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REVIEW
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Australian Wood Review 112

Contents

ISSU 112 – SEPTEMBER 2021

TOOLS & EQUIPMENT

Editor's letter

Passion, not profit

Woodworking is one of those things inspired by passion, as opposed to profit. I would go so far as to say that making money never drives someone to relentlessly pursue it as a profession.

When Melbourne engineering manager Dom Dudkiewicz says he can no longer ignore the 'siren call' that has had his ear, and has taken extended leave from work to chase his woodworking dream – that's the kind of passion I'm talking about. I did wonder if his decision crystallised while writing the article that appears in this issue.

At the other end of the spectrum, we also meet Giordano Viganò, 87, an Italian master craftsman who, after decades of running a furniture making enterprise simply knows no other life: 'It's not that I need something to bring me into the workshop', he says. 'It's hard for me to think of a life outside of it. This is what I do, and who I am.' Is that passion, or purpose?

On centre stage this issue is Jon Goulder. Is there a more unique maker and artist in Australia? A fourth generation maker, Jon was apprenticed in the family firm in Bowral and then studied at then-named ANU School of Art under George Ingham, whose influence he still refers to. All the while teaching, managing and mentoring, Jon has continued to design and make work that is now held in art galleries and museums throughout Australia.

Jon draws on traditions to produce work that embodies our age: where we've come from, and where we can head to. And perhaps it's the siren call again when Jon says: 'I've sacrificed everything to make the next piece – it's like a drug. Pieces have cost huge amounts of money at times – when I start making and I have a vision of that end piece, nothing else matters.' Read more in Adam Markowitz's interview.

Also shining in mid-career virtuosity, and shown on our cover, is Alison Crowther, a UK sculptor who creates often monumental forms mostly from fallen English oak. After studying furniture design Alison was drawn to a more tactile art. Her forms are geometrically organic, and Robert Howard reveals how she expresses veneration for her medium by giving voice to its grain and textures.

Skills and techniques

This issue Neil Turner takes us into the crucible of painstaking refinement as he shows how to create the flames that define his signature *Fire Ball*. It's a challenge with a learning curve to another level. There is also in-depth guidance from Melbourne maker Josh Stevens, who puts a new spin on a traditional technique to create his contemporary bar stool. Finally, for a trip to the dark side, it's mostly hand tools for a small cabinet like the one Charles Mak builds. With dovetails and grooves a-plenty, it's another trip worth taking on the skills highway.

Last chance to enter Maker of Year 2021

If you follow our social media you will have seen the roll-out of the many fabulous entries we've already received for Maker of the Year awards presented by Carbatec. We are so proud to present this initiative, and huge thanks go to Carbatec, Felder Group Australia and Whittle Waxes for sponsoring and standing with us!

There is still time for your work to be part of this year's best showcase of fine woodworking from makers in Australia, New Zealand and all over the world. September 5 is the cut-off – all the info and entry is at www.woodreview.com.au/moty2021

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COVER:
UK sculptor Alison Crowther in her ancient barn workshop.

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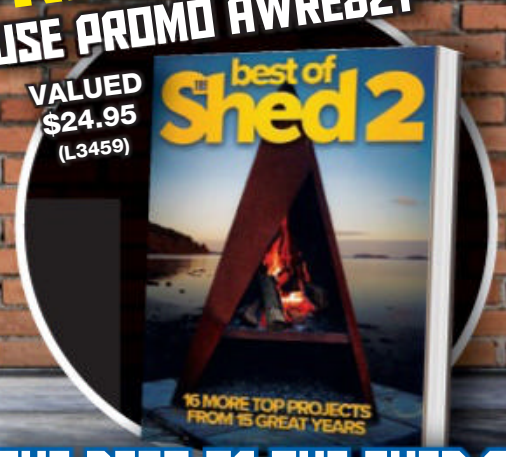

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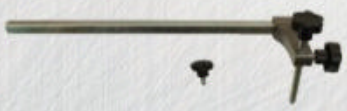

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The HW110LC-36 sits mid-range of three cabinet saws made by Harvey Machinery.

Harvey Alpha HW110LC-36 Tablesaw

Reviewed by Damion Fauser

A relatively new addition to the Australian market is the Harvey range of machines. This tablesaw is the mid-range model of three cabinet saws from this stable and has a golden titanium nitride (TiN) tabletop. There is also a plain cast iron table version of this model which sells for $3499. Anatomically, at first glance, this is just another saw, but upon closer inspection there are a number of features that could make this one stand out from the crowd for some users.

With a 10amp/230V/50Hz motor, a power rating of 1.65kW (2.2hp) that runs at 3850rpm, accessible and clearly presented on/off switch and smooth, lockable arbor controls for blade height and tilt, this machine will run a 10" (254mm) blade to fairly standard parameters. Careful blade selection may be required for deeper cuts in dense hardwoods. The use of a thin kerf blade will avoid taxing the motor too heavily.

The overhead guard is well thought out, made from clear acrylic for good visibility, with good anti-kickback cauls and overhead dust collection that pipes direct to the main 100mm port on the cabinet, negating the need for an additional hose. All of this can be easily removed for blade and riving knife changes and comes mounted on a rigid overhead boom that keeps the whole assembly up and out of the way of the stock being cut. Both table inserts lock solidly into place and have levelling grub screws, but they also have custom access holes for the mechanism to change the riving knife (there is an accessory low-profile riving knife supplied), so those who like to make their own zero-clearance inserts will need to account for this.

The rip fence is a solid T-square arrangement with a high-low extrusion that locks solidly. One feature that I

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The included mitre gauge is a stand-out feature and operates smoothly with presets and a flip-stop.

The rip fence has separate cursors for setting width on high and low fence settings.

really liked is the separate cursors for setting the rip width, whether cutting on the high or low fence configuration. Tooling changes are easy with the arbor lock and the long spanner that is supplied. The arbor has two indexing pins similar to European machines for positive registration, but these can be recessed to allow for aftermarket blades to be used on the machine.

The supplied mitre gauge is definitely worthy of mention. It has adjustable expansion slots to ensure a good fit in the track, is very solidly made, rotates smoothly and has preset detentes at zero, 90, 22.5, 45 and 60°. Included is an aluminium flip-stop that has three threaded indexing locations for the brass stop. This locks positively on the fence which extends telescopically, and there is an inbuilt micro-adjust with 0.02mm definition. The mitre gauge alone would likely make this saw stand out for some buyers.

The machine runs quietly, does not have a blade brake and there is convenient access to the inside of the cabinet via a hinged door.

This machine, equipped with the appropriate tooling, would be a solid and accurate servant to any home-based or smaller cabinetry shop.

Machine supplied and set up by Gregory Machinery in Brisbane.

Learn more at www.gregmach.com

Damion Fauser is a Brisbane based furniture designer maker who also teaches woodwork classes. See damionfauser.com

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Bosch GEX 18V-125 Cordless Sander

Reviewed by Raf Nathan

New in Bosch's Professional range is this cordless 125mm diameter random orbit sander. What a surprise this tool turned out to be. It is a standard 18 volts and came for review with a small, but powerful, 4 amp battery.

On first viewing I was unsure of what its capabilities would be, however after a few minutes of use I was greatly impressed. It has variable speed and a 2.5mm orbit diameter, which means it will leave a fine finish. Many sanders have a 3mm orbit which can leave swirl marks.

A cordless sander like this can make so many small workshop jobs an absolute breeze. For instance I needed to sand a drawer and normally I would set up the random orbit sander and dust extractor, which all takes time. In this case I simply went outside to the deck and sanded until the job was completed as well as it would have been with my regular sander. I checked the attached dust bag and it appeared to have caught pretty well all the dust from the job, impressive extraction.

Provided you let the sander do the work and don't force it down, it will glide over the work surface. My corded 150mm sander will still get used for larger jobs but for quickly sanding components or smaller work this is a winner.

With its light overall weight, the GEX 18V-125 is extra handy for sanding walls or work in difficult locations. And with its brushless motor you can expect longevity.

Raf Nathan is a woodwork designer maker based near Brisbane.

Amana Tool Domino Cutters

Reviewed by Damion Fauser

I've used Festool domino technology since 2009, and I own both the DF500 and DF700. In that time I've replaced many cutters, some due to breakage and some due to normal wear. Over the years I've noticed a couple of distinct trends with the fit of the factory Festool tenons in the slots cut by the machine. Specifically, I've always found the 6mm size to be too tight and the 10mm size to be a whisker loose.

Until recently, only Festool supplied replacement cutters. US tooling company Amana have now released their own full range of tooling for both machines and they were very happy to supply a number of them for me to test out. Due to my historical concerns with the 6mm and 10mm size, they were a natural for me to check out, plus I also requested a 14mm cutter, as that is the size I use most commonly when building workbenches with students.

I've had these cutters in my workshop for a couple of months now and can report that the quality of the cut is every bit as good as the proprietary Festool cutters. Over a reasonable number of cuts the average slot widths are 5.92mm, 9.93mm and 13.95mm respectively for the three cutters. This is perfectly adequate for use with the proprietary Festool tenons.

I've bought other tooling from Amana for several years and in my experience they offer exceptional products in terms of cut quality and longevity of service. If you use either of the Festool domino machines then these cutters are well worth consideration.

Review cutters supplied by Amana Tool, see www.amanatool.com

In Australia Amana tooling is supplied by Carbatec, www.carbatec.com.au

Damion Fauser is a Brisbane based furniture designer maker who also teaches woodwork classes. See damionfauser.com

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Woodfast DS300 Disc Sander

Reviewed by Raf Nathan

This is a very good machine with all cast iron components and a powerful 0.75kw (1hp motor) spinning at a relatively slow 1420rpm, so it's ideal for woodwork. I had it set up and going within a couple of minutes out of the box, as it only needed a clean-up and some guarding screwed in place.

The 435mm long cast iron table is nicely ground and accepts the supplied mitre fence in a machined slot. The table is easy to adjust to any angle with a large locking knob and geared action.

The 300mm abrasive rounds are attached with velcro to the main disc. It does take a little bit of time to remove guards and drop the table down when you want to change the abrasive, so usually you tend to run your favourite grit and leave it at that. For woodwork 150 or 180 is probably a good grit, however I trialled it with120 grit which will remove stock very quickly if you press hard.

You can sand anything you want on this machine. I flush sanded some brass that was screwed onto wood for a woodwork tool and what would normally be a slow hand job for me took literally seconds on the machine. For woodwork you can use it for shaping, adjusting mitres (to an extent) and sanding endgrain cleanly. Using the mitre fence at 45°, and with a little practice, you can produce perfect chamfers on endgrain, ideal for table feet, small boxes and similar.

Dust extraction is via a port on the side and this worked quite well connected to my dust extractor. It is a sander so a lot of dust is expected.

On the electrics side there is a push button start-stop with a large quick-stop button, a brake you can press to bring the disk to a halt and 1hp motor with ample power. At 36kgs in predominately cast iron, it is both very stable and smooth running.

In my short trial of this machine I couldn't fault it at all. I thought it was a terrific addition to my workshop and it will leave a small hole in my sanding abilities when I have to return it.

Review machine supplied by Hare and Forbes Machineryhouse, see www.machineryhouse.com.au

For on site work a cordless mitre saw offers flexibility and convenience.

Bosch GCM 18V 216mm Mitre Saw

Reviewed by Raf Nathan

At last we can buy cordless sliding mitre saws which are perfect for site work with their portability, and of course battery power. This one from Bosch offers 270mm slide capacity and 70mm thickness of cut, which for most jobs is more than adequate. We trialled it over a few weeks sawing hardwood cladding, 140mm spotted gum decking and pine framing.

The saw worked beautifully straight out of the box, with all the angles reading well. It has a thin-kerf 216mm diameter sawblade with 24 teeth. I didn't think the 24 tooth would give a very good cut but, given that it is a new blade, we got excellent results. The saw gave a smooth high quality finish on all the hardwood. I would recommend a 48-tooth blade as an option for a better finish on pine.

The heart of the tool is the battery pack and motor. Bosch rate the brushless motor as equivalent to 1600 watts, which is equal to a corded saw. We were running a latest technology 18 volt ProCore battery that packed a whopping 12 amps. More amps means more run time, and over a period of say a day of cutting we used, according to the inbuilt battery indicator, 40% of the battery pack. So now there's really no need to have a corded saw on site, one of these big batteries should always last a day's work. The 12 amp batteries cost $300, while the 5 amp are $169.

The saw comes supplied with a dust bag but my guesstimate is it caught about 30% of the dust produced. Most of the dust was sprayed out the back. Obviously the tool would work more cleanly if it was connected to a dust extractor. But then you would need a cordless dust extractor, or what would be the point of a cordless saw?

Bevel control is via a large locking knob at the rear which is easy to reach and has adjustable stops to set at 90° and 45°. The mitre table is simple and locks down with a front-mounted knob. There are also two short extension arms on either side, although these only give you an extra 85mm of support each.

The included laser shows a line to the left of the cut and this was set up perfectly from the factory. The laser line itself could be a bit finer and in bright sunlight it can be hard to see. Personally I would prefer an option to turn the laser off as sometimes I want to be able to work to a pencil or knife line, and in these instances the laser is unnecessary. There is also an LED to light the cut area which works well indoors.

There is a trenching capability with a simple plastic spring-loaded stop which I thought a little light duty. Trenching was okay, although depending on the wood thickness being sawn, you may need to pack the workpiece out from the fence, as the arc of the sawblade won't completely make a cut if low to the table.

After using it on site everyone was happy with the performance, portability and power. As the machine is made from aluminium alloy and plastic (which keeps the weight down to under 15kg), you will need to give it some respect as some of the plastic fittings won't cop a heavy hit. I have seen people being very rough with tools on site, which I never recommend. It excelled at sawing both hardwood and pine and the battery power was commendable, as is the six year warranty.

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Product News

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

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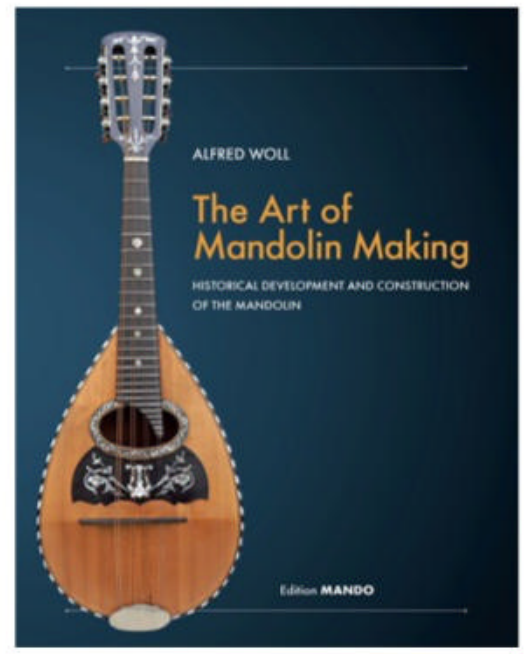
www.thetoolworks.com.au



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www.en.edition-mando.de


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YAFFA 13528

Main and detail opposite: The latest version of Josh Steven's *Split Stool* made in American ash. The stool is 760mm high and the seat diameter is 350mm.

Making the Split Stool

Josh Stevens puts a three-way spin on his contemporary turned stool design.

As a woodturner my experience with furniture making usually revolves around making components for other designers. Often the parts I make are basic shapes with the clean lines we commonly see in modern furniture. These jobs are fun and still present a challenge, but I had been craving something more interesting and involved.

Design development

A few years ago I decided to design a comfortable modern stool that made use of the split turning technique normally seen used for furniture ornamentation and crafty wooden baubles. My own spin on this technique was to use 120° segments for a three-way split, rather than the two or four-way splits I've seen in the past. This led to the development of my *Split Stool* with the latest version being the 760mm bar stool height version seen here.

I've used American ash for this build as it's an easy timber to work with and I had plenty of off-cuts from previous jobs. It turns very cleanly and has nice straight grain which was important for this piece.

Turning the legs

Photo 1 shows the 120° segment we will be cutting out. I put a ripping blade in my track-saw and set it to 30° to cut these pieces. You can also do this on a tablesaw or bandsaw.

Check the angles are correct before gluing up – if you've made a mistake you can correct the angles on the planer. Take care with this: any gaps at this point will result in a weak glue-up that has the potential to fly apart on the lathe.

One strip of paper runs between the two pieces at the bottom and a wider strip spans the top two segments (**photo 2**). It's an awkward shape to glue up but gluing the two 'bottom' pieces first makes it easier to position the 'top' piece (**photo 3**). If the paper slips too much it can be difficult to get the joint apart cleanly after it has been turned. After the glue has dried, the ends are cut off on the mitre saw. Hopefully you'll see a clean glue joint with no big gaps (**photo 4**).

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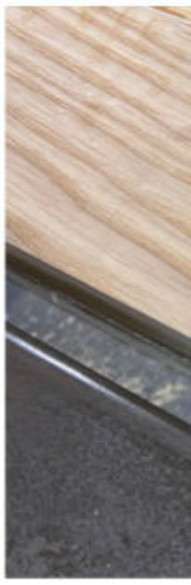

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1. Showing the grain orientation of one of the three segments which will be glued together for the leg blank.
2. The segments are glued with paper separating the joints.
3. For the glue-up, it was easier to position two segments and place the third on top.
4. End view showing the three-way join with the desired result – no gaps.
5. Out of the clamps, the leg blank can be mounted between centres.
6. Hose clamps at each end add security while turning.
7. Taping up the hose clamps is a visual reminder of their presence. Most of the tenon was turned off before using a handsaw to cut the rest off.
8. If all goes to plan, splitting this can be the fun part.
9. Centre is marked on each leg segment before turning small curved pommels at each end.

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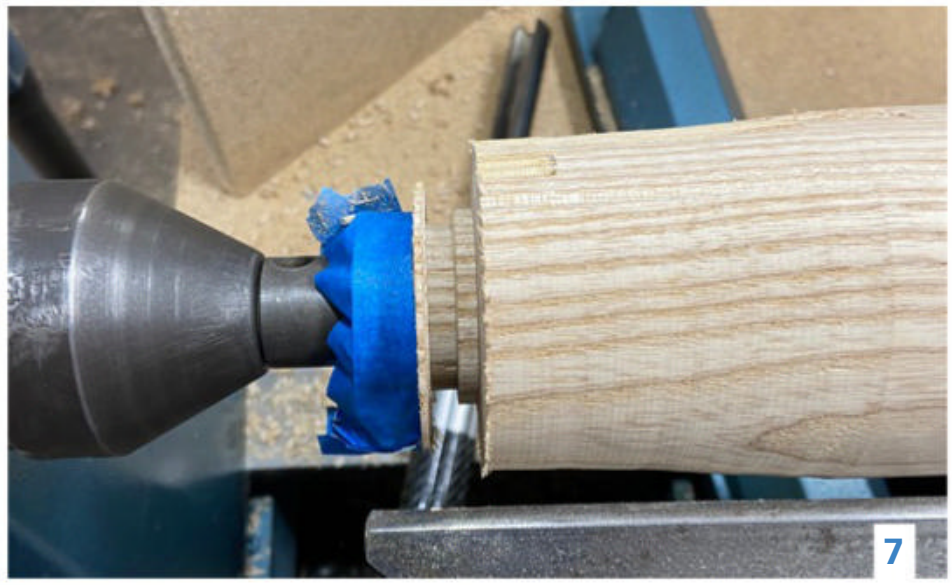
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9

Mount the piece between centres, locating your live and drive centres at the intersection of the joint (**photo 5**). I use a cup live centre for this as it won't drive in and split the glue joint apart.

To start things off, I keep the speed low (around 800rpm) and turn a 10mm wide tenon around 50mm diameter at each end. The hose clamp shown in **photo 6** is a safety measure which stops the glue joint splitting from the ends due to the live and drive centres. A little bit of blue tape keeps the end of the clamp all wrapped up and serves as a nice reminder there's a hose clamp there.

As my design called for a straight taper I used a parting tool to establish the required diameters at either end, then turned down the leg to finished proportions. I sanded to 240 grit while the lathe was running and continued sanding with the grain while the lathe was stopped. A parting tool was used to remove as much of the tenon as I could manage (**photo 7**), and then a handsaw was used to cut the ends off.

