

AUSTRALIAN

Wood

REVIEW

109

MAKER OF THE
YEAR AWARDS
WINNERS, RUNNERS-UP
AND SHORTLISTED ENTRIES

BY HAND TOOLS ALONE Israel Martin Wall Cabinet

MAGIC OR MADNESS Carving Möbius Forms

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Editor's Letter

Maker of the Year 2020

Observing the difficult task of judging the 306 entries submitted for our first Maker of the Year awards tells me why I love what the world of woodworking gives us. We are all so radically different and yet this medium binds us. We may not agree on what 'looks good' or even what is 'well made', but boy does it gets our aesthetic and intellectual juices flowing.

Over the last (unbelievably) six months I've been metering out the entries on our social media so we can savour each piece and appreciate the intent of its maker. In some ways to me this is the best part. No, they're not all of equal merit – but as mentioned opinions differ and as makers we're all on the same road, maybe just not all at the same place.

For myself, I can appreciate finely executed work, exquisite woods and the sensitive use thereof. I love flowing lines where there are no visual stops and starts. I love originality and complexity – but only to a point – for me it usually comes down to the heart, what makes it sing – and what makes me want to touch, hold and gaze at a beautiful creation in wood.

There can only be one Maker of the Year but this competition really is for everyone who threw their hat in. Congratulations go to our winners and runners-up, however I applaud everyone who took a risk in putting their work out there. What we can all take from this is learning from others and letting that inspiration seep into our own work.

A big thank you goes to our sponsors. I never take sponsors for granted because it's always an altruistic thing to support not just a new concept but also the essence of what this community is about. This is my personal thank you to 3M Australia, Carbatec, Hare & Forbes Machineryhouse, Felder Group Australia and Whittle Waxes, and I urge you to return your support to these wonderful companies. Of course a big thank you also goes to our judges for the attention they gave to their difficult task.

Möbius madness

How could just one edge and one surface define a 3D form? Add a twist or three, join the ends and that is the initial way to understand these intriguing forms. This issue we have some special insights from wood sculptor Hape Kiddle on how you can experiment and create your own möbius carvings, see p.44.

Start with finishing

When Shane Wiechnik says '...finishing was that thing I did at the end after "completing" my piece to make it shiny and to protect it from wear and use,' it could have been me. His article this issue not only reinforces the point that finishing is a craft that requires practice, but that making an effort to explore techniques will open design possibilities. In support of that, read how Shane uses a combination of techniques to portray a theme in a series of works, see p.52.

The New Year

Bushfires, pandemics, lock-downs, economic challenges – 2020 is a year none of us will readily forget. Our last issue for the year is the time to wish you all the best for 2021 – next year is one we can all look forward to.

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COVER:

Wall cabinet under construction in the workshop
of Israel Martin, Spain.

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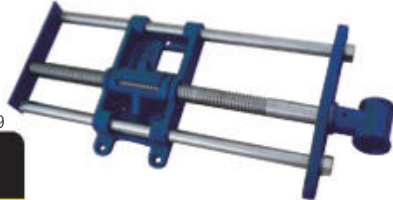
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Cordless Trimmers: DeWalt vs Milwaukee

Reviewed by David Howlett

Full size plunge routers and trimmer routers are used every day in our very busy workshop. With so many power tool brands offering more and more cordless options over the past few years, I wasn't at all interested in replacing our trusty 240 volt corded trimmer routers with any of the new breed of cordless offerings. I was pretty sure they couldn't perform as well as our trusty 240v trimmers. That thinking was turned on its head when Peter Mabbs from Milwaukee Tools asked us to test and appraise their M18FTR-0 prior to its release last year. Within the first few uses, I was an absolute convert. I had to have one!

As I had already started replacing all of our cordless drills with DeWalt drills, I couldn't resist picking up a DeWalt DCW604NXJ (with optional plunge base) after the guys at DeWalt suggested I try one of theirs. Be aware that neither of these routers are sold with batteries so if you don't already own batteries from either brand you'll be up for extra cost to purchase a battery and charger before you can get to work.

Just in case you're wondering if either of these trimmers is worth the extra dollars, I for one definitely think so. The lack of cord is pure power tool joy. Our trusty corded trimmers have been relegated to the sidelines. Having used these two cordless trimmers daily for months now, it is impossible for me to pick a favourite. Very different to each other in their design, DeWalt and Milwaukee have taken different approaches in their respective trimmers but both manufacturers have produced excellent tools.

There's a lot to love about both trimmers. Both come with excellent thick clear bases, with even larger baseplates provided in the box to change over for greater stability or perhaps attachment to jigs. I absolutely love the screw collar style depth adjustment on the DeWalt but then the Milwaukee has a brilliant fine depth adjustment knob within easy reach of your right thumb without changing your normal grip of the tool.

Then there's the very bright LED lights on both. Yeah I know they've been around for ages, but not as bright as either of these. The Milwaukee definitely outshines the DeWalt here. One of the best features of both models is the excellent chuck. Gone is the tiny little conical chuck collet from conventional trimmers that so often refused to release its grasp of your cutter, or worse, allowed the cutter to slip out when you cut a little too deep or fast, no matter how tight you did it up! Both these trimmers sport a large perforated chuck collet retained in the chuck nut just like their full size 1/2-inch counterparts. The 1/4-inch chuck has finally grown up.

The DeWalt is just plain big, giving a sense that this is a serious 1/4-inch router. If you have smaller hands you'll likely find yourself using two hands to control the DeWalt. The Milwaukee is really the size we all expect a trimmer router to be, which means it's much more comfortable to hold for those with average to smaller sized hands. Weight-wise both units are surprisingly heavy once a battery is attached. While most of our customers make this observation the first time they pick up either tool, everyone agrees this is a non-issue as soon as the router is placed upon the work surface. The DeWalt weighs in at 1551gm without a battery and 2180gm with its 5Ah battery attached. The Milwaukee weighs 1371gm bare and 1979gm with a 3Ah battery attached.

Power to perform is there in spades from the brushless motors used in both trimmers. A brilliant feature of the brushless motor



From top: DeWalt DCW604NXJ and Milwaukee M18FTR-0 cordless trim routers

Showing the DeWalt with fence and optional plunge base attachments.

The Milwaukee trimmer with fence, guard and base attachments.



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is that they stop almost instantly when you switch them off. Neither of these routers hints at lacking power compared to a corded tool. So how long can you use your router on one charge? You'll likely be pleasantly surprised by just how much work you'll get done on a single charge. How long your battery will last will depend on variables such as the speed you're running at, diameter and profile of the cutter in use, depth of cut, timber hardness and how hard you're pushing the tool to get the job done. In our DeWalt we're using 4Ah and 5Ah batteries and on the Milwaukee we have 3Ah. We're mostly getting around half an hour work or so out of these, and that's a lot of work.

While the Milwaukee has a standard traditional trimmer fence much the same as any other I've ever used, the DeWalt has a larger fence that allows the router to be set much further in from the edge of a board which is a feature I really like. Attaching the fence to the DeWalt is done by inserting the fence into a slot, then fastening it with two very small countersunk screws.

While there are extra screw storage holes in the fence for storing the screws when not in use, I can definitely imagine losing the screws quite easily. While on the topic of attaching fences, the one feature of the Milwaukee I'm not so thrilled about is the tiny attachment knob. While the Milwaukee fence has an excellent large black knob for adjustment, my work weary fingertips aren't thrilled with the clumsy attachment knob.

I've purchased the DeWalt with the optional plunge base which is an excellent accessory that transforms the trimmer into a serious 1/4-inch plunge router. The plunge base has been well designed and the quality of manufacturing is impressive. While the Milwaukee base was out of stock at the time of writing, I'll be getting one as soon as possible as it looks like a very worthwhile addition. The optional offset base available for the Milwaukee may just be the solution for routing in some confined spaces.

I can highly recommend both trimmer routers as a worthwhile addition to your workshop. While they are somewhat different in their design, they are both designed so well and afford users much greater freedom in how and where they are used compared to a 240v model. If you're considering buying one for yourself, I would recommend going to a store where you can hold a demo in your hand to compare grip, weight and feel. I didn't expect cordless trimmer routers to work every bit as well as a corded one, now I can't wait for the day we see cordless 1/2-inch routers.

David Howlett is a furniture designer maker and principle of the Perth Wood School, see www.perthwoodschool.com.au



Top: Weight- and grip-wise the DeWalt is a bit larger than the Milwaukee.



Above: Showing both trimmer with fences attached.

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Tools That Talk

Duncan Meerding looks at adaptive technologies for those with visual impairment.



For the last 14 years I have been operating as a designer maker of lighting and furniture in Hobart, Tasmania. I have less than 5% vision concentrated around the periphery, meaning I am legally blind. This does create a range of challenges as a practitioner and means I often do things in a different way utilising more jigs or other pieces of assistive technology.

This article will discuss a few ways I set things up for some more basic operations and also look how my tablesaw and thickness planer now have a 'talking' digital read out system.

First things first

To start with, the key thing I do when I approach a machine is to make sure it is isolated from the power and use an off-cut or push stick to make sure it's not in motion. I then cross-check the stop is on, or the tool is unplugged from the wall for smaller hand held tools. Once I have confirmed that the machine is in this stage I set up ready for the cut. For simple things like cutting up panels or drawers I use a range of talking or tactile tools.

The click rule

For fitting shelves or drawer runners I would often use a talking tape measure. This is only accurate to 1 to 2mm tolerance so for greater accuracy I would cut oversize and reduce the size of stock incrementally by 'kissing' the blade. This is what I did for many years, as the talking calipers I have are a bit limiting due to size.

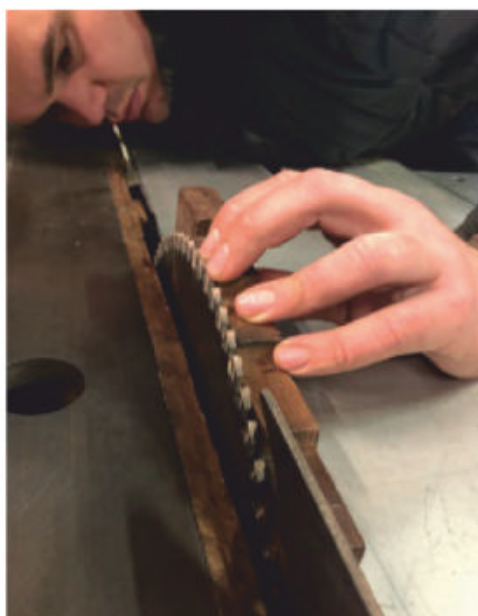
In steps a device I discovered a few years ago via Woodworking for the Blind (ww4b.org). The click rule is great for transcription measuring. The main clicking part looks like a piece of threaded rod with a flat surface ground onto it which then inserts into a tubular piece of aluminium. A bolt for lock-off goes through the rod and intersects with the threads, and this is what creates the sound and feel of the clicking.

Above: Hobart designer maker Duncan Meerding in his workshop.

From left: Talking tape measures are good but not as accurate as click rules.

Using a depth stop to measure in 10mm increments on the tablesaw which has a digital read-out and mini computer fitted to it.

The click rule in action.

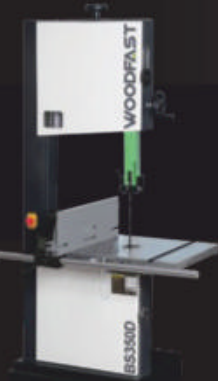


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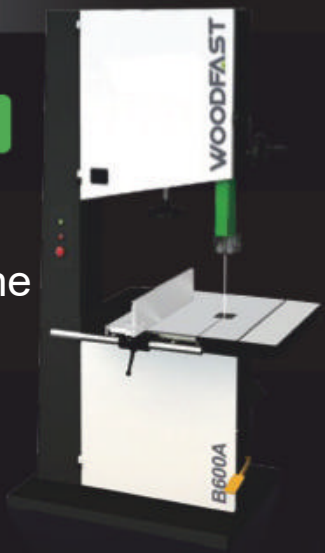
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Each click represents a 1mm increment, with an extra tactile marker every 10mm. The device then has a range of add-on rods allowing for extension of up to one metre. This device is quite handy for fitting shelves or runners as you can do point-to-point transcription measuring.

For depth stops and for spacers I still often use tactile measuring blocks as they are extremely accurate for things like rebates. These tactile solutions are super helpful, but still have the limitation that the machine has to be static and isolated every time you want to adjust it.

Talking machines

Most people reading this article would be familiar with the range of gauges available on thickness planers, from the traditional arrow on ruler version up to the digital read-out systems. One of my chief frustrations was the lack of off the shelf options for people who can't read sight specific read-outs.

In my search for linear optical gauges I eventually found a company in the USA that understood what I wanted to do. Now I have Pro Scale Digital read-outs with a mini computer reading out audibly on both sides of my SCM tablesaw and on my Wadkin thickness planer.

How they work

Accurate Technology Inc had developed a system which got the proprietary signal out of the data output and converted it into a traditional USB (like a keyboard) signal. This converter meant the signal could then be plugged into a traditional laptop.

Whilst this is great as my laptop has text to speech talking and I could access the information, I was not 100% keen to have my laptop sitting on top of my thickness planer or tablesaw. I therefore discussed getting a purpose built mini computer (raspberry pie) programmed and custom built with a local programmer. These boxes were created to be robust enough to withstand the occasional knock and secured well enough to the machines so they wouldn't rattle off. The box gets the USB signal and anytime I hit data send I now get the audible interpretation.

It took a bit of setting up with a local fellow furniture maker Stuart Houghton assisting with fitting things to be super robust, but now I have digital accessible information. This means I can adjust stops accurately on my saw without having to turn off the machine every time and I do not have to guess and check as I place things through the thickness planer.

For me and others like me, it's exciting to see where these developing technologies can take us.

Photos: Duncan Meerding

Duncan Meerding has been running his own designer maker practice for the last 10 years. He was a guest teaching fellow at the world-first Architecture Beyond Sight course at the University College of London in 2019. He is currently collaborating with Visibility in setting up a woodworking course for the blind in Tasmania for later this year. See his work at www.duncanmeerding.com.au

Accurate Technology Inc, www.proscale.com

Tape King – Talking Tape Measure from Caretec, www.caretec.at

Click rule from www.highlandwoodworking.com/click-rule.aspx



From top:

The author's Wadkin thicknesser is fitted with a talking digital read-out.

Close up to the digital readout fitted to the SCM tablesaw.

Teamed with a mini computer, the Pro Scale Digital gauge reads out audibly on both sides of the tablesaw.



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Acer-Ferrous Sector

Reviewed by Robert Howard

The sector is a very old mathematical instrument that has become relevant again as an aid to design, but up until now it was very difficult to find one. The arrival of this Acer-Ferrous Toolworks sector from Red Rose Reproductions satisfies that need.

So, what can a sector do? The sector can be used, in conjunction with a set of dividers, to find proportions (including Golden Ratios); find the radius, diameter or circumference of circles; find the length of the side of any polygon (up to 12 sides) to fit a given circle; set out given angles, or measure given angles (from 6–90°).

Finally, for chairmakers, it can calculate resultant and sightline angles from any given rake and splay angles. This greatly simplifies the drilling of any compound angle hole, such as the leg mortises on Windsor chairs.

All of these uses involve working from a known dimension – in metric, imperial or degrees – to set the sector, and then using dividers to read off or set out the dimension that is required. A few simple steps are all that are needed.

A quick example: what is the length of each side of an 11-sided polygon drawn

to touch the circumference of a circle 187mm in diameter? 1. Draw a circle with 187mm diameter. 2. Set dividers to the radius of 93.5mm. 3. Set the sector by placing the dividers, set to 93.5mm, into the holes marked '6' on the P scale. 4. Finally, with the sector remaining set in that position, re-set the dividers in the holes marked '11' on the same scale. That is the required length of each of the 11 sides.

I deliberately chose the odd numbers to emphasise how easy these problems become (and yes, I did test it, and it worked without any discernible error). Note also that I do not need to know the actual length in millimetres, but just step it out with the dividers.

The most exciting possibilities however, are to be found in its use for finding proportions. George R Walker and Jim Tolpin, in their two books (*By Hand and Eye*, and *By Hound and Eye*), detail their discovery of how traditional designers used proportions as the basis of design. This method has been hiding in plain sight for over two centuries, and offers a way to take the guesswork out of the many design decisions that need to be made when drawing up a design.

In the space I have here I can only point you towards their books. The

method is simple in concept, but tricky in execution. However, if I was 40 years younger I would make mastering it an urgent priority.

The sector itself is of high quality, likely to survive regular use over a long career. The two arms are made from anodised aluminium, and are joined with a brass hinge much like those used in the old, folding boxwood rules. The four scales are laser engraved on the rules, two on the front and two on the back, and include small holes at each numerical point designed to capture the points of a set of dividers. The stiffness of the hinge can be adjusted with the special tool that is supplied.

A 26 page instruction booklet (but no dividers) is also supplied, with additional instruction videos available on the company website. It is available from Lie-Nielsen Australia, for \$314. I have already put my money down (paying full price), to endorse my opinion of its usefulness.

Review tool supplied by Lie-Nielsen Australia, www.lie-nielsen.com.au

Robert Howard is a woodworker and sculptor who lives in Brisbane. He teaches woodcarving classes from his studio. Email: howardrobert@mac.com



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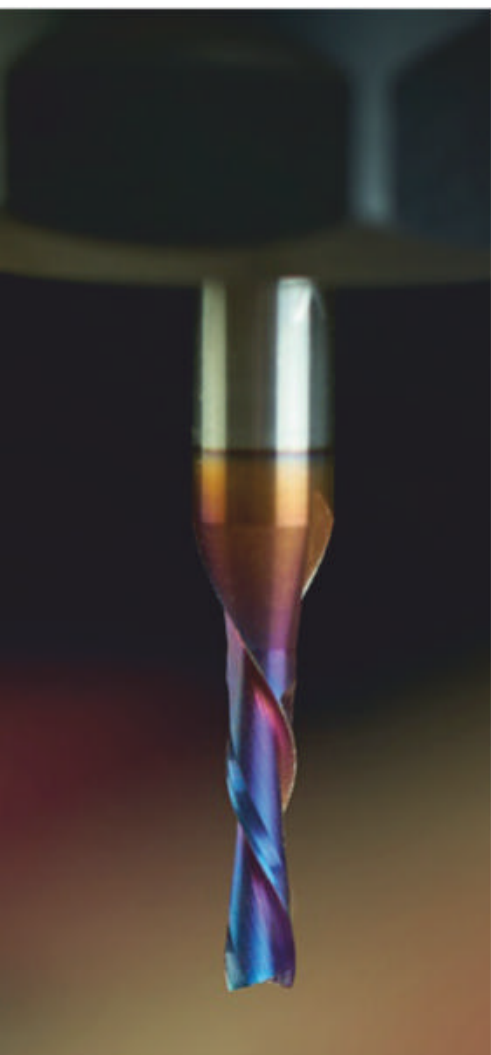
New Series Hammer ►

With the machines collectively known as Series 2, Hammer's goal is to offer a new entry-level machine class. Enter the N2-35, the first of this series. The price point is lower but the features are there, including a solid, tilting cast iron machine table that has a 15mm groove to the left of the blade. Cut height is 235mm via a gear rack and handwheel. A swing-away rip fence positions either side of the blade and stands high or flat. Other features and options make it worth considering.
www.felder-group.com/en-au



Product news

A round-up of tools and equipment to take notice of.



