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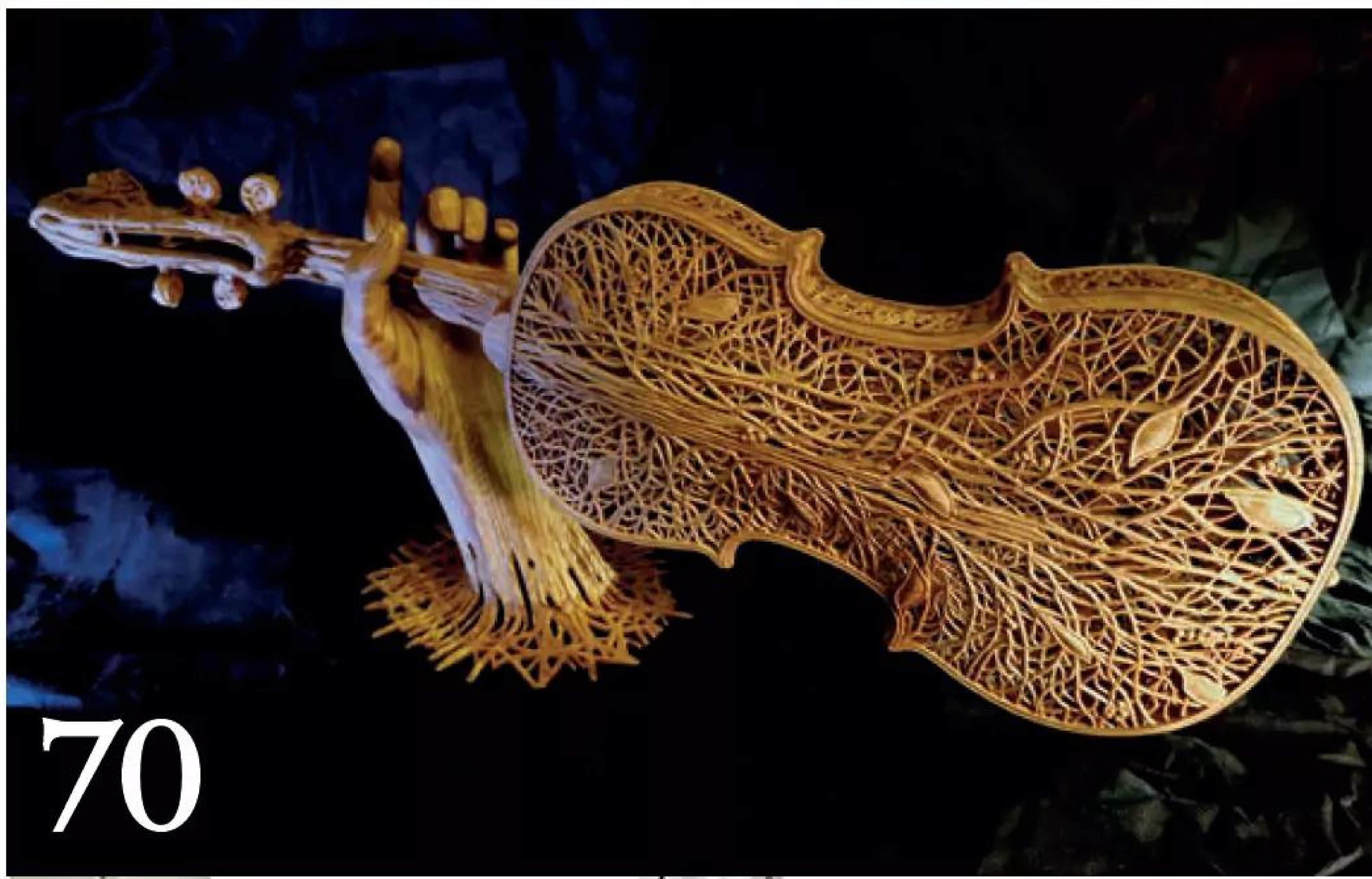

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Editor's Letter

This issue reflects the polarising forces of technology – where it comes to ways of woodworking, that is. The ability to use hand tools is a key identifier of humanity. Head controls hand, but digital technologies now ape the human brain. 'Artificial' means manmade, and yet AI seems to rob us of some agency. This issue reflects some of the dichotomies of tool usage and control.

So Joong-Han's demonstration of Korea's ingenious dual sliding door joinery is a homage to the beauty of traditional hand tool woodworking. With 'fluid and quiet intelligence', angojigi doors offer high-level functionality and it's no secret that accuracy is paramount, see p.20.

Valdas Brucas is a Lithuanian designer maker who is expert in CAD and CNC, and yet he argues that his work is indeed handmade. 'The machine creates nothing on its own,' says Valdas, who explains how 'wood speaks through his hands'. See p.70 to read about his stunning creations.

Dennis Zongker has used digital design tools for over 30 years in combination with a full suite of hand and machine tools. His Art Deco Style Jewellery Cabinet is a masterpiece of fine woodworking that demanded perfect execution from its maker. From p.37, Dennis writes about some of the complex processes involved.

Material intelligence

This issue, Rhys Jones refers to what he calls 'machines for thinking'. Over the years he has designed and made a series of chairs that have allowed him to question the function vs form equation. Rhys also talks about material intelligence and explains: 'When we work with the logic of material, we use it efficiently. When we find an economy of form, we gain clarity in its expression.'

Making to a brief

Being commissioned to make something is a 'special gift', writes Jono Everett. You have to meet the client's needs but, Jono says, it's important for designer makers to also bring their own identity and ethos to each piece. He writes about his recent public commission and also the work of high profile designer makers Jon Goulder and Tom Fereday.

Vale Will Matthysen

Sadly, we've noted the recent passing of Will Matthysen in our web news and social media, and we also pay tribute here from p.59. Will was an incredibly talented maker and also a very active woodworking community member who made things happen for others, and he was well loved.

Maker of the Year 2026

It's now time to launch our annual celebration of the best in woodworking and wood art! Maker of the Year, presented by Hare & Forbes, now has its own website at www.makeroftheyear.com.au where you can find out about new categories and the $20,000 prize pool on offer. It's also the place where you can enter your work into this year's showcase. Will you make the Top 100 in 2026?

Leading up to the September deadline we'll provide competition updates and maker features in our eNews and social media. Maker of the Year, presented by Hare & Forbes, is open to amateur, professional and student makers all over the world and we invite *you* to include your work!

Linda Nathan, Editor
linda@woodreview.com.au

AUSTRALIAN **Wood** REVIEW

www.woodreview.com.au

PRINT AND ONLINE EDITOR:
Linda Nathan
linda@woodreview.com.au

CONTRIBUTORS:
James Brook, Damion Fauser, David Luckensmeyer
Neil Erasmus, Robert Howard, Charles Mak
Terry Martin, Raf Nathan, Darren Oates
Andrew Potocnik, Carol Russell, Graham Sands
Richard Vaughan, Peter Young.

PUBLISHER:
James Ostinga

STUDIO MANAGER:
Lauren Esdaile

SENIOR DESIGNER:
Stéphanie Blandin de Chalain

ILLUSTRATIONS:
Graham Sands

MARKETING MANAGER:
Lucy Yaffa

SUBSCRIPTIONS:
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CALL: 1800 807760
EMAIL: subscriptons@yaffa.com.au

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NATIONAL SALES MANAGER:
Jodie Reid
Tel: (02) 9213 8261
jodiereid@yaffa.com.au

ADVERTISING PRODUCTION:
John Viskovich
Tel: (02) 9213 8215
johnviskovich@yaffa.com.au

PRODUCTION MANAGER:
Michelle Liebenberg

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Ronnie Rozenga in his studio in the Netherlands.

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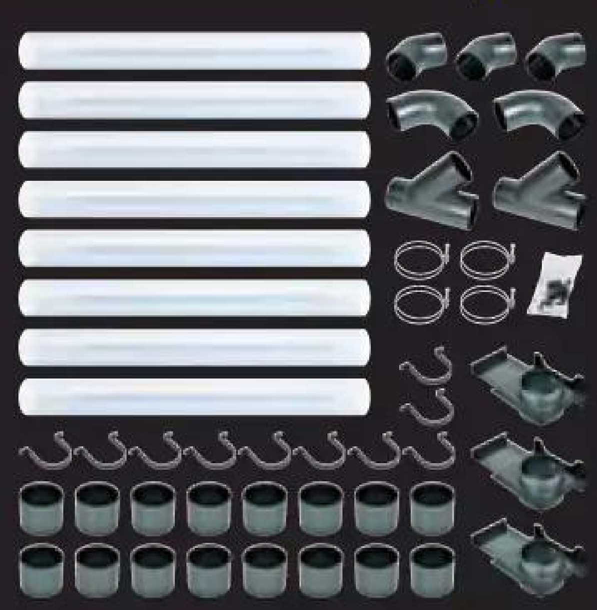

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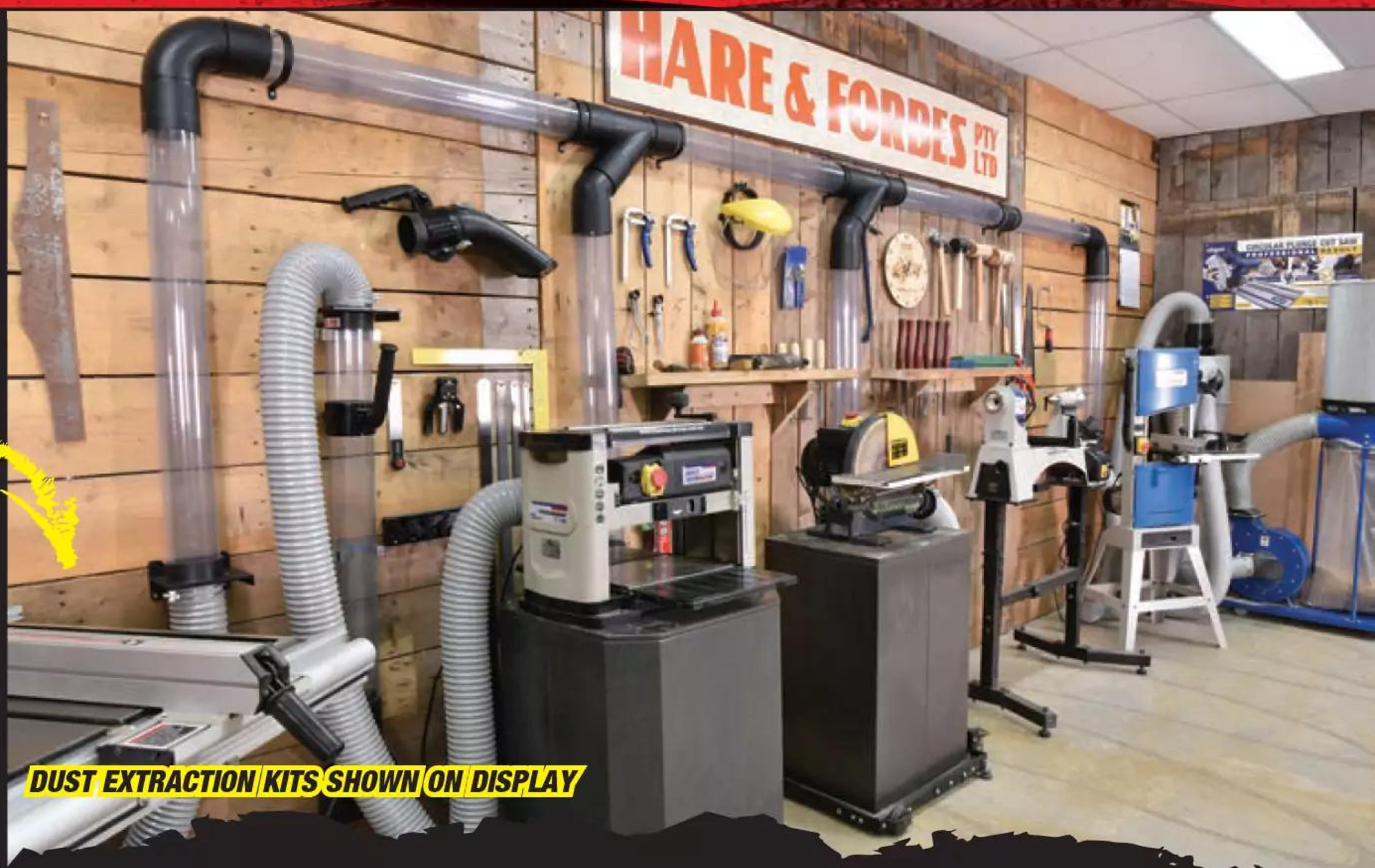

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Ben Adams Travishers

Reviewed by Carol Russell

Model #2
$465

Travishers are usually associated with chairmaking, particularly Windsor chairs or stools that have concave seats.

They consist of a curved blade set in a shaped wooden body. The blade can be adjusted to remove larger or smaller amounts of material to create complex contours.

I'm not a chairmaker but I often have the need to shape sculptures and platters, creating deep concave forms. These objects are like chair seats in terms of shape and depth. My usage of these tools is a bit unorthodox; however, I find them incredibly manoeuvrable and versatile, even for shaping convex surfaces.

When I saw that furniture maker Ben Adams was making his own travishers in his workshop on the Sunshine Coast, I was intrigued.

There are two models, both have spotted gum bodies. The #1 has a 60mm radius blade forged from 80CrV2 steel with a 20° bevel. It has a friction fit blade that requires a tap on the tangs with a wooden mallet to adjust the depth of cut for quick stock removal. At $225, the #1 is an affordable tool for beginners and a good all-rounder.

Model #2 (shown above) is the premium version and has a brass plate for durability. The tangs are adjusted with two screws and an allen key. The 90mm radius curved blade is also forged from 80CrV2 and has a good balance of hardness, edge retention and impact resistance. The blade is 70mm in length with a 20° bevel angle.

It came out of the box razor sharp and ready to go. I had a piece of very dense Huon pine; beautiful, but hard and a lot of work to hollow out with a gouge.

Cutting slightly diagonally across the grain, the material melts away. I loved the weight of the tool; a light touch is all that's needed as the weight anchors it.

The travisher feels beautiful to use – the shaped handles allow for plenty of clearance for your hands as you go deeper. I tried it on some harder Tasmanian blackwood and some cranky red cedar. It performed well without any snagging or tearing out.

The art, I found, is to read the grain, keep up a steady deliberate pace and use the tool at a slightly skewed angle as you make the cut, rocking it slightly as you exit and slicing the fibres cleanly. The blade held its edge beautifully and after a couple of hours of use was still razor sharp.

Available from Ben Adams, see www.benadams.studio

Carol Russell is a Melbourne woodcarver who also teaches. Learn more at www.carolrussellwoodwork.com.au

Gifkins Dovetail Jig

Reviewed by John McBratney

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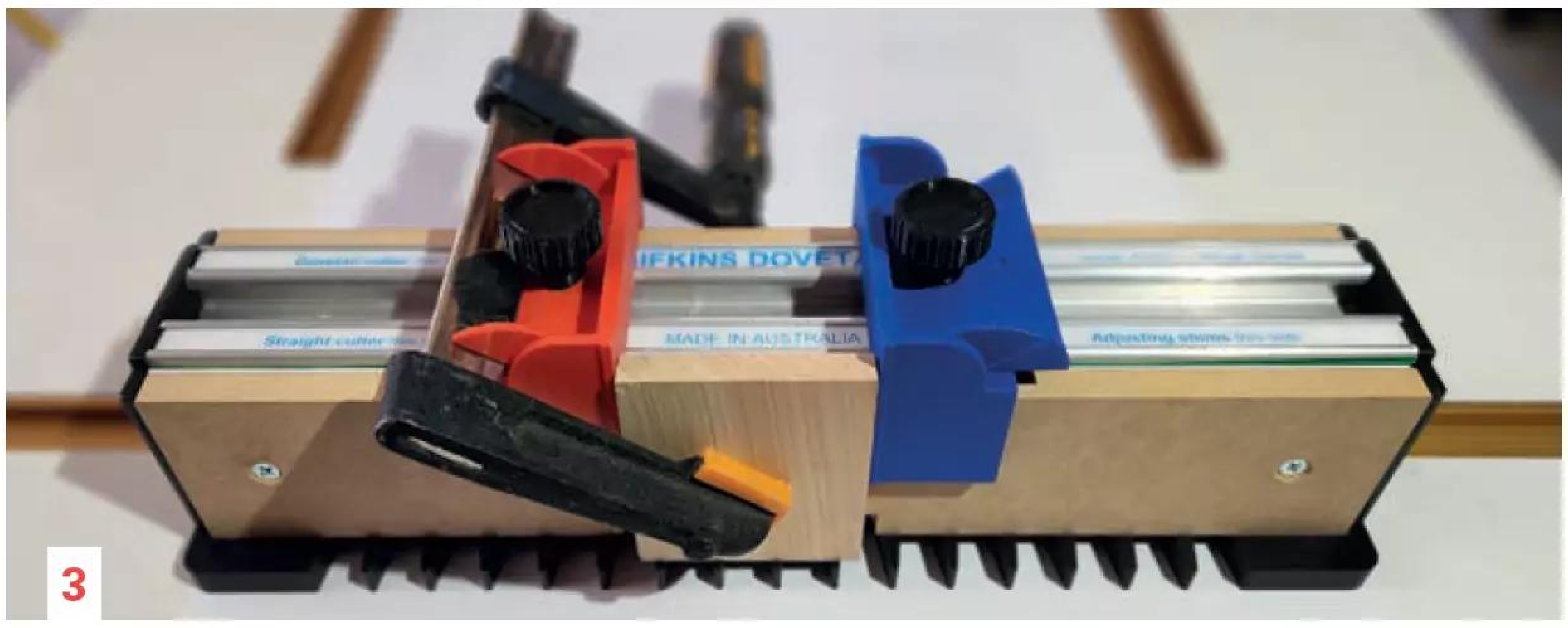

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The Gifkins dovetail jig is manufactured in Australia, which means spares and additional components are easily obtained. The Solo Beginner Pack shown here costs $420 and comes with a standard jig body, stops, a standard template of your choice, router cutters to suit and an instruction manual.

The A10 template is recommended as a starter configuration. This can cut dovetail joints in timbers up to 13mm in thickness. There are other templates and associated cutters available that cover timber thicknesses from 10 to 22mm. My experience confirms the A10 template is a useful starter arrangement.

The jig is an interesting and very clever design. It has a frame which has a two-sided template that screws to its base. One side of the template has parallel fingers, the other has tapered (dovetail shaped) fingers (**photo 1**).

The kit includes a parallel and a dovetail shaped cutter, both of which have spacing bearings attached just under the cutters (**photo 2**). The cutters are held in a table-mounted router. I use an AUK router motor and a JessEm router lifter. While similar router and lifters will work, the above has proven most effective. The jig operates only with a router table and cannot be hand held.

The work to be cut (such as the end of the side of a small box) is held end down hard against the template using an external clamp and placed so the edges are equidistant from the nearest template finger. This results in a regular dovetail cut centred on the timber end (**photo 3**).

The magic of the jig design lies in the setting of the workpiece with respect to the dovetail template to determine how far the cutter goes through the workpiece as it cuts the pins. As the template pins on the straight cutter side are tapered, the positioning of the work to the template pins determines the dimensions of the pin cut, and thus the fit of the finished joint.

The workpiece position is set by means of shims between the jig frame and the backing board, against which the workpiece is clamped. The shims are the white lines between the frame and the backing board in **photo 3**, but more easily seen in **photo 4**.

The initial set-up of the jig consists of determining the number of shims required for a neat fit. This entails making several test cuts of the pin side of the joint, having already made one tail side cut. Increasing the number of shim results in a looser fit; fewer shims give a tighter joint.

As the shims are only 0.25mm in thickness adding one shim has very little effect upon the fit. When making initial test cuts to set the joint fit, I start with a change of two or three shims and make a second test cut. As you approach a neat fit reduce the number of shims added or subtracted. Once a neat fit that easily goes together with light pressure has been reached make a note of the number of shims used. This will be the same for any subsequent set-up using the same template and cutters.

Dovetail joints have two components, the pin and the tail sides. Gifkins recommend cutting the tails first. The workpiece is set against the backboard with its end edge hard down on the template and moved left and right for a symmetrical fit either side of the edge template pins. The work overlap should be about a half dovetail width. If the end tail piece is too thin it is likely to split when the cut is made.

The two hand-screw tightened stops are set to position and hold the work against the backboard. A clamp is used to securely hold the workpiece during cutting. Each stop has a clamp bracket to supports the work holding clamp securely against the backboard.

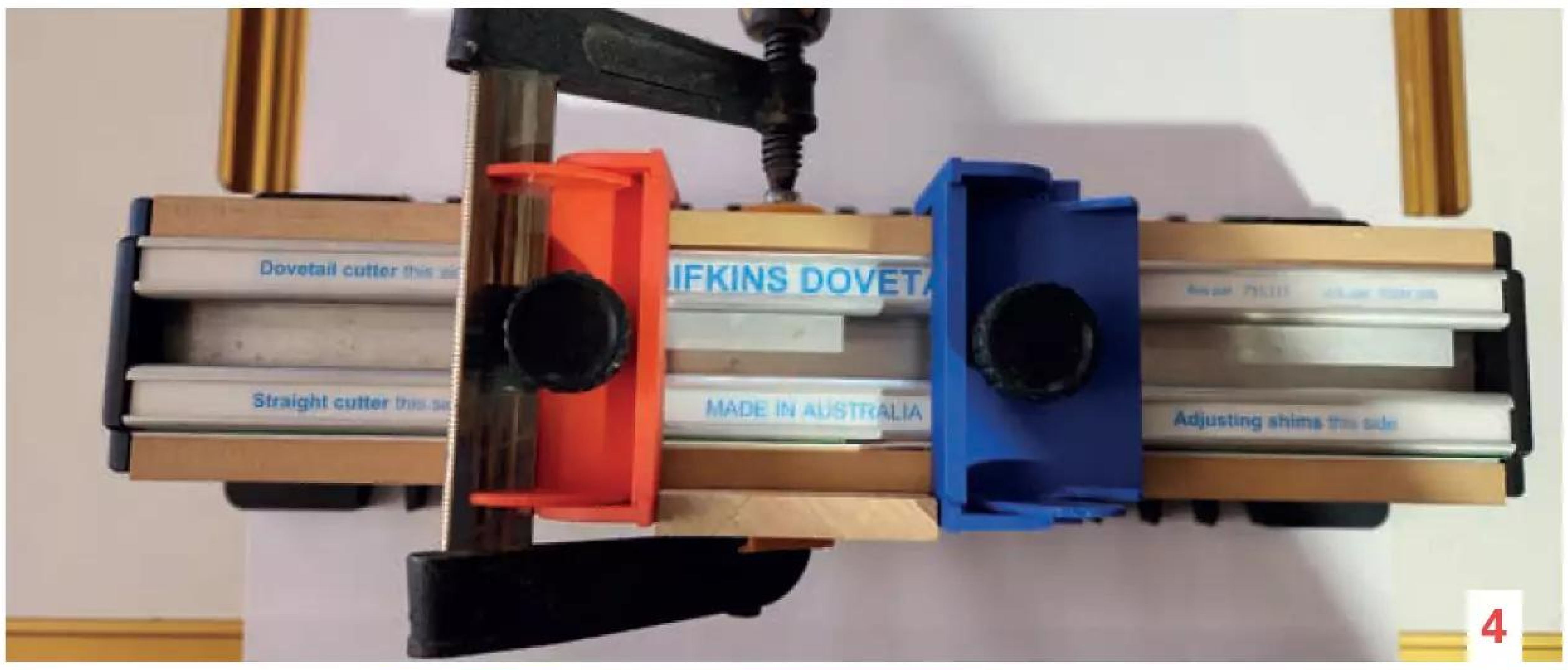

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Photo 4 shows the workpiece clamped in the jig ready to cut.

The selected cutter is inserted into the router collet and its height adjusted. To adjust, place an off-cut of exactly the same thickness as the workpiece on top of the template and adjust the router lift so the top of the cutter is approximately 0.5mm above the timber. This is not critical but results in a small extension of the pin (and tail) through the joint which facilitates final finishing to a smooth joint surface (**photo 5**).

With the work held tightly in position cutting can proceed. This simply entails carefully and slowly moving the whole jig, with the work securely clamped in position as above, so the selected cutter enters the work guided by the template. Generally you move it with a slight pressure to one side on the way in, and on the other side on the way out. This ensures the cut is accurate. The jig throws a lot of chips around, so I wear eye and ear protection and recommend a full face cover PPE system.

If making a box or drawer frame, the workpiece already cut is rotated in the jig, keeping the same face towards you. This ensures any small error in centring the work does not result in a step in the joint edge. Repeat the cutting procedure. Do the same with the other end-piece of the box or drawer.

Next, change the cutter to the pin unit, setting height as before. Place the other side workpieces in the jig, on the opposite side, i.e. if you cut the tails first change to the dovetail side of the jig, using the same stop positions. Do not release the stops in between cuts. This emphasises the need to ensure all sides of a box or drawer structure are exactly the same width. With careful selection of shims, the resultant joint should fit tightly but slip easily together without straining the pins or tails.

The Gifkins jig is an excellent tool for simple joint layouts as in small boxes and drawers. Its real advantage is that the joint fit set-up is not required every time you use it, once you have determined the number of shims for a specific template and cutter set.

The other major advantage is that the joint cutting process is much faster than with other jigs, and unless you are an accomplished joiner, faster and more accurate than hand cutting. The handbook is comprehensive and has a section on more advanced joint layouts using spacers available from Gifkins.

Overall I am very impressed with the unit. When carefully set up the results are excellent, the fit is perfect and cutting dovetail joints is no longer a three hour job. Be aware, however, that it is used primarily for through dovetails and is not normally used for more complicated dovetail joints.

Gifkins dovetail jigs are available from https://www.gifkins.com.au/

John McBratney is retired electronics engineer and home joinery maker who lives in Lancefield, Victoria 3435. Email: mcbratneyjohn@gmail.com

MAKER: PAUL JOSHUA. PHOTO: KRAUTKOPF

Ironbark Tools Low Angle Block Plane

Reviewed by Damion Fauser

This plane from Brisbane-based Ironbark Tools is a new take on the traditional bevel-up infill block plane. Made with modern materials and processes, it is a lovely tool to hold and use with either one or two hands, making it capable of a wide range of tasks.

The main body of the tool is 303 stainless steel, chosen for its corrosion resistance and workability. The fixtures and fittings, such as the locking knob for the cap iron and the adjustment controls for the depth and lateral positioning, are brass.

The blade is M2 HSS, heat treated for ease of sharpening and edge retention. Whilst this heat treatment also helps to reduce the effort required to flatten the back of the blade, like all blades this one did require a little effort on the stones to make it suitably flat for first use. I fully expect this from all manufacturers however, so this is not a criticism. The blade has stepped shoulders like some shoulder plane blades, so some side-clamp honing guides may not be able to securely hold the blade for sharpening.

The tool comes with a very fine mouth setting and the mouth opening is fixed. The inset brass mouthpiece can be removed and filed to open the mouth if required, however this is not reversible unless purchasing a separate mouthpiece, so careful consideration is required.

A range of timber species are available for the infill and the cap iron, all of which create a striking contrast with the metallic elements. The sole is 135mm long and 37mm wide, with the blade being 30mm wide, making it small enough to do delicate work, yet capable of wider cuts where desired.

Cut geometry is defined by a 12° bed in the body. The blade comes ground at 25°, resulting in an out-of-the-box cut angle a very low 37°. For those that add a 3–5° microbevel, this will increase to a cut angle between 40–42°, which is very similar to other production bevel-up block planes on the market. This cut geometry is suitable for high-performance cuts in both long and end grain.

The cap iron has a pair of small brass lugs set into the sides, which smoothly and securely register the cap iron into the body via a set of milled grooves in the inner side faces of the body. Adjusting the depth of cut is easy and smooth – slightly loosen the brass cap iron lock wheel and turn the textured brass adjustment knob at the end of the threaded shaft.

Lateral adjustment is via a brass lever that is captured on the threaded shaft and registers to the underside of the blade via a domed endcap captive in a hole milled through the blade. I did find that because this lateral adjust mechanism is captive only on the threaded shaft, when turning the depth adjustment knob this made the lateral adjust lever move slightly side to side, so users may need to alternately check depth and lateral adjust settings until satisfied the tool is accurately set.

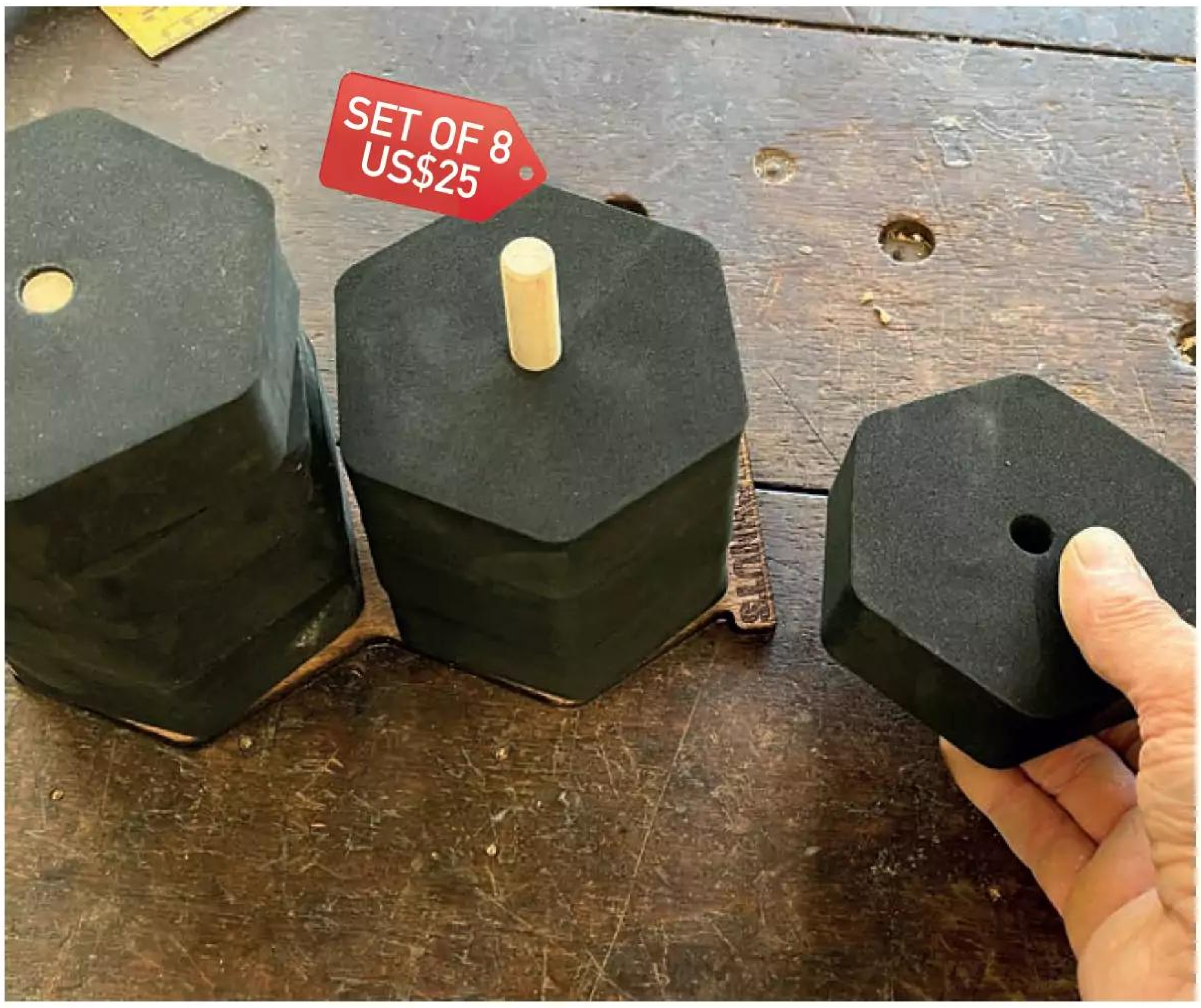
For the quality of manufacture and componentry, as well as cut performance, I would consider this tool to be good value for dedicated hand tool users.

Available from Ironbark Tools, see https://ironbarktools.com.au

Damion Fauser is a Brisbane designer maker who also teaches woodwork classes, see www.damionfauser.com

Bench Nuts

Reviewed by Raf Nathan



I have seen this type of workshop aid before under different names but never trialled them. I must say they work really well. This Carbon Method set comes in a pack of eight mounted on a simple and effective holder. They are made of a closed-cell foam and hexagonally shaped at 95mm wide and 31mm thick.