The split

Now for the fun part! Splitting apart the paper joint would be easier with two people (or three arms) but it is possible to separate the joint by yourself. You'll need two wide sharp chisels (I used a 25mm and 19mm) and a mallet. Line up a cutting edge with the paper line and gently tap one chisel into the joint; if you're lucky it will split away now, if not grab the second chisel and tap it into one of the other joints. If your glue up went according to plan the wedges should split apart with minimal effort like the one seen here (**photo 8**).

If the paper slipped while you were gluing up you'll need a bit more force to split it apart. Don't worry about any timber that tears apart along the glue line, this can be cleaned up when you remove the leftover paper.

Now that we have three leg segments, it's time to mark the centres and put them back on the lathe (**photo 9**). I used a sliding bevel set to 60° to mark the centre line and then a pair of dividers (set to half the length of the centre line) to mark the centre point. Once you've done this on both ends you can put the leg back on the lathe between centres.

Quick tip! The teeth on spur drives (especially old ones that may have been dropped and sharpened several times) are rarely identical and always seem to penetrate into the timber differently. If you remove a piece from the lathe to check, for example, the fit of a tenon, you need to make sure the spur drive teeth go back in the same position. To make this easier I stamp a line of centre punch marks along one tooth and use a pencil to mark this location on the timber (**photo 10**).

To aid with joint alignment and strength I used a stepped tenon on the end of


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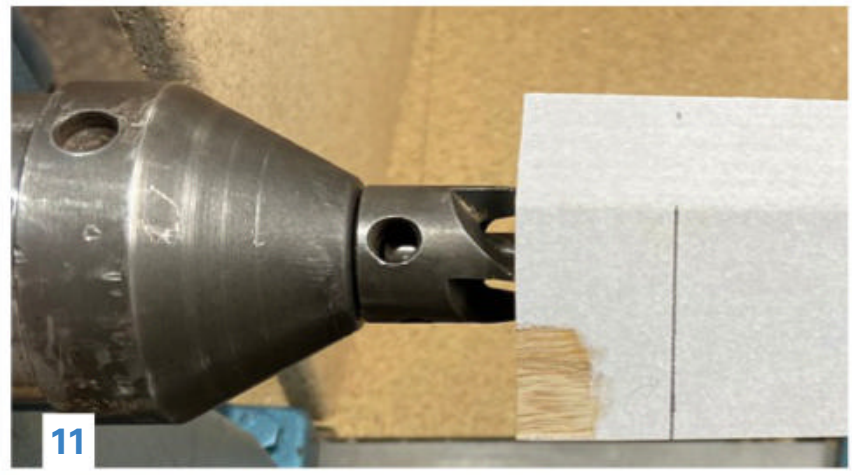
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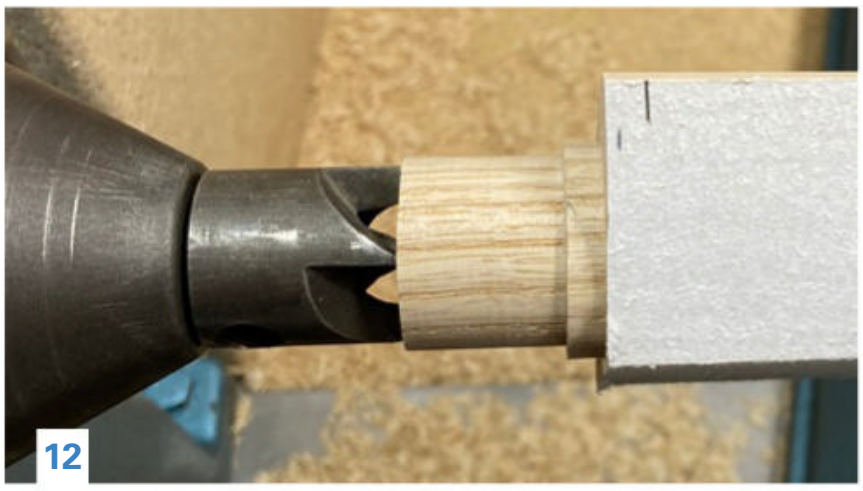
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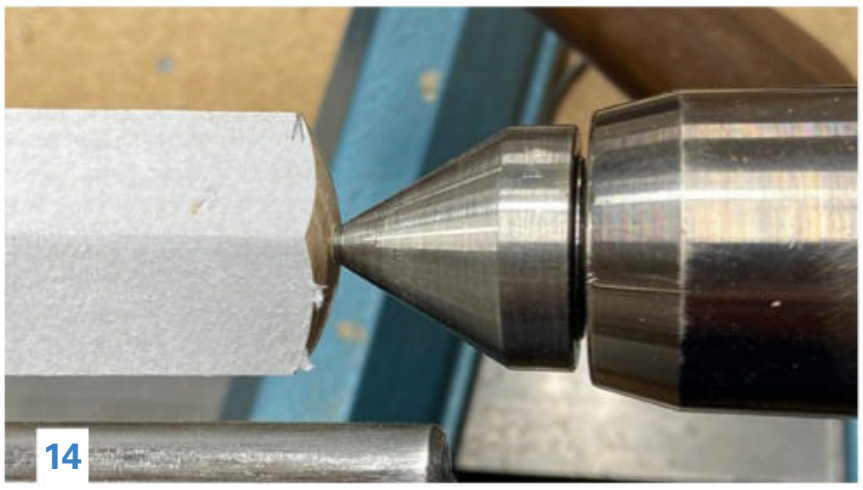
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10. Centre punch marks on the author's spur drive are used to reorient the workpiece when repositioning is necessary.

11. Pencil marks for stepped tenons are visible on the paper surface when the lathe is spinning.

12. A pencil line shows where to start the cut for the 5mm pommel at the top of the leg.

13. Showing the end view of the pommel after turning.

14. Another slight pommel is created at the foot of the leg.

15. An 'upside down jig' holds the leg firmly while drilling holes for the stretchers.

16. The jig in use while drilling a stretcher hole.

17. For the seat, a blank is attached to a screw chuck and then trued.

18. A pencil mark shows the intended start and finish of the rolled edge.

19. The edge has been rolled over and the seat is dished and sanded.

20. Reversed onto a vacuum chuck, the underside of the seat can be turned.

the legs. The main section is 25mm diameter, 25mm long with a 28mm diameter shoulder that is 5mm long.

Luckily the pencil marks for these distances are easily visible on the white paper when the piece is spinning on the lathe (**photo 11**).

A pommel creates a transition from the flat faces of the leg to the tenon. The lowest point of the pommel is 5mm from the tenon. The pencil line shows me where to start the cut (**photo 12**). The surface of the pommel must be as clean and crisp as possible as it cannot be sanded (**photo 13**). Normally this cut would be done with a skew chisel, but I used a 13mm bowl gouge.

The end of the leg receives another slight 5mm pommel to ensure no sharp edges contact the floor when the stool is assembled (**photo 14**). The finished size of the legs, including the tenon is 775mm long x 42mm.

Drilling holes

Now that we have made the legs, the next challenge is to repeatedly hold them firmly and accurately while we drill the holes for the stretchers. To do this, I constructed an 'upside down jig', where the workpiece is clamped up to a surface rather than down.

To construct the jig I used a piece of 70 x 45m pine (all dressed and square), some 18mm plywood and a few 50mm (or any long) roofing screws. The most important parts of this jig are the L-shaped ply pieces which need to be square, identical and accurate (**photo 15**). Ply is used for these as its cross-grain construction means it will be strong enough to not split apart when

the leg is wedged up to the underside. I used a bandsaw for this but you can use any method that will yield two identical pieces.

Screw these L-shaped pieces to the pine board (make sure they are square to the board and the same distance above its surface). I cut two wedges that push or wedge the flat surface of the leg up against the underside of the L-brackets which means that the flat surface of the leg is parallel to the pine board. In **photo 16** you can the jig in action while drilling a stretcher hole.


16

Turning the seat

The seat for this stool is 350mm diameter and around 65mm thick. I start by attaching a suitably sized blank to a screw chuck, truing it up and turning a tenon on what will be the bottom of the seat (**photo 17**). Leave a live centre mark to help realign the block later on.


17


18

Once the piece is mounted in the chuck I use a pencil to mark out the start and finish of the rolled-over edge (**photo 18**). Previous versions of this stool had an angular edge that was only comfortable if you had long legs. The edge is rolled over and the seat is dished and sanded to 400 grit (**photo 19**).


19


20

Reverse the seat on the chuck using the live centre mark to help with alignment. I used a vacuum chuck (**photo 20**), but you could also use bowl jaws or a Longworth chuck. The underside was turned to a straight-sided cone shape to complement the wedge shaped leg (**photo 21**). The rolled edge and underside of the seat were sanded to 400 grit.

Using my Vicmarc lathe's indexing points I drew three evenly spaced lines and marked the drilling location (approximately half way between the rim and the centre). I used some blue masking tape under my lines as it makes any mistakes easy to remove (**photo 22**).

Time to drill the holes for legs! Rather than tilting the drill press table I made an angled platform with two 14° wedges (cut on the mitre saw), a piece of plywood for the base and some off-cuts to keep the seat from moving around (**photo 23**).

To suit the stepped tenon turned on the legs I drilled a shallow 28mm hole followed by a deeper 25mm one. Use the depth stop on your drill press to ensure all the holes are drilled to the same depth.

The purpose of the stepped tenon should become clear at this point. Without the 28mm diameter section the leg would not have anywhere to squarely butt up against, and this provides more strength than bottoming out the tenon in the hole. I contemplated using through wedged tenons but decided to keep a clean look for this design.

Turning the stretchers

The standard stretchers are 410mm long and turned to 20mm diameter with ends reduced to 16mm for the tenon (**photo 24**). For this bar stool I decided to make a footrest/stretcher and thought it would be a fun challenge to make as much of it as possible on the lathe.


21


22


23

21. A straight-sided cone shape complements the wedge shaped leg.

22. Evenly spaced lines marked the drilling location for the legs.

23. A jig holds the seat at an angle while drilling holes. To suit the stepped tenon on the legs a shallow 28mm hole is drilled, then a deeper 25mm one.

24. Two 410 x 20mm diameter stretchers with 16mm tenons were turned.

25. A blank for the footrest was glued up and then marked out.

26. The tenons on the end of the footrest were turned to size.

27. A hand plane, a die grinder and an aluminium cutting bur were used to shape the footrest.

28. To strengthen the footrest some 4mm maple dowels were added after the stool was assembled.

I glued up a block for the footrest with a waste block glued on to make up the width. This will be spinning on the lathe, so an even block will allow the highest safe speed and the easiest cut. I drew the profile on the block including the lengths of the tenons (**photo 25**).

Once the piece was spinning on the lathe, the profile I drew on was easy to see so I could follow the lines and roughly shape the footrest. The tenons on the end of the footrest were turned to size (**photo 26**).

Once the piece was off the lathe, the waste block was cut off on the bandsaw and the hand shaping began. I shaped the front of the footrest to a convex taper and rounded over the back of the footrest with a hand plane.

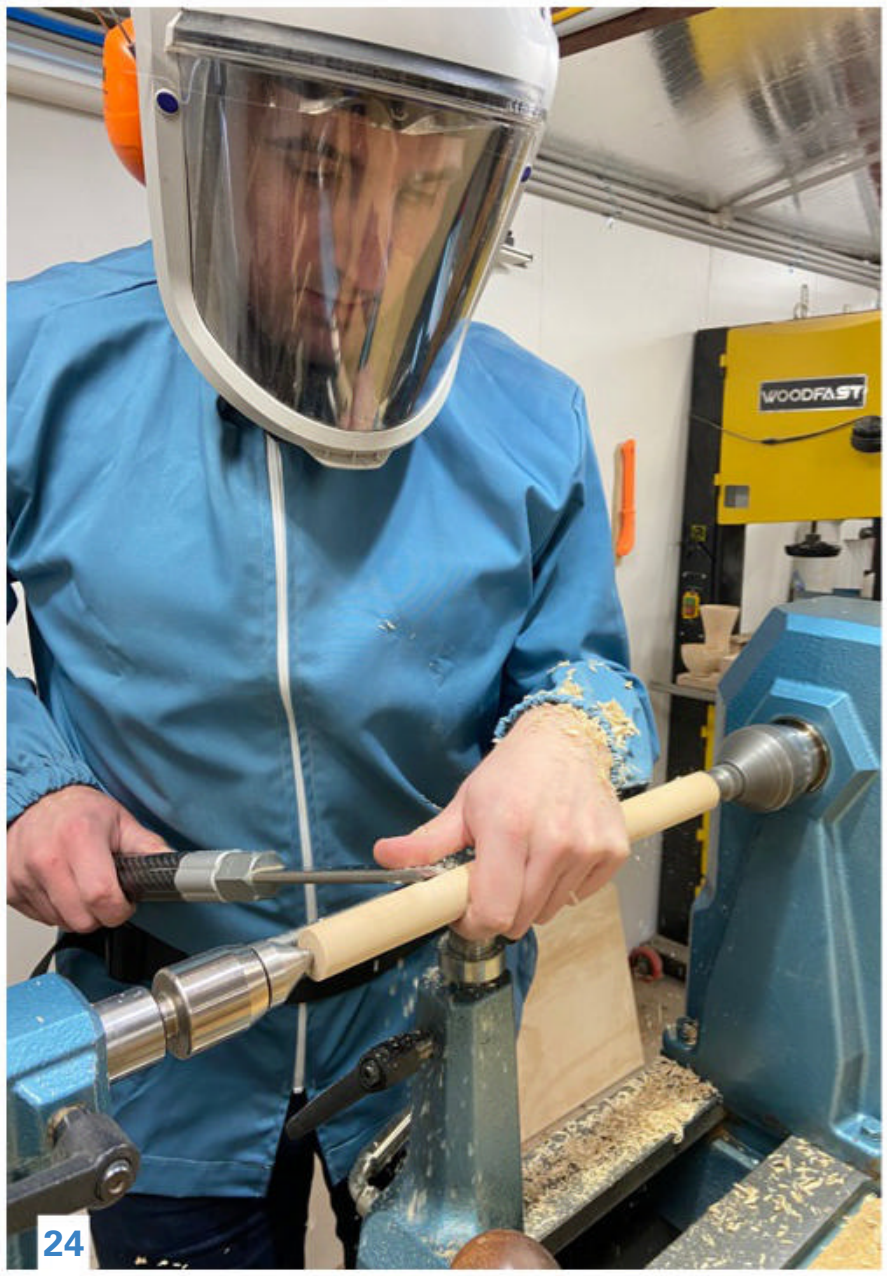
Further shaping was carried out with a die grinder and an aluminium cutting bur. These leave a great surface in harder timbers and the larger spiral produces bigger chips and less dust than other burs. Once I was happy with the shaping I switched to sandpaper and smoothed everything out (**photo 27**).

Cleaning everything up

Now that all our components are made and the holes are drilled, it's time to clean everything up before assembly. I start by removing the paper from the paper joint. I found running the legs over the planer was easiest and quickest way to do this but you can also use a hand plane.

The outer edges of the legs are quite sharp and fragile so I used a small round-over bit on the router table to smooth this out. As long as the outside profile is nice and straight this should be easy. If it isn't straight, or you've turned a different profile, you can round over these edges with a spokeshave and/or sandpaper.

To strengthen the footrest attachment some 4mm maple dowels were added



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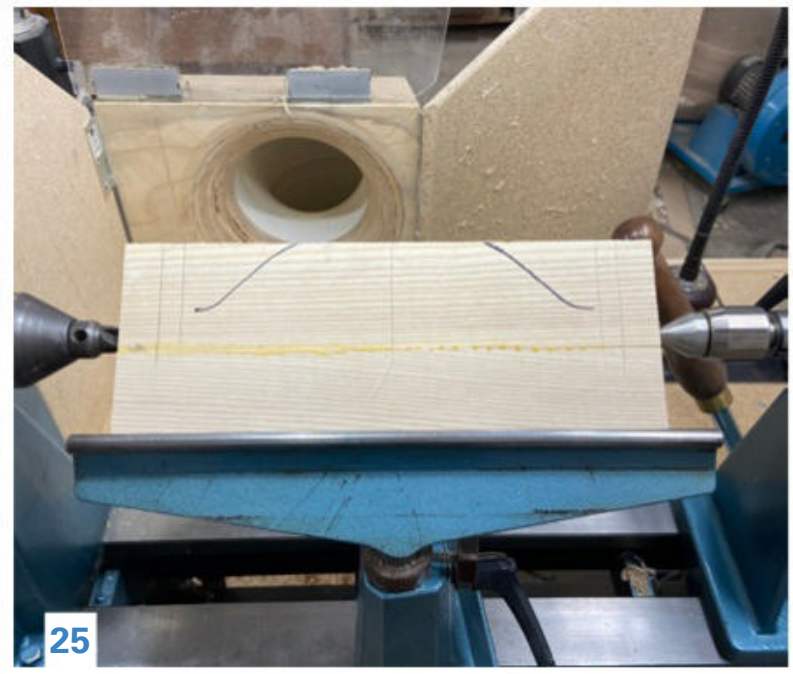
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after the stool was assembled (**photo 28**). It's the first time I've tried this so I hope it's effective.

Assembly

Everything was very accurately sized and not particularly easy to get together so I didn't feel the need to clamp the parts in position during the glue-up. Glue was applied to the holes rather than the tenons to minimise glue squeeze-out, and hammered into position with a soft mallet.

Finishing

I used a matte Whittle Evolution hardwax oil to finish the *Split Stool*. It's my favourite finish to use on American ash as it doesn't cause excessive yellowing, and it's easy to apply and non-toxic.

The latest version of my *Split Stool* was a successful build and a fun exercise, as it allowed me to further hone ideas from previous pieces and directed me towards areas for future exploration.

Photos: Josh Stevens

Josh Stevens is a Geelong based woodturner and workshop instructor. You can see more of his work on Instagram @woodturnerjosh or at www.jsdesign.online.

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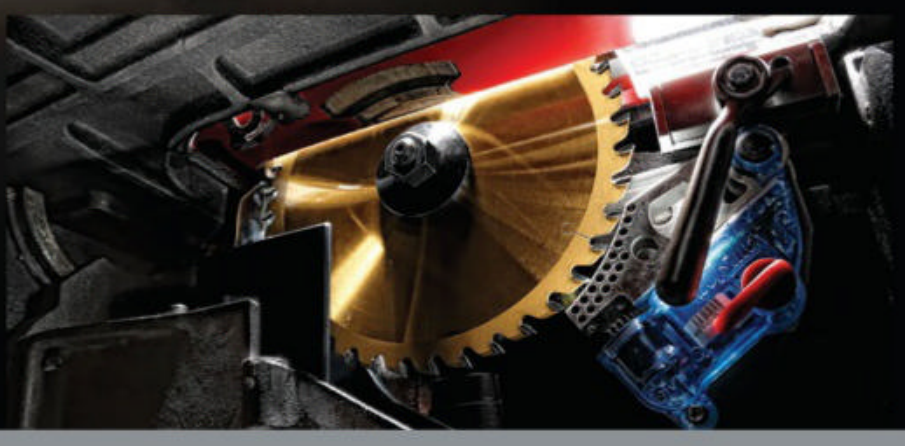

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Main: Jon Goulder, designer and maker.
Photo: Ryan Cantwell

A Legacy of Original Design

'Just because you're a highly skilled craftsperson doesn't mean you have a right to make a living from it', says fourth generation maker Jon Goulder. Interview by Adam Markowitz.

Jon Goulder is a hard man to pin down. Both in terms of actually getting him to sit down for an interview, but also in defining him. His output spans 20 years and most states of Australia, with work in the permanent collections of the type of state institutions that sport impressive acronyms (AGWA, AGSA, NGV, NGA, Power House, TMAG). He's headed furniture workshops at major craft institutions and universities in as many states. He's invited to the sort of parties at Milan Design Week where people wear hats indoors.

I could jump online right now and buy production pieces of his from five different respected independent Australian furniture and lighting retailers. He's taught a generation of contemporary designers and makers across the country. He's currently working as a senior designer for the Australian branch of an internationally renowned Norwegian architecture firm, on projects around the globe. His stories on Instagram are either him or his kids tearing down a mountainside on a bike splattered in mud. Definitely a hard man to pin down.

