AUSTRALIAN
Wood
REVIEW
128

KOREAN FURNITURE
So Joong-Han: Redefi ing Tradition

SHULIM KRIMPER
Mid-Century Master

ALL ABOUT DESIGN
Making Jono Everett's Tuned Drinks Cabinet

ON TEST
- FELDER KF500 SAW/SPINDLE
- KREG MORTISE MATE
- USSA TRIM ROUTER JIG
- BLUE SPRUCE PULL SAW

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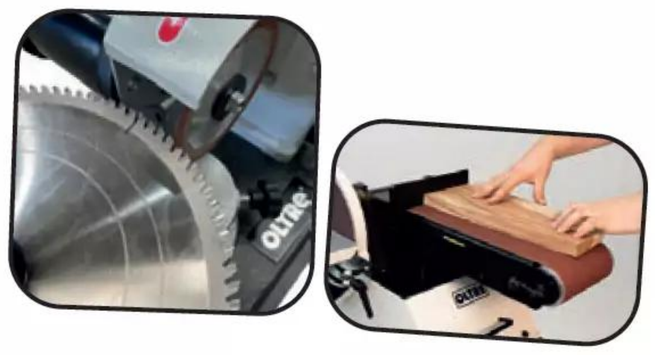

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AUSTRALIAN Wood REVIEW 128

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Editor's Letter

A mid-century master

Schulim Krimper is one of the earliest 20th century Australian designer makers in wood to gain prominence, and yet I have a feeling his work is not well known to current makers.

Krimper and his wife Elsbeth fled Nazi Germany and emigrated to Australia in 1939. He started a business in St Kilda and made furniture throughout the 40s to 60s earning a reputation as a top bespoke maker. While he made to commission, the design of the piece was always up to him! A recent exhibition of his work in Melbourne prompted the feature presented this issue, see p.24.

Gay Hawkes is another who occupies a unique place in Australia's creative landscape. From the 80s until present times, Gay Hawkes has continued to make and show highly individualistic furniture and sculptural works that are based on found and repurposed materials. She has led a rich life in terms of creativity, and also taught and taken part in community programs. A while back, Carol Russell visited her modest shed/home in Marion Bay, Tasmania and spoke to Gay for the article you can read from p.58.

Tradition redefined

So Joong-Han, shown on the cover and featured from p.44, is the son of So Byung-Jin, a master craftsman who is a designated Korean national treasure. He tells how he left his father's workshop but then returned on his own terms to learn fine woodworking skills through his own practice. His work builds on Korean furniture traditions as he seeks to redefine his designs through a contemporary lens.

All about design

Minimalism doesn't mean less in terms of design. This issue, Jono Everett's *Tuned Drinks Cabinet* is the complement to the article he wrote in issue 126 on making his *Tuned Table*. Once again Jono reinforces his design principles as he shows how pared back details and attention to practical requirements can deliver maximum effect and function.

Loathed and loved trees

Melbourne's inner suburban streets are famously shaded with London plane tree canopies, often pruned to grow around overhead power lines. However these trees are also known to produce allergic reactions for many people and so the Melbourne City Council plans to remove them.

From p.70, in *Goodbye London Plane*, Andrew Ward outlines a project that investigated the potential of what may soon be a valuable timber resource for woodworkers.

Radiata pine is another species that is valued for building purposes, yet not appreciated for furniture making. *Knot Pine* is another recent project that highlights the value of trees in an urban landscape and how we can honour and utilise them, see p.76.

Maker of the Year deadline

The entry deadline for Maker of the Year, presented by Carbatec, is 4 September, 2025. If you're reading this before that date, please consider including your work in our annual showcase of the best in fine woodworking and wood art. You can see entries to date and enter your work at www.woodreview.com.au/moty

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So Joong-Han in his studio in North Jeolla Province, Korea

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Felder KF500 Professional Saw/Spindle Moulder

Reviewed by Dom Dudkiewicz

I recently made the switch from a 3hp cabinet saw to this Felder KF500 Professional, European style slider and spindle moulder combination; let me take you through it.

The KF500 Professional from Felder is marketed as an 'inexpensive saw for professional woodworking'. The inexpensive part must be in comparison to a Bentleigh or for a medical professional, but jokes aside, it is inexpensive when compared to higher-end professional European machines.

To maximise bang for buck, the saw appears to combine the lighter duty saw and spindle units common to the Felder-Hammer line, with the premium X-roll sliding table and other accoutrements like micro-adjust rip fence, crosscut fences, moulder fence unit and various accessories from the heavier duty Felder 700 series.

It weighs a not insubstantial 480kg in standard trim and comes with a 2050mm sliding table, 1100mm outrigger (1300mm optional), 800mm rip capacity (1250mm optional), heavy duty 230 series spindle moulder fence, precision mitre index system and telescoping 2600mm crosscut fence as standard. The spindle moulder has four manually selectable speeds from 3,000 to 10,000rpm, is reversible, and is backwards tiltable to 45°. There are no electronic bells and whistles; just a high-quality build with the functions you really need. To get electronic raise and tilt or digital readouts you will need to step up to the KF700 series.

There are several options for the machine and many available accessories. Mine is fitted with the MF quick-change spindle system allowing an easy swap between the 30mm moulder spindle and a spindle with 1/2 and 1/4" router collets. Despite owning a dedicated router table, this still comes in handy in combination with the large sliding carriage/outrigger support for things like tapered sliding dovetails in casework.

My machine is also fitted with a rolling carriage, has been prepared for dado tooling up to 19.5mm, and has a micro-adjustable rip fence; all of which I can recommend. I have also fitted my machine with a power feeder and the associated tilt-away bracket from the 700 series that has gas-strut support and which can be easily adapted to fit the KF500; your back will certainly thank you.

Important to note is that the MF quick change spindle system and preparation for dado tooling needs to be specified prior to manufacture and cannot be retrofitted. The dado-stack from Felder, while costly, is also excellent.

The machine comes with two 5.5hp three-phase motors as standard, although mine is optioned with 4hp 240v single-phase units. I have not and cannot foresee ever having issues with 4hp on the tablesaw which has a 102mm max cutting height, although this reduces to 94mm with a more typical 305mm blade.

I have ripped 80mm hardwood without the saw missing a beat and a 19.5mm dado stack goes through full depth cuts in hard maple like butter. While it never hurts to have more power for a spindle moulder, I feel that a high quality 4hp

2

1. The KF500 Professional saw/spindle combines slider and spindle moulder functions.
2. Showing the rear of the KF500 Professional, note how the power feeder swings out of the way.
3. Precise and robust, the Felder X-roll sliding table.
4. Multiple flip-stops on the 2600mm telescoping fence make repetitive cuts easy.
5. The machine offers a precision mitre indexing system and 1100mm outrigger.
6. The spindle tilts to 45° and is reversible.
7. The MF quick change 30mm and router collet spindles.

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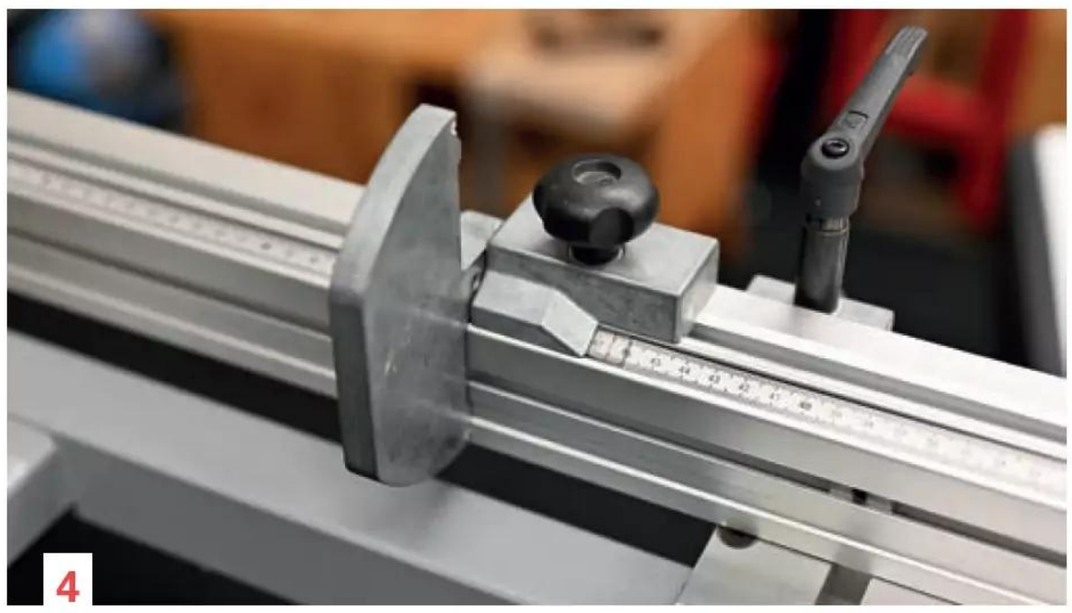

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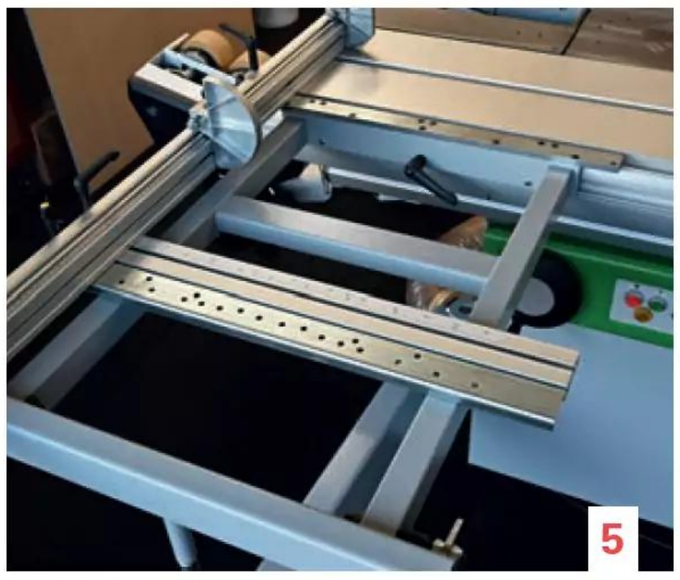
motor will be ample for my use. If you want to shape profiles that require much more than 4hp you'd likely be better served by moving to the larger, and more robust, 700 series machine – and in that case you'd be limiting yourself by not specifying much more powerful motors.

If you are looking to use large compound cutter blocks to cut euro-style triple glazed windows or large doors I would suggest looking at more robust options. The spindle is limited to cutters 100mm in height and 180mm diameter below the table or 230mm above; more than enough to put the fear of God into me.

The inbuilt shaper is one of the main reasons I purchased this machine. While it is true that having dedicated machines is always better than a combination, I simply do not have space for a dedicated spindle moulder; particularly one with a large sliding table and outrigger.

If you have only ever used a router table, the capability of the spindle moulder is truly a huge step up. The higher tip speeds, inertia and immensely larger diameter cutters means that cuts are faster, infinitely smoother, and far less prone to tear-out. The ability to flip a cutterblock and reverse the spindle rotation means that difficult grain or orientation is never a show stopper. The reverse tilting spindle also turns a rebate block into a variable-angle mitre block. The 230 series fence is fantastic, with solid construction, great dust-collection, clear scales with micro-adjustors, and is designed to locate into precisely the same position each time it is installed.

The cross-cut capability of a slider is my other reason for upgrading to this saw. Having the support of an outrigger for long panels or boards, coupled with a 2050mm stroke and 2600mm fence with multiple stops makes repeatable, quick, and accurate cross-cuts a joy. I would previously break down large boards, panels, or sheet goods with a track saw, and likewise use a track saw to cut features



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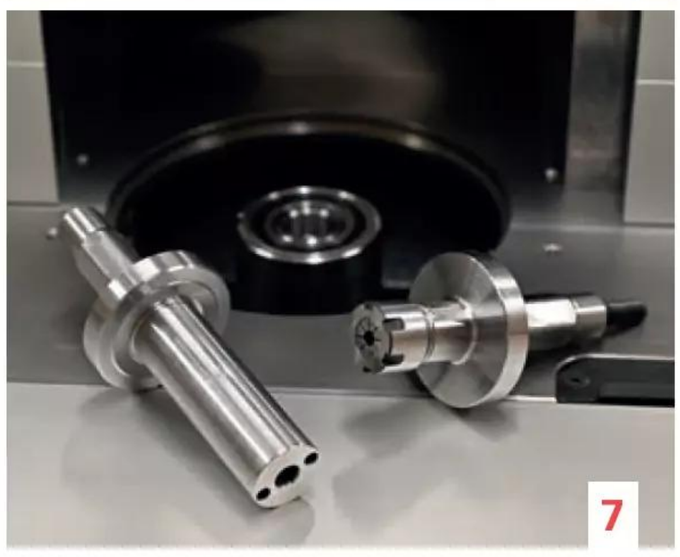

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Above: An 80mm bearing guided spiral block vs 21mm spiral router bit – no contest.

like mitred corners for cabinets; however, the slider makes these tasks quicker, safer, more accurate, and more repeatable.

As far as criticism goes, I do wish the saw came with the option for a longer 2500mm slider, as I find for ripping operations, 2050mm is too short much of the time. The dust collection, whilst adequate is also not as good as I feel it could be. Changing the 4" internal ducting and outlet for 5" has helped somewhat, and a larger over-head shroud would be an improvement. The handwheels also feel decidedly budget; but these are relatively minor complaints.

Overall, I am delighted with this sliding table saw/spindle combination machine. It has vastly enhanced my capabilities and workflow in the shop and the machine is of a high build quality. The X-roll table is robust and smooth, the rip fence is rigid and easy to set accurately, the long cross-cut fence with multiple flip-stops coupled with the support of the outrigger truly enhance efficiency and accuracy, and the spindle moulder and fence system are well thought out, accurate and robust; massive enhancing the capability of my shop.

Dom Dudkiewicz @dudkiewiczdominik is an engineer and furniture designer maker in Melbourne. Learn more at www.bluewrentimberworks.com.au

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Kreg Mortise Mate

Reviewed by Raf Nathan

This jig makes domino sized mortises at an entry level price. It uses your drill with a special long cutter supported in the body of the jig which is moved side to side to make a mortise. It makes 6, 8 and 10mm mortises with the width and depth adjustable in workpieces from 13mm to 38mm thick although you can use larger workpieces by flipping faces.

Initial set-up is straight forward fixing the jig to the shaped plywood base, attaching the lever and dust shroud. The supplied cutter is a beautiful tri-toothed spiral bit running in two bushes mounted on a sliding carriage. As you drill you sweep the handle side to side activating a clever ratchet system that increases the depth of the cutter about 1.6mm each time.

The sliding mechanism and fence are all beautifully made from thick milled anodised aluminium and stainless steel. The fence and cutter height adjustment system are 3mm steel running on slots with guide pins and a large lever to lock the position. In practice there is quite a bit of flex at this point.

The plywood base when fitted to the jig was not 90° to the fence initially so the first few mortises went in at an angle. To rectify this quickly I placed a few strips of blue tape on the plywood to bring it to 90°.

You set the cutter height by releasing the lever and raising or lowering the jig. There are some 1" based markings on the fence which are useful as a guide only. I found it easier to mark the mortise location on the wood and raise or lower the cutter to suit. Dialling in a perfectly centred mortise is fiddly but is also on a domino tool.

Mortise depth is set with a collar on the drill bit which is simple to locate. Again, there are some markings as a guide, but I found setting the collar a few millimetres past the 3/4" mark gave me the correct depth for a 40mm tenon.

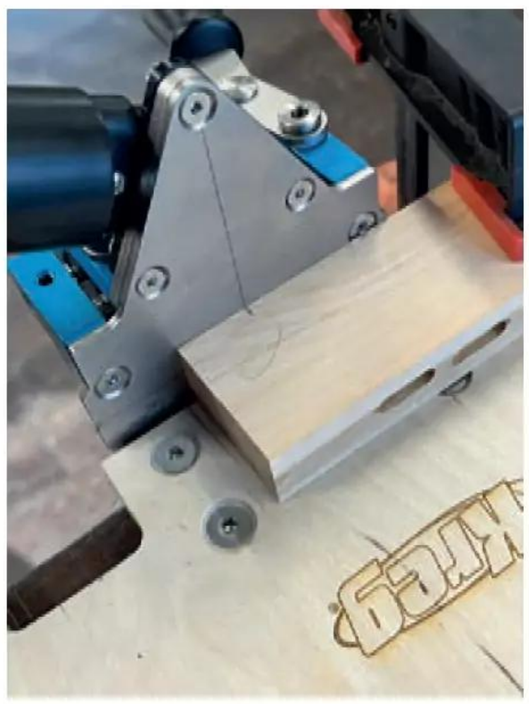
The mortise width can be fine adjusted with two small allen screws at either side that control how much the metal bump-stops project.

To begin cutting, connect a dust extractor to the dust port which works quite well. Clamp the workpiece to the plywood base, and in my use two clamps were critical to secure this. Mount your drill and depress the centre release button and apply forward pressure whilst moving the lever side to side. It is quite simple and the cutters work well. Whilst not as quick as a domino my estimate is about 7 seconds to make one 6mm mortise which is pretty fast.

It is critical the cutter enters the wood at 90° to the edge and if not you will have joints that don't meet on both faces. I found trial and error, and practice were needed to find the sweet spot to hold the drill when in use. Having said that in using my domino it is the same situation.

The price quoted includes one 6mm cutter – extra cutters are $129 each. Whilst the 6mm and 8mm cutters worked very well, the 10mm cutter tended to block the dust port a little making that mortise size not as easy to make.

This is a well made jig that sets you up to make standard domino style mortises at an affordable price. The work proceeds quite quickly with professional results and I would suggest the 6mm and 8mm sizes were optimal.



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USSA Multifunctional Trim Router Jig

Reviewed by Raf Nathan

'Ussa' is a Turkmen language word which translates loosely as 'the inspiring spirit of a master craftsperson'. The inventor, Babayev Nurlan, is an architect and keen woodworker who now resides in China where the jig is made. The idea for the jig came from Babayev wanting a jig to help with his own furniture making. It took about four years to go from a 3D printed initial version to today's machined model.

There are a few iterations of the jig, starting with a 3D print file you download and create yourself, however the premium Multifunctional Pioneer 003 is trialed here. The basic versions are polycarbonate or a mix of materials and have either a fixed or sliding base and need drilling to fit your router.

This one has a base and sliding sled that allow quick changes in the router cutter's position. It is all beautifully CNC routed aviation-grade aluminium with polycarbonate attachments and stainless steel fittings, and arrives in an impressive fitted case that includes an array of parts and attachments.

Your router mounts on a removeable plate which is pre-drilled to fit pretty well all 1/4" routers. A centring pin and guide are included to ensure the router is centred properly on the plate. This plate then screws to the top of the sled. An option is to only use the extra thumbscrews to fix the plate to the sled allowing you to pull the router out for freehand use with quick replacement.

The sled and base are precision machined and lock in place with two large thumbscrews. This is all good stuff. There are laser markings for positioning all the various components in place. The attention to detail in the build quality is outstanding.

Circle-cutting is easy. Screw the round holder in place and the end of the jig fits firmly over this becoming the pivot point for the circle cutting. The sliding base accommodates circles from 25–760mm and the inbuilt ruler can be used reasonably well to set the cutter position as I found the scale hard to read.

The included edge guide is a hefty piece of polished and detailed polycarbonate, although given the high quality of the other parts I thought using this material out of sync. It attaches to the jig with large screws.

The edge guide is good in use but for me it is a little too short. An extra 25mm each end in length would give a better bearing edge for starting and ending a cut, however it works well.

Although it's not a process I use, by quickly screwing in the large thumbwheels onto the base and fitting the edge guide you can flush trim protruding dowels or similar quite easily. The thumbwheels and edge

Main: The jig is shown fitted with a Bosch cordless router and the ploycarbonate edge guide. Two large thumbwheels near the handle are loosened to allow the router to slide.

1. Your router fits to the black base which slides over the lower section.
2. The full kit with main sled, base and guides, fences and template accessories.

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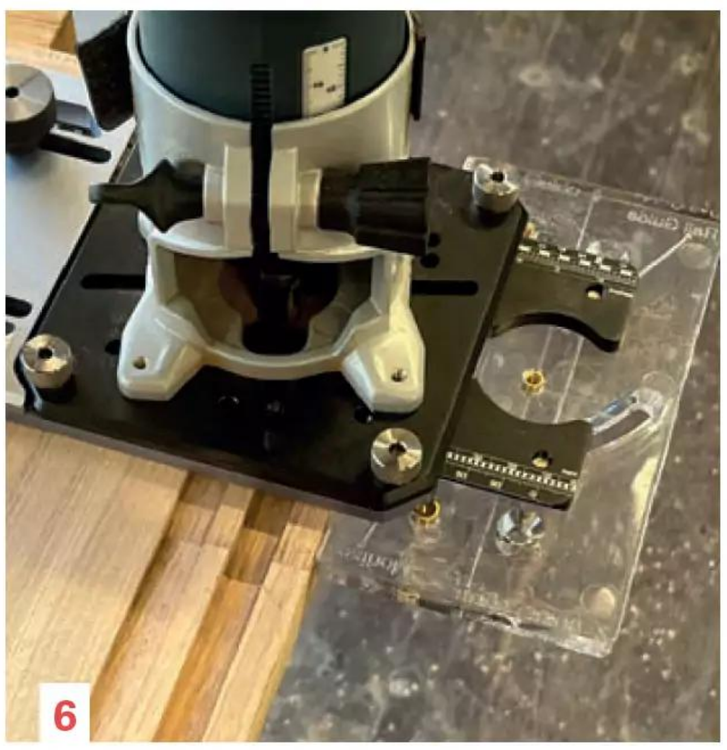

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3. The flip-top handle holds a selection of screws and holders.

4. Here the clear edge guide is fitted – detailed engraved markings show the needed positions.

5. Screw the round holder to the workpiece and let the jig pivot for circle making. Changing cutter position is easy using the two large thumbscrews to release the sled action.

6. Making trenches or grooves is easy with the polycarb edge guide fitted.

7. Two locating pins fit to the base and act to centre the cutter to the workpiece. The edge guide with the extra 90° guide attached acts to support the unit on narrower pieces of wood to make grooves or mortises.

guide are exactly the same thickness so the router can ride above the surface needing to be flush trimmed. For template cutting everything is included, even a small bearing guided cutter.