I used four underneath a panel of hardwood which I sanded with a random orbit sander and then my heavy 4 inch belt sander with an 80 grit belt. The panel sat there rock-steady without moving.

The soft material offers high friction but doesn't mark wood surfaces and holds it securely, ideal for finished or sanded work that needs to be kept clean and unmarked. For a recent cabinet job I found them very helpful for both sanding and polishing wood panels.

These are a great addition to a workshop. They are a little bit thick at 31mm because that raises your working height when used on a bench, however I now find them very useful.

Available from Carbon Method in the USA via https://carbonmethod.com

ZenSharp Sharpening System

Reviewed by Raf Nathan

$180

This is a slightly different take on sharpening and the attention to detail throughout is excellent. It has a beautifully machined anodised aluminium base that with modern machining wizardry done to it has a magnetised surface that is virtually perfectly flat and straight.

Diamond coated stainless steel cards of different grits are 200 x 75mm in size and snap neatly onto the base. I noted that even the card corners are shaped for a little styling. The flat and true base along with the very strong magnets means that with a diamond card added you have a perfectly flat sharpening surface that doesn't need maintenance as you would with a waterstone.

The standard set-up is with coarse, medium and fine stones and the edge from the fine stone will give razor sharpness. Initially I trialled the ultra-coarse card to regrind a chisel bevel. This sort of work is always slow, however the diamonds cut quite quickly with an impressive amount of swarf coming off the tool.

The flatness of the cutting surface helps immensely as once the bevel is formed the tool starts to suck itself to the surface. From there I went from medium to the fine stone and was able to shave my arm with the resulting edge. To refine it the included strop card is excellent. Use this dry, pulling back the edge on the surface to achieve a professional sharpness.

Except for strop cards, sprinkle water on the surface prior to sharpening to extend diamond life and always clean the cards and base after use. Given the tight tolerances you don't want swarf fouling the card fit onto the base. The card fit is already a little too tight so always check it is properly seated before use.

This is an impressive sharpening system with its fast cutting interchangeable diamond cards and the fact you never need to flatten the surface. I worked the edges on five chisels and was impressed with how quickly the diamond cuts. The fine card is my favourite as it creates a useable edge so quickly, and the strop card is perfect to have on your bench to keep edges sharp. The base kit at a reasonable $180 gives you coarse, medium, fine and strop cards. The Pro kit is $290 and comes with an ultra-coarse and ultra-fine cards and a kangaroo leather strop added in. Replacement cards are available, although Zen-Wu say one card should give hundreds of sharpenings.

Review kit supplied by www.zenwutoolworks.com
Available from www.ad-tools.com.au

Raf Nathan @treeman777 is a designer maker who teaches woodworking classes from his Brisbane workshop.

1. The kit has a base and interchangeable diamond cards. The packaging and presentation is excellent.
2. Using the ultra-coarse stone to grind in a new bevel.
3. Showing the inset brass motif – even the base is detailed. Rubber feet hold the stone well to the bench.


Union
KINFOLK

Korean Angojigi Door Joinery

So Joong-Han introduces the intricate angojigi door, an ingenious example of Korean joinery with a dual sliding and swinging action. Achieving the precision required demands an almost meditative care, he explains.

I am a certified *somokjang* – a traditional Korean master of fine woodworking. Just as every culture has its own philosophy and heritage in the way it shapes wood, my work is rooted in the distinctive craftsmanship and design philosophy of Korean furniture making.

In Korea, as in many other countries, there exists a long lineage of master woodworkers who embody the spirit of traditional craftsmanship. Collectively, they are known as *mokjang*, or masters of woodcraft. These artisans are classified into two primary categories based on the scale and function of their work.

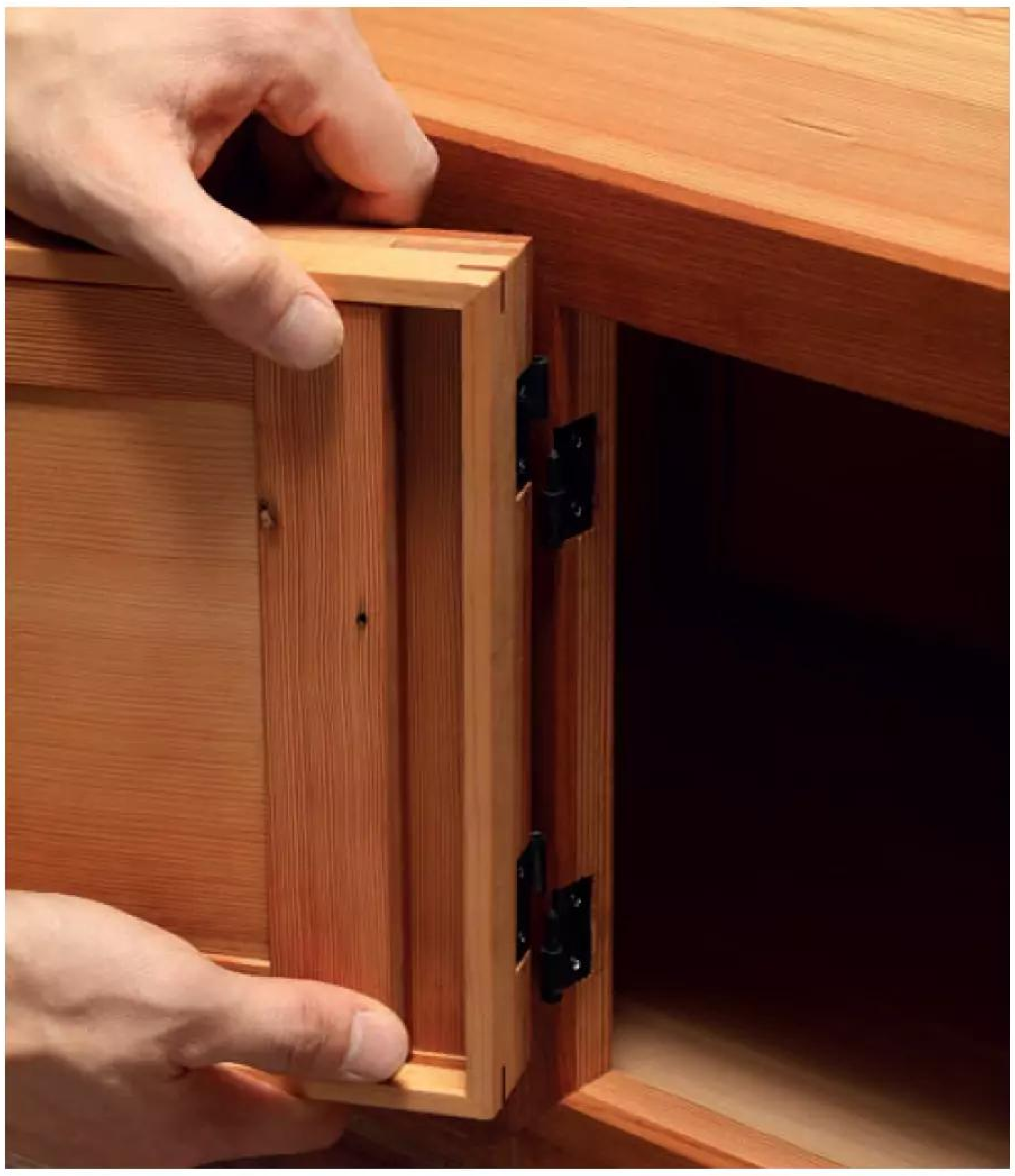
In Korean, *dae* means large and *so* means small. *Daemokjang* are large-scale carpenters who build the structural framework of traditional Korean architecture – *hanok* houses, palaces, and temples. They join massive beams and pillars without nails, using intricate interlocking methods. In contrast, *somokjang* are fine woodworkers who craft the interiors within those buildings. They make doors, windows, and furniture – objects that dwell closest to people's everyday lives.

In this lineage, I continue the tradition not of monumental architecture, but of the intimate – creating furniture and wooden objects that live alongside people, carrying both function and quiet beauty. My craft represents the enduring connection between Korean tradition and the human experience of living with wood.

The art of Korean joinery

One of the most distinctive and sophisticated features of traditional Korean woodworking lies in its

These pages: So Joong-Han with his *Angojigi Three-tier Cabinet* in zelkova, 'black ink' woods and forged iron hardware. The sliding doors are removable for easy access and also to potentially create display areas. Each door has a dual panel which slides behind it as well as being able to open outward on hinges.



joinery, known as *jamajchum*. For centuries, Korean artisans have crafted furniture without a single nail, relying solely on the precise interlocking of carefully carved wooden parts.

This technique demands a far higher level of skill than simply fastening pieces with metal. Yet the result is remarkable – each piece of furniture can breathe with nature, adapting to the expansion and contraction of wood caused by changes in temperature and humidity.

Somokjang artisans have long created the wooden frames of drawers, doors, and boxes using traditional joinery such as mortise and tenon, shoulder, butt and mitre joints.

The angojigi door

The traditional Korean house or *hanok*, represents the pinnacle of adaptive architecture – a structure that lives and breathes with the changing seasons. The angojigi door reflects the uniquely Korean spirit of joinery and is an art form that I seek to reinterpret through my contemporary work.

It is an ingenious single structure that slides and transforms to open wide or close as needed. Unlike a conventional sliding or hinged door, the angojigi combines both mechanisms into one elegant system.

Angojigi structure and its philosophy

Imagine four connected door panels. The two central doors slide outward to the sides, and then the outer doors swing open on hinges. When fully opened, the wall itself disappears, dissolving the boundary between interior and exterior space.

Angojigi literally means 'to embrace and to support'. It's a structure in which one door panel holds and supports another, symbolising both physical connection and emotional inclusion. It embodies an architectural philosophy translated into furniture, as shown in my *Angojigi Cabinet*.

First encounter

In the early years of my craft, I made furniture using only conventional hinged doors. At that time, I had never even heard of the *angojigi* technique. My first encounter with it came by chance, seeing the work of another certified master. I was immediately captivated by its design – so fluid, balanced, and alive with quiet intelligence.

I discovered that this technique is one of the most intricate and distinctive forms of Korean joinery, handed down since the Joseon Dynasty. Intrigued, I began observing real examples, studying their mechanisms, and sketching the structural logic that allowed them to function so elegantly.

Under the guidance of my father and master craftsman, Soh Byung-jin, I gradually developed my own guidelines and began the demanding process of mastering this rare art.

Precision beyond a millimetre

After completing my first *Angojigi Cabinet*, I realised the technique was much harder than I had imagined. It requires not only skill, but unwavering patience and exacting precision.

The angojigi door combines both sliding and swinging functions into a single, seamless structure – meaning every component must align with flawless accuracy. A deviation of even one millimetre can throw the entire mechanism off balance. The door will neither slide nor open properly.

To achieve such precision, each piece of wood must be planed, joined,

and adjusted with almost meditative care. Even for an experienced craftsperson, completing an angojigi piece properly requires at least a week of concentrated work. This explains why few woodworkers attempt it, and perhaps why I found myself irresistibly drawn to it.

Embraced and embracing

At the heart of the angojigi technique lies a quietly poetic interaction between two doors. The inner (embraced) door operates as a sliding door. The outer (embracing) door opens outward like a hinged door, gently wrapping around the inner door.

The outer embracing door must be slightly larger than the door it enfolds. In my own design, the left panel takes on this role, measuring 8mm wider than the inner sliding door.

To allow the two doors to move in harmony, I add a small rail structure behind the outer door – a subtle but crucial element that enables the sliding motion when the doors are joined. At the same time, the upper and lower components must be hand-fitted and perfectly aligned so that, when closed, the pair functions as a single hinged door.

Sliding, hinging, and locking coexist and interact within a single structure that defines the angojigi method: a perfect marriage of engineering precision and aesthetic grace.

Beyond its elegance, the angojigi enhanced storage accessibility. Ordinary hinged doors require clear swing space – angojigi doors open fully, sliding and folding outward for easier access and storage, and expanding the sense of openness.

Joinery as connection

For me, joinery is not merely a technique – it is a philosophy of connection. Binding wood to wood is a way of linking tradition to the present, a way of connecting people. Each joint carries the craftsman's will to connect, endure, and harmonise. My work seeks to breathe contemporary life into the inherited wisdom of Korean joinery, where precision and empathy coexist.

I hope fellow wood artisans will find inspiration in the strength and quiet beauty of Korean joinery. May our craftsmanship transcend borders, becoming a meaningful exchange that inspires makers around the world.

Close-up views of the angojigi door showing the construction and hinging.

So Joong-Han shows the sliding operation of a sample angojigi door.

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Making the angojigi door

The angojigi door has an outer door, an inner door, and an outer frame equipped with a rail. The outer door frame is referred to as A, and the inner door frame as B. Both share the same width, but frame B is made 8mm shorter in height than frame A.

This difference allows the inner frame to overlap perfectly within the outer C-frame, creating the signature layered structure of the angojigi design.

Precision by hand

Although the entire process is done by hand, the precision required is that of a machine. I use traditional handplanes to very finely plane the panels to ensure the exact 8mm height difference.

Allowing for extra length in the frame

The outer C-frame is built 10mm longer than the combined width of both panels. For example, if each door panel measures 200mm, the C-frame is constructed to be around 410–420mm in total width.

In traditional construction, the door frame was made in a C-shaped form and then joined with the door panels. However, this method is slightly more complex and demanding.

Through repeated practice, I discovered that crafting a rectangular frame first and then cutting it to fit the doors is more efficient. This has become one of my personal techniques.

Crafting the rail

The outer door rail is set 2mm inward from the edge. The width of the rail is 6mm, and the depth is 4mm. This groove allows the door to slide and lock smoothly in place.

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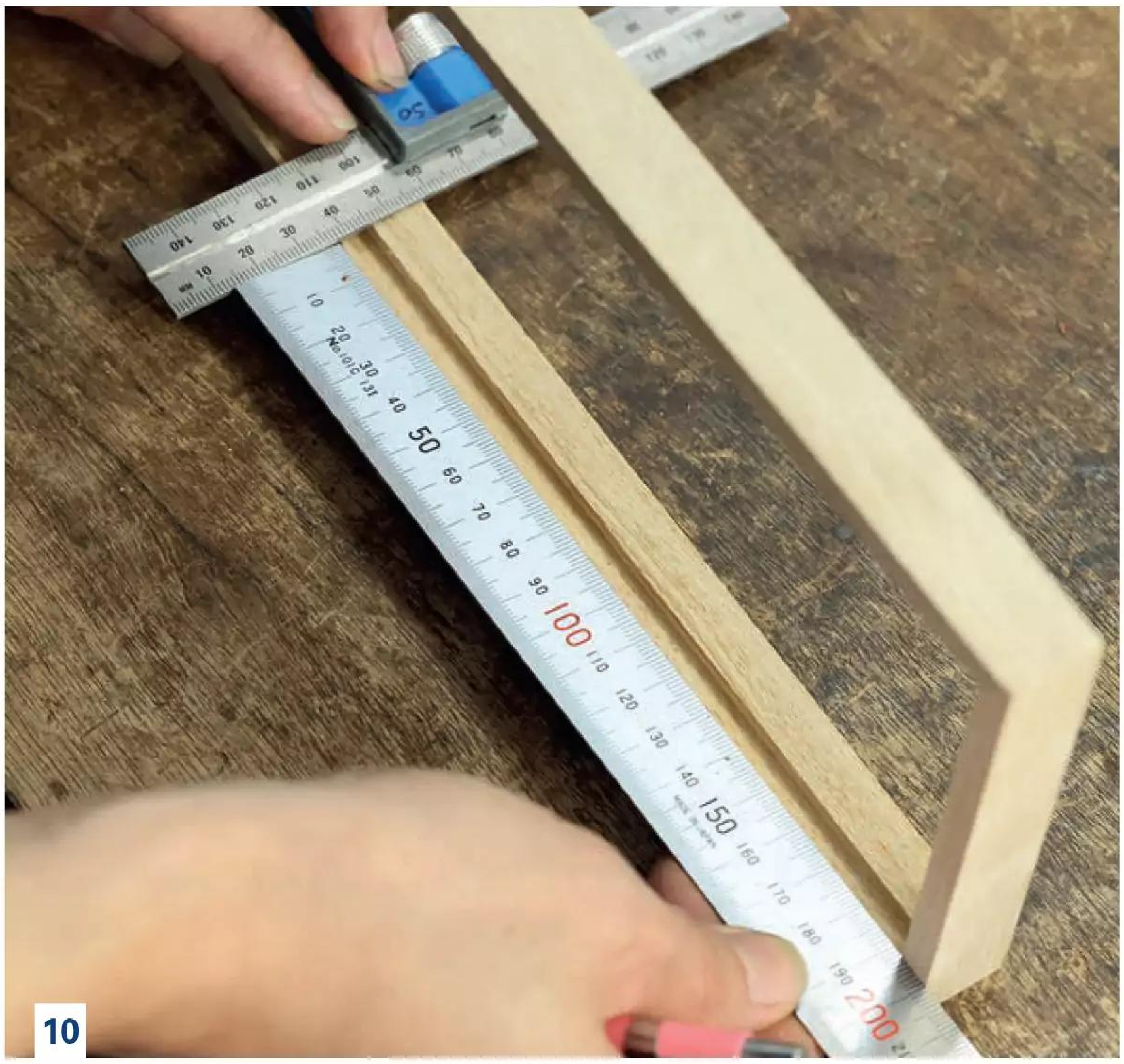
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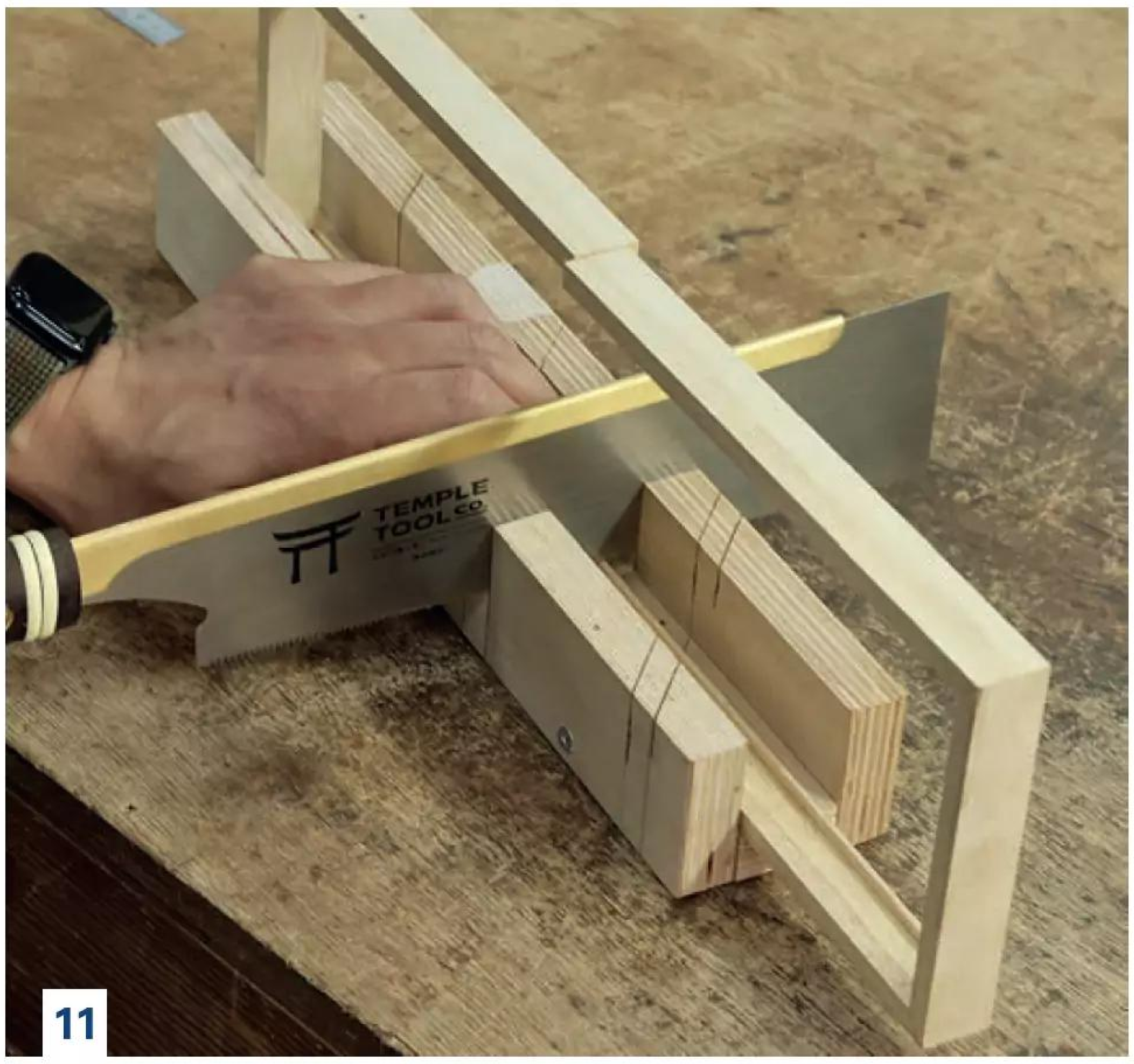
1. There are two door frames, the smaller one sits behind the larger front one and slides within a C-shaped frame.
2. The front door is 118mm high.
3. The rear door is 110mm high however both doors are the same width.
4. Both doors are 18mm thick and note the way the door frame is built up from a secondary wood faced in a more exotic wood.
5. There is an 20mm thick C-frame that is attached to the back the front door. The inner door slides within grooves in the C-frame.
6. Part of the the C-frame is 8mm thick. This method first makes a rectangular frame.
7. There is a groove 6mm wide which will accommodate the inner door.
8. The groove is 4mm deep.
9. Only 2mm thick edge of the groove remains, so care is needed when creating all the parts.
10. In traditional construction, the door frame was made in a C-shaped form. Here the frame is made in one piece.



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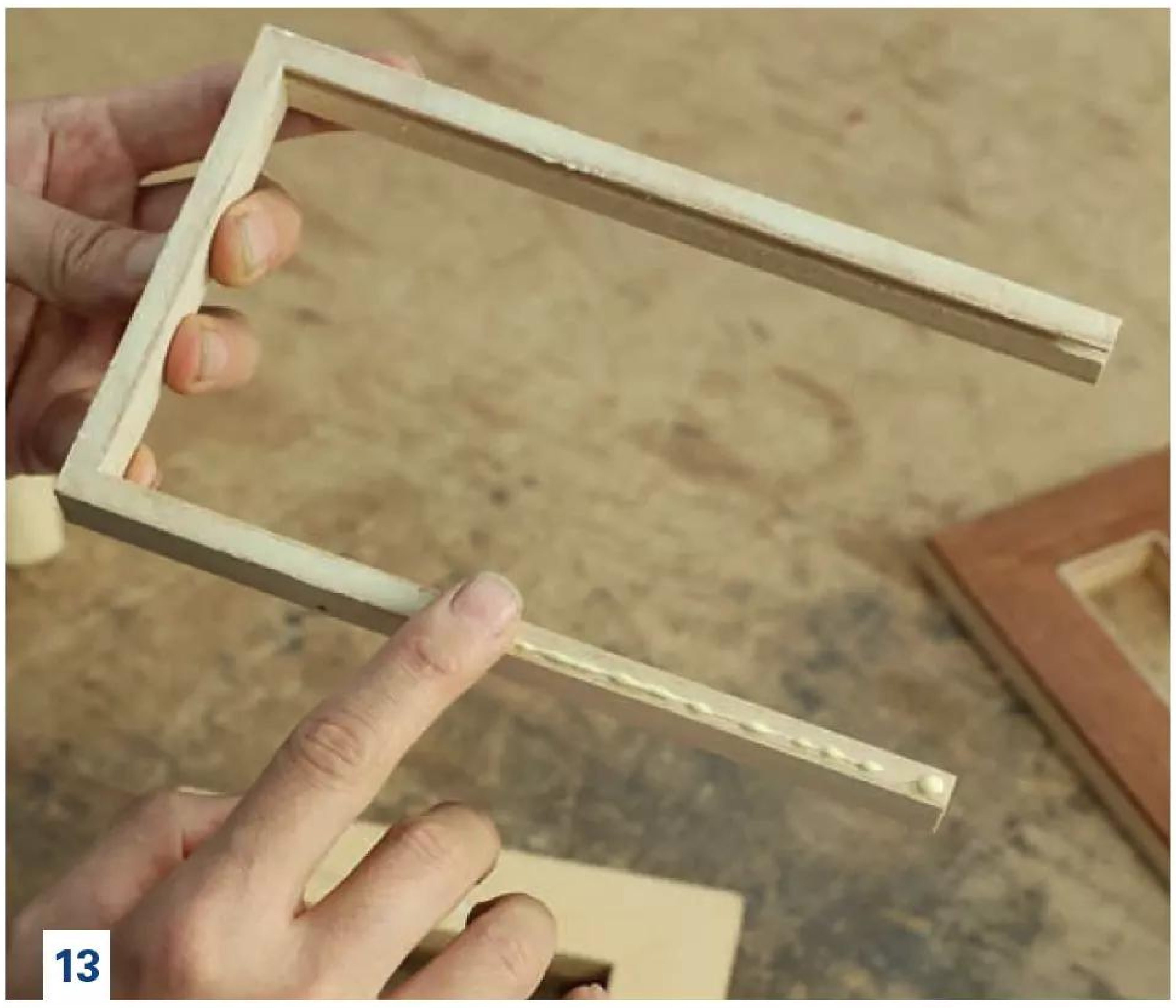
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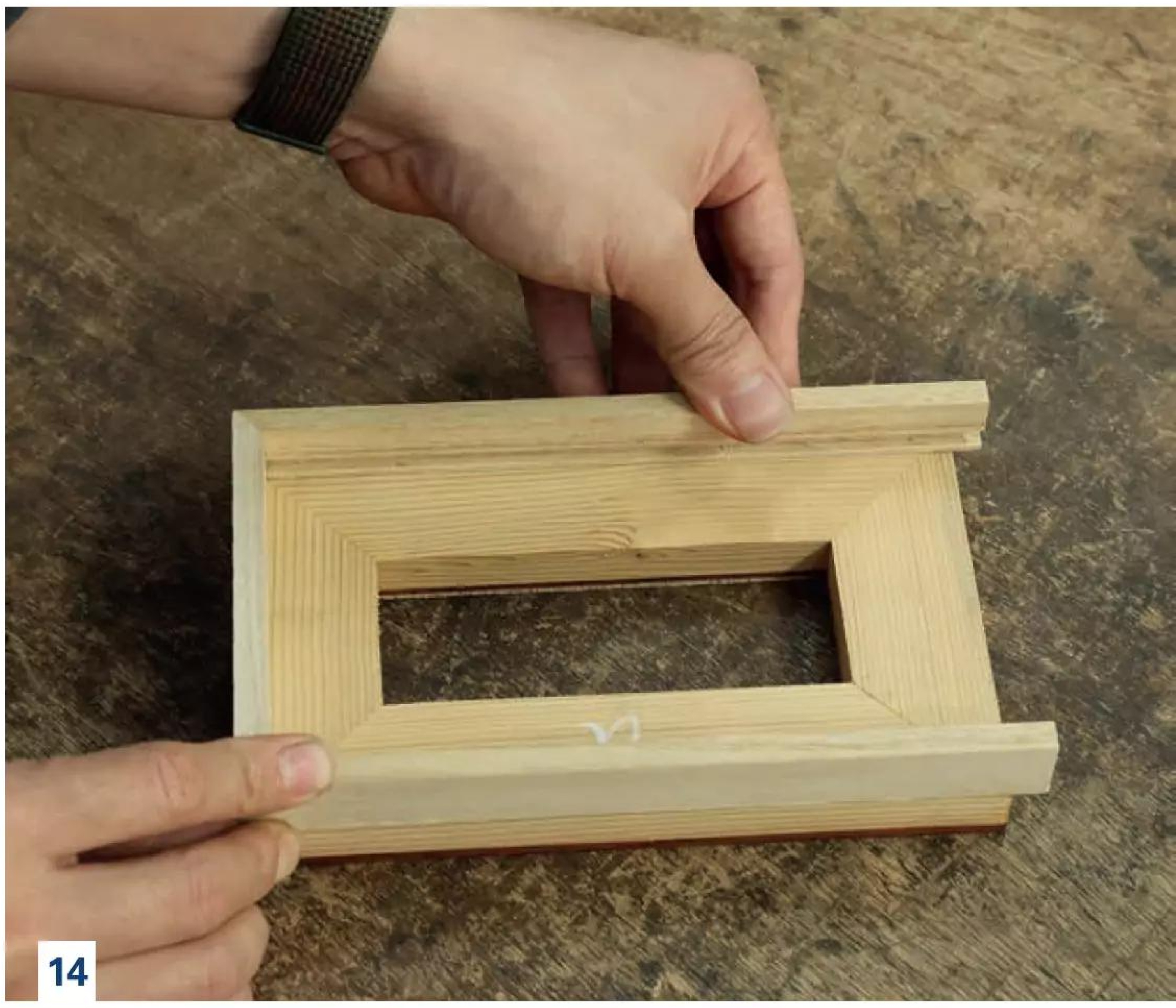
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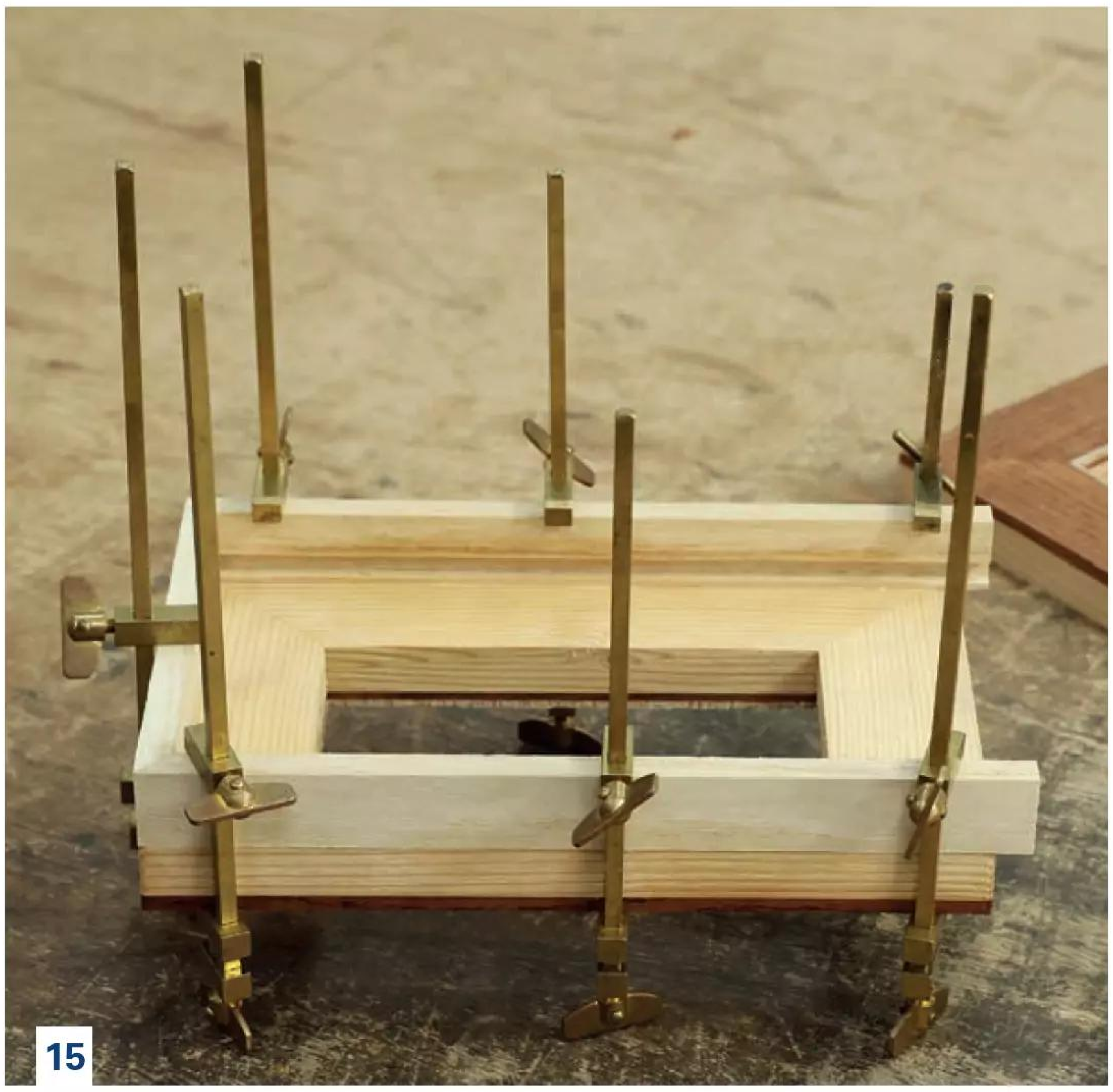
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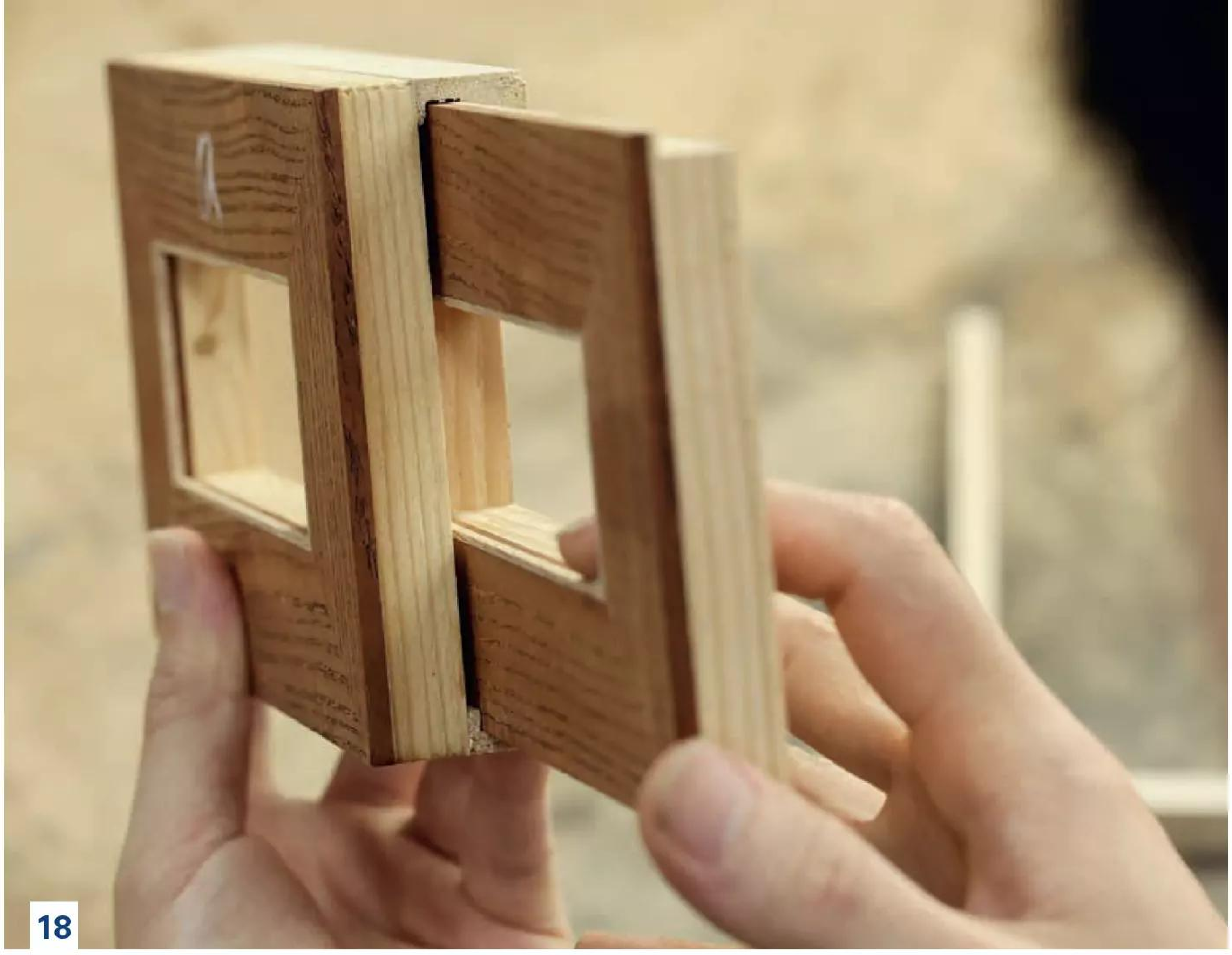

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Creating the step joint

Once the adhesive is fully dried, a step joint (*teok-gagong*) is machined into the outer door so the inner panel (B) can slide neatly inside it.