When I think about designer makers as both an idea and a profession in Australia, there are probably only a handful of people I could name that have been able to continuously maintain a successful and relevant practice over many years, and even fewer that have been able to find respect emanating from both sawdust covered workshops and copic-marker wielding designers.

To someone like me, in a fairly continual state of existential crisis owing in part to the different and not always meshing facets of my own practice, Jon represents someone who

Stak Stool, 2000 "The piece that started my design career. It was all about the tooling and the process.'

Leda Seat, 2004, aluminium and one sheet of plywood. Power House Museum Collection. *Photo: Blue Murder Studio*

has been able to connect the dots and build a viable, respected and relevant example of a contemporary designer maker practice. It can be done. Look at him. So I relished the opportunity to sit down and ask him some questions, and I think his answers were revealing and encouraging, not in a 'this is how you can be me' manner, but rather 'this is how you might be you'.

Tell us about your early years – how you found your way to making.
I couldn't wait to leave school and left at 15. My mum was a school teacher. She allowed it to happen as I was clearly not scholastic. I went to work in the family upholstery factory in Mittagong, NSW. Lots of dining chairs, chaise lounges, restoration work. I developed a lifelong distaste for ornate Victorian furniture.

What led you to choose to further study in Canberra?
After five years at the factory I found I had developed an inherent tacit knowledge. I was so bored at the end of the day. I had to keep progressing in my career, in my knowledge, understanding and skill, and keep evolving. Ten years passed before I went to Canberra. I was a carpenter, travelled extensively. I did a number of snowboarding seasons around the world. I went to Canberra School of Art when the party stopped, age 30. George (Ingham) only took six a year. It was really hard to get in – I spent 12 months getting my portfolio together, lobbied, knew what I wanted, and zeroed in on it.
I wanted it bad. George was the one for me.

I'm interested in your early training with George Ingham, and how it shaped you as a designer maker.
For the first whole year we weren't allowed in the machine room. Hand tools only. Eight hours a day, five days a week. If you were late you were frowned upon. It was full-on. Lots of history, theory, discussions. We'd learn the history of steel pre-post WWII and differences in steel,

Clockwise from opposite:

Settlers Chair, 2018, water formed leather shell, blackwood frame, National Gallery Victoria collection. The laminated leather is self supporting without any internal reinforcement. *Photo: Grant Hancock*

Oh La La Chair, 2011, laminated veneer, stainless steel, upholstery. Art Gallery of WA collection. *Photo: Bo Wong*

Amore Mio Chair, 2008, rock maple, upholstered ply shell. Wesfarmers Private Art Collection. *Photo: Michelle Taylor*

Calypso Lounge, 2006, stainless steel, upholstery. Collected by the Art Gallery of WA. *Photo: Bo Wong*

and why you should buy a pre-war tool. Bridge building construction and structure. We had set projects, starting from a breadboard through to a chair. We made a lot of our own tools by hand and always had three or four projects on the go.

I went at a great time as it was when they had decided to embrace design. George would set a brief but we were encouraged to design around his parameters. Even from the breadboard. Many people didn't get on with him, but I did. It was a very master-apprentice arrangement and he expected to be respected as the master. If you didn't, you'd have a tough time. I'd done an apprenticeship so I understood that arrangement straight away.

What sort of impact did this have on your own professional development?
Everything I am, my patience, my ability to design, is all George. It was his way of seeing the world, or his way of seeing your career. Starting your next design when you are halfway through the project you're working on. To never stop, to keep progressing. He's the reason I've made so many things, and pursued a certain excellence in the craft.

Once you've had that indoctrinated into you – it's an old school Bauhaus–esque philosophy – you do what I've done, which doesn't necessarily make a great deal of money, but you have a huge body of work. I've sacrificed everything to make the next piece – it's like a drug. Pieces have cost huge amounts of money at times – when I start making and I have a vision of that end piece, nothing else matters. Everything else around me is irrelevant and second.

I think that is best represented in my later work with the water-formed leather *Settler's Chair*. It's a never–ending succession of steps towards mastering the material, and it never stops – it's a constant pushing of yourself and a craft. That's George's philosophy. It's a way of life. To never stagnate – he wanted us to make flamboyant failures over conservative success. Because then you're on that edge, risking it all. Never be in your comfort zone, because when you're there you're not really learning, you're not progressing.

How have you grappled with the divide between design and making?
At George's I didn't do the dovetail project out of protest. I thought it was irrelevant and I knew I could do it on a machine. That was my stance. I've never seen what I do as woodwork. I almost don't see my medium as wood. I've never been in love with the grain. I see it as

Right: *Glissando Credenza*, 2009, walnut, stainless steel. National Gallery of Australia collection. *Photo: Bo Wong*

Below: Jon Goulder at the bench in the JamFactory Furniture Studio. *Photo: Bo Wong*

Opposite:

LD Desk, 2010, laminated ply, walnut. Art Gallery of WA collection. *Photo: Bo Wong*

Maggie's Baskets, a collaboration with Maggie Beer. Photo: Grant Hancock

a material, my vehicle, how I can get from A to B. I've never been attracted to that side of woodworking – perfecting the perfect joint. Wood has always been a means to an end for me. Because of my history I naturally was attracted to it. But I explore other materials in my work: there's steel, upholstery, leather. Wood is a component but rarely the full story.

I would not claim to be an amazing woodworker, especially compared to the people I've been around. I'm more interested in the form – it serves a function.

You are one of the few in the country who are accepted and respected by both design and craft worlds. How have you been able to cut through?

I've always tried to deliver outcomes that industrial designers can't. It's really all about saying: 'Try and copy me if you want – you won't be able to. This is my skillset; this is the craft that I've developed. I own (this space)'.

It's one thing to design a collection and walk away and have someone else make it. It's another entirely to turn around and make every piece yourself with the investment and the tax on your body. That chaise lounge for example – just to understand how that thing went together and to carve that back section – it was madness! That's how you can describe it. Madness. It was a year on the bench to make the (*Broached Collection*).

I think where woodworkers miss it, is that they reproduce work. They copy. They are rarely making original things. My goal from the outset was to never put something out into the market that had been done. This is my time on the planet, I want that legacy of designing original work.

Everyone says 'everything has been done'. I don't think the *Calypso Lounge* had been done. I don't think the Settler's chair's been done. The *Glissandro Credenza*. *Maggies Basket* – they hadn't been done before. It wasn't taken from Pinterest.

I see a lineage in the language of your 2006 Calypso lounge and the 2020 Broached chaise lounge, but also divergences. Do you feel there's been an evolution in your design approach?
Because of George, I'm always trying to do things that are original. If you look at my work in its time, I'm trying to make things that are not heavily influenced by other work, or generic.

The *Stack* stool for example, is a one-shot lamination. Three legs, three different ways. I ended up making over 100. It was all about the tooling and the process. Making things that other people wouldn't make. *Leda Seat* – all CNC'd from one flat sheet.

A lot of my early work was influenced by being at UTS and having access to the facilities there. I've almost become more of a woodworker as I've gotten older. I guess that's to do with the increasing accessibility of (CNC). At that time I found myself standing beside designers like Adam Goodrum, Trent Jansen, Charles Wilson. Fifteen years ago (industrial designers) couldn't access woodworkers. There wasn't a 5-axis router in Australia or highly skilled manufacturers like Evostyle. So I always had a point of difference.

One of the most threatening times in my career was when industrial designers were able to produce commercially viable pieces of furniture from local factories. And they were beautiful. They could make whatever they wanted at a wholesale price point, in Australia, in wood. So at that point I started playing with leather. I did *Maggie's Basket*, which is one of my favourite pieces, which in turn influenced the *Settler's Chair* – so I was out on my own again.

How might designer makers better equip themselves in the contemporary market to be noticed and to compete?
Some designer makers have got stuck in the trend of chasing exhibition work. Market presence is key. You need something in the marketplace that is representing you, supplying you with passive income, developing relationships with distributors. It could be anything from a council market through to a high profile showroom.

Top: Wesfarmers reception furniture by Jon Goulder and Malcolm Harris, 2008. Wesfarmers Private Art Collection. *Photo: Adrian Lambert*

Above: *FORM Wallshelf*, 2011. Free form carved walnut. Wesfarmers Private Art Collection. *Photo: Bo Wong*

Opposite:

Broached Commissions Chaise Lounge, 2020, celery top pine, weaving by Liz Williamson, Art Gallery of SA Collection. *Photo: Claire Summers*

Broached Commissions Mirror, 2020, blackwood, press formed leather. Collected by Gene Sherman. *Photo: Claire Summers*

Most successful designers and designer makers have that, different modes of practice that represent different income streams.

There is a madness to the designer maker model. When George Ingham died we had a big symposium about the future of designer makers. When we asked for a show of hands as to who was surviving off their designer maker practice – out of hundreds, there were maybe three. The teaching of being a designer maker as a 'career' was an experiment – and it is one that failed, really. Woodworkers are an exceptionally talented bunch – if you're willing to sink the time into learning how to cut the best dovetails, you will get there eventually, you can teach yourself the best finishing skills. But they never really get the acknowledgement they think they deserve. They need to think on much larger terms and see a bigger picture. It's really quite an introverted and self-indulgent pastime if you think the world owes you something because you're a good craftsperson.

Aside from your work as an independent designer maker, you've held other positions, recently as Creative Director of Furniture Studio at the JamFactory craft centre in Adelaide, and currently as Senior Designer with the Australian arm of the Norwegian architecture firm Snohetta. What led you to adopt a multi-disciplinary approach to your practice?

Diversity of income. Just because you're a highly skilled craftsperson doesn't mean you have a right to make a living from it. A lot of designer makers suffer because they feel like they're not making a living from a practice. What is a practice? Everyone needs to look at their practice as something much larger than standing at a bench.

This started with the Midland Atelier in WA, which was seven years of my life running an enormous craft workshop that had people like Nathan Day coming through to learn. Originally it was a means for me to have access to workshop and machinery, as well as community. Also to be involved in something. I'm a fourth gen maker on my dad's side, but I'm a fourth gen teacher on my mum's side. I've always enjoyed professional life and being involved in something way greater than making a chair. Furniture has almost been my hobby while I've conducted professional life. But the professions I've chosen have allowed me to do what I want. It's come at big sacrifices but it means I've been able to do what I want to do. I'm far more interested in working in teams these days. I just cannot waste five days of my life so I can go do what I want on the weekends.

How have you managed to retain your own creative vision and identity through this diverse practice?

I've always only worked part time – three days a week, to allow me the room to move. In not for profit arts organisations in Australia the pay is never great – so I think of it more as a retainer. But also in the same way George Ingham taught, I teach – from the bench. I work from the spaces I teach at. In the Jam they saw the *Settler's Chair* and the *Broached* series come together. They helped me make it. And they learn from that, not just technically but what's involved in realising it.

What advice do you have for a young or emerging designer maker?

Just because you've trained as a woodworker and because you've done ten years at a bench and you're a master craftsman, doesn't suddenly earn you the right to make a living as a designer maker. To make a living you need diversity. My (independent designer maker) practice has always run on three streams of income: commission based practice; one-off collectible based practice; and design for production practice, sold through retailers – hitting a wholesale price point.

I think the sign of a good designer and maker is being able to straddle those three modes of practice. You should be able to design to a brief. It's actually an enjoyable style of design – designing within tight parameters such as budget. The production mode of practice can lead you into industrial production of components. The table I sell the most of is a metal leg table with a granite top on it. I designed it very quickly, and it's my best selling piece – ever! It's about having an adaptable and broader mindset. And a range of skills. All interesting things to explore.

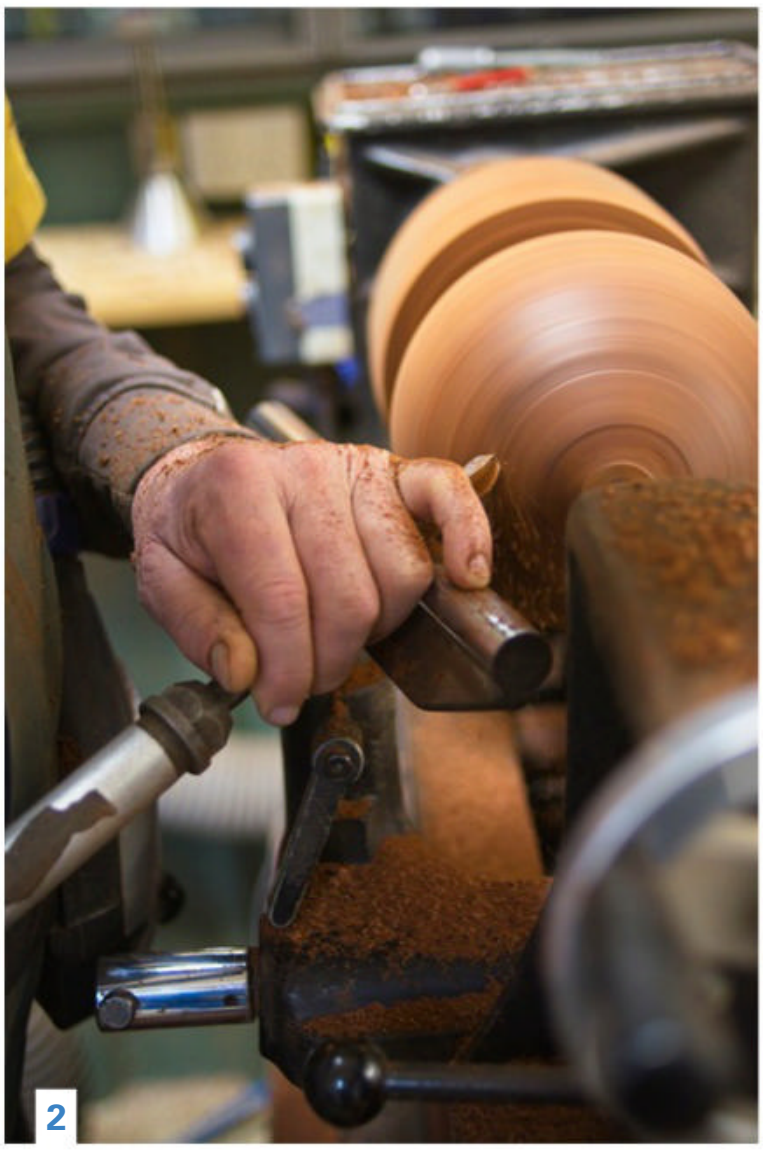
See your practice as something that is diverse. Design or craft related opportunities are diverse. And that's what makes up the modern day practice – the ability to be agile. Don't follow others. Create new and original modes of practice and work.

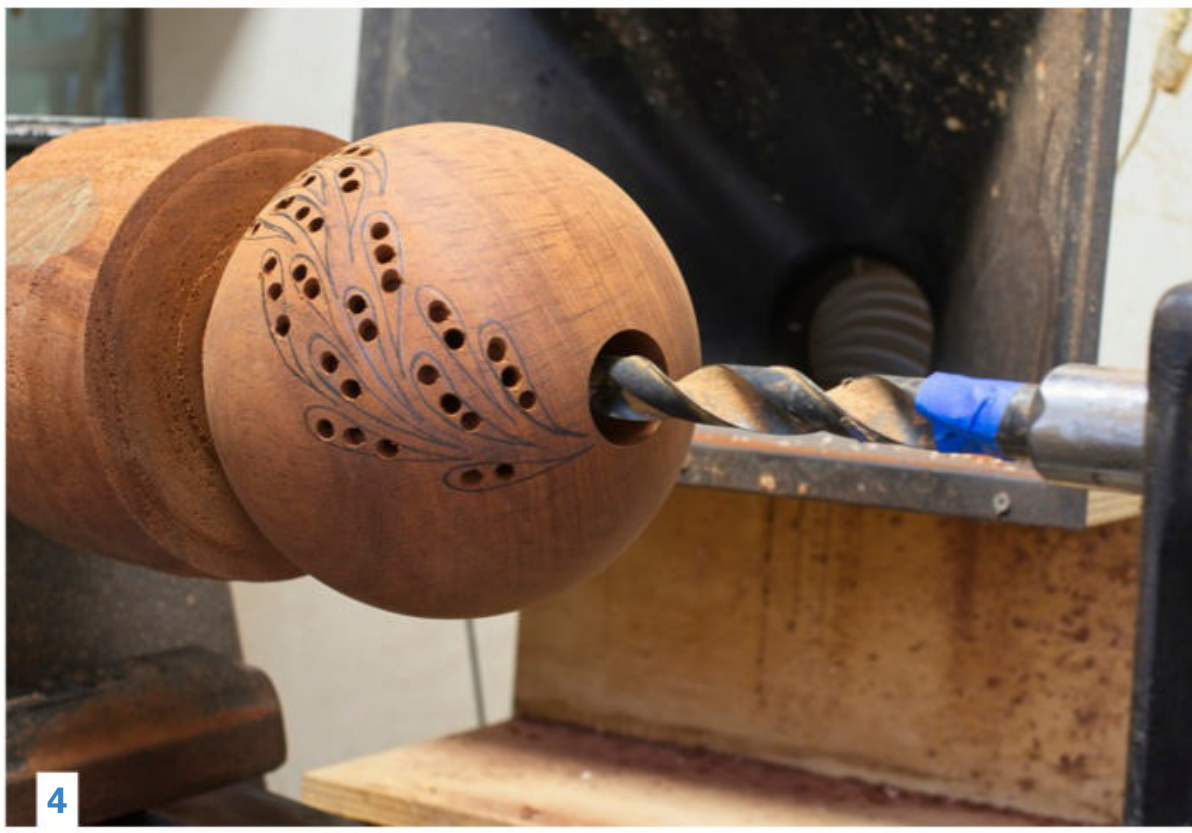
Learn more about Jon Goulder at www.jongoulder.com and @jongoulder.

Adam Markowitz is a Melbourne architect and designer maker who was profiled in AWR#98. He has written several stories for Australian Wood Review magazine.

Fire Ball

A hollowed sphere with delicately carved flames is a challenging project which will yield a unique piece of art. Neil Turner describes his process.





Some years ago I made a hollow carved sphere like the one shown here and was asked if I could make another for a collector. This provided an opportunity to talk through the process used to achieve the final result.

Make a template for the sphere

When turning a sphere, the most crucial thing to bear in mind is that it has to be a sphere. To assist with this fundamental aim, make a template out of any thin material, in this case, 3mm MDF. The easiest way to do this is to cut out a 210mm diameter rough round shape on the bandsaw. I marked the centre with a centre punch, and then drew a 160mm diameter circle with a compass.

Using a faceplate with some sort of friction drive, hold the MDF circle in position with the tailstock and then true the outside with a parting tool. Use the same tool to part off the ring with the marked circle acting as a guide. If you divide the ring into thirds and then cut out one, you now have your template.

Turn the outer form

Place a piece of timber with the grain direction running parallel to the bed, larger than the diameter and longer than required between centres, in this case, black fleck jarrah.

Main: The author's *Fire Ball* turned and carved from jarrah.

1. Mark a line 80mm from the tailstock, then another 80mm on the other side of centre.
2. Working from the centre line, turn the sphere with a bowl or spindle gouge.
3. Check your progress with the template and keep the line in the centre.
4. Use a 3/4" twist bit and to drill a 150mm pilot hole.

