AUSTRALIAN
Wood
REVIEW 133



Maker of the Year Awards 26

PRESENTED BY HARE&FORBES MACHINERYHOUSE

OVERALL WINNER
Riley Hearn

TOP 100
Winners & finalists revealed

PROJECTS

- KUMIKO LAMP
- VENEERED TRAY
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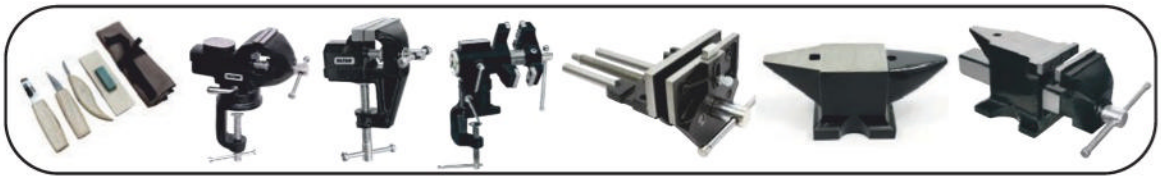



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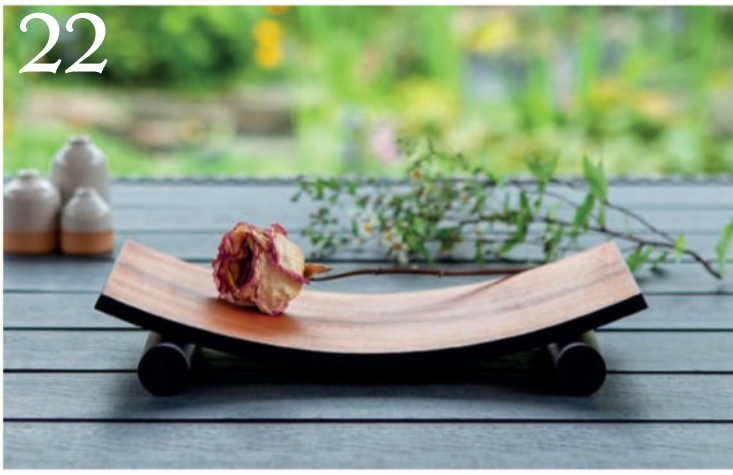
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Editor's Letter

Woodworkers are DIY people. You can make your own furniture, art and even tools – but what about a workshop? This issue we have the ultimate project for you. Using green timbers and mortise and tenon joinery, Lachlan Park shows how a woodworker can build their own space. And with summer holidays coming up, this could be just the right time to start.

Learning and teaching

There aren't as many TAFE course or tertiary options for learning fine woodworking now. On the other hand, there are more small schools and individual makers offering tuition – it can be a nice side hustle after all. If you've heard the expression 'those who can, do; those who can't, teach' – think again. Just because you can 'do' woodwork, doesn't mean you can teach! Patt Gregory has taught from beginner level for decades and has many tips to offer would-be teachers. There are also more than a few insights into what kind of teacher to look for.

Maker of the Year reflections

Where do we start, describing the entries for Maker of the Year, presented by Hare & Forbes? I'm not overstating when I say I am staggered by the depth and breadth of entries. Admittedly I'm biased, but I do think woodworkers are some of the cleverest and most passionate people committed to a craft around.

If, in the seventh year of this competition, I had to make generalisations, I would say the standard and complexity of work has gone up. I feel the level of detailing has increased. There seem to be more entries that fall into the 'wood art' category, and that includes 'art furniture' which possibly reflects how the value of handmade is being recognised.

The level of entry presentation for Maker of the Year has risen too. In our digitised world of scrolling a lot of us have become more visually literate. Overall, the photos submitted are better than they used to be. For some people, phone cameras have levelled the playing field, however quite a few makers have realised the value of using professional photographers to best portray a piece.

Judging criteria are combined to determine winning entries. The use of superb wood or superbly executed techniques should not outweigh design and to a lesser degree innovation, and it's possible for expression and feeling captured to trump expertise. Judging award winners is still difficult.

What impresses me least are flowery AI generated entry descriptions. To my mind there is no point submitting a description that mostly amounts to praise for your own piece. Your work should speak in your voice, and so should your words.

Entry descriptions should cover concept, design, construction and materials and I have to say that I do enjoy reading the deeply personal thoughts, feelings and experiences that many entrants describe as the foundation of their design and making choices.

Overall the work entered in Maker of the Year 2026 is outstanding and I would like to congratulate all entrants for participating.

I encourage you to include your work in next year's competition. Entries open in March 2027 at www.makeroftheyear.com.au

Wishing you all the best for the holiday season and New Year.

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COVER:
Overall Maker of the Year 2026 winner Riley Hearn in the JamFactory studio in Adelaide.

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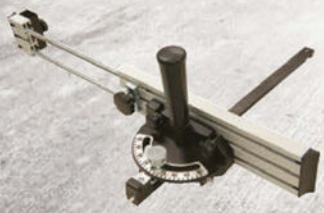

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Step-by-Step Design

Inspired by the famous Studley tool chest, German sound engineer Patrick Damiani explains how he was in no hurry with the design and build of his layered tool chest.

When I started building the tool chest, I knew it would take me a long time, so I decided to approach it in smaller steps. That way I could have a sense of accomplishment along the way.

I started with the carcase and the drawers, and from there I simply went with the flow. There was never a detailed plan, just a rough idea – which is actually how I build most of my furniture.

The first interior section I made was the little twin holder for my No.3 and No.4 planes. I really enjoyed building these small individual tool holders, or little sections for just a handful of tools at a time.



I spent a ridiculous amount of time simply laying tools out on my bench and staring at them, trying to figure out an arrangement that would work well and look right. As soon as I felt I had a section figured out, I just went for it, often coming up with new ideas along the way.

If you look closely at the finished chest, you can actually see that evolution. The types of wood change from one section to another, and different kinds of decoration appear in different areas. The build was spread over six years, so those variations happened quite naturally. I like that they have become part of the chest's story.

One thing I did know from the beginning was that I wanted to house as many of my important tools as possible without having to dig through layers to get to them. Everything should be easily accessible and have its own place.



Main: The overall look of Patrick Damiani's tool chest is inspired by the famous Studley tool chest, however the design evolved in stages over a period of six years.

Below: Patrick Damiani lives in Karlsruhe, Germany. A professional sound engineer who specialises in heavy metal music, he enjoys woodworking as a very serious and complementary hobby.

Once a section was finished, I considered it finished. I didn't go back later to modify it or squeeze in more tools. The chest simply grew section by section until, eventually, there wasn't much space left to fill.

The build

The carcase is basically one big dovetailed box. I built it as a single piece first, then used a handsaw to rip it into two halves. That way I could make sure that both halves matched perfectly when the chest was closed.

The front is built using traditional frame and panel construction, with mortise and tenon joints and the panels sitting in grooves. All in all, the entire build took me around 400 hours, spread over six years.

Inspired by Studley

I would be lying if I said Mr Studley's tool chest hadn't inspired me, but I never tried to copy his chest in detail. What inspired me much more was the overall aesthetic – the idea of giving every tool its own place while creating something that is beautiful in its own right. I definitely wanted to build my own rendition of that idea, with my own set of tools and my own design choices.

The tools

I'm not really a tool collector or hoarder. Most of the tools I own are tools I actually use, and I've bought them as I needed them over the years.

Of course, after working with some of them for many years, you do become attached to them. I would be sad if I broke or lost one, but most of them aren't really irreplaceable.

For me, their significance comes mostly from using them rather than owning them. They are working tools, not museum pieces – even if I built them a rather elaborate home.

My woodworking life

Woodworking is purely a passion for me. Professionally, I'm a recording and mixing engineer, so I spend a large part of my working day in front of a computer screen. Going into the workshop brings me back into the analogue world – working with my hands, with real materials, and without an undo button.

I probably spend several hundred hours in the workshop every year, but I don't earn money from my woodworking. I mostly build things for myself, for our home, or for friends.

I'm completely self-taught. I learned almost everything I know from watching other woodworkers on YouTube, and then spent a lot of time in the workshop practising, making mistakes and gradually honing my skills. Watching someone cut a perfect dovetail is one thing; getting your own to fit is another.

Recently I started filming some of my own projects and sharing them online. In a way, that feels like giving something back. I learned so much from people who took the time to share their work, and now perhaps someone else can pick up an idea or two from watching me build.

The workshop

My workshop is actually an annexe

of my recording studio building, so fortunately the journey from one to the other is very short. The unplugged part is tiny – around 11 square metres (118 sq ft). There is a separate machine area as well, but that has a fairly small footprint too.

The workshop has grown and evolved with me over the roughly ten years since I started woodworking. I originally started woodworking because I needed to build my new recording studio. And when I say I built the studio, I mean quite literally – from the walls and ceilings to the studio furniture, acoustic absorbers and diffusers, and even my main studio monitors. So in a very practical sense, woodworking grew directly out of my work as a recording engineer.

Nothing was really designed all at once. Whenever I needed more storage or found a better way to organise something, I changed or added to it. In a space this small, you eventually learn to make use of almost every available centimetre.







Left: The detail views of the tool chest above show how each tool has been individually housed in response to its shape, and with ornamental touches added.

I have a small tablesaw, bandsaw, jointer and thickness planer, but honestly, I don't use the machines very often. They mostly come into play when I'm building something that simply needs to get done quickly rather than working on a project purely for the enjoyment of making it by hand.

Probably 95% of my woodworking time is spent in the unplugged part of the shop, where the workbench is the centrepiece. It's not that I have anything against machines – I use them when they make sense. But when I'm woodworking purely for enjoyment, I don't really want to make it faster. The process is the part I enjoy.

I built drawer cabinets underneath all the work surfaces, and the back wall around the tool chest is filled with tools as well. Everything has to earn its place. Over the years, organising and improving the workshop has almost become a woodworking project in itself.

Step-by-step design

Gradually building something from scratch involves creativity, but also a lot of problem-solving, planning and decision-making along the way. And at some point you have to stop thinking about it, make a decision and get it done.

As far as optimising space and storage goes I would say to others: buy only what you actually need. It saves money and, in a small workshop, a lot of space.

It's very easy to convince yourself that you need a particular tool or machine because everybody else seems to have one. But do you really need that huge tablesaw if you only use it twice a year? I'd rather have fewer tools that I use regularly and give each of them a sensible place.

