

Brothers join forces to create elaborate Southwest furniture

BY TRACY DINGMANN

The talent of three brothers goes into each piece of furniture produced at Great Southwest Furniture Design in Albuquerque.

There's Julian Reyes, who designs and painstakingly carves his New Mexican-style tables, chairs, beds and media cabinets for walk-in and custom clients. There's Humberto, who takes care of the business end of the company at 2205 Candelaria NE. And there's Gabriel, who manages the wood shop.

Together the brothers have been in business for seven years, first in Tijeras as Route 66 Design and now in the Heights as Great Southwest for the past year. Twelve years ago, the three emigrated to Albuquerque from Torreon, Mexico, to join relatives who lived here.

A glance through their Great Southwest showroom reveals elaborately carved sugar pine furniture in classic New Mexican style: Massive media centers with painted accents sit next to towering canopy beds and low, broad tables. Styles come painted in red, green or antiqued paint accents or finished in honey-colored stain.

The detailed carving is perhaps

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PHIL WATSON,

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER,

CABLE CHANNEL HGTV'S "THE FURNITURE SHOW."

the most eye-catching feature of Julian Reyes' work. It can take him as long as a day to carve a single leg for a table. His tools are "pretty basic — a table saw, joiner, shapers and sanders." He says he taught himself the trade and the New Mexican style years ago.

Customers can either come to Great Southwest and buy furniture off the floor or order it specially made, said Reyes, who does the consulting with the customers.

"They can order more carving, less carving, bigger or smaller, painted or not," he said.

Working on custom orders, he has created literally hundreds of designs.

The Reyes brothers' showroom is located off the beaten tourist track.

The brothers try to grab the tourist dollar by advertising in publications such as the New Mexico Traveler and Guest Guide, which are distributed to every hotel room in the state. They also

have a Web site at greatswfurniture.com.

But people who live all over the country will hear about Great Southwest when a segment about the store appears on the cable channel HGTV in May.

The brothers were chosen to appear on HGTV's "The Furniture Show" by Phil Watson, the show's executive producer.

The show will air sometime in May on HGTV, which can be seen at cable Channel 49 in Albuquerque. (14th)

Watson said he found out about Great Southwest by word of mouth while at an area trade show.

"This guy was telling me, 'Gee, you ought to check these guys out. These three brothers have come out of nowhere pretty rapidly,'" said Watson in an interview from his North Carolina headquarters.

The Reyes brothers' company is just the kind of outfit the show likes to feature, said Watson.

CREATIVE CARVING: Julian Reyes does all the designing and carving at Great Southwest Furniture Design in Albuquerque. The store, which is run by three Reyes brothers, will be featured on HGTV's "The Furniture Show" in May.

JIM THOMPSON

"Manufacturers like Great Southwest are really the treasures of America's home furnishings industry," Watson said. "These companies do everything by hand, and they make their pieces one at a time.

"Unlike the larger automated

companies that are building furniture in gigantic production facilities, there is a heritage of woodworking and craftsmanship here which HGTV feels our viewers need to know about."

The Reyes brothers have seen the six-minute segment and say

they love the way their furniture looks.

The show is quite influential in furniture and home design circles, which should be good for business, said Julian Reyes, who added, "This will give us the reputation that we need."