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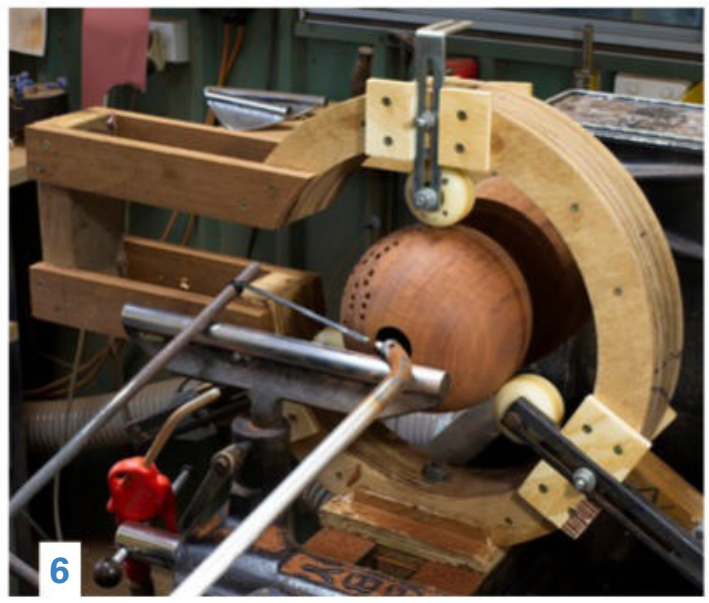

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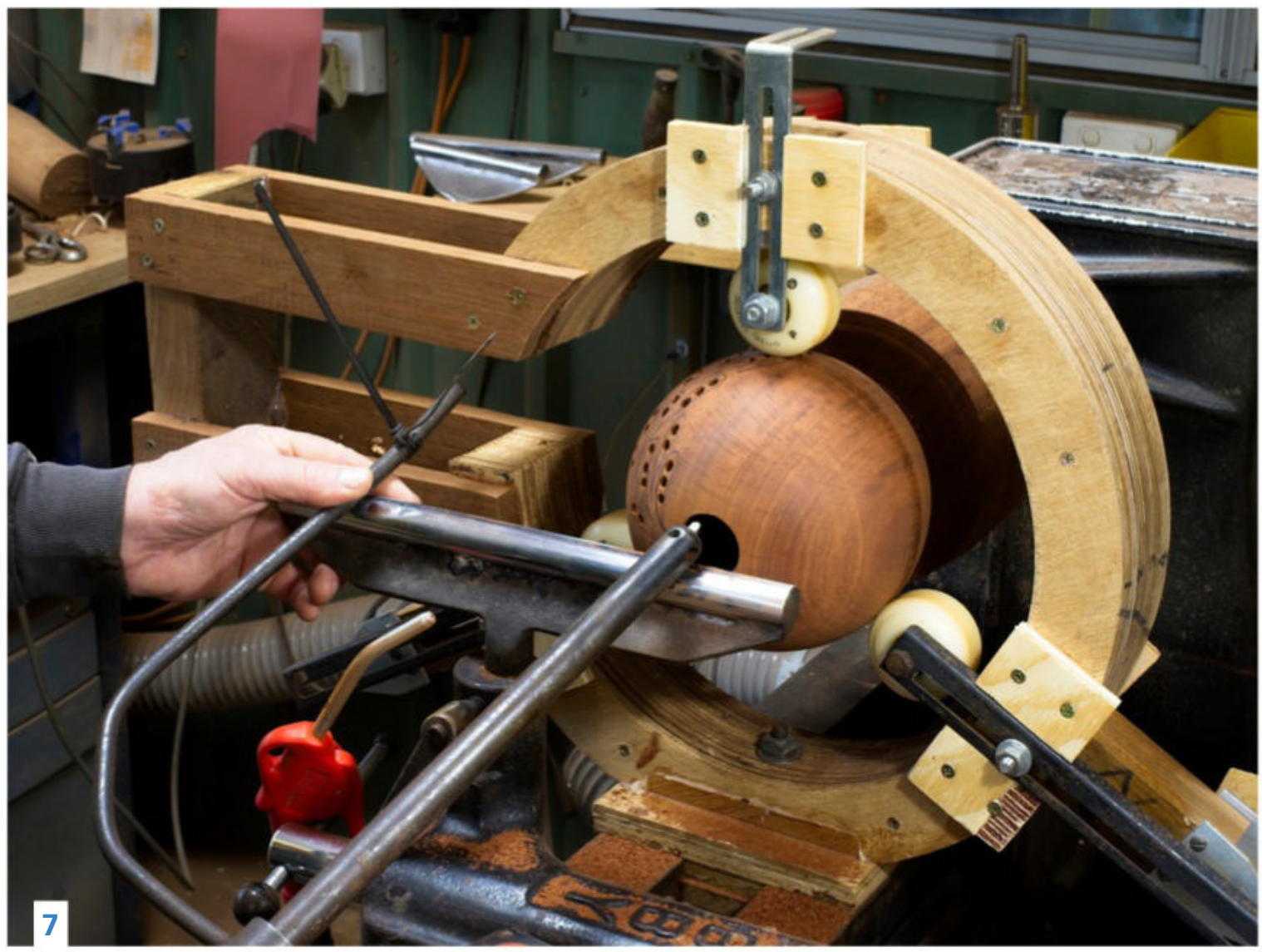
Using a roughing gouge or bowl gouge with the tailstock in support, turn off the corners and create the spigot the shark jaws 70mm diameter and 28mm long. Don't turn to your required diameter; this will be done when it is remounted in the chuck. I often just use a skew chisel in a scraping position to tidy the spigot and slightly undercut the surface that contacts the jaws when tightened, providing maximum holding potential.

Remount the blank in the chuck fitted with shark jaws, use the tailstock to locate the timber on the face of the jaws, then tighten the chuck. Using the template, turn the outside diameter and true up the tailstock end with a parting tool, mark a line 80mm from the tailstock end, and then another line 80mm on the other side of the centre line (**photo 1**).

The limits of the sphere are now defined. With a parting tool, remove material to a depth of 85mm on the waste side of the line nearest the chuck. The reason for leaving this



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5. Initial hollowing at the top was with a Vermec tool.

6,7. Other hollowing tools were used as required.

8. Use an ink pen to draw in the rest of the flame forms.

9. Marking the the position of the feet with a 120° template.

10. Start each flame by drilling a 5mm hole.

much material is that we have to hollow the sphere and any less would lead to vibration during this process.

Turning the sphere

We can now turn the sphere with a bowl or spindle gouge, removing material from either side of the remaining middle line work in stages (**photo 2**). Checking with the template as you go, remove the tailstock from time to time to assess the diameter from the end. The aim is to have the line remaining in the middle (**photo 3**). Lightly sand if required.

When piercing any hollow form, the most essential requirement is even wall thickness. A way to achieve that, is to drill some depth hole in the sphere – the problem is where to drill the holes?

The sphere will be covered in a fire form pattern. Drawing a section of the shapes will allow you to drill depth holes in areas that will be removed. Draw a flowing line from the bottom to the top of the sphere. This line creates movement for the drawn flames to follow.

Using a 5mm drill with some tape or other measuring device set at the required depth of 6mm, drill two or three holes within each flame. With all the holes drilled, remove the tape and drill one of the holes deeper to 10mm. This helps indicate when you are getting close to the correct depth. Drill a pilot hole 30mm diameter as deep as the drill will allow. I revert to a 3/4" twist bit and drill to a depth of 150mm (**photo 4**).

Supports and hollowing tools

The piece of timber I'm using is longer than required however a steady is an excellent option to support the sphere during the hollowing process. Mine is homemade with skateboard wheels and works well.

You can use a range of different hollowing systems – at the end of the day it's what you're comfortable with, or what your budget will stand. My tools were made many years ago, and I still haven't found anything that is better. For me, the most crucial feature of a hollowing tool is a small 3/16" high-speed steel cutter and heavy tool shafts to minimise vibration.

The outrigger stops the tool from rotating, and the cable tie is used as a depth indicator. Tool cutting height is an essential component of deep hollowing. The tool rest must be set so the cutters are cutting above centre in case of a catch, in which case the tool will tend to fall out from the wood.

Initially, I use a Vermec hollowing tool to remove the wood from the top of the sphere (**photo 5**), then change to my other tools depending on where I'm hollowing (**photos 6, 7**). Remove the shavings with a blast of air. Achieve wall thickness as you proceed to the bottom of the sphere, using measuring devices to check your progress. It's a slow process. To finish the inside, use a larger round scraper in a negative rake position using light cuts.


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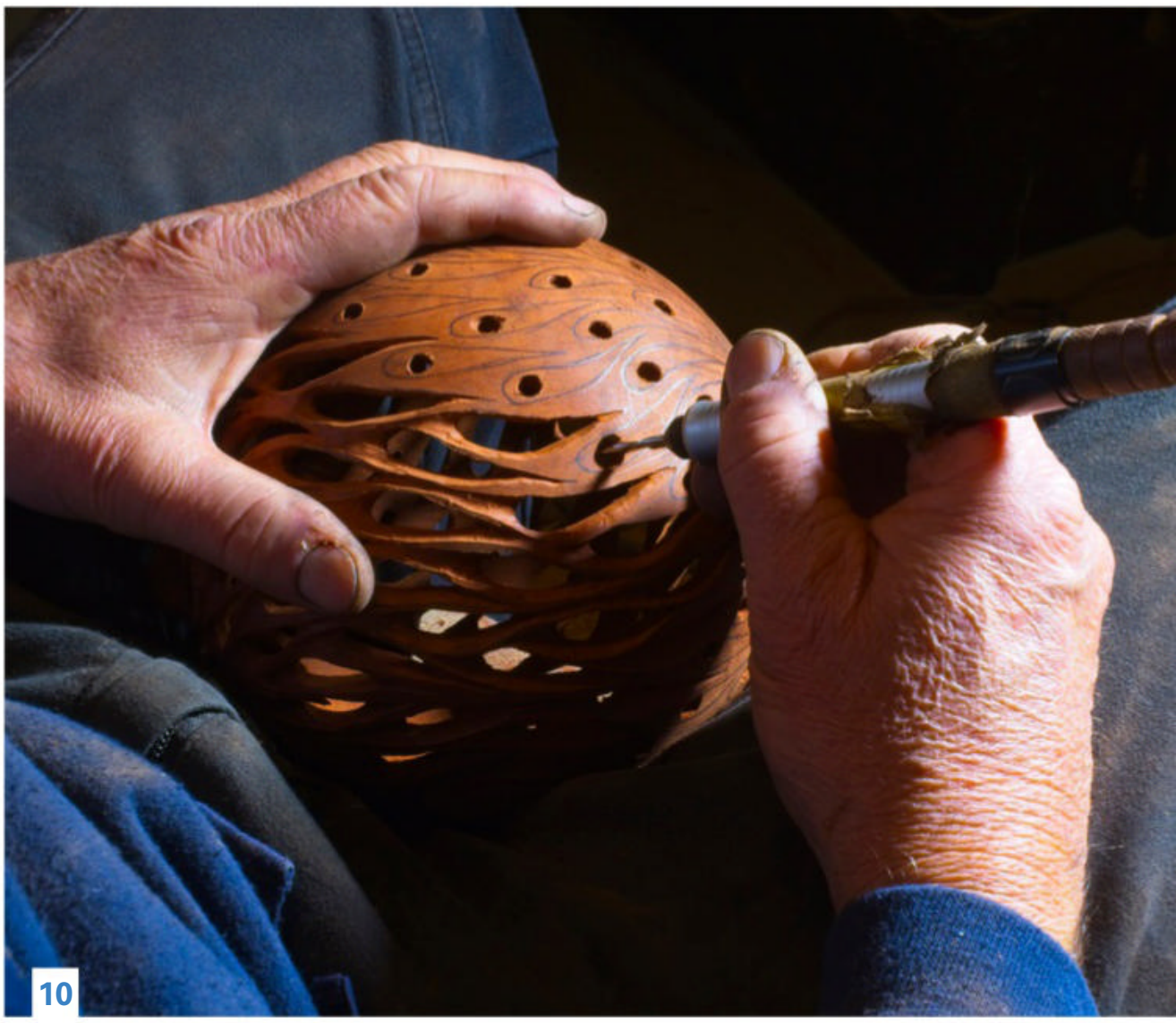
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Sanding, first inside

Sanding inside is a must because we will see inside when we pierce through the wall. I use some Vermec sanding tools to make the job easier working through the grades from 120 to 400.

With sanding completed on the inside, remove the steady if you haven't already and then bring up the tailstock. If available, place a large centre in the 30mm hole and finish turning the sphere using the template as a guide. You can leave a small spigot 50mm in diameter and 10mm longer than where the sphere ends for some material to carve small feet, then part off with the parting tool.

Draw the flames

The next step is to draw the remaining fire forms using the same process as before with two more curving lines with the flames following the lines, eventually filling in the entire sphere with flames. I tend to use an ink pen as pencil will often rub off with the continual handling during the carving process (**photo 8**). You can also now mark the position of the feet with a 120° template (**photo 9**).

Carving the flames

Carving starts with a 5mm hole drilled in all the fire forms. This makes it easier to use a spiral cutter driven in a flexible cable to remove the bulk of the waste. You can use the spiral cutter to drill the hole, but I find it very slow, and the cutter may wander around (**photo 10**).

Don't carve the flames at the very top of the sphere. They will be finished last because it's easy to break off the flame tips while sanding the rest of the sphere. With the basic shape now cut out, start to refine the fire forms and feet for the base, with a 4.8mm square cylinder cutter used at 20,000rpm (**photo 11)**.

Accentuate the bottom of the flames with a 5mm round bur used at

20,000rpm (**photo 12**). The tips of the flames need to be made sharper. I've been using a 1.2mm Krauser bur at 35,000rpm for this with some success (**photo 13**). I use these burs in a micromotor machine, a fantastic tool with almost no noise or vibration. A riffler is used to refine the overall shape and sharpen the tips of the flames (**photo 14**).

The most time-consuming part of the procedure is sanding. This is however the most important part of the whole exercise as here we're trying to create movement and the seamless interaction of the flames.

I have made a small 25mm sander out of a silicon carbide rubber polisher by applying some velcro to the bottom and the top. This allows me to power sand using velcro-backed paper 180 to 400 grit (**photo 15**). The bottom of the flames can be sanded with a flapper sander. To stop the paper flapping about, you can use a small rubber O-ring to hold the paper in place. It works beautifully, better than the tape I used to use (**photo 16**).

Everything has to be finished before carving the final flames at the top. Use jewellers magnifiers to see the flat facets which need to be removed during the sanding process. You have to support the flame tips during the carving and sanding process around the top.

I use 30 per cent satin spray lacquer to finish these pieces because it is easier to apply than oil which would be a nightmare to remove from all the crevices.

This is a challenging project, but the reward is a unique piece of art.

Photos: Suellen Turner

Neil Turner is a wood artist who lives in Stratham, WA. See www.neilturnerartisan.com.au

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11. A 4.8mm square cylinder cutter was used at 20,000rpm to refine the flame forms.

12. Using a 5mm round bur to shape the bottom of the flames.

13. For the pointy tips of the flames, a 1.2mm Krauser bur was used.

14. Rifflers also come in handy for further refining the forms.

15. A small shopmade sander with velcro applied was used to commence the sanding process.

16. An O-ring works well to secure abrasive paper to a flap sander.

AUSTRALIAN

Wood

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Felder Australia delivers a large sliding tablesaw using a modified car-trailer and a pallet jack.

Your New Machine

Buying new machinery takes a fair amount of analysis, but getting it into your workshop requires planning ahead. Story by David Luckensmeyer.

The arrival of a new machine is usually an exciting occasion…but it can also be a costly and stressful exercise. For starters, machines are a significant investment, but there are other costs in time and disruption, as well as set-ups for power, light and dust extraction. If you are thinking about adding another dust or chip maker to your stable, then this article is for you.

Delivery: you or them?

If the seller is organising transport, make sure to ask questions about insurance. When damage occurs the blame game often starts, and knowledge of insurance limitations is advisable.

Smaller and less expensive machinery may be easy enough to move yourself, but as the machine's weight and cost rises, so does the liability. Once you take possession of the machine you are responsible for any damage already incurred. In my experience, 'marine transit' insurance is inexpensive and worth the cost – this category covers all modes of transport in Australia.

Be sure to consider the difficulty of access at pick-up or drop-off. For example, are there any restrictive overhead powerlines or trees, narrow roads or steep driveways to consider? If you're picking up your new machine you'll need adequate rope and/or straps. Sometimes the machine has to be partially unwrapped so these can be fed through the main chassis, rather than risk damage going over the top.

Take care with top-heavy drill presses and bandsaws. Unless a bandsaw has a lifting ring on top, it should be lifted and strapped down by the lower half only, or placed on its spine. Once the machine makes it to the shop floor, a pallet jack is handy for moving items with ease.

Wraps-off, rust-off

The next phase involves removing packaging and putting the machine on the correct footing. Machines are generally shipped with a rust-preventative, most often VCI paper

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(volatile corrosion inhibitor) or a cosmoline coating. To clean off the residue, use mineral spirits and 0000 steel wool or a Scotch-Brite pad. Nothing beats a little bit of elbow grease. Yes, it's tempting to reach for a random orbit sander, but this runs the risk of damaging painted sections or machined aluminium components.

In most workshops rust is an insidious problem and you will want to coat your machine immediately with your favourite rust preventative. Some like Boeshield T-9, or Australian Inhibitor G-15, or some other soft-film product. Widely popular is the paste product Silbergleit which has the added benefit of acting as a lubricant as well. I prefer Renaissance Wax, which is an all-round protector and lubricator and in my experience does not interfere with subsequent timber finishes.

Location, location

Optimal work-height, anti-vibration measures, and mobility are issues worth addressing. Use anti-vibration pads to keep the machine lower to the ground. While machine feet do add to the overall working height, they also allow you to level out the machine.

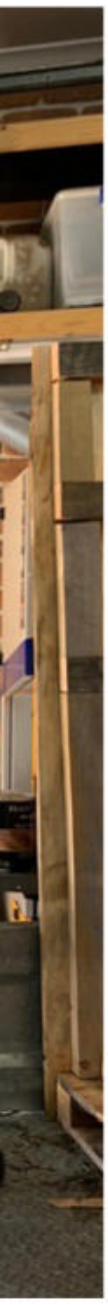
Larger, heavier machines should remain stationary if possible. Using a mobile base with castors is not a good idea because modern sheet metal fabrication is typically unable to withstand the rocking forces that come from moving a heavy machine over an uneven shop floor, resulting in a loss of calibration. For smaller machines however, castors afford flexibility and convenience.

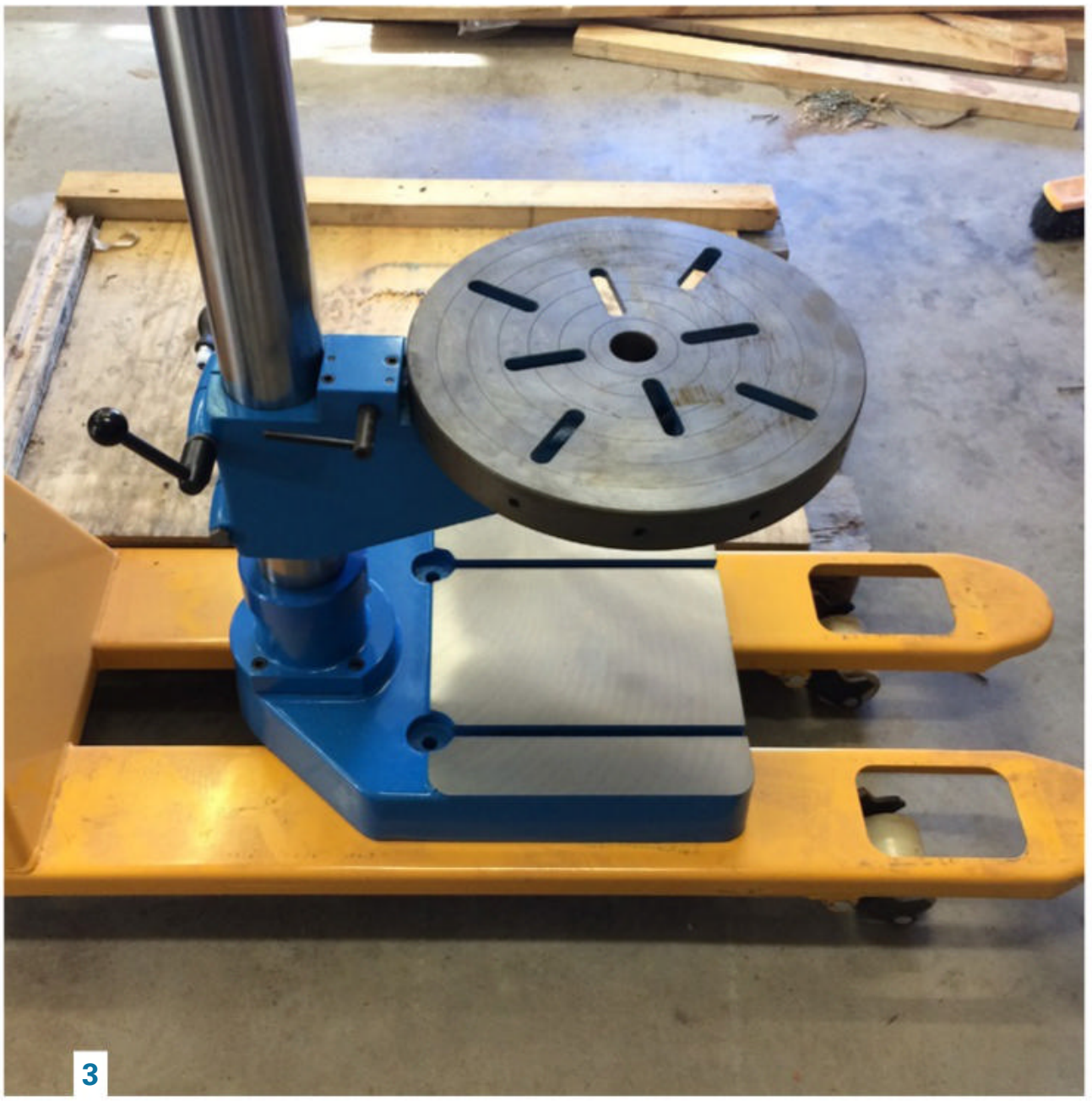
When shopping for castors, keep in mind that a 100kg machine requires at least 100kg capacity castors. The logic that four castors would only be carrying 25kg each does not hold up in the real world – not after your machine rocks onto two castors over an uneven shop floor. Do not ask how I know this!