I also wouldn't try to design the perfect workshop all at once. My own shop has evolved over about ten years, and I think that has actually made it better. You



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Above: Adjacent to his recording studio, the workshop is a small space where, much like the author's tool chest, space has been fully maximised.

gradually discover where you naturally reach for a tool, what gets in your way, and which things you never use. Then you adapt the space around the way you really work, rather than around the way you imagined you would work.

And especially in a small shop, use the space you already have. The areas underneath benches and work surfaces, walls and even small gaps can provide a surprising amount of storage if you build specifically for them.

For me, optimisation isn't about fitting as much as possible into a room. It's about having what you need, where you need it, without the workshop getting in the way of the woodworking.

For me, this was more than a storage project. It brought together many of the skills I enjoy most about woodworking: careful layout, precise hand-cut joinery, fitting, shaping and problem solving. After hundreds of hours of work, the chest has become both the centre of my hand-tool workshop and a record of the craft I have been learning and practising.

Photos: Patrick Damiani

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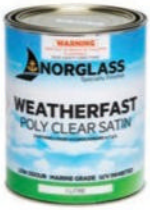

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Making a Kumiko Lamp

Creating a table lamp based on pentagonal shapes was an exercise in geometry and accuracy, however glowing results were achieved. Story by Brian Davey.

I have had a long fascination with lights and how they can enhance a space. More recently I have enjoyed the challenges and results of creating light fittings using *kumiko* .

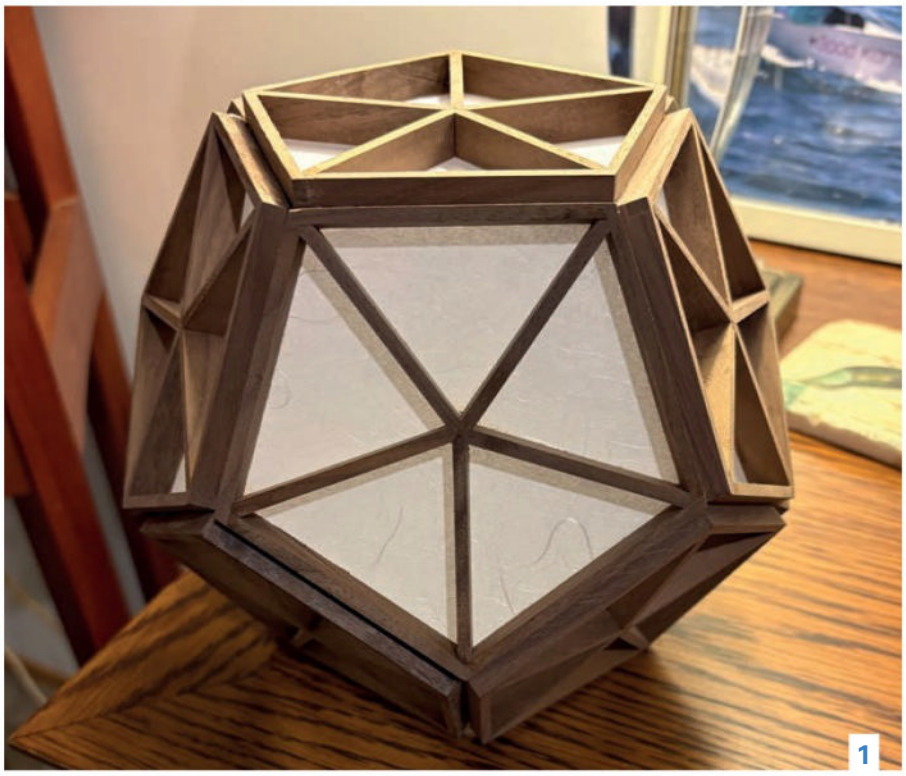
Kumiko lattice work is seen in traditional Japanese architectural joinery and recently popularised by woodworkers adding kumiko panels to cabinetry and boxes. Patterns range from the familiar *asanoha* motif through to intricate and highly ornate scenes.

Kumiko is traditionally based on hexagons so making this pentagonal based pattern for a kumiko light presented me with a fresh new challenge (**photo 1**).

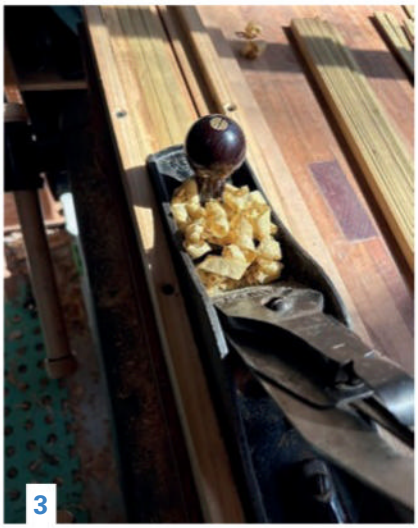
A dodecahedron is a three-dimensional 12-sided form. Each of the 12 sides has five sides which further divide into five triangles. The lamp is made up of 11 x 3.2mm section sized lengths or strips.

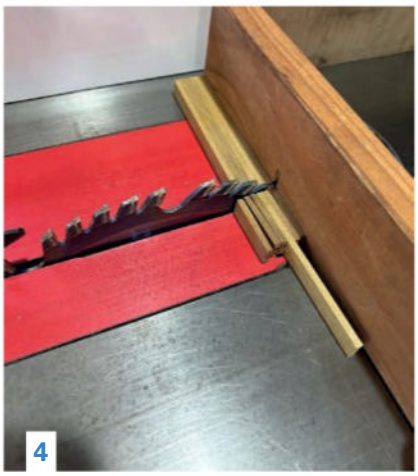
Preparing the kumiko strips

I start with thicknessing a board to 11mm, in this case some recycled kauri that has a warm look that comes from age. The thin strip ripping jig that I use is not unique, though I do like the angled adjustment that I









have added that makes for accurate adjustments (**photo 2**).

Using this jig, the strips of timber are thicknessed to 3.2 mm (the exact thickness of my tablesaw blade), using a well prepared jack plane (**photo 3**). Unless you apply precision at this step you risk breaking pieces if they are too tight and need hammering in, or you end up with loose joints and imprecise pentagons. Believe me, these quickly become an accumulative error that can put your whole project on the rocks!

Cut to length

Next, I gang cut the sides of the pentagons to length on the circular saw to 98mm (**photo 4**). I need 64 of these pieces to make 12 pentagons, though allowing for a hole for the light at the base, I actually use only 11. However cutting plenty of spare pieces throughout the process is essential as back-up for problems, and to get the half lap joint exactly right in the next step.

Cutting the half lap

The 18° tablesaw sled shown in **photo 5** makes cutting the half lap slots easy. I would suggest a digital sliding bevel is essential here. Raise the blade to exactly halfway through the pentagon sides by trial and error, set a distance stopper to about 18mm and then cut the slots in the parts, flipping them end for end for the second cut. I did these in stacks of about 15 to hurry up the process and found it also makes the parts more consistent in size.

Assembling the pentagons

This is quite straightforward, add a touch of glue with a fine artist's brush and squeeze the parts together (**photo 6**). You will quickly have a pile of identical pentagons to leave to dry till the next day. This is important as pushing the 'spokes' into the pentagon can deform the shape if they are not fully cured.

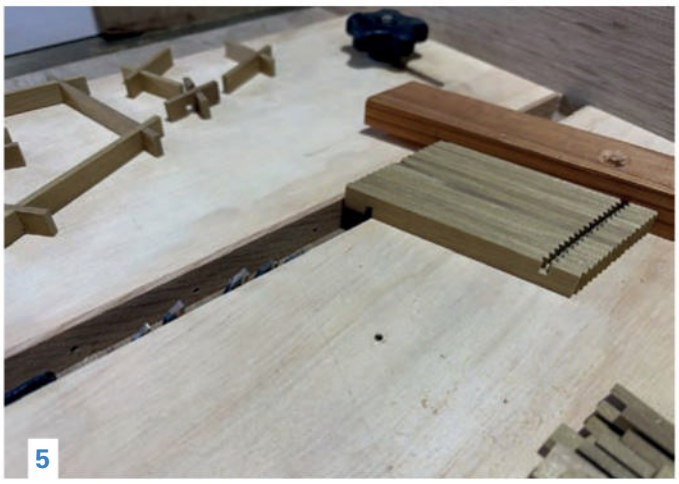
Adding in the 'spokes'

Now I gang cut another set of pieces also 11 x 3.2mm in section and 60mm long – this is about half a millimetre longer than needed. These 'spokes' then have their ends bevelled at 57.5 and 36°.

To create the angled cutting blocks (**photo 7**), I suggest the use of a

Main: Brian Davey in his scenic view workshop in Lake Macquarie, NSW.

1. The completed dodecahedron kumiko table lamp that uses a hardware store bought LED light to illuminate.
2. After thicknessing a board to 11mm, a jig is used to rip thin strips.
3. Using a freshly sharpened jack plane, fine tune the thickness of the strips to exactly 3.2mm.
4. For the pentagons, the strips are gang cut on the tablesaw to 98mm lengths.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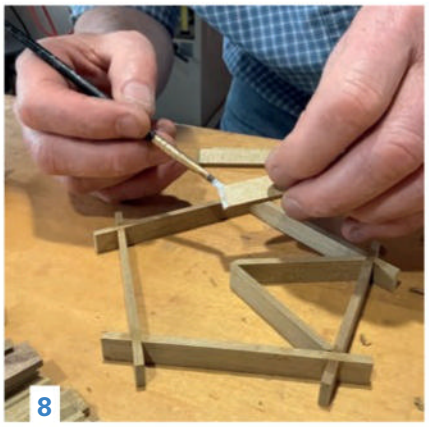
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5. Half lap slots are cut using a sled on the tablesaw. Flip the end to make the second cut.

6. Gluing the pentagons together.

7. Using an angle cutting jig to trim the 'spoke' ends to 57.5 and 36°.

8. Five spokes are glued into each pentagonal side.

9. Use a flush trim saw to trim the overhanging strip ends back.

digital angle cube to set the sawblade angle as the level of accuracy required would be difficult any other way. This length setting requires multiple trials for accuracy as every error will be multiplied by 10! I like using a little tack hammer to knock the stop block to make adjustments.

It is essential that these parts are a press fit and do not distort the outer pentagon when they are inserted. I do these five pieces at a time using a 50mm chisel to cut the bevels and then insert them into the frames with a spot of PVA glue (**photo 8**). This sounds laborious, but the time actually goes quite quickly when you eventually get the dimensions perfect.