◀ Amana in Oz

A select range of Amana Tools premium quality specialty tooling is now available in Australia. In particular the focus is on CNC machine users, including cutters suiting carbon fibre, plastics, non-ferrous metal, solid timber, manmade composites, engraving and more. Proprietary coatings like Spektra hardened ceramic top off their attention to detail and premium materials, providing up to 2.5x the edge life of a regular micro grain tungsten carbide cutter.
www.carbatec.com.au

Fixed and Flexible ▼

The AUK fixed base router motor V3 is an industrial-quality router that runs on a 230–240 volt 10 amp domestic power supply. The motor has an outside diameter of 4.2inch (106.7mm) to suit Incra Mast-R-Lift, Jessem and other router lifts. The V3 has new high performance SKF bearings and updated electronics, and allows for precise adjustment of cutter height without cutter length loss below the table. The motor shaft and auto-release collet rise above the table for easy cutter change. A soft start variable speed control is sealed for reliability in router tables or CNC machines and engineered to maintain constant speed under load. From Gregory Machinery and Professional Woodworkers Supplies
www.woodworksupplies.com.au
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Super Scroll ►

The B-18V scroll saw is an all-round machine with a powerful, variable speed motor easily able to cope with its 50mm depth of cut. The cast iron table tilts to 45° and has plenty of workspace for larger projects. The base is also cast iron with rubber feet to eliminate vibration. The machine takes pinned and pinless blades and has a large tensioning knob easily accessible at the rear of the top arm. The integrated flexible LED light, dust blower and blade guard keep cut lines in view.

www.machineryhouse.com.au/W352



◀ Silicon Fingers

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More For Your Money ►

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▲ The New Alpha

The Harvey Alpha HW615 15" bandsaw is new to Australia and aims to please serious and commercial users. The underlying concept is for a heavy-duty, powerful, and precise machine that's a pleasure to use. It's single phase, 3HP, has a 350mm cut height, 368mm throat capacity, 508mm² table and weighs in at 218kg with an overall height of 1830mm. Available through Gregory Machinery.

www.gregmach.com



◀ Resin Plus

River table makers and resin artists know the crystal clear and bubble-free features of locally made LuciClear casting resin. Two new related and complementary products are now available. LuciClear Coating Resin self levels and spreads evenly over flat surfaces and finishes with a 1mm deep ultra high gloss finish that enhances the colour, grain and artwork below. Artists Resin is medium viscosity and ideal for smaller art pieces, pigment lacing and effects where a clear finish is required.

www.luciclear.com.au



Industrial Heavyweights ▲

Just launched onto the Australian market is a new super heavy range of machines for industrial use which includes planer thicknessers, bandsaws and a panel saw. Most machines are three-phase and designed for larger and heavier solid timber milling and breakdown work. Toughness and reliability are the touted benefits, with added safety features that include extra emergency stops and micro safety switches on doors and openings. From a large dealer network throughout Australia that now also includes the Wood Tech Group.

www.woodfast-group.com



◀ Bow Safety Gear

Bow Products have updated their unique Featherboard design and also released some new safety gear products. Available online and throughout Australia and New Zealand from Carbatec.

www.carbatec.com.au

Down With Dust ▼

WoodRiver's dust connection two-piece downdraft panel set makes it easy to build your own downdraft sanding table. Each steel panel has an array of large holes for rubber grommets to grip the workpiece. Smaller holes help pull the sanding dust down and away when used with a shop vacuum or dust collector. You can also fit work holding stops in the smaller holes to keep the workpiece steady. Currently \$66.50 a pair from Professional Woodworkers Supplies.

www.woodworksupplies.com.au



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Hand Built Wall Cabinet

Israel Martin works to fine tolerances with hand tools alone for the precision, performance and enjoyment they offer.



These pages: The completed cabinet is made by hand tools alone from Spanish chestnut with a walnut door panel and English yew face on the side drawer.



My design process begins on paper with a rough sketch of the main features I want – the number of drawers, doors, spaces, not too much, and I also like to draw some of the details. After deciding on the measurements I then jump into the real thing. Because I use only hand tools I don't like doing mock-ups, and try to work with the real piece right from the start. I need to see the volume of the piece to figure out how it looks with the wood I've chosen.

Working by hand

I start by dimensioning by hand the main pieces of the structure. One face of the rough board is made flat, normally with a jack plane, unless it is a very uneven piece, in which case I'll start with the scrub plane. I then mark the thickness on that board with a marking gauge and plane to the knife line. That is the hardest part of all, but also the one that helps me feel the wood.

After the all the wood for the main structure is prepared I start on the joinery for the carcass so I can get a feeling for the overall dimensions of the piece. I work on the rest of the elements the same way. That way for me, working everything by hand, it's much more fun than if I dimension all the pieces first and then do all the joinery. In this way I can also make adjustments to the project as I work on it.



1. For the panels, two bookmatched boards were selected and sawn.
2. The glued up panels were cleaned up and re-flattened.

CUTTING LIST				
PARTS	QTY	LENGTH	WIDTH	THICKNESS
Carcase (chestnut)				
Sides and divider	3	680	150	13
Top and base	2	480	150	13
Shelves	3	160	150	10
	1	300	150	10
Drawer case	2	300	60	7
Drawers				
Front (Douglas fir	2	145	60	16
Sides (maple)	4	138	60	7
Back (maple)	2	145	60	7
Bottoms (red cedar)	2	138	145	10
Side drawer				
Front (yew)	1	48	31	13
Sides (maple)	2	300	31	7
Back (maple)	1	48	31	7
Bottom (red cedar)	1	300	48	10
Door				
Frame (chestnut)	2	480	34	14
	1	300	34	14
	1	300	26	14
Panel (American walnut)	1	385	230	10
Back				
Boards (red cedar)	7	680	73	10
Splines (mahogany)	7	680	5	2



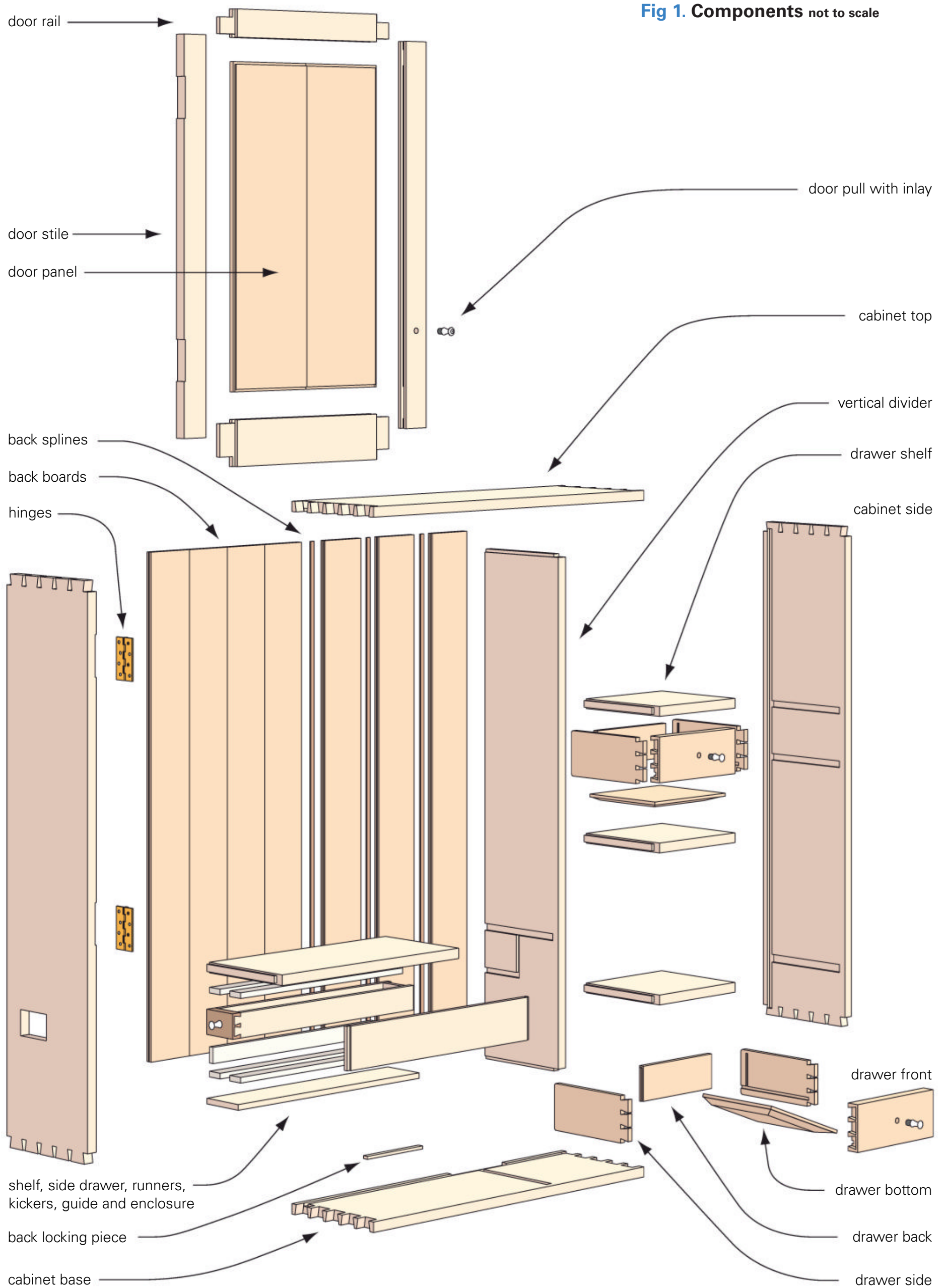
Because I work alone and by hand another thing I do is to look for off-cuts of past work so I don't have to prepare everything from scratch. Normally that's what I do for internal parts such as drawer guides, dust panels, drawer sides and sometimes even for seen components such as drawer fronts.

Making this cabinet was about spaces, colour and grain. I wanted to use some of the off-cuts I already had, such as the Douglas fir drawer fronts and the English yew small side drawer.

Gluing up the panels

I used quartersawn Spanish chestnut for the carcase. I like working with chestnut because it is a really hand tool friendly wood, so sawing and planing goes really smoothly. Two bookmatched boards were sawn (**photo 1**), planed, spring jointed and glued up to get the desired width.

After removing them from the clamps I had to dimension them again so they were perfectly flat (**photo 2**). Because the boards were bookmatched the grain direction changes on

Fig 1. Components not to scale



the panels, so I had to plane in two directions and carefully in the middle to avoid tear-out.

Cutting dovetails

The carcass was joined with through dovetails. I marked the tails and sawed to the line. I like to use a marking knife instead of a pencil to mark the tails as well, because if I don't saw them completely square I can easily adjust them to the marking knife left. I pare the shoulders with chisels and then transfer the tails to mark the pins. I saw a bit inside the lines and then pare to the lines to get crisp joints with no gaps before a test fit (**photo 3**).

With the four carcass pieces done I have the real internal measurements for the shelves. After preparing the shelf material I used a router plane to cut dados (**photo 4**) and rebates, because the piece is not too wide and they are much faster to cut than sliding dovetails. **Photo 5** shows the first carcass dry fit.

Side drawer guide

Normally when I make side drawers all the inside guides, runners and kickers are hidden inside the carcass. In this case I had to make a small half case to hide those pieces, otherwise they would be visible from the outside.

A 'hole' was first made for the drawer as if for a wide through mortise, but in this case the four inner sides were made completely smooth (**photo 6**).

Dados and rebates were cut into the side and main carcass divider to house the side drawer guide. The side and bottom pieces were rebated on one edge and the sides glued. These are also rebated on their ends to fit into a rebate on the main carcass (**photos 7, 8, 9**).

There is no problem with wood movement because the pieces are narrow. The guides, runners and kickers were then made so I could perfectly fit the drawer inside



(**photo 10**). After making this side drawer case. I glued up the carcase pieces (**photo 11**).

Making the drawers

The front drawers are made with straight grain Douglas fir fronts and maple sides. I used American walnut for the door panel and a small piece of English yew for the side drawer front.

The drawer fronts were first made to fit tightly in position and the sides and backs then made a bit oversize as their length would be adjusted later on.

When making dovetails I always start first with the tails – I just mark them and saw without further adjustment if they are nice and straight. I transfer the markings to get the pins, then remove the waist and adjust them with chisels.

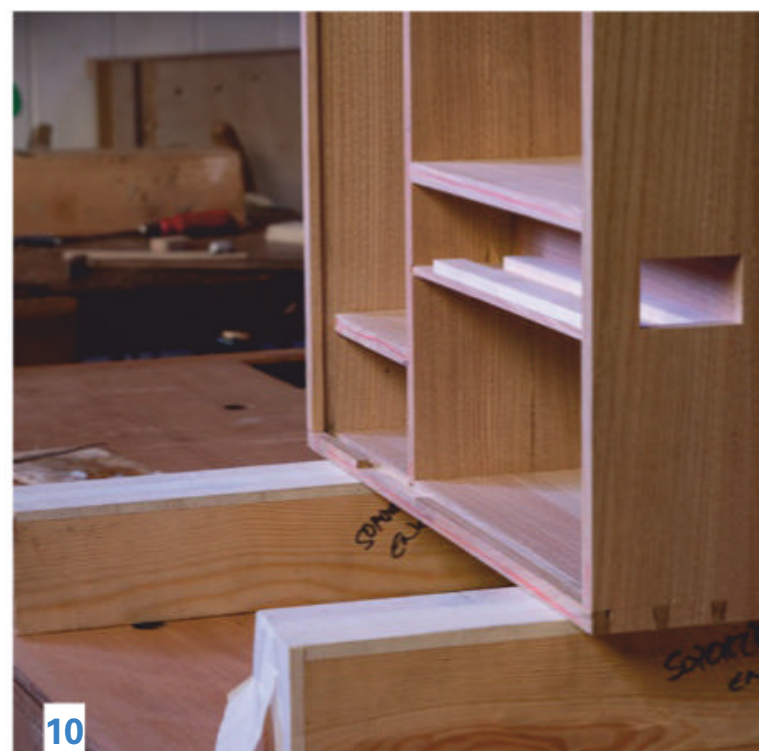
I learnt how to join the backs for the drawers from Garrett Hack. Sliding dovetails are very strong and space

for wood movement can be left at the base. This also allows me to pull out the drawer and see everything inside without pulling it out all the way (**photo 12**).

The tenon of the sliding dovetail is made with a dovetail plane. The mortise part is made with chisels and a small router plane removed the waste. The sides are finished with a wide chisel and a shopmade dovetail guide.

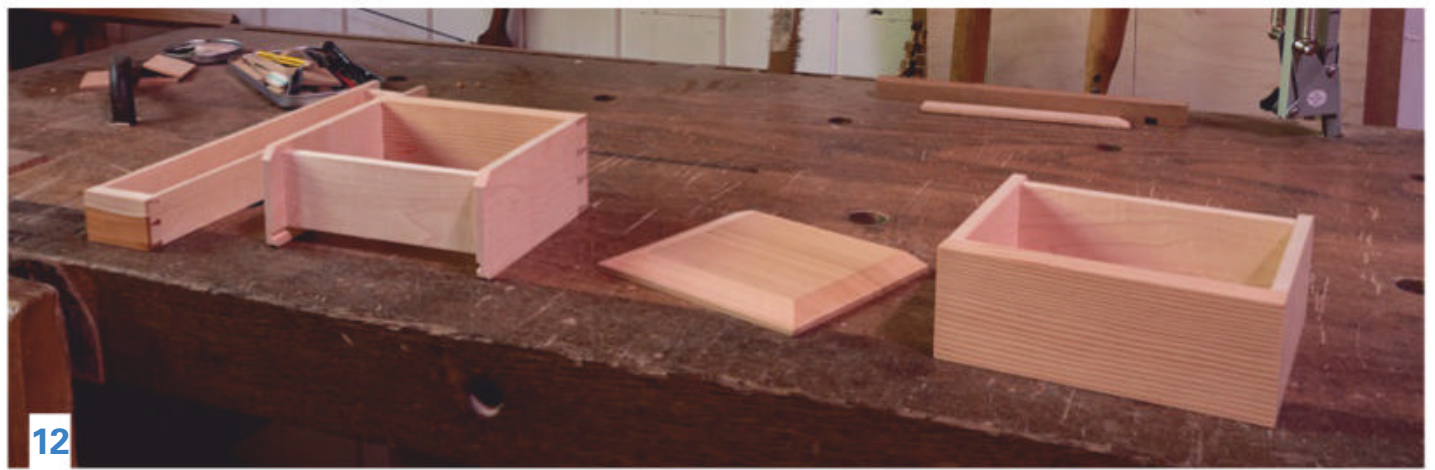
Then once they are glued up, I finished adjusting them in place, planing their sides little by little until they fitted smoothly.

I like to use quartersawn red cedar for my drawer bottoms and cabinet backs, because of its straight grain, stability and ease to work with the saw (**photo 13**). The only challenge I find with red cedar is getting a mirror polish on it with the hand plane. I use a low



3. Test fitting dovetailed boards for the carcass.
4. Dados were made for the shelves and drawer guide with a router plane.
5. Dry fitting the carcass.
6. An opening for the side drawer was cut.
7. For the side drawer case, two components were rebated and glued along their length.
8. Dry fitting the side drawer case.
9. Prepared carcass componentry showing the rebates cut for the side drawer case at the rear.
10. Runners for the side drawer were cut, prepared and fitted.
11. Gluing up the carcass.

12. The drawer backs are fitted into sliding dovetails which allow for wood movement.
13. Straight grained quartersawn red cedar was used for the drawer bases.
14. Preparing door frame components. The stiles and rails are bookmatched.
15. Starting the door frame mortises with a hand drill.
16. Completing the door frame joinery.
17. The back boards are prepared and test fitted. A section of the lower groove is removed to allow their insertion and final fitting with splines in between.
18. Making splines for back panels.



angle plane with a low angle (and most importantly) very sharp blade sharpened at least to 10,000 grit. And I sharpen it very often because red cedar dulls your blade very quickly.

The drawer bottom sides are chamfered and fit into 4mm side and front grooves. After making them I plane smooth the down side of all the bottoms.

The door

The door is made from quartersawn chestnut with the sides and stiles bookmatched (**photo 14**). The joinery is haunched mortise and tenons and the panel is rebated on

all sides to fit into the stile grooves.

I always drill the mortises in the stiles first with a hand brace with a drill bit that is about 1mm narrower than the mortise (**photo 15**), then adjust with chisels. I check the mortises are square to make sure there is no problem later with the tenons. I normally make the tenons at one end and then measure from reality for the tenons on the other (**photo 16**).

The tenons are sawn almost to the gauge line and then finished with the router plane in order to get the two tenon faces perfectly parallel to the stile faces.

Only a few adjustments are then needed with a float to fit them perfectly in their tenons. After the door is made I check it with winding sticks.

A nice piece of bookmatched walnut was used for the door panel and adds interest to the piece while contrasting with the straight grain elsewhere.

After the door is glued up, it was fitted with brass hinges, first to the door, and then to the carcass. Small adjustments achieve a perfect fit.

The back

The back boards sit in grooves (**photo 17**) however the bottom carcass



16



18



17

groove is rebated on a small section so the boards can slide in and then move to the sides (see **fig.1**), before a locking piece is inserted. In this way all but one of the boards are completely surrounded by grooves.

The back is also made from red cedar panels joined with mahogany splines (**photo 18**). The splines are glued to one panel and without glue on the other, like a tongue and groove joint.

Each board is individually fitted so the gaps between them are even.

Finishing

After the first few coats of thin shellac I used pumice to fill the grain

before applying another 9–10 coats and then fitting the pulls.