The handle is a key part of the jig as this gives you relatively safe and secure two-handed control when routing. The handle is too large but off-setting this to an extent is the James Bond style flip-top compartment at the top. It reveals screw storage, allen key and circle holder.

Mortise cutting or groove making can be achieved by flipping the edge guide and securing it near the middle of the base. The extra polycarb 90° guide is then screwed to this. Two locating pins screw into the jig base and they straddle the wood piece automatically centring the wood to the router cutter. There are numerous markings on the base showing where the pins and fence attaches. Everything has been thought through.

The edge guide acts as a fence to give good bearing surface and keep the router vertical. Running a groove or mortise in edges is actually not a process I like, however the Ussa achieved a good result. The 90° extra fence slides up neatly to the workpiece and helps immensely to offer support when running along an edge to make a cut. For mortises a plunge router is preferred.

To extend its use the router and its mounting plate can be removed for freehand use and can be mounted in a router table. The templates for making the cut-outs in a router tabletop are included in the kit. A dust extraction shroud is included for edge work.

Given its somewhat high price, this system's appeal to a broader market may be limited. If you use a trim router a lot and appreciate artistic engineering then this jig is a winner. All its many functions have been thought through in detail, everything fits together perfectly and works well. If you can afford a Ussa jig you will never regret the purchase.

Photos: Raf Nathan

Review tool supplied by and available from www.ussadesign.com/

Raf Nathan @treeman777 is a Brisbane based woodworker and regular contributor to Australian Wood Review.

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YAFFA 15781

Zetsaw Hand Saw Guide

Reviewed by John McBratney

A while back I bought the Japanese made Zetsaw 'best' hand saw guide for cutting square cross-cuts and 45° mitres. This simple but very clever little device is nothing short of magnificent. It is easy to use, dead accurate on cross-cuts and magic on 45° mitres.

It comprises a short flat 85 x 50 x 25mm aluminium body. The side nearest the user has a height-adjustable plate held by two thumbscrews that extends below the body. This is used to set the device hard against the piece being cut. On the right-hand end of the body there is a bracket that holds two 1.25mm thick steel plates spaced by a special washer that is *exactly* the same thickness as the (supplied) sawblade.

Also provided is another steel plate, the dimensions of which are 120 x 45mm, again exactly the same thickness as the sawblade.

To make a cut, the workpiece is first marked carefully with a sharp pencil or marking knife. The steel plate is inserted between the endplates (as you will eventually do with the saw) pushed down on to the work and the whole device moved until the steel plate is exactly where you want to make the cut. It can be set on the marked line or against either side, your choice.

The body is then held firmly in position (I use a single piston grip hand clamp with soft jaws), the steel plate is removed, the saw inserted and the cut made. The result is extreme accuracy, a very fine cut and no tear-out. The sawblades are also magnificent.

A 45° adapter is provided which essentially sets the sawblade guide at 45° to the work side. When the cut is made, a perfect 45° angle is obtained. Outstanding accuracy results as long as you take care with the initial set-up and ensure the steel plate is located precisely where you want the cut made.

The hand guide set comes with two sawblades; one is a fine pitch (18tpi), 180mm in length for cross-cuts, and the second is longer at 265mm and 15 tpi with a coarser pitch for rip cuts or larger cross-cuts.

For the money, this is a very worthwhile workshop addition for those who like hand tool work. I have an extensive range of machine tools in my workshop but I still use the Zetsaw for small cuts and those requiring extreme accuracy.

Available from Timbecon, www.timbecon.com.au

John McBratney is a retired telecommunications engineer that now makes furniture for friends and home. He lives in Lancefield, Victoria.

This page: The Zetsaw from different viewpoints and also shown disassembled with its supplied blades.

Blue Spruce 12" Pull Saw

Reviewed by Robert Howard

Using a sharp saw requires a very delicate touch. I read somewhere that you need to hold the saw as though it was a small, baby bird, and that certainly does suggest the required feel.

Woodworkers of my generation often grew up using blunt saws, which needed to be monstered to get them to cut at all, but if the saw is sharp even a small amount of excess pressure can cause it to take too big a bite and stop dead – particularly at the beginning of the cut.

When cutting dovetails, it can also help to think about grain direction when beginning a cut. I start a push cutting saw on the front corner of the wood, pushing upwards, and a pull saw on the rear corner, pulling upwards. This avoids having the saw teeth cutting against the grain i.e. into the ends of the wood fibres.

Japanese pull saws were an instant hit with Western woodworkers because they were very sharp, with a very narrow kerf, and appropriately delicate for doing fine work. They do require a different rhythm to a western saw, with the emphasis on applying pressure on the pull stroke and backing it off on the push stroke – a difference which you should be able to hear.

Although there are now many excellent western style saws available, they all suffer from the one disadvantage of the push saw – the blade needs to be thick enough to avoid buckling in use.

The Japanese saw, on the other hand, with its complex tooth geometry, cannot usually be resharpened locally, and so is mostly available as a throw-away blade. The delicate teeth are also easily damaged by excess pressure in a cut, especially with our very hard, Australian timbers.

Blue Spruce, the small American tool manufacturer, has resolved this dilemma by producing the first saw designed to cut on the pull stroke with Western style teeth. This means the saw can be resharpened locally, and it cuts with a very fine kerf.

In fact, with a Swedish spring steel blade only 0.012 inches, or 0.3mm, thick, this Blue Spruce saw cuts an even finer kerf than my Japanese Z-saw.

It has a hybrid tooth design with 10° of rake and 10° of bevel or fleam, to accommodate both rip and crosscuts in hardwoods, which is the wood most Blue Spruce customers are believed to use.

In designing the saw, Blue Spruce has focused on the quality of the cut, so that little or no clean-up is required afterwards, which is important if you hope to fit your joints straight off the saw. They have been willing to sacrifice some cut speed to achieve this, but for me, the speed is still impressive enough. With 14ppi the cut is very smooth, and, most importantly, easy to start.

As with all Blue Spruce tools, this saw is beautifully made. I particularly like the ferrule, which is both solid and fully encloses the end of the handle. The spine of the saw is steel, and the handle can be either resin infused figured maple or Bolivian rosewood.

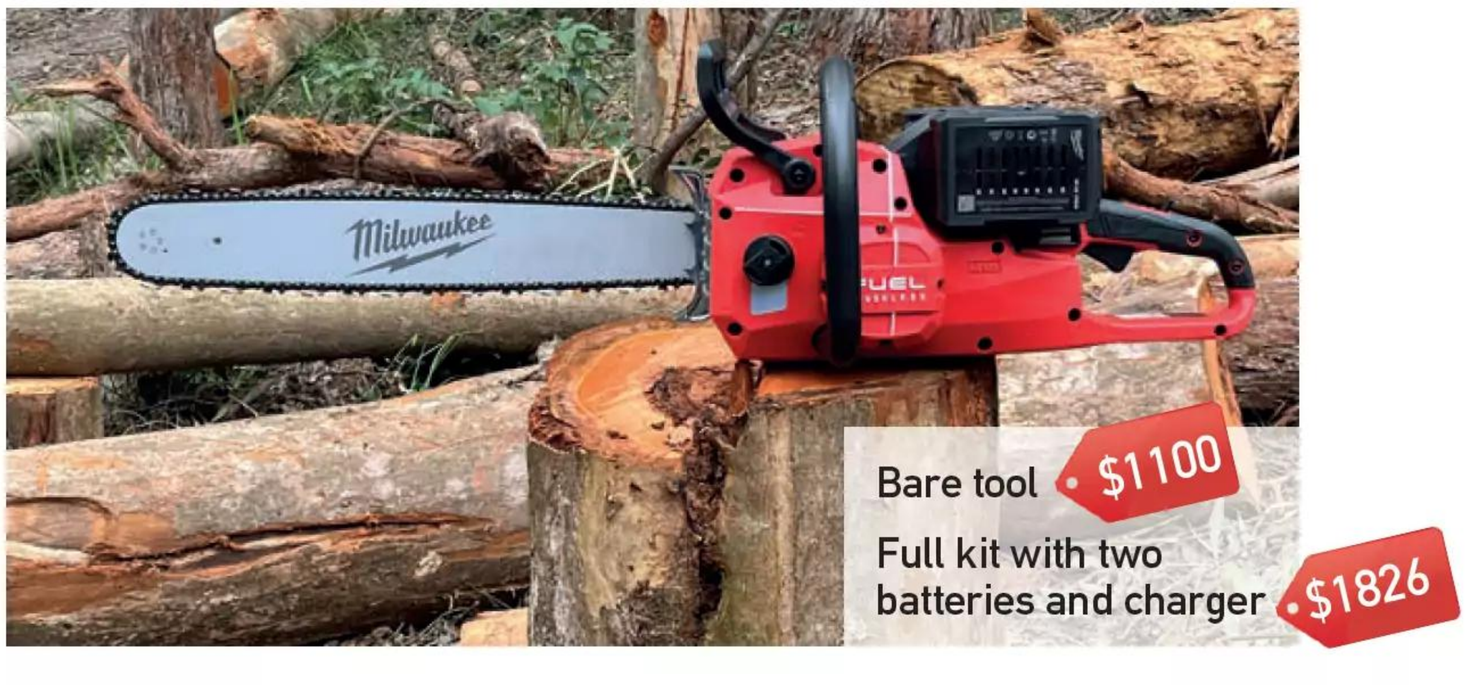
The blade is 305mm long, with a depth of cut up to 45mm. The handle is gripped in the same way as a Japanese saw, in the style traditionally referred to as a gentleman's saw. It is 28mm in diameter, which is a little on the small side for me.

Although this saw is much more expensive than a throw-away Japanese saw, it is good for a lifetime of use. However, I think for most people, the issue will be whether or not you prefer this type of saw, with this type of handle, to the traditional Western style saw.

But if you struggle with getting a saw to work for you – getting it to start easily and accurately, or to cut smoothly and straight, then this just might be the saw for you.

Review tool supplied by Blue Spruce, see bluesprucetoolworks.com

Robert Howard @roberthowardwoodworker is a designer maker who also teaches woodcarving from his Brisbane workshop. Learn more at roberthoward.com.au



Milwaukee M18 FUEL 20" Dual Battery Chainsaw

Reviewed by Raf Nathan

Milwaukee claim this chainsaw is equal to a 70cc petrol saw which is a big statement for cordless. Fully loaded with twin RedLithium Forge 18 volt, 8amp batteries, it weighs all up 9kg. Researching, I noted a very popular 70cc petrol saw rated at 4.4kw and 7.6kg fully loaded. Doing the maths the Milwaukee M18Fuel then is similar power at 4.3kw, heavier at 9kg but $300 cheaper.

Mounting the chain and bar is straightforward. A switch selects eco or maximum power, although I found it hard to tell the difference. I liked the onboard tool storage and the oil reservoir viewing window, and the three year warranty.

Charging its way through a recently felled 320mm diameter grey gum, there is plenty of power cutting slice after slice easily, however after 20 or so cuts it was flat. Charge time is said to be 35 mins for 80% charge and I roughly timed it as 50 mins for a full recharge. After the first two or three charges however, you can expect the batteries to settle down and generate max power and longer run time.

With gravity, the weight certainly helps pulls the saw through the heaviest work. I feel that upgrading with an extra set of batteries, at a hefty $700 spend, would give you a battery saw with excellent run time.

Maintenance requires occasional cleaning of the two air filters on the body and regularly getting in and cleaning out around the chain sprocket. Like all saws, sound levels are high at about 106db but it is quieter than a petrol saw by approximately 10db.

This is a heavy, powerful saw offering the equivalent power of a petrol saw, but with a limited run time. For the part-time chainsaw user this is going to be ample for all work, however a pro will find the run time too short without an extra set of batteries.

If, like me, you're tired of mixing petrol and dealing with noise and fumes, cordless is the perfect option. I liked the Milwaukee saw a lot.

Review tool supplied by Milwaukee, more information at www.milwaukeetool.com.au

Top: With dual batteries and plenty of power, the M18Fuel is an attractive cordless option.

Right: Overhead view showing operating display and battery installation.

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Making the Tuned Drinks Cabinet

Jono Everett recaps on his five basic principles of design as he shows how to make his minimalist but distinctive and highly functional drinks cabinet.

Main: Jono Everett's *Tuned Drinks Cabinet* in American white oak with red oak veneered door panels.

Opposite: End and detail views of the cabinet.

This piece has a few technical fiddly bits, but overall, here is a sweet functional sideboard, visually light, elegant, contemporary, practical and fun to make.

Why this design?

This piece picks up on concepts of the *Tuned Table* I wrote how to make in *AWR#126*, drawing on Scandinavian design principles and contemporary simplicity. If you've been paying attention, I gave out pure gold on five 'how to design furniture principles' in that article.

Here's a very quick recap: 1. design originality; 2. bring a language; 3. minimal material use; 4. design to the piece's environment; and 5. include practical requirements. Importantly, try to design your work free from current or past fashions, it should be classic and help the design stand up over time.

How the design works

The *Tuned Drinks Cabinet* works in two ways. It's a practical and elegant solution to present *objets d'art* or a bunch of fresh flowers, and a place to put your car keys to save you 20 minutes searching every morning. At 1100mm high (well above bench height of 900mm) it has presence within a space without 'owning it', as would the dominance of a heavy furniture piece. Perfect!

The sideboard also provides simple storage. This piece is designed for drinks storage with a 340mm internal minimum (measure your spirits bottles – that should work). Here's the catch, if you design a drinks cabinet with depth, you can't access the bottles at the back, thus, this piece includes simple slide-out bases.

So we have a 1380mm wide and 1100mm high cabinet but want the appearance of it 'floating' – being light on its feet and graceful. No walls of wood here – instead the design allows light and air around every component – an exploded view of the work if you like.

This is a simple trick I use regularly to see every member as an individual piece, making up the whole. A strong black 17mm shadow line visually separates the top from the carcase. Your eye can follow the line and visually construct the piece in your head, joining the legs to the top. I've used American white oak here as blonde/honey toned timbers provide the work with a contemporary minimalist feel.

Importantly, I've gone for two doors over three. Firstly, this gives clear access to the inside when opened, but visually I love wide rectangular doors with purposeful lines that here


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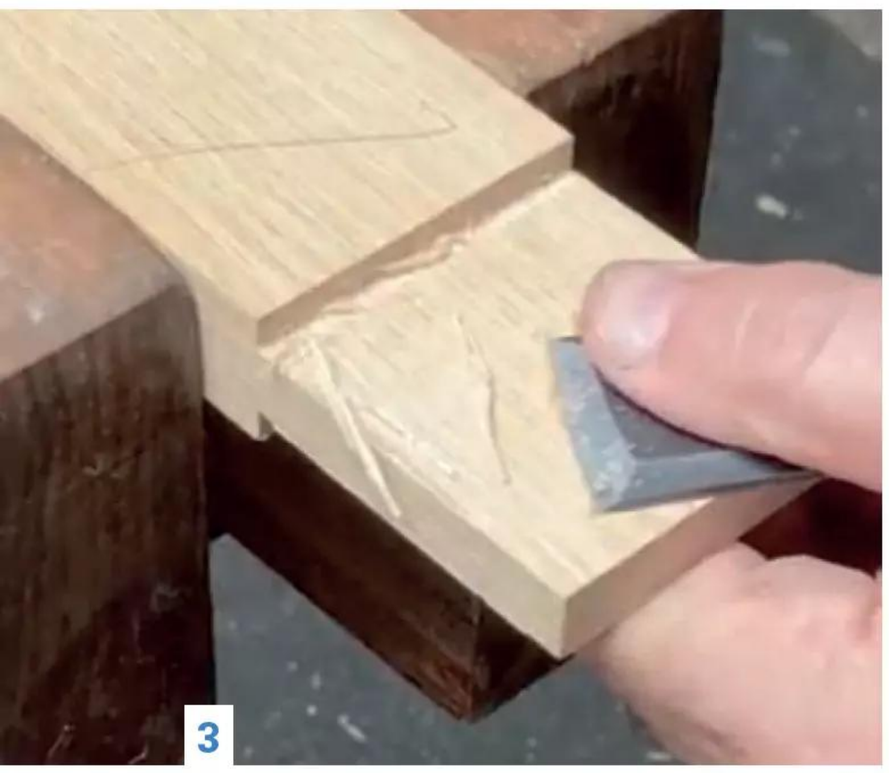
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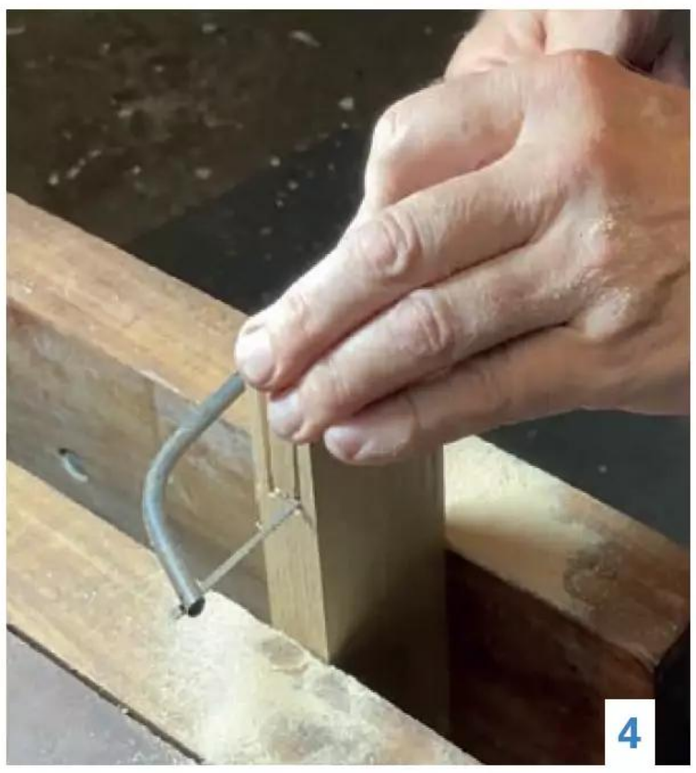
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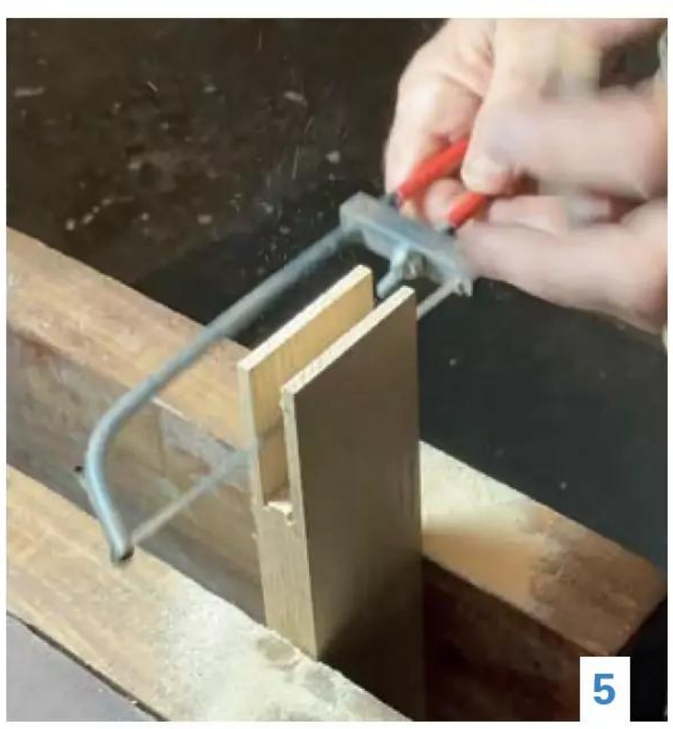
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1. Marking out for the door tenons.
2. Sometimes hand tools are quicker than setting up machines.
3. Chiselling the rail tenons flat.
4. For the door frame mortises, mark the thickness of the stiles into quarter-half-quarter divisions and saw.
5. Sawing progresses.
6. Clean up the base with a chisel.

emphasise the beautiful red oak veneers running across the doors. Try this, it is trickier to hang doors that are wider than they are high, but trust me, it's worth it.

Let's make it

Make a simple carcase, a rectangular box, with an applied back. Solid panels or 17mm oak veneered ply (ply is important as the doors will hinge from this) by biscuit or domino joining and lip with 2mm oak to the leading edges.

Flush to the carcase base, I glued and screwed three batons underneath to ensure the unit can never sag with the constant dead weight of storage. Anything over one metre of unsupported cabinet bridging (between the legs) and you'll need extra support.

The top and two sides of the carcase are faced with dress panels (use your nice veneers here) glued and hidden screws behind where the legs will go. These are 26.5mm proud of the carcase to allow for 25mm doors.

The legs and underframe

I use 6mm MDF to create the template for the leg profile and have the luxury of an inverted router and made a jig to hold the work down to shape the inside leg profile. A router table will work here as well. Be sure you taper the legs on the outside. The underframe face cheeks can remain square and the leg attachment to the dress panel is also square. The 32mm thick legs do not taper on the end elevation.

Now make the H-stretcher (underframe). I've 'let' the joins in at the intersection, but this is not mandatory. I went for small hand cut mortise and tenons for the underframe joinery into the legs.