Consider reinforcing where the shop floor is not concrete, and epoxy coating where it is. An off-white or light-grey colour will lighten your workshop. Forget flecks: every time you drop a screw you'll be glad you did.

Position machines from a workflow perspective first, then you can tackle the ideal layout for power, dust extraction and compressed air delivery.

Good lighting is essential. Avoiding shadows is important for good work, and task lighting can help with this. Most shops have the typical batten fixtures throughout, but if the ceiling





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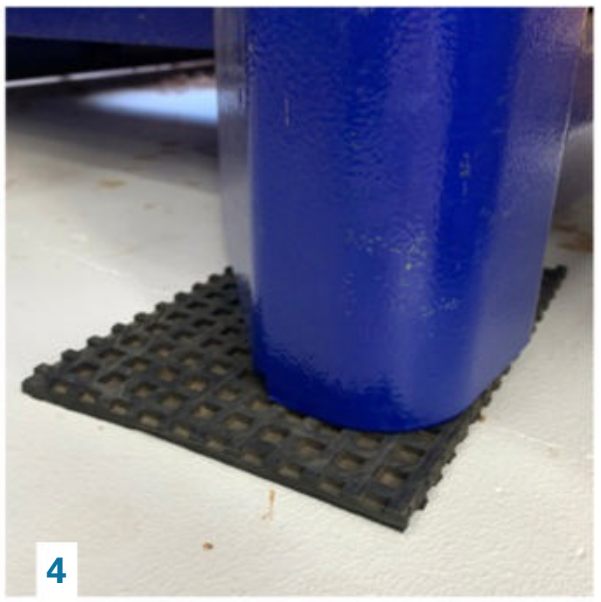

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height is available, high bay LED lights can be an economical alternative.

Powering up

Let me say upfront that a licensed electrician must be involved with power installation. Make sure you are prepared for single-phase or three-phase, and if the machine is large, be aware that the start-up amperage will be far higher than the electrical draw at idle or even normal working loads. For very large machines (for example 40A and up), I prefer hard-wiring where possible to avoid expensive male and female connections, but check with your electrician about the electrical isolation requirements in your state.

For European machinery, ask the machine vendor for advice on wire colours compared to Australian standards, as your electrician may not be familiar with the differences. For example, an incorrect connection of the neutral wire may lead to severe damage.

Dust and air

For small workshops a mobile dust extractor and a short length of flexible hose will suffice; you can move it from machine to machine. For larger set-ups, I recommend installing a main extraction pipe across the shop, with branches and vertical drops to serve your machines. Locate dust extraction gates at each machine, so that airflow can be directed one way or another.

There is no need to be beholden to the machine distributor for dust extraction parts, as there are many companies who stock ports, quick connects, band clamps, flexible hose, rigid ducting (PVC or sheet metal), gates, filters and the like.

1. During transport, the best way to protect machinery from rough operators involves the building of a crate.
2. A lift point and an endless chain can be very handy for unloading machinery and attaching machine feet or a mobile base.
3. A typical pallet jack has a lifting range of about 150mm, and has a hydraulic arm and a handle that is pumped manually. Most jacks will go as low as 50mm to slide under a machine. The narrow fork version is most useful.
4. Industrial quality anti-vibration matting can be purchased in small quantities and cut to size as an inexpensive, low-rise option for machine 'feet'.
5. Many machines have pre-drilled holes to receive machine feet which allow for a stable foundation as well as excellent height adjustment, often with locking nuts.

6. Take note of how the machine-base is constructed so the castors raise the machine a minimum amount. This is especially important for heavier machines where the appropriately rated castors might be 150–200mm in diameter, which would raise the working height too much for most operators.

7. A mobile machine-base can easily be constructed in hardwood for smaller machines. Castors with braking options require a surprising amount of space to rotate 360°, so double-check when making your base.

8. While two-part epoxy paint is relatively expensive, it lasts a long time and can make a massive difference to your shop.

9. Electrical and compressed air distribution can be attached to dust extraction infrastructure to keep services off the floor. Using inexpensive aluminium fence posts from your local hardware is an excellent way of stiffening up infrastructure in the middle of the shop.

10. In my old shop, 150mm PVC piping served very well for dust extraction distribution. Good infrastructure does not have to cost the earth.

11. As my shop grew over the years, I moved to a proprietary dust extraction solution including branches, verticals, and multiple gates to service each machine.


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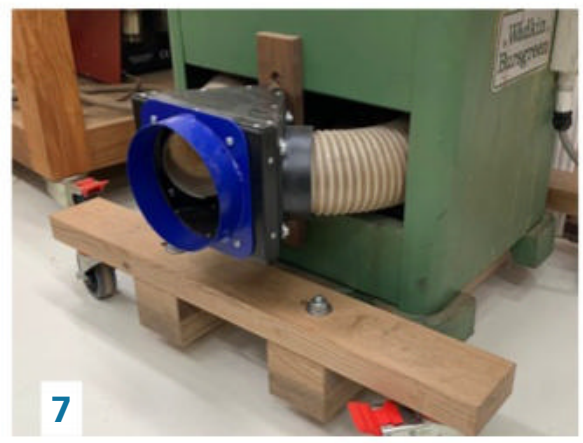
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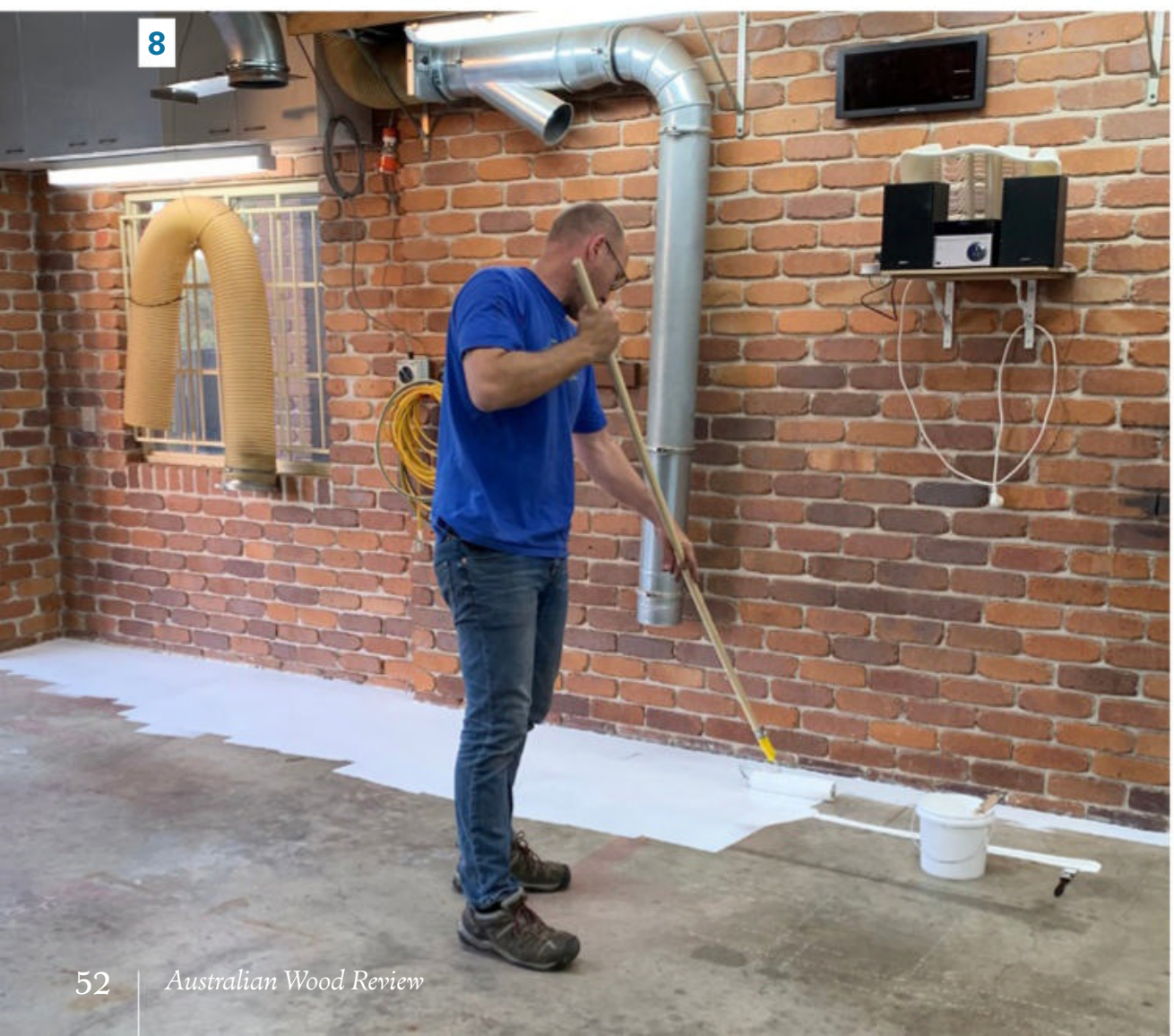
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Wireless remote-start solutions are increasingly popular for single-phase machinery, but hardwired switches and a contactor are cost-effective for larger three-phase installations.

Until you have compressed air you will perhaps not appreciate its usefulness. An inexpensive 1/8" or 1/4" coil hose and blow gun can be run from small and quiet oil-less compressors. Sawdust and chips accumulating on the router table or tablesaw are easily blown away. Chips and larger splinters from rough timber being processed on the surface-planer can be cleared safely. This is not just about convenience; a regularly cleaned machine surface yields safer and more accurate work.

Lastly, don't be daunted by the range of issues mentioned here – thinking ahead to the arrival and installation of your new equipment will help you better navigate the process.

Photos: David Luckensmeyer

David Luckensmeyer is a Brisbane based woodworker and furniture maker, see www.luckensmeyer.com.au and @luckensmeyer

Wood Diary

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www.craft.org.au

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Curated by The Japan Foundation

North Metro TAFE, Perth

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18–20 SEPTEMBER
Annual Exhibition featuring Golden Gouge Woodcraft Competition
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Woodcrafters Clubhouse, Toowoomba Showgrounds, Glenvale Road, Toowoomba, Qld

Email: tdwoodcrafters@gmail.com

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2–3 OCTOBER
Spoonies in the Tweed 2021
Weekend spooncarving festival with mastercarver Robert Howard

www.tweedspooncarving.com.au

2–3 OCTOBER
Goulburn Valley Woodworkers
McIntosh Centre, Shepparton Showgrounds, Victoria

www.gvwoodworkers.com.au

Len Taylor 0458777901

2–10 OCTOBER
Confluence
Furniture by Dunstone Design, sculpture by Hape Kiddle and paintings by Warlpiri artist Mary Brown Napangardi

Luci.D Interiors, Moss Vale, NSW

www.lucidinteriors.com.au

www.dunstonedesign.com.au

8 OCTOBER–17 NOVEMBER
The Art of Making
Studio Woodworkers Australia exhibition

Gallery 1, Australian Design Centre

Cnr William & Palmer Streets, Sydney

8–17 OCTOBER
Sydney Craft Week
Celebrating creativity and the handmade in all its forms

An initiative of Australian Design Centre

www.sydneycraftweek.com

23–24 OCTOBER
Lost Trades Fair 2021
Hawkesbury Showgrounds, Richmond, NSW

www.losttrades.info

1–12 NOVEMBER
Design & Development 2021
Workshop with Damian Wright and Evan Dunstone

Dunstone Design workshop, Queanbeyan, NSW

www.dunstonedesign.com.au

5–6 NOVEMBER
Cooroora Woodcraft Show
Cooroora Woodworkers Club Inc

Cooroy Memorial Hall

Contact: Steve Chapman
Mob: 0419611565

www.cooroorawoodworkersclub.com

13–14 NOVEMBER
Annual Exhibition
Eltham & District Woodworkers

Eltham Community Centre, Victoria

Contact: Adrian Desfontaines
Mob: 0414795347

19–21 NOVEMBER
Canberra Timber, Tools & Artisan Show
www.timberandworkingwithwoodshow.com.au

8–28 NOVEMBER
Design Canberra Festival
A celebration of all things design

www.designcanberrafestival.com.au

4 NOVEMBER–14 DECEMBER
Transformation: contemporary craft and design
Craft ACT: 2020 Annual Members exhibition

www.craftact.org.au

20 NOVEMBER–5 DECEMBER
Sturt School for Wood
2021 Graduating Exhibition

Cnr Range Road & Waverley Parade, Mittagong, NSW

www.sturt.nsw.edu.au

9 DECEMBER–22 JANUARY
Centre for Fine Woodworking
Graduate exhibtion 2021

Refinery Artspace, 114 Hardy St, Nelson, New Zealand

www.cfw.co.nz

2022

10 JANUARY–18 FEBRUARY
Six week residency program with Michael Fortune
Centre for Fine Woodworking, Nelson, New Zealand

www.cfw.co.nz

5 FEBRUARY–18 APRIL
New Works by Terry Martin
Ipswich Art Gallery, d'arcy Doyle Place, Ipswich, Qld

www.ipswichartgallery.qld.gov.au/

20 FEBRUARY
Sydney Tool Sale
(TTTG eNews 22/2/21)
Traditional Tools Group

The Brick Pit Sports Stadium

1A Dartford Rd, Thornleigh, NSW

www.tttg.org.au

12–13 FEBRUARY
Tools & Techniques Weekend
Demonstrations, tool and timber sales

Sturt School For Wood, Mittagong, NSW

www.sturt.nsw.edu.au

13 FEBRUARY
BEYOND ORDINARY, EXHIBITION OPENS
Curated new works by contemporary women makers

Sturt Gallery, Mittagong, NSW

www.sturt.nsw.edu.au

28 FEBRUARY–11 MARCH
Apprenticeship program with Michael Fortune
Centre for Fine Woodworking, Nelson, New Zealand

www.cfw.co.nz

12–13 MARCH
Lost Trades Fair
Bendigo Racecourse, Ascot, Bendigo, Victoria

www.losttrades.info

Speaking the Trees

UK sculptor Alison Crowther creates sinuous textures on the ancient English oak trees she gives voice to. Story by Robert Howard.

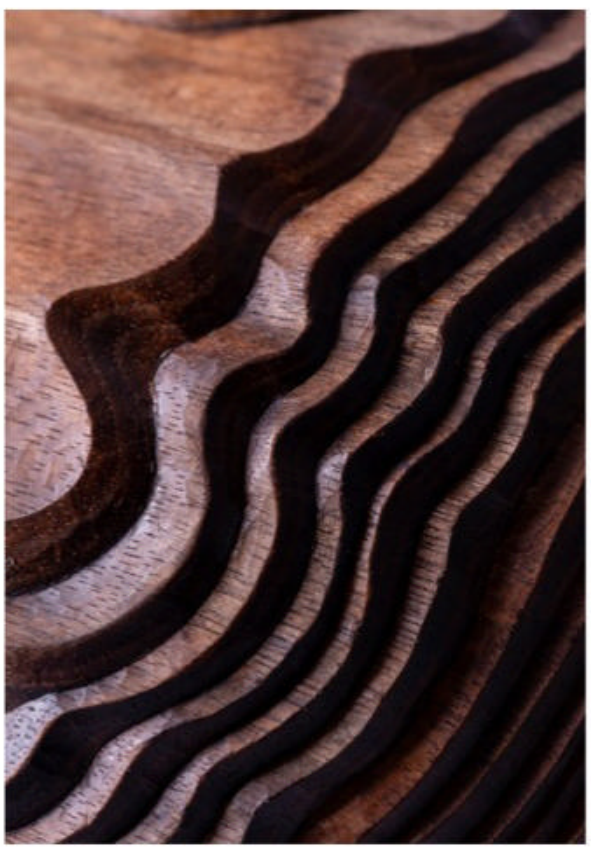
Not many woodworkers, when asked what tool they would like to be able to buy, would answer 'a better forklift'. But a forklift is indeed an indispensable tool for English sculptor, Alison Crowther. Perhaps the most breathtaking aspect of her work, when you first see it, is its physical size. One striking example, now a fixture in the main lobby of Tower 7, One Shenzhen Bay, China, is carved from a 5m x 1.3m log of English oak weighing around 13 tons, and whilst most other works are considerably smaller, anything less than a forklift would not suffice for moving many of them.

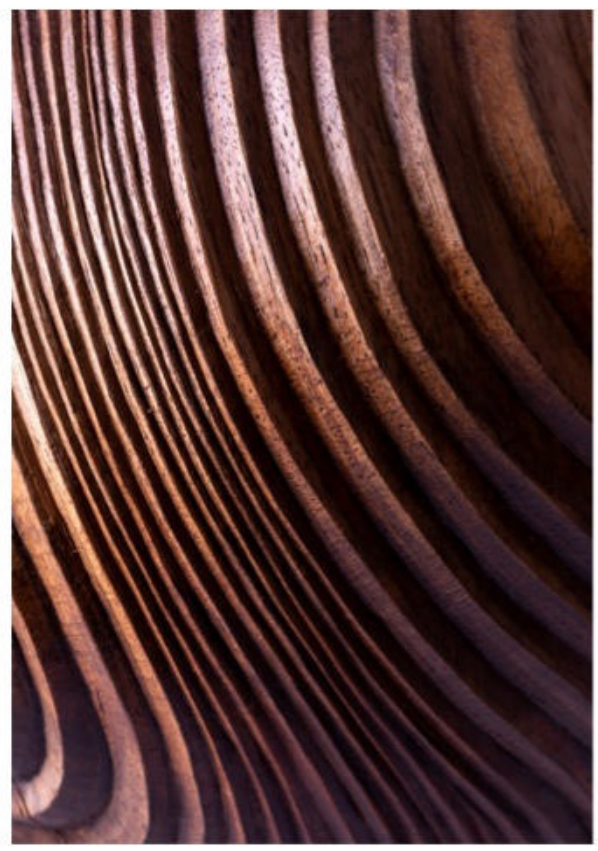
However, producing sculptures this size was not initially her ambition. Born on the north-west edge of West Yorkshire in 1965, she studied furniture design (but not furniture making) at the Royal College of Art, graduating in 1989. Her interest in working with wood, in particular woodcarving, was fanned by a limited exposure to using it in some projects during the final year of her course, and her discovery that the tactile pleasure of carving was so much more appealing than the high-tech cerebral activity of the design world. The savage storms that swept across the UK in 1987, whilst a disaster for the forests and woodlands, did have the unexpected benefit of creating an abundant supply of high quality wood, perfectly timed for Alison's growing passion for carving.