The pulls are the most difficult parts for me to design as they can make a piece, or destroy it. The size, the colour, how they are attached – everything has to be taken into account.

Here I made small Shaker style pulls and this is the only time I used a machine, a small lathe. I used African blackwood and finished them with steel wool and wax while they were on the lathe. They are fitted with contrasting holly wedges. A small circle of abalone was inlaid into the door pull.

My decision to work only with hand tools has to do with enjoying their performance and precision, and also reflects my frustration with low cost machines. Also, given that my workshop is next door to my home, using hand tools allows me to work at any time of the day I choose.

Photos: Israel Martin



Israel Martin lives in Cantabria in northern Spain, works to commission and teaches hand tool woodworking. Apart from some short workshops with Garrett Hack he is self taught and honed his skills building his own workshop, workbench and some of his tools. Learn more at www.lacabraenlaescalera.com and Instagram @lacabraenlaescalera

Maker of the Year 2020

Presenting our winners, runners-up and selected entries.

We asked you to enter your best work and you certainly did! For our inaugural Maker of the Year awards we received a massive 306 entries – beautiful examples of woodworking that ranged from all manner of furniture, lighting, cabinetry, hand tools, musical instruments, boxes and vessels to sculptural works. Some are exquisitely refined and superb examples of the craft; some are wildly expressive and their beauty tells a story that is not just about technique. And some celebrate tradition, while others take a new road.

Award winners were determined by a panel of experts whose formal qualifications span the disciplines of engineering, architecture, design and education as well as trade skills. We thank them for applying their experience and the sensitivities that these professional makers have to the heartfelt work of others.

There were four categories which makers could elect to enter their work in: Furniture, Bowls & Boxes, Art & Accessories and Student. Entry was via our website where entry criterion and other information may be found.

Our sponsors are the enablers that make community initiatives such as this possible. Maker of the Year was presented by 3M Australia, a company known for its innovations and far reaching, research-driven products. Our sponsors are woodworking industry giants: Carbatec, Felder Group Australia, Hare & Forbes Machineryhouse and Whittle Waxes. These are companies that strive to provide top quality products and services, who support our community and who deserve our support in return.

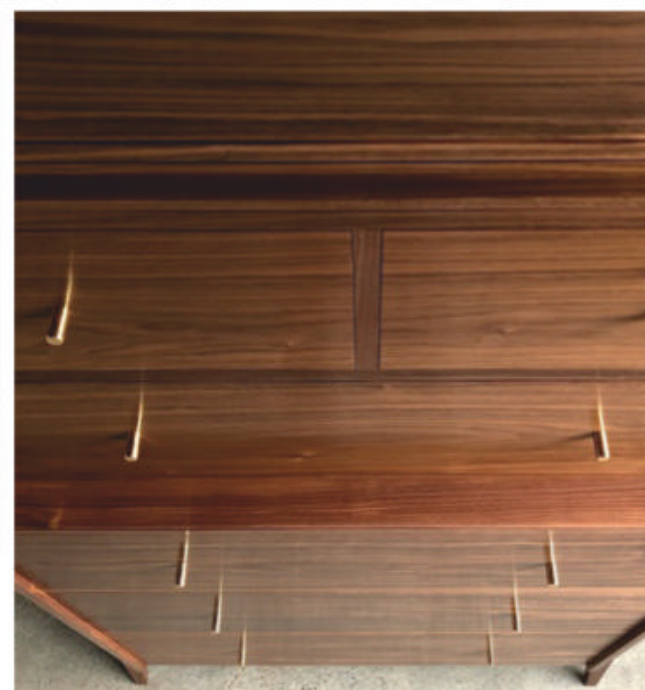
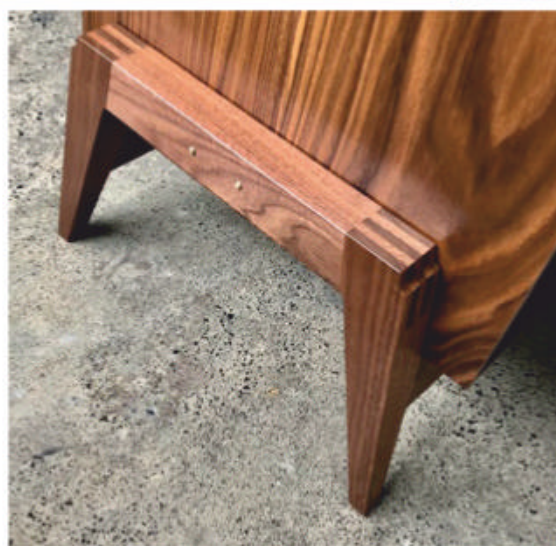
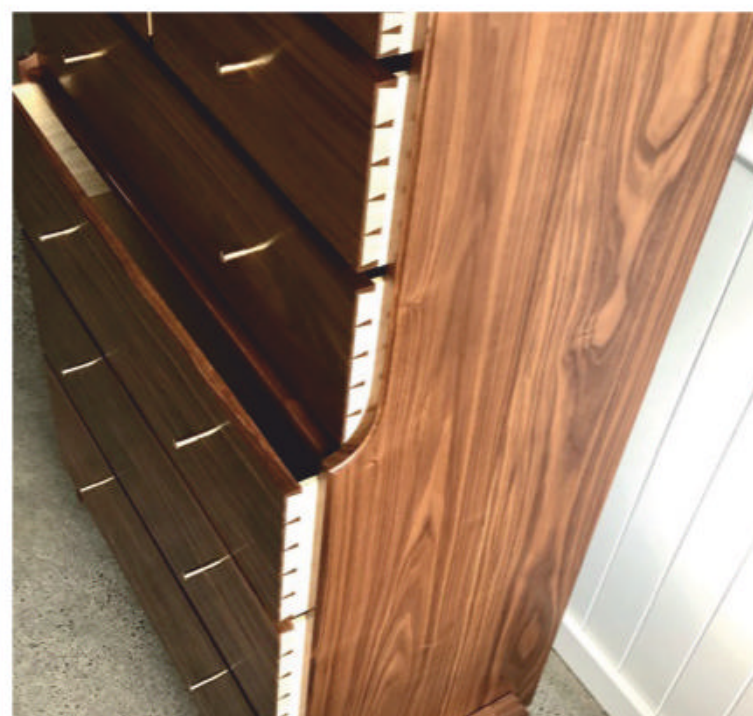
In the following pages you can see the winning entries for Maker of the Year 2020 along with some



of the finalists. To see all the entries head to www.woodreview.com.au/moty and click on a category icon to view an incredible range of work. Where else in fact can you view such a diverse collection of current work by Australian and New Zealand makers?

A big thank you to all who entered – stay tuned for details of MOTY 2021 which will be released in our March issue next year!





MAKER OF THE YEAR & FURNITURE WINNER

Simeon Dux, Sham Tallboy, American walnut, poplar, brass.

What the judges said

• Simeon Dux had two pieces in contention for the Furniture prize, and one for Bowls & Boxes. His work is the right mix of skill, design and identity, but it was the breadth and consistency of skill that has earned him the top gong. In design this piece dances between historical, midcentury and contemporary precedents in its language, but is able to unite them all to create something that is pleasing to the contemporary eye while retaining the richness of its lineage.

The craftsmanship is precisely done without being showy, and works to support the design intent rather than being a design element itself. Moments of flourish in detail are clever but not overbearing, and the proportions give this piece a strong sense of presence and identity. – *Adam Markowitz*

Sustained excellence across all his entries makes Simeon Dux a very deserving winner. Closely following was Miles Gostelow, who also demonstrated a range of excellent work. Either of Simeon Dux's major pieces were good enough to win

the Furniture category IMHO, but there was a lot of excellent competition. It was very difficult to choose between such a range of genres, styles and periods. – *Robert Howard*

This a beautifully resolved piece that showcases the maker's technical skills and design knowledge with restraint and sophistication. The references to Shaker, mid-century modern and Art Deco influences are clear but not overplayed. Congratulations Simeon on a beautiful piece. – *Laura McCusker*

Through the three pieces entered by Simeon is evident a desire to work to an incredibly high standard. From design through joinery to finish, his resolve and meticulous approach is obvious.

The exceptional quality of his finished work is undeniable. A very worthy winner. Whilst giving a nod to different styles the lovely proportions, timber selection and final composition make for a well balanced, unique piece. Beautifully executed. – *Bern Chandley*

The Judges



Adam Markowitz,
architect and
furniture designer
www.markowitzdesign.com



Bernard Chandley,
furniture designer and maker
www.bernchandleyfurniture.com



Laura McCusker,
furniture designer
and maker
www.lauramccusker.com



Robert Howard,
Contributing Editor, mechanical
engineer and woodworker
www.roberthoward.com.au



FURNITURE – RUNNER-UP

Alexsandra Pontonio, *Flank Bookshelf*, Vic ash, Tasmanian blackwood.

'The sliding dovetail bookends gesture equally to the piece's craft and utility. Interactive and adaptable, these can be used, moved or replaced by flat blanks. A nod to the detail, the shape of the uprights are notched into the shelves following the same 8° taper. The slender internal cabinet features shop sawn Tassie blackwood veneer.' Photos: Northside Studio

Flank is a design that elegantly combines functionality and craft to produce a piece that will stand the test of time in both aesthetics and use. By contrasting blackwood with Tasmanian oak the joinery and function has been highlighted in a way that is both appropriate and decorative without



being overdone. Congratulations Alexandra, a very close runner-up. – Laura McCusker

The strength of this piece is in the sophisticated play between utility and beautiful simplicity. The proportions and integrity of construction are spot on. – Bern Chandley

This piece is a fantastic example of progressive fine woodworking, and where I think we need to be heading as a craft. It is innovative, contemporary and forward thinking, but is rooted in an understanding of the craft, an expression of skill and a joy of materiality and the handmade. – Adam Markowitz

Clockwise from left:

Simeon Dux, *Art Deco Wall Unit*, walnut, white oak. Photo: Northside Studio

Julian Glencross McCartney, *Promontory Dresser*, Vic ash, Gippsland blackwood. 'The result of transcribing natural and manmade features, seen while hiking through the Wilsons Promontory coastal region of Victoria, into a functional furniture design for a modern living space. Fire-scorched rails and staves speak of the blackened trees scattered throughout the coastal bushland.' Photo: @boots_n_fades

Greg Allan, *Barletta Cabinet*, blackwood, maple, brass mesh. 'Somewhere to stash your special stuff.' Photo: Northside Studio

Remy Tramoy, *Becoming*, American walnut, poplar. 'Mid Century Modern with a personal touch, this piece is all about a simple yet elegant form that lets the grain speak first. The name refers to my entry into parenthood when we welcomed our twins into the world.'

Marinos Drakopoulos, *MM03*. 'Inspired by traditional forms found in Windsor chairs, shaped layers of laminated timber form the backrest and incorporate carefully refined structural elements.'

Myles Gostelow, *Cascading Synergy Dining Table*, Huon pine and Tas blackwood dining table pair. When butted together the grain and the endgrain of the legs form a waterfall detail.

Nick Pedulla, *Walnut & Brass Record Cabinet*, '...designed to make a statement...and to be an indulgent use of two beautifully combined materials while also achieving functional duty... One of the most difficult parts was achieving a perfect, continuous grain match on the top and across the lid.'

Colin Fardon, *Wanderer*. Named after the wanderer butterfly inlaid in the last compartment, (this cabinet) features 40 hand dovetailed drawers with solid drawer bottoms, three secret compartments, 12 panels of serpentine stone, over 15 different species of timber. The cabinet took 1137 hours to complete.' Photo: Clayton Lloyd



JUDGE'S TIPS

- Most obviously, as this is a competition judged from photographs, having the best photos possible gives the best possible chance. Grant Vaughan and David Haig both had work professionally photographed, and the difference shows. If that is deemed too expensive, look around for a friend who is competent, or try to bring yourself up to speed via YouTube how-to videos, etc. Whatever you do, don't torpedo your chances by not giving the photography the attention it requires. And also, photograph strategically: the best angles, obviously; but also any detail that might help the judges best appreciate every important aspect of your work. – *Robert Howard*
- Photography is critical – we could only judge the work by the photos rather than in person. In that context, having bad photography is like having gappy dovetails or a sloppy mitre. Having good photography immediately raised the quality of the work in our eyes. Avoid busy backdrops, draped bedsheets. Carefully consider what other objects to have in the photos; often a few carefully placed objects (such as books or a nice ceramic) can give context and scale and improve the reading of the image (but can be overdone or distracting if done poorly!).

Think very carefully about angles, about what you are communicating in each shot, and about whether your photos have captured the key story of your piece. If there are two photos that show essentially the same thing, get rid of one, and show something else. If you are a professional, you should consider paying to have your work professionally shot – photography is a skill and attempting to do it yourself is often doing your work a disservice. – *Adam Markowitz*



BOWLS & BOXES – RUNNER-UP

Amichai Lankri, Kolenu Shabbat Candlesticks, Lebanese cedar and Huon pine. A reimagining of Shabbat (Sabbath) candles and a gift to Kolenu, my local congregation here in Melbourne. Named after a song sung to welcome the Shabbat, with the lyrics 'above the sound of many waters, our voices will rise up!'

A really lovely piece with great use of both form and negative space. The symbolic use of Huon pine and Lebanese cedar is thoughtful and appropriate as well as aesthetically harmonious, adding to the narrative rather than distracting from it. Beautiful lip detail. – *Laura McCusker*

An innovative interpretation of a vessel and a ritual object, the piece uses narrative to inform the shape and selection of timber species, which gives a depth to the object beyond the visual elegance. The tension between curvature and hard line is quite carefully resolved, and fine details such as the spout have been well considered. – *Adam Markowitz*





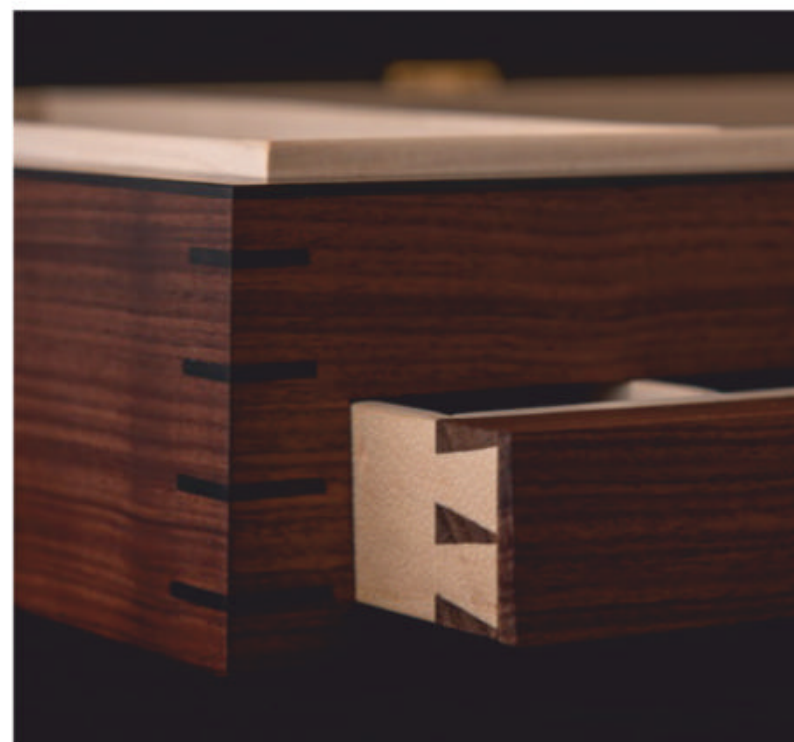
BOWLS & BOXES – WINNER

David Haig, Rae's Jewellery Box, carcase, rosewood; koa (lid); interior, sycamore and black velvet; details (escutcheon plate, key handle, stringing) ebony. Finish, oil/varnish. Photos: David Allen

David Haig's entry was beautifully presented via professional photography, and showcases both his very high level of technical skill and his very rare and refined aesthetic sense – an unbeatable combination. – *Robert Howard*

Bloody David Haig! Impeccably resolved, with details all considered with consideration for each other and in deference to a conceptual whole, such as the reducing spline depths in conversation with the tapering side profile. Details are done with virtuoso skill but have been employed without brashness and are not the defining element of the piece, but rather work in deference to the cohesiveness of the design and the subtle interplay of details. – *Adam Markowitz*

There is so much to this piece that at first glance looks deceptively simple. The quality of the making is obvious but the design is also exquisite with each proportion thoughtfully resolved. The curved lid contrasts beautifully with the crisp lines of the carcase, softening the form and asking to be touched. – *Laura McCusker*





Clockwise from above:

Anthony Hoffrichter, *Jewellery Box*, black walnut, olive ash burl, snakewood. A spring-loaded side drawer is accessible by pushing a button inside the top.

Wayne Quick, *Art Deco Styled Chess Board*, silver ash and rare 10,000 year old red bloodwood. Wall mounts when not in use. 'The box is joined with the impossible dovetail join, accentuated with black veneer. The design on the front is also subtly inlaid into the chess board side by changing the direction of the grain.'

Martin Burgoyne, *Earth Treasure*, birch and cherry veneer, jarrah, pau shell and mother-of-pearl. 'A flip-top box, or is it a chest of drawers in Japanese *kogei* style? *Kogei* is a uniquely Japanese term which describes items that are intrinsically 'beautiful things', well beyond their utility value. The lockable, hinged, flip-up end opens onto a series of trays and containers.'

Ken Fisher, *Memory Box for Kodie*, rosewood, claret ash, blackwood, cedar, woollybutt, Japanese wooden nails. 'This is my fourth memory box project for our grandchildren.'

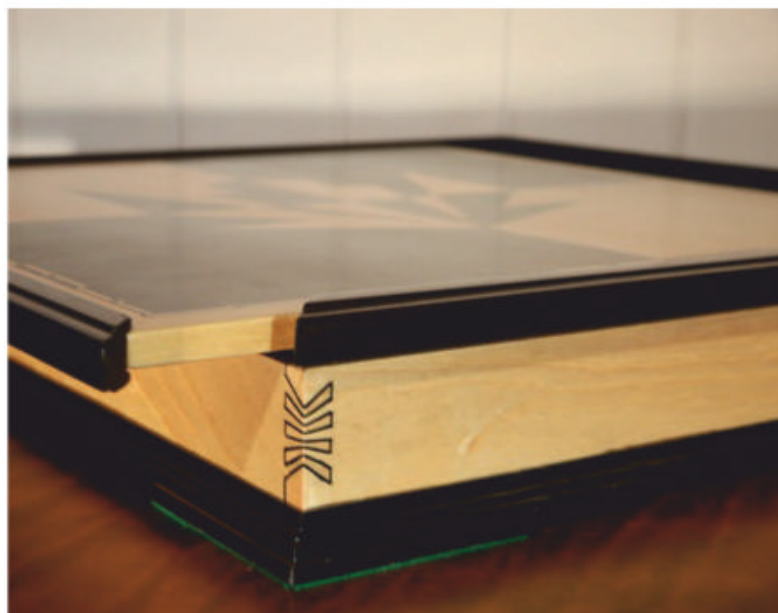
Steven Giannuzzi, *Moana Bowls*, American white oak. Photo: Matthew Wheeler

Opposite, from top:

Rob Bloomfield, *Jewellery Box*, Old walnut, ambrosia maple burl and South Pacific toby.

Benjamin Reddan, *Yosegi Keepsake Box Batch No 21*, New Guinea rosewood, jarrah, American white ash, American black walnut, American white oak and yellow stringybark, birch ply substrate.