Putting it together

Every now and then every woodworker has to undertake the daredevil glue-up. Here's one of them. There isn't a way around it. Domino

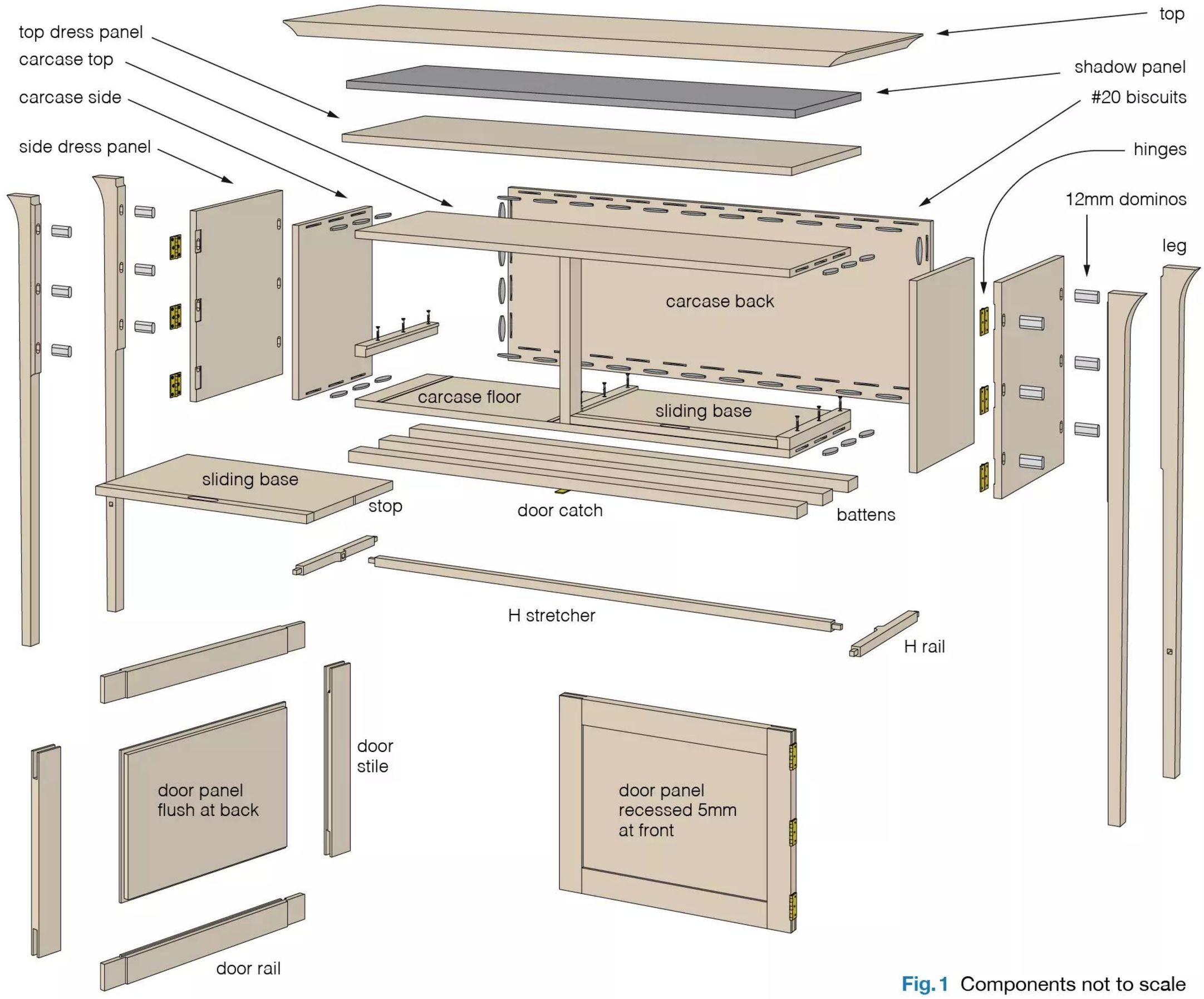
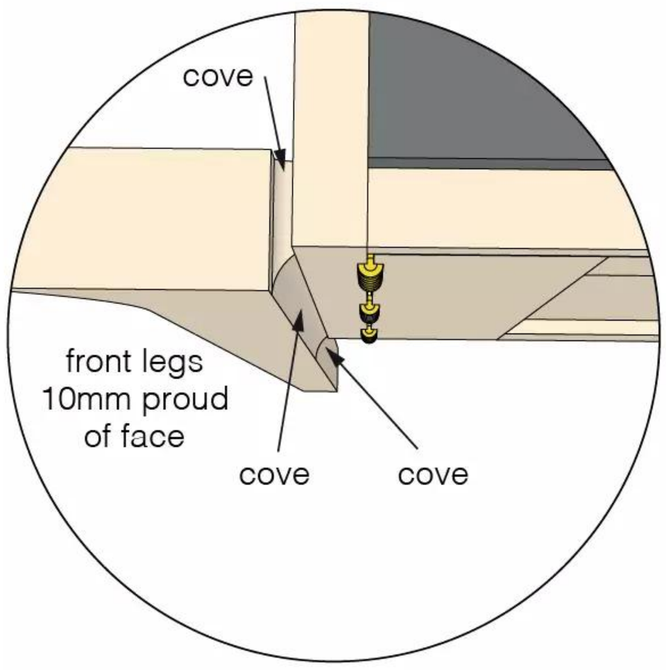


Fig. 1 Components not to scale



CUTTING LIST (mm)				
PART	**QTY**	**LENGTH**	**WIDTH**	**THICKNESS**
Top	**1**	**1380**	**400**	**25**
Shadow Panel	**1**	**1106**	**340**	**17**
Carcase		**65**	**15**	**2**
Top	1	1072	435	17
Sides	2	435	372	17
Doors				
Stiles	4	416	55	25
Rails	4	550	55	25
Dress Panels	**2**	**435**	**350**	**9**
Slide-out shelves	**2**	**306**	**495**	**17**
legs (stock)	**4**	**1050**	**75**	**32**
H-Stretcher (inc tenons)				
Long	1	1178	20	20
Short	2	336	20	20
Battens		**20**	**25**	**3**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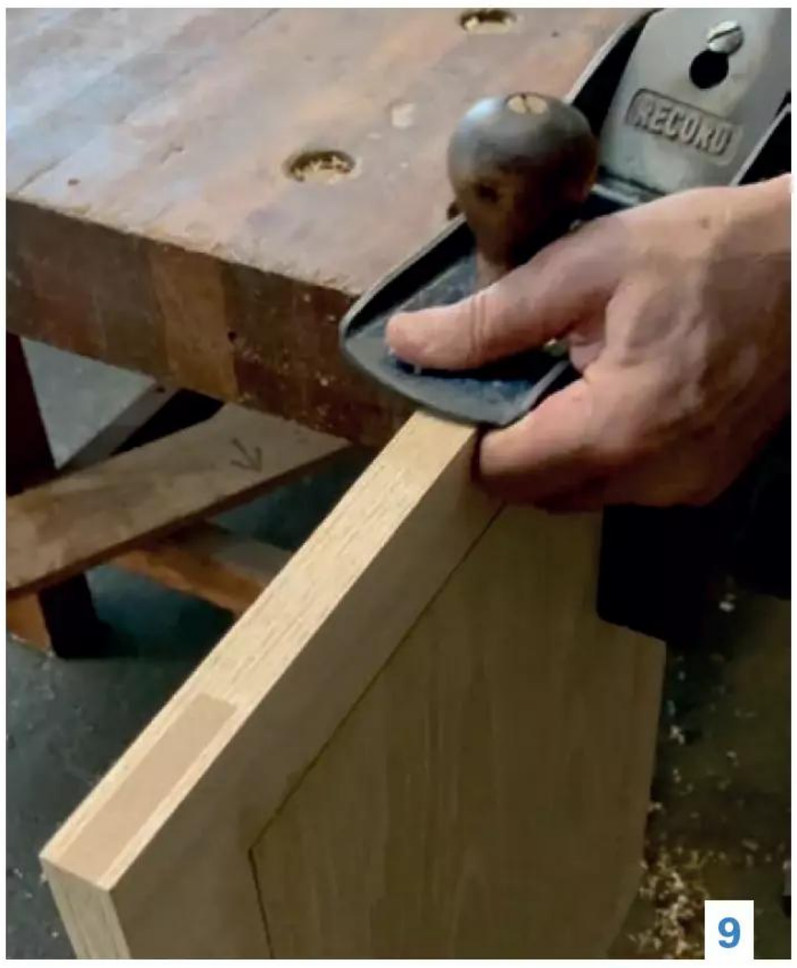

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7. Cutting the joinery for the ….
8. Checking the fit.
9. Fitting the doors.
10. Time to install hingeware.
11. Slide-out shelves give access to items stored towards the back.
12. Test assembly before fitting the top.
13. Preparing the wide doors with their dress panels.
14. Hanging the doors.
15. Jono Everett's happy place, at the bench.


10


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all four legs to the unit while gluing the H-stretcher to the legs at the same time. Nasty. I did it in a flying leap with cross linked PVA but if you're not feeling so brave, a two-part epoxy resin will give you around 30 minutes working time.

Door joinery

For the doors I used a beautiful, exposed joint – the through mortise and tenon or corner bridle joint. These look good and will prevent the door from sagging with time. Divide your timber thickness (in this case the doors are 25mm thick) into a quarter-half-quarter and use the marking gauge set for both elements of the joint. These are fun to hand cut but you can remove the bulk of the waste with a decent bandsaw. Door rails and stiles have a trench (groove) cut for a floating panel which will prevent the doors twisting as the panel expands (allow 2mm gap in both directions) and the doors are hung with Anton Gerner's beautiful brass hinges.

A good trick to rebating butt hinges is to drill a screw hole, mount the hinge and mark around with a marking knife. You then inch up to the line with a trim router to the depth of the hinge and pare waste to the line. I've also mounted a 3mm brass tongue below the centre of the doors to ensure they will always sit true.

For this cabinet I've introduced two sliding pull-out bases each mounted on two strips on waxed hard veneer edge tape (melamine) underneath. The slide-outs have a solid edge with a finger groove. Held down with rebated blocks, (there's 1mm play in every direction) the slides are stopped at approximately halfway out to prevent the cabinet capsizing. This system works beautifully.

I've finished this piece in a hard wax oil and coated in an organic wax.

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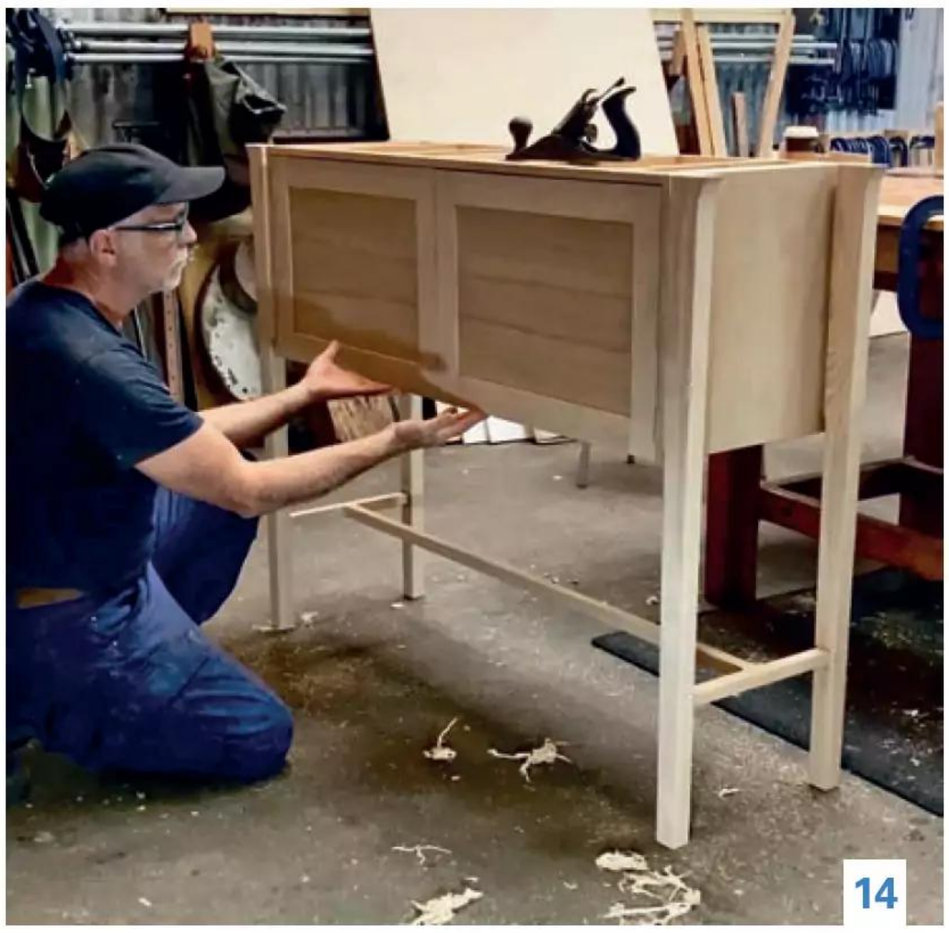

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Shadow lines provide space and air around components and by adding subtle curved details the visual direction of the piece is upward, giving this cabinet a light 'floating' aesthetic which makes for an elegant and timeless piece.

Photos: Jono Everett
Illustrations: Graham Sands

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

Furniture as Art

Schulim Krimper was a trailblazer in Australia's modernist designer maker tradition. A recent comprehensive exhibition of his work highlighted his significance. Story by Linda Nathan.

Back in the day, when I was the lesser partner in a cabinet and furniture making business, I remember giving an inward cheer when I first read about Schulim Krimper. What a hero! Here was someone who did custom work and took no quarter from the client! The customer was *not* always right – and speaking of rights, makers had some too…and feelings.

My introduction to Krimper (1893–1971) came through the book *Schulim Krimper, Cabinet-maker (1986)*[1]. *Terence Lane* (1946–2024) was then Senior Curator of Decorative Arts at the National Gallery of Victoria. His 40 year career was notable for pioneering exhibitions on, and writing about, decorative arts and modernist furniture, in addition to many other achievements.

Lane's book notes that in the post-war period, 'It was (Krimper) who first demanded – and received – for his craft, the respect which had previously been accorded only to painters and sculptors'. His demeanor supported this – apparently he preferred to be called 'Krimper', wore a beret, and 'when the mood took him, a monocle'[2]!

My admiration of Krimper's furniture and in particular his attitude was recently renewed when I visited the exhibition *Schulim Krimper: mid-century artist and master craftsman* at Bayside Gallery in Melbourne. This gallery is sumptuously housed in Brighton Town Hall in Carpenter Street, Brighton, an old stomping ground. This was where I met my partner Raf Nathan who lived in the same street in a not-so-sumptuous house. Raf had begun his woodworking life in

Opposite: Portrait of Schulim Krimper 1968 by Mark Strizic. National Portrait Gallery of Australia.

1. Schulim Krimper (cabinetmaker) and Clifford Last (carver), *Sideboard* (1949), Queensland blackbean, brass, 940 x 2140 x 590mm. Private collection, Melbourne.

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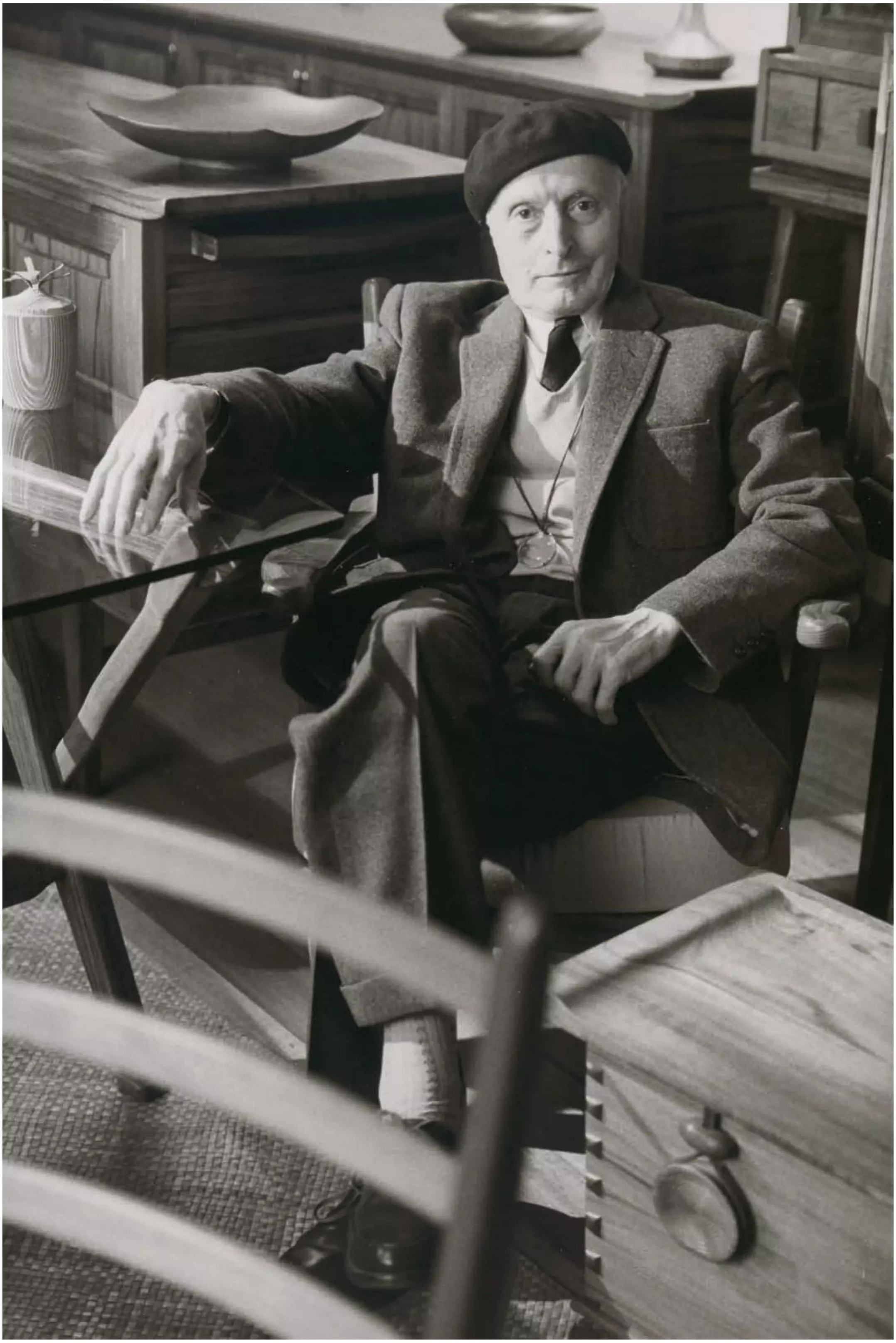

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a small backyard bungalow. Longer workpieces had to be hung out of the window.

Mid-century furniture design has been all the rage for many years now, so the trip to Carpenter Street, and to the real-time mid-century work of Krimper took me back in more than one way. While the business we had in Ripponlea came much later, it was the world of custom making (and custom clients!) that makes me still love, in particular, this quote from an article about Krimper that appeared in *Australian Home Beautiful*, July 1950:

'Customers and prospective customers were classed into three groups: "The first has taste. He gets on well with them. The second has no formed taste, but trusts him. They get on well enough, too. The third lacks taste and wants him to make furniture that artistically he regards as rubbish. Of them he says – "We part company soon!"'

Lane goes on to describe how prospective clients were carefully assessed before Krimper agreed to

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work for them. 'I would like to see your place', he would say, and a home visit was arranged[3]. Customers had to place themselves entirely in his hands and had little or no input into the designing process, or even into the choice of timbers used. Price was never discussed… Eventually they would be summoned to the workshop and told: 'This is what I have done for you. If you like it, it is yours. If not, say so and we are friends.'

In the modernist tradition, Australia looks back to the mass-produced designs of Grant Featherston, Clement Meadmore, Fred Lowen and Douglas Snelling. No one else quite fits the mould of Schulim Krimper however, a furniture master craftsman who found a financially stable way to design and make according to his own tastes, not those of his clients. Krimper's now collectible work is represented in the National Gallery of Victoria as well as private collections.

I've seen several items by Krimper in real life over the years, but to be up close to 41 pieces, curated and assembled by Kirsty Grant for this beautifully presented exhibition was an expected delight. Several pieces were on loan from the NGV and Ballarat Art Gallery however much of the work was new to the public eye. 'I was commissioned to curate the exhibition two years ago', explains Grant. 'Locating the items included in the show, most of which are from private collections, took some time. The fact that most of them have never been exhibited in public before is one of the very exciting aspects of the show.'

Seeing Krimper's work *en masse* was a privilege, as was the opportunity to inspect all the gaps, joins, junctures and under-structures in the way that only other woodworkers tend to do. Seventy or however many years later this work showed some of the patina of use but structurally it was superb! Leg, door and drawer gaps were still perfect. Now that's a tribute.

2. Installation view *Schulim Krimper: mid-century artist and master craftsman*, installation view at Bayside Gallery, 2025. *Photo: Mark Ashkanasy.*

3. Krimper's maker's mark on the underside of his *Desk chair* (1950s), unidentified timber, leather, brass. Private collection, Melbourne.

4. *The Lina Bryans writing table* 1955, blackbean, glass, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne. Purchased, 1973. *Photo: Christian Markel / NGV*

5. *Schulim Krimper: mid-century artist and master craftsman* installation view at Bayside Gallery. *Photo: Mark Ashkanasy*

6. *Cocktail cabinet* on stand (c.1950), black bean, brass, glass. Ballarat Art Gallery.

7

7. *Pair of sewing boxes* (1950s–71), unidentified timber, leather. Private collection, Melbourne.

8. *Shallow chest on stand* c.1948, red cedar, silver ash, myrtle, copper and brass, 915 x 1962 x 490mm. National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne. Purchased, 1948. *Photo: Christian Markel / NGV*

9. Three-legged chair c.1960, teak, leather. Private collection, Melbourne. *Photo courtesy Jeromie Maver*

10. *Desk chair* (1950s), unidentified timber, leather, brass. Private collection, Melbourne.

While the idea for the exhibition originated with the Bayside Gallery team, the exhibition was an opportunity to honour Terence Lane. 'Given the fact that Terry died last year and is greatly missed by those who knew him, it was a great way to acknowledge his foundational work on Krimper and to honour his work more broadly,' said Kirsty Grant of her colleague and friend.

In his text for the book (which is reprinted in the exhibition catalogue), Terence Lane sketches Krimper's life story. Born in 1983 in Sereth, now Romania, Krimper followed his childhood inclination and undertook a traditional apprenticeship in woodworking. Lane quotes Krimper, 'I worked for four years from 5:50am to 9pm' before passing his examinations and staying on to work for his master.

Krimper fought in the First World War and afterwards lived in Berlin throughout the rise of Hitler's National Socialist party. Krimper and his wife, both Jews, finally gained permits to emigrate, and spent a year in a refugee camp in England before travelling to Australia in 1939.