Traditionally, this step was entirely hand cut, but today, many artisans – myself included – use a tablesaw for greater precision.

In classical terminology, the rail section is called *am-jangbu* (female tenon), and the inserted part of the door is called *sut-jangbu* (male tenon). The two must be perfectly proportioned to allow seamless movement.

Cutting and assembly

The extended outer frame is trimmed to match the final length of the outer door panel (A). The inner panel (B) should fit smoothly within the bonded outer frame without friction.

Attaching hinges – the dual mechanism

Once assembled, the angojigi door functions as a sliding door. By attaching hinges, it also becomes a swinging door, embodying both sliding and opening mechanisms in one structure – a defining feature of the angojigi design.

When installing hinges, the alignment between the two panels must be flawless. Even a 0.5mm deviation can cause the door to rub or fail to open smoothly.

So Joong-Han @sojoonghan_ was profiled in Australian Wood Review, issue 128, September 2025. Learn more about So Joong-Han at www.gobjet.com

11. The rectangular frame is sawn to size creating two C-frames.

12. The C-frame, when prepared with all the grooves made, is attached to the rear of the front door.

13. Applying glue to the C-frame.

14, 15. The C-frame is glued and clamped to the rear of the front door. The C-frame already has the grooves made which the inner door slides in.

16. For the rear door the tongue that slides in the frame groove is cut on the tablesaw.

17. Trimming the frame excess flush with the door edge.

18,19, 20. Showing how the rear smaller door slides within the C-frame.

Photos: Ho-Young Ahn

This article was prepared with the assistance of Eun Ji Choi, Tammein, see www.tammein.com

A Guide to 14" Bandsaws

Power, features, construction, price and more are just some of the points you need to look at. Raf Nathan makes comparisons as he shops around.

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This article looks at 14" bandsaws – a popular size for smaller workshops. The size of a bandsaw is actually determined by the wheel diameter however the throat width (the distance from the blade to the frame) is often cited. Sizing these machines is still mostly done in inches and with motor ratings given in horse-power.

With a 14" machine you can saw shapes, thick material, and depending on the motor power, even deep saw from 200mm or wider boards. These machines have a relatively small footprint which helps where space is an issue.

How much power do you need?

There are various thoughts on how much power you need. Theoretically a well set up machine with a good sharp blade does not need a lot of power, however the deeper or thicker the wood you are cutting the more power you will need.

Motor power of 1–2.5hp is available for 14" saws running at 10amps which is what our household wall outlets are. With 3hp and above you need a 15amp wiring set-up which can be an expensive addition for a home-based set-up. For professional work where you need 3hp machines, 15amp wiring is essential.

There are 1hp machines well suited for small scale work. However you may need more horsepower depending on how fast you want to push the wood through. Hence I would not recommend less than a 1.5hp machine, and if you are pushing wood through it daily then you will need at least 2hp or a 3hp machine. You will never regret buying more power.

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Hafco BP-360

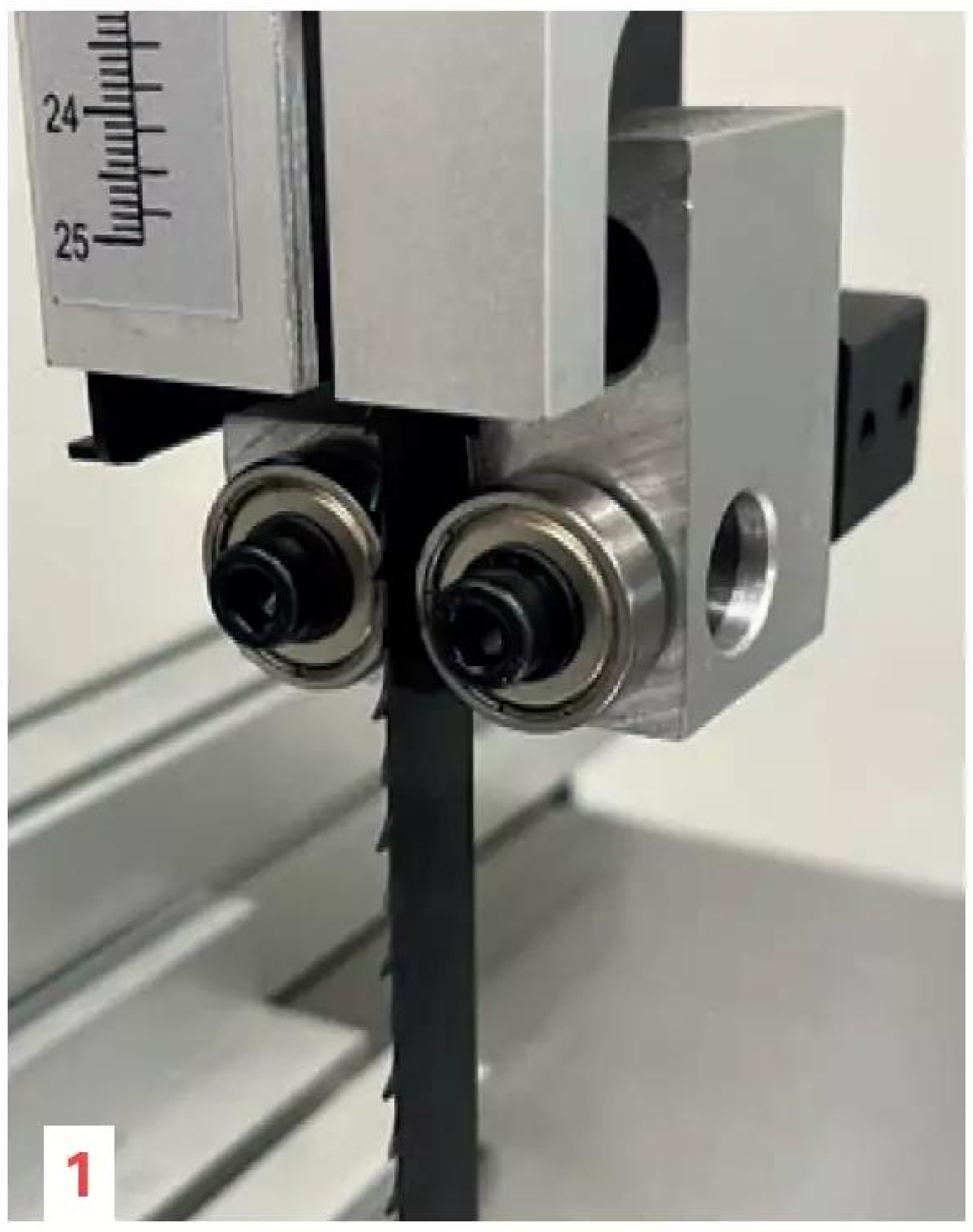
A very good value entry level machine as it has 1.5hp quality motor, micro-switched doors and bearing guides that are easy to adjust and lock with a thumbwheel.It has quick blade release lever, two speeds and a flexible work light. With a solid 88kg of weight it's quite a good deal.

1. The table is well sized with high-low sliding fence system

2. Fast action fence adjustment mechanism

3. Bearing guides with quick and simple adjustment.

4. Solid cast wheels and rigid frame.



Hafco BP-355

This is a more rugged machine with bearing guides with quick adjust locking with an allen key, two speeds and 245mm depth of cut. It has a good 2hp motor and 120kg of weight. Hare & Forbes also have a range of larger superior machines that for the price offer excellent value.

1. Bearing guides with allen key locking.

2. Nicely made cast wheels and rigid body.

3. Quite solid fence with a low position option.

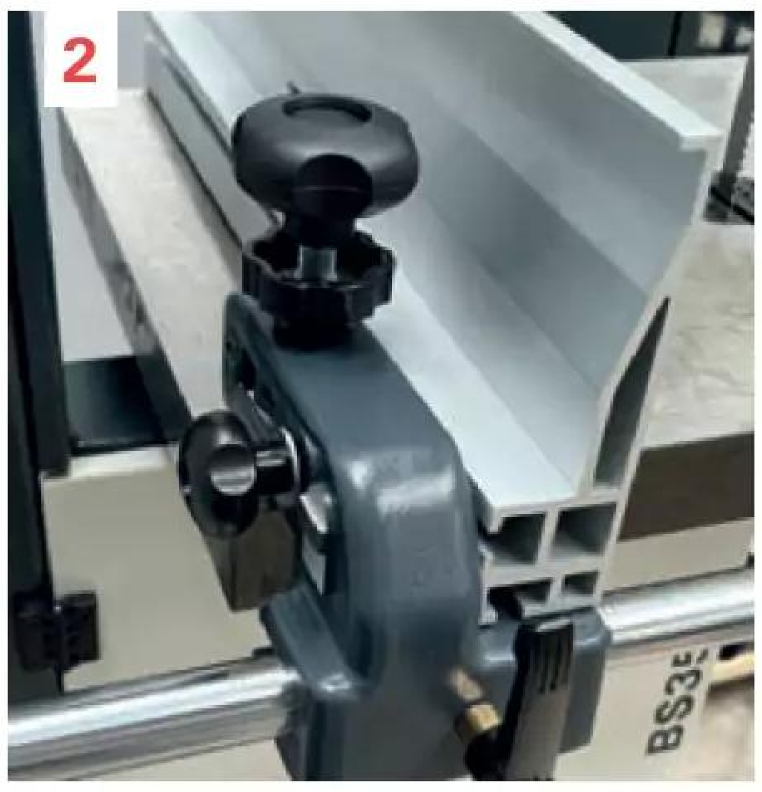
Woodfast BS350C

The Woodfast name in Australia is famous mainly for locally made wood lathes. However various ownership changes see the machines now coming out of China, as many other brands now do.

The BS350C comes with a 1.5hp motor. A smaller bodied machine it sits on a stand weighing 80kg. This has a good solid fence system with easy to use spring loaded guides and locking knobs. The alloy wheels are well made.

1. Bearing guides are easy to adjust.

2. Quite a good solid fence.



Woodfast BS350D Deluxe

This is a very nice machine with 2hp and importantly bearing guides that are easy to adjust. The upper and lower guides are spring mounted and are quickly set and locked with a finger knob. The solid fence system has a large cast head holding the large aluminium fence. With cast iron wheels and an enclosed base this machine is one of my favourites.

1. Very easy to use bearing guides

2. Rugged fence system with high and low positioning available

3. Cast iron wheels

Woodfast Professional BS350E

This is their largest 14" and is a solid full framed machine. You will need 15amp wiring for the 3hp motor but it is a superior machine. For the price you get better guarding, quality switch gear with key guarding, quick tension release, a foot brake and two dust ports.

1. Quick adjust bearing guides plus it has extra guarding.

2. Good quality fence system.

How high?

Table height can be an issue as the lighter machines have the table set high which is suited for getting up close for small work. The larger machines have the table set lower as you may be sawing thicker material and that is a more comfortable working height.

Speaking of tables, the larger it is the more work support you have. All machines seem to have cast iron tables which is a benefit in terms of having good weight and vibration absorption.

The guides

One secret of a good bandsaw is the guides. There are various types available, including roller bearings, ceramic discs and blocks. I cannot say which is better in use however being able to accurately and easily adjust the guides is critical. So whatever guides your intended machine does have get ones that are simple and easy to set in position.

Carbatec BS–345H

This is a solid machine featuring 1.5hp, bearing style guides, quick blade tension release lever, alloy wheels and weighs a decent 95kg. Value for money is obvious here with its large table, two speeds and 200mm depth of cut. This is a good option for a limited budget.

1. Well made guide assembly.

2. Simple but effective bearing guides use an allen key to lock them.

Carbatec BS–345C

This machine has alloy wheels, bearing guides, two speeds, and a quality 1.5hp motor. It weighs a reasonable 77kg but does have a small table and a somewhat modest fence.

1. Large bearing guides.

2. Rack and pinion rise and fall.

Fence types

A fence that can be flipped to have a low and high profile is seen as best. A high fence offers support for deep cuts in thick wood and the low option is for smaller pieces of wood where the upper guide can be kept low to minimise blade exposure.

My preference is for a solid fence system using a steel rod for support rather than an aluminium rail. The superior fences have a cast alloy head holding the actual fence which runs on a steel rod.

Machines can be a single frame or a smaller unit sitting on a cabinet or leg frame. Larger professional machines will always be a full framed unit.

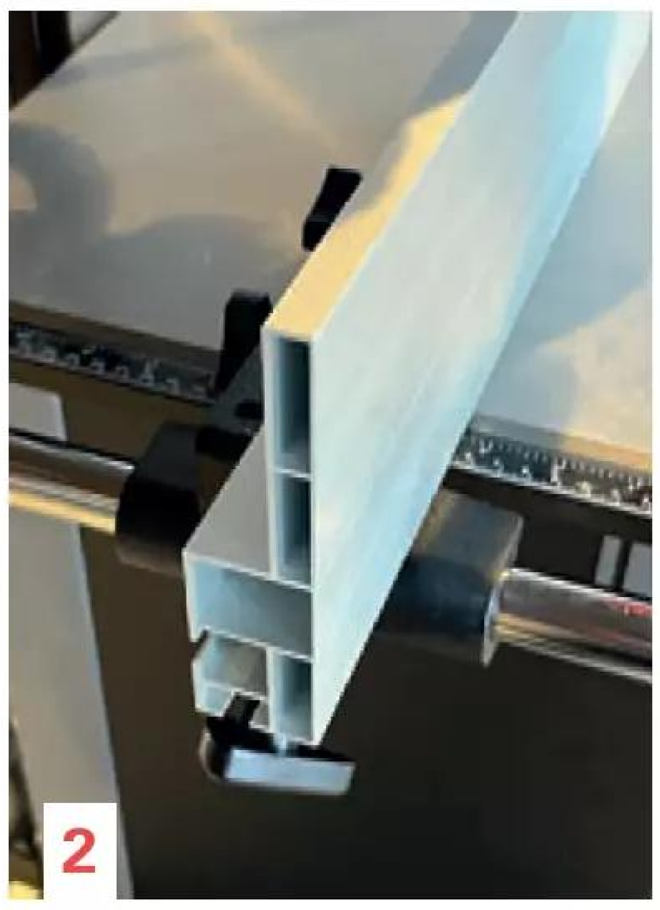
Tension release

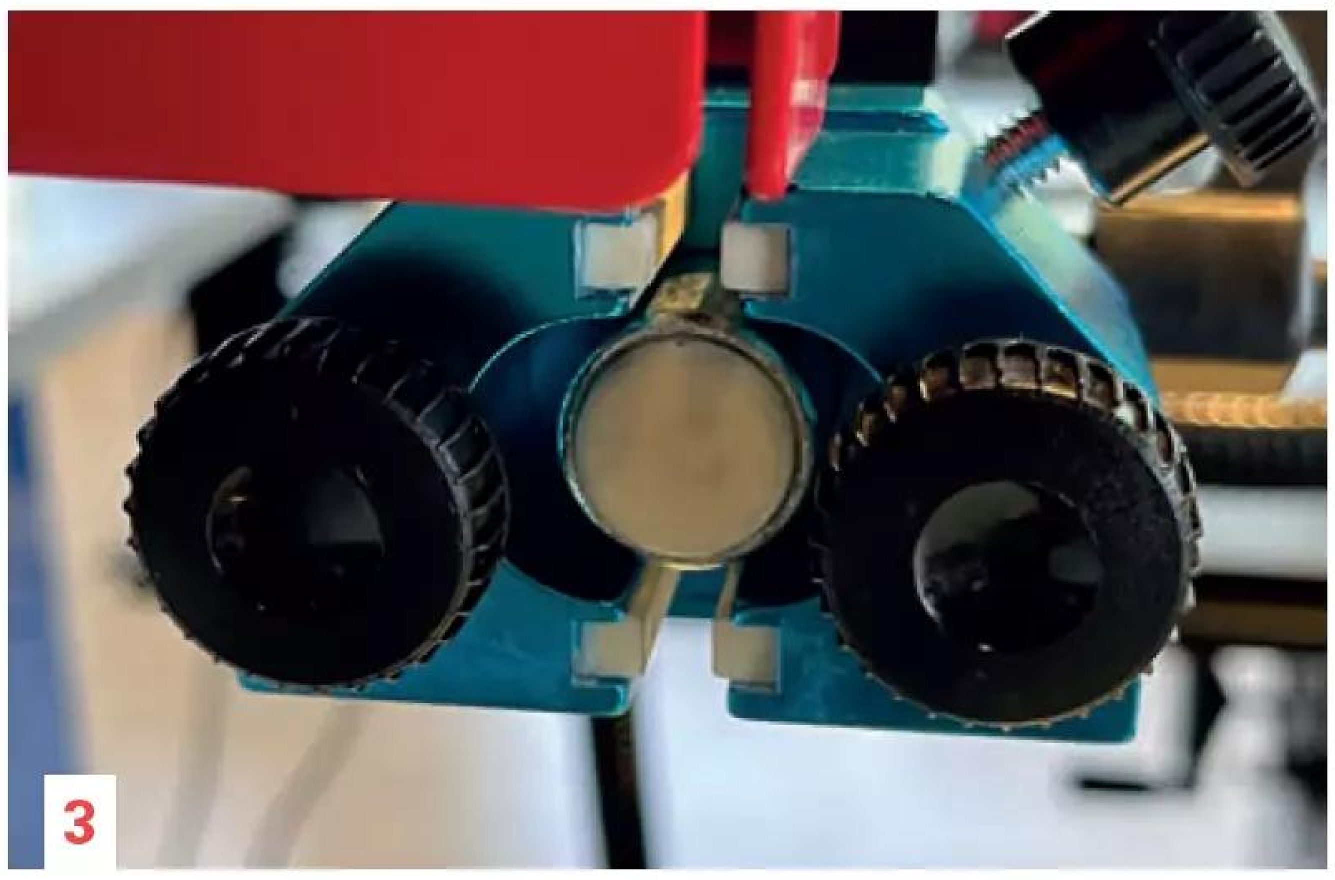
Blade tension is critical on a bandsaw as is releasing tension when not in use. Keeping a blade under tension will load up the steel frame unnecessarily. Releasing the tension is a simple way to maintain your machine's integrity and simply means unloosening the tension wheel or on superior machines using a quick-release tension arm.

Laguna 14BX

This is a well designed and nicely finished machine that, compared to less expensive saws, oozes sophistication. Features like the solid on-off switch design, good sized rigid fence and cast iron wheels and a foot brake make it appealling. Add in twin dust ports, ceramic guides, 2.5hp and 123kg of mass and it adds up to an appealing package.

Also available is the Laguna 14/12 CE machine which is a slightly down-specced version of the above. I did not view this machine so cannot comment on it.





1. Quality rack and pinion for the upper guides.

2. Good solid fence system.

3. Detail of the ceramic guides that are quick to adjust.

Hammer N2-38

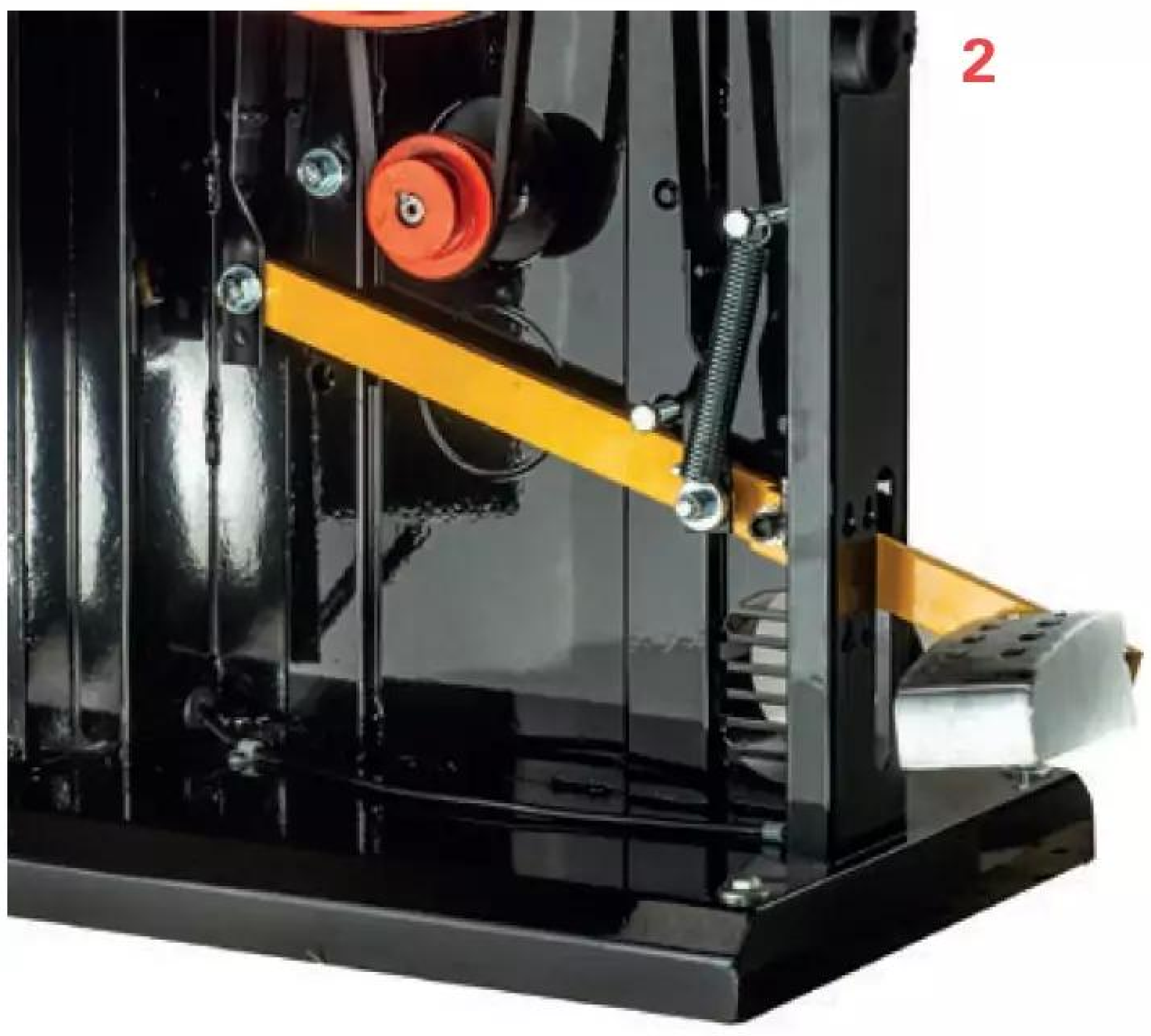
All Hammer machines are quality made and detailed. As a respected brand you will always have good re-sale on any Hammer machine. The N2-38 has a solid one-piece frame with 2hp motor and weighs a healthy 150kg.

Hammer N2-35

The Hammer N2-35 is a lighter duty version bandsaw but it still weighs a decent 100kg running a 1.4hp motor. In line with a smaller motor it has a cutting height capacity of 235mm which is still more than enough for most workshop operations.

1. Close upto the ceramic N2-35 guides.

2. Interior view of wheel in lower N2-38 cabinet.



Sherwood SB-SHD-350

This very smart 2hp heavy duty machine comes with ceramic block guides, cast iron wheels, foot brake, two dust ports and weighs in at 105kg. The fence is an acceptable reasonably sized aluminium system. Although the machine is 2hp, you will need 15amp wiring.

1. The machine is solid with cast iron wheels.

2. Interior view of the standard safety brake mechanism.

Sherwood SB-SMH-350

On paper this looks a good solid machine with a full frame and cast iron wheels, two dust ports, the guides are bearings but need an allen key to lock them, quick blade tension release and a substantial 122kg. With a 2.4hp motor and the standard features it arrives with make this a stand-out for value and what appears quality build.

1. Close up to the Sherwood's quality heavy fence system.

2. Cast iron wheels within.

3. Showing the bearing guides.

Sherwood SBSHD-350-L

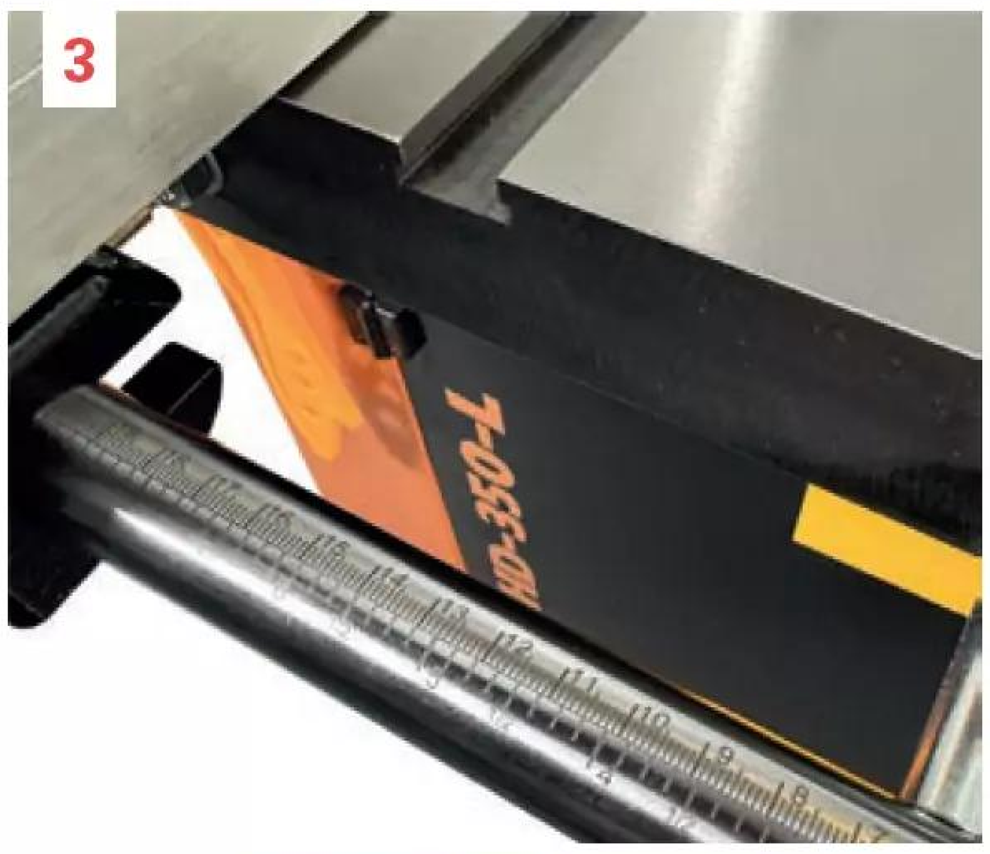
This machine looks similar to one of the Woodfast models I viewed. It has simple, easy to adjust bearing guides, 3hp, but again it needs 15amp wiring however it weighs a good 143kg.

1. Showing tension level and reverse side of the machine.

2. Good sized table with heavy duty fence.

3. Adjust scales for the fence.

4. Close-up to bearing guides.



Blade capacity

Thin blades are best for creating tight curves for cutting spoon blanks or similar to shape. A wider blade is better for deep resawing although I have heard other people say they resaw deeply with thin blades.

The machines all seem able to use blades from 6mm wide up to 20mm or 25mm wide. The smaller machines can often take thinner blades down to 3.2mm wide which is useful for sawing smaller tighter curves.

Other features to consider

Most machines have safety micro-switches on the doors meaning it won't start with the doors open. This is a good feature to have. All machines have one dust port and the superior have two with one at the base and one under the table for better dust extraction.

The weight of the machine can affect performance. The heavier machines will be more stable with less vibration. A foot brake is a feature on the superior machines. This will let you stop the machine quickly if needed. Warranty is worth being aware of as this ranges from one to five years, a large variance.

Pricing was all over the shop with various sales operating at time of writing and some dealers offering big markdowns on selected machines. The prices listed in the table however show full list price as taken from websites. Needless to say, you'll need to check pricing and shop around.

On the ground

To evaluate this size bandsaw in Brisbane, I visited Hare and Forbes, Woodwork Machinery Plus and Carbatec and researched other dealers online. However I never saw any machines actually operating. For the average shopper, this is not possible in any case. Deciphering the data and choosing a machine comes down to comparing the features noted above, especially the guides and motor power and then deciding which one you like the look of.