Pierre Moens, *Squirrel Jewellery Box*, sheoak, blue gum, 183 x 122 x 92mm





ART & ACCESSORIES – WINNER

Grant Vaughan, Split Form 10, red cedar, acrylic, lacquer, 320 x 480 x 100mm. Photo: David Young

Once again, beautiful professional photography, showed to best advantage Grant Vaughan's excellent technical skill, combined with his equally rare and refined aesthetic sense. – *Robert Howard*

A beautiful and exquisitely resolved

form and finish. The high level of skill involved is evident yet not there for the sake of itself. An inspiringly accomplished piece. – *Bern Chandley*

Split Form 10 is a great example of Vaughan's idiosyncratic design aesthetic. Not only is it unique and striking, this sculptural piece is a lesson in the use of use of form, texture, colour and contrast.

– *Laura McCusker*

ART & ACCESSORIES – RUNNER-UP

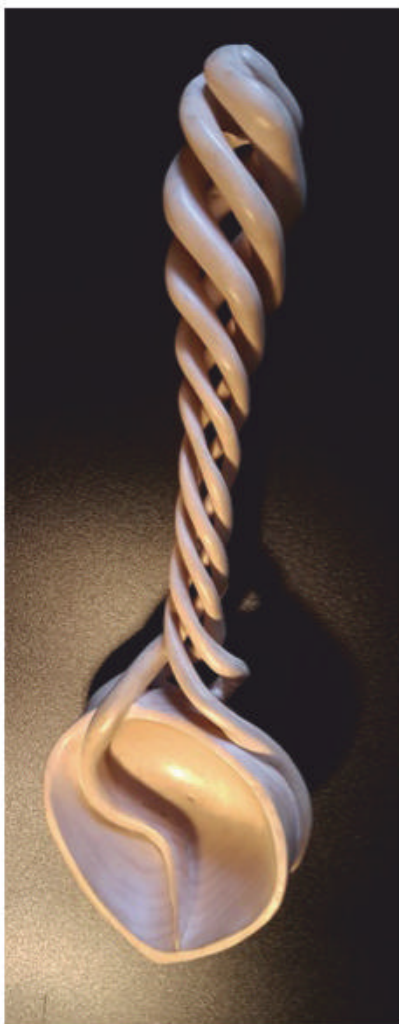
Myles Gostelow, Platypus, NSW rosewood and buffalo horn.

Miles Gostelow's Platypus combines technical excellence, a very resolved design, and a high degree of warmth, or 'heart', due to its fine, carved surface texture – something that will increase as it ages. – *Robert Howard*

Gostelow's high level of technical skill is showcased here in one simple, sweet object. Sharp edges and soft curves, smooth bill and textured fur. Gorgeous little critter. – *Laura McCusker*

Wonderfully tactile. A carved piece of great skill and sensitivity. – *Bern Chandley*





Clockwise from above:

Paul Mitchell, *Sculpted Tree*. This is the result of countless hours of design and fabrication to turn a client brief into reality. Constructed from birch plywood layers and manufactured using a combination of digital and manual shaping techniques. Photo: Aimee Catt

Stephanie White, *Twisted*, basswood. 'This spoon was a real challenge. The centre is completely hollow, and the tendrils have a slight flex too them.'

Olivia O'Connor, *Heron*, golden wattle, oil, rock, stainless steel, clay, artists oils, 525mm high. 'Handcarved from a branch that fell in a storm, I used the natural bend and twist in the timber to create the shape of the bird.'

Greg Hehir, *Robust Fragility*, nelia, Huon pine. 'A form which embodies the toughness and resilience of these iconic trees but also alludes to the threats which impact their future. Both exist and thrive in climatic extremes however are under threat from land clearing, historic harvesting practices and bushfires.'

Vince Rush, *Together Through Time*, jacaranda. 'A complex piece with flame that tells the story of a marriage.'

Alby Johnston, *Black Forest Bench Seat*, white beech, red cedar, blackwood. Created in response to the wildlife and habitat loss during this year's bushfires in Australia, this piece reminds of our reliance on the forests and its inhabitants.

Myles Gostelow, *Wetlands Series* (detail), jelutong. Handcarved patterns for concrete casting.

Mark Rogers, *X-KAB-8R*, recycled packing case pine. 'Fixed tracks run on wheels, full articulation of digging arms and bucket, loosely modelled on a CAT 6020B mining machine. Suits Duplo people!'





STUDENT – WINNER

Ceri Aldiss, Arch Base Table, American white ash, black walnut, 1200 x 450 x 450mm. 'The brief was simple – a table with a curve and a drawer. My vision was to create a piece based on two highly contrasting forms. The kerf bent detail of the solid walnut base is left exposed to encourage discussion of process and add to the overall aesthetic of the piece.' School: The Centre for Fine Woodworking, Nelson NZ, Furniture Makers Program. Tutor: David Haig

Once again, beautiful professional photography, showed to best advantage Grant Vaughan's excellent technical skill, combined with his equally rare and refined aesthetic sense. – *Robert Howard*

The simple geometric gesture of the curve intersecting the plane has been very carefully resolved in detail and well executed. As a result the design is bold and innovative – a strong form like this is easy to become overbearing, but the resolution has been carefully resolved. The expression of the details such as the exposed kerf sawn technique, shopsawn veneer and dovetails speak to skill in execution while working to support, rather than overwhelm the design intent. – *Adam Markowitz*

A beautifully accomplished piece from its adventurous design to impressively resolved finish. – *Bern Chandley*

STUDENT – RUNNER-UP

Ollie O'Rourke, Formé Armchair. Inspired by 20th century Danish design, the Flow chair made by Sean Deane (one of his industrial design class predecessors) and, being a surfer, the flow of the ocean. School: NBSC Freshwater Senior Campus, Teacher: Ben Percy, Weaving: Modanest; Upholstery: Steal the Limelight

This chair is stood out by the sheer gumption of what it set out to achieve. The technical difficulty of achieving the two offset laminations would have been extremely difficult, let alone getting them to line up correctly for joinery and comfort. Secondary details such as the floating of the seat as well as the paper cord backrest show that the chair design is not a one trick pony and there are a number of elements being considered. The design is evocative of precedents but not derivative, and so finds its own voice.

I'm only disappointed I couldn't give it a sit test in person! – *Adam Markowitz*

A boldly difficult design constructed with admirable verve. – *Bern Chandley*

JUDGES' TIPS

- The work that won in each category was generally offering a combination of skill, design, and having strong identity in the work. The most virtuoso piece of craftsmanship did not necessarily win nor did the most adventurous/clever design – it was the pieces that blended both successfully.
– *Adam Markowitz*

Another attribute of the winning entries was that in design they were informed by the history and lineage of the craft in the conception of their pieces, but not shackled by it.
– *Adam Markowitz*

- I am not a fan of metal drawer runners (or kitchen door hinges) in competition work. If these must be used, then at least do what you can to make them invisible.
– *Robert Howard*
- There are two possible approaches to entering a furniture competition:
 1. Use it as an opportunity to try something new. To push your skills and design concepts to the next level.
 2. Use it as a showcase of what you know can do by building a piece you are already familiar with but take a more thorough, meticulous approach to achieve as refined a finish as you possibly can.

Either way can be seen as a chance to improve your skill set and expand your horizons as a woodworker.
– *Bern Chandley*





Clockwise from above:

Alan Weng, *Curve Wooden Chaise Lounge*. Designed to mimic a human sitting position and largely 'manipulated from Charlotte Perriand's 522 Tokyo Chaise Longue'. *The King's School, teacher: Brian Davey*

Kathryn Mawson, *Cabinet and Stand* inspired by James Krenov, Victorian ash, American black walnut. *Jamison High School, teacher: Dean Maddock*

Finn Hawkins, *Retro Sideboard*, blackwood.

Elsie Scullard, *Carved Rocking Horse*, Huon pine, jarrah. Based on traditional and contemporary forms and carved to convey a sense of dignity and power. *School: St Johns College Dubbo, teacher: Mark Scullard*



Opposite, clockwise from top:

Charlotte Asbridge, *Tambour Entertainment Unit*, Tas blackwood, sassafras. Inspired by Will and Holly Acland's *Cunard Cabinet*. This influenced me to add a sliding tambour door to my entertainment unit and to give it an art deco appearance. *Freshwater Senior Campus, teacher: Ben Percy. Photo: Alvin Theseira*

Deborah Fryer, *Hall Side/Bed Table*, ash, walnut. 'The project was to design a hall table incorporating curves.' *Centre for Fine Woodworking, Nelson, NZ, tutor David Haig. Photo: Daniel Allen*

Jackson Fairlie, *Demilune Table*, American walnut, maple. Made at North Bennet Street School, USA.

Alice Wilson, *American Walnut Jewellery Box*. 'This is an originally designed jewellery box made with primarily American walnut. Hand cut marquetry runs along the right side and flows on to the lid. A dovetailed tray and three drawers run on handmade brass runners.' *Killara High School, teacher Brendon Francis*





JUDGE'S TIPS

- Don't be disheartened if you didn't win – it is no comment on the quality of your work. There was so much good work in there, it was truly an impossible task for the judges, and in many instances we were comparing apples with oranges. The shortlisted work by each of the judges was widely different, which just goes to show the varied and ultimately subjective nature of the process.
– Adam Markowitz

- Overall, there was a pleasing number of entries, and the standard was very good. I also hope that more enthusiastic amateurs, and emerging professionals, who have been a bit shy about entering this time, draw encouragement from realistic comparisons and enter any future competitions. Entering benefits everyone in the woodworking community. – Robert Howard

- Remember there are three variables when it comes to successfully winning in competitions or other competitive rounds, and only one that you have control over.

1. The strength of the field
2. The expertise, area of specialisation, preferences and biases of the judging panel
3. The quality of your submission

In a competition like this, where the standard of submissions is so high and the judging panel is diverse in both experience and background, point three has to be the focus and comfort. To this end, my advice would be to concentrate on one idea and do it well, remembering that often less is more. Be the Coco Chanel of wood design, she advised that 'before you leave the house, look in the mirror and take one thing off.' I think the same should hold for object design. – Laura McCusker



Hape Kiddle in his Griffith, NSW studio. 'It would be unusual for there not to be at least one möbius carving under way in the studio.'



Möbius Magic

The satisfaction of carving a möbius successfully is well and truly worth the time it can take, says wood sculptor Hape Kiddle.





Above: Different views of the same Huon pine form illustrate how much a Möbius can visually move and change.

Left: An easy way to make a Möbius is to take a strip of paper and give one end a half twist, joining the ends together with tape.

Below: For smaller scale work, particularly in hard and dense timbers – welcome to the world of rasps and files.



For many years now I've experimented with the Möbius form. There is something about its unusual nature, its playful, twisting, disappearing and reappearing lines that I find alluring. During my time as a jeweller I would forge silver and gold into expressive Möbius forms, sometimes as pendants, bangles or the occasional ring.

What is a Möbius?

Historically, the Möbius is attributed to German mathematicians Johann Benedict Listing and August Ferdinand Möbius in 1858. However, it appears in art as far back as 200AD in Roman mosaics.

Put simply, a Möbius is a surface with only one side (despite being three-dimensional) and one border perimeter. An easy way to make a Möbius is to take a strip of paper and give one end a half twist, joining the ends together with tape.

Design and play

From this point you can search out many possible variations in the





form. A change in the paper's width, thickness or length, or perhaps using another material will yield changes. Heavy materials (such as rubber) may droop for example, and suspension again causes interesting effects on the möbius model.

Different materials can be used to experiment. One of my favourites is plain old plasticine which I keep cool in the fridge between shaping sessions. This can be extruded and shaped, and has the extra benefit of been able to be cut away with knives and chisels to refine the form. It is also relatively clean as opposed to clay.

Beginning and beyond

After I've got an idea of the form I want, I select the material that's best going to work for the design. I take into account the dimensional requirements, the colour of the wood and its workability.

I wouldn't suggest using heavily figured wood for these forms as they are difficult enough to carve without the additional challenge of grain variants,

and in some cases the figure may overwhelm the form. But then again...

Some of the timbers I use are Huon pine (*Lagarostrobos franklinii*), myrtle beech (*Nothofagus cunninghamii*), white beech (*Gmelina leichhardtii*), Australian rose mahogany (*Dysoxylum fraserianum*), and silky oak (*Grevillea robusta*). There are of course many other possibilities.

Gidgee

I should add that I use gidgee (*Acacia cambagei*) for my smaller work. This marvellous wood is more dense than the others just named and requires a very different approach and tooling. But here we say – welcome to the world of rasps and files.

The benefit of the figured gidgee in the making of the smaller works is that the form can be more robust and the endgrain, inevitable in a möbius form, remains quite strong.

Gidgee carving is a slow process but the deep tones of the wood and the tight figure make for some

wonderfully small intimate carving forms that are both fascinating and tactile in the hand.

Tooling

For the most part an array of shallow gouges are my main chisels for this sort of work. In addition there are a couple of V-chisels that I find handy (12/6, 13/6 or equivalent). In terms of brands, I find myself more often selecting my M-steins, Pfeils and Japanese Kawasei from the tool cabinet.

Over the years of carving I made some good friendships with certain chisels, they're comfortable in hand and I know them like they are extensions of my fingers, but I'm open to trying out others tools as well and regularly do so. Different cuts often require a change in approach and a möbius will most certainly require a willingness to adapt.

As with chisels, I keep an open mind in regards to rasps. I have a small selection of these which include Japanese rasps, microplanes, and



Opposite: Möbius variants in figured gidgee by the author.

Above, left to right: Once the bulk out is taken away, a hole is drilled to further refine the shape. Having a theme in mind will affect the feeling you are trying to express. A fluted effect was chosen here.

Right and far right: Double möbius form in progress. 'At some stage, depending on your design, there will come a time where part of the form will need to be separated – usually where one part moves under or over another. I tend to do the separation as late as possible in the carving.'

Below: Different views of a gidgee möbius form once again show how the form changes from different viewpoints. 'Gidgee carving is a slow process but the deep tones of the wood and the tight figure make for some wonderfully small intimate carving forms that are both fascinating and tactile in the hand.'





Corradi files of various cuts. But I would be doing fellow carvers a disservice not to place emphasis on a handful of particular rasps. These are a double-ended jewellers wax file (I have used my Valorbe for 15 years), a Shinto rasp and two particular Iwasaki wood files. I am never without these in the workshop or on location. The Iwasaki bent half round really deals well with the gidgee internal curves as it cuts towards the user on the pull cut and leaves a clean surface.

Getting going

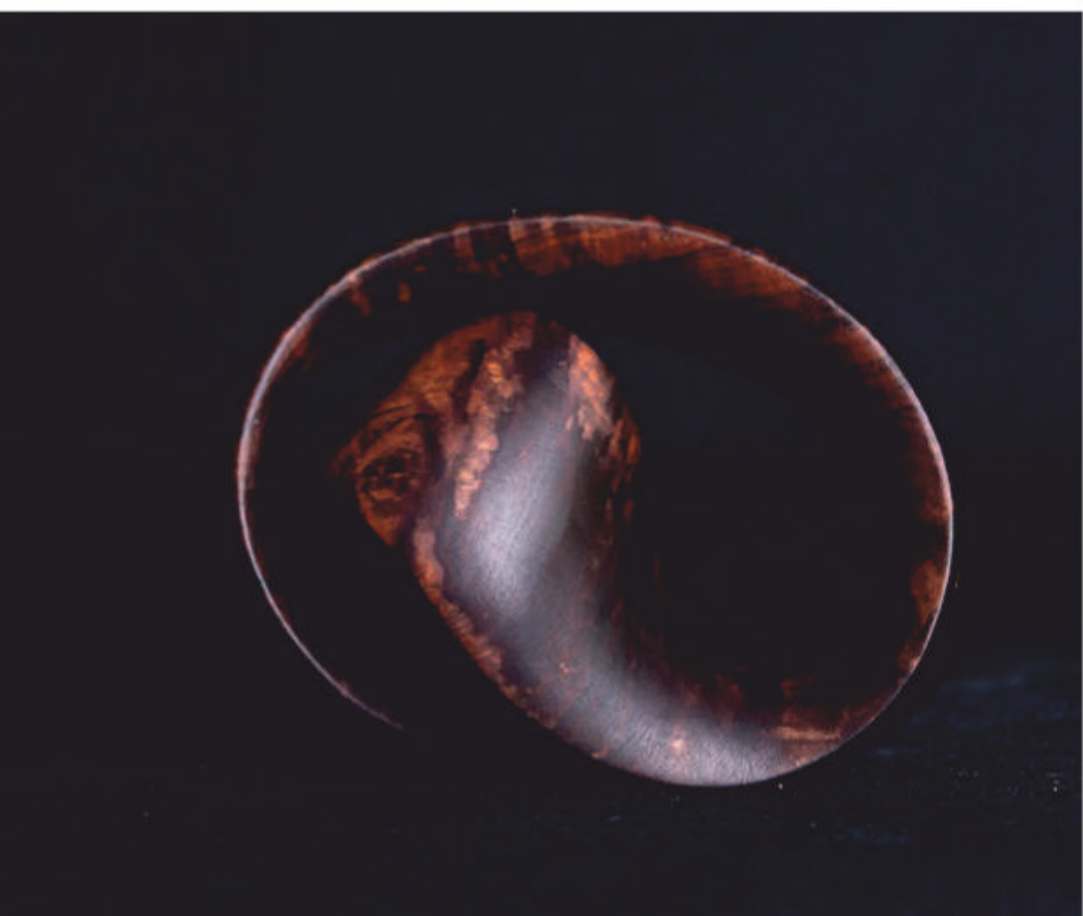
Once I've got my plan together, models resolved and materials selected my process is not so different to any other carving. I draw on to the material a front view and its matched sideview (in line with one another) and then carve away the external bulk.

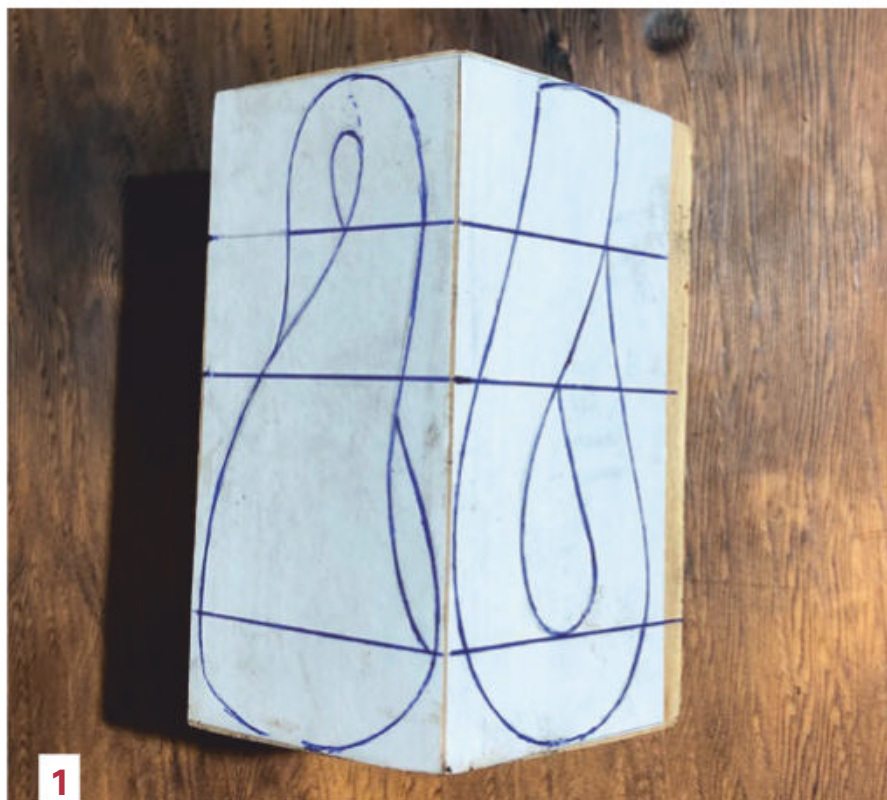
I then turn my attention to the removal of the negative space. I begin by drilling a large hole in the most central part of the area to be removed

and carve this away with gouges.