Again, allow plenty of time for the glue to dry as the next step is a bit rough on the frames. I use a flush trim saw and a sharp block plane to remove the outer nibs, leaving just the pentagons behind (**photo 9**).

I next visit the drum sander with 240 grit paper and level up the tiny discrepancies of the surfaces, this results in edges that need a touch of hand sanding before gluing them down onto the rice paper.

Gluing on the rice paper

I usually use proper rice glue, cooked up and blended, but this time I used PVA as my rice glue did not work too well after I tried freezing it to keep it fresh. Again, allow the glue to dry properly or the paper will tear when you cut it with a sharp knife (**photo 10**).

Cutting the base angle

Once all the pentagons are cut out, I return to the circular saw, but this time with another 18° saw sled (**photo 11**). The 18° is obviously for the 72° pentagon base angle and once again this is where 100% accuracy is essential.

The blade is now angled to 58.3°. How it got to this number still confuses me, but it had a lot to do with nudging the angle of a couple of pentagonal planes I had drawn in Fusion 360 until the corners exactly matched, only then I was able to find the angle between the planes, divide by two and then subtract from 90°.

Now set a stop so that when a pentagonal frame is resting on the 18°, the blade at 58.3° cuts just less than half the way up the edge. More

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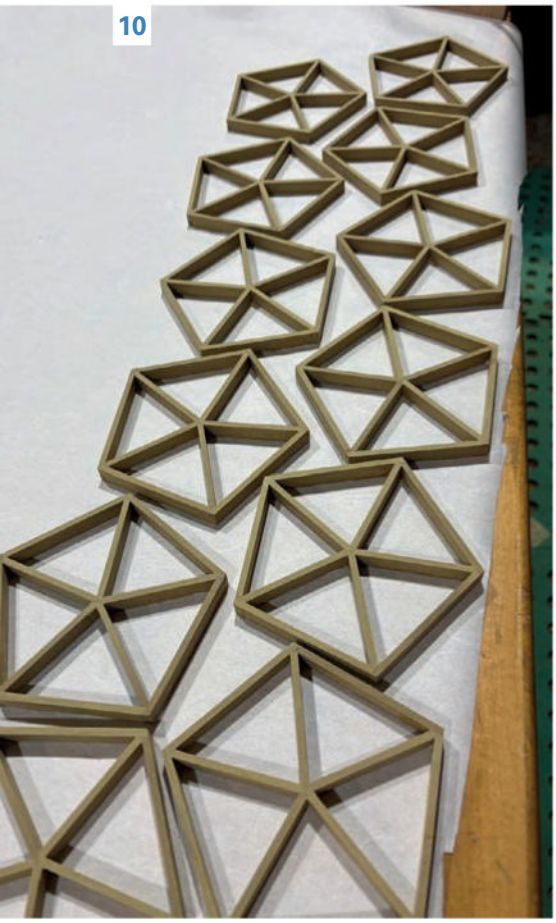

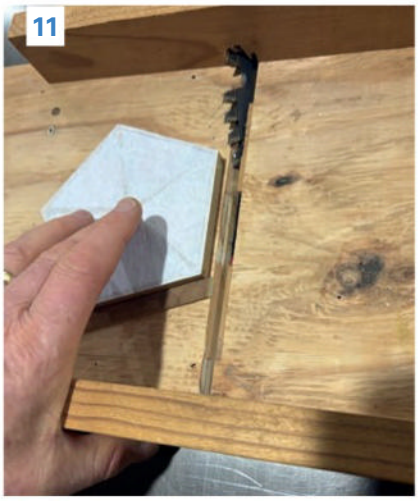

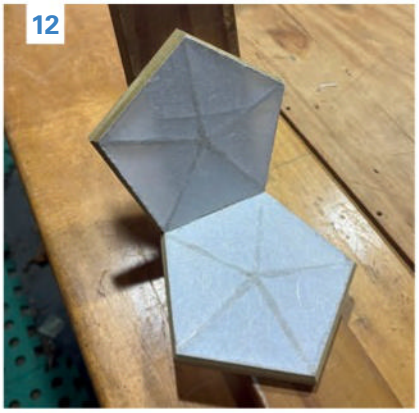

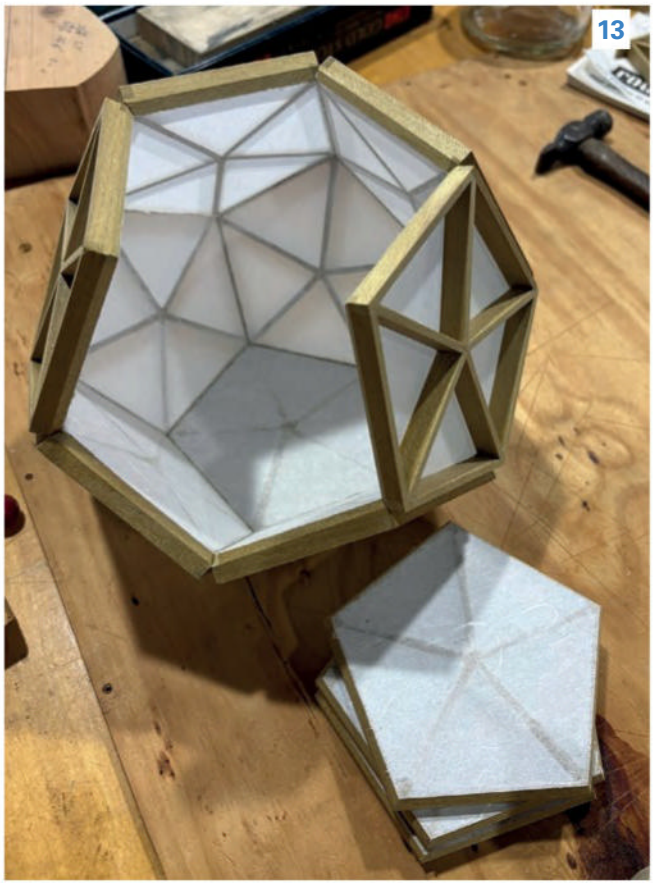

10. Apply glue to the edges of the completed pentagons and glue to washi (rice) paper.

11. Once cut out of the paper, an 18° angle is sawn for the 72° base angle.

12. A simple jig was made to hold the sections when gluing them together, initially two at a time.

13. Bring two pairs of pentagons together before gluing in the rest.

or less here is okay as long as you leave enough material for the rice paper to hold onto, and you give yourself a reasonable gluing surface. While the sawblade is at 58.3° cut a scrap of 19mm pine at the angle and screw it together to make a gluing angle jig.

Final assembly

Gluing up goes remarkably well…well it can! Join two pentagons together using the gluing jig to hold the angle (**photo 12**), making sure your parts line up lengthways and the inner edges are exactly in line.

After a second set is glued and dried, bring these two together and check for alignment. If you have worked accurately, they'll fit perfectly. Add glue and hold them together for a few seconds and then add the rest of the parts one by one (**photo 13**).

Finishing touches

Naturally there are sometimes minor discrepancies that can either be filled with glue or a tiny touch with the block plane may be required. Be extremely careful with the block plane as the rice paper is hanging onto a knife edge. The final pentagon is where you find out if your care has been sufficient. Sometimes it will just slot in perfectly (you know that self-satisfied smile!), but more often than not, a tiny trim may be required to make it all fit together.

For lighting I use a LED and rechargeable Puck light from Bunnings. The result will be more pleasing than expected. Soft light through the rice paper and kumiko patterns are visually interesting as well as attractive, warm and comforting whilst providing a point of discussion. And of course everyone will be more than impressed with your skills!

Photos: Brian Davey

Brian Davey is a recently retired Industrial Arts teacher and now lives in Lake Macquarie, NSW where he is able to devote more of his time to woodworking.



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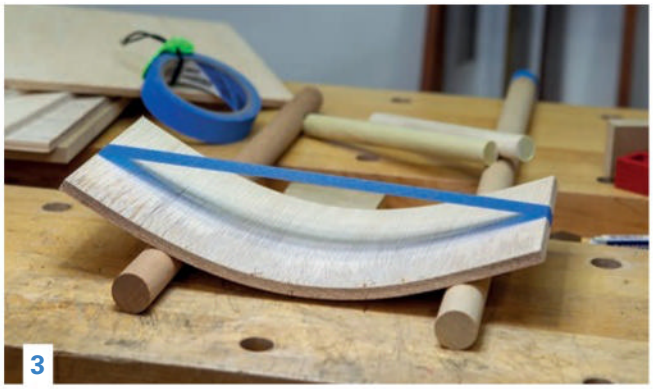
A Little Curved Tray

Learning to veneer around curves can take your work to a whole new level, explains Steven Der-Garabedian as he demonstrates the processes involved.









1. Gathering all the parts.
2. Trying different curves.
3. Using a drawing bow to trace a curve.

Below: Making a simple curved tray like this one will teach you techniques for larger scale work

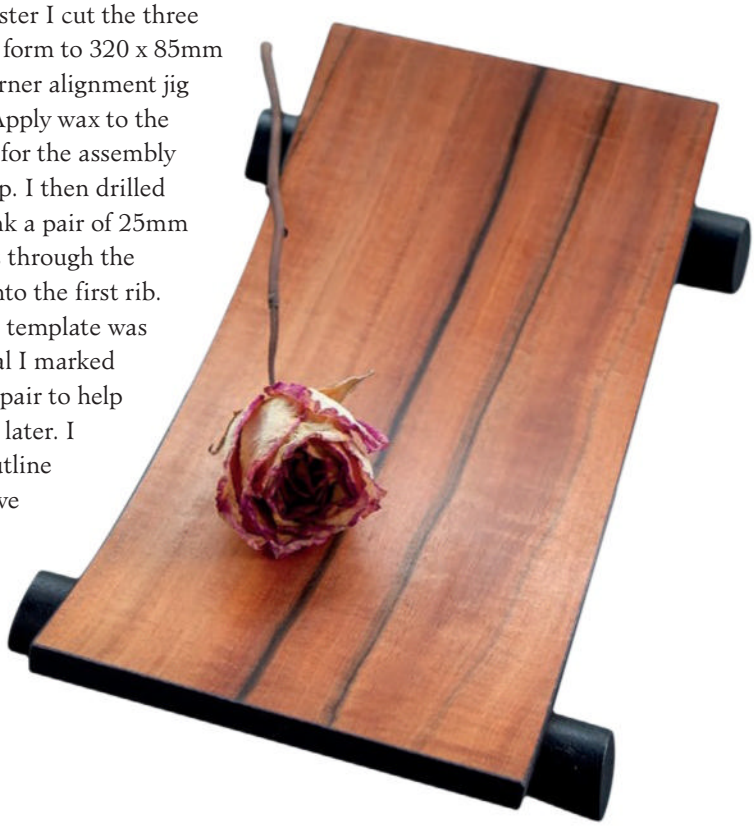
After a recent course I taught on bending wood, I was left with several offcuts of wiggle wood or as officially known, bendable ply. I'm getting better at throwing out offcuts but these were just big enough to save and make something with. I've got lots of veneer and so I thought I would make a curved tray. Some might argue that a tray should be flat but what's the fun in that. Think of it as a mashup of a tray and a bowl.