Settled in Melbourne, Krimper set to work in St Kilda to build a business, initially in partnership, and then on his own. 'Working 60 hours a week, however, he was unable to adjust his working methods or to compromise on quality, he lost on nearly every piece he made', writes Lane. 'His financial situation only improved when he received a government order for ammunition boxes. The work was repetitive but provided him with a modest income and enabled him to repay his debts.' Every 21st century woodworker who has struggled to

8

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making a living will here resonate with Krimper's mid-century need for a bread-and-butter line.

A turning point came in 1941 when Robert Haines saw a shopfront display of Krimper's turnings and lamps. 'A friendship developed… and in 1947, when appointed Assistant Director of the National Gallery of Victoria, Haines brought Krimper's furniture to the notice of the Director, Daryl Lindsay', writes Lanes.

Following this, Krimper works were acquired by the NGV in 1948 and 1951. Haines subsequently offered to organise an exhibition of his work. This took place in 1951 in the upmarket Georges department store gallery. 'Never before had Melbourne seen such a presentation – furniture as art', writes Lane. The result was sales, and a reputation that built.

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11. *Cocktail cabinet* (1940s), Queensland walnut, Vitrolite, mirror and brass. Ballarat Art Gallery. Detail of custom made keys also shown.

12. *Screen* (detail) c.1961, teak, brass, 2607 x 2393 x 1320mm. National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne. *Photo: Christian Markel / NGV*

13. *Chest of drawers* ,1952, African walnut, 895 x 1470 x 510mm. Andrew Collection, Melbourne.

14. *Toy birds* (1960s), unidentified timber. Private collections, Melbourne.

An exhibition of Krimper's work organised by the Department of Trade and accompanied by Robert Haines, then Director of the Queensland Art Gallery, followed in New York in 1956 and was well received. Exhibitions of his work were mounted by the NGV in 1959 and 1975. Krimper died in 1971.

Lane summarises Krimper's opus. 'During his 32 years in Australia, Krimper's furniture evolved from the simple pine and hardwood cupboards, bookcases and chairs of the post-war period to the ambitious cabinets and sideboards of the 1950s and 1960s… In the work of this period, however, the major components of his style were most clearly present.

'The first was the influence of the indigenous furniture styles of Germany and Austria: Biedermeier furniture of the 1810s, -20s and -30s, with its severely reduced forms and broad, flat surfaces serving to highlight figured veneers of fruitwood and other pale timbers; and, more importantly, peasant or folk furniture with its simplicity and clarity of construction.'

Viewing his work today, Krimper's expertise as a maker is apparent. It's also easy to see that he was a master of grain arrangement. Cabinet doors and drawers often featured sculpted recesses that exploited the beauty of wood grain patterns. Hand finishing was another hallmark of his work.

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Lane describes this involved 'a long process of planing, hand sanding and then waxing'.

In his time, Krimper was innovative, combining wood with other materials such as Vitrolite, laminates, linoleum, bamboo and leather. He used exotic woods, however many of the works shown are made from native species including black bean, mountain ash, silky oak and Queensland walnut.

As a bespoke designer maker of fine furniture from 40s to the 60s in Australia, Krimper holds a unique and unparalleled position. If he was alive today, we would surely be queuing for advice on not just woodworking techniques and design, but on how he managed to craft a living out of the craft.

All photos courtesy Bayside Gallery, Victoria. The exhibition Krimper – Mid-century artist & master craftsman ran from 5 July to 24 August 2025 at Bayside Gallery, Brighton, Victoria.

Kirsty Grant is an independent curator and writer. She was a curator at the National Gallery of Victoria for 20 years and after that, Director/CEO of Heide Museum of Modern Art.

In 2014, Grant curated a major exhibition titled Mid-Century Modern: Australian Furniture Design which was the first survey of this aspect of Australian design.

1, 2. Schulim Krimper, Cabinet-maker. A tribute by Mark Strizic and Terence Lane (Gryphon Books, 1986). The exhibition catalogue produced by Bayside Gallery includes a full reprint of Terence Lane's essay and essay notes.

3. Lane's essay refers to a series of unpublished interviews.

Full Circle

Karolis Stolys describes how he made his dream cabinet and why it fulfilled his passion for perfection.

As a child, I spent countless hours in my father's woodworking shop. We crafted doors, windows, and furniture together, and I quickly developed the skills to handle chisels, planes, and dovetail joints with ease. It was a time of learning through doing – feeling the texture of the wood, understanding its behaviour, and appreciating the rhythm of creation.

Later, when I left home to study, woodworking gradually faded into the background. But the feel, the scent, and the presence of wood never truly left me. Years passed, and I eventually found myself drawn back to the craft. I set up a modest workshop in my garage, a quiet space that allows me to step away from my primary profession as an information technology specialist, away from computers, formulas and software programming, and rest my mind.

What fascinated me most was how much could be achieved with just a few basic tools – a jigsaw, an angle grinder, and a sander. Starting with simple projects, getting familiar again with wood, I quickly moved to more complex works, constantly expanding my arsenal of tools and machines.

I became captivated by the complexity of fine woodworking – marquetry, intricate inlays, and advanced joinery techniques like mortise and tenon, finger joints, and dovetails. I became captivated by the elegance and challenge of shaping curves and executing flawless laminations. The pursuit of perfection fueled my passion.

The dream, then and now

One of my long-held dreams was to build a drinks cabinet. For years, I refined its design in my mind until I could envision every detail. When I finally began the project, I was determined to create something luxurious and unique. Precision was paramount – each aspect of joinery had to be seamless, and the sanding and finishing processes required the utmost care and attention. A poorly executed finish can ruin even the best construction, so I treated each stage with patience and respect.

These pages: Karolis Stolys's *Drinks Cabinet* in walnut with maple, birch and brass marquetry inlay. The back panel has a sunburst veneer pattern in lacewood. *Photos: Alfredas Simonavicius*

I also wanted to challenge myself beyond woodworking. So, I took on the task of crafting the brass fittings myself – everything from the leg attachments and hinges to the handles and even the decorative interior back panel.

Looking back now, I see how this cabinet symbolises my full-circle journey. From simple experiments to intricate to an award-worthy piece, each grain and joint tells a story of dedication, craftsmanship, and the endless pursuit of perfection.

Today, I dream of building a large workshop and, in the future, opening a woodworking school where both children and adults can learn the craft. Working with wood offers a way to escape routine, disconnect from screens, and reconnect with creativity and nature.

Design and materials

The inspiration for this particular cabinet came from an unexpected place – I found myself stuck on a reels video, where circles are drawn in the sand with a special rake, and moving the centre of the circle and changing the radius creates mesmerizing patterns. I realised the same technique could be adapted to furniture design. The cabinet's doors were the perfect canvas for this idea, offering enough space to accommodate and highlight the unique figure I envisioned.

I designed the entire cabinet myself, beginning with a pencil sketch on paper. I only turn to design software when exact dimensions or cutting angles become difficult to calculate manually.

Choosing materials was an especially meticulous process. For the cabinet frame and legs, I selected solid American walnut for its rich colour and expressive grain. The sides, doors, top, and bottom were made from walnut veneered MDF. MDF was chosen for its dimensional stability, which helps prevent gaps from forming between the frame and panels over time.

The process

I milled 45 x 45mm solid walnut profiles for the frame and routed rebates to hold the MDF panels. After precisely cutting the frame parts to the correct lengths – factoring in the rebate depths for MDF – I shaped the ends with a tablesaw, followed by fine-tuning with shooting and shoulder planes. Although a shooting plane is quite specialised, I find myself using it more frequently due to its ability to ensure perfect, precise joints (**photo 1**).

One of the major challenges was maintaining perfect 90° angles between all adjoining planes – sides, top, and bottom – so that everything aligned perfectly in all three dimensions.

For the frame joinery, I used domino tenons. Before gluing anything, I dry-assembled the frame and temporarily clamped it together to measure and cut the MDF panels (**photo 2**). Cutting the panels slightly oversize, I used a hand plane to achieve the final fit. This approach – test fitting everything before gluing – was a hard-earned lesson from my early days as a woodworker.

Once all parts were ready, I glued the frame together. I wanted the cabinet to evoke the feel of an old refrigerator, with rounded corners and edges.

Although it might seem easier to round over individual frame pieces before assembly, I learned not to do that. Once rounded, it's very difficult to


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clamp the frame properly – clamps just slip off the curves. Instead, I routed the curves after the frame was glued. The largest round-over bit I could find was 1.5 inches in radius, which I used to gradually shape the edges by running the cabinet body across my router table – back and forth until smooth.

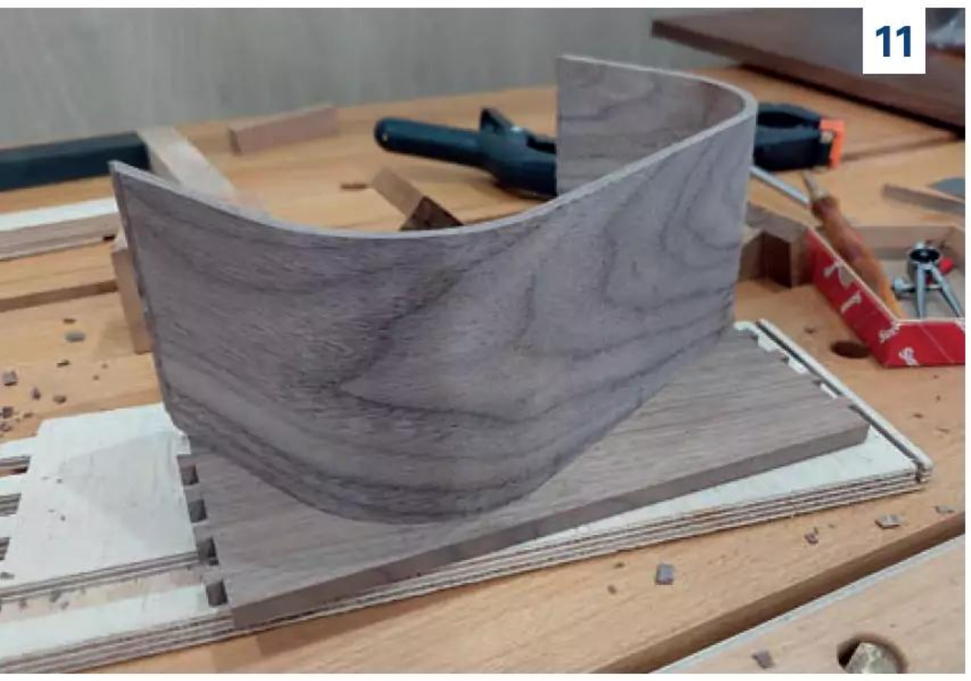
Before assembling the cabinet, I made the rear panel (**photo 3**). The back is veneered with lacewood, which shimmers differently depending on the angle of light. I cut the veneer into radial segments converging at the centre and glued them carefully to create a dynamic, shifting reflection. I planed the edges of each piece to ensure tight, seamless joints.

To create a glowing interior, I lined the inside back panel with 0.5mm brass sheet. I embossed the brass with indentations resembling the bottoms of wine bottles. To do this, I drilled shallow recesses in the MDF back using a 50mm forstner bit, then used a homemade sanding ball on a power drill to polish the indentations. Placing the brass sheet over the panel, I vacuum-pressed it into place. To prevent the sharp edges from puncturing the vacuum bag, I covered the corners with leather scraps (**photo 4**).

I had hoped atmospheric pressure would be enough to press the brass into the recesses but it wasn't, so I made a rounded wooden mallet, covered it with rubber, and hammered the indentations manually through the vacuum bag. The vacuum still helped keep the brass firmly in place during the process. Once the indentations were completed, I glued the brass sheet to the panel using polyurethane adhesive (**photo 5**).

With the main structure complete and the corners rounded, I turned to the legs. Made from solid 76mm square walnut blocks, I routed them using the same 1.5-inch round-over

1. Solid walnut, 45mm square sections were rebated for the frame to hold the veneered panels.
2. The frame parts were temporarily clamped together to measure and cut the MDF panels.
3. The back panel was veneered in a starburst pattern which highlights the chatoyance of the lacewood veneer.
4. The other side of the back panel held a brass sheet lining that was vacuum pressed on.
5. The indents for wine bottles were manually formed with a mallet.
6. The legs were shaped on the router table, jointed and fitted with brass 'feet'.
7. Showing how the marquetry panels for the doors were prepared.
8. Sections of maple burl and figured birch were used to create circular pattern.
9. The brass marquetry inlays were superglued in.
10. 'Waves' were routed into the top shelf and lined with fabric and then velvet.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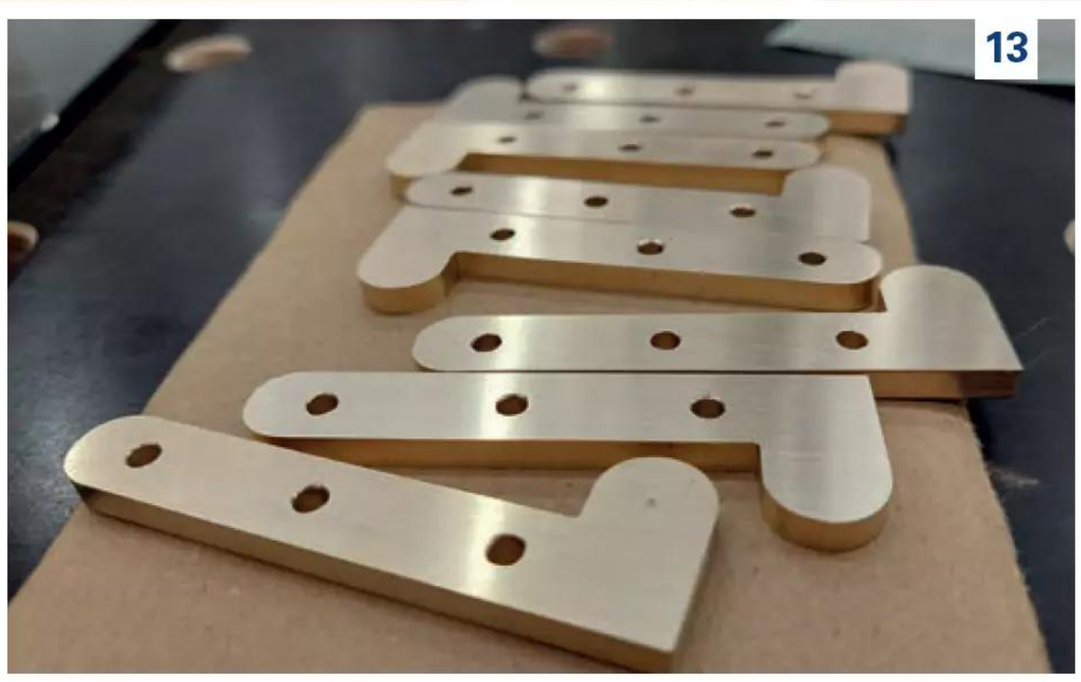
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bit (**photo 6**). Each leg was shaped to fit seamlessly against the cabinet's curved body, creating a harmonious flow. I mounted the legs to the cabinet sides and fitted custom-made brass 'feet' which were cut from 75mm brass tubing – and adjustable feet, installed into recesses drilled with a forstner bit.

The cabinet doors were also made from walnut veneered MDF. Using a router compass, I cut out sections of the existing veneer and replaced them with maple burl and figured birch (**photo 7**).

Next, I routed circular grooves 1.5 mm deep for brass inlay strips. I intentionally left some circular patterns incomplete, to give the impression of an ongoing sand drawing (**photo 8**). The brass strips were glued in with CA glue. I marked each end with a blue marker and sanded them on an edge sander to ensure tight, seamless joints (**photo 9**).

Inside the cabinet, I installed lighting using brass-coloured aluminium profiles and 2200k amber LED strips. These were hidden so the light source wouldn't be visible – the light reflects off the brass back panel, creating a warm, diffused glow.

Each door contains a magnet, while the cabinet frame houses reed switches that automatically turn the lights on when the doors are opened. All wiring runs beneath a double-layered bottom panel, where I also installed a socket for the power supply. I had pre-drilled all wiring holes before assembling the cabinet – something I strongly recommend, as it's often impossible to reach certain spots later.

At the top of the cabinet, I installed a seven-bottle wine rack made from MDF. I routed waves into it, lined it with soft fabric using textile adhesive (**photo 10**), and covered it with dark green velvet. The front edge was trimmed with solid walnut and inlaid with a brass strip. The wave pattern of the rack tilts slightly downward to keep bottles secure and corks moist.

On the inside of the doors, I added curved shelves for wine glasses, crafted from 0.6mm 11-ply veneer, laminated in a custom mould (**photo 11**). I decorated each shelf with my woodworking studio's logo (**photo 12**).

Even the door hinges were custom-made from 5mm brass strips. Using a metal-cutting blade on the tablesaw, I shaped the parts and created a template for precise routing. I rounded the hinge corners and drilled holes for screws (**photo 13**). The hinge pins were made from 10mm round brass rods and brazed using a copper-silver alloy.

Since I have limited experience in metalwork, I filed off the excess solder by hand. The same process was used to make the handles, which I later polished and coated with Zapon lacquer to prevent oxidation (Incralac is another suitable type of lacquer).

Installing the knife pivot hinges was a critical step – they are non-adjustable, so accuracy was essential. I marked their position using a marking knife and routed mortises with a handheld router and a custom jig. The hinges were fastened with brass screws (**photo 14**). To avoid damaging the soft brass, I


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initially used steel screws to thread the holes, then replaced them with brass ones, whose heads I also lacquered.

Final sanding was done with 240-grit paper, and for the wood endgrain, even finer grit. While many dislike sanding, it's one of the most important steps – it determines the look and feel of the final piece. I don't enjoy it either, but for the sake of quality, I treat it as a meditative final ritual before finishing (**photos 15, 16, 17**).

For the finish, I used Rubio Monocoat Pure oil. Though technically a single-coat product, I applied several thin layers, sanding lightly between coats with 500-grit paper. It's crucial that the oil is fully cured before sanding – it should produce white dust when ready. A thick coat won't polymerise properly, so I always opt for multiple thin layers. I prefer oil finishes in general – they enhance wood's natural richness and tactile appeal while remaining easy to repair.

Just before the submission deadline, I discovered the Maker of the Year competition by Australian Wood Review. I was looking for a photographer to document the cabinet in time – and thankfully, I made it. I am deeply grateful to Australian Wood Review for organising the competition and for the award given to me. I hope my passion for woodworking – and this recognition – will inspire others to create, explore, and pursue excellence in craft.

Process photos: Karolis Stolys

Karolis Stolys @stolysstudio is a woodworking enthusiast who lives in Vilnius, Lithuania. In 2024 his drinks cabinet was the winning World category entry for Maker of the Year, presented by Carbatec.


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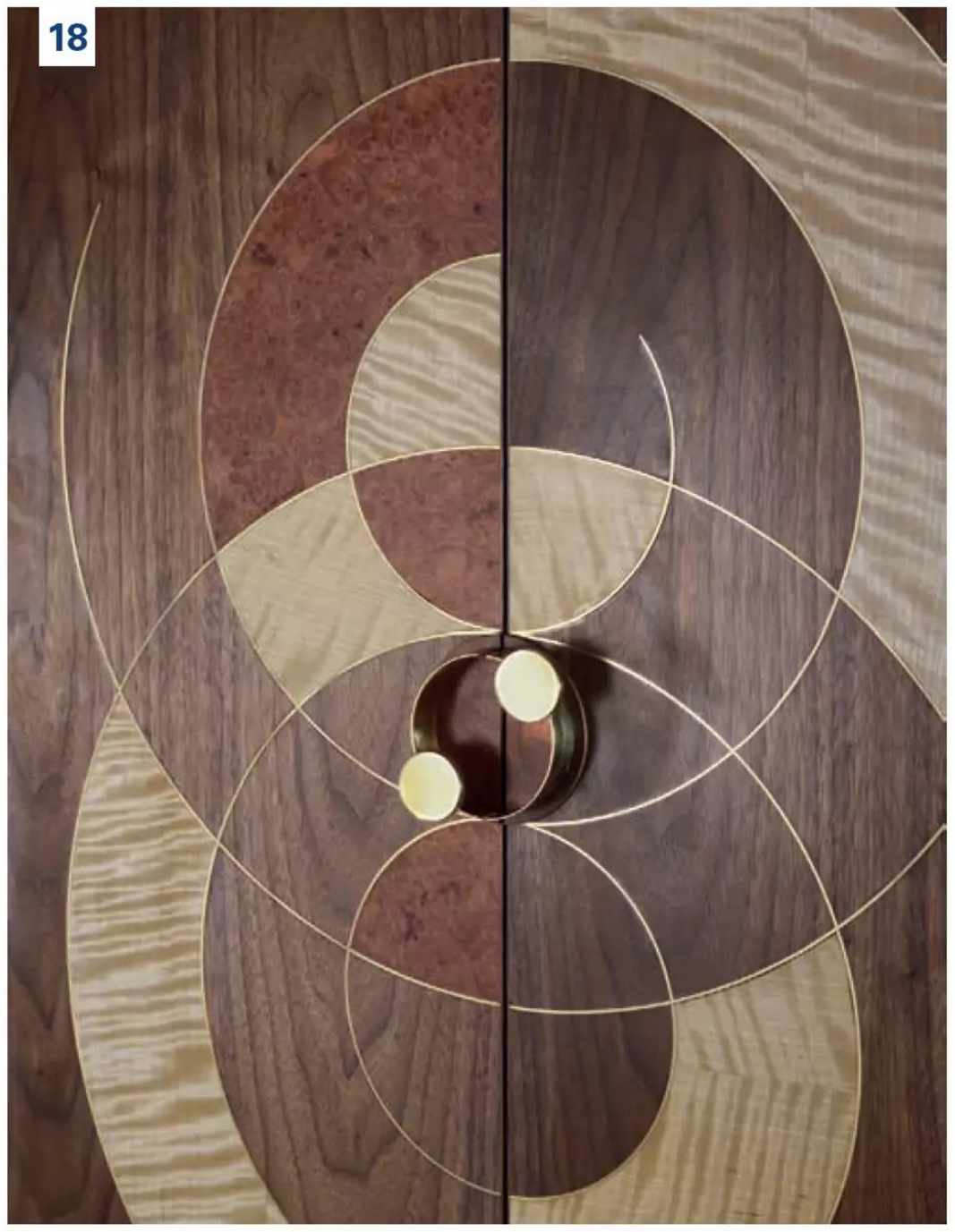
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11. Bent laminated shelves were made to be fitted to the interior side of the doors.