TABLE OF COMPARISON

	RIP CAPACITY	POWER	HEIGHT CAPACITY	GUIDES	FENCE	TENSION RELEASE LEVER	DUST PORTS	WEIGHT KG	WHEELS	TABLE SIZE MM	PRICE $
Hafco BP-360	340	1.5	225	bearing, fast action	basic aluminium	yes	1	88	aluminium	545 x 515	1200
Hafco BP-355	345	2	245	bearing, fast action	improved aluminium	yes	1	121	aluminium	535 x 435	1485
Hammer N2-35	340	1.4	235	ceramic discs	cast head and alloy fence	no	1	100	alloy	548 x 400	2674
Hammer N2-38	360	2	310	ceramic discs	cast head and alloy fence	no	1	150	alloy	510 x 400	3593
Carbatec BS-345H	345	1.5	200	bearing	basic aluminium	yes	1	95	alloy	550 x 400	1199
Carbatec BS-345C	345	1.5	200	bearing	basic aluminium	yes	1	77	alloy	360 x 360	1595
Woodfast BS-350C	345	1.5	330	bearing, fast action	cast head and alloy fence	yes	1	96	cast alloy	546 x 400	1900
Woodfast BS-350D	345	2	330	bearing, fast action	cast head and alloy fence	yes	1	129	cast iron	546 x 400	2150
Woodfast BS-350E	346	3	356	bearing, fast action	cast head and alloy fence	yes	2	143	cast iron	546 x 400	2800
Laguna 14BX	340	2.5	330	ceramic inserts, fast adjust	cast head and alloy fence	yes	2	123	cast iron	546 x 400	3250
Sherwood SBSMH-350	346	2.5	330	cast head and alloy fence	cast head and alloy fence	yes	2	122	cast iron	548 x 402	2000
Sherwood SBSHD-350	345	2 (15amp)	335	alloy fence	alloy fence	yes	2	105	cast iron	510 x 405	2349
Sherwood SBSHD-350-L	345	3	355	bearing guides, fast adjust	cast head and alloy fence	yes	2	143	cast iron	545 x 400	2800

Making a decision

It all depends on the work you are doing, how fast you want to work and what your budget is.

For me as a downsizer, wanting a smaller 10amp machine that's not too heavy, the Woodfast BS350D ticked enough boxes. I don't do much deep ripping so this size machine and power would be sufficient, and I liked the guide system a lot.

The Laguna is also definitely a serious contender with its nicely designed features and obvious quality finish, although it is priced at the high end. The two budget machines from Carbatec and Hare and Forbes both seem substantial enough for part-time work with 1.5hp motors and good guides. The Sherwood models come up with good specs on paper and their SBSMH-350 model with 2.5hp for the price looks very tempting.

You can't go wrong with a Hammer machine and the two shown here are going to be safe choices but the N2-38 is certainly the pick.

Buying a new machine can be daunting at times. Price and power are good starting points, however build quality and your own overall assessment will sometimes override those considerations.

Hafco machinery from Hare & Forbes, https://www.machineryhouse.com.au/

Hammer machines from Felder Australia, https://www.felder-group.com/en-au

Woodfast machinery from Beyond Tools, https://beyondtools.com/

Sherwood machinery from Timbecon, https://www.timbecon.com.au/

Carbatec and Laguna from Carbatec, https://www.carbatec.com.au/

Raf Nathan @treeman777 is a Brisbane based woodworker and frequent contributor to Australian Wood Review who also teaches woodworking classes.

In the Art Deco Style

US maker Dennis Zongker runs a custom cabinet workshop and also designs and makes individual pieces. Here, he describes the processes employed in making his superb Art Deco Jewellery Cabinet.

Dennis Zongker's *Art Deco Style Jewellery Cabinet* is a masterpiece of fine woodworking inspired by the work of Emile-Jacques Ruhlmann and designed to fit into the high society of the Roaring Twenties. It's made from American cherry, Gaboon ebony and American holly with Macassar ebony and bubinga burl veneers.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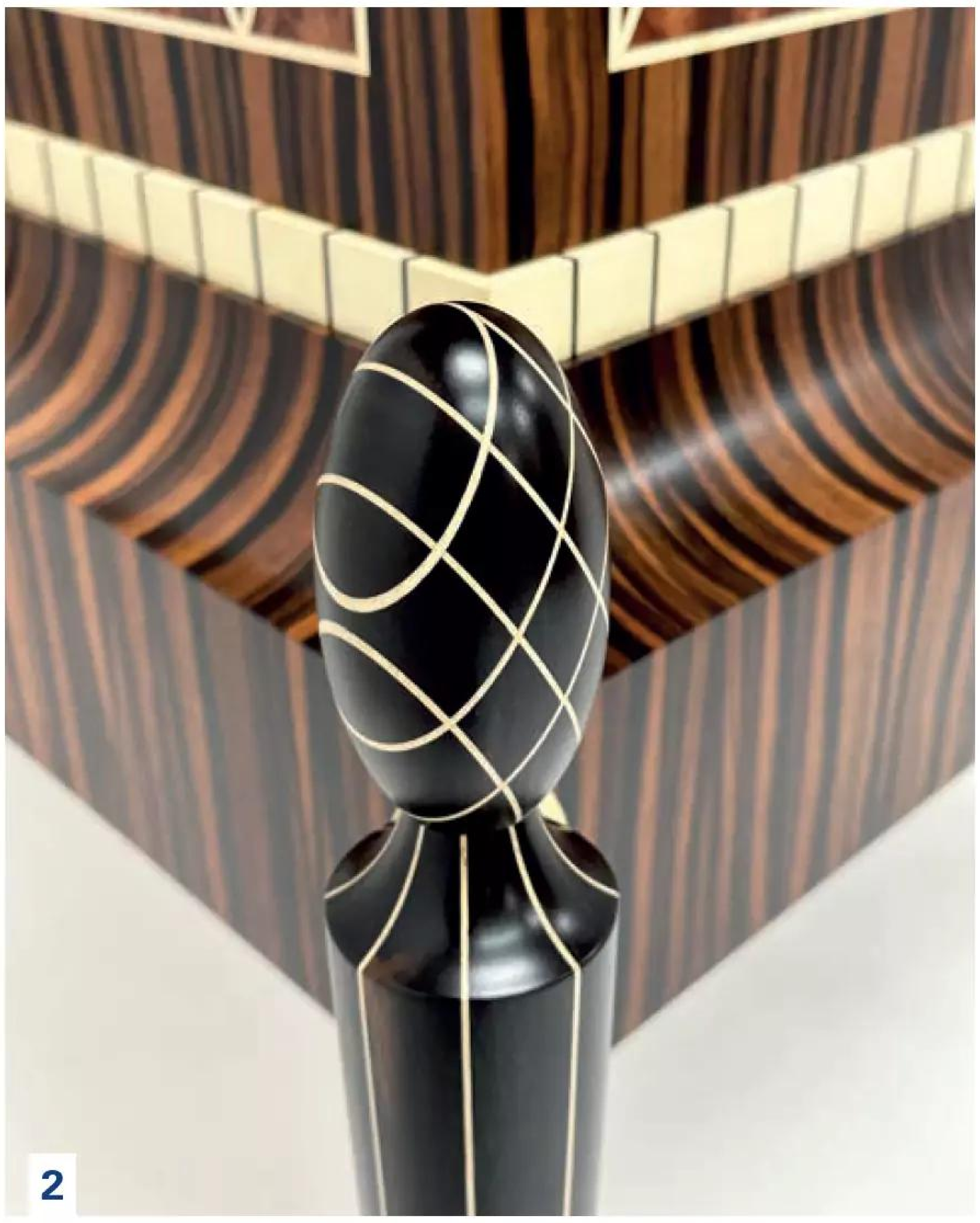
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I began my woodworking journey at a small joinery in a quaint town near Omaha, Nebraska where I crafted radius crown mouldings, reception counters, and commercial cabinets. During this time, I also learned the basics of drafting. After about four years, I developed a strong passion for creating custom furniture, which led me to dive into every woodworking book I could find. My goal was to absorb as much knowledge as possible about the best joinery techniques and methods for crafting heirloom-quality pieces.

Zongkers Custom Woods was founded in 1989 by my brother Dan and me. In our business, we each take on multiple roles; my responsibilities include overseeing the craftsmen, managing finances, creating drawings, and producing high-end furniture pieces that require longer lead times. Our team consists of nine skilled craftsmen who specialise in a diverse range of custom, high-quality items, including large conference tables, liturgical furnishings, and dining room sets. We ensure that all our creations are delivered and installed across the United States.

The inspiration

The *Art Deco Jewellery Cabinet* shown here was all about embracing the vibrant spirit of the Roaring Twenties and the Art Deco movement. I aimed to incorporate various elements, including four distinct types of veneer that would harmonise beautifully, along with diamond shapes in the finials that echoed the diamond patterns on the cabinet's upper section.

The Art Deco era, spanning from 1910 to the early 1930s, has always captivated me with its striking geometric patterns and luxurious design elements. This period is characterised by a unique blend of intricate shapes and opulent materials, particularly evident in the fine furniture of the time.

My design process

Inspired by the elegance and sophistication of high society during the Roaring Twenties, I set out to create a jewellery cabinet that would seamlessly fit into that glamorous world. A significant source of my inspiration was Emile-Jacques Ruhlmann (1879–1933), a prominent French furniture designer known for his pivotal role in the Art Deco movement. His innovative approach to design, which combined functionality with artistic flair, has greatly influenced my vision for this piece, as I aim to capture the essence of that vibrant era while showcasing exquisite craftsmanship and style.

My approach to design revolves around immersing myself in extensive research. I start by collecting as many Art Deco books as my budget allows, diving into their pages to absorb the aesthetic and historical context of the era. I spend time analysing the images and details, attempting to transport myself back to that time, which helps me grasp the essence of creating a piece of furniture that feels authentic to that period. This process can sometimes stretch over several days, as I patiently wait for that moment of inspiration to strike, igniting my creativity and allowing me to begin sketching my own designs.

This piece was created for a private collection and took me about a year to design and make. The size of the

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cabinet is 36-½" wide x 26-½" deep x 69" tall. It's made from four species of hardwood and veneers: American holly, Macassar ebony, Gaboon ebony and bubinga burl. It has one outer drawer, 24 interior drawers and a hidden door compartment.

My design process is multi-faceted. I have been drawing in AutoCAD for about 30 years now. This is where I design and engineer everything that I make, except for statues. I use oil-based clay to figure out the exact details. Then I can use calipers to transfer over the measurements to wood.

Making the legs and finials

Designing and making the segmented legs with the elliptically shaped finials was the most challenging and time consuming part of the build for me. It took me several weeks to figure out how to make the diamond shapes mixed with the elliptical rings.

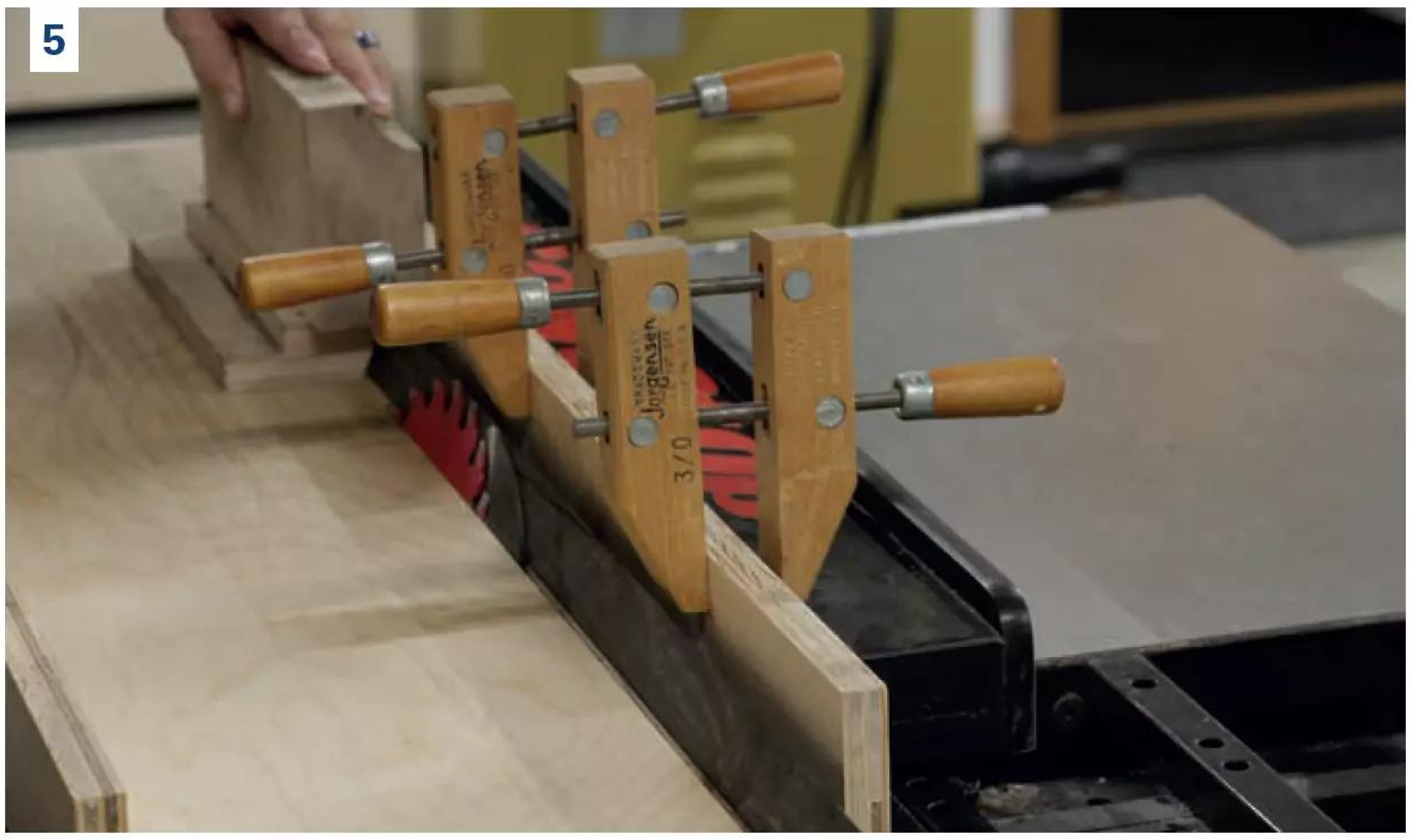
Gaboon ebony is used for the solid larger segmented pieces and American holly for the thinner rings. Each finial has eight elliptical rings, with four rings facing right and four facing left, all cut at 30° angles.

Getting the rings to line up in the segmented glue-up was very challenging. Turning them on the lathe was the simplest and fun part of making the top finials. Making the long-segmented legs was a little less challenging but it still took a while to get them glued up.

The yield on the solid Gaboon ebony was not very good considering the cost. I purchased a very large piece of Gaboon ebony that was 2" thick x 11" wide x 10' long. I made and used

1. The body of the cabinet is veneered in Macassar ebony and bubinga burl with diamond pattern inlay in holly. The door front features marquetry of butterfly and rose motifs, stylised to sit within the overall design. The diamond inlays are reversed ebony on the drawer fronts and interior door panel.
2. Designing and making the elliptical finials was the most challenging part of the build. 'Turning them on the lathe was the simplest and most fun part of making them.'
3. The cabinet has 24 internal drawers joined with half lap joints pinned with solid shopmade ebony dowels.
4. For the marquetry, Gaboon ebony and American holly were used for the stylised butterflies and rose shapes set into the background bubinga burl veneer.

5 The 32 triangular segments required for the legs were cut from a large piece of Gaboon ebony using a shopmade tablesaw jig.



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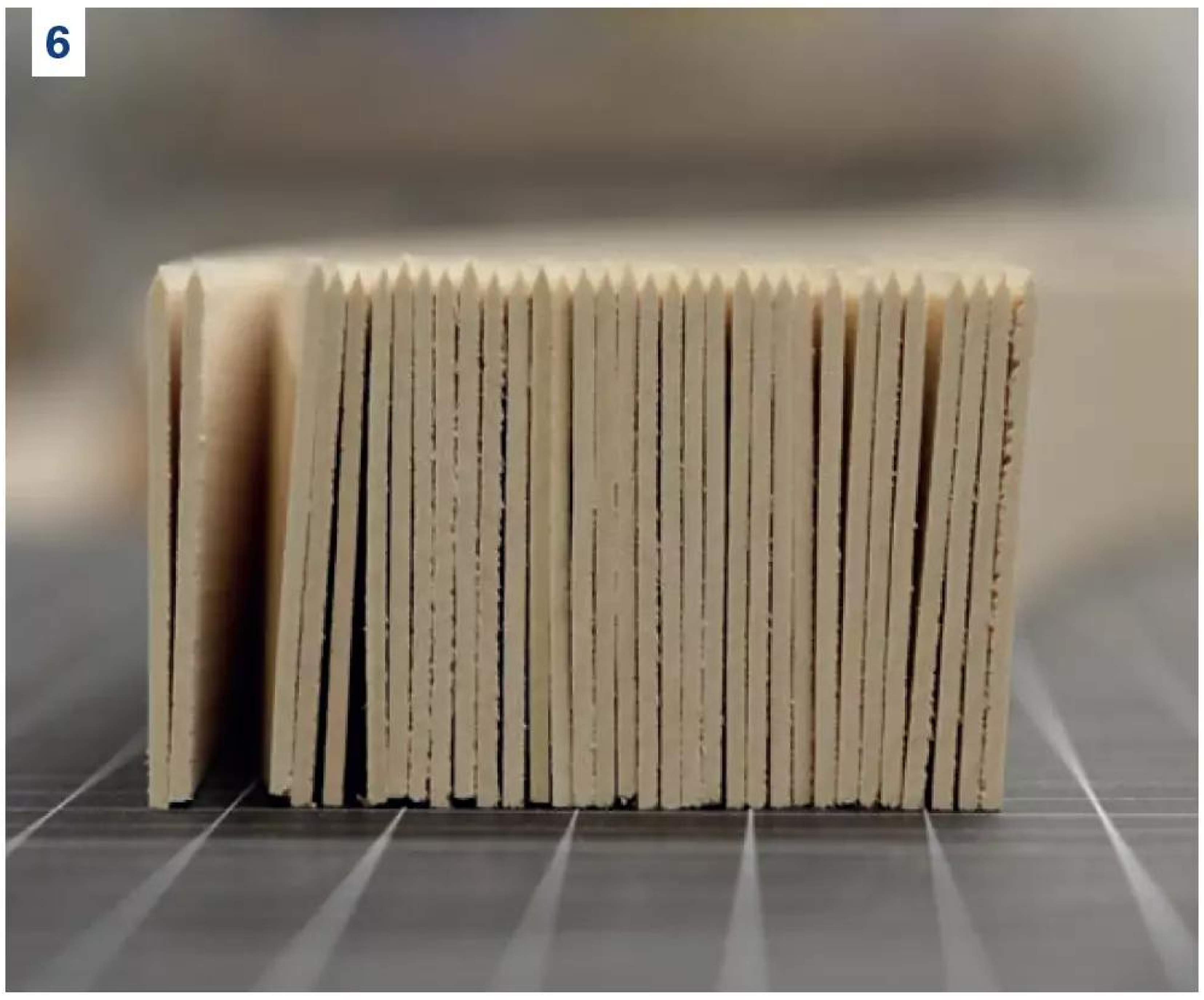

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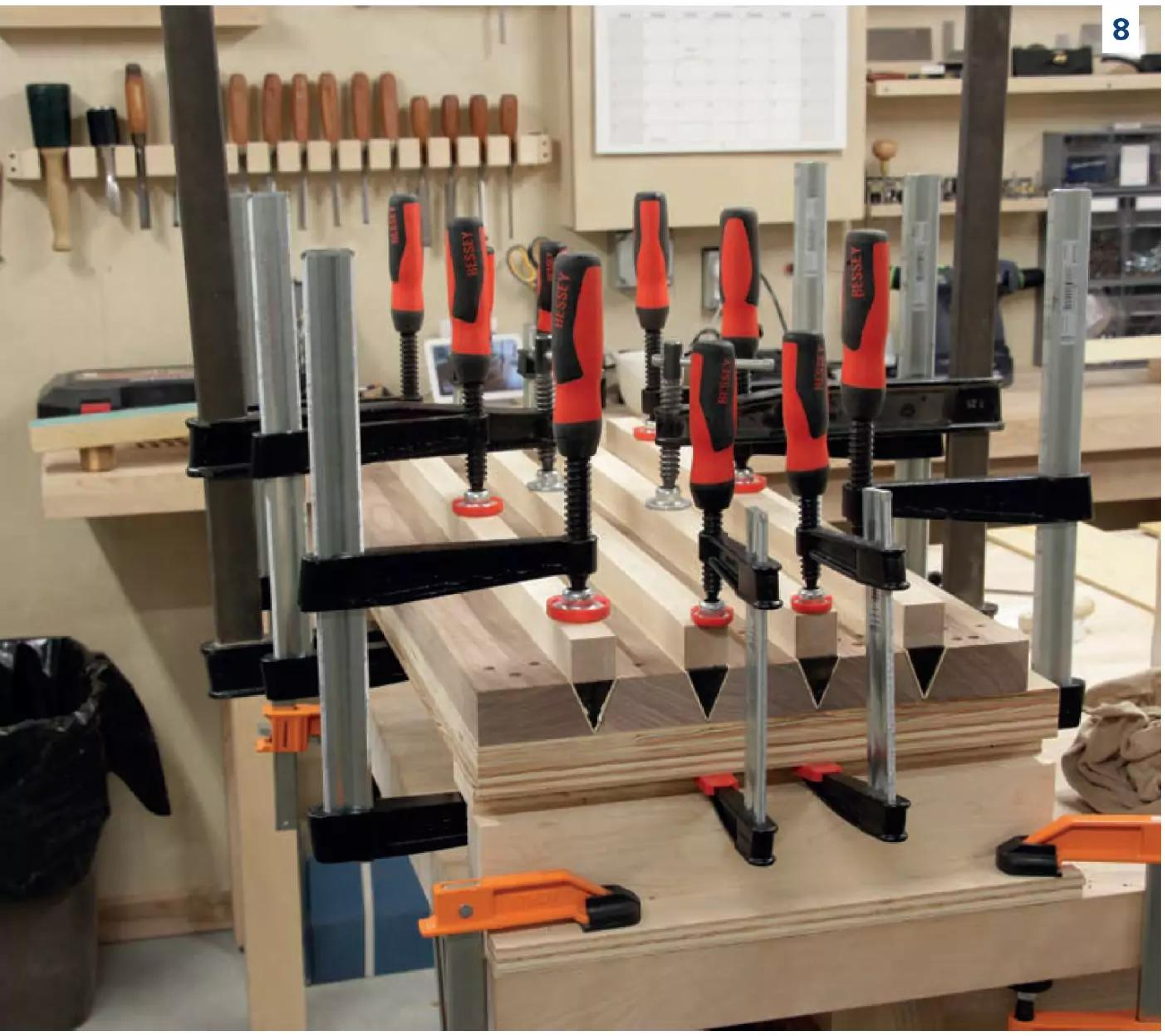

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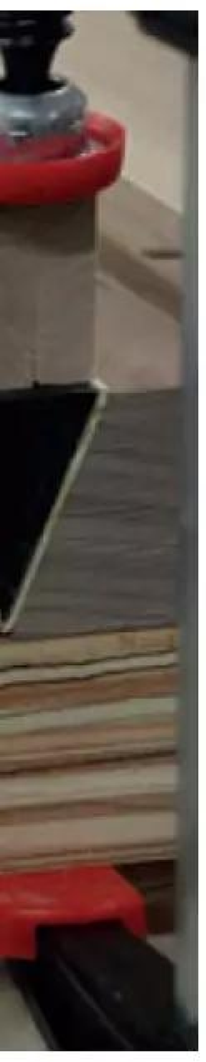
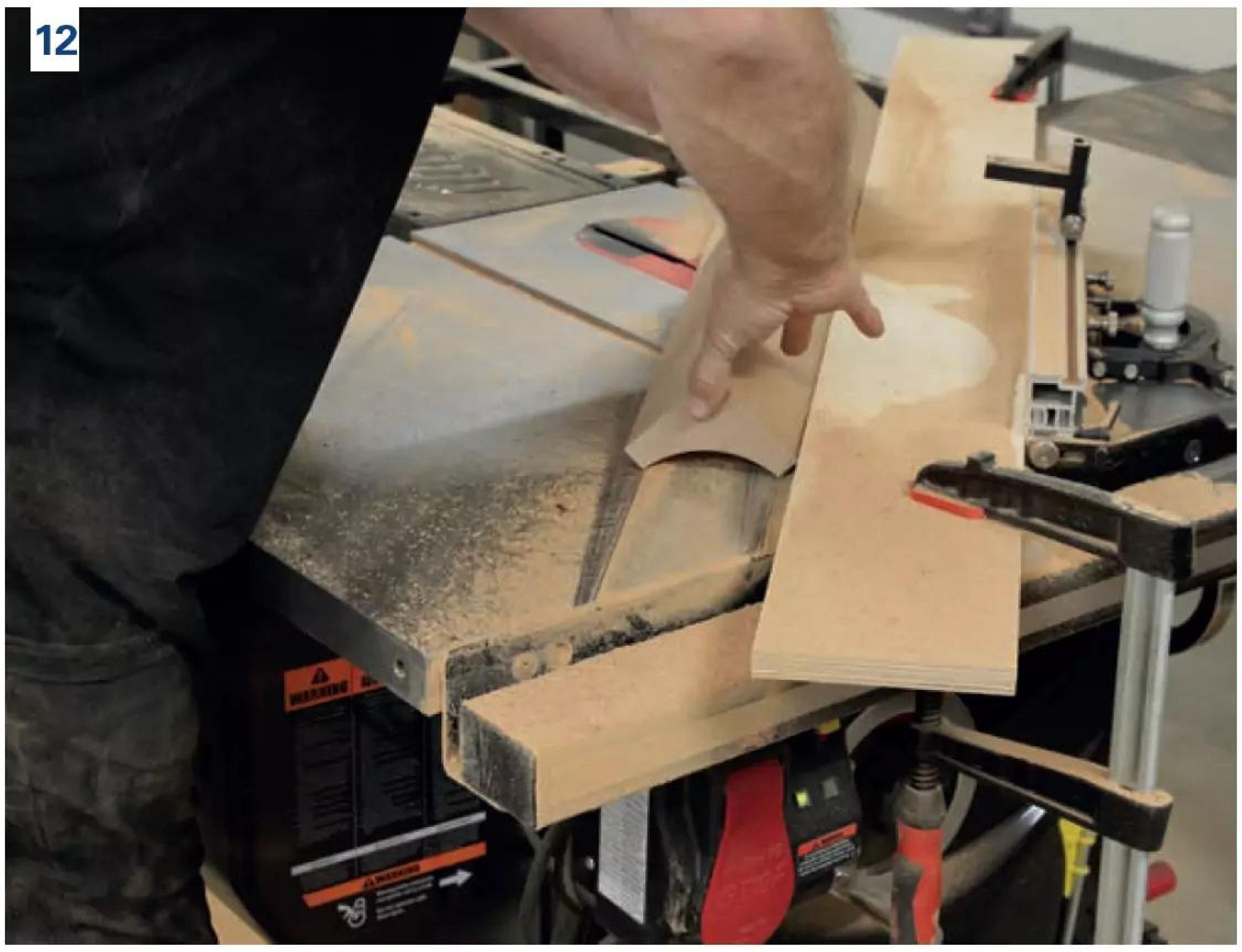
a tablesaw jig that allowed me to cut the 32 segments into 22.5° isosceles triangles. After the first cut, the board was simply flipped over to cut the opposing angle.

The next step was to cut 1/16" thick American holly filets, 32 pieces (eight for each leg). To clamp the 16 pieces needed for each leg I used large rubber bands that were stretched around the pieces after brushing on wood glue. Small bar clamps were also used to help tighten up the glue-up.

After the glue had dried, mortise and tenon joinery was cut to attach the holly feet which were next glued in. After the legs were done, I moved onto the lower and upper carcase.





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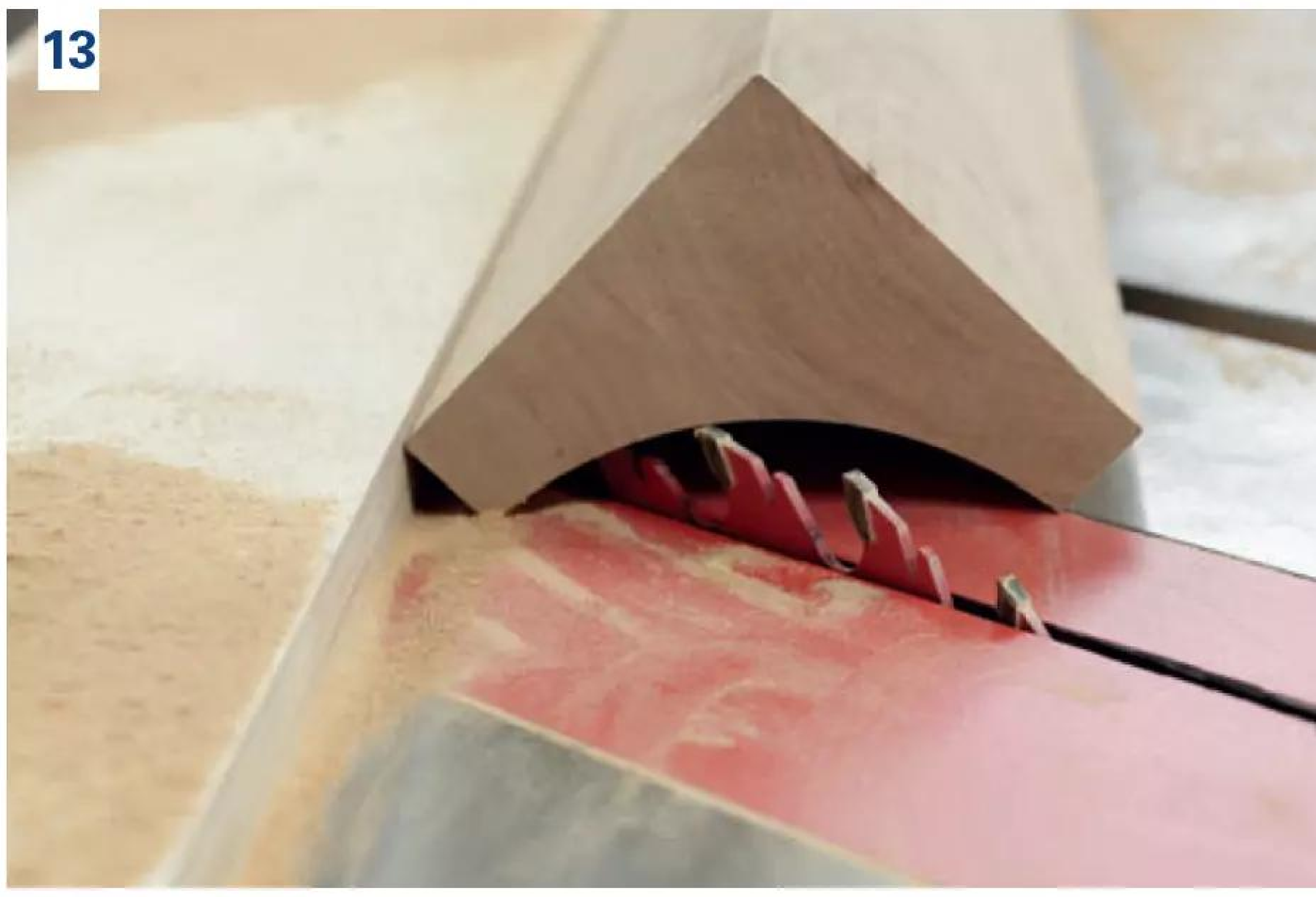

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Making the carcase

The joinery included large hand cut dovetails and other difficult joints however the majority of time spent on the carcase was for the veneering, including the marquetry and inlays.

One of the most important design goals was to line up the Macassar ebony veneer. I had to purchase a large flitch of veneer to ensure the grain would match up. The nicer looking Macassar ebony is where the light brown and black stripes alternate almost like a zebra with their alternating colours. Matching up the wood grain edge-to-edge is just as important as matching up the length of the grain. I like to figure the veneer match-ups out first to make sure I have enough to finish the whole project.

The lower carcase has a large radius cove made from solid cherry hardwood. Cherry is a great wood to veneer over because the grain is very smooth with small pores, and glue won't telegraph through the face veneer.

The cove mouldings were made on the tablesaw. I made a timber straight edge and clamped it at a 45° angle to my tablesaw. The blade was lowered to sit 1/16-inch above the table and a piece of cherry pushed into the blade. This step was repeated eight times to reach the depth needed for the large radius cove.

6. The next step was to cut 32 pieces of 1/16" thick American holly, eight for each leg.

7,8. A jig was made to glue the holly filets to each ebony segment, four at a time.