It starts with a form

To determine how much of a curve, I held this with some masking tape and adjusted this back and forth until it looked just right. On such a slight curve I don't expect much spring-back but I tightened it up a bit more just in case, however it never materialised. Once I was happy with the shape I gathered my supplies including 19mm MDF for the ribs and spacers, 12mm MDF for the template and the base as well as 8mm wiggle wood for the core, caul and the top surface of the bending form. The size of the bending form components was determined by the length of my leftover ply which was 330 x 152 x 8mm. Obviously you can make yours as large and as wide as you like with the same techniques.

I used a shop made drawing bow to copy and trace the curve onto a piece of 12mm MDF that was 320 x 85mm. It's important to keep track of the centre line on all pieces. Using a bandsaw I cut close to the line and then made it smooth at the belt sander.

To make the process of cutting multiple ribs faster I cut the three needed for this form to 320 x 85mm and set up a corner alignment jig on my bench. Apply wax to the inside surfaces for the assembly steps coming up. I then drilled and countersunk a pair of 25mm flathead screws through the template and into the first rib. Just in case the template was not symmetrical I marked one side of the pair to help with alignment later. I also traced a cutline around the curve approximately 3mm away from the template.













4. Smoothing the curve on a sander.
5. Using the corner jig to make ribs for the bending form.
6. Using the router to duplicate ribs via the template.
7. Gluing and pin nailing the bending form.
8. Securing the wiggle wood to the top of the bending form.

Rinse and repeat

The bandsaw makes quick work of the initial cut but ensure you stay away from the template. Use a line further away for insurance as you can always remove more waste in the next step. Set up a pattern cutting straight bit with a bearing on your router. Mine has the bearing on top but a bottom bit works just as well.

Adjust the height to make sure you only cut into the rib while the bearing rides on the template. Carefully remove the waste until your pattern is duplicated. Once cut, head back to your bench, unscrew the template and repeat twice.

While I like my furniture to be light, I like my jigs and bending forms to be sturdy hence the 19mm ribs and spacers. Drilling into MDF will raise the area around the screw hole. Flatten these with a chisel or sandpaper. The reason we applied wax to the corner jig is that we will now use glue to assemble the form.

Since this form is going into a vacuum bag, I don't want the top to sag under all that pressure and therefore kept the ribs 55mm away from each other. I cut four spacers that were 55 x 30 x 19mm. Apply glue to the bottom of the first rib and place it on top of the 12mm MDF base that is secured against the corner jig.

Next add two spacers and keep them at a distance that still allows their tops to be below the curvature of the ribs. Add more glue and the second rib. Test for square both vertically and across the base. If all is good tack the second rib to the spacers with a few 23 AWG pin nails. Add two more spacers and the final rib. Make sure the ends we marked are all on the same side. Tack this last rib in place then flip the assembly over and tack it from the bottom as well as the first rib into the first set of spacers that was previously blocked while in the corner jig.

Under pressure

Cut a piece of wiggle wood that will fit the length and width of the bending form. Round over the top edges and corners. Apply glue to the tops of the ribs and place the wiggle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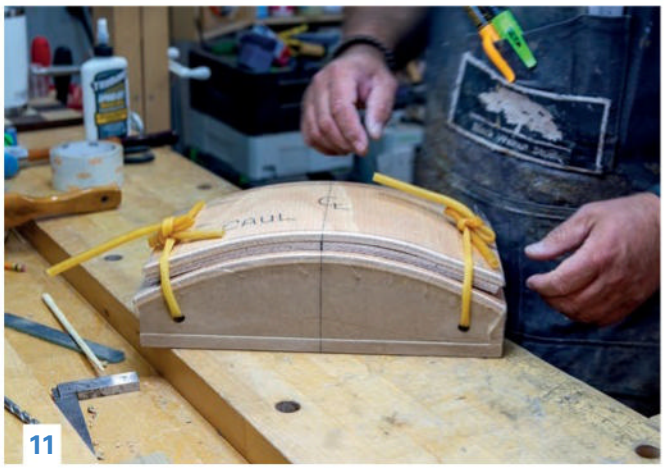
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wood on top. Using a countersink and pilot bit drive in a couple of flat head screws into the outermost ribs securing the top to the base. Slip this into the vacuum bag, add the breather netting, seal the opening and finally pump out the air.

I'm using a Roarockit Thin Air Press kit and a vacuum pump that has an adapter for the one-way valve. The kit provides a hand pump that lets you evacuate the air. You could also mechanically secure the top, however, using a vacuum bag makes things a lot easier.

Refining the form

Let the assembly sit in the bag for at least four hours although longer has no ill effect. Wood glue does not fully cure in a vacuum so after you remove the assembly let it sit overnight. We're going to do a bit more work to the bending form to help with our pressings.

First order of business is to cover the top of the form with packing tape as wood glue will not adhere to it. Don't worry too much about wrinkles as all that pressure in a vacuum bag will iron them out. To help with alignment I like to use a key system to hold the veneer sandwich and top caul from skewing sideways in the vacuum bag. This key is nothing more than a 6mm dowel glued into the centre rib at the ends of the form.

We will need to notch the veneers, core and caul and this extra length is added to the final product knowing that we will cut them off. The height of these two dowels is just below the surface of the core and the caul. Glue these in and round over the tops to make sure we don't puncture our vacuum bags. Apply some wax to the dowel as inevitably excess glue will squeeze out on them.

9. Slipping the form into the vacuum bag.

10. Making notches to fit the dowel registration keys on the bending form.

11. Adding surgical tubing to help keep the veneer sandwich close to the form.

12. Preparing the veneers for cutting and gluing.

13. Gluing the core.





14. Tying tubing to prevent the bag from slipping underneath the veneer sandwich.

15. Vacuum pressing the tray.

16. Jointing one long edge after removal from bag.

17. Cutting the opposite long edge on the tablesaw.





Make the caul using some more wiggle wood that is approximately 5mm longer and wider than the core. Mine ended up being 328 x 157 x 8mm. Round over the top edges and corners and apply overlapping pieces of packing tape to the inside. Cut out the notches for the dowel keys. One further step is to drill a pair of 10mm holes into the ribs as shown in the picture to accept surgical tubing. This helps hold the veneer sandwich down as the air is drawn out of the bag. While this curve is tame, we don't want the bag to get sucked in between the form and tray sandwich. We can now finally start making our trays.

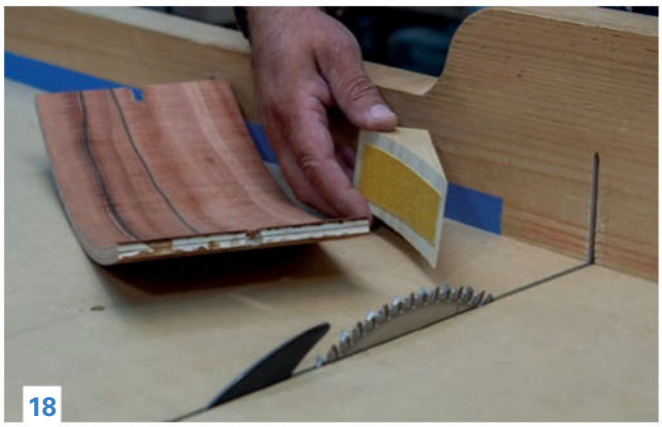
Making a sandwich

The first rule of veneering is do to one side what you do to the other. The second rule is to apply the veneer perpendicular to the core. Cut your core and veneers accordingly. Next using the caul as a template, cut out the notches for the keys in both the veneers and core. Use blue masking tape to support the area where the notches will be cut out in the veneers.

Prepare your vacuum bag and cover your workbench with newsprint. Have your bending form ready as well as the surgical tubing straps. Any PVA wood glue will work but one made for veneering, such as Titebond Cold Press for Veneer, works that much better. It contains solids that resist bleed-through of glue in the thin veneers.

Apply glue to one side of the core and lay down the first veneer. Flip this over and repeat with more glue and the second piece of veneer. Place this sandwich onto the bending form and cover with the caul. Stretch and tie down the surgical tubing straps and place the whole thing into the vacuum bag.

Apply the breather netting under the one-way valve and seal the open end. Finally, turn on your pump and draw out the air to let atmospheric pressure work its magic. While the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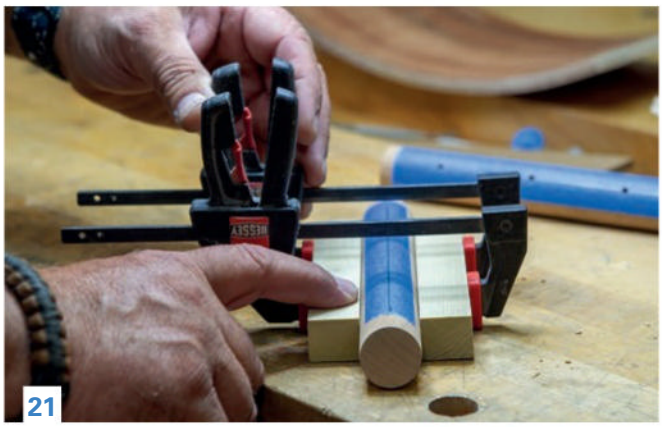
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bottle of glue suggests 45 minutes to two hours, my experience says to leave it in the bag for at least four hours if not longer. On forms with tighter radii, I often leave the assembly in the bag for at least nine hours, if not overnight. Again, once out of the bag don't let temptation let you pick and poke at it, rather let it rest overnight to fully cure.

Clean-up time

In order to give our tray clean edges it's ideal to start off with one long clean edge. Using the teeth on the side, not the wide face of a mill bastard file, clean any veneer that has stretched over the edge of the core. Make sure that you are filing towards the core and not away. Angle your file so you don't hit the veneer on the opposite face. Repeat for the opposite side then head to the jointer. One or two light passes should do the trick.