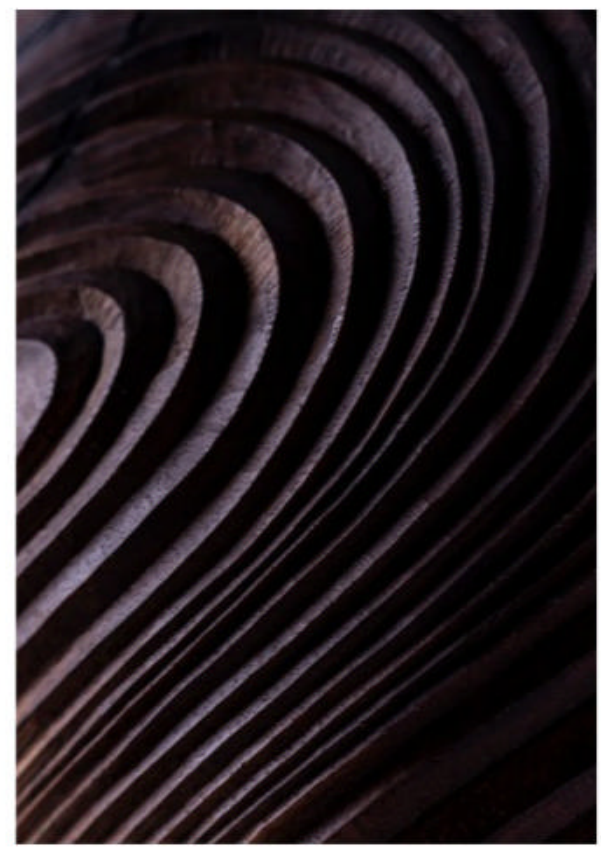
After an initial foray into furniture making (mostly benches and seating) failed in the recession of the early 90s, she returned home to endure a variety of menial jobs, but always managed to continue her carving explorations in her spare time. She finally secured a teaching position in West Sussex, and from this base began to plan how she might build a career as a woodcarver/sculptor. She researched all the local galleries and art spaces, and continued carving pieces in her own time for them to sell.

Main: Alison Crowther in her ancient barn workshop. The spherical small, black, circular ring and hole on the side of the sphere helped centre the pattern which was similar to the one shown hanging above. *Photo: Beth Evans*

Above: Alison Crowther's hands cradle a model for the surface 'texture' of a larger work. *Photo: Sarah Sheldrake*







This page:

Full and detail textural views of *Dryad*. *Photos: Jacqui Hurst*

Opposite:

Incised Walnut II is worked from straight grain wood. The carved lines follow the growth rings on endgrain and long grain. *Photo: Jacqui Hurst*

Votive, 2020. Photo: Sarah Sheldrake

As the new century began, her success and established reputation gave her the confidence to give up teaching, and to strike out on her own as an independent sculptor.

Early on Alison focussed on using English oak as her wood of choice. She loved the way it was woven into the history of everyday life in the UK, in particular for its renown strength and durability. This last attribute was particularly important as much of her early work was destined to sit outdoors, exposed to the elements. A final blessing was that it was readily available locally. But it also ties in perfectly with her aesthetic vision.

Alison says that she wants the wood to 'speak', and for her this is not an empty art-speak cliche. What I think she means is this. The history of a tree is contained in its form, and every piece of wood from a tree carries part of that history. Some of it is visible to sensitive eyes. In particular, the shape of the trunk and the way the grain flows are affected by the natural forces that bear on the tree as it ages, and the climatic cycles it endures.

Her design language, the forms and the carved details she uses as the tree's 'voice', have evolved over time. I imagine the process has had a chicken and egg quality to it, a backwards and forwards

dance between what she sees in the wood, and her creative imagination, with each sculpture growing out of each one that came before it.

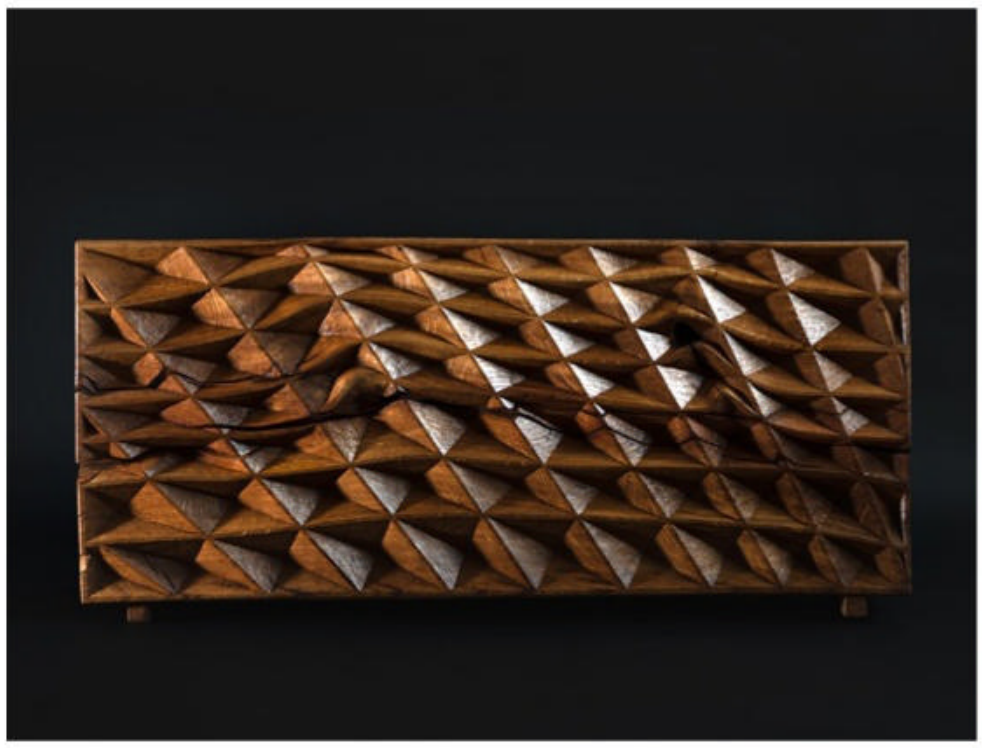
When you look at a typical Alison Crowther sculpture, what you see is a simple, underlying form – a sphere, an egg, a tapering cylinder – with a carved surface pattern, or what she refers to as a carved 'texture'. The idea is for the form to carry, but not obscure, the texture.

Old oaks can be famously twisted and gnarly, with numerous closely spaced growth rings, so that when such a tree is carved to a simple form such as a sphere, or an egg, the rings create an entire surface of wonderful, sinuous lines, all in the rich, warm colour of the parent tree. There is no need to edit the lines by disregarding messy bits, or chopping out ugly bits, as they all run in beautiful, undulating closed loops, just as the growing tree made them.

By choosing the spacing she wants, and then carving along the spaced growth rings with either a V or curved gouge, Alison is able to use shadow, the carver's friend, to highlight the wonderfully sinuous patterns the rings create on the wood surface.

A more complex surface design, or 'texture,' involves using the growth rings to create a network of horizontal lines, and the medullary rays to create a network of vertical lines. This works really well when the vertical lines gently twist, or spiral, up the length of the tree. Once an appropriate spacing for each set of lines has been decided, and drawn, the spaces between the lines are carved out, using a method worked out in the preliminary models (these small models are often developed into small works suitable for sale in small galleries).

The downside of the large sculptures is that a lot of wood has to be removed. In quoting for any commission, Alison has to allow for the cost of any additional skilled labour she might have to hire, and carefully calculate how long she might need it for. Over time she has worked out a system that works for her.



This page, clockwise from above:

Outer Sphere, 2015. 'It takes an experienced artist's eye to see these possibilities for the wood to 'speak' in the raw form of the fallen tree.' *Photo: Jacqui Hurst*

Plexus Bench, over the years Alison Crowther has several seats with geometric textures carved into the walls. *Photo: Sarah Sheldrake*

Kissing Bench, Glyndebourne, 2018. *Photo: Jacqui Hurst*

So that she does not need to spend all her time directing assistants, she plans the work very carefully, and makes up a variety of full size patterns. These effectively control the shaping of the wood by her team, and free her to do other work.

She has three skilled workers who are familiar with her work and way of working. Her senior helper has been with her for eight years and works two days a week. Another also works two days, and one only one day. When required she is able to hire additional people from the local workforce who have enough basic woodworking skills to be useful.

As a way of giving back, or helping ensure the continuation of the woodcarving craft, Alison's senior assistant, Phil Walker, secured a Queen Elizabeth Scholarship to enable Alison to spend one day a week passing on to him her knowledge and skills.

To maintain a constant workflow, and a consistent income, Alison usually has around five works under way at any time. One might be at the development stage of sketches and discussions with a prospective

client. She might be carving models of possible forms and/or texture for another, while the preliminary shaping of the underlying form of a fourth work is happening in the yard outside her barn workshop. Finally, another couple will be inside as Alison and her assistants do the final, detailed carving of their texture.

As the photos show, the total work required for any one of these sculptures is enormous, so quoting an accurate price is critical. She cannot afford the luxury of working 'on spec', but has finally reached a point where she is comfortable with the price she gets for most of her work, and is able to be more indulgent with the occasional commission that has, for whatever reason, something that is of extra-special interest to her.

The Covid pandemic has caused all the corporate and hotel commissions to dry up, but these have been adequately replaced by private commissions.

You might be envious of Alison's enormous old barn workshop, with its massive timbers and cavernous space, until you contemplate working there through an English winter with no central heating. Alison is currently having another workshop built, using the traditional, heavy timber framing, but while it will be better insulated and partially heated, any heating has to be limited by consideration of its effect on the green wood she is carving.

I think sculptors grow into their work, with each piece building on what has come before it. Where it ends is unpredictable, more a product of chance than planning. But if the work is guided by a consistent aesthetic vision and love of the work process itself, the result will be a body of work that is a clear signature of the artist who made them. The forms on these few pages do not need Alison Crowther's signature to tell you who made them.

Robert Howard is a woodworker who also teaches woodcarving classes from his Brisbane studio. Learn more at www.roberthoward.com.au

Top: *Scale Tree II* and *III* in situ at One Shenzhen Bay, China, 2018. The 'scale tree' is known from fossilised remains dating back between 360 and 300 million years ago, with the bark covered in diamond shaped impressions in rows spiralling up the trunk.

Above: *The artist with two of her Votive* carvings, 2020. *Photo: Sarah Sheldrake*

These pages:
Giordano Viganò at the bench working on a fine ebony keepsake box with bone inlays and leather.

A Lifetime's Work

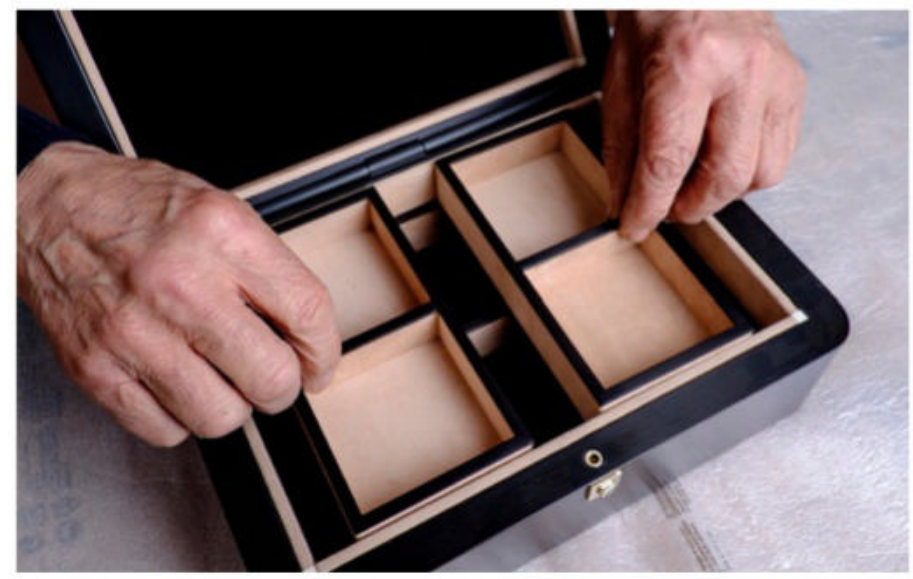
Decades of hard work and dedication to the craft are the unsurprising 'secret' behind Italian master craftsman Giordano Viganò's work. Story by Vasko Sotirov.

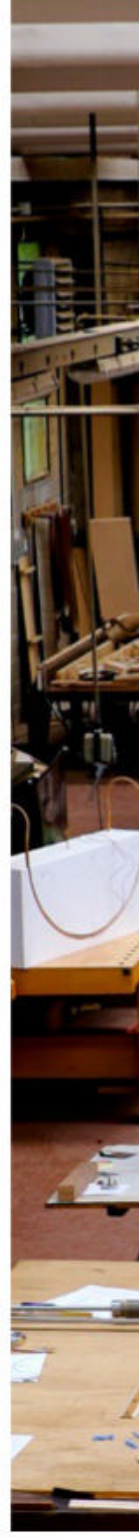
It's not often you get the opportunity to talk to one of your heroes, but I did, and want to share with you the awesome chat I had with Giordano Viganò. He's one of the most refined Italian *ebanistas*, that is, an artisan whose specialty is working with ebony (*ebano* in Italian), and other highly valued timbers. Based in Novedrate, a tiny town 20km north from Milan, he's been working with wood for more years than double my age.

When I set foot into his workshop, I was struck by how big the space is. It's around 1500sqm and filled with all the machines and workbenches a woodworker might want. As well as surprised, I also felt a bit nostalgic. You see, this man has been in the business since the 60s and at one point had up to 14 workers. Over the years, as they all retired, he never wanted to hire any others, so now that space feels a bit empty, almost desolate. At least that's how it felt to me – until I started talking to Giordano. His personality immediately filled the shop and also made me feel that I've known him for a lifetime.

Moments later he was telling me about a young fellow he met a few days ago who had to go to Japan for work, and then he was showing me a new piece in the making, and then how he had come up with a brilliant solution to a problem he'd encountered, and yes…Giordano's like that. Really enthusiastic and passionate, ready to share information and knowledge.

I really didn't expect he would be so open about technical stuff. The kind of questions I thought might have got the 'oh that's a business secret' answer, actually evoked quite the opposite. He told me there are no secrets he'd like to keep. In fact there was just so much to see and learn that I was completely overwhelmed.





Clockwise from right:

Giordano Viganò with his wife Silvana.

Once the workplace of 14 people, the 1500 sqm workshop is now the playground of Giordano Viganò alone.

Plié folding side table,ebony and custom brass hardware.

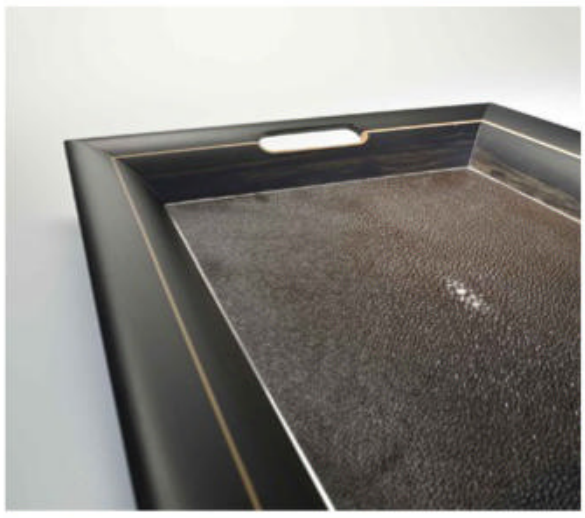
Tavolo Quadrato, palmwood, silver. 'The legs and the lateral bands present the wood dissected along the vein.'

Vassoio, ebony tray with stingray lining and silver inlays.

Part of the shop is dedicated to pieces that are ready or almost ready to go to their new home, and trust me, I was impressed. The craftsmanship is incredible. Elegant and luxurious, with an execution so natural that looks effortless and seamless. My detail seeking eyes were very happy.

As we talked about how he made this, and how he made that, he also got interested in what I make. No pressure there, just showing my humble work to a real master of the craft. In return I got a few precious words of advice and his very welcome point of view.

'If you push your standards to a certain level', he said, 'be ready to deal with very demanding clients. The more precise you are, the more time is needed. It's a delicate dance, the one you do between running a successful business, and getting lost in the details.' So how *do* you do that? A lot of hard work and dedication – which is exactly the story of his life.



Giordano, or simply Giò, as his wife Silvana calls him, was born in 1934. Yes, he's 87 years old but if you spoke to him on the phone you'd never guess. His mind runs fast and the body isn't far behind. I asked what his secret is, and guess what it is? …he's never stopped working. He's slowed down a bit, especially since now he's alone in the shop, but never stopped. He also shared with me his retirement plan, if I can call it that.

'It's impossible to climate control this place. It's too cold in the winter and too hot during summer time. One day I'll get rid of this place and move to a smaller shop with less machines. Maybe a 300 to 400 sqm place could be okay – a place where I could play.'

What motivates him and pushes him to keep on working? 'It's not that I need something to bring me in the workshop, it's hard for me thinking of a life out of it. This is what I do and who I am.'

'How did you become the *ebanista* that you are today? 'By pure chance!', he said, so here's how the story begins.

Giordano's father was a self taught and renowned furniture designer, working in the Louis XV, XVI and Baroque styles, and so from an early age Giordano was exposed to the world of furniture making. One summer, the 15 year-old 'lazy boy', as he described himself, was playing on the street, when a local woodworker asked him to help cut some chair leg mortises on a horizontal mortiser. Giordano laughs. 'I was cutting mortise after mortise, but the table was really hard to move, so I took some machine oil and lubricated the tracks. In so doing, I must have inadvertently undone the vertical stop, and leg after leg, the mortise kept slipping more and more to one side. By the time I'd figured out what was happening, one side of the mortises had barely had any wood left on them…'.

However this experience ignited the curiosity that took him to apprentice in many different workshops. He became so passionate about woodworking, that late at night, after work, he would take his father's drawings and secretly make them at home. Later he would show them to his father and ask for feedback. 'Sometimes, after severe but constructive critiques, I would break a piece that wasn't well enough executed and remake it again', he said.

Giordano showed me one of those early pieces that still remains in his workshop – a beautifully executed small side table. I scratched my head for some time trying to figure out how a young artisan could make such a piece at home with limited tools.

Working for others honed his skills and also taught him about the pace required. 'I worked at a place where they made me veneer tabletops with the sunburst pattern. My boss was very demanding and wouldn't accept work that wasn't perfect, so at the beginning I had to remake some, but then eventually I became very good at it. I'd arrive at eight in the morning and by 12, I would have finished a whole top. I'm talking about a full 32-sheet pack, perfect grain match, with the centre coming to a point veneer job.'

After refining his skills, and many challenges later, Giordano eventually started his own company. The new business went well, but he *made* it go well, promoting his work and handling every aspect of the business. While the administration side of things was basic, the one thing that wasn't missing was hard work, and lots of it. 'I worked an insane amount of hours. I don't know why, I just did it. I had to do it. For several years I would work from 6am to 12pm, then

from 1 to 8pm, then from 9 till 2am in the morning. Seven days a week.'

In the 80s he started working with big design brands like B&B, Cassina, Giorgetti and architects such as Umberto Riva, Gianfranco Frattini and Kuramata per Cappellini making their prototypes and special pieces. At the same time he had private clients and created his own line of furniture.

It's impossible to list it all here but the Giordano Viganò company has made interiors for luxury stores and banks, for villas and residences in Milan, London, Johannesburg, Tanzania, Switzerland, Bulgaria and more. Some of the commissions were so big and important they took years to complete. In those days Giordano was not only a woodworker, but coordinated other suppliers as well.

Over the years, the work that Giordano produced varied from classic to modern and contemporary furniture, and extended to small but precious objects like picture frames, wooden *pochettes* and more.

But what was his favourite type of commission? 'A great commission is the one that makes me scratch my head and forces me to find an elegant solution to a difficult problem. It's so nice when you wake up at night because you came up with an idea, and you know it's going to work. This is the most exciting part for me. When an architect comes with a sketch and I have to figure out all the engineering for the piece.'