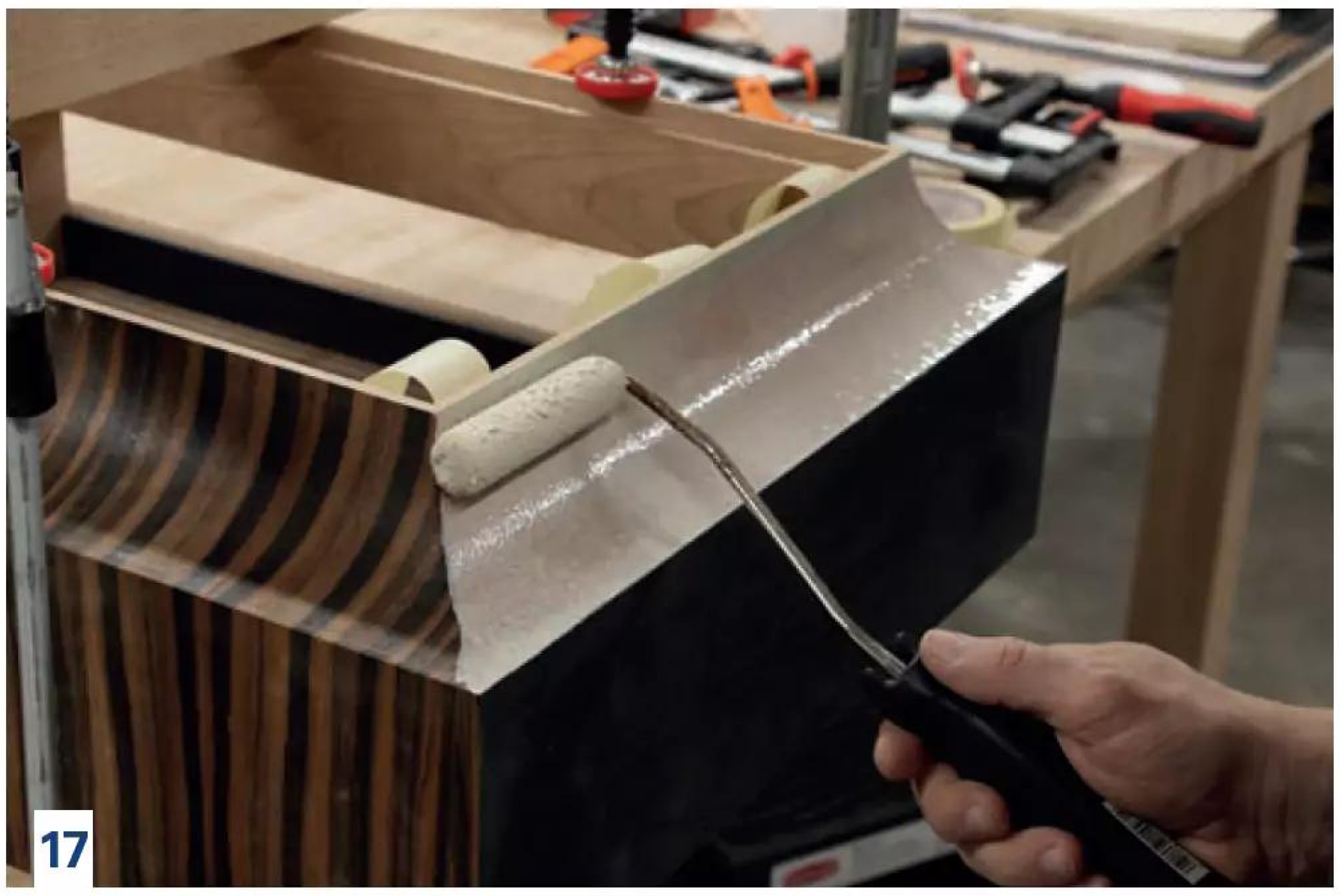
9. Large rubber bands were used to clamp the 16 pieces for each leg together. Small bar clamps helped to tighten up the glue-up.

10 After the glued segments had had dried, a holly 'foot' was mortise and tenoned to each leg.

11. Turning the segmented legs was one of the simpler processes.

12, 13. The large radius coved mouldings at the top and base of the carcase were cut progressively on the tablesaw. A 45° degree straightedge was clamped to the tablesaw and the depth achieved over eight passes.

14. The cabinet carcase was made from American red cherry, selected as an ideal substrate for veneering because of its smooth grain and small pores.



15. The lower carcase was dovetailed and glued up with provision for a large drawer.

16. Showing how the coved sections were glued to the carcase.

17. One of the most important design goals was to line up the Macassar ebony veneer to wrap over the curves and meet at the edges.

18. Curved cauls were used to clamp the veneer to the carcase.

19. A rasp was used to finesse the glue joint.

The marquetry

For the marquetry on the door, the design of the roses and butterflies was stylised to simplify the detailing for each shape. To ensure the Art Deco style marquetry would blend well with the overall design of the jewellery cabinet, only three different veneers were used for the door marquetry. Gaboon ebony, and American holly were used for the butterflies and roses, with bubinga burl selected for the background veneer.

Inlays

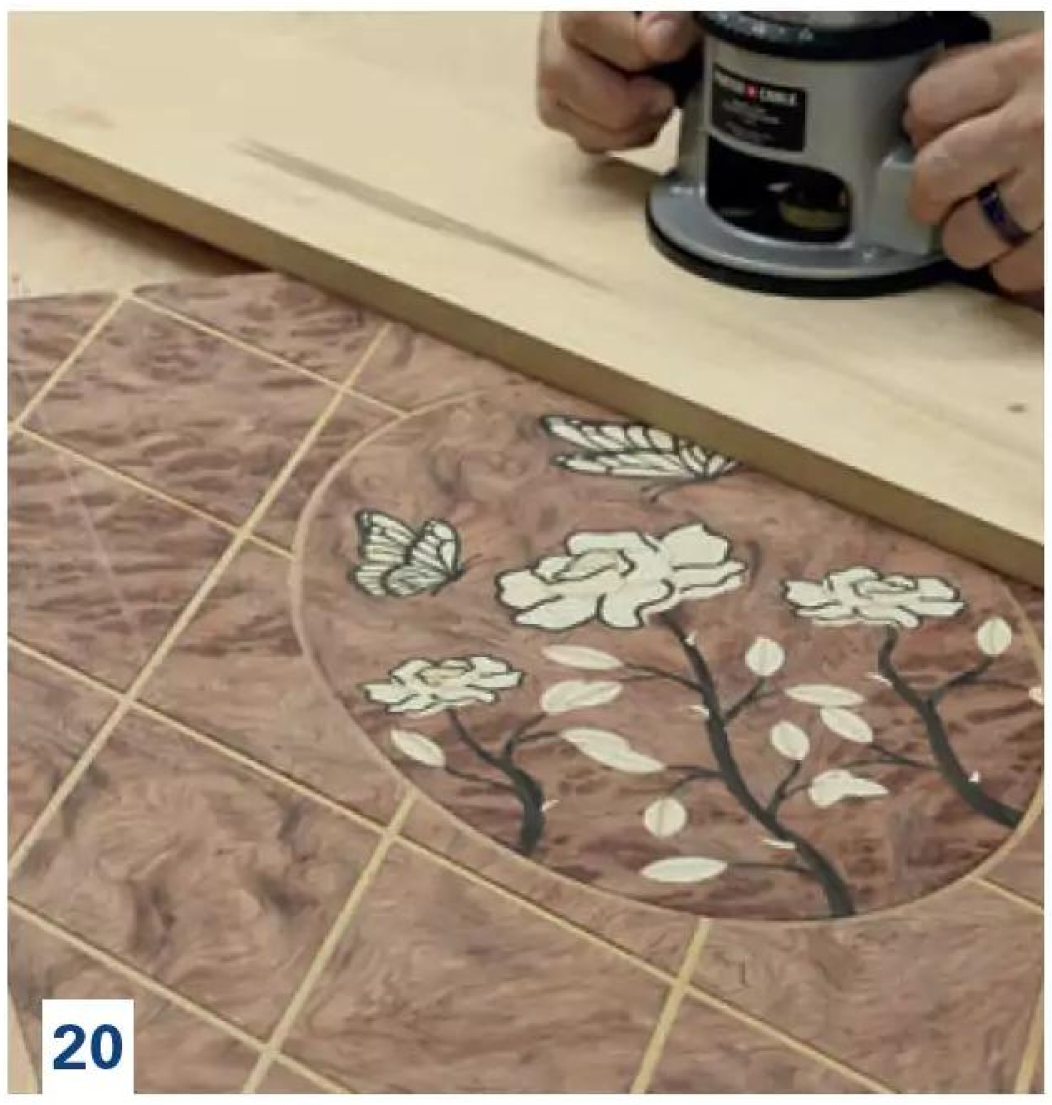
To simplify the design on the inside of the cabinet I only used Gaboon ebony inlays with the main background veneer being American holly. On the back of the door and on the face of the inside hidden door I used the same diamond shape inlay that is on the outside face of the cabinet.

The diamond and straight inlays on the outside and inside were routed in dados to the thickness of the veneer. The inlays were cut on the tablesaw with a shopmade veneer jig and then fitted into the dados using a straight chisel. Yellow glue was brushed into the dados and the parts placed into a vacuum press bag with a caul placed on top.

The lower outer drawer is made from solid Macassar ebony with hand cut dovetails. The ebony drawer dividers have lap joints that rest on top of the drawer bottom that is made from solid American holly.

The 24 inside drawers are made from soft heavy curly maple. Instead of dovetailing the drawers I used a lap corner joint. I made my own 3/16" diameter and 3/4" long ebony dowels with a dowel maker tool to blend with the Art Deco style.

The cabinet was made alongside other work undertaken throughout the year. Fortunately, in spite of its complexity, I didn't encounter any mishaps or need to remake any parts, which made the process smoother. Utilising AutoCAD



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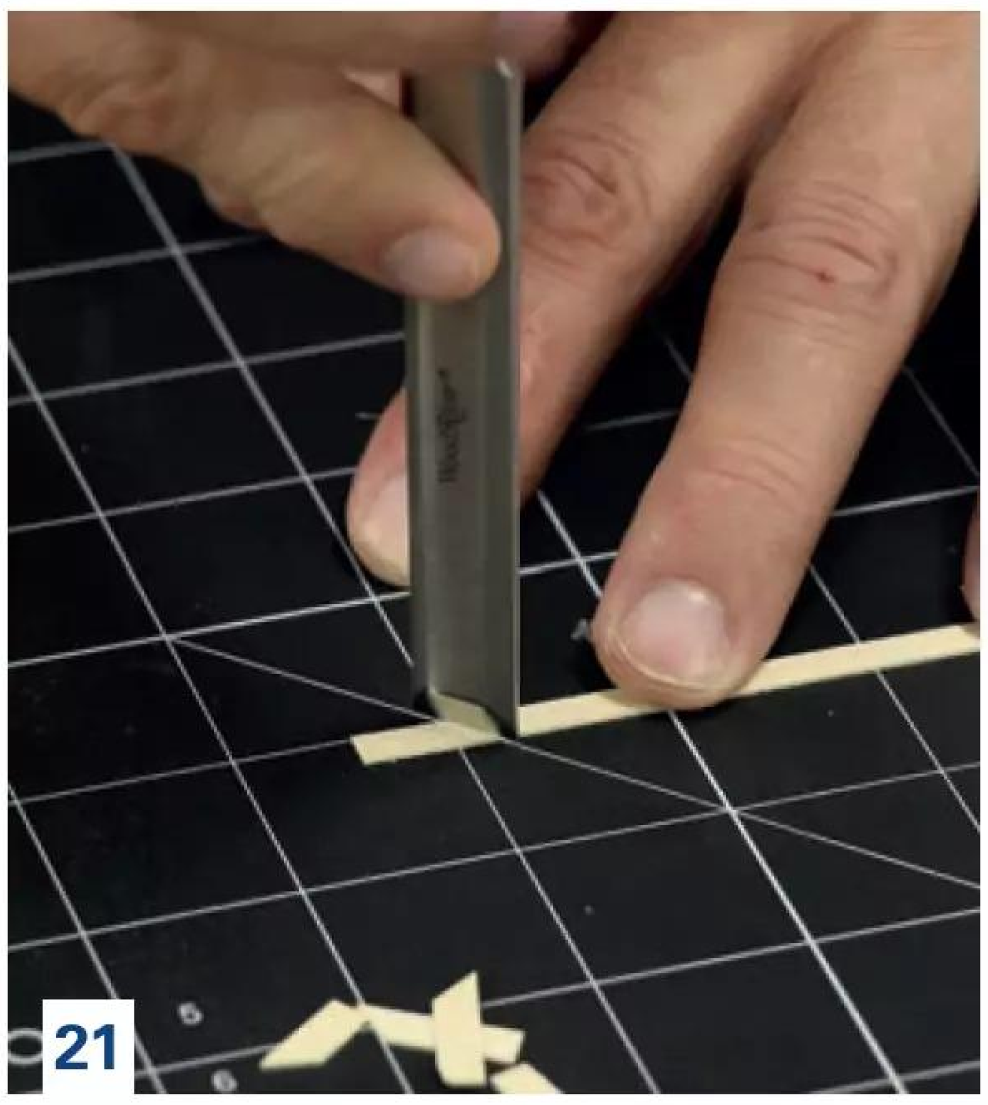

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was a game-changer, allowing me to visualise the entire design before diving in.

There are not many pieces that I think a craftsman makes that he is 100% happy with and of course this one is not an exception. I was about 95% happy with everything and yes, I would love to make this piece again. It was very enjoyable.

The piece that I am working on now is a wine cabinet with design elements to match the Greene and Greene style period but with my own design, and luckily for me, I am booked up for the next couple of years with furniture pieces.

Photos: Dennis Zongker

Dennis Zongker's Art Deco Jewellery Cabinet will feature in his upcoming book, which draws on his lifelong experience in designing and crafting custom furniture. Hi first book, published in 2013, is titled Wooden Boxes: Skill Building for Seven Unique Projects.

Learn more about Dennis Zongker @dennisznongker at https://zongkers.com

20. After the holly and ebony marquetry was glued to the bubinga door front panel, grooves were routed to accept holly inlays.

21, 22. Each inlay was hand cut to fit.

23. Gluing up the main body of the carcase.

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The Butterfly Project

A lifelong woodworker, both professionally and at home in the Netherlands, Ronnie Rozenga creates one-off masterpieces. Marquetry often features in his work, and for this he prefers to use thick veneers that are glued rather than taped together.

Born and raised in the North of the Netherlands I spent much of my childhood in the workshop of my father's painting company. Although painting runs in the family genes, my attention has been focused on working with wood since childhood. When I was 16, I studied mechanical engineering and then construction engineering, and ultimately chose to work as an employee in restoration carpentry and masonry. Over the years I specialised in fine interior work, both new and restoration. Unfortunately, due to physical problems, I had to stop professional woodworking a few years ago.

Over the years I built up my own workshop, where the emphasis was on making furniture, doors, stairs and interior panelling. In 2013, I discovered the beauty of marquetry in a 70s documentary about three furniture maker brothers who made chairs with marquetry in the backrests. Fascinated, I started practising, even though I knew little of the different techniques yet.

In the Netherlands, marquetry is a kind of lost art, there are hardly any opportunities to learn it, so I was left to my own devices. After diving into books and the internet, the techniques and materials became clearer to me, and Silas Kopf's video on the double bevel technique became my guide.

After time, I found this way of working did not suit me well and

Main: Ronnie Rozenga with his award-winning *Papiliones* table in his home workshop in the Netherlands. The table is made from wenge and cherry with various species used for the marquetry.

1. The side view of the *Papliliones* table shows the floating top and decorative frame arches.
2. The sides and drawer fronts present a wrap-around scene of 13 species of butterflies along with leaves, branches and flowers.


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I made some adjustments to the technique. Most marqueteers use thin veneer, but I really don"t like to work with that. The veneers I use now are shopsawn at a thickness of 3mm out of solid woods, all selected for their colour and grain.

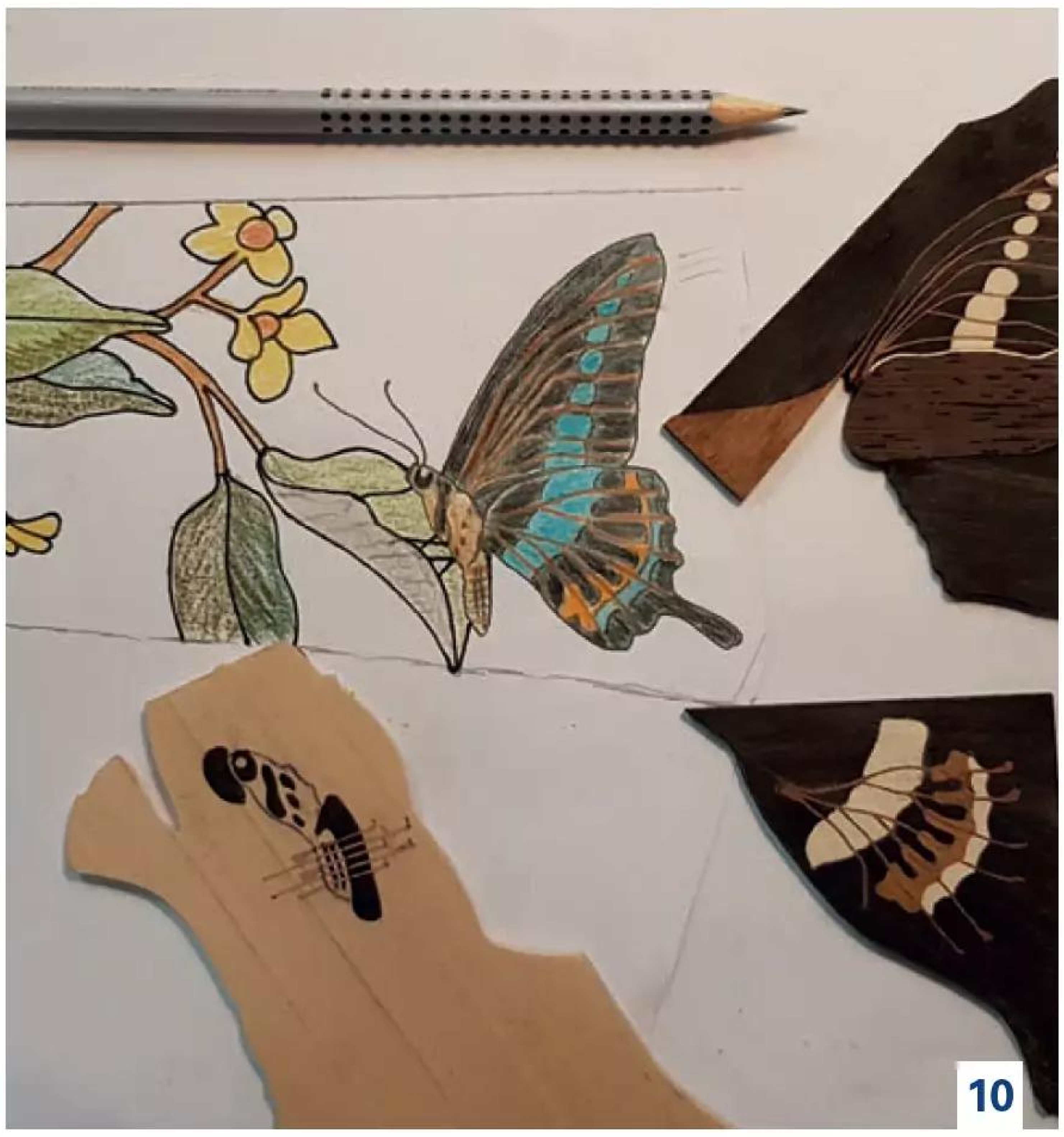
Another thing I didn't like was using veneer tape to keep everything together and having to work from the back side of the marquetry. Being able to view my work face side up allows me to judge whether I am satisfied with the result, which is why I started gluing the parts together.

The masking tape used is temporary and removed as soon as the glue has dried. A big advantage of this method is being able to work in very small detail and with thin lines.

The Papiliones project

Papiliones is an ode to the butterfly. These beautiful insects with their vibrant colours have captured our imagination for many centuries. They symbolise resurrection and eternal life, love and happiness, but above all, the butterfly is loved for its beautiful colours and graceful flight. Creating marquetry that invites you to immerse yourself in the scene was my starting point for this piece (**photos 1, 2**).

I had in mind a wide panorama of butterflies, and from there the design emerged. A table with three drawers would form an arch with six legs and architecturally shaped arches between them. To maintain a full view on the marquetry without restricting light, the top is raised and 'floats' on eight brass bushings. The drawers are joined with hand cut half blind dovetails and have satin glass covers to mask their inner contents.



3. Hand drawn and coloured pencil sketches were first created for the marquetry.

4. Each marquetry image is a 'package' of veneers. Shown here are completed leaves, ready to be inserted into the background cheery veneer.

5. A detail photo of two completed butterflies shows how each is composed of separately cut pieces.

6. The author working at the marquetry bench. Each coloured sketch is traced onto the veneers selected for each part of the image.

7. The scrollsaw table is tilted a few degrees to achieve the double bevel technique.

8. The author prefers to use 3mm shopsawn veneers which may then be glued.

9, 10. Each image of a butterfly or leaf is made of separate parts sawn from woods selected for their colour and grain features.

Inlaid bandings accentuate the lines and visually divide the heights, widths and lengths.

The primary woods for this project are wenge and cherry, two woods that match perfectly. As a further contrast, maple bandings are used in the top and legs, as well as for the drawer sides.

Designing the marquetry

Creating the marquetry panorama was the first step. Detailed drawings were made of the butterflies, branches, leaves and flowers which run in five panels from left to right over the sides and drawer fronts (**photo 3**).

The colours of the wood species used for the imagery were carefully considered. Bringing marquetry to life is all about contrast, in this case with the cherry background. Similar colour tones can visually disappear however there are ways to solve this. For example, on a dark background, a very thin light wood highlight on the edge of a leaf can really make it pop. This will also reflect light, enhancing the sense of depth and liveliness.

For lighter images on light backgrounds, sand shading can separate the colours beautifully, giving a feeling of light and shadow. It is important to imagine the direction of the light source – some imagery will then 'catch the light', while others will be shaded.

Making the marquetry

The marquetry panels are made from smaller parts that are later assembled (**photo 4**). Each leaf, flower and butterfly is made separately (**photo 5**) and then sawn into the cherry background.

11, 12. These completed butterflies are ready to be inserted into the cherry veneer background.

13. A full scale drawing was used to set angles, mark out for joinery and later check all was correct during assembly glue-ups.

14. For the arches, 4mm thick strips of wood are first bent in a steam pipe and then held in a mould until dry. Glue is next applied between each layer.

15. The glued laminates are next clamped in a custom made mould.

16 Dry-fitting the arches to check before glue-up.

17. Gluing up the half lap joins on the arches.

18. Gluing up in stages simplified the process. Here the front legs and arches are glued together.

19. Using the full-scale drawing to mark out tenons for the arches.

20, 21. The tenon for the arches were hand cut – all differed in size.

The first step is to trace the drawing of each part (for example, a butterfly) using transparent paper. To join two pieces of wood, the tracing paper is placed on the wood, and the saw line is transferred with carbon paper (**photo 6**). The veneer I want to add is then slid underneath and fixed with masking tape, taking in account the desired grain direction.

The marquetry is completely hand made using a double bevel technique. Using the scroll saw, the two layers of veneer are now sawn in one go, with the table tilted a few degrees to eliminate the saw cut (**photo 7**).

Now the two pieces fit together seamlessly and are glued together (**photo 8**). Each piece has some excess to allow the next cut to be made in the same way. In this way, new pieces are added continuously (**photos 9, 10**) until the part (for example, a butterfly) is complete.

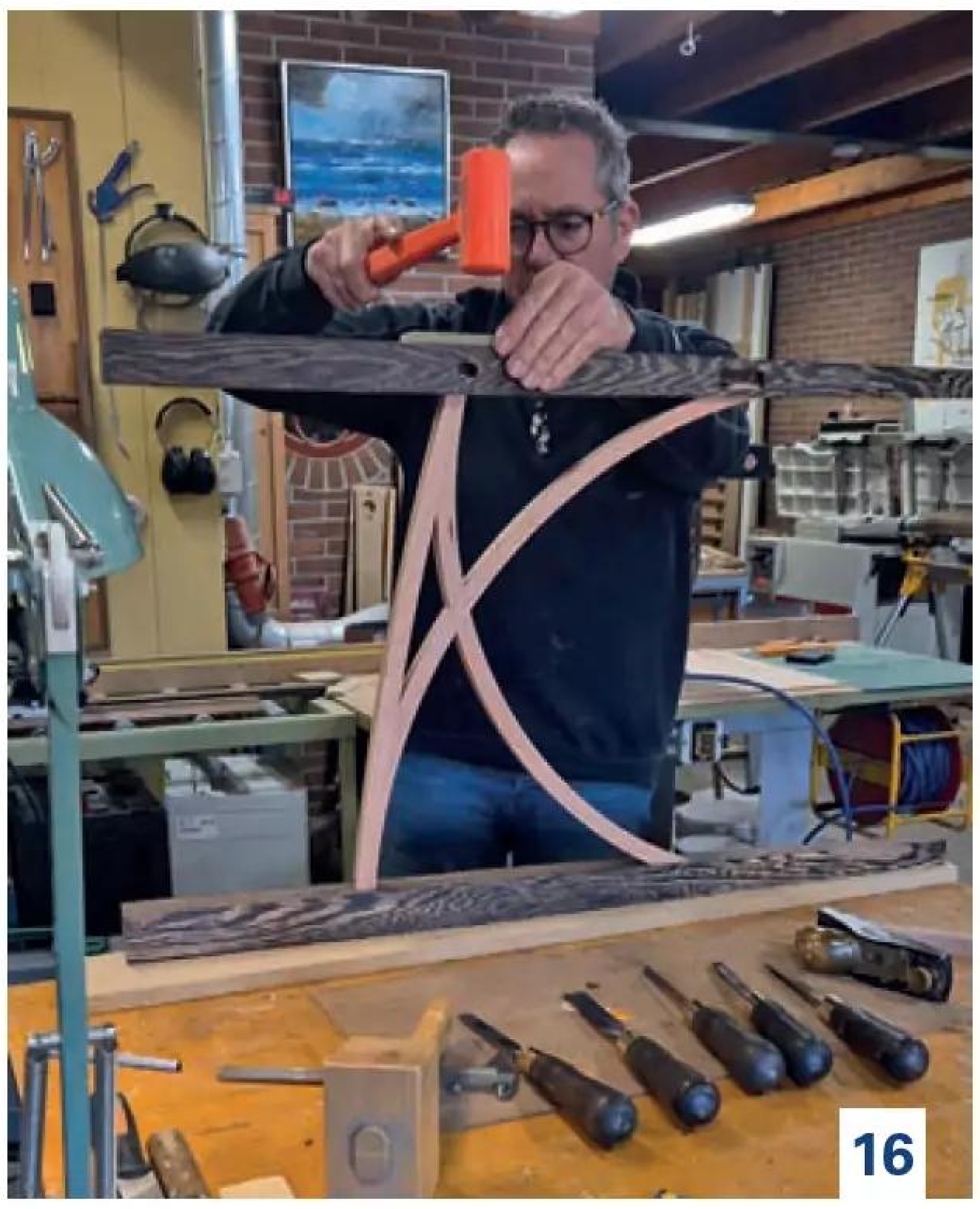
The butterfly now has excess all around, on which the contours are drawn, again with the tracing and carbon papers (**photo 11, 12**).

Assembling the marquetry panels

The butterfly is now oriented in the correct place on the background veneer, fixed with masking tape and then sawn into it.

When the pieces are added to the background, always work from back to front. The furthest parts always go first, the parts in the foreground last. In this way you avoid having to saw difficult transitions. This is why some legs and antennae of the butterflies are cut in first.

When all the marquetry for this project was completed, the marquetry sheets were glued to the substrates, in this case ayous for the aprons and cherry for the drawer fronts. To avoid the panels warping due to seasonal changes, a back veneer was added,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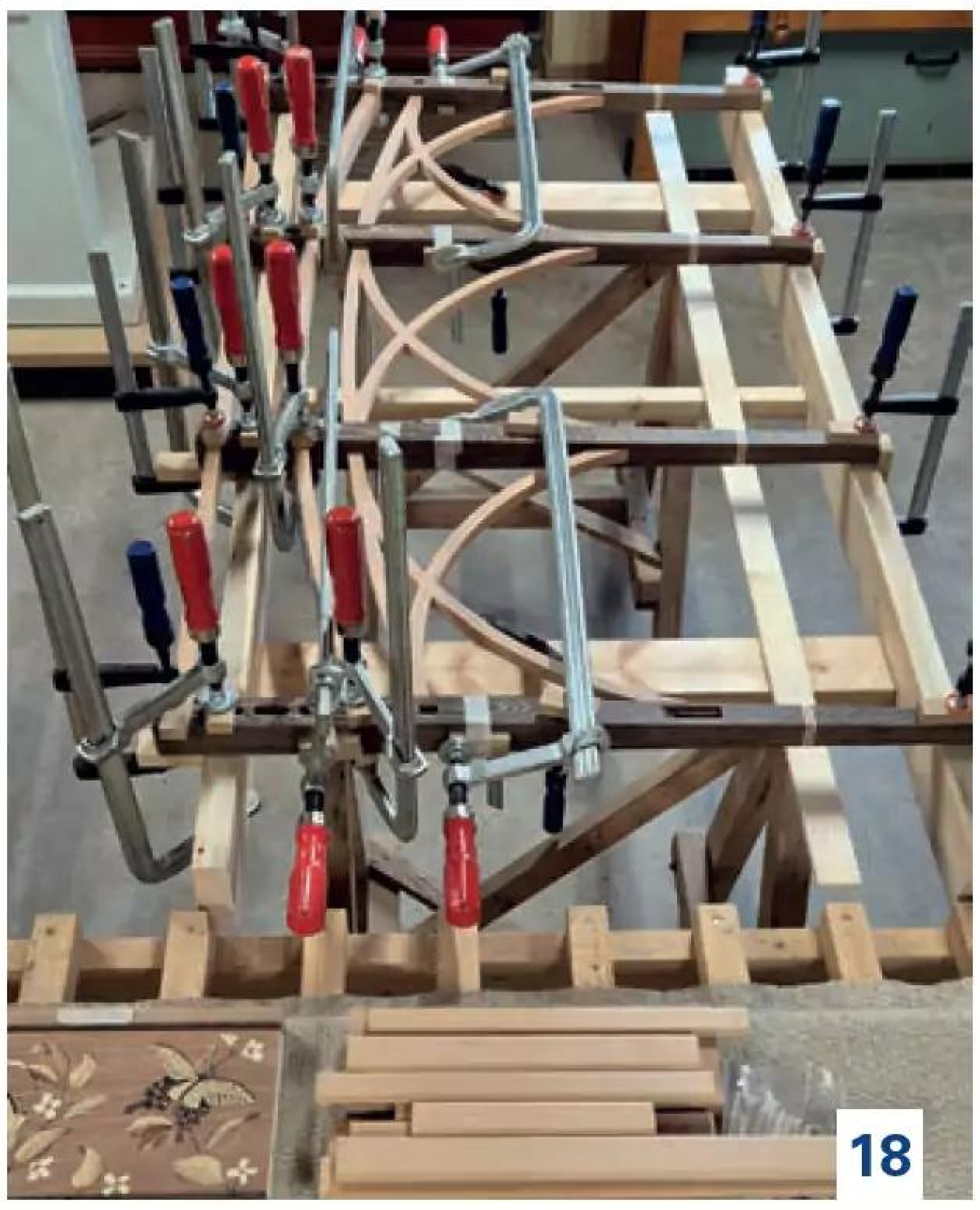
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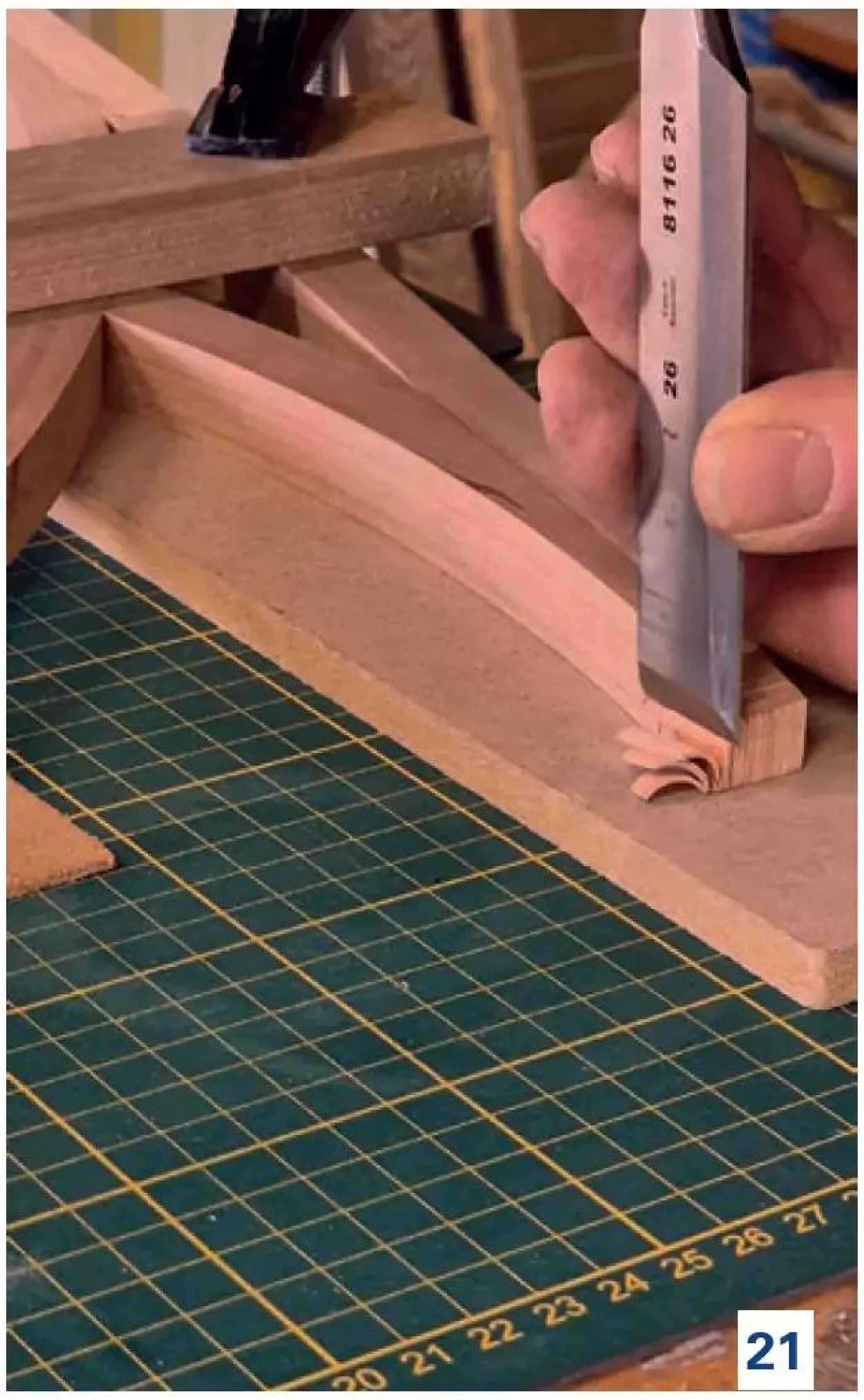
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using the same 3mm thick cherry veneer as the face side.