Using the freshly cleaned edge against the fence, cut the opposite side to make them parallel. A blade made specifically for veneering helps with these cuts. To cut the short ends we need to make a support block. I copied the curvature of the tray onto a scrap piece of hardwood and cut this shape out on the bandsaw. I attached some 120 grit sandpaper to both the base and the curved ramp. Next using a crosscut sled and the support block, I cut the ends as close to perpendicular as I could. If you are off by a little it won't make much of a difference.

Feet come next

Now that we have four clean edges, I started to play with the size and position of the feet. I wanted to stay away from traditional and chose 25mm dowels that I eventually dyed black with India ink. I also made a version with 30mm wooden balls, also dyed black.

I contemplated creating a flat spot on the dowels to rest against the bottom of the tray but opted against it in the end. I like how simple and fragile it looks, however, three 3mm hardwood micro dowels give it plenty of strength for a tray of this size. To stay away

18. Using a support block to crosscut the tray.

19. Making sure the dowels don't roll and align properly.

20. Cutting 15° ends on the dowel feet.

21. Supporting dowel feet in preparation for drilling.

22. Three-way edge clamps and shopmade clamping pads.


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23. Gluing edging onto tray ends.

24. Using a mill bastard file to nearly flush edging.

25. Using a Veritas mini cabinet scraper to clean the edges.

26. Edging the long sides.

27. Using a small steel scraper to flush the long side edging.

28. Making custom sanding blocks from pink styrofoam insulation.

29. Drilling holes to accept the feet.

30. Applying shellac to the top of the tray

from flat and straight, I angled the ends of the dowels to roughly 15°.

To make sure the angle matched on all four ends I temporarily glued a block to the dowels using CA glue and masking tape and completed the cuts on the tablesaw using a mitre guide. Three 3mm holes are next drilled into the dowel so that when glued to the tray, the 15° flare is on the top or the bottom. Now is a good time to dye your feet if you so choose.

Edge work

To match the dark black line running across the top I chose black dyed veneer. To make it a little more pronounced I opted for a double layer. There are a few ways to secure the edging but here three-way edge clamps will do the trick. In order not to marr the surfaces of the tray and to stop the clamp pads from slipping, I make small clamp pads out of 19mm MDF with sandpaper on one side and a blind hole to accept the clamp pads on the other.

Choose your method of edging and apply glue to the ends of the tray as well as to one face of the black dyed veneer. Using a caul, apply pressure as needed along the edge. Repeat for the other end.

Once the glue has cured use a knife to cut away any excess veneer being careful to stay away from the tray's surfaces. Next, use the teeth on the side of the file you used before to bring the edging close to being flush. Finish up with a card scraper. I find the the Veritas mini cabinet scraper works well in these instances. Adding a few wraps of blue masking tape to the end of the files will resist marking the faces of the tray.

Repeat the process for the long edges of the tray. In situations like these, where the veneer is dyed black, butt joints in the corners work perfectly and are almost invisible. If you choose thicker edging you can stick with butt joints or change to mitres.

Sanding dilemas

Sanding curved work usually presents some issues. While our curve is slight it still makes sense to use a sanding block. For this I make



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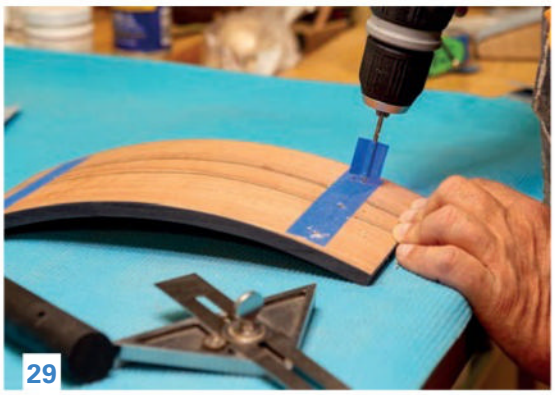
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perfectly matching radii by holding 80 grit sandpaper on the tray's top surface then sand small rectangles of pink styrofoam insulation until a mating curve is achieved. Use some foam safe glue to attach various grits of sandpaper to the blocks and get to work. I chose shellac for my finish and for this started at 150 grit, moved to 180 finishing up at 220. Other finishes might need you to go no further than 180.

Final touches

Once sanding is completed I attached masking tape to the underside of the tray where the feet will attach. I transferred and centred the previously drilled holes in the dowels to the bottom and drilled these by hand. I used a makeshift blue tape drill-stop being careful to not poke through the other side. While hand drilling isn't as accurate as using a drill press, I didn't want to take the time to set up a dedicated angle holder for the drill press table. I also believe the slight errors that creep in by hand add to create a bit of tension that holds the feet firmly. I ended up enlarging the holes in the dowel to 4mm to accommodate this.

Clean up any scratches and get ready to apply your finish. I applied eight coats of shopmade shellac and finished up with a fine layer of furniture wax to control the sheen. I prefer something between satin and glossy and this is easily accomplished via wax and a 3M white buffing pad.

Finally, add a small amount of glue to the holes for the feet and tray bottom and an appropriate length of 3mm dowel. Clamp using soft cauls or cork pads.

This was a fun little project that allowed me to use up some scrap wiggle wood and play with different versions of feet and some beautiful veneer. Learning to bend wood and veneer adds a whole new level to your woodwork. I've stayed away from the straight and narrow ever since.

Photos: Steven Der-Garabedian



Steven Der-Garabedian @blackwalnutstudio is a Canadian woodworker, teacher and author. His book Veneering Essentials: Simple Techniques & Practical Projects for Today's Woodworker is available online in print and digital editions.



Maker of the Year Awards 26

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We're thrilled to present the award winners and Top 100 entries for this year's Maker of the Year competition.

In its seventh year, Maker of the Year continues to be an annual celebration of the best in fine woodworking and wood art across the globe.

Over 400 entries from 28 countries were received for Maker of the Year, presented by Hare & Forbes, with over half coming from Australian entrants. It is exciting to present a platform that invites interest from all over the world. If you've been following as the entries appear on the Maker of the Year website and Wood Review social pages, I'm sure you will agree the standard of work has been incredible. I found myself regularly transfixed by the creativity and skill displayed.

Defining a winning entry is not easy. The combination of design, crafting, detailing, materials selection and narrative portrayed in a fine piece really is infinitely variable. At one end of a scale, a simple form can appear banal, but at the other, supremely refined. A rustic looking piece can convey artistry and emotion but can't conceal proportions and construction that are not well considered. Add to this the incredible range of furniture, objects and artworks entered, and the difficulty our judges face is manifest!

Nevertheless, our six hugely qualified and committed judges have determined the award winning entries shown on the pages that follow. A huge thank you to Bryan Cush, Jono Everett, Kate Stehr, Laura McCusker, Paul Barton and Rasmus Fenhann.

I also want to offer my sincere thanks to our sponsors who really do want to connect with and support our community, our craft and the artistry of making things from wood. A huge thank you to Hare & Forbes, Felder Australia, American Export Hardwood Council, Whittle Waxes, Carbitool and Tormek Sharpening. These companies provide quality products and service and therefore deserve our support.

To the hundreds of people who entered this year, this is my personal thank you for putting your work out there, for letting so many of us enjoy what you do and take inspiration from it. All your entries are showcased at www.makeroftheyear.com.au

Award winners now share in a $20,000+ prize pool that includes $11,500 in cash. Congratulations to the winners and to our Top 100, whose work you can now see on the following pages. We hope you will include your work in next year's online showcase when Maker of the Year opens for entry in March 2027.

Linda Nathan, Editor

Please note: Apart from award winners, the Top 100 entries are not presented in any order. Photos shown without image credits were taken by the maker.



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Jono Everett
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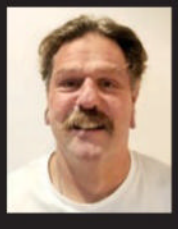

Paul Barton
Wood artist, woodturner
@paulbarton_woodartist



Rasmus Fenhann (Denmark)
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In Conversation with Riley Hearn

We asked the Overall Winner for Maker of the Year 2026 to tell us a little about his background, his design preferences, and where he sees himself headed.



Riley Hearn 'doing the *Superleggera* pinky lift' with the *Villain Chair*, exposing its light wei ght triangulated structure, floating seat and overall refined proportions.

The term emerging maker doesn't reflect the lifetime it can take for that to happen. Brisbane-born, Riley Hearn studied industrial and games design at QUT and Griffith University before spending a year at Sturt School for Wood in 2025. He is now a first year Associate in the JamFactory Furniture studio in Adelaide.

His interest in designing and making started a long time before that however. 'My interest in craft largely stems from my mother. She didn't pursue making professionally – she was a graphic designer for many years and then retrained as a lawyer – but she is so manually literate and was always trying her hand at different projects. She restored a scrapped Mazda 1300 because the family needed a new car but couldn't afford a new one. She hadn't ever done it before but she learnt how and took the time to get it right. Her attitude of having a go and figuring it out was such an influential undercurrent for my childhood.'

A big attraction to applying for the Associate program at JamFactory was its multi-disciplinary studios. 'It's an emerging artist accelerator program,' explained Riley. 'You come with technical skills. There are three Associate placements within each studio where you have access to studio facilities and involvement in a mentorship program.'

'There are seminars and talks around developing an economically viable practice. And when you're not doing that, you are producing work for exhibition or to sell through JamFactory or other retailers. As an Associate you are under the umbrella of an established ecosystem where there are opportunities and connections happening all the time. And you get out of it what you put in.'

I asked Riley to define his design style. 'I like making pieces that invite interaction and direct attention. The *Altar Standing Desk* that I entered last year had a small blue drawer pull set against an otherwise restrained look. I like having small details in there that stand out to curate a little journey through the piece.

'I don't go in for excessive ornament or embellishment. I prefer to aim at having a clean and refined form. If I'm going to include something bolder or louder, it has to have purpose because it'll really stand out; the sleekness pared back with little bits of fun and delight. The red in the *Villain chair* is there to catch your eye as you move around it.

It's not garishly in your face but it's still deliberately highlighting parts that are often not made a feature of, like structural components.'

He admires the attention some designs pay to details that others may overlook. The circuitry of a Macbook





Altar Standing Desk, American white oak. 'Each leg is made of two boards, matched for colour and figure and then mitred on the long edge to reduce weight and waste. Fine shadow gaps help delineate the coplanar faces.' *Photos pp.32, 33: Connor Patterson Photography*



Pro for example, or like the signature red of a Louboutin shoe heel that Riley alludes to in his *Villain chair* description. He likes the attention that may be paid to the parts of an object that other producers may say, 'Well you're not going to see it, so we don't have to spend too much time on it. Obviously there are practicalities involved but their way of going, "We can make a feature of this – we can turn it into something that really sings." Just because it's not going to be seen doesn't mean that it doesn't deserve to be celebrated.'

