

The New York Times

Recycling as Nature Does It *By Joyce Wadler*



Photo by David Maxwell for The New York Times

The Green River Stone Company, which for the last several years has been selling the prehistoric fossils that the firm mines from its own quarry to make kitchen tiles, countertops and backsplashes, recently teamed with John Strauss, a furniture maker, to create a line of one-of-a-kind tables. The custom pieces, which vary in price according to the stone, are available as a 24-inch-square side table (about \$5,350, below) and as an 18-by-52-inch cocktail table (about \$5,100). Mr. Strauss, to the left, trained in New York with the furniture maker Gabriel Giuntini, whose clients included Mark Hampton. He spoke from his home in Ohio.

You and Green River say these fossils are supposed to be 50 million years old. How do you know?

This is not my expertise — I'm the furniture guy, they've got the geologists. But the fossils come from a prehistoric lake bed in Wyoming. This is when Wyoming was a tropical climate like Florida, so it's really incredible in that sense.

How will this collaboration work?

We're offering the tables, but I specialize in custom work and I can do virtually anything. The wood is relatively straightforward, but there are so many choices to be made in regard to the fossils that people should look at their Web site first. They have lots of little fish, plants and palm fronds.



Have they turned up any human fossils?

I don't believe so. I don't think there were any humans in that area. The coolest thing they found was a freshwater crocodile. There have been only four or five found in the world. You can see the scales and where the crocodile swallowed stones or pebbles for ballast, in the belly area.

How do you clean a fossil?

Carefully. They use special tools.



No, I mean as the owner of one of your tables, not as the person who digs it out. Fossil is actually harder than the surrounding area — you just wipe it. ■

Information: straussfurniture.com or greenriverstone.com.

A version of this question appeared in print on January 28, 2010, on page D3 of the New York edition.