12. The author's studio logo was added to each shelf.

13. The door hinges were shaped from 5mm brass strips and fitted with screws and custom-made hinge pins.

14. Fitting the knife hinges for the doors required extreme accuracy.

15, 16, 17. Sanding carefully through the various grits was a lengthy process that was worth the final result.

18. Detail of the circular marquetry in veneer and brass inlay. *Photo: Alfredas Simonavicius*

Taking Tradition Forward

Schooled in traditional skills, Korean furniture designer maker So Joong-Han distills his designs through a contemporary lens.

While other children played with toys, So Joong-Han played with the wood shavings that clung to his father's clothes when he came home from work. From birth, wood and woodworking were part of his natural environment. Joong-Han's father, So Byung-Jin is a master carpenter and designated as Korea's National Intangible Cultural Asset No. 55.

Joong-Han used to go to his father's workshop after school and watch him work. Before he even understood what woodworking was, he remembers how he loved to watch his father's skill.

'When it came time to choose a major for university, I didn't hesitate – I chose furniture design', said Joong-Han. 'I believed that designing everyday objects to be both beautiful and functional was deeply meaningful and inspiring.' His formal training was a step-by-step process, starting with learning how to draw design plans. Afterwards, Joong-Han worked in his father's workshop, where he was able to absorb both traditional and contemporary techniques of woodworking.

Learning from a parent has its pros and cons. 'I've always been someone who prefers to grow through firsthand experience. I deliberately chose to try more and fail more, believing that each failure would help me improve. Because of this, I often clashed with my father in the beginning.

'While he was a master in the field of woodworking, he was also my father – so it was difficult for him to watch his son struggle or fail. Whenever I started working on a new piece, he wanted to help me a lot. But I believed that going through the entire process myself, including the failures, was the only way to truly develop my own skills. So I declined his help. By going through every step on my own, I actually learned woodworking much faster, and built a foundation of techniques that were uniquely mine.'

Main: So Joong-Han in his workspace in Wanju, North Jeolla Province, Korea.

1. *Damwol* (2025), figured zelkova, *Toona sinensis*, paulownia, black ink woods, ancient red pine, *Diospyros ebenum*. Meaning 'tranquil moon', *Damwol* has a central 'stage' for art objects and a secret compartment in the base. The legs and handles are new design developments.

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However, the constant tension between father and son eventually wore Joong-Han down. After a while, he left the workshop and spent five years pursuing a completely different business. But in the end, he found his way back...

'When I returned to the workshop, my father had come to respect my path. He let me work independently and simply watched quietly from a distance. To make up for the years I had been away, I spent over a year immersed in woodworking, devoting every waking hour outside of eating and sleeping to practising in the workshop. I trained relentlessly, determined to truly master the craft of *somokjang* (traditional Korean cabinetry).'

The culmination of that year was So Joong-Han's official debut work, a traditional *meorijang* (a type of cabinet that sits alongside a bed). Recognition followed in

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2. *Meorijang* (2022), figured zelkova, *Toona sinensis*, red pine, brass fittings, 730 x 390 x 680mm. So Joong-Han's official debut work retained a traditional form but with a modern sensibility gained through minimal use of *jangseok* (metal ornaments).

3. So Joong-Han's *Sokdookkeop Daji Sacheung Chaekjang* bookcase received a Korean Arts Council award in 2023. Made from zelkova and paulownia with cast iron hingeware, 700 x 350 x 1700mm. A traditional bookcase is reimagined with a contemporary *bitjang* (wooden latch).

4, 5. Interior and outside views of Master So Byung-Jin's Wanju Somok School, where traditional Korean cabinetmaking is taught, and where So Joong-Han shares space with the Geungjaeyeon collective of trainees.

2024 for his *Sokdookkeop Daji Sacheung Chaekjang* – a four-tiered bookshelf with doors that received the Chairman's Award from the Arts Council Korea at the Korean Traditional Craft Competition.

Joong-Han works in a small rural village called Wanju, located in North Jeolla Province. This is where his father established the Wanju Somok School, a place dedicated to teaching traditional Korean cabinetry.

He shares his workspace with students who learn for three years before taking the official certification exam to become a *yisuja* – a recognised trainee. Once certified, they can progress to join Geungjaeyeon, a guild of somokjang trainees led by Master So Byung-Jin.

The Geungjaeyeon is a collective of his father's disciples who are passionate about preserving and promoting the tradition of somokjang. Many of the members are active in various fields of society, but they come together through a shared love for traditional Korean furniture.

'Even among artisans like me who have formally completed training in somokjang, approaches to the work can vary widely', explains Joong-Han. 'Some dedicate themselves to faithfully restoring and preserving traditional forms. In my case, I'm more interested in reinterpreting tradition through a contemporary lens.

'I don't believe one path is better than the other – it really comes down to personal taste. Personally, I find beauty in simplicity. I enjoy refining proportions, simplifying lines, and adding functionality that suits modern lifestyles.'

'My latest work *Damwol* is based on the *mungapjang*, a traditional document chest. But because I like to explore playful design elements, I reimagined it with raised legs and an open space in the centre for displaying decorative objects. The legs and handles in particular have a unique design I'm very pleased with. I sketched many variations for the legs.

'I tried a gear-like cut, experimented with asymmetry, and eventually landed on an idea that came to me rather suddenly. By carving and planing square or rectangular blocks, I created legs that appear differently depending on the angle – from one side they look slender, from another, wide.

'The handle is not only visually distinctive, but also ergonomically satisfying and I plan to incorporate this design into future works. This latest piece feels especially meaningful to me, as it represents my first conscious attempt to incorporate more overtly modern design into my work.

'I'm always experimenting with ways to blend tradition with my own style – and with this piece, I feel like I've taken a real step forward. When I create a work, I try to ensure it contains its own story, thoughtful details, and even a touch of humour. This is how I strive to honour the spirit of tradition while crafting pieces that belong in our lives today.

'Beyond aesthetics or function, I want my work to be something that becomes part of someone's life story, passed down and remembered. Quiet beauty, sincerity, and precision are values I hold dear.'

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The material

So Joong-Han uses woods long favoured in traditional Korean furniture, such as zelkova (*neutinamu*), Chinese toon (*chamjuk*), and persimmon (*meokgam*). 'Each type of wood has its own distinct grain and character, giving every piece a unique emotional tone', he says.

'Black persimmon is one of my favourites. Its deep contrast of black and brown patterns is striking and unpredictable – no two boards are ever the same. It's also quite rare and valued in Korean tradition. I also love zelkova for its warmth and stability, and chestnut for its soft lustre and historical significance.'

Metal and wood

Korean traditional furniture often features ornate brass fittings called *jangseok* once used extensively by wealthy people to showcase their status. In contrast, furniture made for 'commoners' had little or no metal fittings, reflecting a more minimalist aesthetic.

'Personally, I prefer this understated style. I deliberately avoid overly ornate designs and use jangseok sparingly. I aim to reinterpret them with a contemporary sensibility. I believe that simplicity and functionality are what make a piece sophisticated.

'This minimal use of fittings has become a defining aspect of my style. To me, refined design lies not in embellishment, but in restraint and purpose.

'Joinery is where the structural intelligence of traditional furniture really shines – it requires both mental focus and physical precision. Finishing is where the character of the wood comes alive. Applying oil and watching the grain reveal itself is always a moment of quiet satisfaction.'

The tools

Many of the tools So Joong-Han uses are traditional Korean hand tools. 'Among them, chisels and hand planes passed down from my father are

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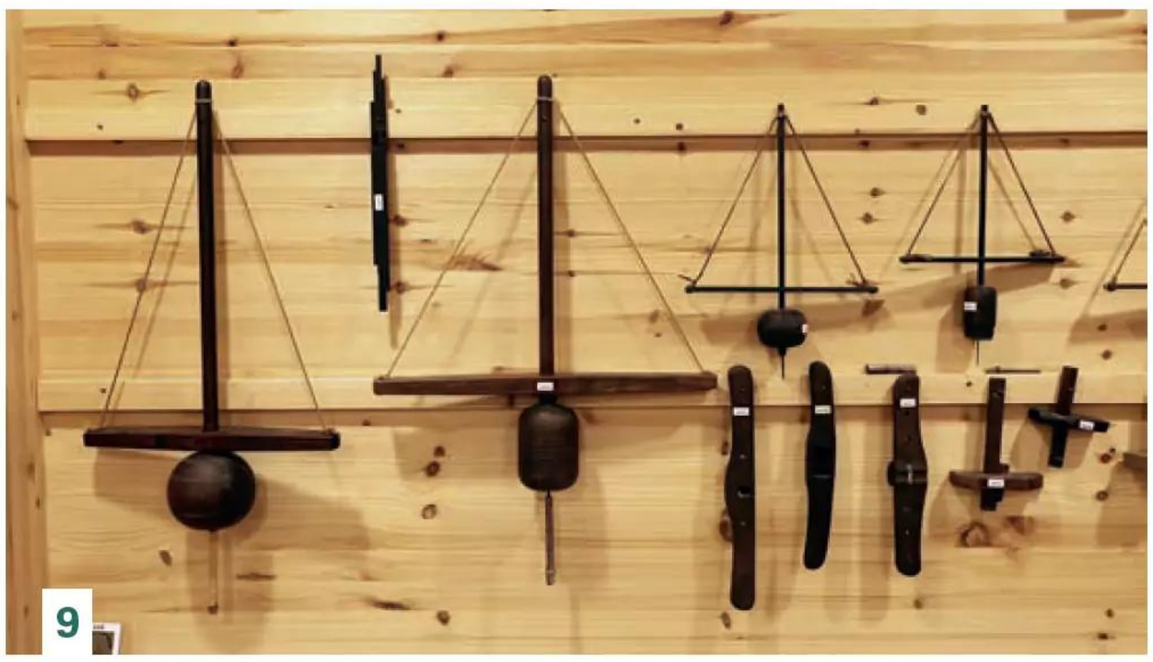

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especially meaningful – some of these tools were even handed down from his teacher. At the woodworking school he founded, we've also collected tools dating back to the Joseon Dynasty, some of which I still use occasionally.'

'One such tool is the *tanggae* saw, a traditional Korean pull saw that dates back centuries. I also use uniquely Korean tools like the stone awl (*doldaesongot*) and the bow awl (*hwalbibi songot*).

'It's a dream of mine to one day open a small museum to exhibit these tools – not just to preserve their history, but to share the story and spirit behind each one.

'I also use modern tools when needed. But even today, I find myself relying most on these older tools – for their precision, craftsmanship, and the quiet emotional depth they bring to each piece I create.

'Of course, I use powered machinery as well when it's efficient and doesn't compromise the integrity of the work. Machines help with rough cutting or dimensioning wood, which saves time and energy. But for joinery, shaping, and finishing, I mostly rely on hand tools to maintain control and sensitivity.'

Finishes

'I prefer natural oil finishes, and among them, I often use camellia oil. This finishing method has been used in Korea since the Joseon Dynasty, and the key lies in the precise blending ratio. I follow a traditional formula – camellia oil mixed with pine resin and alum – to create a finish that is both protective and deeply expressive.

'The oil penetrates deeply into the wood, enhancing the natural grain without creating a plastic-like coating, as varnish sometimes does.

6. *Display cabinet*, 1300mm high, figured zelkova, *Toona sinensis*, paulownia, *Diospyros ebenum*.

7. *Four-Shelf Bookcase*, zelkova, *Toona sinensis, Dispyros ebenum,* ancient red pine latticework, cast iron fittings.

8. So Joong-Han uses a Korean *tanggae* (frame) saw to rip a board.

9. Showing *doldae songgot*, a traditional Korean hand drill. The string drives the drill when the tool is twisted.

10. *Sabang Takjajang* (2023) ancient red pine, *Toona sinensis*, 380 x 380 x 1350mm. A reinterpretation of the traditional four-sided s*abang takja* but with an upper storage cabinet above open shelving.

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11. *Angojigi Three-Tier Cabinet*, zelkova, black ink woods, forged iron hardware. *Angojigi* refers to a sliding door, or more poetically, to an embrace.

12. *Yuhwa* (softly shining) standlight (2025), zelkova, silk, 300 x 300 x 1400mm. Inspired by traditional women's veil worn during the Joseon Dynasty.

13. *Tea tray* (2025) 450 x 150 x 90mm in zelkova and 'black ink' woods with brass fittings and storage drawers.

14. *Jewellery boxes* (2025) in plain and figured zelkova, 180 x 120 x 120mm.

Instead, it gives the surface a warm, living texture – one that feels alive to the touch.'

Interest in handmade crafts and independent designers is gradually growing in Korea, especially among younger generations. The market remains relatively small however, and as elsewhere, it can be difficult to achieve a sustainable career.

'It's true that the work I do is time-consuming, but I believe the value lies in the process itself', says Joong-Han. 'I try to find a balance by offering both large-scale statement pieces and smaller, more accessible items like trays or boxes. These smaller works still reflect my philosophy and craftsmanship, allowing more people to connect with my work at different levels.'

'My advice is to take time – both in learning and making. Good work requires patience, reflection, and honesty with materials. Don't rush to impress; instead, let the work grow with you. As for my goals, I hope to share the beauty of Korean furniture more widely around the world. In five to ten years, I envision running my own studio-gallery space where tradition and innovation meet, and continuing to connect with others through teaching and exhibiting.

'I want to widely share the beauty of traditional Korean furniture. Although Korea is a small country in the East, culturally it is vast and rich. Nowadays, with the rise of K-culture, contemporary Korean culture and arts are gaining worldwide attention. Along with this, I hope more people come to appreciate the traditional Korean culture that laid the foundation for today's popular culture.'

Photos: Ho-Young Ahn

Learn more about So Joong-Han at Instagram @sojoonghan_ and www.gobjet.com

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Lone Spirit

A flame form vessel made from rare timber pays homage to a special friend. Story by Neil Turner.

The piece shown here is part of a series of five pieces which share a similar form and embellishment. Although I've made them from different woods, it's been mostly about getting the form exactly how I want it, always striving for perfection – and never quite getting there. My thought with the name was that this form represents a single flame, just one flicker of light, a single spirit.

Over the years I've been lucky to receive commissions from people all over the world. Recently a collector in France got in touch with me and commissioned me to make a piece. I decided to make another *Lone Spirit* vessel which at the same time also pays homage to Jack de Vos, a mentor and friend. Jack and I attended workshops and collaborative workshops together and he taught me many things.

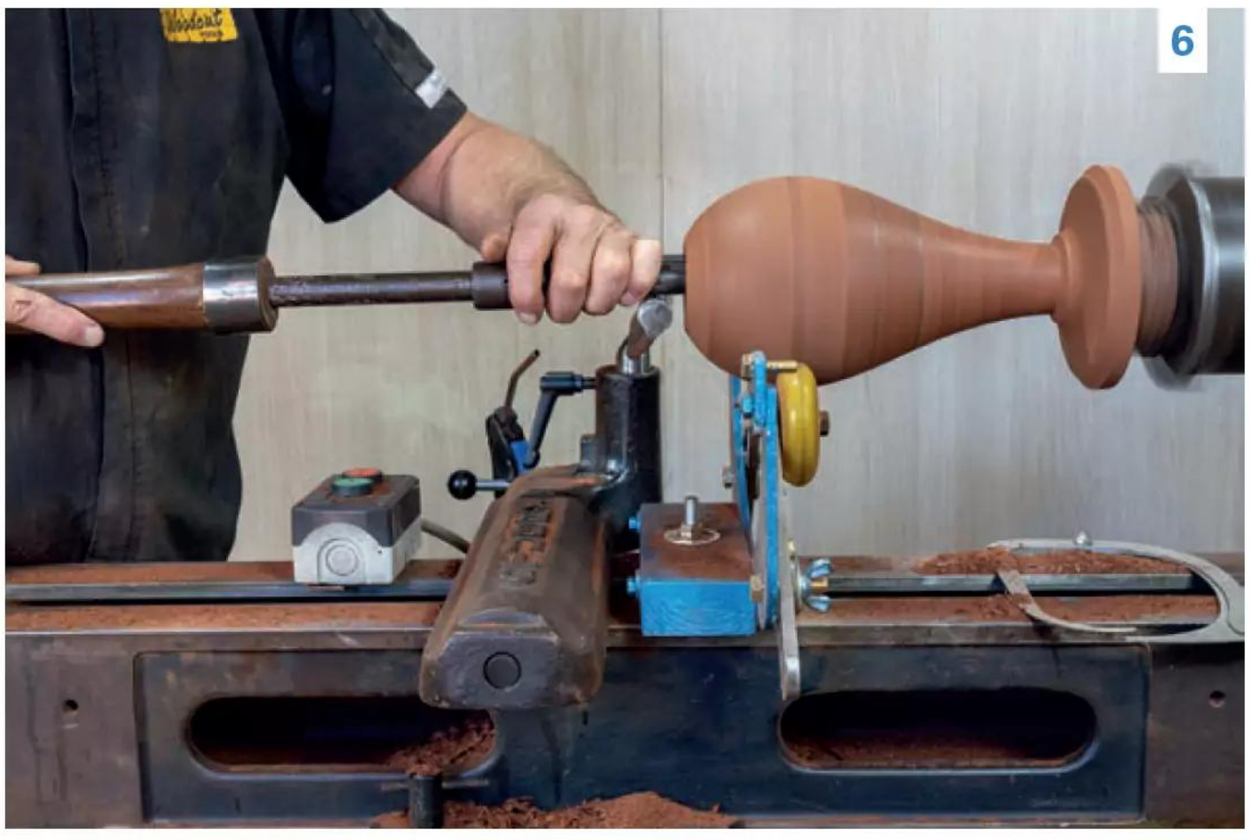
Jack rang me ten days before he passed away and asked if I would like to buy some of his timber. In particular, he wanted me to have some very special black fleck jarrah. I felt honoured that he offered it to me, and now make sure that I use it for special pieces

Main: *Lone Spirit* vessel in black fleck jarrah

1. The blank is mounted between centres.

2. A 40mm pilot hole is drilled into the form to a depth of around 100mm.

3. Hollow through the base to the depth of the hole drilled ensuring the walls are an even 5mm thickness.



only because it continues to remind me of my time with him. This piece of jarrah had a distinctive black fleck running through it, making it unique.

This piece draws on techniques I often combine in my work. After hollow turning a vessel, I use various carving tools to pierce and embellish the surface. The effect creates a series of negative spaces and an interplay of shadows that work in harmony with the outside form. As artist and friend Bing Pho said to me, 'It's what's not there that makes it interesting'.

The process

The blank required for this piece was 150 x 150 x 280mm long. After mounting it between centres, it was turned round using a roughing or bowl gouge. I checked for any cracks or deformities that might cause a problem in the final design. A 30mm long spigot, 65mm in diameter was created to accommodate a set of shark jaws for better holding capacity (**photo 1**).

The base and part of the long neck are first shaped. The hollowing process differs from the norm for this piece as it is hollowed through the base. At this stage, we can't finish the whole form because we need support material while hollowing the inside. The start of the neck is reduced to 70mm so you need to visualise where the final shape will end.

A 40mm pilot hole is drilled into the form to a depth of around 100mm (**photo 2**). With a steady in place, start to hollow using a combination of straight and curved carbide-tipped tools to remove the waste, blowing the shavings out regularly.

Measure the wall thickness as you proceed to the depth of the hole drilled, ensuring it's 5mm. An even wall thickness is necessary because we will be piercing the vessel, and the thickness of the wall will be visible (**photo 3**).

The rest of the outside shape was then turned away with a large Oneway tailstock centre in place. Reduce the neck size to 30mm at the top, ensuring a smooth transition from the long neck to the bottom shape (**photo 4**).

This simple attachment makes the tool safer to use and helps reduce the risk of going through the side of the vessel. Another tip is to have the cutter above the centre when turning inside the form; if you do have a catch, it will tend to fall away from the timber, reducing the catch.

Sand the outside and inside of the vessel to 400 grit. A Vermec sanding tool running through the grits from 120 to 400 was used on the inside (**photo 9**). Remove all the tool marks with the heavier grits to speed up the sanding process, blowing out the dust as you work.

Next, drill a 19mm hole down to the end of the turned form (**photo 5**). With the steady in place, hollow down to the end of the hole, measuring the wall thickness as you go.

At this point, you may have to use a heavier shafted tool to remove the waste in the neck, as there is a lot of the shaft extended over the toolrest, which can result in flex and vibration (**photo 6**). In this case, I have extended the neck a little longer with a bowl gouge to make it look more elegant (**photo 7**).

All my hollowing tools have an outrigger, with a simple cable tie cut to length to indicate the wall thickness and the position of the cutter inside the vessel (**photo 8**).