Once the bulk out is complete and as clean as possible in terms of shape, I will set out to work the carving down to the form of the model.

At some stage, depending on your design, there will come a time where part of the form will need to be separated – usually where one part moves under or over another. I tend to do the separation as late as possible in the carving.





1



2



5



6

There is a temptation to 'see the möbius' active in dimension by cutting the separation early, but it's better to get the form organised rather than deal with a lot of bulk that may affect how you see the form. At this stage you'll need to pay close attention to your model as it is easy to go astray.

Give it time

There are a couple of what I see as key ingredients in the art of woodcarving. One is time; give the work the time that it is requesting of you. Good work takes time. And the other is observation; look at your model, soak it in and become familiar with the design as much as

possible. I tend to saturate myself in the subject matter so that it soaks into my bones, so to speak. The more I know about the form and variation of the möbius, the more I can feel free to express through it.

Now begin

Once the möbius structure is visibly obvious to me, I feel like I'm ready to start carving. The möbius form is, for me, the underlining bones of the sculpture. I am searching out how to communicate more than the rendition of a möbius!

I have in mind a theme from the very outset and whilst the möbius is in itself

a fascinating and charming object to contemplate, it's the theme that brings it to life and gives it meaning.

A theme might be a simple recognition of the value of water to life with the base of the möbius being robust and water-like, and the moving expressive twist forming the gentle impression of a leaf.

This is where I'm at my slowest in terms of carving. I want to be able to react to how the form is feeling and make subtle changes as I go. Again observation and a willingness to surrender time prove to be important ingredients.



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This numbered sequence shows the process of carving a Möbius form in Huon pine. Photos: Hape Kiddle

Finishing

I use a range of different finishes on my work as I find that different woods respond to different finishes. For example, in the case of gidgee I sand to a fine finish (between 800 and 2000 grit wet and dry depending on the gidgee's receptiveness) and use a slow drying wax sparingly.

I find there are many different types of finishes available which will mostly yield great results when not rushed. Oddly enough, most finishes come with instructions and reading them is a good step...

And again, give the finishing process the time it deserves. You've worked hard enough to get to this point so celebrate your hard work with a good finish.

The satisfaction of carving a Möbius successfully is well and truly worth the time it can take. The process extends how the maker views form and I am personally more inspired each time I make one. They are very much a part of my maker's language and I find many of the shapes contained within a Möbius influence my other work. If you do find yourself carving your own Möbius, I wish you luck and learning.

Photos: Sarah Brown



Hape Kiddle is a full time wood-sculptor, carving teacher, and occasional jeweller working from his old Tudor style cottage studio in Griffith NSW. Learn more at www.hapekiddle.com and Instagram @hapekiddle

The Craft of Finishing

Understanding finishing techniques and their potential can help you achieve and embellish your designs. They are another tool in your design tool belt, says Shane Orion Wiechnik.

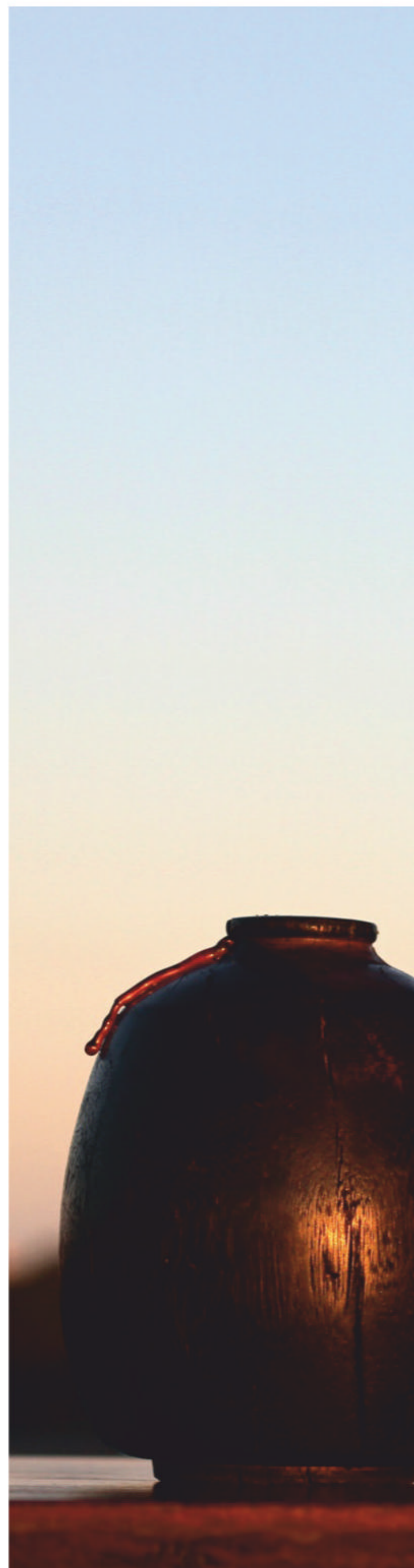
I am practising my finishing skills. Early on as an aspiring woodworker, finishing was that thing I did at the end after 'completing' my piece to make it shiny and to protect it from wear and use. It has become increasingly clear to me that finishing is like sharpening, joinery, and design; it is an equal part of the craft and requires equal attention. It requires focused attention. It requires practice.

Historically, European furniture making separated the finishers from the joiners and the ébénistes (cabinetmakers). This set an education precedent to separate

these skills, which certainly has its benefits. A specialist in their field can learn and do so much more than a jack of all trades. These days, the modern designer maker along with the home craftsperson needs to be all of these things.

There has been a project in the back of my mind for a while that was perfect for exploring and practising finishes. It was something that required a creative visual approach. The techniques themselves will only briefly be covered in this article. Instead, I aim to clarify how in a lot of ways finishing is just like any other part of the craft.

1. Bushfires at the end of last year and early this year were devastating in terms of wildlife and forests lost.



**The Bushfire Vase finishes,
left to right:**

Kauri: Soap finish on bare timber, *shou sugi ban* sealed with shellac gently brushed on, gilding on red paint inside cracks with *Xanthorrhoea* resin brushed over the top.

Queensland maple: Cloudy ammonia wiped on, then washed off before polishing with grass tree resin, partial grain filling using pumice powder, light *shou sugi ban*.

Spotted gum: Heavy *shou sugi ban* sealed with two brushed coats of shellac, polished with shellac, pulling the carbon from the burned areas onto the unburnt areas, glass resin drip attached with epoxy.



2. The bottoms of the vases were burnt for thematic reasons referencing how bushfires often burn just at ground level.
3. The turned vases before their thematic finishes were applied.
4. The author used the *shou sugi ban* torching technique as one method of portraying a theme.



2

Designing a finish: the options

Blackened burnt areas:

- *Shou sugi ban* (scorching timber surface)
- 'Japanning' with black polish
- Ebonising with iron and vinegar
- Paint

Amber tones of dried leaves and foliage:

- Bare timber
- Pigmented finishes
- Ammonia
- Reddish resins

Texture of burnt surfaces and leaves on the ground:

- Intense *shou sugi ban*
- Carving
- Open grain finish

Stillness when the fire is over:

- Smooth soap finish
- Wax only finish
- Full grain finish
- Matt finishes

Embers and flame:

- Gilding
- Gilding with a reddish wash top coat

Regrowth:

- Green pigmented polish
- Paint
- Gilding with green foil
- The plants in the vases themselves



3

Plan finishes at the start

The brief I set myself was to bring the aesthetic of bushfire regrowth to woodworking. Since first moving to Australia, my partner and I have found a unique beauty in the way new life bursts from recently burned bushland. Whenever there has been a fire, we like to hike through the land and observe new bright green growth bursting from the deepest black.

The unprecedented bushfires were devastating this past fire season, but fire has been an important part of the Australian ecosystem for millennia. Certain plants don't even propagate unless their seed pods reach a certain temperature.

As a woodworker, I wondered many times how I might bring this aesthetic into a design. Marquetry illustration was considered. Sculptural pieces could be made to resemble leaves growing from burned bark. In the

end I decided to take inspiration from the aesthetic without literally translating the subject matter. To get that aesthetic, I spent a lot of time thinking about different finishing techniques I could use.

I will often lay out the characteristics of my desired aesthetic or design needs against a set of known decorative techniques. From here, I can settle on what goes well together, and what I think best helps me reach my goal. My starting point for planning these finishes is shown left.

More than one

Whatever your project or theme, your finishing should also be considered. This goes beyond the functionality of 'durable' or 'food safe'. It also goes beyond just settling on one finish for every component. There are important practical considerations regarding object use as well as environmental concerns, but there are aesthetic considerations as well.



4

Shiny or matt? Contrast or simple homogeneity? Maybe one part could be open-pored while another is close-pored in order to highlight a duality? Understanding finishing techniques and their potential can help you achieve and embellish your design. They are another tool in your design tool belt. Do not ignore them.

The bushfire vases

After many design iterations, I settled on making three small decorative vases with simple but organic shapes. The serenity of their shaping would reflect the calm of a recently burned landscape, and not the violence and danger of an uncontrolled blaze.

I decided to burn the bottoms of the vases for colour, texture and thematic reasons. Bushfires often burn just at ground level.

The smallest vase

On the smallest vase, I kept it simple. After burning the lower half until

cracks began to form, I cleaned it off and polished it with shellac using a cloth rubber. I used the rubber to pull the loose black carbon from the burned areas into the cracks and pores of the upper half of the vase until the whole piece was dark.

The upper half is more heavily polished and smooth with a low sheen, while the lower half remains more matt and textured. To finish it off, I made a small red glass dribble to resemble bloodwood gum, which often comes out of the tree after it has been damaged. The glass piece was shaped and then glued onto the surface with an epoxy. This also helped ensure a red element across all three pieces.

Practice and experimentation

Turning is a great aid for practising finishing techniques, because the ability to quickly produce finishable products reduces concern about stuffing up projects at a late stage. The

more complicated the technique, the more practice it will require. The more techniques you practice, the easier it will be to include them in your design.

Gilding and French polishing are great examples – if you've never tried them, you probably won't think of them in the design phase. It won't take someone long to explain to you how to gild or French polish, but getting the feel of these materials takes experience.

The Qld maple vase

I had tried some of the techniques used here but not fully practised them. In order to darken the Qld maple vase but not blacken it I used ammonia and then Australian grasstree (*Xanthorrhoea*) resin.

I wiped on the cloudy ammonia (an ammonia and water mixture) and after five minutes washed away as much as I could with water. When dry, the surface had pleasantly darkened and muted the brighter pink tones in the timber.



5

5. To complete the smallest vase a small red glass 'dribble' was made to resemble the response of bloodwood gum after bushfire damage.
6. Detail of the scorched and primed cracks highlighted with gold leaf.
7. Ammonia was first brushed on then washed off the tallest maple vase.
8. After a few days the surface was polished with *Xanthorrhoea* resin dissolved in alcohol using a cotton rubber.
9. Gilding is not complicated but requires practice. First, gold leaf is separated from its wrapper...
10. ...then the gold leaf is carefully cut.
11. A flat brush called a tip is used to float the gold onto the surface.
12. The cracks in the maple vase were prepared with a red acrylic and then gold size before the gold leaf was applied.



6

Ammonia needs to evenly touch every part of the piece, or else you'll be left with splotches of colour. I wiped it on wet with one cloth first, then used a dry rag to pull back evenly. One of the benefits of fuming with ammonia (putting the piece in a small tent with liquid ammonia) is the assurance of an even surface.

After a few days I polished the surface with *Xanthorrhoea* resin dissolved in alcohol using a cotton rubber. A small amount of pumice powder was added to the pad to partially fill the grain.

I held the piece in my hand rather than putting it on the lathe in order to work the resin in a more controlled way, and also to practise my polishing technique.

Practising on an odd shape is an added challenge. I used a larger rubber for the broad surface, but switched to a smaller rubber to reach around the corners and into the mouth, polishing solidly for about ten minutes. I wasn't aiming for a big built-up finish, so this was easily done in one session. What I had when I finished was a nice brown/amber piece with a hint of reddish glow and a black base.

Accidents may happen

Did you know that *Xanthorrhoea* resin gets redder with UV light? I knew it was a natural waterproof resin that dissolved in alcohol similar to shellac. I had never worked with it before, but knew it had a reddish hue like dragon's blood (another resin). The polished maple vase sat in my living room, and after a few days the half facing the morning light was a much deeper red than the other half. I rotated the vase 180° and two days later the two sides were equally red.

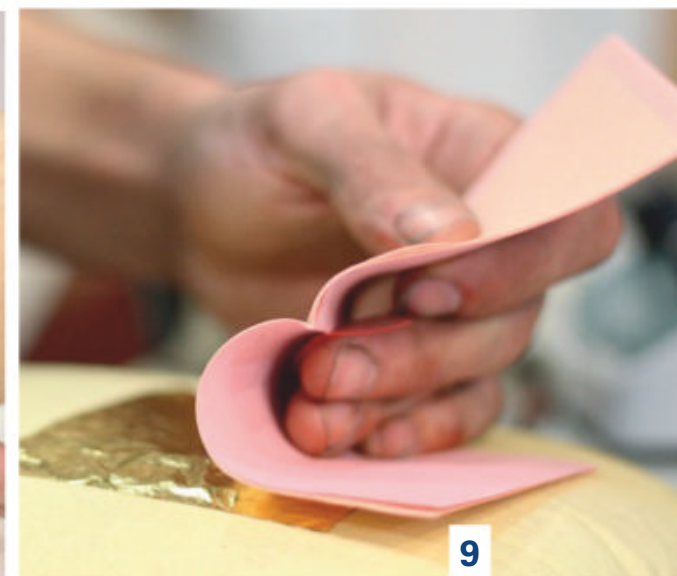
This is the absolute dread of every woodworker. You don't want to put something on your piece, a piece you potentially spent hundreds of hours on, and find out it changes colour, or breaks down, or otherwise does something unexpected. Dovetails are easy in this regard: if they fit, they fit. Your process improving is very visual and immediate. Other aspects of a



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project, such as structure, longevity, and finishing, are less immediate.

The kauri vase

I struggled the most with the third vase. The burning was very successful, and easily sealed in with a few brush coats of shellac. However, with this piece I had planned to use a wax finish but wasn't happy with the result.

The yellow/amber tone of the wood after the application of wax was spot-on the colour of fire-affected leaves, but despite meeting the brief and the design perfectly, it didn't feel right. You can plan things but in the end they may not work. The extra thought and time put into finishing can make that difference.

What I didn't like was that the tone was too aggressive and pushed against the calmness I had desired in the piece. I pulled the wax off with turps and steel wool before returning to my chart. I tested a few more finish options and in the end used a soap finish to keep it soft in tone. The soap was warmed slowly on an electric burner and applied like a wax but with much more force.

The cracks in the bottom were oil gilded with 23 carat gold leaf and a one-hour Japan gold size. The surface in the cracks was prepared with a red acrylic. After applying the size, you wait until there is a certain level of tackiness where the gold will adhere and have the best shine. If you run your finger across the surface, it should squeak. Then the gold leaf is carefully cut, and a flat brush called a tip is used to float the gold onto the surface. It was quite difficult to get the gold into the cracks, and I did end up having to go over it a few times.

The gilded areas were coated with the grasstree resin brushed on to resemble the red glow of embers.

Don't dwell, reflect

I am happy with these pieces. They will sit in my home on display for some time while I see how they age. In their making I was able to test a few finishes and decorative techniques using multiple application methods. It is important not to dwell on the mistakes, but to note them down and understand them. That said, never forget to also note down and understand what went well.

It is my belief that part of what makes a craft so special is the way we slowly build them over time and through practice. In every attempt we learn a little bit more consciously and tacitly. For some people, finishing may seem like a science. I assure you, it's a craft.

Photos: Shane Orion Wiechnik



Shane Orion Wiechnik is a furniture restorer/conservator living and working in Sydney, Australia. He studied the conservation of furniture and related objects

at West Dean College in England and works with International Conservation Services and Renaissance Conservation. His own business, Crafts and Conservation, is dedicated to the preservation of both historic objects and the skills used to make them. He is a passionate teacher who has helped design woodworking courses for Sydney Community College and Bower Reuse and Repair Centres. Currently Shane teaches at Heartwood Creative Woodworking.

Turn to Tradition

With regard to classical forms, says Andrew Potocnik,
the devil is in the detail.



'Bulbous with generous beads and undercuts' is how the author defines this project that draws on traditional forms. The box is 85mm in diameter and 75mm high.



1. The blank was roughed down to a cylinder and divided into top and base sections.
2. Transferred to a chuck and the lid section parted off, the outer form was rough-turned.

I'm not in the habit of making pieces that draw on classical forms; however, for this project I couldn't resist returning to a design I had drawn some time ago. Bulbous with generous beads and undercuts this project can challenge the skills of beginning turners whilst fulfilling the desires and tastes of those who like traditional forms.

An off-cut of figured blackwood, too good to throw away, but too small to use on a large project was put aside for that perfect project. We woodworkers seem to do so on a regular basis, until we end up with too many 'treasures' to deal with. But that doesn't stop us from saving wood for that next project, and here was mine, so the brain was off and racing, and off to the lathe I went.

Mounted between centres the wood was roughed down to a cylinder and divided with a parting tool to determine top and base sections (**photo 1**). Tenons were turned at each end so the base and lid could later be held in a scroll chuck, eliminating the need of a tailstock to hold the wood in position.

Transferred to a chuck and the lid section parted off, the exterior form was rough-turned establishing proportions that appeal to the eye before arriving at the final shape (**photo 2**). The collar at the right of the form (**photo 3**), needs to have parallel surfaces so the lid will fit perfectly later on. A pair of vernier calipers will ensure your sides are such, best cut with a sharp parting tool, and never sand this area or you will round it and compromise the neatness of the lid's fit.