For veneering I used polyurethane glue. It is not my favourite but for veneering it has one big advantage. Most glues contain water – this always causes the veneer and substrate to expand and creates tension in the panel. Polyurethane glue doesn't contain water, but it is slightly foamy and can bleed through thin veneer. As I am using thick 3mm veneer, this doesn't give me any problems and leaves a nice flat and stable panel without any tension.

Table frame and carcase

The architectural arches are a connecting element between the legs. After drawing up various design options, I opted for a double arch construction with a continuous arch under the drawers and a second row of arches that crosswise connect the legs. To determine the correct radius of the arches and the position of the joinery, I made a full scale drawing (**photo 13**).

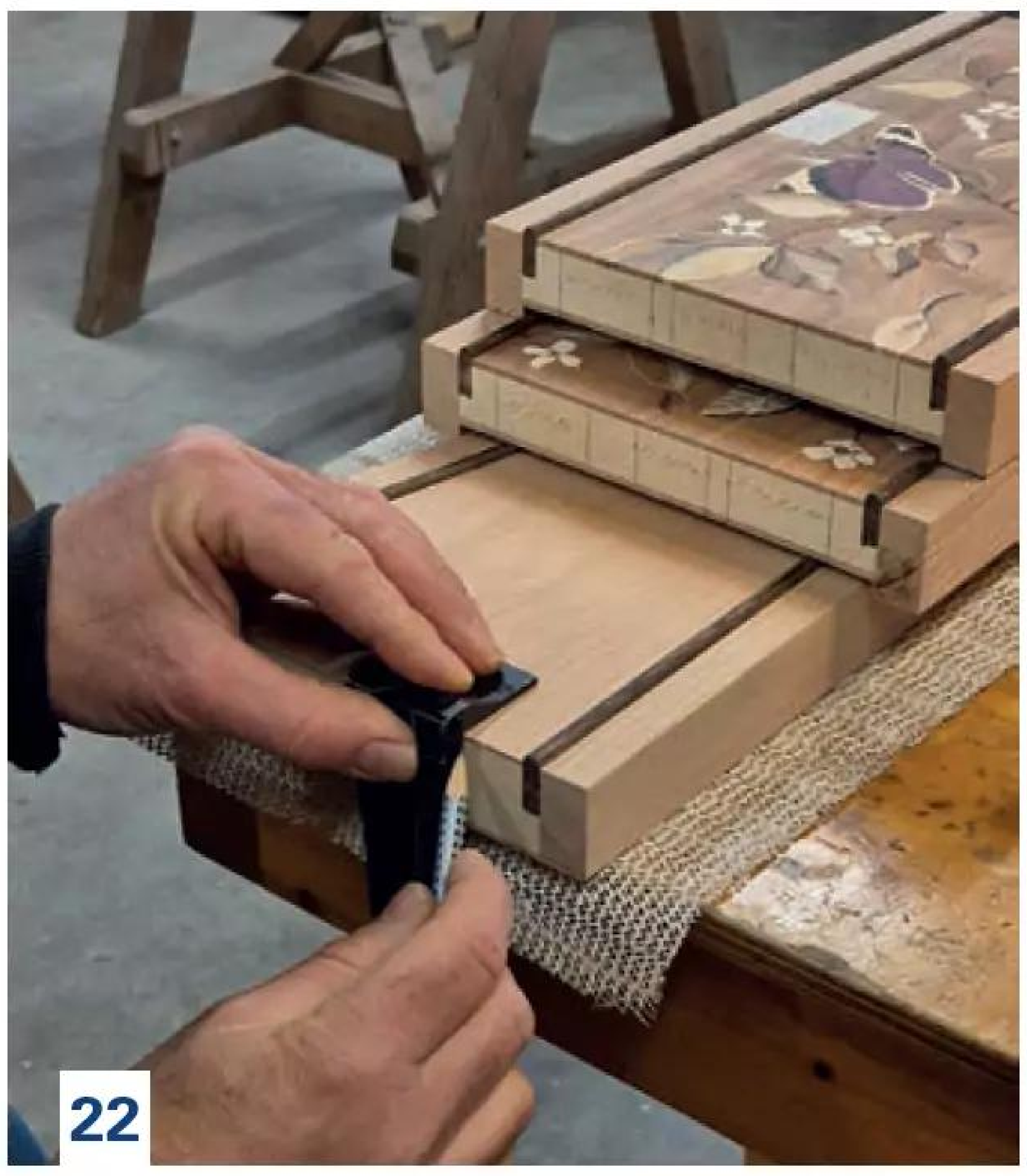
After the radius was determined, I could begin making of the arches. To get the right shape I choose a combination of steambending and laminating. Cherry strips were planed at a thickness of 5mm, steamed, fixed in a mould and dried for a week (**photo 14**). The radius of the mould was about 20% smaller than the actual radius, because there is a certain amount of springback in steam bending. The strips were then laminated in a second mould that had the actual radius (**photo 15**).

The five intersecting arches were connected with lap joints (**photos 17, 18**).

Joinery

This table has a lot of joinery in it – legs to aprons, legs to arches and and rails of the drawer case. All this joinery was done with mortise and tenon joints, using the full scale drawing to mark out (**photo 19**).

The mortises were made with my horizontal mortiser, with the rounded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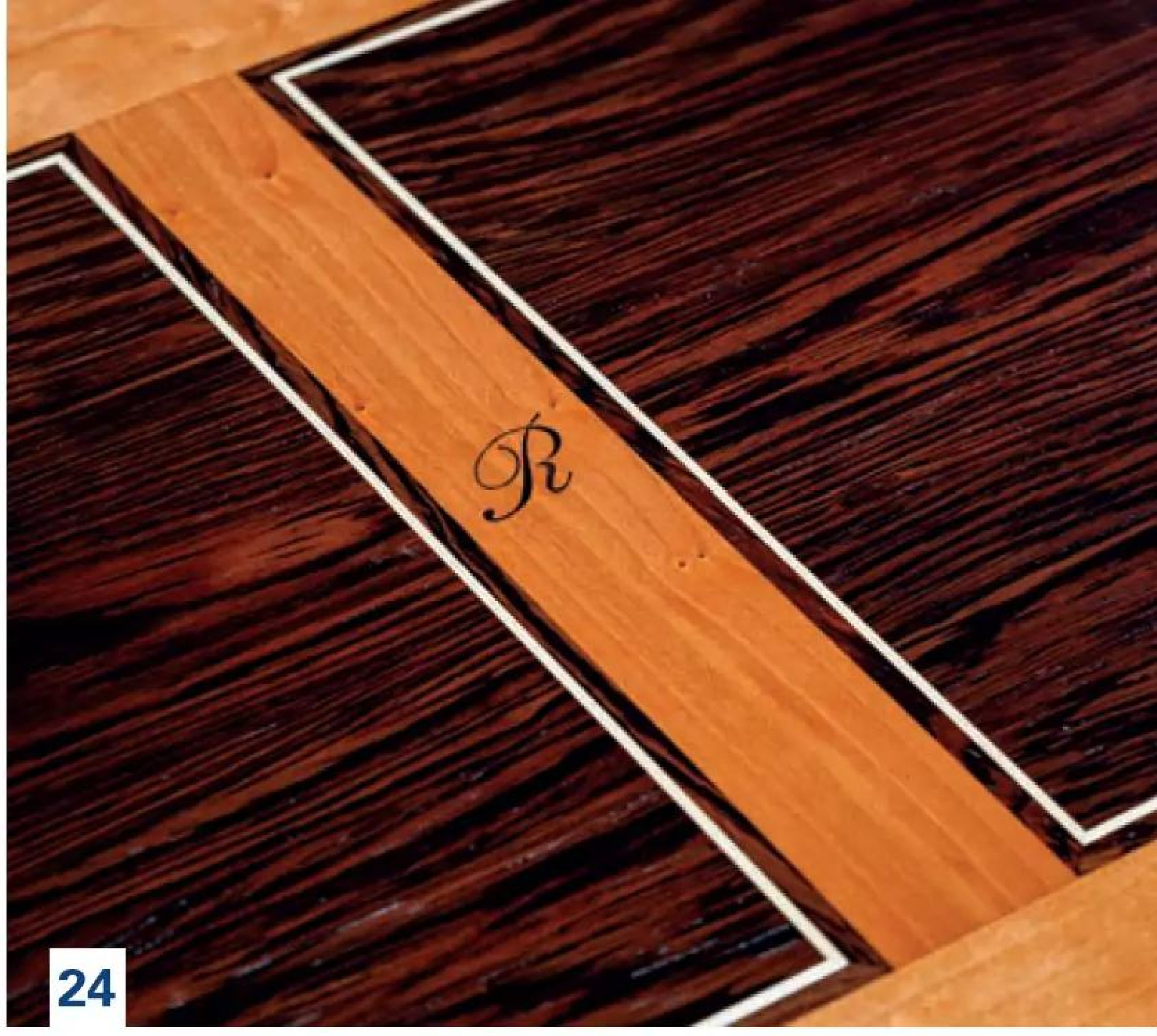
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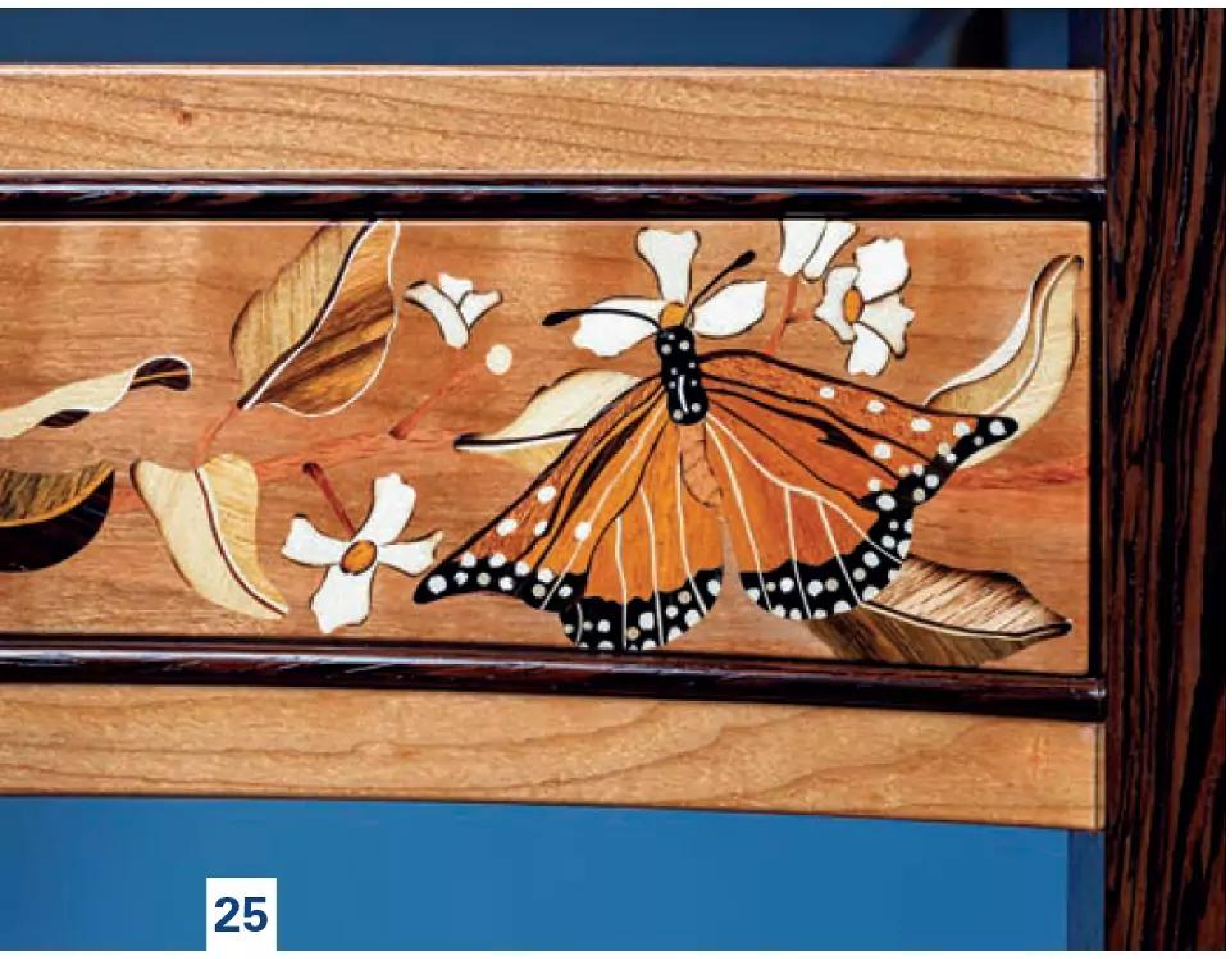
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corners straightened with a chisel. The arches meet the legs at an angle, the curve of which was also carved with chisels. The tenon arches were all cut by hand (**photos 20, 21**) after they had each been marked individually, because they all differed in size.

The aprons and the legs have double mortise joinery with loose tenons (**photo 22**). These are staggered to prevent the legs from weakening – this can happen if too many joints meet in one place.

Inlay bandings

As mentioned, inlaid bandings were added for different reasons. Firstly, I like to use contrasting woods in a piece of furniture. Adding a maple inlay to the top accentuates the transition between the cherry and wenge (**photos 23, 24**). Secondly, inlay bandings can optically break the heights and widths of a piece of furniture. By adding the wenge lines above and below the drawers (**photo 25**), the whole of the drawer fronts and drawer case looks less bulky. The bandings in the legs make the length of the legs appear smaller and add visually (**photo 26**).

The leg bandings were made by gluing five layers of thick wood veneer together, a combination of 3mm thick strips of maple, wenge and cherry. The mitres were cut with a fine saw and refined with a mitre plane on a shooting board for a perfect fit before inlaying them into grooves in the legs (**photo 27**).

Assembly

After the joinery was completed and the marquetry and banding added, it was time to glue up the table. I like to glue up in stages (**photo 28**). Table sections were glued one by one and then glued together into a whole. This gives more control over squareness, and also makes it easier to position the clamps. Once again, the full scale drawing was used as a guide to check all the dimensions and keep everything aligned.

Most of the gluing was done using a liquid hide glue, although white PVA glue was sometimes used. Liquid hide glue can be used without heating and has the advantage of not leaving stains in the finish, which PVA glue can do. However, I like to tape glue joints so that any squeeze-out can be removed easily.

The drawers

The marquetry drawers were next made and fitted. The first step was to fit the drawer fronts into the drawer case, taking into account the sides of the drawers had to be planed when fitting the drawers. The bottom of the drawer fronts have an arch shape – this had to be made to fit perfectly as I wanted to

22. Hand cutting the mortise and tenons for the leg to frame joinery.

23, 24. Contrasting woods are used throughout. The maple banding inlay on the top accentuates the transition between the cherry and wenge.

25. The marquetry panels are bordered by wenge inlays.

26. Bandings were added to the lower legs continue the contrasting theme and make the wenge legs look finer.

27. For the leg bandings, strips of 3mm thick maple, wenge and cherry were sawn and inlaid into grooves in the legs.

28. Glue-ups were done in stages to make squaring up and positioning the clamps easier.

29. Tests were made before deciding on a polyurethane finish to give best results for all species. The completed table was a personal project that's now a family heirloom.

30. The bottom of the drawer fronts were shaped to an arch and carefully fitted to keep the gaps between the drawers and frame to a minimum. The drawers were joined with half blind dovetails.

keep the gaps between the drawers and the frame to a minimum (**photo 29**).

After the fronts were made to size I cut the half blind dovetail joints by hand (**photo 30**). As the marquetry was completed and could not be replaced, there was no room for error when cutting the dovetails, so checking each step more than once was not an unnecessary action...

Fortunately, everything went well and after the half lap joints for the backs had been cut, the drawers could be glued. Afterwards these joints were pinned with cherry pins and the drawers were fitted in the table. To make the drawers slide smoothly, I polished the wooden rails and the sides of the drawers with candle wax, my favourite lubricant for this task.

Applying the finish

After completing the top of the table, everything could be finished with a clear varnish before the final assembly. I chose a polyurethane/alkyd based varnish because after several test samples this finish gave the best result. I also tried oil and wax based finishes, but on the wenge they just didn't give satisfying results as it gave the surface a bit of a 'dead' appearance. However, satin gloss varnish gave it a nice, rich natural colour and accentuated the grain beautifully.

The pores were deliberately not completely filled, beause I consider the pores as an essential part of the wood surface and I certainly want to keep them visible. They add a lot to the natural 'feel' of a piece of furniture in my opinion.

To apply the varnish, I choose to use brushes and to apply the techniques I learned from my father, he taught me everything I know about painting.

What's next?

The table was built to reside in the entrance hall in my own house. It has been a project that took a few years between the first thoughts and completion, but I am very happy with how it turned out. Sometimes when you're at a dead end, you need to let it sink in and set it on hold, then pick it up again with a fresh perspective.

What's next? Well, as usual, inspiration always comes in different ways and reignites the fire until there are enough ideas to take on another project. So who knows what will follow...

Portraits and studio photography: Otto Kalkhoven. Process photos: Ronnie Rozenga

Ronnie Rozenga @ronnierozenga lives in the Netherlands. His Papiliones hall table was international runner-up award winner for the furniture category in Maker of the Year 2025.

Jono Everett with one of the 17 *Kizuna Benches* designed and made for the newly expanded and refurbished Newcastle Art Gallery, NSW. The benches were made from blackbutt and upholstered in Australian leather by Reioni Douglas.
Photo: Edwina Richards

Made to a Brief

Jono Everett looks at the differences between public and private commissions, and asks other high profile designers for their input as well.

So, your mate Dave asks you to make a coffee table. Or say, what if you're invited to provide public seating for a major art gallery? If you are being asked to create work for someone, paid or not, this is a commission.

Does taking on any of these wildly different furniture commissions rely on the same set of principles and what is the best way to tackle a commission? What's the difference between public and private and who gets the say in the design? All good questions for sure – let's dive in!

Establishing a brief

I start the process of a private commission through conversation and connection. I never ask the client to bring me ideas they have found trawling the internet. This is important for two reasons.

Firstly, they have commissioned me. I am a designer maker and know materials, finishes, form and techniques and have a distinctive design signature. They will get me – not someone or something else. I don't replicate commercial product or other design ideas and feel it's important for makers to hold true to values of craftsmanship and character – so finding images on the net can be confusing and detrimental to getting the project going in the right direction.

Secondly, to be commissioned to make something is a special gift. Why produce work that already exists? Only limited by imagination, commissions present a moment to design something completely new, something original, something that has never been made before.

Detail of the *Kizuna Bench* shows the 'bridge' construction and use of ebonised spacer to create a shadow line. *Photo: Edwina Richards*

My view is that commissions don't have to be constrained by the client's ideas – these are the foundations – their requirements must be met but commissions are, in fact, an extraordinary opportunity to expand on those ideas, collaborate and show ingenuity through original, considered and beautifully crafted furniture. I've outlined my process of designing in previous issues of AWR but want to reiterate the importance of bringing your individuality, personal values, signature aesthetics and detailing to every piece you create.

Smaller commissions

Hypothetical Dave is a lovely person. If not, unfortunately you're just too busy honing plane blades to be able to get to this project... Key to delivering a successful domestic commission, regardless of scale or complexity, is to gain a degree of connection to the client enabling a good understanding on their needs, their dreams and (the nasty bit), how much they are willing to spend. Remember, you are being commissioned because you can deliver something crafted and exclusive.

For sure, commissioning bespoke handcrafted furniture may not be the cheapest option for the client but you can deliver a piece specific to them in function, scale, proportions, material preference and finish. Good design, fine timber and excellent joinery make for a forever piece.

Above: Tom Fereday, *Fereday Ottoman* (2021), spotted gum, American oak, olive and tanned aniline leather. Designed for the Art Gallery of New South Wales. 'Over the period of two years a collaboration with the gallery was formed through the shared goal of creating a quiet yet highly refined seating collection designed to complement the incredible space and artworks of the iconic Sydney gallery. Over 35 unique ottomans and lounges were created. It was important that each ottoman was produced locally, working with some of the finest makers in NSW. The original prototypes were hand made by Rolf Barfoed and later CNC manufactured by Evostyle in solid spotted gum with upholstery handmade by Swiss Design. *Photo: Fiona Susanto*

Opposite: Tom Fereday, *Powerhouse Ottoman* (2023) and on the right, showing in-progress work. 'Spanning almost four metres (this) was a unique collaboration for a communal entrance seat made entirely from solid spotted gum. Intersecting solid timber dowels formed the backrest and resulting legs piercing through a soft oval seat. The piece was commissioned for the newly launched Powerhouse Museum in Castle Hill and fabricated by Evostyle. *Photos: Hamish McIntosh*

If Dave asks for 'just a coffee table', it's easy, logical and cheaper for him to go and buy one. Commercial furniture and handcrafted work live in two separate universes. If your client is making comparisons to what they can get from a store, you have a client that does not appreciate the intrinsic value of the handmade.

Crazy deadlines are a massive red flag as well as unrealistic expectations around the value of your time and skills, so consider if certain requests are worth taking on. If you can make things well – you will always be asked to make something. Stand tall, be confident with the solid design and craftsmanship you can deliver and set yourself a realistic hourly rate so you can quote properly.

Larger scale commissions

If you're a maker ready to branch out to fry some bigger fish, commercial commissions come in two forms. If you make a connection to private businesses or institutions, you can bite the bullet and get the processes of designing and quoting going. If you're dealing with government (Council, State or Federal), you'll be up against making a submission via a competitive tender process (sometimes selective, sometimes open to all).

For the latter, you're going to need to put together an impressive presentation and have the concepts fairly well resolved. In both scenarios, refined sketches or models, samples of materials and finishes are essential. My computer assisted sketches look like they were done by a 4-year-old, so for commercial projects I outsource to have premium renders produced.

For tips on how to manage a commission, I've asked highly successful Sydney based furniture designer Tom Fereday as well as prominent Adelaide furniture maker Jon Goulder about their approaches.

In-studio design with outsourced making

Tom Fereday comes from an industrial design background and has a litany of design awards to his name and has exhibited his furniture internationally. In his studio he develops his designs for both products and commissioned projects, which he then fabricates as models and resolves design details in his workshop, often in association with makers, designers and architects.

Tom told me he's proud to engage high level Australian fabricators to make his working prototypes and the final products through 'a collaboration with makers'. This allows Tom to design work across a spectrum of materials from steel, glass, upholstery and timber, work in partnership with his suppliers and keep control of quality.

In 2021 Tom won the contract to supply public seating for the NSW Art Gallery from an invited select group. He was able to prove his ability to deliver the beautiful ottomans shown here with the gallery commissioning further pieces for the members' lounge and library.

Tom approached this large scale commission by proposing seating incorporating highly skilled making and premium materials (spotted gum and leather) while meeting the rigorous design constraints outlined in the design brief, including consideration for very high use and accommodation for all ages and people with disabilities. He collaborated with TZG Architects (engaged to renovate the building), designing furniture to complement the gallery architecture, without being 'too loud' – detailed pieces that didn't distract from the artwork – work you could 'quietly enjoy over time'.

With regard to makers starting out, Tom noted the importance of both managing 'transparency and expectations' and providing the client with the genuine materials, rather than visualisations. 'Even the simplest designs in the right materials can be beautiful, but it's very hard sometimes to convey the value of that – it's important to present the feeling of what you'll be getting', he noted. Tom, is passionate that furniture has longevity and says 'not only should your furniture pieces look good, they need to function really well'. Tom also humbly noted that 'he's always still learning'.

Designed and made in-house

Jon Goulder, Adelaide based fine craftsman and designer maker works in a very different way, making everything by hand. Jon is considered one of Australia preeminent furniture makers with works being held in permanent collections in museums and galleries.

Jon and I were lucky enough to study under master craftsman George Ingham at the Australian National

Top: *Pavilion Dining Chair*, pressed leather, blackwood and electroplated aged brass. Designed for Hugh Allen's Yiaga restaurant, a Wardle Studio project in the heart of Fitzroy Gardens, Melbourne. Hugh Allen wrote in a social media post: 'The chair for a restaurant is maybe the most important decision you make when selecting and designing a venue. John Wardle and I literally spent three years looking at chairs… We were drawn to (Jon Goulder's) formed-leather work, something we had never really seen applied to dining chairs, especially in a restaurant setting. Jon then spent over 12 months developing the chair, with many prototypes and rounds of refinement, to create what we think is a masterpiece. I reckon this chair will become an icon of Australian furniture design in the years to come.' *Photo courtesy Jon Goulder*

Above: Jon Goulder, *Settlers Chair*, 2018, water formed leather shell, blackwood frame, National Gallery Victoria collection. 'My goal from the outset was to never put something out into the market that had been done. This is my time on the planet, I want that legacy of designing original work.' *Photo: Grant Hancock*

University, an uncompromising training in precision craftsmanship that instilled respect for tools and timber.

Jon tells me he thinks deeply about his designs and is selective about the commissions he takes. He doesn't make other people's pieces and has kept his design signature and identity in his furniture throughout his career, with an evident progression in the sophistication of his designs. 'I came from a manufacturing family, if I'm going to manufacture work it needs to be my design', he said.

Over many years Jon has developed a range of sophisticated furniture pieces that demonstrate high level technical skills and craftsmanship and incorporate beautiful quality materials such as his *Pavilion Dining Chair* and his version of the classic *Settlers Chair*. There is an obvious advantage of having resolved designs, jigs and fabrication processes of these small-run furniture editions being ready to order for residential and commercial projects.

Jon also develops unique designs for one-off residential and commercial projects commissions. He told me he only shows his own portfolio when suggesting a design approach or material choice, ensuring any commissions will be an extension of his ongoing practice, reflecting his design values and aesthetics. To avoid issues during commissioning, Jon stressed the importance of thoroughness and care in client presentations. Drawings, scale models and fabricating a full scale working prototype give stakeholders a visual and physical understanding of all aspects of the work prior to proceeding.

For projects in public environments such as libraries and galleries, Jon has a rather unique approach to developing his designs through hosting 'conversations' – forums in which both stakeholders and the public are invited to provide suggestions on inclusions in the furniture's design. 'I'm really interested in people's opinions and needs and they can help shape the brief', he said.

Jon develops his design concepts for commissioned projects by bringing together his design sensibilities and aesthetics, drawing on the architectural detailing and, critically, 'hopes he's flexible enough' in his approach to take people's ideas into account and ensure they are woven into the fabric of the final design.

Jon expressed his support for furniture makers new to taking on commissions: 'We need more crafts practitioners that are prepared to wave the flag for craft in Australia. We also need to see your individual personality in the work – everyone has a narrative.'

My recent commission

In 2024 I was successful in a competitive tender process and commissioned to provide the seating for the newly extended and refurbished Newcastle Art Gallery which opened in February, 2026.

This, without doubt, is my dream commission, a legacy project. A really exciting challenge to design and fabricate furniture at my best, pieces that are enduring, 'make sense' and sit wholly in their environment. Gallery seating is furniture in its rawest state. Benches most often sit centre in the room, in every room – exposed, present and setting the tone for the understanding and aspiration of the gallery.

Since the 60s there has been an ongoing tendency for galleries and museums to buy the Mies van der Rohe *Barcelona Ottoman*. You know the ones – sectioned padded black top with button pull downs and chrome legs – a 20th century classic. As epicentres of culture, galleries and museums present art, historical and scientific objects, identifying and elucidating on the uniqueness, dreams and demons of that place, so why default to generic staging rather than engaging local craftspeople to provide bespoke furniture? Lauretta Morton OAM, Director Newcastle Art Gallery had the vision to see the value of commissioning furniture that speaks directly to this place by reflecting the city's art, its community, its character and its soul.

So how to go about a commission like this? I love art and I love galleries. The new Newcastle Art Gallery is an ambitious project more than doubling the size of the existing space, an exciting addition to the city, making the 'connection' part of the design process easy.

The project brief provided specific requirements for public gallery seating throughout to complement the architecture, use quality materials, and provide longevity and accessibility, without sharp corners or the ability for the benches to slide. Beyond this, the brief was broad, generous and open for interpretation, giving space for deep attention to the design.

Batchwork for the *Kizuna Bench*, clockwise from top left:

Showing the recesses made in the legs for adjustable feet.

Components mortised and ends half lapped.

A full scale working prototype assembled and upholstered for client approval.

The bench ends were cross-lapped to receive the rail supports for the tops.

Photos: Jono Everett

For me, the consideration of the architectural elements and the buildings design intent are paramount. The pieces need to be 'right' and completely harmonise with their environment.

Filling the brief

The *Kizuna Benches* are spread throughout this new landmark gallery – 17 in total. *Kizuna* is a Japanese word that refers to the strong, enduring bonds that form between people through mutual trust and support. The design draws upon Japanese minimalist perfection, allowing the high quality natural materials to be at the forefront using simplicity and balanced proportions.

The solid 'bridge' like configuration references the Newcastle Art Gallery's unity to art and artists, historic and contemporary with particular attention to the Australian / Japanese ceramic collection and the connection and significant artworks of the First Nation's people. The boxy, hard edge profile reflects the buildings angular architecture.

The benches are fabricated using expressed precision joinery from carefully sourced local blackbutt (*Eucalyptus pilularis*). The timber is burnished (1200 grit) and coated with hardwax oil and finished with a natural wax polish. The seating elements have a 12mm plywood core, faced with 5mm high density foam and covered in commercial grade natural leather with the top appearing to 'float' to bring a visual lightness to the overall design. Highly skilled upholsterer, Reioni Douglas and I have established a dialogue of design and detailing approaches over many years.

The benches two metre long, 600mm wide benches are fabricated using cross lap joints in 42 and 32mm section. These joints are tight so the legs won't rack. The floating mitred top frame (rebated 5mm to give a clean edge to the leather inset) is then fixed to the rails. An ebonised 7mm spacer between two leg sections clearly express negative space - a simple, no fuss, grounded aesthetic with the timber and the joinery being the hero.