4. Reduce the neck size to 30mm at the top.
5. Drill a 19mm hole down to the end of the form.
6. You may need to use a heavier shafted tool to remove the waste in the neck to avoid flex and vibration.
7. A bowl gouge was used to extend the neck to make it look more elegant.
8. My hollowing tools have an outrigger with a simple cable tie cut to length to indicate the wall thickness and the position of the cutter inside the vessel.
9. Sand the outside and inside through the grits to 400.
10. After sanding, the form can be cut off with a parting tool.
11. Drawing ‘flames’ alongside the two lines running up to the top of the piece.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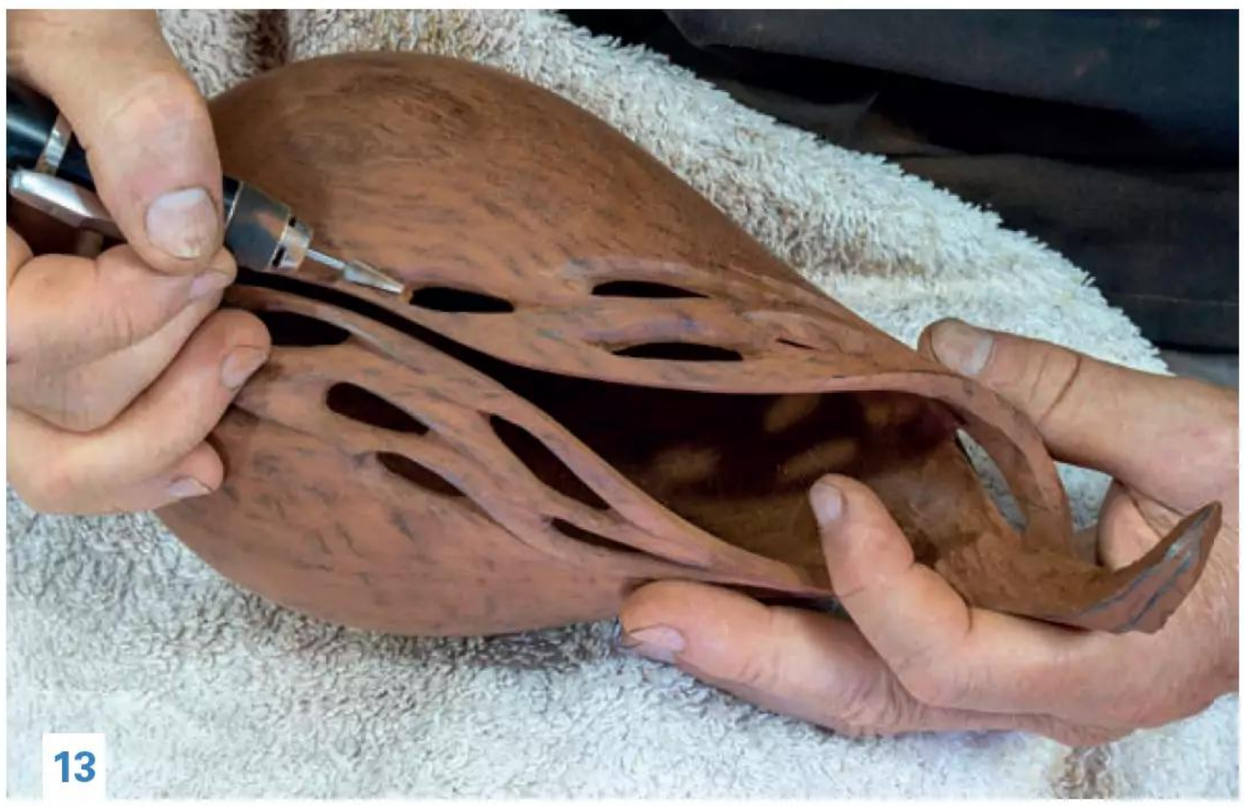
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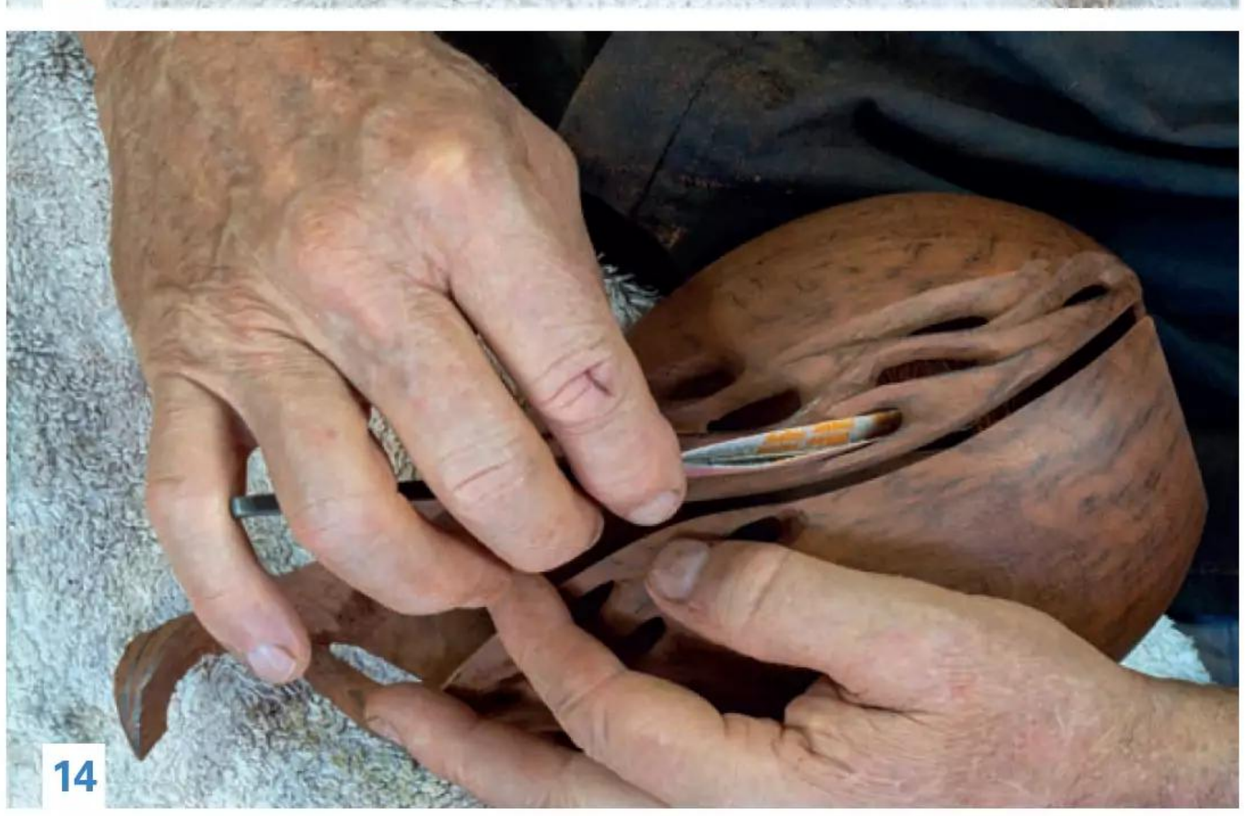
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Sand as far as you can with the sanding tool. The inner neck can be sanded when it is opened up during the carving process. This part of the process is essential, as you can see inside the vessel when the carving is completed. With the sanding completed, we can now cut off the form with a parting tool (**photo 10**).

Mark out for carving

The next step is to mark out where part of the neck will be opened. We need two lines spiralling around the piece, converging at the top to create the flickering flame. On lighter woods you can use a pencil, however I find that on denser timbers this tends to rub off with constant handling while carving. Instead, on denser and darker timbers I use a fine ink pen.

There is no set line here to draw; you have to trust your eye. So, mark with a pencil initially, then use pen when you are happy with the lines. You can now draw some fire forms following the two lines on either side, running up to the top of the piece (**photo 11**).

Carving the flames

For this, the carving tool of choice for me is a micromotor machine. This has a good range of speeds from 1000 to 40,000rpm, no vibration or noise to speak of from the handpiece, and it's very manoeuvrable.

First, remove all the waste from inside the fire forms, then open the groove from the base and continue


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all the way to the top, cutting out the small flame and then the other side of the void. For this part of the process, I had to use a flexible drive Foredom, as the spiral cutter has a 1/8" shank, which will not fit into the micromotor handpiece – it can only receive a 3/32" shanked bur (**photo 12**).

With a cone-shaped bur, elongate the flame tips and bottoms, as well as chamfering the edges. The same bur is also used to tidy up the groove and the flame at the top (**photo 13**).

Using a riffler with some Velcro paper attached, sand the inside of the fire forms and the groove. This refines the shapes a little more (**photo 14**). A split mandrel with Velcro sanding grits held in place with a small rubber O-ring (to stop it from flapping) refines the round part of the flames (**photo 15**).

Using a 3/4" barrel sander, carefully sand the inside of the flame and the part of the neck that was not sanded during the initial internal sanding, moving down through the grits to 400 (**photo 16**).

A small sander is used to refine the shapes and sand the edge of the groove (**photo 17**). This is made from a jewellery polishing tool called a floppy or silicon carbine rubber polisher. Attach sticky-backed Velcro and you have a very versatile sanding disc used at 9000rpm. I buy these burs from jewellery making suppliers, usually the green or brown grades. The remainder of the shaping conducted on the flame is carried out with this sander, supporting the tip through the entire process.

Once the sanding was completed, I decided to highlight the flames with pyrography, using a small 1mm ball at a medium temperature. This provided an extra focal point and highlighted the black fleck in the piece of jarrah. The piece was finished with a 30% satin spray lacquer inside and out.


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Afterwards I asked myself if I was happy with the piece I had created, and would my friend Jack de Vos be happy as well? Had I done justice to the timber? How can I make the next one better? I was once told the piece I make today is practice for the piece I make tomorrow, and I think that's a good way to think about what we do. I think my friend would be happy with the piece.

Photos: Suellen Turner

12. A flexible shaft Foredom tool was used to create a groove to open up the neck.

13. A cone-shaped bur is used to elongate and chamfer the flames, and to tidy up the groove edge.

14. Refine the flames and groove using a riffler with velcro paper attached.

15. A split mandrel with velcro sanding grits refines the round part of the flames.

16. Use a 3/4" barrel sander to sand the inside of the flame and the part of the neck you couldn't reach during the first sanding.

17. A small shopmade sander can be used to refine the shapes and groove edge.

18. Detail of the completed 'flame' decoration.

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Truly Seen

Carol Russell writes about the life and work of Tasmanian artist Gay Hawkes.

Gay Hawkes seated in her *Sedan Chair*, 2020, recycled pallet wood, enamel paint, castors, 1230 x 480 x 560mm

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1. *Marchwell Chair* (2014–5), *Eucalyptus*, horizontal scrub, pallet wood, 2205 x 900 x 780mm

2. *Self portrait as child*, 2020, wood and found dolls head, 410 x 100 x 65mm

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I met with Gay Hawkes at her home in late 2022. It was one of the most extraordinary few hours I've ever spent with anyone. I had planned to write an article about her and her work for *Australian Wood Review*. It's an article I had set aside only to complete years later, but I'd like to take you back to that rainy day when I sat down with Gay Hawkes.

24 September 2022, Grand Final Day: It's pouring with rain as I reach the top of the hill, I can see a dirt road ahead leading down to the ocean. The scene is wild and untamed. Marion Bay curves around and I can see spectacular steep cliffs either side, ghostly in the mist. There is an expanse of saltmarsh before you get to the dunes and the ocean beyond. I stop the car and get out, taking in the scene, this is Tasmania's wild south-east coast.

I'm here to visit Gay Hawkes, sculptor, teacher, furniture maker and artist. Gay's exhibition at the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery in Hobart (TMAG), entitled *The House of Longing* stopped me in my tracks. It was an extraordinary collection of her furniture, paintings, sculptures, writing and performance. I was very moved by the narrative and the expansiveness of her work.

I felt compelled to meet her and more than a little daunted. I'd been familiar with her work as a teenager growing up in Tasmania. I had been in awe of her, the memory of these pieces had settled in my subconscious and when I saw the beautifully curated rooms full of them at TMAG, the feelings of excitement flooded back. I wasn't expecting the intricate paintings and poems and art books or the heart wrenching story of the loss of her beloved boathouse studio.

Gay's story is one that straddles continents and disciplines and societal attitudes over four decades. There's nothing trite in her conversation and although she may appear frail on this rainy Saturday morning in the draughty converted shed that she's made her home, she's not to be taken lightly.

Her home is full of art and colour, memories and humour, a large cardboard (then) Prince Charles watches over us.

I'm as delighted as a child to see these wonders. Gay Hawkes is a force of nature, she is formidable in her intellect with a quick, dry wit.

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3. *Tree Person Fire Sculpture*, 2013, cardboard, pallet timbers, 1830mm high (work destroyed)

4. *What-Not* (2013), *Eucalyptus*, plywood, 820 x 670 x 710mmm

5. *Bookstand* in pallet timbers

6. *Mum's China Cabinet* (2014–5), recycled pallet wood, engraved acrylic, 1305 x 570 x 560mmm

7. Gay Hawkes' workshop is adjacent to her kitchen.

Gay had made me scones and we drink coffee by the wood stove from fine Noritake shell-like cups that belonged to her mother. She has been unable to rebuild after the fire. She tells me of the hardship she's endured and has channelled much of the pain of this into her sculptures, paintings and poetry.

I really like her, I knew I would. I want her to like me. I try not to talk too much, I'm here to listen and as she begins to talk, I start to understand how important an artist she is. There's a ferocity to her, an indefinable energy.

We talk as two makers, comparing notes. I record the discussion, and listening to these tapes again, I'm so touched by the tenderness in her comments about my own work as we talk about how as artists, artisans, craftspeople or makers, no matter how we define ourselves, what we want is for our work to be truly seen by others. Gay takes a moment, is silent and truly sees the pieces I have bought to show her.

She is taken with a boat I've made. We talk about the ancient almost mythical qualities of boats, and she tells a story of a sculpture containing a boat she made as a response to the tragic incident of a young man from Stanley who sets off in a boat on Bass Strait, he is drowned and the boat lost. She tells me she made the sculpture out of incredible feeling for Bass Strait as she was brought up there.

The work was featured in an exhibition in Sydney and the father of the boy happened to go to the exhibition, saw the sculpture and bought it. Gay said it was one of the most gratifying things that had ever happened to her; the family got in touch with her, the work had touched them deeply.

I remember Gay had said in an ABC interview that she doesn't set out to make any artwork, she just makes

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what's in her head. One of the stories that really resonated with me was when Gay described a scene from the early years of her career. She talks about having made a small stool and catching a glimpse of it through a window from outside. She felt so much delight at the sight of it, a feeling, she says that has never left her when she finishes a piece.

Timeline

Gay Hawkes was born in Burnie in 1942. Her father made the furniture in their home and her mother sewed their clothes, so creating things from what was available was a way of life for the family.

She graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in 1962. She went on to become a teacher in Tasmania, the UK and Canada. Education and facilitating creativity in others have been a cornerstone of her life. She has worked extensively as a teacher in jails, schools, remote communities with First Nations people as well as mental health units and community arts programs.

For a while, Gay worked in administration for Tasmanian Theatre in Education and became a Community Arts Officer. This led to her enrolling in an Associate Diploma majoring in furniture and design at the Tasmanian School of Art in 1979 under the tutelage of renowned Tasmanian furniture maker Kevin Perkins.

Gay explains how she wanted to go her own way and experiment. She wasn't interested in the traditional methods of dressing and processing timber and making the material fit together using conventional joinery. Weaving together found objects, horizontal scrub, driftwood and discarded pieces, she could challenge the traditional idea of furniture, drawing on the narrative inherent in the materials. She experimented with green timber in the tradition of pioneering families and the craft revival of the 1970s. The material would be processed as little as possible, highlighting the weathered textures, bark and worn painted surfaces. Her pieces were designed around these features and the finished work carried the origins of the material with it, transformed but still recognisable.

Gay had a young family at this time. With support and encouragement from Kevin Perkins in the form of a letter of recommendation, she managed to secure a professional development grant from the Crafts Board of the Australia Council which gave her the resources to develop her sculptural practice.

She moved to Melbourne with her children in the mid 1980s and tells me how she received incredible support and recognition. Gay was able to sell her pieces through galleries and was featured in magazines and on television. She had found her place in the art world, a contrast from her experience in Tasmania at the time

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8. Workshop view of *Marion Bay Chair*, 2023, found wood, shells, kelp, sticks, 1130 x 603 x 630mm

9. *Untitled hanging cabinet*, pallet wood.

10. Some of Gay Hawkes' creations with found shells.

11. *Singing Cupboard* (2014), recycled pallet wood, plywood

12. *Hanging Cupboard* (2014–5), recycled pallet wood, 600 x 390 x 310mmm

where she had struggled to find an audience for her work.

In 1988, Gay was chosen to represent Australia at an international sculpture symposium in Trondheim in Norway. Due to the scale of her work, it couldn't travel with her, so she had to make new work there. She evocatively describes making a chair in the snow with another artist and a trip to a small island strewn with driftwood. It was a highly productive time, and she reflects on it with great pleasure.

This was the beginning of a series of residencies, all over the world. Gay travelled to New Zealand, Russia, Ireland (three times), Georgia, and Armenia, a place she describes with great fondness. I love her story about being given an apartment with a Russian piano that she was able to play. She describes the flowers in the street and the vibrant clothes of the women, and the influence of these images can be seen in many of her paintings; her love of colour and pageantry permeate through her work.

Back in Tasmania, one of the most significant chapters in her life was running the Dunalley Children's Chair Factory, where she would teach children the value of being able to explore their creativity. An old boat shed on the water, it was an idyllic setting where the children would swim, eat homemade scones and Gay would teach them to work with wood and paint and other materials, encouraging them to think in a fresh way.

Then, in the 2013 fires, along with some 65 homes and buildings in the tiny Dunalley community, came the devastating loss of her home and studio with its vast collection of her own work, books and objects spanning 40 years. It marked an end to this magical time.

Deciding not to rebuild after so much loss, Gay sold the land in Dunalley but found it almost impossible to find somewhere she could afford.

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The House of Longing exhibition was about her desire to once again have a house. In her words: 'After The fire, I set about again making the pieces for a house, thirty-one in all, while house prices rose sky high like smoke'.

Gay Hawkes produced a book of poetry alongside the exhibition entitled *From the Busy Machinery of Longing – A Miscellany of Thoughts After Bushfire*. These poems are heartbreaking and so eloquently describe the emptiness and loss not only of possessions but of community.

Gay Hawkes has a long legacy and has made a huge contribution to the artistic landscape in Australia. Her work is featured in the National Gallery of Australia, the Australian Parliament House Collection and the Australian War Memorial Collection as well as many other significant collections.

She has pioneered the use of discarded materials and objects, reinterpreting them into pieces of sculpture and furniture that is housed in galleries all over the world. One of her most enduring legacies will be as an educator, a person that has lit a creative spark in others and inspired people to see the world around us and the objects discarded by humans and nature in a different light.

It was nearly two o'clock... I had to go, the grand final was about to start, and Gay had made it clear she wanted to sit down and watch it in peace. The pageantry and theatre of football is closely followed by her, something I wasn't expecting.

I head down to the wild ocean nearby, the wind making my eyes stream and the waves so high I can hardly see beyond them.

I'm so grateful for that day with Gay Hawkes and I hope she can forgive me for taking so long to write this article. I'll let one of Gay's poems have the final word.

On Why Birds Sing
The other day, I said to my neighbour,
"I must go now because I'm trying to make a kangaroo."
Why?" she asked
Why, why ask why? Because I must.
Because I have the image in my head and it must come out. Because making something in three dimensions is the most satisfying thing I know.
Why do birds sing?

All photos copyright Peter Whyte Photography, Tasmania

The House of Longing showed at Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery in 2022. In 2025 Gay Hawkes showed an exhibition titled Seaborne at Narryna in Hobart with Bett Gallery. This exhibition builds on the earlier one with some recent works added to the collection.

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Trees Grown on Trees

In the mountain forests north of Kyoto, master forestry has been practised for centuries. With precision and patience, logs are shaped that are as beautiful as they are functional. Joakim Rådström tells the story of Japan's most exclusive building material.

Main: The oldest daisugi tree in the region resides in the temple garden is over 400 years old, and still producing shoots.

1. Plantation view of daisugi trees where shoots are cultivated on a host 'mother' tree.
2. Grown from cuttings, maruta logs are felled and transported with the utmost care. After debarking, the boles are polished with fine sand.

No country combines technology with tradition, or beauty with function, like Japan. A telling example is the cedar industry in the Kitayama region north of Kyoto.

Go there in the spring, and you'll notice how the warmer Japanese May climate gradually gives way to the cooler weather of the mountains, to rain showers and wonderfully fragrant coniferous forests.

Maruta tree production

Since ancient times, so-called *maruta* (see glossary) logs of cedar have been produced here, specially designed for use in traditional buildings, tea houses and unmistakable *tokonoma* walls. A process that requires decades of care, but results in logs with an extremely smooth, straight and knot-free surface.

'The tradition has existed for 600 years', says Hiroshi Sumiyama at the small-scale Kitayama Maruta timber mill I recently visited. Production begins with the selection of the right 'mother tree', which must be straight and relatively free of knots. When it is five or six years old, foresters cut the best branches a little way down from the top and plant the cuttings in the ground.

After three years, the emerging young trees are tied with soft rope to further promote straight and smooth trunks, and help the young plants withstand winds and heavy snow. When they have reached six to seven years of age, the trees are then pruned for the first time, and outgrowing shoots are removed close to the trunk.

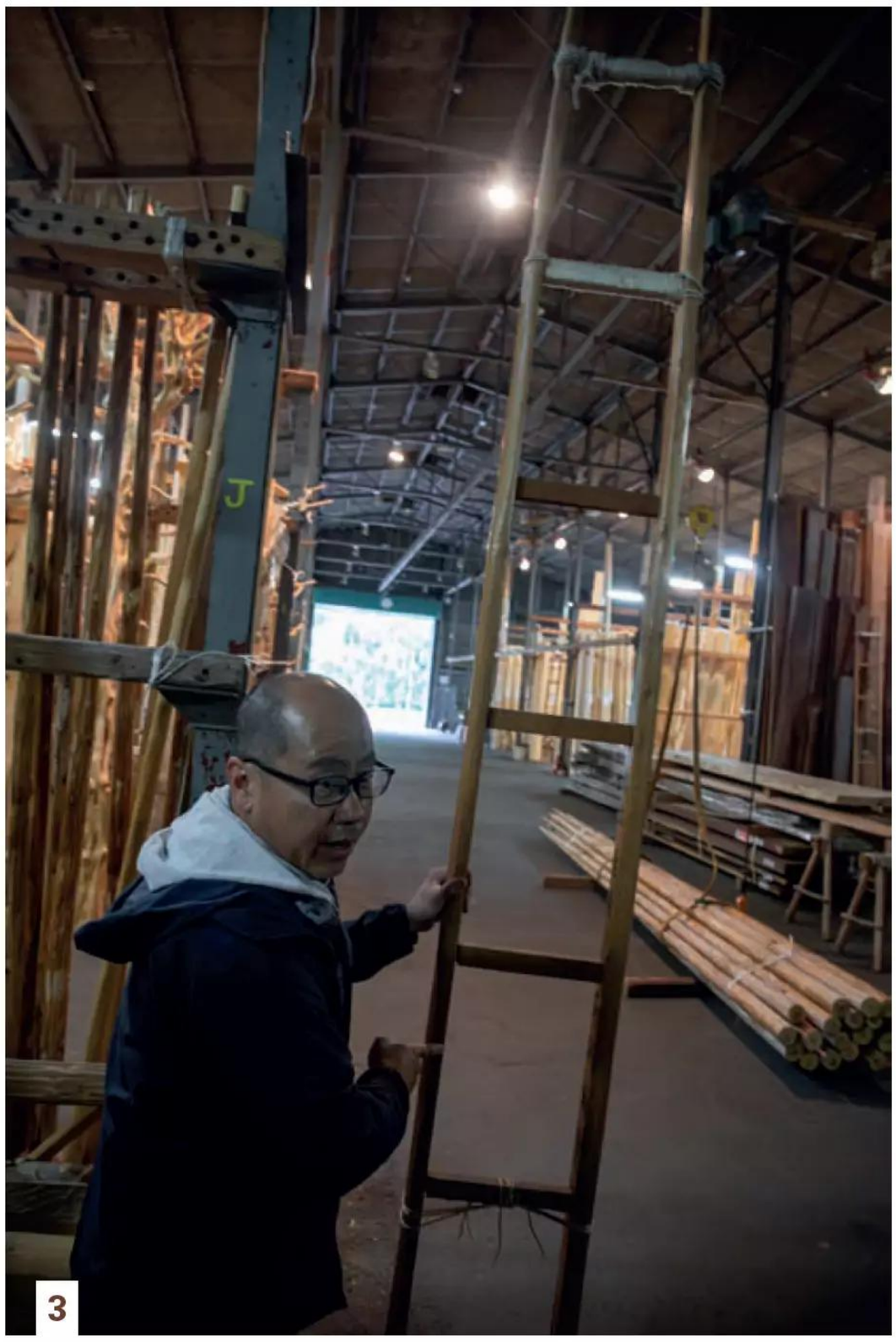
Daisugi trees

Parallel to the maruta production is another tradition: *daisugi*. Here, a native tree is used as a base for thin, straight shoots that are gradually thinned and pruned into thinner logs for use as battens, among other things.