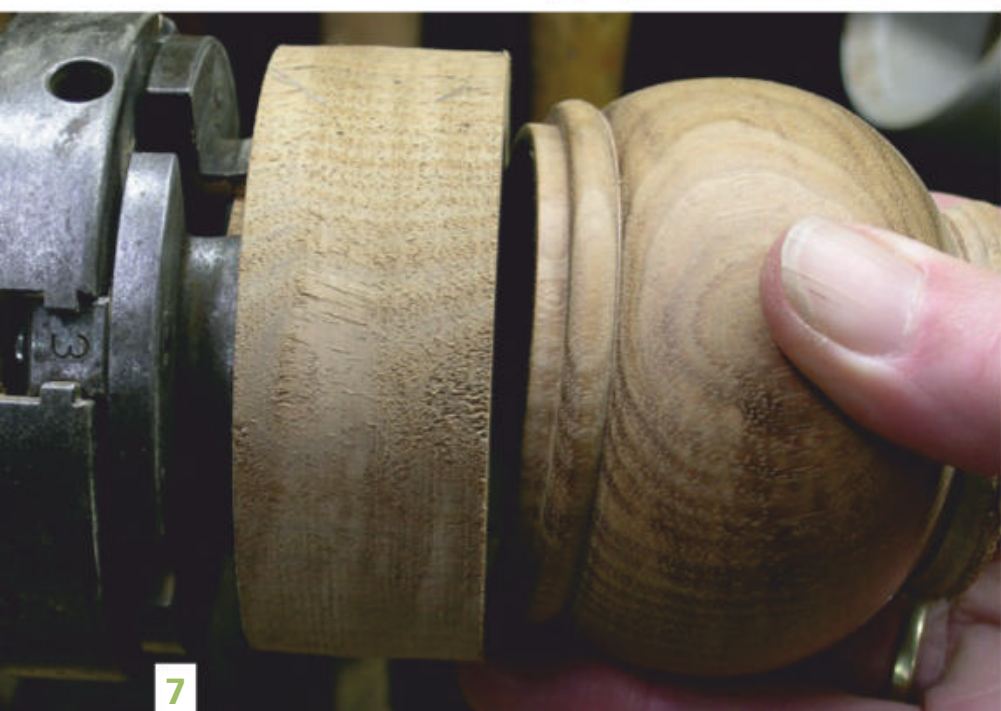




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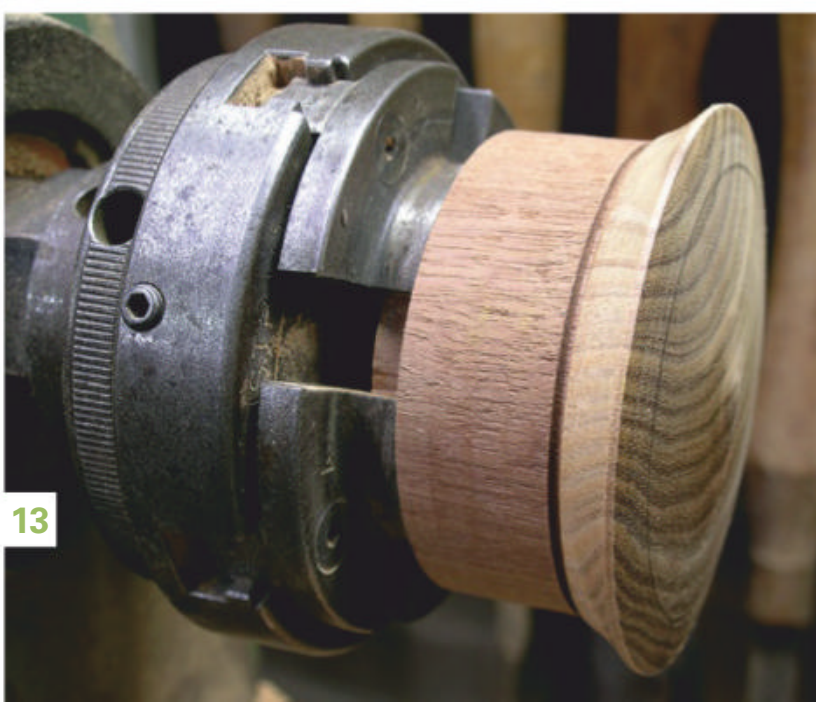
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13

3. The collar at the opening needs parallel surfaces so the lid will fit perfectly.
4. The rim was turned to 3mm before sanding the interior.
5. Don't finish the tenon yet as it may change size before the lid is cut to match.
6. Vernier calipers establish the opening required for a jamb fit chuck.
7. The base can now be pushed firmly into place.
8. Turn the base to final shape and sand through to 320 grit.
9. I add a couple of V-grooves to add my name and timber type.
10. The carrier is now shaped to become the lid of the box.
11. The base was prised free and the inner shoulder of the lid enlarged slightly.
12. After sanding only the domed surface a couple of V-grooves were cut and a friction polish applied.
13. A carrier with a tenon was turned onto which the lid was pushed into place.



To hollow the interior I used a combination of gouges and scrapers, regularly using my 'finger gauge' to ensure the interior matched the exterior form without making the walls too thin or thick. There are a number of gauges available to give you visual reference of wall thickness, so it's a matter of making use of tools and accessories that best suit your working methods and skills. The rim at the top of the box was turned down to about 3mm before the interior was sanded smooth (**photo 4**).

Sanding from 120 grit up to 320 I then applied a friction based finish to the interior. In **photo 5** you can see how figuring within wood suddenly leaps to the fore, however it is important to not apply a 'finish' to the tenon yet as it may change its size before the lid is cut to match, leading to an ill-fitting match once the box is completed.

To finalise the outer shape of the box I mounted wood set aside for the lid in a scroll chuck via the tenon cut earlier. A tenon cut into this piece serves two purposes, a carrier for now and lid later, with grain that aligns from top to base. Using vernier calipers to determine the exact opening required for a jamb fit chuck (**photo 6**), the base could now be pushed firmly into place (**photo 7**) and the base turned to the final shape and sanded through to 320 grit (**photo 8**).

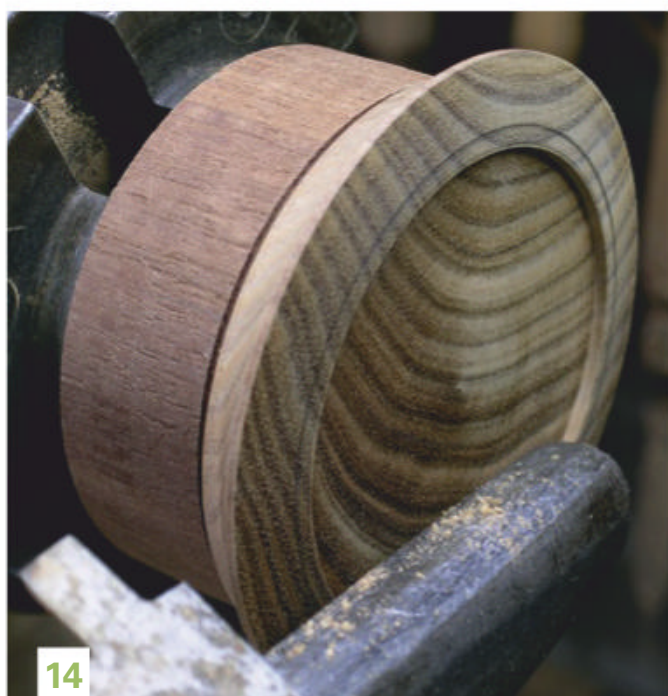
I like to add a couple of V-grooves where I can later add my name and timber type. Currently I use a three point tool (**photo 9**), but you could use a diamond pointed scraper or the edge of a skew to achieve similar results.

As the carrier was to become the lid of the box, I could now turn my attention to shaping its lower curve to suit the overall profile of the box (**photo 10**). At this stage the right end of the lid still needed to be trimmed about a millimetre or more to not sit proud of the bead at the top of the base.

Once correct proportions were achieved, the base was prised free, the inner shoulder of the lid enlarged slightly so it became a push fit and the interior surface shaped in preparation for sanding (**photo 11**).

Detail adds so much to any piece of work, and so it does even more on small items. Here I followed the wall of the lid with a skew chisel to cut a V where it meets the curved underside of the lid which was slightly domed by about 3mm. After sanding only the domed surface a couple of V-grooves were cut and a friction polish applied (**photo 12**).

To complete the lid I turned a carrier with a tenon similar to that at the top of the box, onto which the lid was pushed into



14



15

14. A 3mm recess was cut leaving a border of about 8mm.

15. A burl ironbark off-cut was marked to a circle using calipers. Once cut on the bandsaw it was attached to a carrier with heat sensitive glue.

16. The diameter of the insert is matched to the recess so it can be glued into the lid.

17. The excess was trimmed from the insert and a few voids filled.



16



17

place. Providing you do this correctly, the lid should run truly and you can then dome the top of the lid (**photo 13**). The lid could be sanded smooth and the box's shaping complete, ready for a finish; however, I opted to add an inlay for added interest.

A recess of about 3mm depth was cut leaving a border of about 8mm using a 'granny tooth scraper' (**photo 14**). A fairly level surface within the recess was achieved with a scraper shaped to a slightly curved profile.

From my stash of off-cuts I selected some burl ironbark which was marked to a circle using calipers. Once cut on a bandsaw it was attached to a carrier with heat sensitive glue (**photo 15**) pressed into place with the tailstock using the caliper centre point to align it as the glue cooled and hardened, which only takes a matter of minutes, after which shaping can continue.

Vernier calipers ensure the diameter of the insert matches that of the recess (**photo 16**) so it could be glued into the lid, excess material trimmed away and a few voids filled with a suitably coloured filler (**photo 17**), ready for sanding and a wipe-on, wipe-off polyurethane applied to all outside surfaces. Note that the insert was left a fraction proud of the lid, a small detail that helps create definition between materials and elements of the form.

No matter what style of work you create, the key is in making sure there is clean definition between elements of the form, while ensuring intersections between materials are equally crisp. Making each element stand out creates a feast for the eye, and let's be honest, if the eye isn't drawn to an object, the hand will not be enticed to explore the tactile qualities that are equally important in appreciating a well made object.

Photos: Andrew Potocnik



Andrew Potocnik is a wood artist and woodwork teacher who lives in Melbourne. Email andrewpotocnik@telstra.com

Wood Diary

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

Note: Listings are current at time of printing but may be subject to change, especially with regard to active COVID-19 restrictions. Always check details with organisers before planning to visit.

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29 NOVEMBER–12 DECEMBER

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22 NOVEMBER–6 DECEMBER

Twenty Twenty

Sturt School for Wood 2020
Graduating Exhibition
Cnr Range Road & Waverley Parade,
Mittagong, NSW
www.sturt.nsw.edu.au

16 DECEMBER–30 JANUARY

Centre for Fine Woodworking
Graduate exhibition 2020
Refinery Artspace, Nelson, New Zealand
2021

13–14 FEBRUARY

Tools & Techniques Weekend

Demonstrations, tool and timber sales
Sturt School For Wood, Mittagong, NSW
www.sturt.nsw.edu.au

14 FEBRUARY

Contemporary Furniture

New work by Rolf Barfoed, Elliot Bastianon
and Andrew Carvolth
Sturt Gallery, Mittagong, NSW
www.sturt.nsw.edu.au

6–7 MARCH

Lost Trades Fair

Bendigo Racecourse, Ascot, Bendigo, Victoria
www.lostrades.info

6–7 MARCH

Kiama Woodcraft Group Annual Woodcraft Expo

Demonstrations and timber sales
Kiama Masonic Hall, Collins Street,
Kiama NSW
David Bywater: 0425 249 148

12–14 MARCH

Brisbane Timber, Tools & Artisan Show

RNA Showgrounds,
Bowen Hills, Brisbane
www.timberandworkingwithwoodshow.com.au

21 MARCH

World Wood Day

Virtual celebration of the importance, beauty
and value of wood
<http://www.worldwoodday.org/>

26 MARCH–5 APRIL

Melbourne Design Week 2021

Theme: The World That You Want
www.ngv.vic.gov.au/melbourne-design-week

1–3 MAY

Maleny Wood Expo including

Wootha Prize exhibition
Maleny Showgrounds, Qld
www.malenywoodexpo.com

15–16 MAY

Lost Trades Fair

Cobb & Co Museum
27 Lindsay St, Toowoomba, Qld
www.lostrades.info

6 JUNE

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The Long Hollow

Short lengths of fruitwoods, eucalypts or the branch to hand can be hollowed and decorated to make your own personal drinking mug. Story by Jeff Donne.



Bloodwood mug with blackwood cup and box elder milk pourer, all made by the author.



Morning rituals are set in stone. Between us, we have many: some normal, some not, some we probably shouldn't talk about in a woodworking magazine. But there is a ritual that most of us do, or need, to stoke the fires for a fresh new day.

Coffee. Some have it black, or with milk, and others insist on a morning cuppa strong enough to wake Jimmy Possum from his grave.

This ritual often involves a favourite mug: a little chipped, a lot stained, and with words or a picture on the outside that makes you smile. It's your mug, and nobody else is allowed, or wants, to use it.

Well now it's time for a second favourite. A companion for the tried and trusted. Once carved and supplying you with your morning hit, this new mug will age with grace. It'll stain to a fathomless black on the inside, develop a glorious grubbiness and patina from your hands, and it will always be warm, even when empty.

So drink up from that old china mug and set it aside to enjoy its well-earned rest. Let's make a tree mug!

To the garden we go

When you're starting out making a mug from wood, by all rights you should slump into despair. Wood is peppered with holes! Any hope you have of drinking liquid ambrosia from these vessels should, in theory, dry up. To make things worse, endgrain mugs provide a superhighway from the inside of your mug to the puddle at your feet via a network



1. Hollowing with a hook knife.
2. Endgrain – full of pores and opportunity.
3. Sitting on my workhorse to hold it steady while I shape the outside.





4. Sawing off the tongue.
5. Marking the bottom of the mug with a compass.
6. Use a hook knife and start carving the rim of the drilled hole.
7. Carve across the grain in semi circular arcs.
8. A modified Morakniv 164 with a long handle.
9. I use another long-handled hook knife called a twca cam to smooth the inside a little.
10. Another hollowing method with a shorter handled hook made by Pete Trott.
11. Using a pull cut to refine the shape. Keep your elbows in and hands connected for extra stability.



of a gazillion pores running straight out the bottom. Right now, if that old china mug could smirk, it would.

But wood is magic. We all know that. And yes a wooden cup, even an endgrain cup, can zealously hold onto its contents as effortlessly as its noisy and easy-to-shatter compatriots, providing you do a few things right.

First, choose the right wood. Fruitwoods, like apple and cherry, or weeds like sycamore are great for endgrain cups, whereas weak-celled species with large pores, like Australian red cedar, aren't so good. That said, if you're already half way out the back door with a saw in your hand, and you're eyeing up that eucalypt branch leaning over the greenhouse, you make do with what you can get. Sure it may crack, but it'll be a blast to make and I'll cover some tips on how to avoid empty mugs and coffee-stained socks in a page or two.

In fact, I'm going to join you in your quest to eke out a fine-looking mug from a less-than-fine-looking log. I'm working here with a chunk of red bloodwood, *Corymbia gummiifera*, a eucalypt (but not a eucalyptus; confusing I know) that's not as tough as many in its tribe, but is nonetheless intimidating.

The no-lathe mug

I'm starting with a round, green log that's about 100mm in diameter when derobed of its bark. The first thing I'm going to do is saw my log to length. You want something that's a little taller than your favourite china mug to accommodate a slightly thicker underside, and then you want to add an extra 100mm or so on the bottom to allow for a flattened 'tongue' you will use to clamp the mug in place while hollowing out.

With an axe, remove all the bark down to the sapwood. Bloodwood bark is very soft and the axe makes light work of this.



The next step is to make the tongue for clamping. Measure about 100mm up from the narrowest end of the log, draw a line around the circumference and on this line, cut about a third of the way in from two opposing sides. Now place the log on its widest end, and with an axe and club, carefully chip off the wood from the two opposing sides to make a thick tongue with parallel sides. Clamp this end into a holding device.

The long hollow

Now reach for an electric drill because we are going to kick-start the hollowing process. If you're going for the true cordless approach, a t-bar auger will do the trick, but be warned of the devastating effect of a slow-turning wide auger on a small piece of endgrain. All it takes is for one little catch on a stubborn piece of grain and your mug-to-be will be hopelessly split.

Before drilling, I mark the rim by drawing one circle inside another with a compass onto the endgrain. The use of a compass is useful here because it marks the centre of the cup and the exact place where I am going to drill.

A good quality 25mm spade bit deals adequately with drilling through endgrain. Depending on what's lurking inside the log, drilling endgrain can be tough, so hold on and keep in mind to include the drill bit spur in any measurements you make.

And now we hollow...and hollow. It takes a while, but it's one of those tasks where you can build up a steady rhythm and natter with friends until a cup magically appears. Straight or hooked spoon carving knives will do this task well, but you will find a long-handled hook knife is by far the most efficient, powerful and satisfying tool to use.

I've made my own long-handled hook knife from a Morakniv 164. Just carefully split the existing handle off with an old





axe, grab a dry and sturdy stick and drill a hole smaller than the tang and tap it in. Glue it in place if you want, but a friction fit will do, and then whittle the end of the stick down to accommodate the ferule. This quick and easy upgrade produces an aggressive hook knife that slices away big shavings thanks to the leverage of using both hands.

To hollow, you begin by clamping the tongue in place and moving the hook knife around the rim of the drilled hole. Here lies the beauty of an endgrain cup, because you will always be hollowing across the grain, regardless of whether you move the knife left or right. If this cup was being hollowed perpendicular to the endgrain, you would need to perform a few mind acrobatics taking into account the four directions of grain you would need to follow to prevent the fibres from tearing.

And so, after numerous cups of tea from that seemingly demure old mug that required no grunts and groans to muster, and literally going round in circles many, many times, you will finally have a hollowed interior.

A new ritual

The exterior is carved with an axe and knife, but before you start swinging the axe, it's time to saw off the tongue, leaving a base that's thick enough to accommodate the

drill bit spur. The axe does most of the shaping, and this is where you need to carefully align the top with the bottom. A little bit of wonky is fine, but too much and you'll end up with coffee on your lap.

Don't worry about carving a mug handle; wood is a fantastic insulator of heat, so unless you're prone to poking out your pinkie when sipping your cuppa, carve a vessel that you can hold and enjoy its tactile beauty.

Once axed out, do some minor shaping with a knife, being sure to constantly feel for spaces where it may be getting a little thin; busting through a wall at this stage may bring on tears!

Now bevel the bottom and tweak the rim to your liking, and there's your cup, your mug, your goblet or whatever you want to call it. From here you can decorate it if you want. I've added texture with a tiny Japanese gouge and stained the exterior with *sumi* ink, also from Japan.

Before you drink from it, you will need to seal all those pores loitering at the base. I seal the inside with raw linseed oil, and the outside and bottom with rubbed-back shellac and more linseed oil (I leave the shellac on the bottom untouched, to really seal those pores).



16



17



18



19

12. Carving a lip.
13. Make the bottom parallel to the top by holding a pencil at the same height and rotating the mug.
14. Sawing the bottom of the mug to ensure it sits just right.
15. Make the bottom wide enough to be stable.
16. Use the knife tip to bevel the lip and bottom with a lever cut.
17. Not the knot. Push these though and fill with pure melted shellac.
18. To decorate or not?
19. Black *sumi* ink was applied and lightly sanded to reveal the wood underneath. Shellac was applied to the outside and rubbed back with steel wool before coating all surfaces with raw linseed oil.
20. Trust your eyes. A little wonkiness is fine.



20

Shellac flakes are used to fill any gaps, like those left by knots, or any cracks that may appear as your cup dries. Place some flakes on baking paper and microwave for 20 second bursts until melted. Now quickly roll the melted goo in the baking paper to form a stick. It'll go hard in a few seconds. Take the shellac stick and melt the end with a lit match and apply the melted shellac to the gap that needs filling. Sand it back and you'll have a durable, food safe filler in place. Shellac does start melting between 80–100°C though, so if you have holes to fill, you may want to reassign your coffee mug to a wine mug to avoid untimely leaks.

Let the making of this cup become the beginning of a new ritual: one of making something every day, and of course, if you're a milk and honey person, there's an off-cut from the log down there, waiting to be made into a teaspoon and milk jug.