Commissions don't need to be scary – if you manage them right, they can be a really exciting adventure in design, making and connection. So, choose which projects to take on, think your ideas through clearly, good documentation for presentation, add your character and personal signature to the design, make with excellence, good materials and quote properly.

Thank you to Tom and Jon for your brilliance.

Jono Everett @everett_creative is a furniture maker, artist and designer and co-manages the Soap Factory arts collective, Newcastle. You can read more about Jono's practice in AWR#123. In AWR#127 Jono wrote about a large-scale collaborative project he co-directed. In issues 126 and 128 wrote about his design principles in the making his Tuned Table and Cabinet.

Jono Everett: 'The *Kizuna Bench* design draws upon Japanese minimalist perfection...'
Photo: Edwina Richards

Time Well Spent

The sudden death of Will Matthysen leaves an unfillable space in the woodworking world. As a maker, designer, mentor and active community member, Will's legacy will however live on. Words by Linda Nathan.

Will Matthysen with *Clock 174*, made in 2014 in response to the brief for *Create for a Crate*, an exhibition that featured works made from pallet timbers. Will's clock won first prize and People's Choice awards. *Photo: Vicki Petheridge*

Will Matthysen has been a steady and valued presence in the woodworking world for over three decades. His sudden death on 30 December, 2025 from a massive heart attack comes as a sharp blow to his loved ones, friends and all who knew him through the unique clocks he made and the positive influence he extended to others.

My own connection goes back to 1993 when he wrote an article for Australian Wood Review, only a year after the magazine was first published. An image of one of his clocks featured on the cover of the third issue. After that I met Will several times and spoke with him many more. He wrote a number of articles for the magazine and judged AWR competitions on more than one occasion.

Put simply, Will was a lovely and hugely talented man who also cared about others and acted on that. I remember an always pleasant and smiling person whose quiet words belied a sharp intellect that also took in an awareness of and empathy for others.

South African born, Will trained as an architect in London and Melbourne before working on commercial projects for ten years. In his first article for the magazine, Will wrote how his clockmaking knowledge was largely self taught. '(Clockmaking) is an interest going back to my school years, starting with the dismantling of the family's mantle clock and followed by numerous visits to the local library to supplement hands-on experience with a theoretical background.'

He made his first clock when he was around 14 in his father's workshop, cutting the gears on a bandsaw. Will's father was a carpenter / builder whose home workshop was the 'safe space' Will headed to after school.

While studying architecture in London, Will spent time in the Science and British Museums

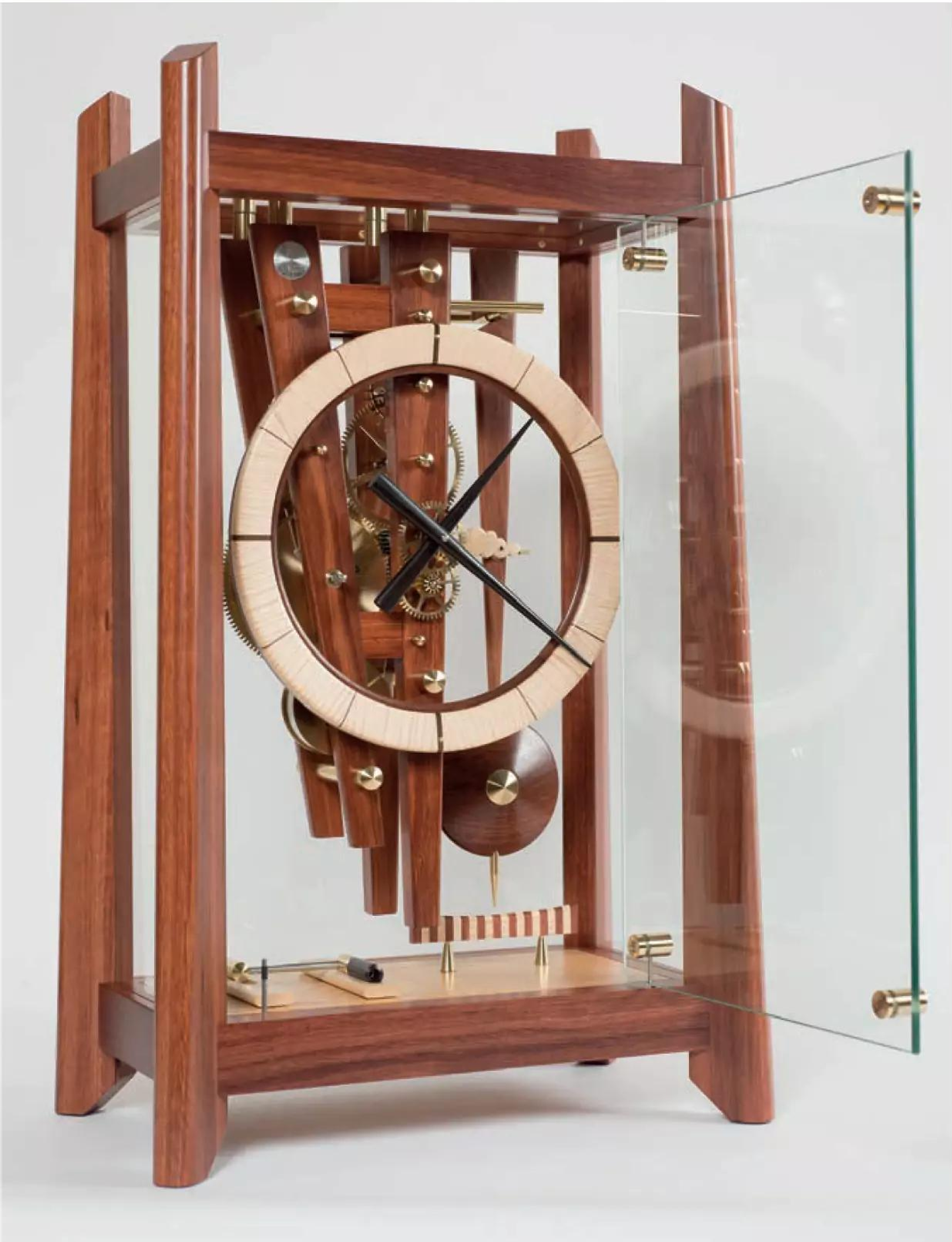
Clock 190, full and detail views, shown at *Double Take in Wood*, a 2017 Victorian Woodworkers Association exhibition staged at Manningham Art Gallery, Victoria. It has an 8-day duration with a lunar dial. It is fitted with a Brocot dead beat escapement, maintaining power, a constant torque mainspring, and micro ceramic ballraces to minimise friction and wear. *Photos: Vicki Petheridge*

Clock 198 and *Clock 199* (2020), burr walnut, sycamore, ebony, gold-plated brass, steel, glass. *Photos: Ian Hill*

sketching and studying clock collections, and later completed a course in clockmaking at RMIT in Melbourne.

Setting up his own workshop in Melbourne in 1989, Will went on to develop a full-time career in designing and making intricate and innovative clocks. Combining both metal and wood, he enjoyed 'operating at the fringes of established traditional crafts and blurring the boundaries between them'. He developed techniques and built gear-cutting machines, jigs and templates. He loved native Australian timbers, researched their properties and experimented with their use.

Will Matthysen's opus of finely crafted clocks numbers over 200. Building on traditional clock mechanics he used a range of materials and woods to develop supremely elegant clocks where function and ornament share an integral relationship. Framed in finely crafted display cases, his designs



sought to expose the beauty of both the mechanisms and structures he created.

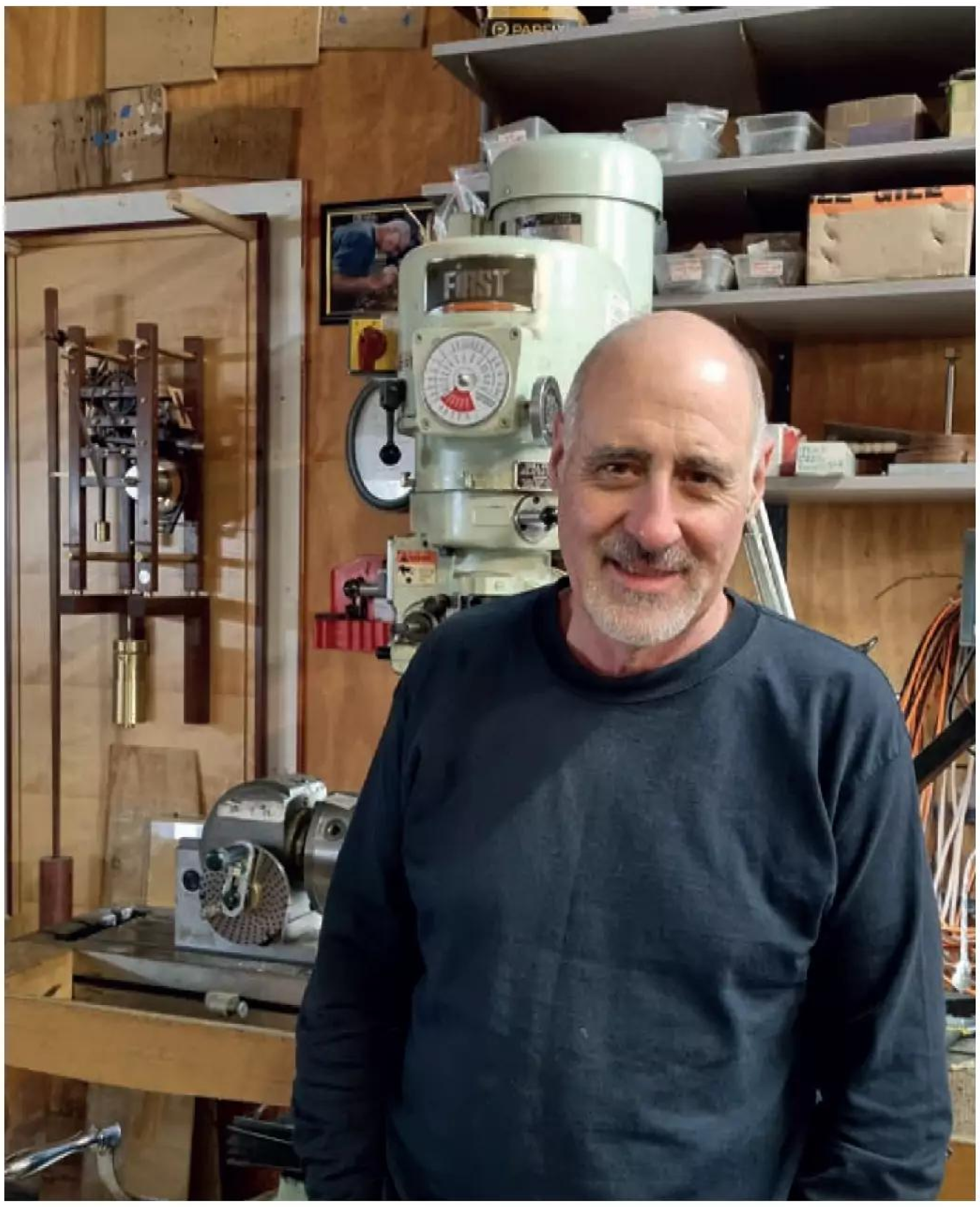
Like many woodworkers, Will enjoyed working alone in his home-based workshop, however he recognised the need for and benefits of like-minded fellowship and took on leadership roles in the Victorian Woodworkers Association. He served as President from 2002 to 2005 and again from 2010 to 2011, overseeing the development of programs that included a third-party public insurance scheme for woodworkers and craft workers as well as exhibitions, including the successful *Create from a Crate* series. Will was a member of Studio Woodworkers Australia and for a time also served as President for that association.

Will shared his knowledge in another Australian Wood Review article in 1998 (issue 19) and later wrote a three part article on making a wooden geared clock for issues 52, 53 and 54. Later issues have also featured images of several of his award-winning clocks. Will was a design tutor at Melbourne University from 1989 to 1994, and taught clockmaking programs at the then-existing Australian School of Fine Furniture in Launceston, Tasmania (2003, 2005).

Will Matthysen was a master designer and maker who devoted himself to the study and development of his craft. Along the way, he actively encouraged others and participated in associations and community events and exhibitions that allowed others to learn and develop.

Top: Will Matthysen, *Clock 209*, 2023, Qld silver ash, Qld red cedar, ebony, gold-plated brass, steel, glass. 'With a design based on elemental shapes; circles, rectangles and trapezoids are layered in the clock's geometry and composition. And yet each element is essential, none are purely decorative and all push the limits of the material.' *Photos: Ian Hill*

Left: *Clock 173*, 2014, free standing table clock



Will's clocks were masterpieces of creative precision and represented a purpose that he devoted himself to. In his words: 'In the past, clocks were more than utilitarian objects for telling the time that we use them for today. They represented an ordered universe in an otherwise chaotic world. It is to these aims that I will direct my efforts. As to how far I get, well, only time will tell.' In the scheme of things, his time was extremely well spent.

When we look to the passing on of traditions and skills, it's often the humanity of certain individuals that is remembered. Kindness, humility and openness to others are some of the character traits which, subsequent to his passing, many people have noted in Will Matthysen, on top of his prodigious talent and skill.

We extend our sincere condolences to his wife Marjan, his sons, family and friends at this very sad time.

See more at www.willmatthysen.com, and hear Adrian Potter's 2020 interview with Will Matthysen at https://designermakerrevolution.podbean.com/

Above left: *Clock 166*, 2013, wall mounted

Above: Will Matthysen in his Warrandyte, Victoria workshop in 2022.

Below: Detail of one of Will Matthysen's brass movements.

Machines for Thinking

Rhys Jones on design, material intelligence, and the chair as a mediating structure.

Rhys Jones in his Sydney workshop. *Photo: Rhys Jones*

In November 2025, I attended my first woodworking symposium. For two days I wandered the streets of Tarntanya/Adelaide, visiting workshops, meeting other designer makers, and indulging in long-form conversations about the challenges and rewards of our creative endeavour. My contribution included a talk that explored the theme of symbiosis from a theoretical standpoint. It was a deluge of ideas, from Plato's cave to neoclassical realism in Australian art. Now the dust has settled, I have had time to reflect on the core message. As it turns out, I was trying to articulate an approach to making that is about doing more with less.

Performance driven design has shaped my thinking since childhood. One of my earliest memories of material called to action took place at the Avalon Airshow. I was taken on a flight in an ultralight aircraft – little more than a thin shell suspended in a web of tubes and wires. Hurtling through the air, I was struck by the improbable coherence of the machine. Despite the aircraft's haphazard form, every part was doing something, and for that reason it felt unified.

That awareness manifested as a desire to make that led me to the Wood Workshop at the ANU School of Art. In the years that followed, I discovered the deep, shared experience of craft. It was this unifying connection coupled with the dedicated physical act of making that drew me firmly into studio furniture.

Several years later, I returned to university to study architecture. It was a radically different experience from art school, but I maintained a connection to furniture by teaching woodwork in the evenings. Eventually, the two scales of making converged while working in a laboratory in Switzerland alongside architects, engineers and artists. Piece by piece I came to realise that my obsession with

1, 2. *Wannan Chair,* American cherry, rock maple, Danish paper cord. 'Unique weaving methods allow a traditional Danish paper cord system to span the two sweeping rails that form the backrest.' *Photos: Rhys Jones*

3, 4. *Inter se*, rock maple, rattan cane. 'A synthesis of the naturalistic forms in Chinese furniture and Western ways of thinking, *Inter Se* reverses the idea of the continuous arm that is characteristic of the horseshoe armchairs first produced during the Ming dynasty.' *Photos: Stuart Hay*

5. A collection of prototypes in wood, metal, plastic, fibreglass, leather and fabric for 'Machines for Thinking', a year-long investigation into the interrelationship of form and function 'exploring new chair typologies by combining craft methods with contemporary materials.' *Photo: Charlie White*

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function was the tail wagging the dog. Like many other makers, rethinking my approach was inspired by nature.

We intuitively accept that nature is as connected as it is diverse. We experience delight in all its forms rather than think of them as being useless. Nature operates through relationships – a dynamic equilibrium where value is defined by participation, not utility.

These relationships operate at every scale as an indefinitely extending graduation of parts that make up a relative whole. We can observe this as a series of nested systems: cells to leaves, leaves to trees, trees to forests. This idea is expressed both poetically and mathematically in the 1977 short film *Powers of Ten*, written and directed by Charles and Ray Eames, which depicts the relative scale of the universe by moving through magnitudes of ten. It invites us to consider that perspective is not fixed, but contingent on the relative whole that we feel connected to.

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To create something is to uncover the unifying conditions that shape the parts. Recognising the embedded wisdom in natural systems and revealing them in our work can be referred to as material intelligence. It is the dialogue between material necessity and creative intent that helps us to participate in natural order. The architect, Louis Kahn, humorously conveyed this approach by asking 'What do you want, brick?' No matter what alternative Kahn proposes, the brick responds with, 'I like an arch.'

For a time, I would often introduce woven fibreglass into laminated timber forms. In the chair, *Inter se*, these invisible supports add tremendous resilience to the curved profiles, challenging our expectations of how the material should behave. The exploration taught me a lot, but perhaps not as much as if I had used timber alone.

Being 'true' to material is not a constraint. It expands possibilities by revealing the invisible significance beyond the visible form. Anni Albers explains this beautifully in her 1944 essay, 'We Need the Crafts for their Contact with Materials' where she says, 'Formed things and thoughts live a life of their own; they radiate meaning...Learning to form makes us understand all forming.'

This way of thinking flipped the script on my function-first approach. A hand does not exist to hold a chisel; holding a chisel is simply one of the many possibilities of its form. The same is true for the objects we make and use. If chairs existed solely for sitting, then I would pack up my workshop and move on.

I continue to make chairs because they are mediating structures that hold us for the many rituals of human experience. They are rife with meaning. Like architecture, chairs can crystallise broad cultural and social conditions with individual experience in time and place. With every chair I am searching for unity in its expression, hoping to uncover a set of relationships so tightly woven that no detail seems superfluous.

My interest in chairs is tied to a fascination with weaving. At a certain point in my learning, I came to realise that joinery is, in essence, about weaving timber fibres. A woven seat adds another layer of complexity by introducing a new dimension of forces alongside the significant stresses exerted on a chair. It is a design challenge that makes you consider the structure as a unified whole. The rhythm, structure, and tactile quality of woven surfaces have me revisiting their possibilities with almost every chair I make.

The chairmaker's chair, to me, is the *Superleggera*, designed by Gio Ponti for Cassina in 1957. Informed by 150 years of craft tradition in the Liguria region of Italy, Ponti and his team distilled the vernacular of the *Chiavari* chair until there was nothing left to take away. In the process, they revealed an impossibly thin timber structure married to a finely woven seat.

The *Superleggera* is instructive because it demonstrates how the integrity of the object and the intelligence of its making is linked to the depth of its relationship to people and place. By recognising the unique systems and environment in which we operate, we can create work that enhances the favourable characteristics of its context. Further still, the resilience of craft continues by building and sharing innovation within an established body of knowledge.

This field of relationships radiates from material. How and where it grows, how it is processed, formed and used all belong to unique systems or patterns of life. I believe that when we call every fibre to action, we strengthen these invisible bonds. It is an approach that considers the performance of an object to be a possibility of its participation in life.

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My most recent work was guided by this approach. To link the environment with the contexture, I contemplated the patterns of contemporary living and asked myself the question: How can we live better with less?

Gesto Armchair is my response. It is a chair that actively participates in the rhythms and rituals of inhabiting space through its ability to be folded into a compact profile that stands unsupported. The design is centred on an economy of movement – with a simple gesture, the chair, the user, and the space transform together to support multiple ways of living.

To achieve an ergonomic and lightweight form, I explored techniques and details that would work with the underlying structure rather than obscure it. Curved timber elements were steam bent to reduce waste while enhancing structural resilience through the continuous fibres that span each member.

The use of braided cord further contributes to durability, weight reduction, and long-term repairability. The open weave creates a dynamic transparency and allows the seating surfaces to interlock when folded. Embracing material honesty led me to express the brass folding mechanism at key pivot points.

Gesto Armchair marks a shift in my approach to making. Honouring material by considering its place in a set of relationships can lead to not only meaningful outcomes, but also the responsible stewardship of natural resources. When we work with the logic of material, we use it efficiently. When we find an economy of form, we gain clarity in its expression.

I share my work and my story in the spirit of craft, knowing that my approach is one of many that turn to material intelligence to counter


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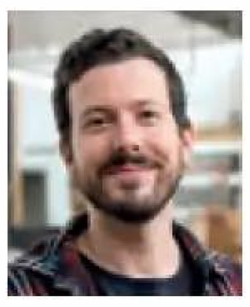
the excesses of modern living. Many institutionally funded projects have explored the same questions through forming timber, from silvicultural harvesting to computationally predicted drying methods. These developments are promising, but they do not complete the full picture because they are often products of applied research conducted to achieve a specific, predetermined outcome or practical objective.

Over the last 15 years I have watched institutions, galleries and workshops that support the arts and crafts steadily contract or close completely, despite an increasing number of digital practitioners seeking tactile engagement with material. This pattern of change is evident across multiple sectors, most recently with cuts to pure science – the pursuit of fundamental knowledge about the natural world, without concern for immediate application. It signals a preference for funding bodies to support applied research, ignoring that many of the greatest discoveries are born from unbridled curiosity.

These changes mirror a function-first mindset that limits the scope of our creative potential and therefore diminishes our connection to the world. An objective needs to be framed by a set of relationships, but the outcome is what we leave to be discovered. In my experience, the further it diverges from initial expectations, the better the work.

I would never call ornament a crime, nor would I discourage the celebration of human labour. Doing more with less is not about austerity or limiting ourselves. It is about getting to the core of the question by being open to possibilities. It is an approach that sharpens curiosity and encourages us to interrogate the parts until the connections between them reveal themselves. Even through something as specific as chairmaking, we can uncover unique expressions that serve as an allegory of our being.



Rhys Jones is a designer maker working at the intersection of studio craft, industrial design, and architecture. His practice positions making as a mode of inquiry, informed by more than a decade of teaching and leading workshops internationally. He is a director of Studio Woodworkers Australia and a member of Splinter Workshop in Sydney. In November 2025, Rhys Jones spoke at Studio Woodworkers Australia's Symposium entitled Symbiosis. Learn more about Rhys Jones @rhysjonesworkshop at https://rjworkshop.com

6, 7. *CH11*, jarrah, celery top pine, metal, coated wire. 'An early exploration of material economy. The chair's weight is reduced physically and visually through careful profiling of each component. Carbon fibre rods reinforce select structural elements to maintain tension in the woven seat.' *Photo: Stuart Hay*

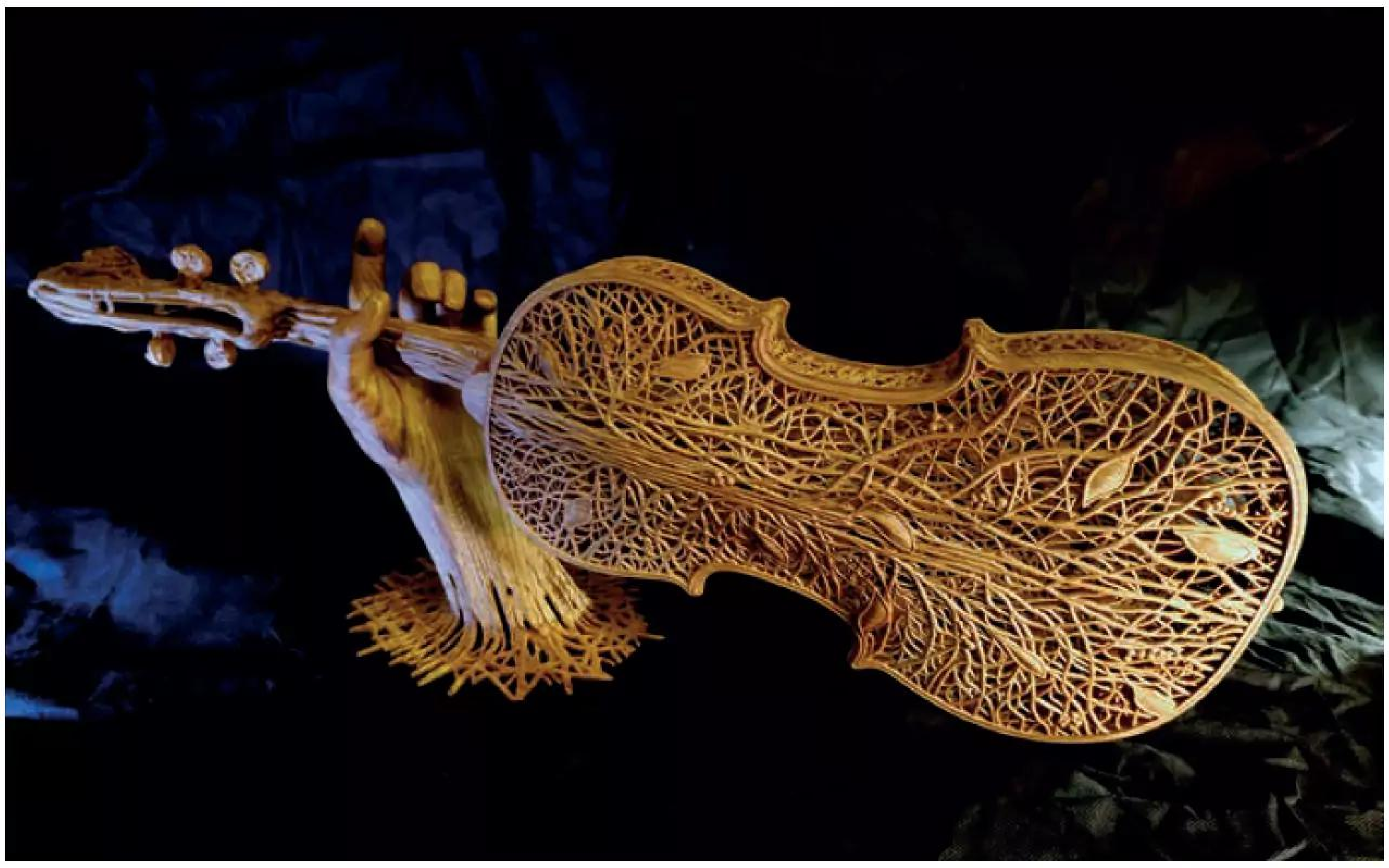
8–10. *Gesto Armchair*, black walnut, brass, braided cord. 'How can we live better with less? *Gesto Armchair* is my response. Centred on an economy of movement – with a simple gesture, the chair, the user, and the space transform together to support multiple ways of living.' *Photos: Rhys Jones*

In Hand with Technology

‘Every one of my works is a new challenge and a new story written in wood’, explains Valdas Brucas.

My name is Valdas Brucas. I am 60 years old. I live in a small town of Panevėzys, Lithuania, where I have my modest workshop. I am an artist-craftsman specialising in artistic woodcarving. I have a loving wife, Laimutė, who is a doctor, two children – Austeja and Eimantas, and one of my life’s greatest miracles – my grandson Kristijonas.

My journey in woodworking began with handwork: carving decorations with chisels and knives, making furniture, drawing and searching for form through sketches. Then life led me into advertising – creating logos, designing printed ads, working with publications. I made large advertising billboards and worked with various



vinyl-cutting machines and processing equipment. During that time, I learned to work with different photo editing and design programs. It was a useful skill – one that later helped me transition to a new stage of creativity.

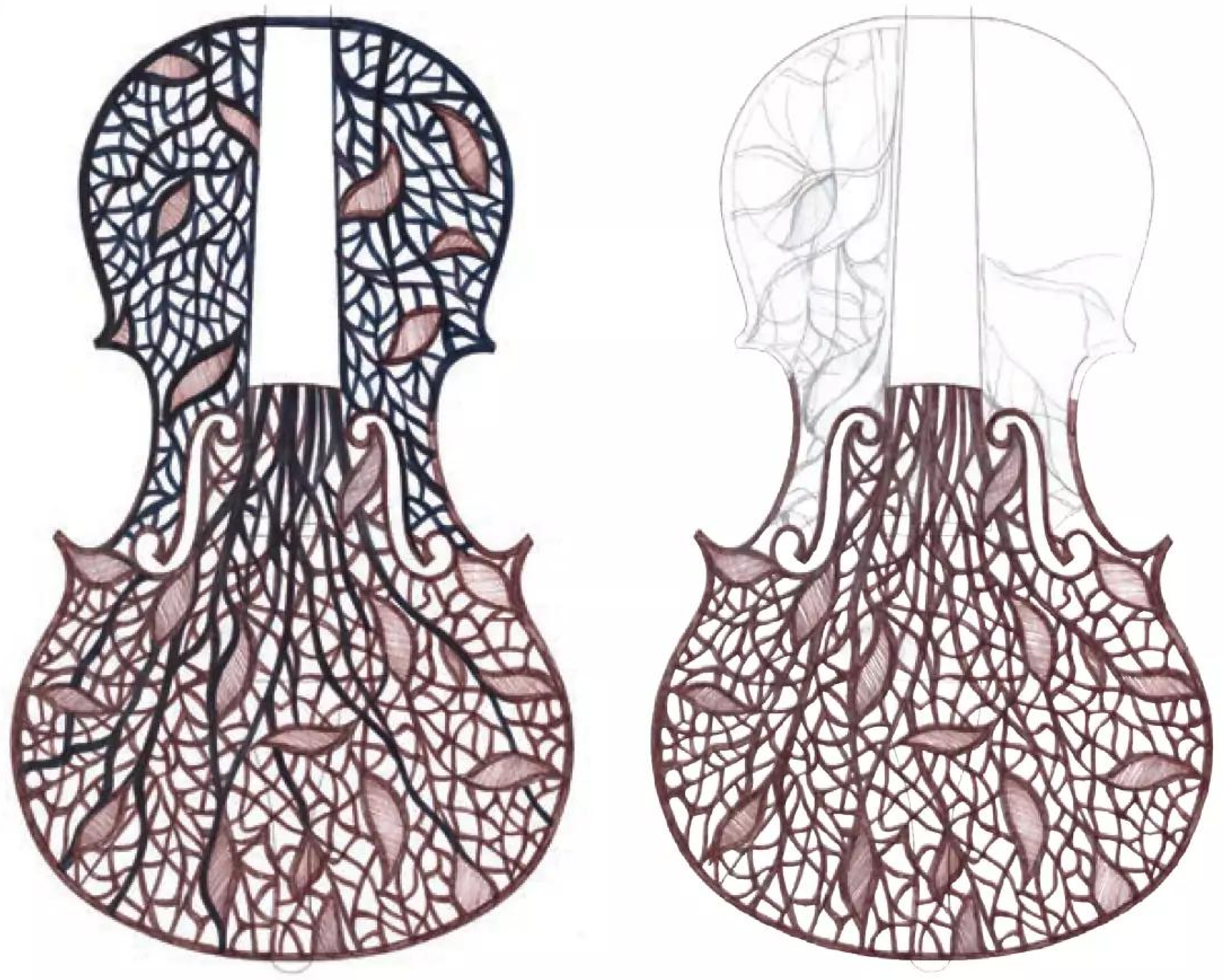
The next chapter of my life was interior design. For many years I created interiors – for private homes, cafés, restaurants, and offices. Over 20 years I created about a hundred interiors in Lithuania, Russia, and England. I usually sketched my visions by hand; I used computer programs as well, but drawing remained my language. Working with interiors, I noticed that designers and furniture makers often lacked carved or machined wooden decorations – details that bring character and depth to a space. That's when I made a decision: I bought my first CNC machine and began creating 3D wood decor.

This was a new beginning. Although I had experience with various programs, 3D design and CNC machining was like an entirely new science. I learned to work with 3Ds Max and other 3D tools – I watched countless YouTube tutorials, made countless mistakes, but persistence won.

Designing is only the first half; the other half is making sure the machine 'listens to you'. I had to learn which router bits to use, what speeds work, how different wood species behave: some are brittle, others extremely hard; some give a clean surface, others tear violently. I ruined many pieces. But that's research: once you understand the technology, it becomes a tool – and your eyes and hands remain the primary instruments.

My first CNC machine was a simple Chinese model I bought 14 years ago – and it still works. Now I have six CNC machines: one is a four-axis machine for round decorations and columns, but I mostly work with 3-axis machines. You can create so

Above: Valdas Brucas's *Oak Violin* is life size. 'It will never play and you will never hear its sound. This is music for the eyes.'