The daisugi host tree thereby creates a natural 'platform' for the shoots to grow from, effectively providing more growing surface for more trees in an area otherwise characterised by steep mountain slopes with small cultivation areas.

Daisugi is also extremely sustainable. As a single host tree can produce many straight tree trunks in the hundreds, the need for large-scale felling is reduced, local ecosystems are maintained and the risk of soil erosion is significantly reduced.

We pass a large daisugi plantation in the area. The trees have an almost otherworldly appearance. Further away we arrive at an old Buddhist monastery. In the temple garden, Hiroshi Sumiyama points out the



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oldest daisugi tree in the area – over 400 years old, and still producing shoots.

Crafting trees…and ladders

Daisugi trees do not grow very tall, unlike maruta trees. To care for the older maruta plants, physical aids such as specially built ladders are therefore required. 'They have to be able to do *that*', says Hiroshi Sumiyama, showing how the sides of the ladder can move, unlike more rigid metal ladders.

This allows the foresters to naturally move with the tree as it bends while they prune the trunks. The ladders are also adapted to the user's foot width and stride – all in all, a craft as much as the forestry and carpentry work itself. 'At first I was scared', admits arborist Yoshia Matsumoto, who climbs the swaying ladders every season to prune the carefully tended, growing maruta trees.

Pruning is repeated every three or four years. This also slows down the growth rate, creating tighter annual rings and stronger wood. Research at Kyoto University shows that maruta wood had 1.8 times greater bending strength than comparable products.

With due care

After 20–40 years, the trees are felled – with utmost precision and at an angle adjacent to the mountainside, to prevent damage to the precious wood. The bark is peeled off with a knife or by high-pressure water and the logs are then left to dry, stacked against other trees. This gives a weather-resistant surface and a nice sheen, and prevents cracking.

The logs are then transported down the mountain using light off-road vehicles, self-constructed monorails or even helicopters – all out of care for the delicate wood.

Surface treatments

Finally, the logs are planed and polished with a special sand taken from the local waterfall. Legend has it that it was a Buddhist monk who tipped off the villagers in the area about the coveted sand after he had been given food and shelter in the village.

The result is perfectly smooth and straight logs. However, there are even more exclusive varieties, known as *shibori*, or naturally knotty logs, which can sell for ten times as much as the normal variety.

However, such naturally occurring logs are extremely rare, so to imitate the desirable patterned surfaces of shibori logs, the trunks can be 'wrapped' up with special sticks a few years before they are to be felled. The technique, known as striation, involves arborists tying hundreds of small sticks tightly around the trunk. Previously, special wooden sticks

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were used, while plastic models are common today.

'Even experienced craftsmen can only tie up five or six trees in a day. The trees are tied up and then monitored for two to three years', says Hiroshi Sumiyama. When the sticks are removed, a pattern almost identical to naturally patterned logs is visible – and demand is high.

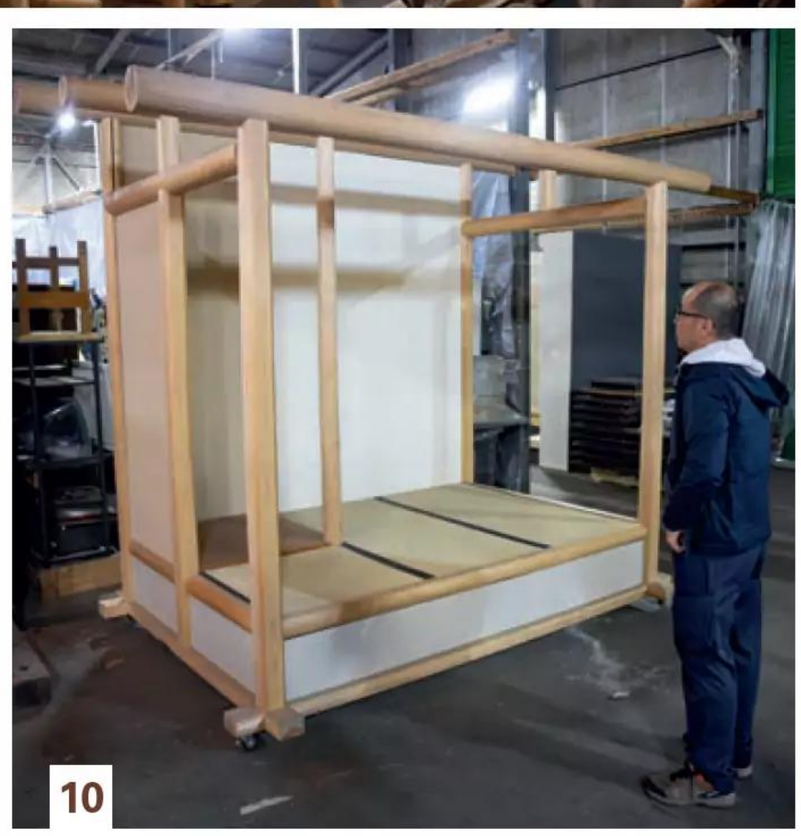
Where standard logs sell for up to A$900 each, artificially patterned logs can go for well over A$5,000 – and the naturally patterned variants for more than A$10,000. Even then, the logs are usually only a modest three metres long, to suit Japanese homes, whose room height is usually 2.7 metres. 'The longest logs we have delivered were 12 metres, and that was to an imperial palace', says Hiroshi Sumiyama.

The logs are sold to expert buyers at special auctions. Some buyers specifically ask for logs from certain growing areas that have been maintained by selected foresters, or that have been striated with a particularly large number of sticks. Experienced craftspeople, fine soil and many sticks can drive up prices considerably. 'The technology must continue to exist in the future. But recently, demand has decreased', says Yoshia Matsumoto, a fifth-generation maruta worker.

In addition to arborists, there is also a shortage of talented carpenters, as it takes a lot of experience to master maruta carpentry. The logs are used as beams for tea houses, among other things, and need to be supported by support pillars with perfectly bowl-shaped recesses for the maruta logs to rest on – a skilled craft that leaves little room for error.

The impressive craftsmanship is put on display in Takehiro Morishita's

3. The tall ladders used when pruning are made in-house. With flex, they allow foresters to move 'in harmony with the trees'. Standard maruta logs sell for up to A$900 each.
4. Repeated pruning slows down growth rates, creating tighter annual rings and stronger wood with greater bending strength than comparable products.
5. Carpenter Takehiro Morishita trims an already felled cedar. Cuttings can be taken from trees that are five to six years old.
6. A photo of a photo displayed at the Kitayama Maruta mill depicts the labour intensive process of striation to create patterned *shibori* logs.
7. Plastic sticks are commonly used now instead of the traditionally wooden ones.
8. Hundreds of small sticks are tightly wrapped around the trunk in the striation process.



9. Processed and polished, maruta and shibori logs for sale at the Kitayama Maruta mill. Meticulously cared for, the resulting logs are extremely straight, strong and knotless.

10. Hiroshi Sumiyama views the construction of a *tokonoma*, an area of a traditional tea house set aside for display of art and ikebana.

11. Stripped cedar maruta tree tops are processed and sold for interior decoration.

Glossary

Maruta: Meaning 'log' in English, especially with the bark removed. In international contexts, however, it is often used when referring specifically to traditionally produced Japanese, round wooden logs.

Daisugi: Special technique for pruning cedar (*sugi*) where tall, straight trunks are grown from selected shoots of an older mother tree. The name translates to 'platform cedar', referring to the appearance of the underlying, compact parent trees.

Tokonoma: An alcove in Japanese houses, where small art objects are often displayed.

Shibori: A verb that means 'to twist, press, squeeze', and which in the case of maruta logs refers to logs with a striated – that is, beautifully patterned – surface. The result is logs that are sold at many times higher prices than the usual, smooth variety.

carpentry shop along the Kitayama highway. Morishita is now 68 years old, and started preparing maruta 50 years ago. He still works in his well-equipped studio, complete with equipment for debarking using high-pressure water and trestles and sharp knives for precise delimbing of cedar logs. 'If you leave small protrusions, new buds will sprout', warns Hiroshi Sumiyama. Not that there is any risk in Takehiro Morishita's experienced hands.

To support the sector and inspire more people to apply for the profession, the government is funding forestry schools. The question is, however, how long will that last? 'You get to introduce us to rich people abroad!', says Hiroshi Sumiyama, laughing.

Kitayama Maruta is trying to export to exclusive clientele overseas but has encountered scrutiny over regulatory frameworks in for instance Europe. These require heat treatment of the logs to ensure that pests and their eggs are completely killed before the products can be released onto the market. 'But if we do that, cracks will form', says Hiroshi Sumiyama. 'The EU doesn't understand – or they don't trust us.'

Perhaps Japan's maruta artists will also arouse the interest of future generations, and find new markets. Alternatively, a 600-year-old tradition risks going to the grave with its practitioners.

Photos: Joakim Rådström

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

25–31 AUGUST
National Skills Week
This year's theme is 'Explore ALL the options'. Showcasing career opportunities.. Raising the status of skills and vocational learning. Vocational Education and Training (VET) has been the foundation of Australia's economy.
www.nationalskillsweek.com.au

3–5 SEPTEMBER
SCM Sydney Innovation Days
Showcasing the latest in woodworking technology, including advanced CNC nesting machines, edge banders, and joinery machines
26 Peter Brock Drive, Eastern Creek NSW 2766
www.scmgroup.com/en_AU/scmwood

4 SEPTEMBER
Maker of the Year, presented by Carbatec
Entries close 11:59pm AEDT for Wood Review's awards for fine woodworkers and wood artists. Information and entry at
www.woodreview.com.au/moty

6 SEPTEMBER–5 OCTOBER
Biennial Clarence Prize exhibition
Supported by Clarence City Council
The Barn at Rosny Farm, Rosny Hill Road, Rosny Park, Tasmania
www.clarenceartsandevents.net

17–18 SEPTEMBER
Carpentry Expo
Demonstrations, educational workshops, and professional development opportunities
Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre
www.carpentryexpo.com.au

10–19 OCTOBER
Sydney Craft Week Festival 2025
The theme for the 2025 festival is 'material intelligence'. The festival is an annual city-wide of making, presenting contemporary craft and skills workshops led by the Australian Design Centre
www.sydneycraftweek.com

26 SEPTEMBER–14 OCTOBER 2025
The Evolution of the Wood Surfboard
30 wood boards on display dating back to the early 1800s. Featuring renowned makers and including special 'mini-shows' and presentations.
www.balsawoodsurfboardsriley.com

30 SEPTEMBER–19 OCTOBER
Melbourne Fringe Festival
Melbourne's annual contemporary design exhibition celebrates innovation and diversity across a range of media and applications. Design Fringe platforms avant-garde art, furniture and design.
www.melbournefringe.com.au

6–10 OCTOBER
Wood Dust backstreets
Workshops with Australian and international craftspeople
Wood Play Studio, Coburg, Victoria
www.wooddustaustralia.com.au

10–11 OCTOBER
Cooroora Woodcraft Show 2025
Displays of work by club members and woodworkers from other clubs, as well as works produced by talented local school students.
Memorial Hall, Maple St, Cooroy, Qld
Email: show@cooroorawoodworkersclub.com
www.cooroorawoodworkersclub.com

10 OCTOBER–19 NOVEMBER 2025
MAKE Award: biennial prize for innovation in Australian craft and design
Finalist exhibition
Australian Design Centre
101–115 William Street, Darlinghurst, Sydney
www.makeaward.au

18–19 OCTOBER
Woodfest 2025
Workshops and Makers Market Bulli Showground, NSW
www.woodfest.com.au

19 OCTOBER
Antique & Collectable Hand Tool Market
Hand Tool Preservation Assoc Australia Inc
164 Neerim Rd, Corner Neerim & Grange Rds,Caulfield East, Vic,
9:30–12:30pm, $5 entry
www.htpaa.org.au

22–23 OCTOBER
Melbourne Build Expo
Construction and design show featuring 450 speakers, 300 exhibitors, networking parties, six conference stages and more.
Melbourne Convention Exhibition Centre
www.melbournebuildexpo.com

25–26 OCTOBER 2025
Goulburn Valley Woodworkers Wood Show
Woodwork sales, trade stands, demonstrations, timber sales, food trucks
Shepparton Showgrounds, Victoria
Len Taylor: 0458 777 901
www.gvwoodworkers.com.au

6–14 NOVEMBER
Symbiosis 2025
Exhibition, Symposium and Masterclass
Studio Woodworkers Australia
JamFactory, Adelaide
studiowoodworkers.org.au

7–8 NOVEMBER
Beyond Tools Woodworking Show
Demonstrations, tool experts, show deals, free entry 9am–4pm daily
Beyond Tools, 23 Exhibition Drive, Malaga, WA
beyondtools.com

8–9 NOVEMBER 2025
Eltham & District Woodworkers Club Annual Exhibition
Demonstrations and sales daily from 9am–5pm. Free hands-on workshop for children.
Eltham Community Centre
801 Main Road Eltham, Victoria
www.elthamwoodworkers.org.au

8–9 NOVEMBER 2025
Out of The Woods Competition and Exhibition
A celebration of fine woodwork presented by Fine Woodwork Association WA
The Pattern Shop, Midland Railway Workshops, Blacksmith Lane West, Midland WA
Email ootw@fwwa.org.au

13–14 NOVEMBER
Southeast Asia Woodworking Summit 2025
Impact Exhibition and Convention Centre, Bangkok, Thailand
thailandwoodworking.com

15–30 NOVEMBER
2025 Graduating Exhibition Sturt School for Wood
Sturt Gallery, Cnr Range Road & Waverley Parade, Mittagong, NSW
www.sturt.nsw.edu.au

22–23 NOVEMBER 2025
Hand Tool Event
Melbourne Guild of Fine Woodworking
14 Cottage St, Blackburn, Vic 3130
www.mgfw.com.au

27 NOVEMBER–13 DECEMBER
Craft + Design Canberra Annual Members Exhibition
Makers from the ACT and surrounding region
www.craftanddesigncanberra.org

Goodbye London Plane

Using a soon-to-expand urban timber resource, and the inspiration of a select group of makers, created a collection of work that was all about local. Andy Ward explains...

Often maligned, London plane trees are a huge element of Melbourne's urban fabric. These trees carry complex and potent undertones within our urban landscape.

Melburnians have a love-hate relationship with these beautiful, particulate pollutant ingesting, shade-supplying, hay-fever-inducing trip hazards. London plane tree roots can be unruly and hazardous with twisted limbs that obstruct powerlines and other infrastructure.

After several years of studies, draft masterplans and complaints from residents and visitors alike, most of Melbourne's London plane trees will be removed under a long-term City of Melbourne Council plan to diversify the city's tree population. They currently make up 70% of the total tree population in the inner city but in 40 years could make up only 5%.

Whilst no London plane tree has ever been recorded to die of old age, the tree is often sent to the chipper. The aim of the *Goodbye London Plane* project was to show how an often-vilified tree can be repurposed from the city's fallen and felled.

Goodbye London Plane paticipants and curators, left to right: Sean Brickhill, Georgie Szymanski, Lauren Henderson, Andy Ward, Budd Heyser, Bohdan Cherednyk and Ben Mooney.

With native logging now banned in Victoria's state forests and the carbon footprint involved in importing materials seeming nonsensical, it's time we employed the most sustainable practices possible – using the materials on our doorstep. Let's peel back the cambium on this striking and misunderstood material.

Seeding an idea

A group exhibition showcasing the works made by some of our city's finest makers was intended to spark conversation and invite a second look at an often demonised, yet integral, part of our urban fabric, history and identity.

I was approached in late 2024 by Ben Mooney of MaHouse, a Collingwood based homewares store, to collaborate on a group show for Melbourne Design Week. Ben is a huge supporter of local makers and has an amazing eye and innate ability to pull the seemingly chaotic into something finessed and refined. Having never curated or exhibited in a show, teaming up with Ben gave me a quiet confidence that we could pull it off together.

I don't suffer from hay fever or operate a street sweeper. If it was not for their inability to provide homes for our native wildlife I would say I have no negative feelings towards the trees. The material is stunning and surprisingly diverse in colour and tone as I discovered throughout this process. What initially drew me to the material was the warm straw tones and wild grain, I like how it can be both subtle and intense depending on how you cut it.'

I had been wanting to work with London plane for quite a while, I first saw the material shared in an Instagram post by Revival Projects, who I ended up engaging with for this show. I was so surprised by its striking figure and this was the catalyst for one of the underlying themes of the show. I loved the idea that something so seemingly mundane and everyday to Melburnians could be concealing such unknown beauty.

With the push for their removal on the horizon, it seemed like a great opportunity to get together some of our favourite local makers to showcase this underutilised and iconically Melbourne material.

Accessing the resource

I engaged with Revival Projects in Collingwood who were able to make this show possible through their urban tree recovery initiative. As part of their transfer of custody arrangement we

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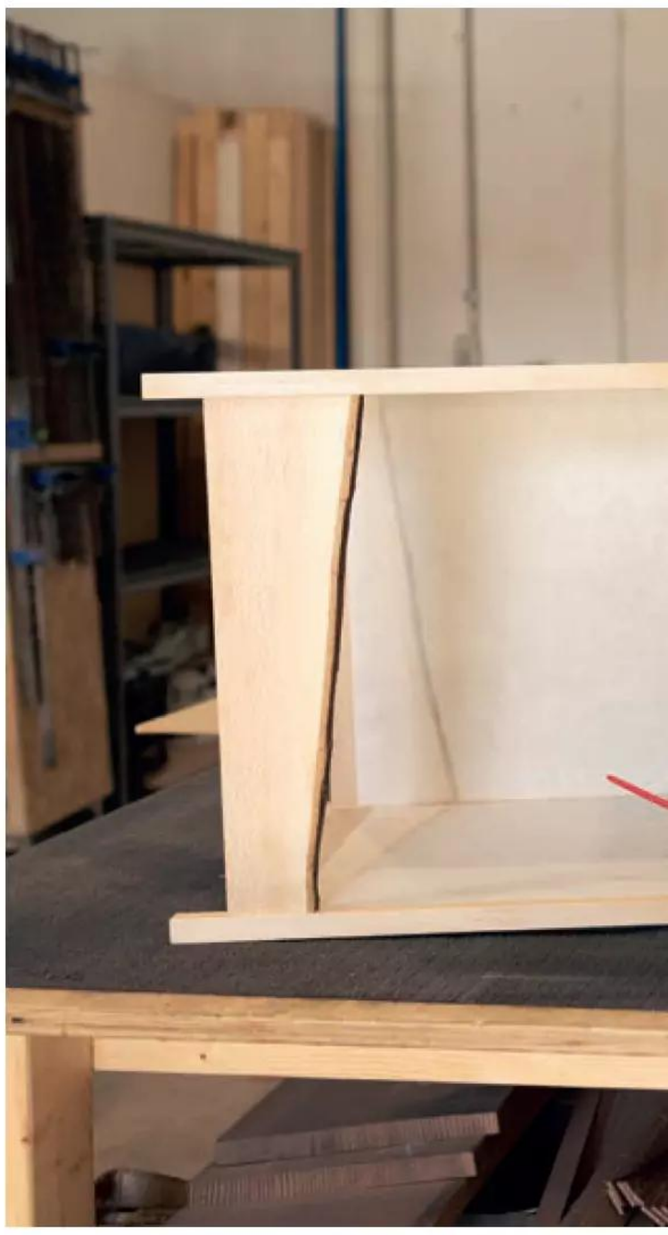

were fortunate to be able to make our pieces from a plane tree felled only a few blocks away from MaHouse.

Finding the makers

Choosing the makers was a very organic process – Ben and I were able to rattle off the list pretty much on the spot. Some of the makers had previously sold pieces at MaHouse, others we both just mutually admired.

I believe that to be a maker, you need a certain amount of open-mindedness and sensitivity. These qualities are especially valuable when participating in a group show with many moving parts and tight deadlines.

For this show, most of the London plane had a moisture content of 25% just eight weeks before the opening, which made building solid furniture a significant challenge. Fortunately, Revival Projects generously donated some dry offcut quarter rounds from a previous milling of the tree. While some might have seen this as unusable scrap material, everyone approached it with vision, optimism, and enthusiasm.

It was a unique experience to be together at Revival at the very beginning of the design process, when there are more questions than answers. Given the typically solitary nature of making, it was really refreshing to gain insight into each other's thinking at such an early stage. I was genuinely blown away by the work that was produced for the show. It was inspiring to see how each maker transformed their chosen material into something beautiful and considered.