Photos: Robin Munn



Jeff Donne is a storyteller in words and wood. His Spoonsmith woodcraft school has recently changed to a new publishing and making venture, *Under the Bloodwood Tree*, where his adventures in writing and

woodcraft live together in one little hand-carved home.

See: www.underthebloodwoodtree.com

A selection of tools made by the author which feature various casuarina species.



In Praise of Casuarinas

Ian Wilkie looks at visual and workability properties of a group of Australian native species which are mostly not available commercially, but for small scale work have many possibilities.

Names and misnomers

There are many interesting Australian woods that are not generally available commercially, and most casuarinas (sheoaks) fall into this category. 'Sheoaks' were once all lumped under the one generic name of casuarina, but have been recently split into three different genera. The ones that are familiar to many of us have now mostly become *Allocasuarina* (*Allo* means different).

Many books and reference sources have not yet caught up with the name changes, so I will use casuarinas as a lumping term, and *Allocasuarina* for the botanical name where I'm reasonably sure it is the currently accepted name. Incidentally, the name casuarina comes from the Latin

name for cassowaries (*Casuarius spp.*) because the drooping foliage (**photo 1**) looks like the feathers of a cassowary.

The 'acorns' or 'cones' as they are often called, are actually woody fruits and a useful guide to species. Many look similar to the untrained eye, but some are strikingly different (**photo 2**).

Calling casuarinas 'oaks' is a misnomer, although they do actually belong to the same family (Fagaceae). The common name derives from the large medullary rays which reminded early colonists of 'true' oaks (*Quercus spp.*). These rays form very prominent lines on the cut ends (**photo 3**).



The 'she' part of the name is claimed by some to be from the sound of the wind in the foliage, but an alternative view, which I think more likely to be correct, is that the feminine epithet was used in a derogatory sense, indicating they were second-class oaks.

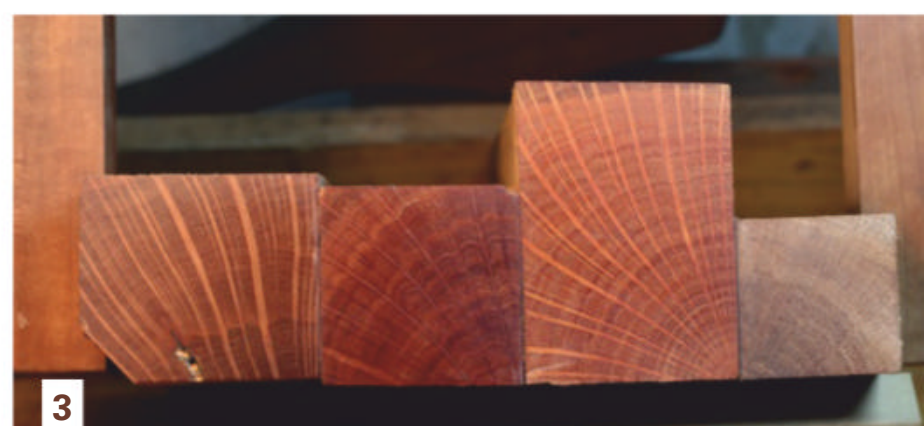
Most sheoaks are much harder than the woods the early colonists were accustomed to, and it seems the woodworking tools available in those early years were not of best quality (there were complaints to the colonial office from early governors regarding the inadequacy of tools supplied). Nevertheless, rose sheoak (*A. torulosa*) was used for various purposes, such as making roof shingles, where its easy splitting properties would have been appreciated. Some rose sheoak was used for furniture (mostly as veneers), but its use seems to have waned through the 1800s, no doubt due to far more tractable woods becoming readily available as the rainforests further north were exploited. By the beginning of the 20th century, the most common use of casuarinas was for firewood.

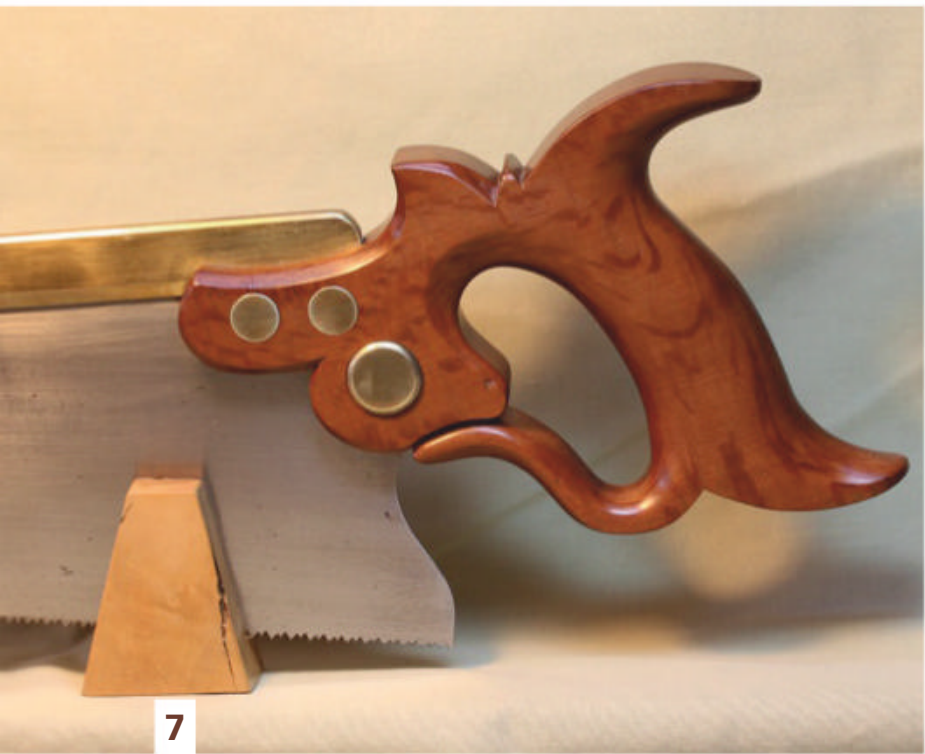
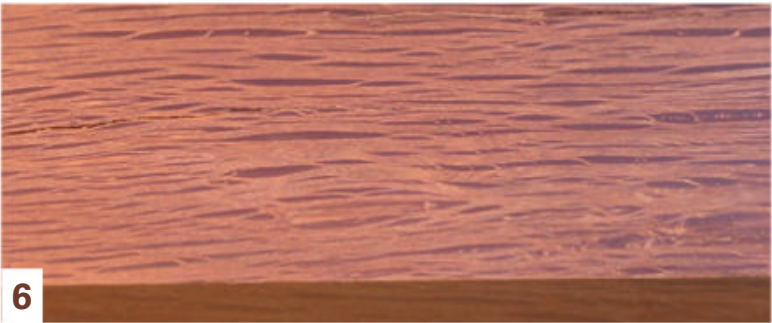
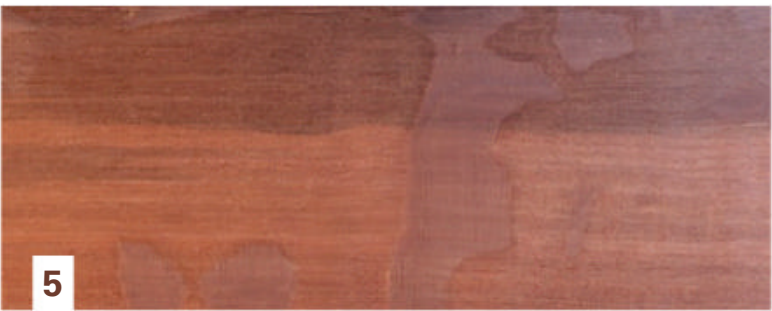
Not for sale

Most casuarinas are small trees or shrubs, often of 'poor form' which translates as not good for milling. Only a few species grow to medium sized trees with a regular, straight bole. River oak (*A. cunninghamiana*) is the largest



1. The needles of casuarinas are really branchlets, with the leaves reduced to whorls of tiny 'teeth'.
2. The cones of drooping sheoak (*A. vertillata*), can be up to 50mm long.
3. Endgrain views, left to right: bull oak, hairy oak, rose and river sheoaks.





4.

Rose sheoak left to dry in the round.
5.

Radial surface of bull oak showing large medullary rays.
6.

Tangential surface of bull oak showing the ends of medullary rays.
7.

Bull oak saw handle.
8.

Radial surface of rose sheoak.
9.

Tangential surface of rose sheoak.
10.

Rose sheoak showing a herringbone figure.
11.

Chisel handles made from rose sheoak.
12.

Spalted river oak.
13.

Radial surface of river oak
14.

Tangential surface of river oak.

of that group, but mostly restricted to the edges of water-courses where harvesting is not permitted. West Australia has a sheoak (*A. fraseriana*), which is similar to eastern rose sheoak (*A. torulosa*), and is about the only one of the casuarinas regularly harvested commercially for timber. On the East coast, most casuarina wood can only be obtained sporadically from boutique suppliers.

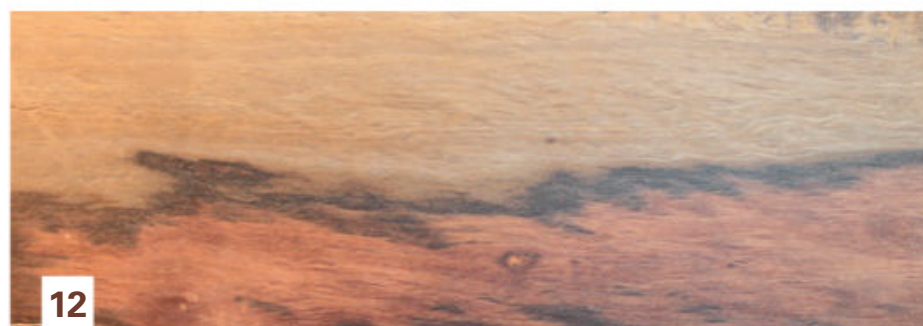
I grew up on a farm in North Queensland, and the hub of the household was a wood-burning stove that kept a large kettle perpetually ready for tea making, cooked our meals, provided copious hot water, and warmed our butts on cold nights (when mum didn't chase us out of her way). The stove was fed almost exclusively with rose sheoak, which grew abundantly on the property. For 40 years, 'sheoak' and 'firewood' were synonymous in my mind. The way the green firewood billets split in the sun within days of being cut, it seemed to me it was created especially for the purpose (photo 4).

Casuarinas generally have a high tangential to radial shrinkage ratio, making them very difficult to dry, but once dry many are stable, tough, and durable woods with spectacular grain patterns.

First encounters: bull oak

It was a chance encounter with a couple of billets of bull oak (*A. leuhmanii*) that first changed my view of the casuarinas. The wood I got was from a standing dead tree and had a lot of very deep splits, but I did my best with axe and bandsaw to recover as much sound wood as I could. I tried planing a piece and quickly learnt why *A. leuhmanii* is sometimes claimed to be the hardest wood in the world. It isn't (another casuarina may be, see later), but it's still very hard. It dulls plane irons after a few swipes, but if you can smooth a radial surface, it is spectacular stuff.

The rays on the radial surface are huge, some more than 30mm wide and extending 80mm or more towards the



periphery (**photo 5**). On the tangential surface they show as long lines sharply pointed at either end (**photo 6**).

I was quite taken by the rich colour and looked for something to make that didn't involve any intricate shaping. I turned some up for handles and found it easier to turn than I expected, and what impressed me most was the magnificent, very tactile surfaces I achieved, very easily. Pretty soon I was putting bull oak handles on any tool that stood still long enough.

Bull oak (sometimes spelt 'buloke') has a wide distribution through much of inland Australia. There is the usual variation from tree to tree, but wood I've collected from as far apart as Victoria and western Queensland was remarkably similar. One lot I obtained from a mature tree near Echuca (killed and partly shattered by a lightning strike) had quite fine rays and finished with the smoothest, most lustrous surface that just begs to be handled (**photo 7**).

Working with rose sheoak

That experience got me thinking about rose sheoak and if it was useful for other than firewood. By starting with green wood, sawing immediately, sealing ends, and drying it very gently, I got plenty of sound wood from the first batch I harvested.

The rays are a bit smaller on average than bull oak's. The 'rose' colour of the fresh-sawn wood turns to a dark brown after a few months of exposure (**photos 8, 9**)

The wood of one tree from the old family farm on the Atherton Tablelands had a fine fiddleback figure forming a herring-bone pattern that gives the wood a shimmering quality. It's the only time I've seen this pattern in a casuarina (**photo 10**).

A. torulosa is a little bit easier to work than bull oak (but still plenty tough), and takes an equally nice finish. Although I thought it might be a bit too fissile to take heavy impact, I used some to re-handle my socket chisels and they have stood up as well as any other wood I've used (**photo 11**).

The largest casuarina: river oak

A. cunninghamiana is the largest of our casuarinas, and grows abundantly along the watercourses draining the eastern side of the Great Divide from north Queensland to southern NSW, wherever they haven't been choked out by introduced Chinese elm and camphor laurel.

A tree fell into my hands (almost literally) when a storm blew it over into our backyard. It had been dead for some time, and had a few splits as well as a large hollow, but what intrigued me was the jet black inner heartwood. The normal coarse grain structure was completely obliterated and it looked like ebony. I rescued what I could and put it aside to dry.

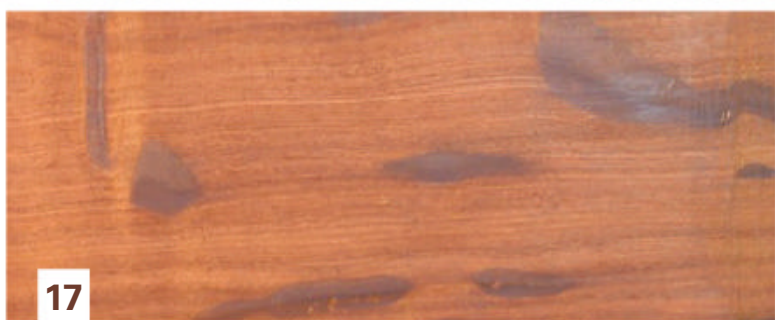
Unfortunately, most of the black wood split to matchsticks during drying, despite my care, and I managed to get only small pieces of it that remained intact, but the spalt



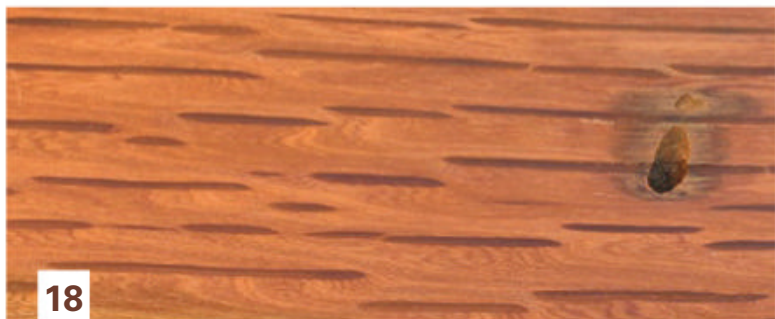
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17



18

15. Chair legs and spindles turned from river oak.

16. River oak infill for an old cast iron plane body.

17. Tangential surface of hairy oak. Note the blunt ends of the rays and the fine arched white lines between the rays, a distinguishing feature of this species.

18. Radial surface of hairy oak – borer holes are common.

lines (for it is a fungus that produced the black pigment) extended into the sound wood in some areas (**photo 12**).

The colour of *A. cunninghamiana* wood seems to be variable, it can be mid to darkish brown, with large medullary rays similar to sheoak, but what grows in my area tends to be a very pale brown with medium to small rays (**photos 13, 14**).

Wood from the several trees that have come my way has been a little easier to work than sheoak; planing, chiselling and turning quite well. It was favoured by bullockies for making yokes, according to CSIRO's *Forest Trees of Australia* and on the basis of that recommendation I tried some for chair legs and spindles. It turned and took detail quite well, and although it's denser than the European woods typically used in this context, it's tougher, so you can reduce the size of chair parts to reduce weight (**photo 15**).

I infilled an old cast iron plane body found in a junk shop with some of the spalted wood, and was quite pleased with the result. It didn't finish with quite as fine a surface as bull oak or sheoak, but is still nicely tactile (**photo 16**). Note: The casuarinas all seem to have a pretty high tannic acid content, and can promote rusting when in contact with steel. Coating in-contact metal with wax or other barriers minimises this.

Easy to work: hairy oak

A. inophloia is sometimes known as hairy oak for its woolly bark, or flame oak for its striking reddish-brown wood. It is not as widely distributed as bull oak, being restricted to the southern half of inland Qld and northern NSW. It has large medullary rays like those of bull oak (**photos 17**).

It's among the easiest of the casuarinas I've worked with; it planes and saws quite well, and peels nicely on the lathe. The rich colour (which becomes a deep brown after a while) makes it hard to ignore.

Its major drawback is that the wood can be full of small defects. Besides the galleries of borers (**photo 18**), it often contains numerous soft inclusions around 20–25mm long and 15–20mm deep, and a few millimetres wide, distributed throughout the heartwood. I don't know what causes them – they are possibly the result of insect damage to the cambium (growth) layer, creating a small void which becomes filled with bark material as the tree heals around the defect.

Even easier to work: rock oak

I've only had one block of *A. huegeliana*, courtesy of a WA friend. It planed, cut, and rasped easily, but still took a fine finish and is easily the nicest casuarina I've worked with. The whole block had small medullary rays and a fine fiddleback figure throughout. I don't know if that is common in this species, but it is certainly not



19



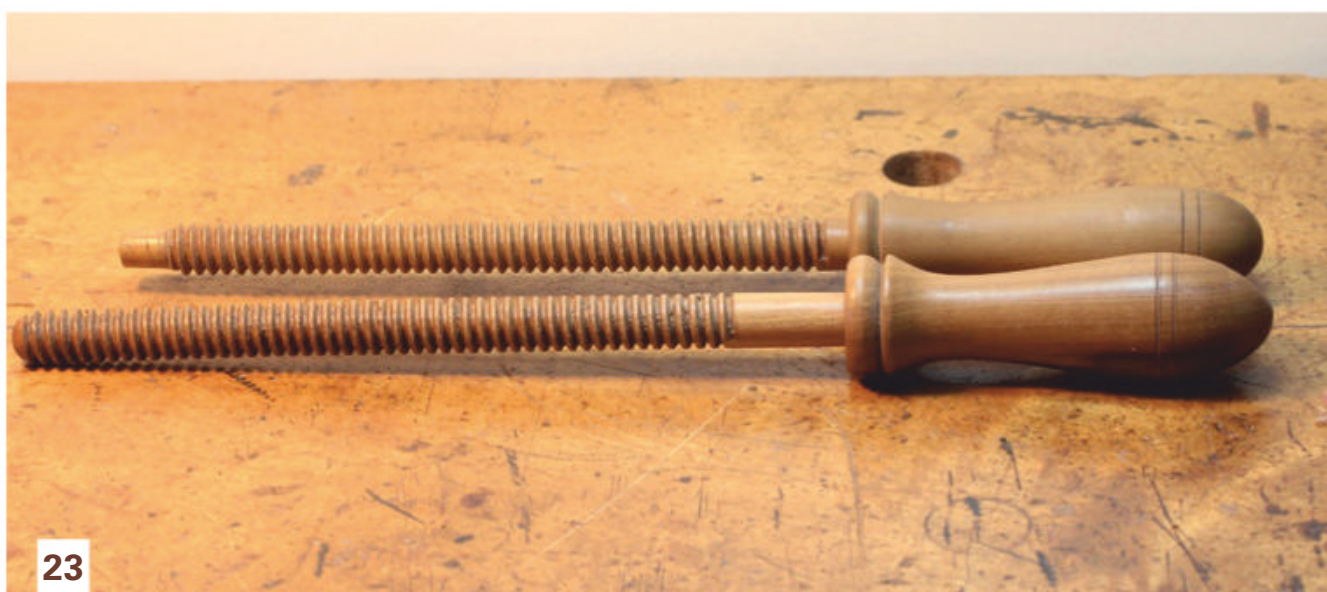
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20



23

- 19. Rock oak saw handle.
- 20. Swamp oak saw handle.
- 21. Radial surface of belah.
- 22. Tangential surface of belah.
- 23. Belah clamp screws.

common in any of the other casuarinas I know. It made a beautiful handle for what has become my favourite dovetail saw (**photo 19**).