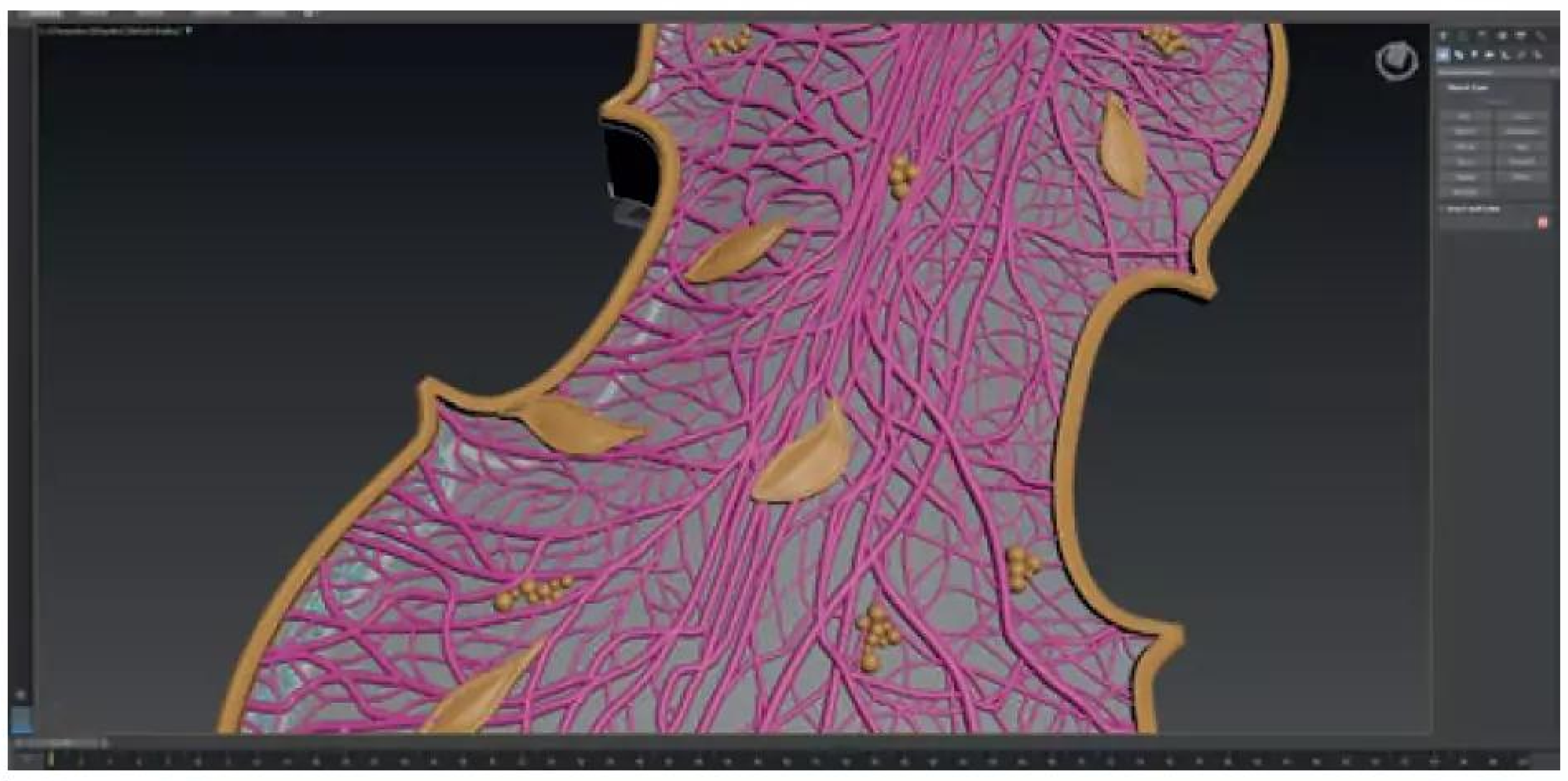


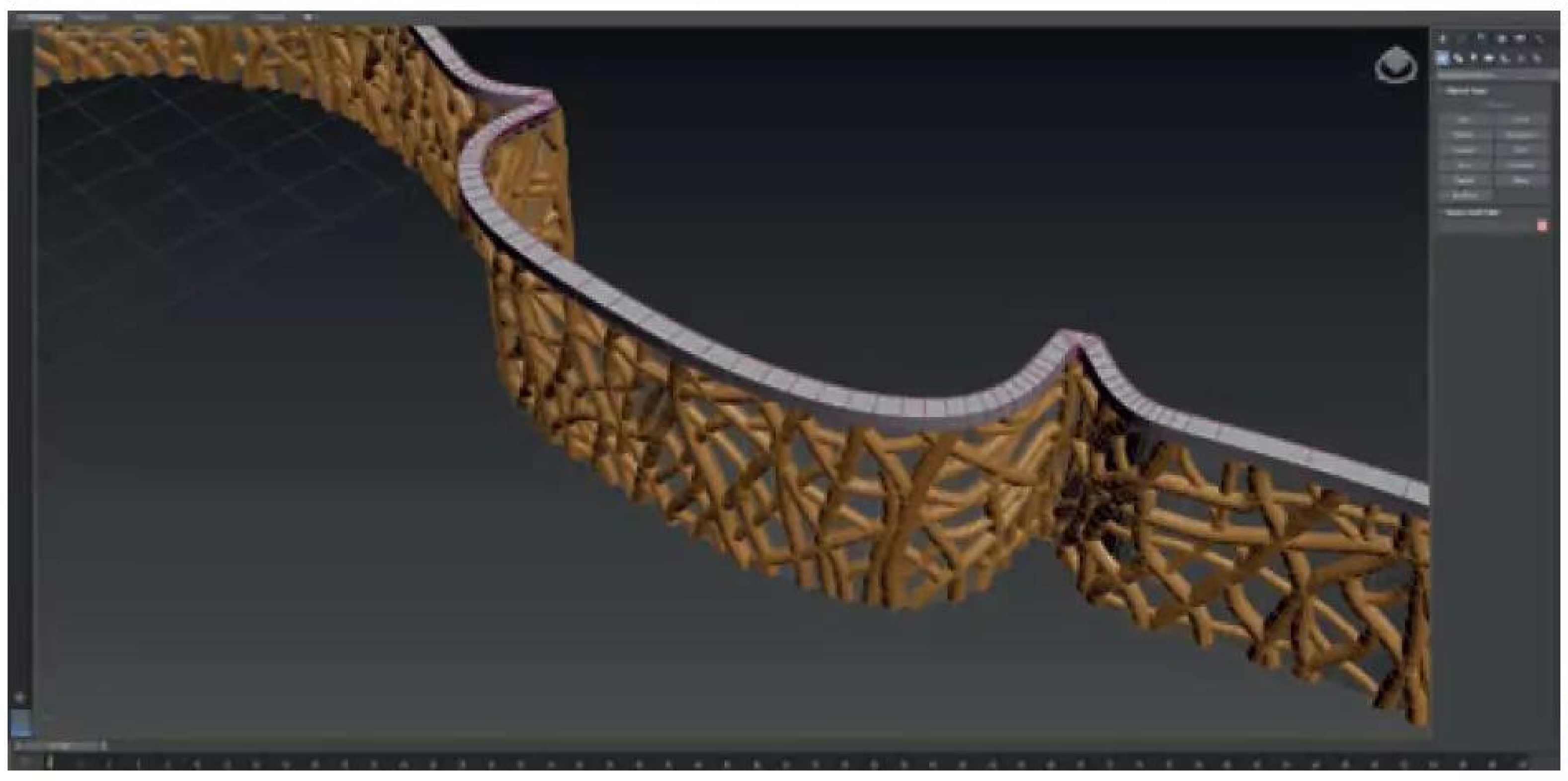
These pages show some of the processes involved in creating the author's *Oak Violin* using CAD and CNC technology. Design, machining, assembly, hand detailing for the violin was carried out over a six month period.

much with them – and many people don't realise how much creative potential lies in technology. Some say, 'This is not handmade work'. I see it differently: the machine creates nothing on its own. 3D design, the birth of an idea, the drawing – that is the work of a human. The machine only performs the physical part; and after milling comes meticulous handwork: carving, sanding, preparing for finishing. CNC is about 30% of the final result – the rest depends entirely on the craftsperson.

Every piece I create has its own story. I remember my first milled rosette – a moment of family celebration: my son and I were thrilled when it succeeded. Each new piece became a bigger challenge, each more complex than the last. One of my most significant works is a Louis XVI-style table, recreated almost entirely from a few photographs. I designed it in 3D, made the components, and talented Lithuanian carpenters assembled it. Today, the table stands in Užutrakis Manor. It felt like reviving history from traces – a long and intricate process.

One piece especially dear to me is an oak lace doily, created in memory





of my mother. She loved crocheting. I remember her on winter evenings, with a crochet hook or knitting needles in hand, surrounded by colourful threads and handmade textiles. She left us so many things embroidered, knitted, and crocheted with incredible care. This work was inspired by her beautiful creations, by memories and longing. Modern 3D scanners could not capture the detailed texture of her doilies, so I searched online for a similar pattern.

The frame was designed by me, inspired by my mother's lace designs. Both the frame and the doily are made from oak. Both sides were machined, so the 'threads' meet as in real lace. The size is 400 × 400mm, and some threads are only 0.4 × 0.4mm thick. It was extremely delicate and required tremendous precision – it took me two months to achieve the right form and texture.

Another complex project was the *Oak Violin*, created in honour of my grandfather. This is not just a violin. It is a story about a man I never met but have always carried in my heart. My grandfather played the violin – that's what my mother told me. She spoke of how he not only played but also repaired these delicate instruments, patiently restoring them with love. I never saw him, never heard his music, but those stories were like a melody I gradually began to hear within myself.

Wanting to touch that world I never knew, I created this violin. I wondered for a long time how to bring such a deep and emotional family story to life. I chose oak, symbolising strength, memory, and time. It's an unusual choice – violins are not made from oak. But I cared not about the sound, but about meaning. The violin's strings are also made of wood, fragile and silent. It will never play, but it will quietly tell the story of a man whose music still lives in me.

This violin is a silent monument. Its music is not heard by the ears, but by the eyes and the heart. Was it worth it? That is for you to decide. But when people hold it, they feel a shiver – an emotion I never expected.

From the first sketch to final assembly, it took over half a year – countless milling hours, many corrections, and some details were finished by hand carving. The violin consists of 46 parts, all of which had to be assembled. I made several moulds, a special sanding table, and even glued some pieces using tweezers... To sand the open work ornament, I wore magnifying glasses – my hands could not be allowed to tremble. It felt like being a wood surgeon. The strings are made from thin pine shavings, rolled into tubes and reinforced with glue.

Clockwise from right: *Soccer ball on a napkin*, oak. 'A ball that reminds us that Lithuania never had strong football achievements – but perhaps this one shows we can be winners elsewhere.'

Crocheted napkin in oak frame: inspired by his mother's handiwork.

Self portrait made from around 1600 wooden 'sticks'. 'A reminder that a man is always made up of many fragments – and that only by hands, over time, can they be joined together.'

I have made more unexpected works too: a soccer ball created from crocheted doily fragments – 32 segments from eight doilies, crafted from oak and walnut. A ball that reminds us that Lithuania never had strong football achievements – but perhaps this one shows we can be winners elsewhere.

Recently, I completed a new piece – a self-portrait made from around 1600 wooden sticks. A long and monotonous gluing process – a forest of sticks, each sanded to match the shape of my face. Only with a specific lighting angle do all the facial features emerge. No CNC was used here, though some other technologies played a role — which ones, I'll leave for the viewer to guess.

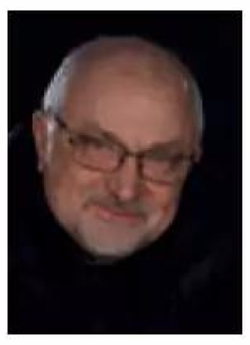
My creative philosophy is simple: mastery and respect for wood, combined with openness to innovation. I can carve by hand or create with CNC – the essence lies not in the tool but in the idea and the ability to bring that idea to life. Every day is a lesson. And even at sixty, I'm still learning.

In Lithuania we have a saying: 'The deeper into the forest – the more trees you find'. That is how I feel: the deeper I go into my craft, the more possibilities appear.

Besides large projects, I also create smaller items: Christmas ornaments, unique jewellery for women, and soon I will introduce a series of men's wooden jewellery inspired by Baltic motifs and ancient runes. Small in form, but full of symbolism and authenticity.

My machines and my hands – these are tools with one purpose: to draw out history, form, and feeling from wood. My motto remains the same: What can one person do? The answer is everything, or nothing.

Photos: Valdas Brucas



Valdas Brucas lives in Lithuania. Last year his Oak Violin was shortlisted in Wood Review's Maker of the Year Awards.
See more of Valdas Brucas's work on Instagram @valdasbrucas

Wood Diary

For more events and news sign up to AWR fortnightly newsletters at:

www.woodreview.com.au

Diary listings are free. **Email to:** linda@woodreview.com.au

Note: Listings are correct at time of publication but may be subject to change. It is advisable to check details with the organiser before visiting.

7 FEBRUARY–22 MARCH
Homecoming
Turned and carved work by Terry Martin
Swan Hill Regional Art Gallery, Victoria
https://swanhillregionalartgallery.com.au

1 MARCH
Maker of the Year, presented by Hare & Forbes
Entries open for Wood Review's awards for fine woodworkers and wood artists.
Information and entry at
www.makeroftheyear.com.au

13–15 MARCH
Auckland Wooden Boat Festival
From Auckland's historical working waterfront, celebrating Aotearoa New Zealand's maritime heritage.
www.aucklandwoodenboatfestival.co.nz

28–29 MARCH
Lost Trades Fair
Lost arts, rare trades and heritage crafts
Hanging Rock, Victoria
www.losttradesfair.com.au

7–8 MARCH
Kiama Woodcraft Group Annual Woodcraft Expo
Demonstrations and sales by members, plus timber sales
Kiama Masonic Hall, Collins Street, Kiama, NSW
9am–4pm Saturday and Sunday
Darren Collins: GreenChange1@gmail.com

27–29 MARCH
Turnfest woodturning symposium
Demonstrations by international and local woodturning and woodcarving professionals
Seaworld Resort and Water Park, Gold Coast, Qld
www.woodworkingsuppliesqld.com.au/turnfest

28 MARCH–28 MAY
Australian Wood Design Exhibition 2026
Showcasing Australian timber design
Orbost Exhibition Centre, Orbost, Vic
www.orbostartscentre.com/wood-design

12–13 APRIL
Bathurst Heritage Trades Trail
One hundred artisans demonstrate world heritage and rare crafts alongside a hands-on program at Bathurst Showground.
www.bathurstregion.com.au

29–30 APRIL 2026
Sydney Build
Australia's largest construction show with 550 speakers across 15 stages, 600 exhibitors, networking parties and entertainment
ICC Sydney Exhibition Centre, Halls 1–4, 6 and 7
www.sydneybuildexpo.com

1–3 MAY
Bacchus Marsh Carve-In
Woodcraft Manningham and Woodcarvers
Australia's only dedicated live-in weekend event for woodcarvers
YMCA Lady Northcote camp, Bacchus Marsh, Victoria
Email: johnpaine137@gmail.com
https://bacchusmarshcarve-in.org/

1–4 MAY 2026
Wootha Prize Event
National woodworking competition promoting the sustainable use of native timbers. Glass House, Montvale, Montville, Qld
https://barunglandcare.org.au/woothaprize/

2 MAY, 2026
The 2026 Coffs Harbour Wood Show
at Coffs Harbour Annual Show, includes Amazing Wood Expo
Coffs Harbour Show Showground
Email: Ian Horncastle creativeart@iinet.net.au

2–3 MAY
Montville Timber Trail
Includes Montville's Long Weekender, Makers Design Fair, and Blackall Range Woodcrafters' Guild mini Wood Expo. Includes carving workshops and hosting Wootha Prize exhibition.
www.montvilletimbertrail.com/

2–3 MAY
Melbourne Knife Show
Kensington Town Hall, 30–34 Bellair St, Kensington, Vic
www.akg.org.au/knifehshow

2 MAY–27 JUNE
Felled (with Conscious Craft)
Six makers reimagine timber sources in contemporary woodworking practice. Showcasing sustainability and ethics in production methods and materials use. Shown during Melbourne Design Week
Craft Victoria, Watson Place (off Flinders Lane), Naarm/Melbourne
https://craft.org.au/whats-on/all-events/felled/

14–24 MAY
Melbourne Design Week
An 11-day program of talks, tours, exhibitions, launches, installations and workshops across Melbourne with over 450 events and exhibitions, and 100,000 visitors across Melbourne, its suburbs and the regions.
https://designweek.melbourne/

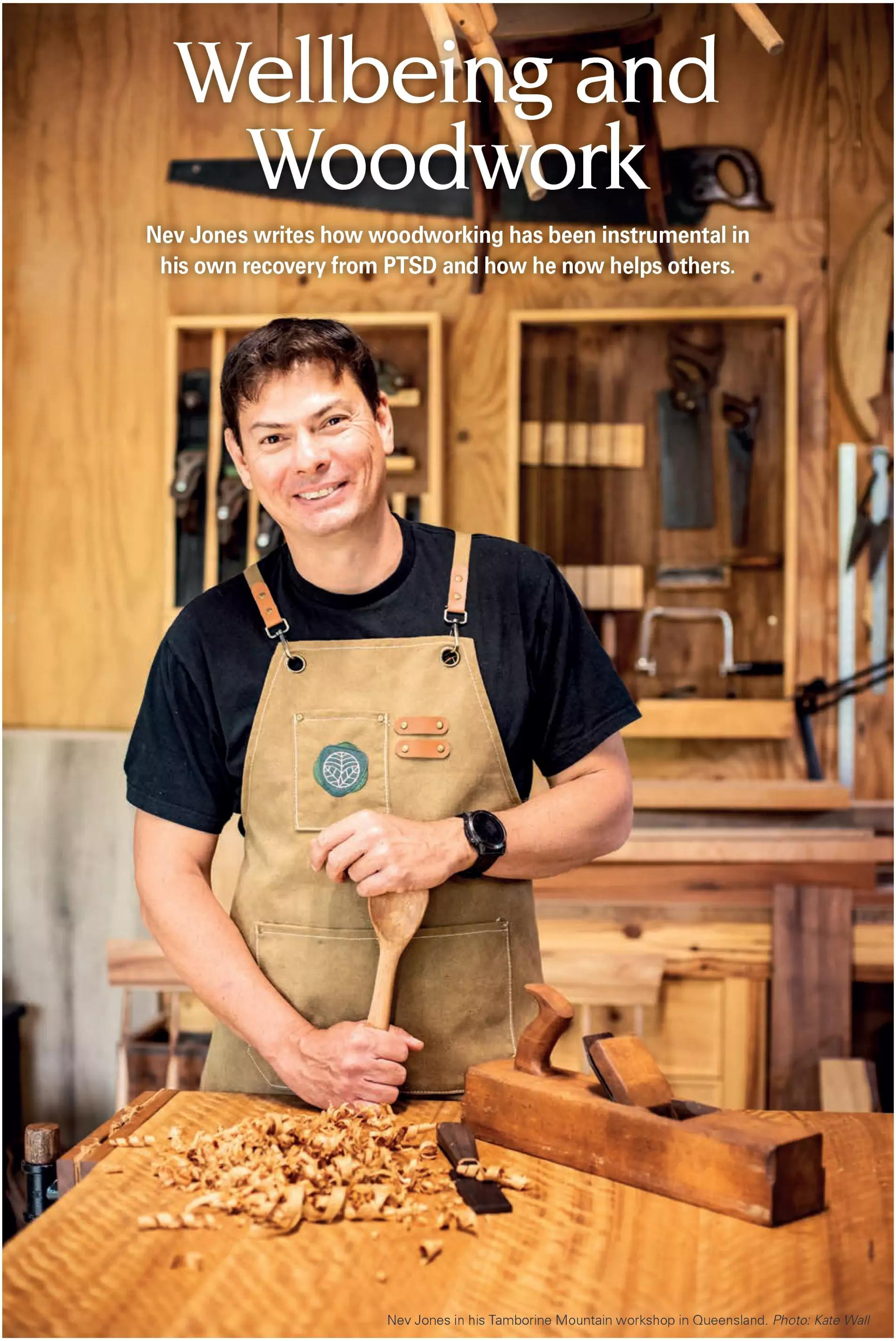
26 MAY–4 JULY
Unveiling the Unexpected
Stuart Davidson explores the transformative potential of multi-axis turning.
Vitrine Gallery, Craft Victoria, Watson Place, Naarm/Melbourne
https://craft.org.au/whats-on/all-events/unveiling-the-unexpected/

9–12 JUNE
Xylexpo
Biennial world exhibition for woodworking technologies and components. With Bimu, the biennial exhibition of machine tools, robotics and automation.
FieraMilano Rho Fairgrounds, Italy
www.xylexpo.com

11–13 JUNE
Design Show Australia
Interiors, lighting and furniture alongside Archi Build Expo and Kitchen and Bath Show
Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre
https://designshow.com.au/

12–15 JUNE
Q-Turn
A weekend of skill-sharing open to woodturners, scrollers, carvers and burners.
Hosted by Ipswich Woodcrafts Club.
The Outlook, Ipswich-Boonah Road, Boonah, Qld
Jim Tutin: 0418194184, email jimtutin6@gmail.com
https://ipswichwoodcraftsclub.org

4 JULY
Hand Tool Event
All-day tools and technique demonstrations with Lie-Nielsen Australia, HNT Gordon, Ironbark Tools, Australian Wood Review, 10am–4pm, free entry
Damion Fauser Workshop,4/14 Buttonwood Place, Willawong, Qld
http://www.damionfauser.com/



Wellbeing and Woodwork

Nev Jones writes how woodworking has been instrumental in his own recovery from PTSD and how he now helps others.

Nev Jones in his Tamborine Mountain workshop in Queensland. *Photo: Kate Wall*

These days I tend to describe myself as a psychologist, woodworker, and veteran. It's funny how life has brought these three aspects of my identity together.

My relationship with woodwork is rooted in childhood. I grew up on a banana and cattle property at a WWI returned soldier settlement called El Arish in Far North Queensland. Out of a combination of necessity and curiosity, my childhood was spent in the bush making cubbies, toys, and the occasional weapon out of rainforest timber from our property. As I got older and my farm responsibilities grew, the things I made evolved into furniture, fences, and tools These days, we would call that 'green woodworking', but back then it was just called living.

After completing an apprenticeship as a mechanic in 2000, I decided to join the Army. I was looking for something meaningful and was inspired by the Australian Defence Force's peacekeeping efforts in East Timor after its 1999 independence vote. In my mind, there was no greater cause than standing up for the oppressed.

I was accepted into officer training at the Royal Military College, Duntroon, as part of the College's 100th graduating class. Halfway through training, the 9/11 attacks occurred. I still remember standing next to a mate, late at night, watching the TV screen as the second plane hit the World Trade Centre. He turned to me and said, a little naively, 'We're going to war.' He couldn't have been more right.

I graduated into the Australian Intelligence Corps, beginning a 20-year career with an operational counter-terrorism focus. Much of that time was spent overseas with multiple deployments to Iraq, Afghanistan, and Timor-Leste where I led intelligence teams with a mission to 'find the enemy'. During those years, I completed a psychology degree, not with the intention of becoming a psychologist, but to better understand people, their motivations, their decisions, and their minds.

By the end of my army career, I was burnt out. I had missed most of my young daughter's life, and my family was paying the price for my service. I was also haunted by memories that refused to fade. I vividly remember one period during my third deployment to Iraq. It had been six months without seeing anything green, and all I wanted was to lie on the grass at home and look up at the trees. It's funny how our body communicates with our mind like this. Eventually, I was diagnosed with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and medically retired from the Army.

In the months that followed, I rediscovered my love for nature and woodworking. Combined with support from my family and some excellent health professionals, I found my way back. My career of service did not end with the Army, it simply took a new direction. I became a registered psychologist specialising in supporting veterans and first responders.

I now run Tamborine Mountain Psychology, a small private practice in the Gold Coast Hinterland. Halcyon Woodcraft grew naturally out of that work. Many of my clients found it exceedingly difficult to talk about deeply personal issues while sitting indoors, face-to-face with someone they did not know.

To make things easier, I started introducing simple hand tool projects like carving a spoon or making chopsticks into therapy sessions. These activities broke down barriers to communication without distracting from the conversation. Over time, some clients asked to hold sessions outdoors, saying they felt too confined inside four walls. The results were incredible.

The positive response encouraged me to transform my waiting room into a hand tool woodworking studio, filled with vintage tools and projects in various stages of completion. Clients waiting for their appointments could ground themselves through touching, smelling, and hearing the feedback from pieces of wood as they curiously played with a hand

Left: Windsor style chairs made by Nev Jones, lifelong woodworker and advocate for the mental health benefits of woodworking.

Opposite: Adjacent to his practice as a psychologist, Nev Jones runs Halcyon Woodcraft as a social enterprise that offers free workshops to veterans and first responders.

plane or drawknife. They did not have to sit still in silence, grappling with spiralling anxiety, as we all can do before a medical appointment. I noticed that clients who spent time in this environment prior to their sessions were more relaxed and engaged once sessions began.

In response to growing interest and support, I officially launched Halcyon Woodcraft in 2024 – a social enterprise funded entirely through my psychology practice. Halcyon Woodcraft provides free, wellbeing-focused hand tool woodworking programs for veterans, first responders, and vulnerable community members. Each program blends technical woodworking skills with Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) principles and focuses on themes like resilience and personal growth. Participants do not need a mental health diagnosis, just a desire to be a better person today than they were yesterday.

Most programs centre on green woodworking, with spooncarving being a favourite. Others have a more specific purpose: for example, one program involves building a mitred shadow box to display service medals. This program is aimed at veterans and first responders transitioning to civilian life. The theme is about honouring the past while accepting it is time to move forward to 'hang up the medals'.

Last year, I was honoured to be awarded a Churchill Fellowship to investigate the mental health benefits of green woodworking in therapeutic settings. My goal was to explore why green woodworking has such a positive impact beyond the obvious satisfaction of creating something tangible. While its wellbeing benefits are widely acknowledged, there is surprisingly little research explaining how it works on a psychological or physiological level.

Between June and August this year, I travelled to Japan, the USA, England, Sweden, Latvia, and Scotland, meeting with green woodworkers, researchers, and veteran organisations. I visited incredible

Left: Nev Jone's outdoor and indoor classes in green woodworking skills are combined with cognitive behaviour therapy principles as a vehicle for regaining mental health.

institutions like the Gifu Academy for Forest Science and Culture and the Mt Fuji Wood Culture Society in Japan, Peter Korn's Centre for Furniture Craftsmanship in Maine, and the Sätergläntan Institute for Slojd in Sweden. I also met with inspiring charities such as Plane Wellness (USA), Clervaux Fold (England), and Garvald Woodworkers (Scotland), who all use woodworking to improve the wellbeing of participants.

Along the way, I attended international green woodworking festivals Spoontown in rural Kent, Spoonfest in Derbyshire, and Taljfest in northern Sweden. These were a wonderful opportunity to immerse myself in the micro-culture of the green woodworking community. These festivals were an opportunity to meet and learn from iconic green woodworkers such as Samuel Alexander, Robin Wood and Barn the Spoon amongst others. Importantly, these festivals were an opportunity to meet many people of diverse background who use green woodworking as a tool to manage their own wellbeing.

Another highlight of my Fellowship travels was meeting and interviewing veterans and first responders from almost all countries visited, who use green woodworking to manage their mental health. Their insights confirmed what I had observed locally: green woodworking is an appropriate, accessible and effective craft which can be used to support therapeutic outcomes – it helps people heal.

Through my Fellowship, I identified four universal therapeutic mechanisms through which green woodworking can improve wellbeing- the 'Four Cs':

Calming. Green woodworking can downregulate the nervous system through its meditative rhythm. The focused attention, repetitive movement, and connection with nature promote relaxation and mindfulness.

Connection. The tools and techniques used in green woodworking connect us with previous generations and their craftsmanship. Additionally, due to green woodworking being about 'handmaking quality items that last', it also connects us with the future and our role as custodians of knowledge.

Creativity. Creative expression has long been linked to improved mood and emotional regulation. Green woodworking offers a practical and accessible creative outlet, something real you can hold and use.

Competence. Most green woodworking projects have a utilitarian purpose. We use the spoon we carve or the bowl we turn. Making something useful instils pride, confidence, and a renewed sense of capability.

The Churchill Fellowship has reshaped my practice and inspired the future of Halcyon Woodcraft. From 2026, we will continuing to offer free wellbeing programs for veterans and first responders and also develop new programs for people with disabilities. In addition, we will launch a community youth mentorship program offering free short-term woodworking mentorships for young people under 18.

We're also exploring multi-day programs and greater access for participants outside our local region. To achieve this, we're seeking corporate partnerships and collaborators who share our vision for using handcraft to increase human resilience.

Photos: Kate Wall

Learn more about Nev Jones and Halcyon Woodcraft at www.halcyonwoodcraft.au Read about Nev Jones' Churchill Fellowship experience at www.churchilltrust.com.au

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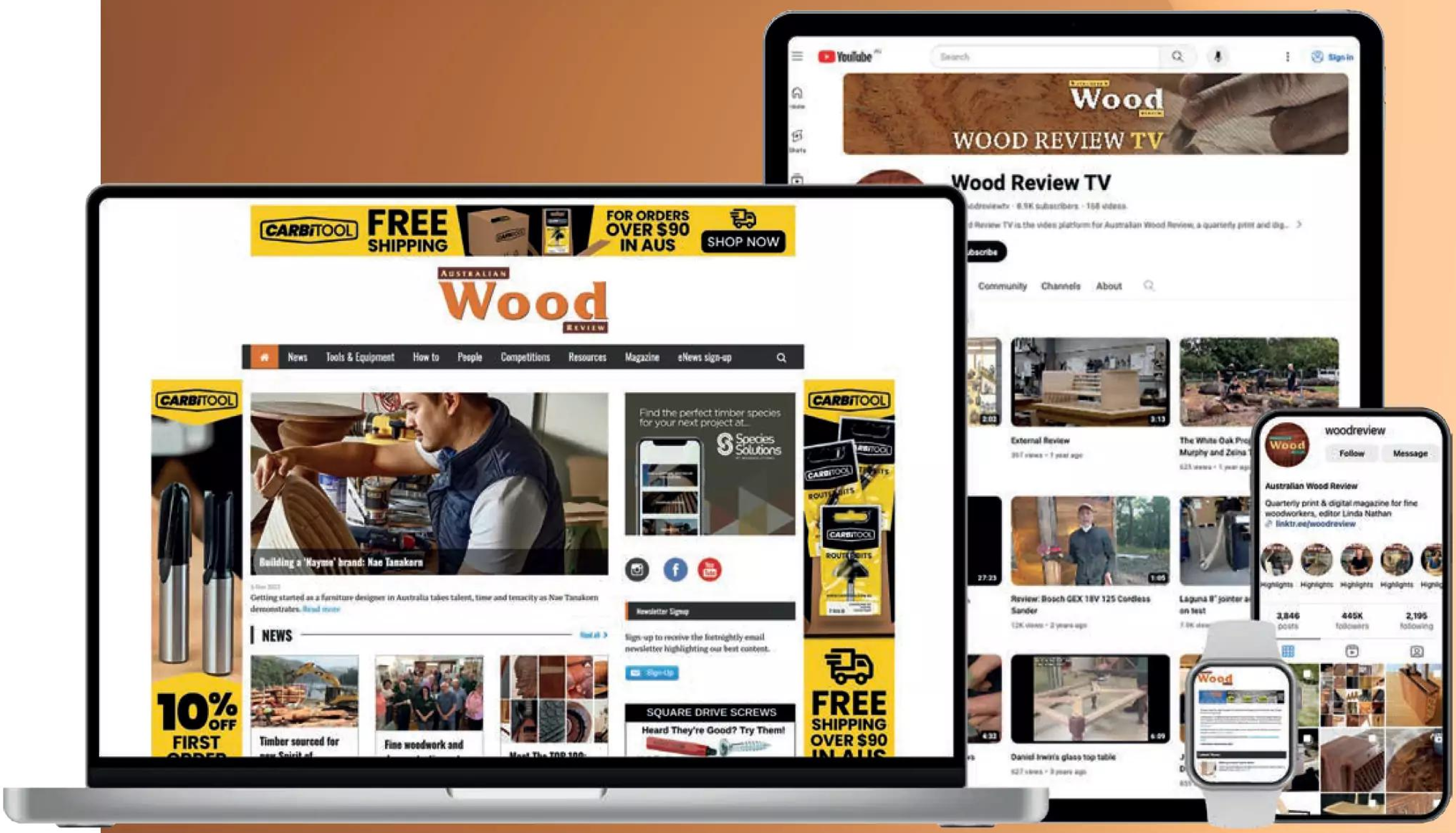

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