ours, nature and politics have always been intertwined.