Giordano's huge workshop is filled with machinery, tools and benches. He built it at in the late 60s on a beautiful

piece of land that almost looks like a park. On one side is the office, and on the other, outside, is where timber is stored. The internal layout follows the typical processing path that the material will go through.

Rough sizing is done on the heaviest machines in the shop. A docking saw, bandsaw, jointer and planer gets that job done. Final dimensioning and joinery takes place on a tablesaw, spindle moulders and horizontal mortisers, a vertical router, disc sanders and other equipment. What remains is the delicate work of veneering, hand tool work and assembly. It's here that we find the guillotine, a hot press, wide belt sander, assembly table and all the workbenches.

Giordano couldn't tell me which machine is his favourite, but I have a pretty good idea: 'If you take away my slider and the Cremona bandsaw, it would be like cutting off both of my hands…'.

Learn more about Giordano Viganò at https://giordanovigano.it/en and Instagram @giordanovigano

Portraits and factory photos: Vasko Sotirov

Furniture photos courtesy Giordano Viganò

Vasko Sotirov is a craftsman based in northern Italy. Obsessed with details, he designs and uses mostly hand tools to create objects which have a purpose beyond functionality. Learn more at vaskosotirov.com and Instagram @vaskosotirov

These pages, clockwise from top:

Marguerite Writing Desk, maple wood with amaranth details.

Stadium Tavolino, Macassar ebony coffee table.

Folding table, pear wood top with ebony inlays and ebonised legs.

Scatola Ladybug Box, solid American walnut and ebony with custom made bronze hinge and pull, orange leather lining.

Ebony valet stand on swivel base with removable leather hangers

Leap of Faith

‘The siren call to pursue a career in woodworking has had my ear for some time, and I could no longer ignore it’, explains Melbourne maker Dom Dudkiewicz.

I am not a master craftsman nor a professional furniture maker. I am an amateur woodworker with a passion for this craft just like many readers of this publication. Last week I made a huge life decision and informed my employer I’d be taking extended leave and likely not returning to my career as an engineering manager – effectively turning down a promotion in the process. I made the decision to dedicate myself fully to this craft and see if I can build a more sustainable life around it. The siren call to pursue a career in woodworking has had my ear for some time and I could no longer ignore it.

I realised that waiting for an ‘ideal’ time to follow my passion was flawed. There is no ideal time. While the saying ‘life is short’ is thrown around a lot, it is true nonetheless. I may regret my decision, but I know with complete certainty that I would regret not making it. Allow me to explain why I am so drawn to this craft, and tell you a little about myself, and what I’ve done to give myself some chance of success in this endeavour as an otherwise amateur woodworker. Perhaps some of this resonates with you.

Woodworking calls to me for many reasons and on many levels. I get immense satisfaction from creating a tangible finished product from nothing more than an idea and doing so with my own hands. I enjoy the limitless potential to grow in this craft and am simultaneously drawn-in by the honest simplicity and the singularity of focus the work brings. In a world that is in a hurry to create and consume ever more ‘stuff’ without regard for sustainability, I am in love with the idea of creating lasting, quality items that require a significant investment in human time and effort. Not to create more and faster, but to create less, slower and better. I love that the process of making can create more value and meaning than the finished product itself.

I have also always wanted to do something for myself, be my own boss, not a cog in a larger machine. The example set by both of my parents in

providing for my brother and I when we immigrated from Poland in late 1989, just before the 'recession we had to have', through sheer perseverance and will has ingrained in me the value of honest, hard work and self-sufficiency. Watching my father turn his hand to any number of trades and projects has also given me the confidence to likewise turn my own hands to anything. I am excited to be in full control of my own destiny and success. To chart my own course.

My journey into woodworking began when my partner Claire and I built a new home. In order to save some money, the first thing we decided to do was install the solid timber floors ourselves. One project then led to another and I began taking woodworking more seriously as a hobby about five years ago.

I consciously decided that I'd like to one day make furniture for a living around two years after that. I was very aware that rushing into custom furniture making with little skill, knowledge or tooling was unlikely to end well. This awareness, coupled with my aversion to financial risk, has resulted in me taking a slow, incremental approach.

To that end, and with no specific timing in mind, I formulated a simple three-point plan; acquire a decent set of tools with which to work, build out a home-based workshop that is both functional and relatively pleasant to work in, and focus on developing my skills. Because I am somewhat of a perfectionist and cannot do less than my best, I didn't want to offer my services until I was reasonably confident in my abilities.

No doubt influenced by the same devil that whispers in the ear of many a woodworker, the first part of my three-point plan – buying tools – has been easy. In retrospect, I maybe slightly overdid it on hand tools, but I have truly fallen in love with cutting joinery by hand and using handplanes, saws and chisels wherever possible. There's a definite sense of mastery that comes with relying on hand and eye to cut a precise joint – a feeling I don't really get when using a machine.

Don't get me wrong, I am very much a hybrid woodworker and use machines to do the heavy lifting and when it makes sense to do so. Buying a floor-standing mortiser, for example, was one of my best investments – I prefer to build with traditional mortise and tenon joinery and I get no satisfaction from wailing on a mortise chisel. I also don't thickness by hand and use a mix of handsaws, tablesaw and bandsaw for tenons; often all three depending on my mood. I do, however, feel that hand tools allow a level of precision that can

Opposite: The author with the workbench he constructed. Self-taught, he has used workshop projects as opportunities to learn and practise new skills.

Above: Traditional houndstooth dovetail joinery was used to construct a Roubo style bench from Tasmanian blackwood and rock maple.

Above: Building the router table cabinet was a chance to practise batch-cutting half-blind dovetails on each of the nine drawers. The carcase joinery included sliding dovetails and traditional draw-bored mortise and tenon joinery.

Opposite: Traditional joinery was also used for the author's Vic ash drum-sander cabinet with a focus on grain selection and orientation.

exceed that of a machine, providing more control and finesse. I find I usually turn to hand tools at late stages of a project where an errant cutter or setup error with a machine can be disastrous.

As for steps two and three, setting up a woodworking shop and building skills are a conveniently complementary pair of goals and something I have taken full advantage of. Having never had a mentor or any formal training, I picked up my theoretical woodworking education through the copious consumption of books, magazines and digital media. The majority of my learning however, has been derived from solving my own problems and actually getting hands-on.

Whilst I've made various small furniture pieces, outdoor projects and even some small commissions, I've really leveraged shop projects as wonderful opportunities to learn and practise new skills; setting up my shop in the process. Because 'shop furniture' is not expected to be fine-furniture quality, there is no associated fear of failure and this has allowed me to be more confident in trying new techniques and methods. Just as a surgeon who doesn't appear to be taking things too seriously is usually more successful than a quiet, nervous one, woodworking projects go far smoother and cuts are far more precise when you take the pressure off. With shop projects my focus is on learning and on executing precise joinery, not on the finished product.

I began making an effort to keep logs of hours spent on various stages or aspects of a project so that I can appreciate the additional time required for different choices in design and execution. This might include choices such as a hand-cut dovetails for drawers instead of locking rebates and determining how long it generally takes to cut a mortise and tenon joint. This understanding

will assist with more realistic time and cost estimation when quoting on furniture pieces. It also provides me with a benchmark to try to improve on. Did I mention I was competitive?

While I don't worry too much about aesthetics with shop projects, I don't take short-cuts on joinery and apply the same techniques and tolerances that I would use on a furniture piece. My focus with shop projects is learning, and building muscle memory and confidence in various techniques. In particular, I have focused on learning to cut accurate joinery as I see this to be the foundation of quality work.

On a router-table cabinet I built last year, for example, I chose to hand-cut half-blind dovetails on each of the nine drawers to refine my technique and my approach to batch-cutting dovetails. I also employed traditional casework construction methods including sliding dovetails and draw-bored mortise and tenon joinery – which I use for the majority of my work. On constructing a stand for my drum-sander, in addition to the joinery, I focused on grain selection and orientation, aiming for continuous, matching and straight grain on all visible faces.

My most recent shop project, a large French Roubo workbench, was a great opportunity to apply various skills and prior lessons learnt. While not employing any new techniques, the culmination of my woodworking knowledge and skills to date enabled me to confidently build a workbench I'll be proud to have as a centrepiece for my shop and that will inspire me to do my best work.

Realising I would need more shop space than afforded by my two-car garage, I also recently built a small adjoining structure to provide space for timber storage, assembly of larger pieces and break-down of stock. I chose to build this as a traditional post and beam timber frame, with freshly milled *Macrocarpa* and employing large pegged and wedged mortise and tenon joinery.

This project also provided an opportunity to try my hand at some timber windows and doors. Working with green timber beams that were not perfectly square or straight taught me a lot about layout and the use of reference lines and faces. Designing the entire structure, including all of the associated calculations also enhanced my understanding of timber's mechanical properties, design of structural joinery and consideration of wood movement – I certainly hope my calcs weren't wrong when I have up to two tonnes of timber stored overhead! Whilst not a furniture piece, everything on this project built on my overall woodworking skills and knowledge, in addition to providing me with another great asset.

Top: Building an overhead post and beam timber storage for his garage was an exercise in structural engineering with due consideration paid to the weight it may potentially hold in the future.

Above: Refitting his garage workshop with doors and windows was once again an exercise in traditional frame and panel joinery.

A workshop is never done, skills will always improve and there will always be another tool that could do the job better; that's what makes this journey worth pursuing. I do, however, feel that I'm now ready to begin my professional career in woodworking. I've set-up a small workshop and developed some fundamental woodworking skills and knowledge. Most importantly, I've taken the critical step of committing to this journey by standing-down from my safe, but in many ways unfulfilling job.

My next steps include making a small portfolio of furniture pieces to showcase what I can do and to serve as a basis for building customer confidence and setting expectations. I feel extremely blessed to have this opportunity and am extremely excited to start this new chapter in my life. I can't know how this endeavour will work out, but I feel that only good things can come from my decision. I sincerely hope that others who are dreaming of the same have the opportunity to likewise pursue their passion. I have no illusion that things will be easy and realise I'm wearing rose-tinted glasses and have a huge learning curve ahead of me, but I am extremely excited nonetheless. Life is short – I'm going to make the most of it.

Photos: Dom Dudkiewicz

Learn more about Dom Dudkiewicz at Instagram @dudkiewiczdominik

Dry assembling the beech storage cabinet shown opposite. A metal hammer with light tappings gives better feedback in closing the joint, however your fist should be enough when test fitting.

Joinery Challenge

A small cabinet built to house hardware became an exercise in handcut joinery. If you want to test your hand skills and your patience, this is a project for you, writes Charles Mak.

Fig 1 . Carcase components and assembly not to scale

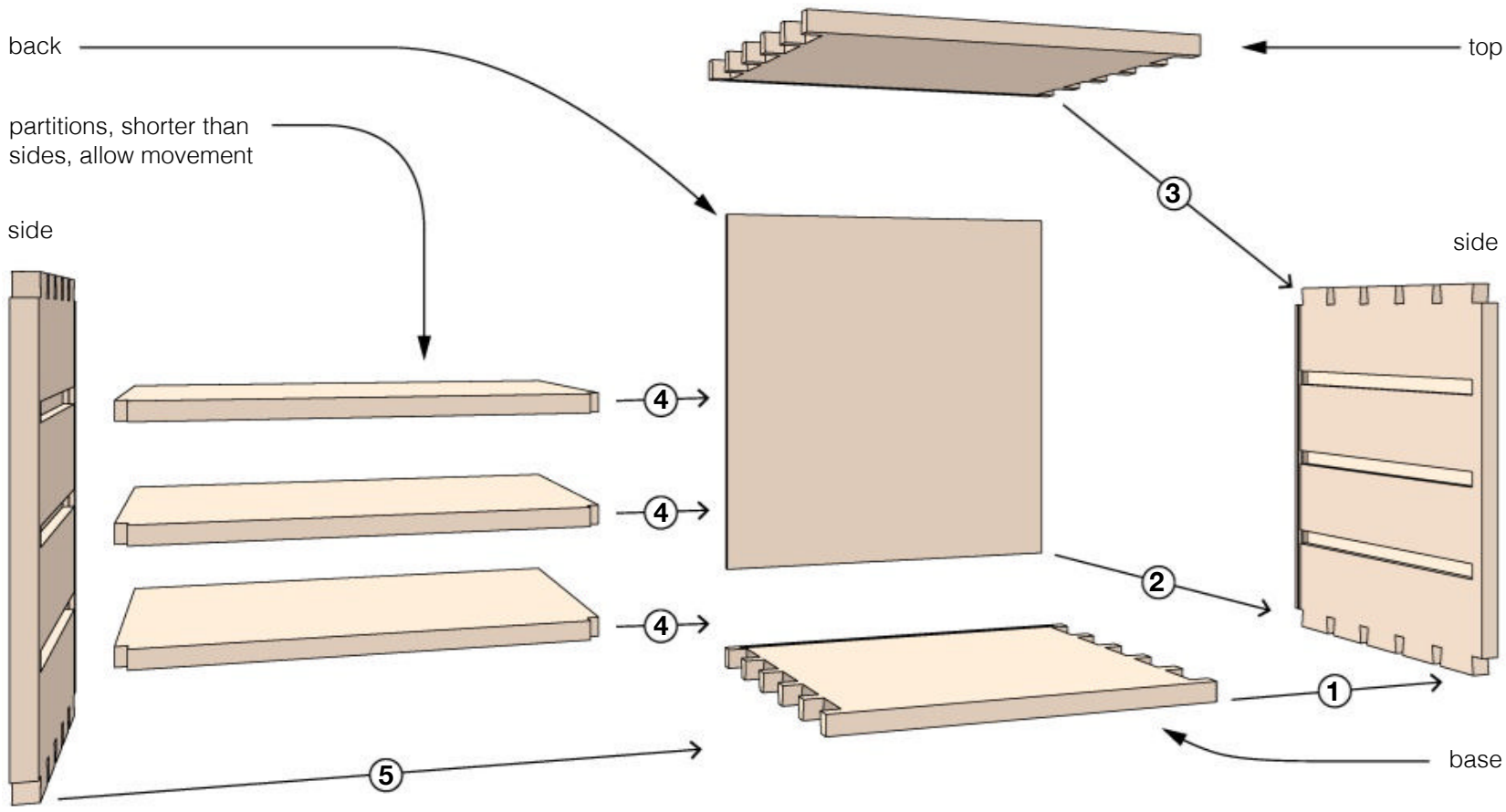
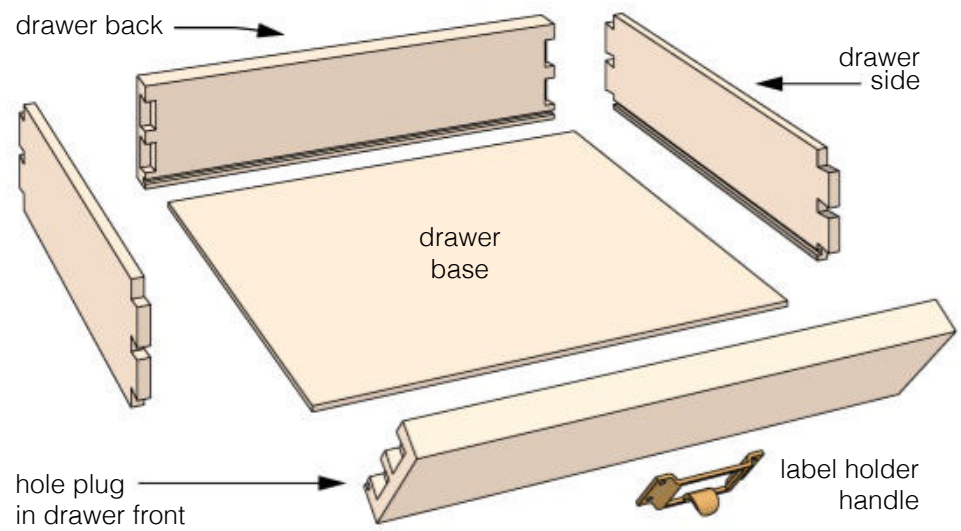


Fig 2 . Drawer components not to scale

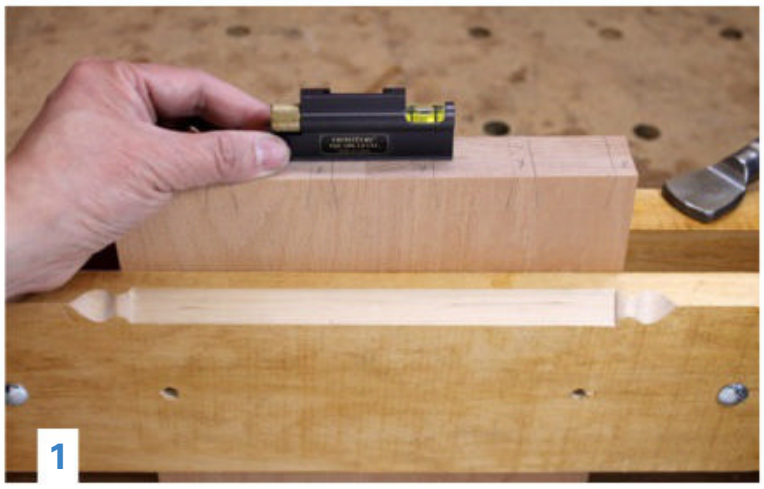


Over the years, I have built cabinets, trays, or boxes of various designs and sizes for my hand tools. But tools are not the only objects that we woodworkers worry about proper storage of. Tired of my disorganised storage of hardware, I set out to design and build my first till of drawers to house some of my essentials. I also set out to use mainly hand tools in this project.

Design and construction

I wanted to house select cabinet hardware such as screws, pulls and hinges, and keep the cabinet's size and weight manageable to enable hand carrying. Since dovetails offer strength as well as aesthetics, I used them for both the carcase and drawers. Traditional drawers are lap-dovetailed at the front and through-dovetailed at the back. Here, I treated the drawers like cabinet carcases, and put half-lap dovetails at both the front and the back, 16 of them in total – all hand cut.

To house the carcase back, stopped and through grooves are used, while through grooves (used with hole plugs) are cut in the drawers to hold the bottoms.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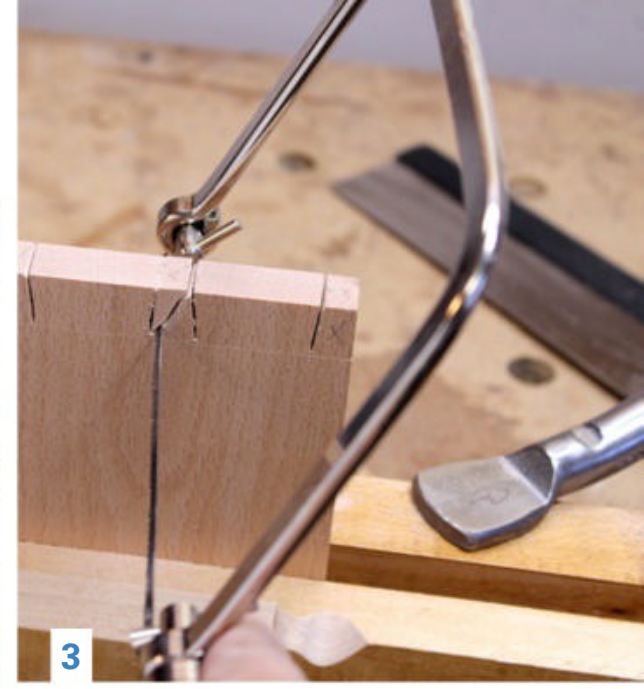
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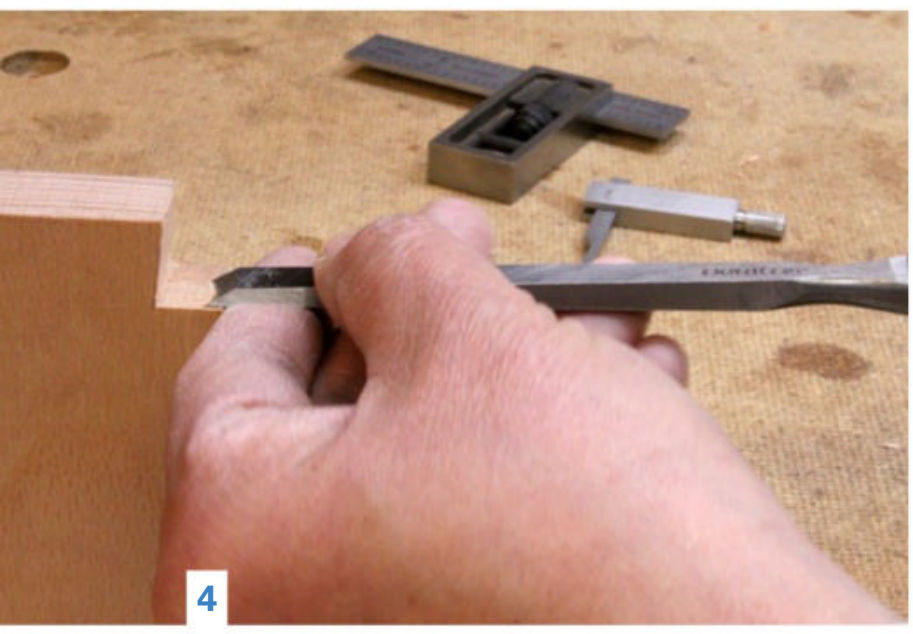
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After giving it some thought, I chose stopped dados instead of through dados on the sides to house the partitions. Such an approach means more work – the partitions being shouldered accordingly – but gives a much neater appearance. **Figs 1** and **2** show the construction.