'What won't you compromise on?' I asked. 'I definitely go to some quite intense lengths to avoid compromises on the execution of a piece, but the truth is that realities of making will force you to compromise all the time. I don't know if I'll ever get a piece "out all the way". My true non-negotiable is that no matter how high your standards are, you treat people with respect. The idea that you can mistreat people just because you're pursuing excellence is absurd to me. Frankly, if you can only produce exceptional work by being a bully, maybe you're not as good as you think you are. You can aim high and be kind; the best makers I've known are living proof of it.'

'The only other thing I don't want to compromise on is intentionality of those fine details. Every part should be deliberate. Excessive ornament or flashy technique can be a way of saying "Look what I can do!" – it's craft for ego's sake, rather than craft in service of the object, making it more beautiful or more functional, having greater utility. It's not about throwing in a piece of timber because it's rare and expensive – that's like putting gold leaf on a hamburger. It doesn't serve anything there. Every detail is a chance to reinforce what the piece is about.'

I was interested to know if younger makers have different priorities nowadays. 'From what I've seen, younger makers seem to gravitate towards having an exhibition-based practice more than a production-based practice, which is the opposite of what most older makers I've known do. It feels like there's a differing emphasis on repetition versus exploration underneath that; making the same piece many times versus only doing one-off pieces. I think you need to fully engage with both ways of working if you genuinely want to improve as a maker.'

'What's your vision, career wise? Where do you see yourself in 5 and 10 years?', I quizzed. 'I've got a compass heading more than I've got a map,' said Riley. 'For me, ultimately, a large part of what I would love to be doing is teaching, whether or not that's in a formalised setting. Sharing the knowledge that I've been the beneficiary of and making sure it has a longer residence time in the world. I really do believe in the value of sharing skills and retaining them. In the meantime, I just want to keep on making beautiful things.'

Will you focus on production lines, custom work, or making

for exhibitions – or the whole lot? 'Honestly, I'm so hungry for it, the way I'm feeling right now I think it's the whole lot,' Riley said. 'I know there is a version of each of those types of practice that will resonate with me. Right now I'm seeing what those versions look like and just finding that mix; having a diversified income stream makes good sense from an economic point of view. Having bread-and-butter production items can keep me ticking over while I'm working on the more bespoke items or speculative pieces. A bit of everything is also a good fit for me because I like to work and I like to be busy, and having a lot of things on the go suits me. Solving a whole variety of problems is what I get excited by.'

Riley sums his potential future up: 'I often draw parallels to the fashion industry. The way I want to be working is that there are some things that are made to be bought off the rack, some things that are made to measure (as in it's a set design and we can tailor it to you). And then there's truly bespoke, pieces truly made just for you; and then there's also going to be experimental pieces that no one really wears but is like the haute couture that shows at Paris Fashion Week. Spreading out into all those areas and teaching and sharing. Doing all those things gels best with me and I'm looking forward to the busy-ness.'

Lastly, I wanted to know what an award like this might mean to someone at the start of a career. 'The biggest thing that it means to me is that it's a permission slip, a signal to me. It's like a tap on the shoulder that says – hey, you can trust yourself. It's a piece of evidence that I can return to when the doubt is there.

'I still love making things whether or not I get awards and accolades, but there are always moments of doubt around my own decisions, taste and inclinations, and even around the standards I hold to. There are so many opinions around and it's easy to get lost in them, but if I purely listened to those voices then I wouldn't work the way that I work or make what I make. Being recognised in this way is a signal that I'm not completely off course – I can trust myself a little more.'

Inerview: Linda Nathan

Riley Hearn is Overall Winner for Maker of the Year, presented by Hare & Forbes in 2026. He is also the Furniture category winner and was shortlisted in the Student category. Learn more about Riley Hearn @rileyhearny at www.rileyhearn.com.au

Opposite: Riley Hearn in his JamFactory studio space with his award-winning *Villain Chair*. *Photo: Connor Patterson*

Below:
Two views of Riley Hearn's *Lode lamp* in American white ash.

Keepsake box in New Guinea rosewood and silver ash. *Photo: Ashley Mackevicius*







FURNITURE, AUSTRALIAN

1. WINNER: RILEY HEARN

'Made from New Guinea rosewood, the *Villain Chair* is light, weighing in at only 3kg. A robust frame keeps the chair strong, with pairs of crossed braces between legs and rails to stiffen each axis and triangulate the leg joinery. Ergonomic compound-curves of the coopered seat and laminated backrest ensconce and support the sitter, and make the chair comfortable in both an upright posture for work or in a relaxed, social slouch.

'The name, *Villain*, appeared as the chair took shape, as though in conversation with the piece. The functionality-driven design resulted in a form that felt sleak and sharp, attractive and a little dangerous; evoking a stilleto or a vampire. The components of the chair create varied negative space. The seat, fixed to hidden supports, reveals this visual lightness as it appears to float away from the legs and rails. The curved backrest and seat sit in stark contrast to the crisp-edged planes that make up the legs and frame.

'The finishing of the chair is part of a continued exploration into using bold colour to direct focus towards the often-hidden, functional elements of objects. The deep black extenuates the contrast of curves and facets. The red accents highlight the presence of each structural member and reward the viewer's attention, like the crimson wink of a Louboutin heel.' *Photos: Connor Patterson*



WHAT THE JUDGES SAID

Villain Chair was an instant standout. It's one of those works where the references don't feel forced or overplayed. There's an elegance to its stance, lightness, and a sophisticated control of structural language and hierarchy. The 'Louboutin' red streaks against the jet black make this a real eye-catcher. A really confident and memorable piece of work. **Bryan Cush**

The *Villain Chair* – undoubtedly a great, succinct title that takes us directly to the intention of the design without ambiguity. It is clear at first glance that the harmony of its structure, palette, material choice, design clarity and overall execution elevates this chair into the realm of art. **Jono Everett**







2. RUNNER-UP: WEI WU

Under the Eave is a three-metre dining table which translates the structural logic of traditional Chinese timber architecture into a contemporary piece of furniture. The long, slender tabletop recalls the extended line of an architectural eave, while the oval-section legs suggest the solidity of architectural columns. The interlocking parts beneath draw from the principles of *dougong* – the traditional Chinese bracket system.

'The table disassembles for transport while making its construction an essential part of its visual language. At three metres long, I wanted the table to feel substantial without appearing heavy. Every edge and transition has been carefully shaped and hand finished, balancing the architectural geometry with a quieter, more tactile quality.

'The table is made from American black walnut. Its scale presented challenges in controlling the natural movement of solid timber. Concealed steel rods run transversely within the structure to provide additional stability. In traditional architecture, the area beneath an eave is a place of shelter and transition, where people pause, gather and connect. In much the same way, a large dining table creates a shared space for everyday life.'

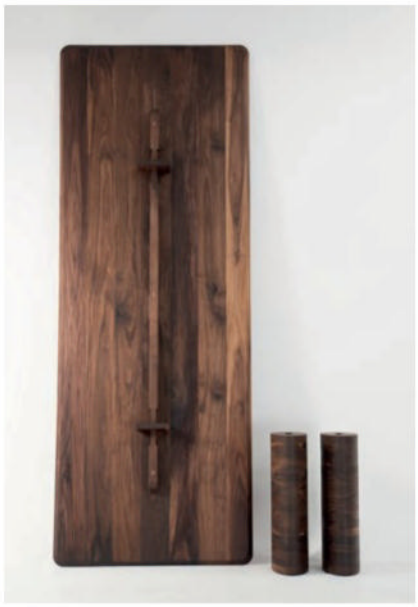
WHAT THE JUDGES SAID

A highly sophisticated piece, with the influence of traditional Chinese timber architecture evident but handled in a distinctly contemporary manner. Elite-level flat-pack furniture. I really enjoy the elevation view of the piece and particularly the 'scooped' detail at the intersection of the long central fin and legs. It's a subtle detail, but one which is highly resolved. **Bryan Cush**

Here is how it's done. Presented in just three individual components, this table is a masterclass in using ancient architectural traditions to deliver a clever, beautifully balanced contemporary furniture design. Using stack laminations to provide weight to the independent legs allows for a locked-in, elegant floating top. Simple, well-considered, and beautifully executed. **Jono Everett**

















3. Alex Trunzo, *Arm Chair*, spotted gum, spalted sassafras. 'Combining flowing shapes with ridged lines allows the natural timber to shine through in small hints and break up the intensity of the black stain.'

4. Todd Atkins, *Ziggy LC-01*, white oak. 'The chair's planted stance is defined by splayed rear legs which wrap around the seat before stepping back in a distinctive zig-zag transition into the backrest.'

5. Tim Quirk, *Raindrop table*. A ply substrate was clad in sycamore shopsawn veneers steambent to achieve the 50mm radius at the throat of the laminated and coopered form. A turned steel weight was fitted internally to lower the centre of gravity.