Wet wood

It was about 10 weeks out from the show opening when I realised that a large majority of the available material wouldn't be fully dry until approximately three years after the show opening, not super ideal. That discovery sent me spiralling down a rabbit hole of kiln research, driven by a certain amount of defiant unwillingness to accept that I couldn't use this material.

After messaging just about every woodworker in Melbourne and countless hours on YouTube, I spoke to Wood Review Editor Linda Nathan, who immediately recalled some articles by Neil Erasmus published in *AWR#31* and #32*. These articles detailed Neil's ingenious dehumidification kiln design, made specifically for drying veneers.

Following Neil's design, I made a kiln and managed to take the London plane veneers I'd cut from a moisture content of 25% down to 6% in just 48 hours, and they remained predominantly flat and stable throughout the process.

The kiln is genius in its simplicity: an oil heater and dehumidifier are placed at the rear of an insulated cabinet. Inside that, a secondary box holds the veneers. Two computer fans circulate warm air over the timber, drawing moisture into the dehumidifier.

Each veneer is pressed between alternating corrugated cardboard sheets and clamped or weighted down inside the secondary box. Thanks to the large amount of surface area in contact with the veneers, combined with the constant airflow, this method

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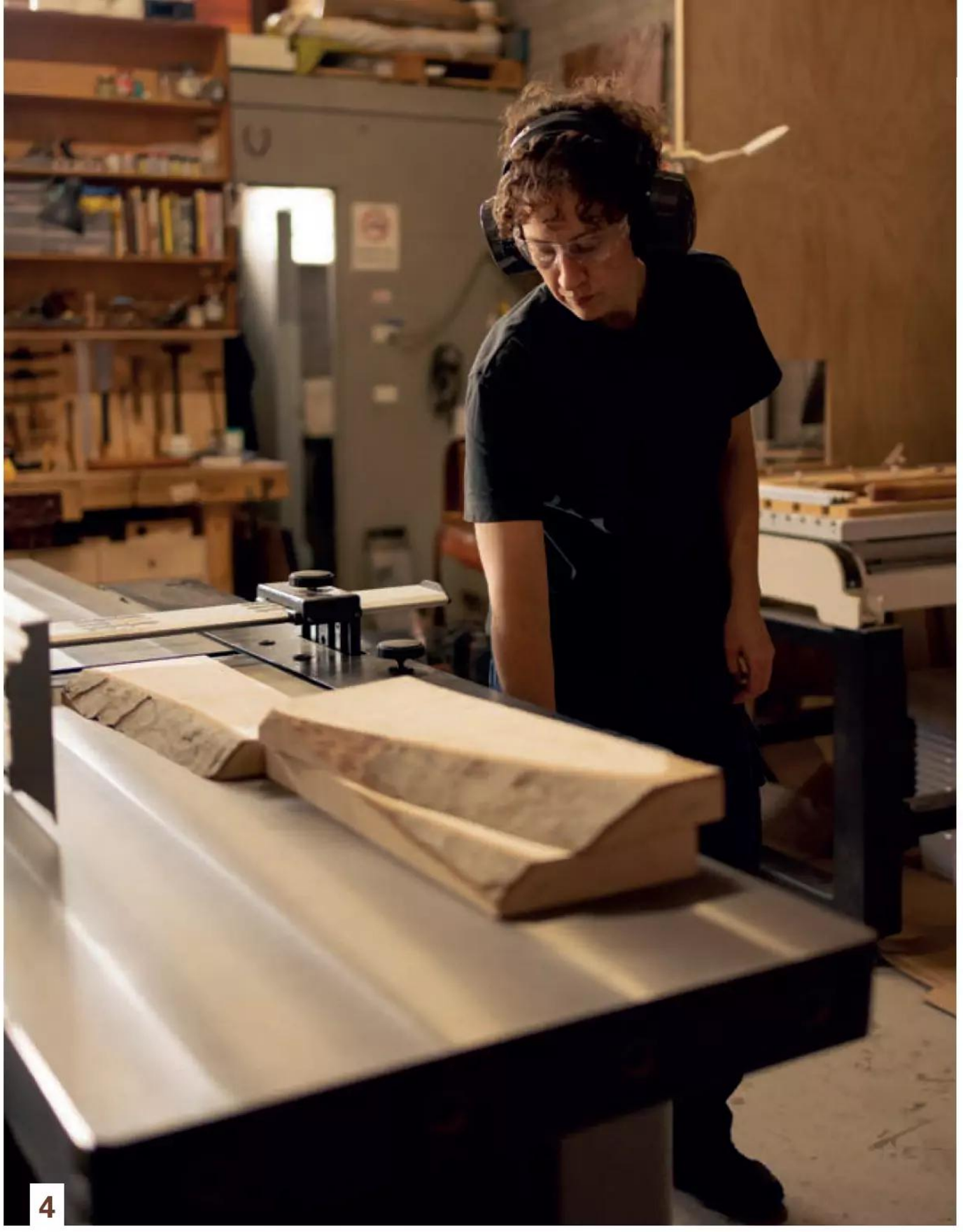

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allows the thin material, which would normally warp under such fast drying conditions, to stay remarkably flat and usable.

What to make?

I had been exploring the idea of making a sculptural screen incorporating a lighting element for quite a while. After Ben and I first discussed our potential plans for the show, and how we envisioned the work being displayed in his shop, I designed my *Plane Screen*. Given the minimal aesthetic of the piece, it ended up being a good vehicle for my first foray into using more wild and figured material.

I chose to slip-match my veneers, which created a subtle cant in the direction of the circular cut-out, where a concealed light housed in the upright support at the back illuminates the opening from behind. For the substrate, I chose solid American glacial oak, both as a nod to its increasing use as a replacement for timbers like Vic ash and Tassie oak since the recent forestry bans, and because of its beautiful ray fleck when

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1. Budd Heyser selecting London plane at Revival Projects.
2. Ben Mooney (left) and Andy Ward at ground zero of the London plane project.
3. Lauren Henderson: 'My first time using this timber for joinery – it has some beautiful figure that I'm excited to showcase.'
4. Georgie Szymanski: London plane is 'a beautiful timber to machine and use hand tools with and has a beautiful freckled like appearance. I believe we should be utilising this tree in Melbourne as furniture grade timber and not wasting a precious resource'.
5. Georgie Szymanski in the workshop with her table in-progress.
6. Andy Ward: 'The grain can be both subtle and intense depending on how you cut it.'

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7. Andy Ward, *Plane Screen* and *Plane Prop*. London plane veneers are laid over American glacial oak.

8. Andy Ward, *Plane Seam screen*, veneer, brass and aluminium

9. Lauren Henderson, *Glow Table* doubles as 'portable, rechargeable ambient floor lamp'.

quartersawn. That fleck blended in nicely with the London plane veneers, creating a quiet visual harmony between the two materials.

Working with London plane

What initially drew me to London plane was the consistent straw tone and beautiful grain that intensifies on closer inspection. When plain sawn, it could almost be mistaken for maple or beech; when cut on the quarter, it can transition from very fine interlocked pore-like figure to an exaggerated snakeskin pattern.

Having only seen small amounts of London plane prior to working with it, I had the preconception that it was generally homogenous in tone. Inspecting the log that was milled at Revival was a bit of a rude awakening it had some very wild spalting and colour verging on wood porn territory.

When it comes to timber selection, I'm usually drawn to more subtle and visually quiet material. I was out of my comfort zone here but like anything meaningful or challenging, I've found this is usually a good place to lean in.

Working predominantly with Australian hardwoods really puts you in good stead to tackle most non-native timbers. London plane is a medium-density hardwood in terms of Janka hardness, a close comparison would be Tasmanian blackwood.

The London plane was a genuine joy to work. It machined and sanded beautifully and took surprisingly well to hand tools given its sometimes heavily interlocked grain.

I did find it a little tricky to finish at first. The varied tone in the timber I used was looking a little muddy under a clear hardwax oil. In the end, opting for a slight amount of white pigment helped balance things out.

10. Budd Heyser, handcrafted knives in London plane, high carbon steel, coin silver.

11. Nick Alyward, *Bump vase* 'highlighting contrasting London plane grain'

12. Bodhan Cheredynk, *Church Window Pants*, highlighting live edged.

13. Billie Civello, *G-Stool*, London, plane, recycled aluminium, stainless steel.

14. Georgie Szymanski, *Tea Table,* 'a simplified Chippendale version'.

Will I use London plane again?

I can see myself seeking out more of this beautiful material in the future and sincerely hope to see it be thoughtfully processed and utilised to its full potential should the plans for their removal go ahead.

The exhibition was displayed at Ben's shop MaHouse Supply Store in Melbourne as part of Melbourne Design Week 2025.

Photos: Revival and workshop. PARDU Nicole Williams
Finished pieces: Assignment Studio, Hannah Nikkelson

Learn more about Andrew Ward @andyward__ at www.andyward.au

Revival Projects is located in Collingwood, Melbourne, see revivalprojects.com.au/

For information about MaHouse, see mahousesupplystore.com.au/ where, at the time of writing, the items exhibited were available for purchase.

** You can read Neil Erasmus's articles on the Wood Review website at www.woodreview.com.au/how-to/how-to-make-a-kiln-for-drying-hand-cut-veneers*

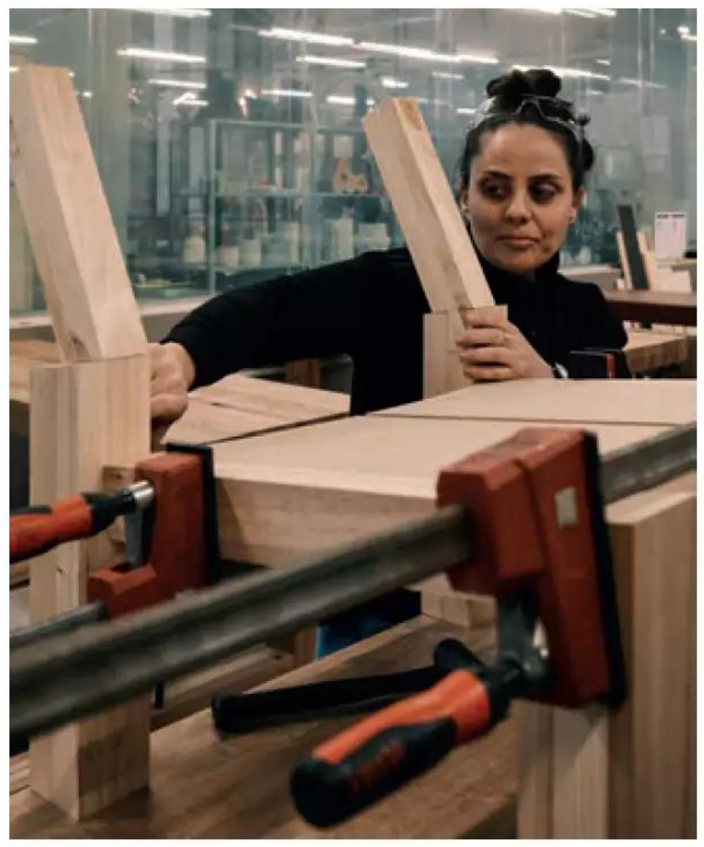
Photos: Revival and workshop. PARDU Nicole Williams

Finished: Assignment Studio, Hannah Nikkelson

Knot Pine

Designed and made as a homage to an iconic urban tree, a limited edition of chairs now stand as a legacy to its significance.

Loathe it or love it, radiata pine is at foundation of Australia's plantation and building industries. As a medium for fine furniture it's not widely recognised however. Albeit on a relatively small scale, Robert Dunlop took it on the world stage with his 80s era Danish design inspired *Squatters Campaign* range. Over 20 years ago, this magazine hosted a competition titled *Redesigning Pine* which looked at understanding and valuing the resource more highly.



Monterey pine is another name for this species and until early 2020, a Monterey pine stood in Walsh Street, South Yarra before the heritage listed family home designed by renowned architect Robyn Boyd in 1958.

The tree was already mature when Robin Boyd bought the plot in 1957. In designing his family home, Boyd opted to preserve much of the established vegetation – including the pine, southern blue gum and hackberry trees and built heritage remnants, such as the rubble stone retaining wall found on site. When Walsh Street was added to the Victorian Heritage Register in 2007, Boyd's decision to site the residence in a way that preserved the *Pinus radiata* was recognised, and the tree was specifically identified T1 in the listing.

The pine's death at 22 metres tall and its felled timber provided a valuable resource and an opportunity for the Robyn Boyd Foundation who are now the custodians of the residence to consider its second life. To challenge the perception of pine as a cheap material, the foundation commissioned Melbourne furniture maker Alexsandra Pontonio to design a piece with it.

'I had been wanting to work with pine for some time, as I was keen to challenge the conventional understanding of precious materials within the context of fine furniture', said Alexsandra. 'I was so excited when I first received this brief, the heritage and history of this tree gave so much depth to this idea.'

The result of her work is the *Knot Pine* chair design now made in an edition of 20 and available to purchase with funds raised supporting the Robin Boyd Foundation.

Learn more at robinboyd.org.au

Main: Walsh Street Monterey Pine, 2019. Image by and courtesy of John Gollings.

Full and detail views of the *Knot Pine* chair. *Photos: Michael Pham*

Designer Alexsandra Pontonio working on the chair design at the Melbourne School of Design maker space. *Photo: Michael Pham*

Riding the Wave

From ancient times man has found ways to glide on water. Mark Riley outlines a basic history that will be brought to life in an upcoming exhibition.

History is replete with examples of humans seeking to ride the waves, and wood has always been the primary material used.

Archaeologists have found that the practice of riding a vessel with a wave was utilised since the pre-Inca cultures around three to five thousand years ago. Peruvian Moche people used the *caballito de totora* (little horse of reeds) with archaeological evidence showing its use around 200 CE.

There are reports dating back to the 1640s of Africans surfing on long wooden boards. Captain Cook's crew documented many times that locals in the Polynesian islands were riding wood boards from 1769, and then it was reported in 1778 in The Hawaiian Islands.

In the 1900s Hawaiian Duke Kahanamoku took surfing to the USA and Australia. Duke is considered the 'father of modern surfing'.

During the 1920s, Australians and Americans were building plywood boards, and when the USA team came to Australia in 1956, the balsawood revolution started. This changed the game. Australians soon followed the balsa rage until polyurethane came along in in the 60s. This took over the markets. There are many different woods now being used in different types of constructed boards.

As to my own interest, growing up in Melbourne and Sydney I was drawn to surfing at an early age, and spent the majority of my time in the water. I have always had a fascination with anything made out of wood and that's why I became a carpenter.

After working several years in the trade, I was ready for a change. I packed a bag and a couple of surfboards and went on a trip to Mexico, Central and South America. Two months into the trip, two polyurethane boards had already broken but then I stumbled upon balsa wood in Ecuador. It was light, had great flex characteristics and grew fast on sustainable farms.

Right: *Olo* surfboard, (1819, original), solid oregon, 18' 7-1 /2". The traditional finless Hawaiian *Olo* longboard was reserved for chieftains and were used for surfing large waves and reportedly even tsunamis.

Far right: From from the Bennett family (left to right), four classic Australian 'kookboxes' (aka cigar boards, paddleboards or hollow plywood boards) built by Barry Bennett from the 30s to 50s, 15'6", 15' and 17' respectively.

On the far right is a Hawaiian (Waikiki) plank board (1910), sugar pine, 9' 8". This vintage board stands testament to the Renaissance of surfing that began in Waikiki at the close of the 19th century. Found beneath a Northern Beaches, Sydney house, it was offered to The Bennetts, who have preserved its legacy. It not only holds historical significance in the evolution of surfing but also carries a unique connection between Hawaiian craftsmanship and Australian surf culture, making it a rare and valuable piece of surf history.


"Steeler"
PACIFIC
S.L.S.C.
WAIKIKI

Top: Mark Riley with friend Tim carrying a half-trunk of balsa.

Above: Balsa (*Ochroma pyramidale*) is the most sustainable wood to use for surfboard building. The trees are fast and relatively easy to grow.

I knocked out my first board then and there in Ecuador. After building houses in Sydney for 20 years and using oregon, pine, and maple, when I touched a piece of balsa in Ecuador with its silky-smooth finish and when I cut it sanded it and bent it, it was a hallelujah moment. From this day in 1995, I was hooked on balsa.

The potential for a strong, light, long-lasting surfboard in not just as solid balsa but also in combination with foam was clear to me. Twelve months after leaving Australia, I came back to Sydney with a container of balsa sticks in tow. Soon after, in April 1996, Riley Balsawood Surfboards was born.

There are many ways to build a wooden board. The heaviest way is to build them solid but you can cut them apart and chamber the centre of the board to reduce the weight. Another way is to build a frame and apply wood to the deck and the bottom with solid rails.

The most efficient and lasting method is to shape a polystyrene foam blank and vacuum bag 2.5mm sheets of balsa wood to the foam and add balsawood band rails to finish off, giving it lightness, flex and buoyancy. The most environmentally friendly way is to use recycled sawdust with a biodegradable mixture to form a blank and shape it.

Over the years there's been a shift from solid wood to lighter (hollow) or polystyrene cores. This still gives the feel of wood when in the water but gives lightness and flex.

Early designs saw boards made from dense hardwoods evolve to the lightweight balsa wood boards of Hawaii and the US before the plywood creations that emerged in Australia.

Today, the sustainable possibilities are endless, with boards crafted from balsa wood, agave, western red and Australian cedars, redwood, bamboo, Pacific maple, cork, chop sticks, sugar pine, oregon, plywood and paulownia, showcasing every imaginable style. The most sustainable wood is the balsawood tree *Ochroma pyramidale* because of its large fast-growing trunks that mature in four years. They are easy to grow with minimum maintenance and water in the right areas.

Australia is a huge surf market but we are slow when it comes to moving from polyurethane to more environmentally friendly alternatives. It is very difficult to get funding or support from the government to help switch to natural products and move away from chemically produced, non-biodegradable materials.

There aren't many manufacturers in Australia because labour is intensive and expensive – most wooden boards are made in Asia. The DIY market is bright however with many people attending classes or building boards from kits. It's very satisfying to build an eco-friendly board and even more satisfying when you ride it.

For the last 30 years, I have been researching the history of surfboards and how they are made. *The Evolution of the Wood Surfboard from the 1500s* is my attempt to bring some of that history back for others to learn from and enjoy. At this exhibition, there will be 30 boards on display, as well as special guests and other items as well. The event takes place from 26 September to 14 October, 2025 at Hazelhurst Regional Gallery & Arts Centre in Gymea, NSW.

Photos courtesy Mark Riley

Contact Mark Riley via. balsawoodsurfboardsriley.com

Australian Wood Review

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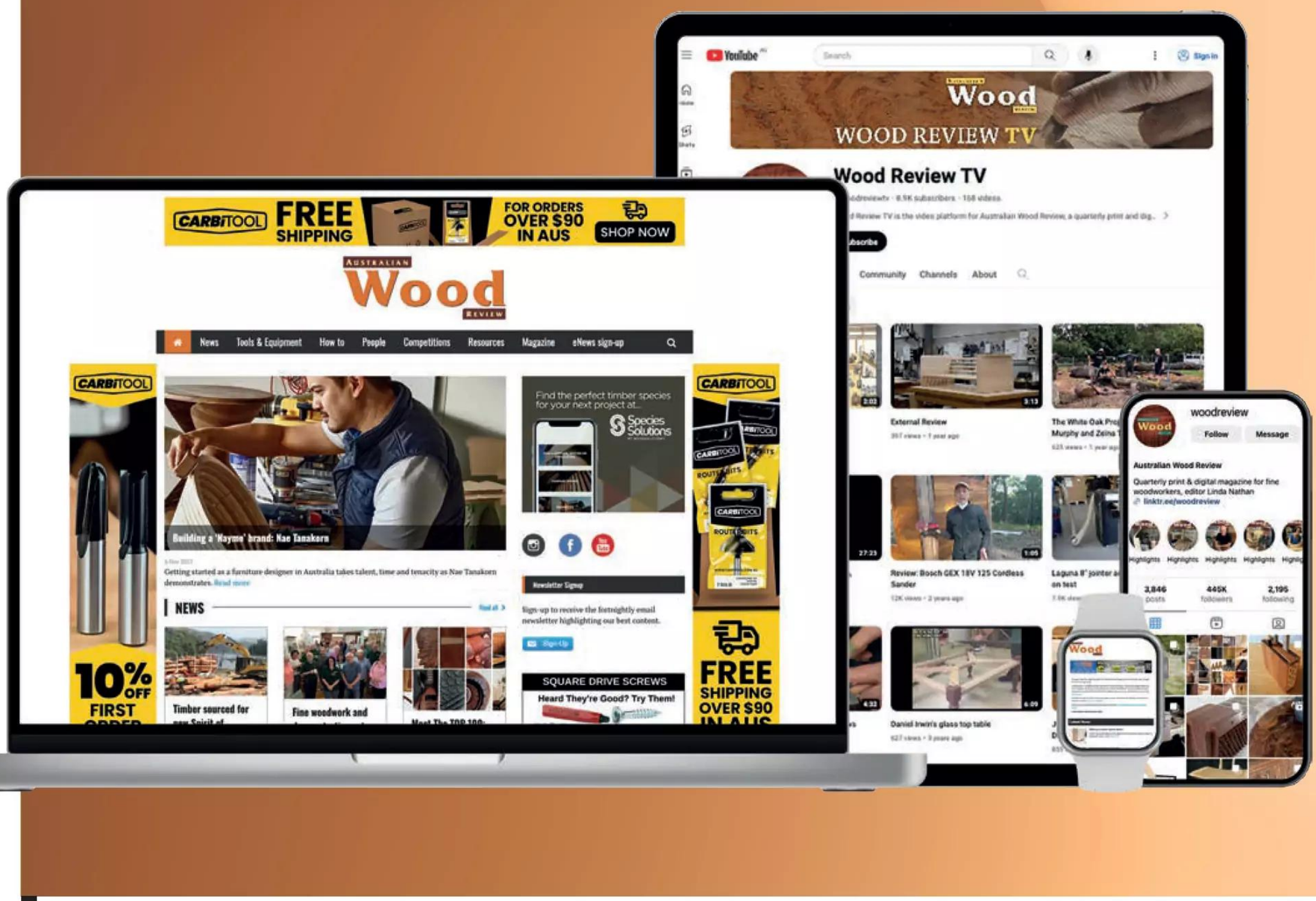

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