The final design decision was about the handle. A big handle on the top or handles on the sides would seem a bit distracting, if not intrusive. In the end, I settled for a handle-free solution: rubber feet are mounted to the bottom, raising the case high enough to slip my fingers underneath to hold the till.

Preparing the stock

While flat and true stock is what we should always strive to prepare and use, one's attention to timber quality plays an even more important role when we build fine drawers. '(A) fine drawer requires a perfect fit…The sides must be clean, and true, the top and bottom – whether the surfaces of a cabinet or separate frames, must be flat', James Krenov said. So – examine your parts before you start, especially if there is a significant lapse between the time you dressed the stock and the time you work on the project.

CUTTING LIST (mm)

PART	LENGTH	WIDTH	THICKNESS	QTY
Carcase				
Top	235	324	16	1
Bottom	235	324	16	1
Sides	235	326	16	2
Partition	225	300	13	3
Back	305	308	3	1
Rubber feet	-	-	-	4
Drawer				
Front	62	291	15	4
Back	62	291	12	4
Side	62	210	7	8
Bottom	205	284	3	4

Carcase dovetails

Handcut dovetails show your craftsmanship as well as your taste. It pays to learn how to cut them and use them often enough so they become a joinery choice you can consider without any fear or hesitation.

This article does not cover the step-by-step details of how I mark and cut dovetails. For beginners and seasoned woodworkers alike, the best written guide on the subject I have come across is Ian Kirby's *The Complete Dovetail*. It should help you improve or refresh your dovetailing skill.

For starters, I always follow his advice when marking out joints by setting


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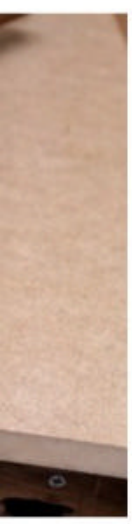


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the marking gauge less than the thickness of the wood. One of the key advantages of his approach is that the ends of the joints will be cut below the surface of the carcase, meaning that you can clamp directly on the tails to close the joints, without making any clamping cauls.

Cutting the tails

After laying out the tail boards, I cut them as a pair (**photo 1**). To start, make a light saw kerf on the waste side of the pencil line across the endgrain. Then tilt the saw in the kerf to cut to the sloping line (**photo 2**). Use long strokes without forcing the saw down, taking care not to cut beyond the baselines which will spoil the finished look of the joint.

With the tail slopes sawn, use a coping or fret saw to remove the bulk waste from the pin sockets (**photo 3**). Saw off the outside half pins and clean up the shoulders (**photo 4**). Finally, use a chisel that is narrower than the width of the socket, and work from both sides to finish the tails cleanly (**photo 5**).

Cutting the pins

To mark the pin boards, I use a dovetail alignment board, a jig made popular by British woodworker David Barron (**photo 6**). After marking the endgrain, draw vertical pencil lines from the endgrain knife lines down on the pin board, and saw straight down as guided by the pencil lines. Remove the waste and chisel to the lines (**photos 7, 8**). Lastly, dry fit the whole case.

Cutting the grooves

Disassemble the carcase, and cut grooves on the interior of the case at the back for the hardboard back. The plough plane is the ideal tool to cut through grooves on the carcase sides. With the help of a chisel and a router plane (and some patience), the plough can also handle stopped grooves which are cut on the top and bottom (**photos 9, 10**).

Drawer dovetails

It is easier to build a carcase with partitions installed and then make the drawers to fit into openings. However, if you are confident of your precision skills and measurements, you can build the drawers first – and that is a challenge I was willing to take on.

1. Starting with the stock held level will help you cut sloping or perpendicular lines more consistently.
2. Check the guide kerf to be square across the endgrain before tilting the saw and cutting down.
3. After gang-sawing the tails, I remove the bulk of the waste one board at a time.
4. Use a chisel narrower than the thickness of the wood to remove any high spot, keeping the base lines intact.
5. Garbage tails, garbage pins – squareness on the tails is essential and should be checked using a square.
6. In knifing, make three strokes – light, medium, then heavy – instead of one heavy stroke to prevent following the grain line.
7. For thicker stock, drilling is a quick way to remove the bulk waste in the pin sockets.
8. I use a butt chisel (honed at 40°), followed by a regular chopping or paring chisel in the final chiselling act.
9. When ploughing, start from the front end, gradually taking longer and eventually full length strokes.
10. I worked the ends of a stopped groove with a chisel and a router plane after ploughing most of the groove.


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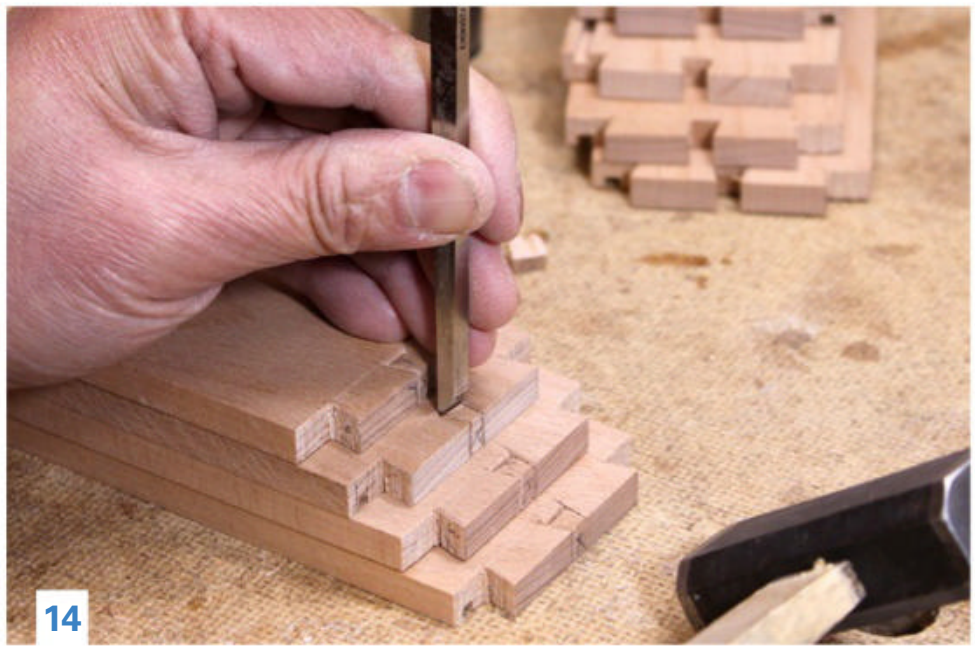
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11. In gang-sawing, tails are marked on one board, and the endgrain lines transferred to the second board with a square.

12. To avoid unnecessary blunders, mark out the waste before you start sawing on the waste side of the line, or splitting the line.

13. Chisel a knife wall on the shoulder's baseline to create a guide kerf for sawing.

14. With many boards to do, chopping out the bulk waste is best done sitting down.

15. To transfer marks, hold the knife tightly against the tail and scribe in three progressive strokes.

16. Tilt the saw and begin the cut on the near corner, splitting the scribed line.

17. Chop out the waste across the grain first, then chisel away the waste in the socket down the grain. The marking gauge can be used as a super-fine cutting tool to remove just a hair of material.

18. I used the drawers and partitions as well as spacers (allowance for wood movement) to mark the dado positions. Scribe the dado baselines across the carcase side using a combination square.

19. Chop out the bulk of the waste between the scribed lines. Afterwards, chisel away the waste left from the chopping and finish the stopped dado to depth with a router plane.

20. Mark out the shoulders on the partitions with the router plane, matching the set-backs cut on the carcase sides. I chamfered the dado edges of the partitions slightly before assembly.

The process of cutting half-lap dovetails for the drawers starts out the same as that for a through dovetail – by first marking out the tails (**photos 11, 12**). After sawing the tail slopes, chisel a knife wall on the outside half pins to guide the sawing off of the half pins (**photo 13**). Lastly, after forming the tails (**photo 14**), plough through grooves on the side pieces for the bottoms.

The alignment board is used again to transfer the tails to the pin boards. But this time, the tails (carcase sides) are set back to create a lap (the end wall thickness) on the pins (drawer fronts and backs) (**photo 15**). With the pins marked out and vertical pencil lines added, clamp the drawer front in a vice and saw the pins diagonally as guided by the knife lines and pencil lines (**photo 16**). Use a series of horizontal and vertical chisel cuts to finish the sockets (**photo 17**).

Repeat the same steps for the half-lap joints at the drawer backs. After ploughing through grooves on the drawer front and backboards, glue up the drawers with the bottoms in place.

Partitions

I put the glued-up drawers in the dry-assembled carcase one by one to mark out the dados for the partitions (**photo 18**). First, the dado width is scribed on the inside face of the carcase sides and the waste chiseled away between the scribed lines (**photo 19**). A router plane was then used to cut the dados to proper depth. Dry fit the dado joinery, and aim for a snug fit.

In the last step, mark out the shoulders on the partitions, matching the stopped dados, and cut out the notches. Remember to test fit the whole carcase with the partitions in place.

Assembly

With so many parts involved (and so much effort invested), carefully plan out your carcase glue-up procedures (**fig.1** shows a suggested glue-up sequence), and rehearse everything a couple of times.


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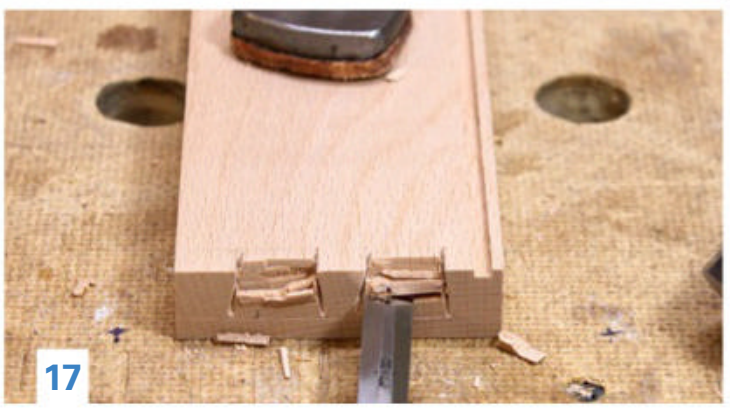
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For more complex assemblies like this, I use hide glue (bottled form) for its long working time and reversibility. To allow the partitions to move, apply a dab of glue to the front spots only.

Clamp the assembly square, by checking the diagonals. To adjust the diagonals to become equal, shift the clamps in the direction of the long diagonal. While waiting for the glue to set, plug the holes on the drawer sides.

Once the glue is cured, plane everything flush. Here is another reason for setting the gauge slightly less than the thickness of the board: the endgrain of the joints are the reference surfaces, and they tell you when to stop planing each board.

Fitting the drawers is the moment of truth, and will reveal how well you have prepared your materials, cut your joints and put everything together. Here, a handplane with a keen edge gives you better control than any power tool if you need to take off only a minute amount of material.

Finishing

I applied coats of finish to the outside of the carcase and to the outside of the drawer fronts (up to the very front on the drawer sides, highlighting just the half-lap joints). The final chores are to attach the drawer pulls and the feet.

This till took me a good amount of time to make by hand, but it allowed me to appreciate the Krenovian secret of well fitted drawers – 'that of method, patience, and consistency'. If you want a project wherein you can employ plenty of hand craftsmanship, test your patience, and show your passion, this is the right one for you!

Photos: Charles Mak
Diagrams: Graham Sands

Charles Mak lives in Alberta, Canada and enjoys writing articles and woodworking in his shop. Email: thecanadianwoodworker@gmail.com


20

For the Birds

A lifelong interest in nature and the environment has sustained Hank Tyler's creative and professional life.

Main: Hank Tyler in his Eltham, Victoria studio. *Photo: D.D. Tyler*

Three Sandpipers, bubinga, 2009, Cape Cod Museum of Natural History, Massachusetts, USA. *Photo: Bill Duffy*

Sandpiper Family, bubinga, 2013, Museum of American Bird Art, Canton, Massachusetts, USA. *Photo: Bill Duffy*

Hank Tyler is a self-taught sculptor and a trained marine biologist. Growing up within a community of artists in Maine on the North Atlantic coast, Hank made model sailboats from scraps of pine and later joined a bird watching group that caught and banded birds to track bird migrations. The two interests merged as Hank he undertook studies in biology and oceanography. 'During my high school years, sales of bird sculptures paid for most of my university expenses.'

Learning and experimenting with techniques has allowed him to explore the subject that has absorbed him for 61 years. 'Sandpipers and shorebirds are my favourite subjects. With several hundred sandpiper species, I have the opportunity to explore and sculpt birds of different sizes and shapes with a variety of bill forms. During the last seven years, I have been sculpting owls in osage orange.'

'All my sculptures are in one contiguous piece of wood', says Hank. He explains how the shape of a branch, crotch or knot will influence the design, which then begins with a sketched out template cut from heavy paper. 'I plan my sculptures to be a bit asymmetrical, with curved lines, and slightly tilted to indicate action.'

The base is a critical part of his designs and usually displays an environmental habitat. Smoothed or etched textures show the movement and skimming of waves, or depict sandy surfaces dotted with beach stones and occasionally the imprint of birds' feet.

Sandpiper, osage orange, 2017, Ward Museum of Waterfowl Art, Maryland, USA. Photo: Hank Tyler

Abstract, bubinga, 1988. *Photo: Bill Duffy*

Leach's storm petrel pair, lignum vitae, 1972, Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum, Wisconsin, USA. *Photo: Bill Duffy*

Carbide burs in a die grinder are his main tool for removing wood in tight spots, and for smoothing rough chiselled surfaces. An array of well-used hand tools are then used to smooth and shape. 'I am still using five US-made Nicholson files that my father gave me over 50 years ago. For fine detail, shaping and smoothing, I use Italian handmade rifflers created by the Malani Family in Pietrasanta.'

Hank generally sands to 600 grit and finishes with tung oil. Bowls, spoons, spatulas, spreaders and knives are finished with food-safe walnut oil. 'Most of the wood I sculpt has been given to me; Brazilian rosewood and bubinga wood in the early 1960s and later, as my reputation grew, other species of wood. 'My favourite North American woods are black walnut, black cherry and osage orange. In Australia, as a member of the International Wood Collectors Society, he says, 'I am enjoying exploring many new species and expanding my knowledge of Australian trees and timbers'.

In the 1970s Hank came to Australia as a backpacker and returned several times in the decades that followed to attend conservation conferences, and to explore more of the country. He now lives in Eltham and teaches at the Melbourne Guild of Fine Woodworking.

Learn more about Hank Tyler at www.hanktylersculptor.com

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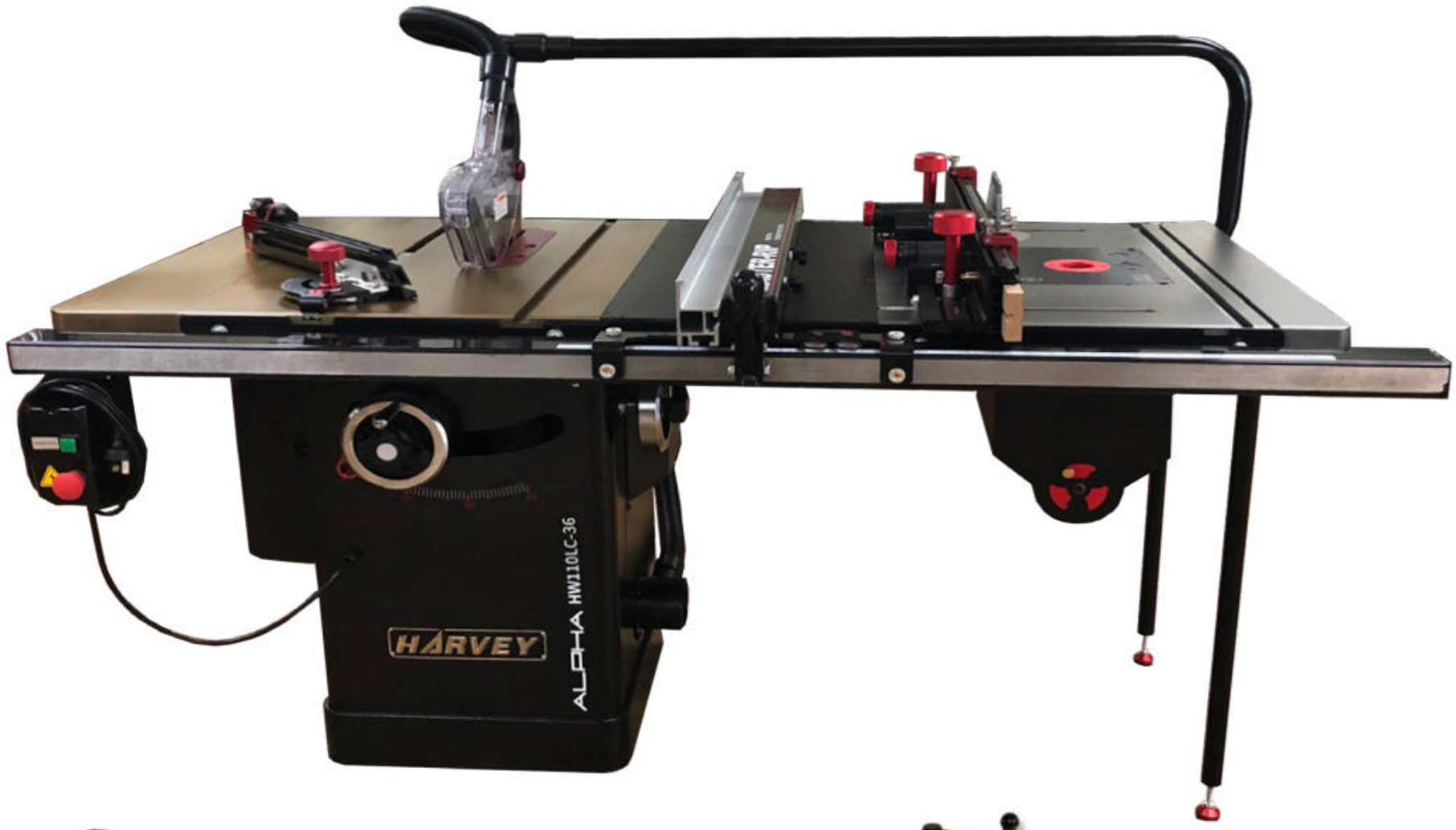

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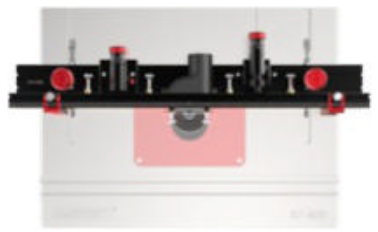

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