Highly figured: swamp oak

A. obesa is also from WA and is one of three species with a common name of swamp oak. The wood in the one example I've had was medium brown when fresh, turning a blackish-brown on exposure. The tangential rays have tiny spots and markings that make them look like little eyes.

The single piece I've worked was marginally softer than *A. torulosa*, but otherwise had much the same properties. It finished well and made an excellent saw handle (**photo 20**).

As hard as belah

C. cristata has a distribution from central western Qld to central NSW, but a very close subspecies (*C. pauper*) extends across the dry inland to WA. It is unusual for a casuarina in not having prominent medullary rays. (Another is coast sheoak (*C. equisetifolia*) which I've not yet managed to obtain a sample of).

The wood is very slightly less dense than bull oak (1.1 vs 1.11) but it is considerably harder (20,000 Janka units vs a 'mere' 16,700 for bull oak), so it's not surprising that I found it more difficult to dry, and more difficult to work

than any other casuarina I've met so far. It is also a fairly bland wood, the most decorative bit I've seen had a slight curly figure on the radial surface (**photo 21**), but the tangential surface is almost featureless (**photo 22**).

The only use I've made of belah to date is for making wooden screws (**photo 23**). It turned without too much difficulty, and took a very clean thread (using a carbide router bit), but some threads have chipped slightly in use, and small cracks appeared even after the wood was oiled and waxed. Despite these minor defects, they have proven to be very tough and up to the job.

This brief overview of casuarinas only scratches the surface; there are dozens of other species that could yield interesting and useful woods. The density of the majority of species makes them less desirable for solid wood furniture, but they can be excellent in applications where small to medium-sized pieces of stable, attractive woods are required.

Photos: Ian Wilkie



Ian Wilkie was once a veterinary pathologist all the while a keen woodworker and possibly even keener hand tool maker. Ian has written several stories on toolmaking for AWR. Email iwwilkie@bigpond.com

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Designing Your Workspace

Size isn't the issue – it's the way you set up your workshop that affects your efficiency and enjoyment. Story by Vic Tesolin.

The space that I work in is extremely important to me. It's a space that I need to feel comfortable and creative in. This is where I transform rough timber into furniture and projects. It has to be personal. It has to be my space.

Size isn't everything

Over the years I've moved and lived in different places, so I have experience assembling and disassembling my shop. I've also been fortunate to teach around the globe, which means I've worked in many different shops. Spaces have been from as large as 200m² to as small as 3m² and I can assure you that bigger is not necessarily better in my eyes. To begin with, you have

further to walk to retrieve a tool and if you are middle-aged like me, you may very well forget what you set off to get halfway to arriving there.

Some workshops I've worked in have been machine and power tool focused, and others have had nothing but lights using the power grid. A great many of them were shops where both hand and power tools were used together in harmony. All of this is to say, some of these shops were a dream to work in while others were a bit of struggle and it had nothing to do with the size, type, or tools used in them.

The key to a functional and enjoyable workshop is one that is laid out well. I can always tell if a shop space has

been thought about and considered carefully. The material flows from machine to machine easily without friction while breaking out the timber for a project. The tools are where they should be – close at hand. The walls are adorned with tools to be used and personal touches like posters or pictures that mean something to the owner.

If you're setting up a shop at the moment it will pay off to take the time to consider some critical things like tool layout and lighting, as well as heating, cooling and humidity. If you already have a shop space that you are working in, then you may be happy to make a few tweaks to take your workspace to the next level. I've



1

Opposite: The key to a functional and enjoyable shop is one that is laid out well.

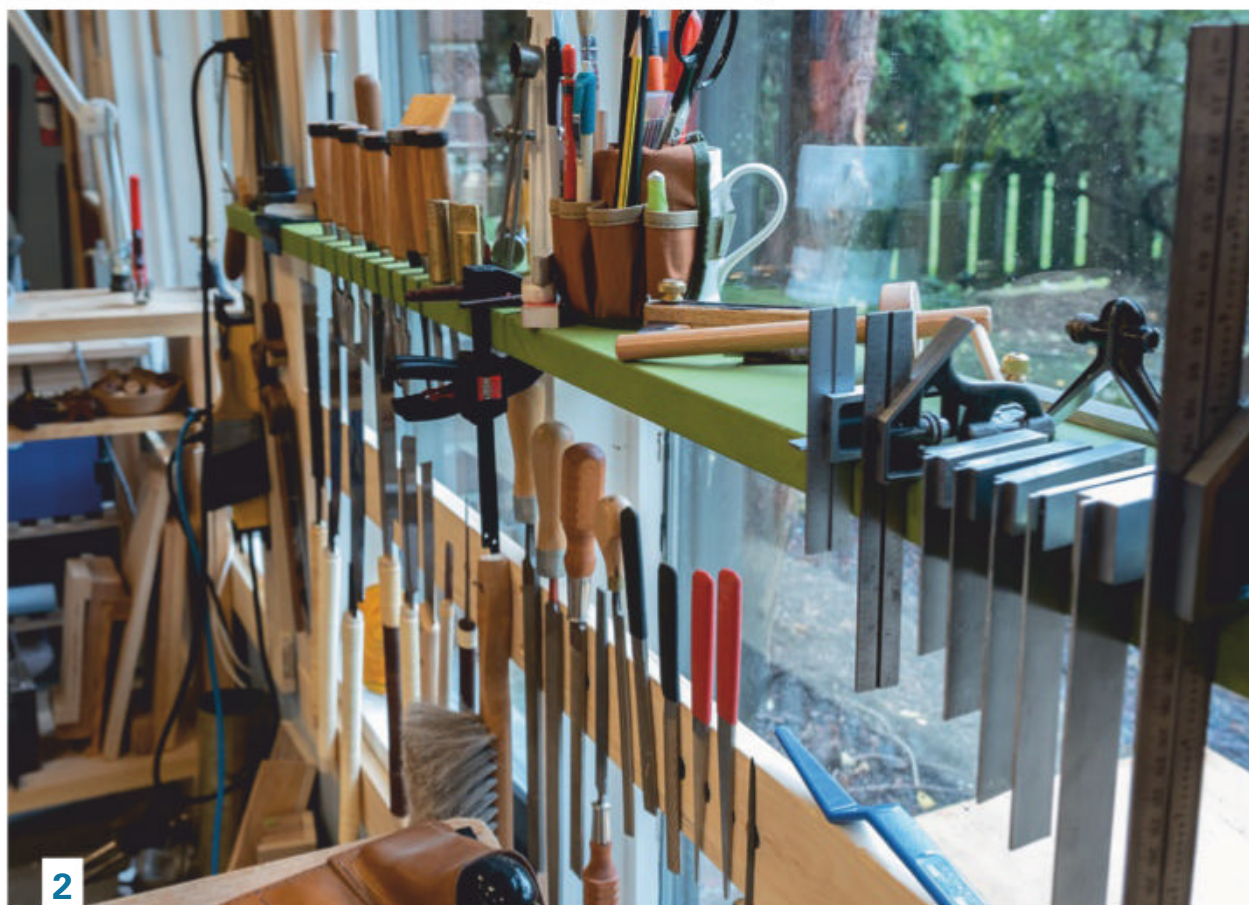
1. A full-sized tablesaw doesn't suit the way I like to work. Choose equipment that suits your work style to make the most of your space.
2. Keep your tools where they should be – close at hand.
3. Let your fingers do the work – make a scale plan.

had six personal shops over the last 20 years and I've picked up a few ideas along the way.

Workshop layout

Laying out a workshop so the work flows well can seem like a daunting task, but a bit of forethought will go a long way. The first step is to take stock of your tools and machines. What do you have? Do you use all of the tools that you have or are there some just collecting dust and shavings in there? I've purchased many tools over the years that weren't really necessary and just ended up occupying valuable space.

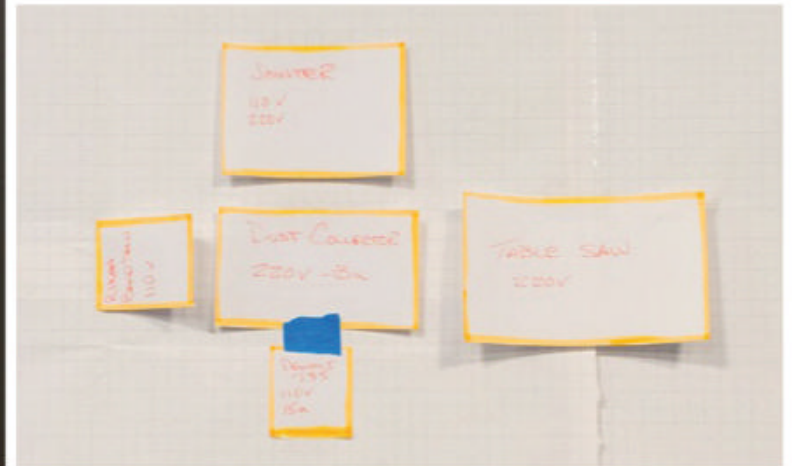
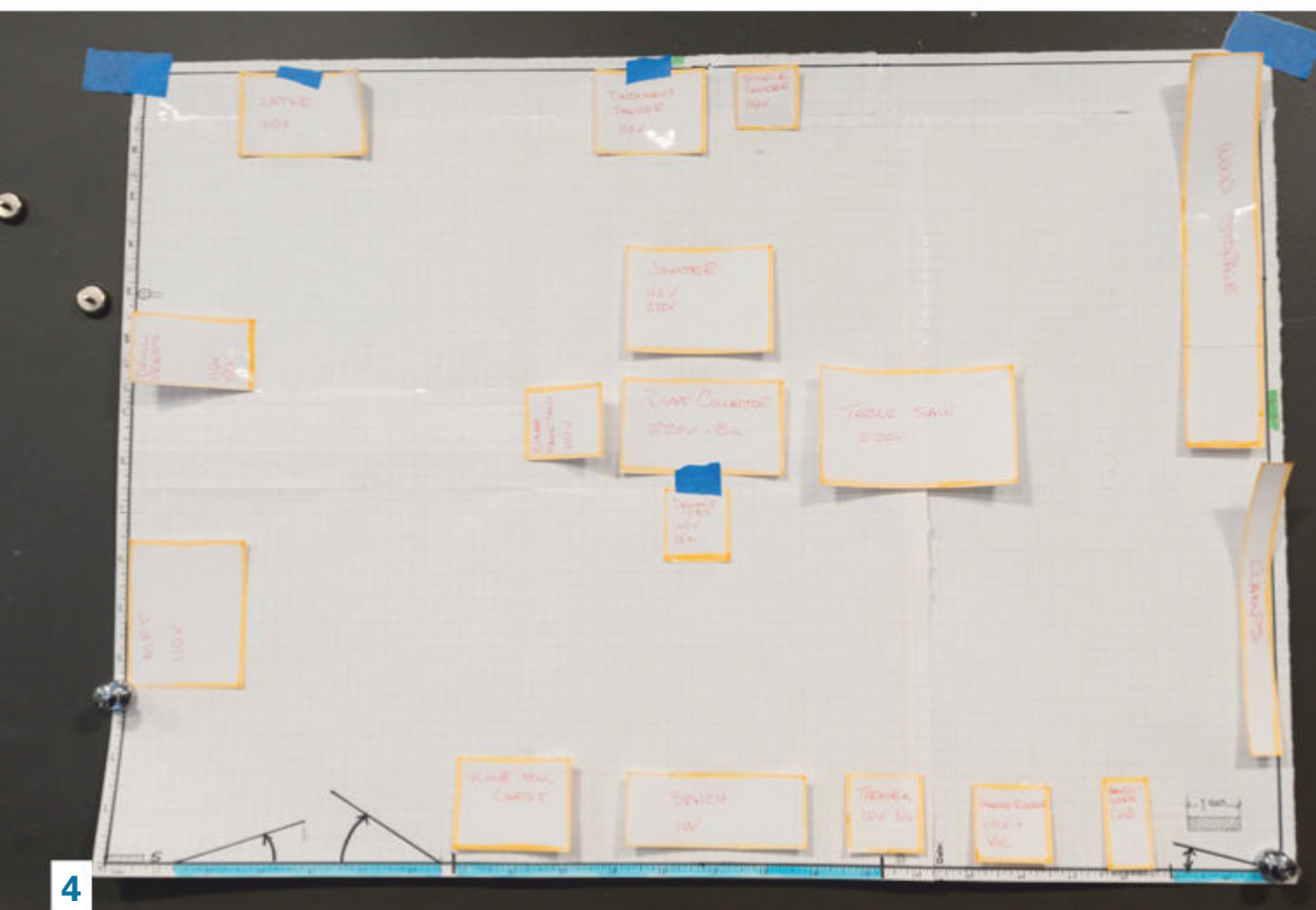
For example, I haven't owned a full-sized tablesaw for 12 years. Now I'm not suggesting you sell your tablesaw, they just don't suit the way I like to work. I have a small Inca tablesaw that I use for critical cross-cuts and all the other tasks get done with a track saw. This method of work saves me valuable square metres and to be fair, my tablesaw normally became another work surface. A work surface that wasn't ideal for work but it was a horizontal surface that collected all kinds of mess.



2



3



Make a plan

Reorganising a workspace or setting one up can seem daunting. The tools are usually heavy and the thought of moving them around over and over again is not something you want to do. Thankfully you don't have to. Take some time to accurately measure your workspace. You are going to make a drawing from these numbers so don't rush it. Once you have the perimeter of your space, get some graph paper and cut and paste pieces that are a scale version of what you have. I find 1/4 scale to be a useful scale for this kind of task, but any scale will do. If you fancy yourself a drafts person or are handy with CAD software, feel free to do it however you want. Personally I've never made the time to learn any CAD software and I prefer to work with pencil and paper.

Once you have your perimeter set, mark in all the details like doors, windows, electrical outlets, light switches, and anything else that is not easily moved. Also include items like stairs, ramps, or support beams. This takes a bit of time to get laid out but you will be glad that you did.

Now measure up all of your machines, tools, and work surfaces. Don't worry about in/out feed space, for now just

measure the tools. Go back to the graph paper pad and layout the shapes of your tools. Don't worry about mimicking the actual shape of the tool (think drill press) but more of the block of space it takes up. Now cut out the shapes and label them so you can keep track of what is what. I also colour the perimeter of the tools so that it's easier to see them on the drawing.

Now it's time to have some fun. Move your machines and benches around the space with ease and no sore back. It's easy to experiment with different layouts to see if they will work or not. Keep in mind that you need to save space on the in- and out-feed sides of your machines. I like to have at least 2000mm on each side, but these numbers are going to depend on the type of woodworking you do. If you routinely work with sheet goods then you will have to guard a bit more space. I've never had a workshop big enough to sling around sheets of plywood, so I break it all down to manageable chunks outside the shop on sawhorses.

Tool and material storage

Once the tools are in place you can start to look at the spaces left over to see what can be used for other things like storage. Lack of space to store tools and materials is a problem all

woodworkers seem to struggle with. Personally, I buy my timber as I use it with about 20% more as a cushion. I know this is a more expensive way to purchase timber but I just don't have the space to order in a pack at a time. I'm not a production woodworker so I don't need racks of timber at hand. I also store my timber vertically. This takes up less space and keeps the pieces more accessible. I learned my lesson in the past with horizontal storage. Somehow the timber I wanted was always at the bottom of the pile.

Another set of tools that often gets forgotten about in the layout are clamps. These necessary tools are notoriously difficult to store. Some woodworkers try to use mobile stands while others hang them on the wall. I like clamps to be close at hand and easy to access because when I need one or two to finish a glue-up, I don't want to waste time searching for what I need. A place for everything and everything in its place is a good rule to work by for tools in general.

Now that the layout is done, sit back and study it. Hang it somewhere where you will see it often so that you can stop, look, and try other layouts. I like to photograph the layouts I create with my phone so I can keep track of



5

4. Measure the perimeter of your space and cut and paste pieces that are a scale version of what you have. Move these around to suit and test your equipment and workflow.
5. Keep clamps close at hand and easy to access – you don't want to waste time searching during a glue-up.
6. Lack of storage space is a problem all woodworkers seem to struggle with. Dedicated cabinets and shopmade wall fixtures can help.



6

different iterations. Take your time here and don't rush into the heavy lifting. If you have woodworking friends, send them some of your layouts to get their thoughts. Be prepared to have your ideas challenged and have an open mind, but also remember that the space is yours and it needs to serve you well.

Centralised dust collection

I did something different in my latest shop that I hadn't considered before. I grouped the bandsaw, combo machine, and Inca saw in a cluster around the dust collector. These are my biggest chip creators and this layout allowed me to have short runs of hose to my dust collector. These short runs ensure excellent suction with little loss of efficiency due to long, bendy runs. At first glance it was a bit odd looking but this layout has proven to be extremely efficient in many ways. Moving from machine to machine is quick and the cluster gives me the in- and out-feed areas that I was looking for.

Power and light

As you study your drawing, perhaps you are noticing that you need to make some additions to your space. Maybe you need more electrical outlets to satisfy your layout. I always assume I will need one outlet for the tool and another for a task light. I find the overhead lights in most shops are good for lighting the space but are often inadequate for performing close-focus tasks. I have many task lights (at almost every work station) because there is nothing more stressful than not being able to see what you are doing, not to mention unsafe.

Call a friend

The last step is to make your ideas and drawings a reality. Invite your woodworking friends over for some extra muscle, and move things around to see how it looks in the actual space. Be prepared for some let-downs as what works well on paper does not always translate to the real space. Once you've set things up, work in the space and be critical of the layout. Is it functional and efficient? Does your work flow well or do you find your self criss-crossing the



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7. Grouping these machines around the dust collector has allowed short runs of hose for more efficient suction and the in- and out-feed access I wanted.
8. Task lights at almost every workstation improve safety and accuracy.

space to do what you have to do? Is it feeling enjoyable or annoying? How can you tweak it? Don't worry, you may not have to go back to the drawing board. Oftentimes you can change a few small things in the space to make things better.

I am happy to say that I love working in my shop. After 20 years of basement and garage shops, I'm fortunate to now have a stand-alone building that is temperature controlled and a great size for the way I work. I chose to paint the walls and doors colours that are pleasing to me, which in turn makes the space more inviting and comfortable to work in. I hung some posters and all sorts of memorabilia for a real personal touch. Just as we grow and change, your space will likely change over the years as your woodworking evolves, and that's okay. Try different things and try different tools. I personally like to change things up every couple of years just to keep things fresh and interesting. Ultimately, no matter what, do your best to make the space yours and you will enjoy woodworking even more.

Photos: Vic Tesolin



*Vic Tesolin is a furniture maker who lives and teaches woodwork in Burlington, ON Canada. A sequel to his book *The Minimalist Woodworker* will be published in 2021. Learn more at <http://victesolin.com>*

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