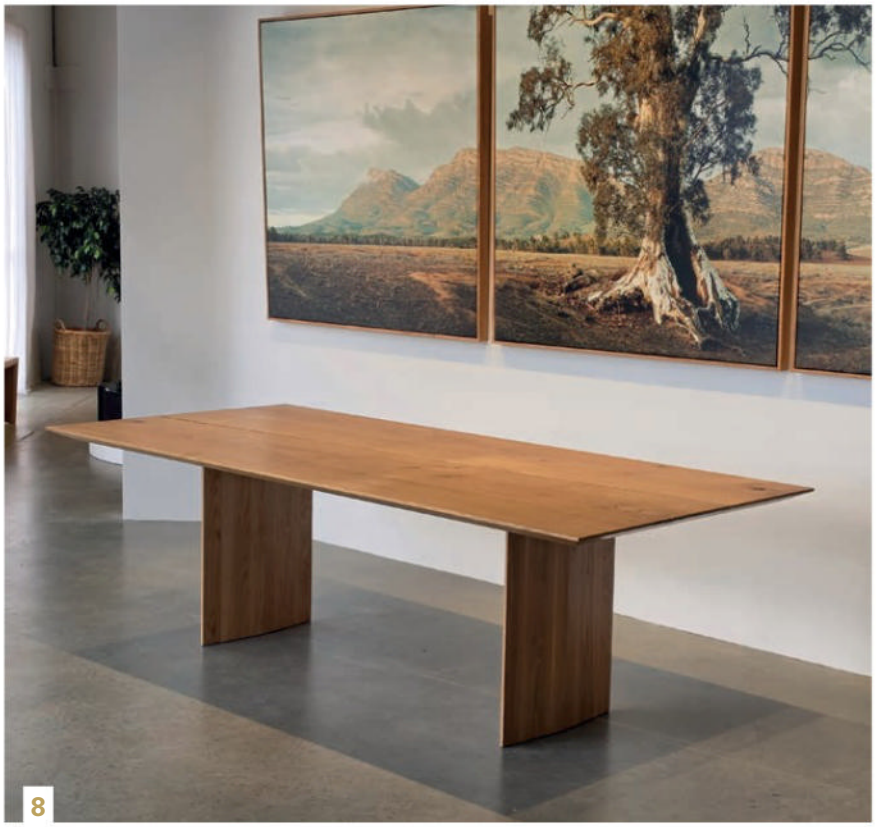




6. Siegfried Chaloupka, *Pincushion Stool*, recycled timbers and materials. 'This is a surrealist idea, laced with intentional irony. It reimagines the familiar sewing pincushion as usable furniture, creating curiosity through the tension between its confronting appearance and unexpected comfort. The originality of the design demanded process development and pushed me to my limit. I developed prototypes, custom jigs, and methods to achieve a restrained exterior appearance that conceals the complex structure internally, whilst maintaining the structural strength required to function as a seat.'

7. Renato Spagnolo, *Dining Suite*, forest redgum, epoxy. The table design is inspired by Tony Kenway's work. The three metre long slab has black epoxy infills on the sides. 'Buttress look' legs fitted with aluminium plate screw into into slotted holes. A 100 x 50mm section horizontal rail breaks up the large space when looking at the table side on. The ten Maloof No.7 style chairs with ebonised spindles are made from the same forest redgum.The inset photo shows how the underside of each chair bears a maker's mark that pays respect to Sam Maloof. *Photos: Ian Spagnolo*









8. Nathan Day, *Peak table*, French oak. 'I'm very proud of this piece for a number of reasons. It reflects the evolution of our workshop – it's the perfect balance of heritage craft and digital fabrication. Secondly, I'd saved these rare oak slab offcuts and had a clear idea of what they were going to become. Lastly, it was my first stock piece for the gallery. It was also the first piece to sell, a future family heirloom living about an hour from the workshop. The top is made from bookmatched slab offcuts held in place without glue. The top of the rails have sliding dovetails machined onto them. Each slab is fixed at the outer end of the rail. Seasonal movement takes place back towards the centre of the table, with the gap widening or narrowing depending on the time of year. They are fitted tight, so also act as straightening braces for the slabs. It was very much my intention to lean into our contemporary aesthetic but also retain my woodworker's spirit. Our signature bevelled edge makes the top appear ultra-thin despite being 40mm thick. The base follows suit, with the legs laminated extra thick and digitally milled to a fine edge. The natural features in the timber are celebrated – feature knots left open, the end splits thoughtfully bow-tied.'







9. Daniel Horne, *Seijaku Bench*, Tas blackwood, Qld maple, river stone. '*Seijaku* is a Japanese concept that translates to tranquillity, serenity, or "energised calm" – a state of profound inner peace and mindful awareness maintained even in the midst of everyday chaos.' *Photos: Cathy Taylor*







10. *Contour Dining Suite* in rock maple. 'Too often, chairs and tables are designed separately and then paired as a compromise. The *Contour round dining table* (designed by Evan Dunstone and here made by Alex McFarlane) was created to complement and engage with the *Cataract Ergonomic Rocking Chair*. The chairs were designed and made by Evan Dunstone. *Photos: Aditi Sargeant*

11. Broc Cattley, *Beginnings*, southern silky oak, Qld red cedar, shopmade brass hardware. 'Echoing a seed pod, this jewellery cabinet marks a personal transition towards creating work that fulfils and inspires me.'







FURNITURE, INTERNATIONAL



1. WINNER: ASPEN GOLANN AND PETER GALBERT, USA

'Designed for the Linde Wing at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, *The Meeting Bench* draws from the MFA's American furniture holdings and Boston's long history of Windsor chairmaking. Built using traditional Windsor techniques, each component is hand-split from the log, allowing for thinner, more flexible elements than those produced through industrial woodworking. The form is largely composed of empty space – basket-like, open, and transparent – creating a visually light structure that invites approach and use.

'Familiar references to traditional chairs establish a connection to history, while broken lines and overlapping forms gently disrupt expectation. The decreasing space between the spindles creates a dynamic sense of stretch and rhythm.

'The bench was designed not just as a place to sit, but as an experience of comfort, connection to history, and a blend of traditional and contemporary approaches to craft, made accessible within a public space.' *Photos: Kate Benson*

WHAT THE JUDGES SAID

The Meeting Bench is an extraordinary coming together of design, material and making. Traditional Windsor techniques are pushed into a fresh and unexpected language, with the intersecting forms, changing spindle rhythm and use of negative space creating both visual lightness and structural integrity. It is highly resolved, beautifully crafted and, importantly, remains a genuinely inviting and functional piece of furniture. What a glorious piece. Thank you Aspen and Peter. **Laura McCusker**

Aspen Golann and Peter Galbert's *Meeting Bench* is an interesting and playful design that brings new life to the Windsor chair tradition. I am particularly fond of the functionality as a meeting space in a museum. The feeling of transparency combined with privacy is very well achieved. The traditional craft techniques associated with Windsor chairmaking are carried out perfectly with elegance. **Rasmus Fenhann**







2. RUNNER-UP: LUKASZ KOROL, POLAND

Cabinet in Ash. 'The main motivation was a desire to explore and celebrate ash wood in all its forms and expressions – making the piece a true study of the timber. While its natural variation can be seen by some as a challenge, I embraced it as an opportunity to create a piece that invites contemplation of the rich character this material offers. I opted for a clean, classic form on the outside, free from details that might distract from the patterns drawn by the grain itself. However, opening the doors is intended to feel like opening a box of treasures. Exposed through-tenons with walnut wedges and hand-cut dovetails serve as my artisan fingerprint – a manifestation of my dedication to traditional joinery. It was all crafted in the hope that someone might open its doors just a few times more than necessary.'



WHAT THE JUDGES SAID

Lukasz Korol is showing a very clean and well executed piece with perfect craftsmanship. I like the focus on using different types of ash wood grain showing the wood at its best. Giving the user a joyful experience and feeling when opening the doors and drawers is also a good focus.
Rasmus Fenhann

Cabinet in Ash is a beautifully resolved celebration of timber and traditional craftsmanship. The restrained exterior allows the natural character and grain of the ash to take centre stage, while the opening doors reveal an unexpected richness of joinery and detail. The exposed through-tenons, walnut wedges and hand-cut dovetails demonstrate exceptional skill, creating a piece that rewards closer inspection. This elegantly proportioned piece is a study in restraint, quality and tradition. Simply, beautiful.
Laura McCusker

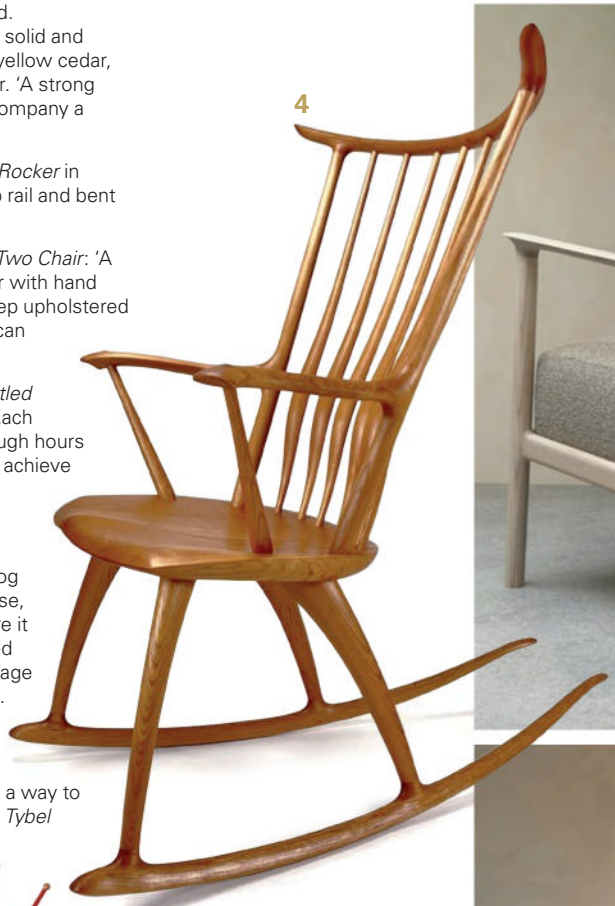
3. David Jenkin, New Zealand. *Efloressence* music stand, solid and laminated maple, walnut, yellow cedar, and birdseye maple veneer. 'A strong and light open form to accompany a musical flowering.'

4. Brian Millspaw, USA. *Eva Rocker* in cherry with steambent top rail and bent laminated rockers.

5. Mitch Polley, UK. *Twenty-Two Chair*: 'A contemporary lounge chair with hand shaped armrests and a deep upholstered seat. Here made in American ash.'

6. Mitch Polley, UK. *The Untitled Chair*, American walnut. 'Each component is refined through hours of shaping and finishing to achieve a balanced, organic and sculptural silhouette.'

7. Szymon Duraj, Poland. *Shinsei Cabinet*, ancient bog oak, sycamore. 'In Japanese, *shinsei* means rebirth. Here it speaks of a new life formed with purpose, a quiet passage into what longs to emerge. A moment in my own story where making became meditation, where woodwork became a way to begin again.' *Photos: Maja Tybel*























8. Niels van der Wansem, Netherlands. '*De Stijl* is a loungechair made of sustainable walnut or oak wood, designed with clean lines and subtle curves. The frame is paired with a comfortable leather or wool seat.' *Photo: Lucrecia Herrera Ortiz*

9. Phil Berczuk, UK. *Conchiolin Console Table:* 'Black saddle oyster shells carry their history in surfaces that darken when buried in iron and sulphur-rich sediment, the very conditions that shaped them. Inspired by these ideas of growth and transformation, this table takes its name and formal language from that relationship. Made from cold-formed micro-laminated fumed oak veneers (100% FSC), two asymmetrical components each form a continuous, curved profile.' *Photos: Simon Ellis*

10. Koen Van Dijck, Belgium. *Tall Collector's Cabinet*, walnut, brass. 'The interior reveals a subtle Art Deco inspired marquetry panel, adding a layer of detail and surprise.' *Photo: Karolien Bogaerts*

11. Lloyd Brooke-Anderson, New Zealand. *Rere Sideboard:* '*Rere* is a Māori verb meaning to fly, flow, or run like water, often used when describing a waterfall. The carved details are made using a single gouge and are inspired by the rhythm of falling water.'

12. Lloyd Brooke-Anderson, New Zealand. *Lumen Vanity*, local walnut, US maple: 'Named for the softer moment when light is covered, like a cloud crossing the moon.'





13. Adrian Duyn, Ireland. *Daisy:* 'Eight individual petal tables gather to explores the quiet poetry of a flower opening and closing.' *Photo: Nick Cavanagh*

14. Finnzarby Richwood, New Zealand. *A Joining Occasional Table*, ash, sapele, glass. 'Inspired by the engagement of two friends, my goal was to symbolise the coming together and intertwining of two entities.'

15. David Ringheim, Canada. *Understory*, solid and veneered walnut, shopmade hardware and brass knobs. 'A studio furniture piece that combines display, storage, and sculptural form into a single functional object.'

16. Oleksandr Kutsaiev, Canada. *Blooming Tree Dining Table*, walnut, epoxy resin: 'The goal was to capture the movement, branching structure and organic character of a tree while transforming it into a fully functional piece of furniture'

17. Juliette Huneau, Canada. Part of a series of wall cabinets in solid wood with marquetry, *Naxos* incorporates a discreet mechanism of wooden gears, revealed on the back of the door. The three pivoting staircases on the front each connect to their own locking point.' *Photos: Audrey Mc Mahon*







18. Wayne Halabourda, Canada. '*Vanishing Points* is a playful exploration of three-point perspective. Each panel of the harlequin-patterned doors is uniquely shaped so that the geometry subtly shifts across the surface, reinforcing the illusion of perspective.'

19. Michael and Amanda Jury, USA. *Robin and Dogwood Cabinet* celebrates the quiet arrival of spring through a restrained interpretation of one of North America's most familiar seasonal scenes.' *Photo: Greg Staley*

20. Philippe Sarazin, France. *Ellipsis Buffet*, French walnut base. 'Sumptuous Macassar ebony veneer facades are punctuated by delicate orange PMMA filaments that trace, like threads of light, an imaginary map across the wooden surface.' *Photo: Labo Voluptas*

21. Samuel Strain, USA. *Hunter Table* with handcut marquetry featuring 27 willow branches with blossom inspired by the client's backyard tree.

22. Michelle Hallee Wong, USA. *Triplets*, cherry. 'Three tripod tables of differing heights function as movable end tables. The tops are decorated with holly stringing inlay in a directional swoosh and three overlapping circles.'

23. Sam Viscomi, USA. *Sculpted Cabinet*, white ash. A hand sculpted bedside table in walnut on an ebonised ash base. *Photo: Sarah Boyd*













ART & OBJECTS, AUSTRALIAN



1. WINNER: CRAIG HARRIS

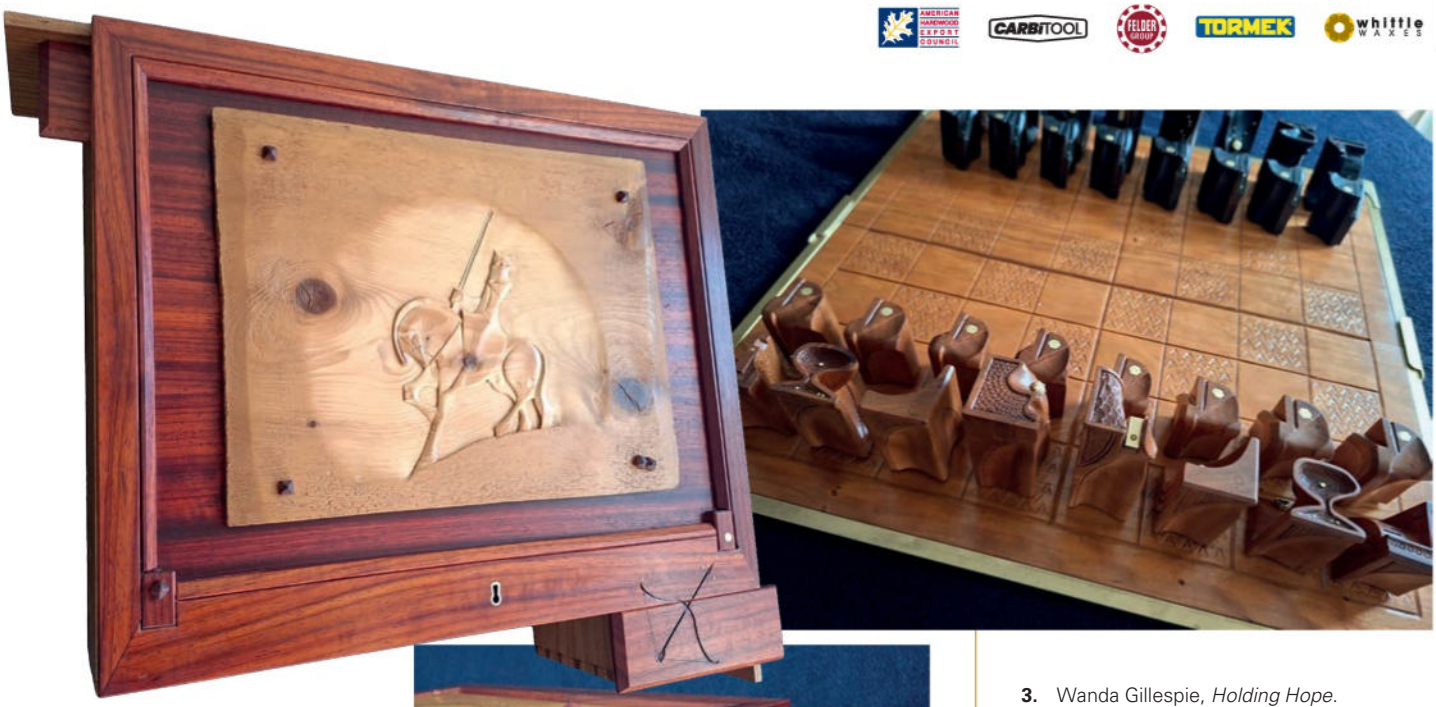
Box for Memories, tiger myrtle, King Billy pine, Tas blackwood. 'This work began with a difficult request from a friend who had lost her father. Rather than creating a vessel only for ashes, I made a place that could hold both old memories and new ones. The veneered timber box was built around an MDF core, with solid blackwood edges applied. Made from mild steel, the companion cube represents the emptiness that grief leaves behind, while the warm timber cube honours memory and connection. My friend's father spent much of his life between Papua New Guinea and Queensland, so the buff-breasted paradise kingfisher became a quiet tribute to both places.
Photos: Rohan Thomson, Pew Pew Studio

WHAT THE JUDGES SAID

Craig Harris has transformed a deeply personal request into a finely resolved memorial object. The contrast between the solid timber cube and open steel frame creates a compelling relationship between presence and absence, while the sculptural bird provides a delicate counterpoint to the geometric forms. Thoughtful materials, symbolic references and exceptional craftsmanship combine to create a work of lasting resonance. **Kate Stehr**

This piece grabbed my attention straight away with its simplicity and fine detail. I loved the concept and overall size. The icing on the cake was the nicely carved bird. A really beautiful piece of work. **Paul Barton**





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2. RUNNER-UP: KEN FISHER

Little Prince Chess Set, cherry, padauk, brass. 'Almost two years in the making, this is my response to a request from a close family member for a contemporary chess set. The cabinet is made from cherry with a repurposed padauk panel relief carved as a tribute salute to the great Gaudi. The game pieces evolved as each piece group was tackled. Height sizes and board dimensions are standard. The addition of polished brass and other carved and stamped features have added a uniqueness. The cherry board grid is V-cut by hand with alternate squares embossed with triangle punchings symbolising fire and a stylised symbol for Sagittarius.'

WHAT THE JUDGES SAID

Overall this piece had so much going for it. From the relief carving on the box to the unusual abstract chess pieces. The beautiful detail in the chess pieces won me over, a really wonderful piece of work. **Paul Barton**

Ken Fisher's chess set demonstrates an exceptional commitment to hand-making, with every element considered as both functional object and sculptural form. The individually carved chess pieces have a distinctive character, while the detailed board and cabinet create a cohesive visual language. The combination of skilled craftsmanship, playful design and thoughtful material detail results in a highly resolved and engaging work. **Kate Stehr**

3. Wanda Gillespie, *Holding Hope*. 'Emerging from burnt landscapes – where charred trunks rise like sentinels and green shoots break through blackened bark – this sculpture evokes a terrain where trauma and regrowth coexist. A female figure walks, her lower body darkened by flames. In one arm she carries a small dog, its fur singed at the tips – an image of tenderness held within adversity. The sculpture invites reflection on resilience as the ability to endure and to hold space for hope.'

4. Grant Vaughan, *Emergence*. 'An abstract expression of new growth inspired by organic forms where two independent elements come together.'



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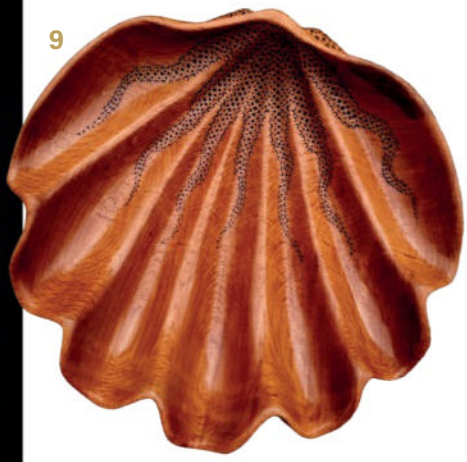




5. David Hall, *Box 166*, Huon pine, figured eucalypt, 30 x 205 x 140mm. 'A variation on the language of my previous designs with all sides chamfered to provide softness and to add visual interest. Six removable trays are contained within.'

6. David Upfill-Brown, *Vagus vase*, 500 x 190 x 190mm. 'An Australian cedar vase capturing a glass interior by joining four pre-carved sides to represent an aggregation of influences from rainforest fruits and molluscs found on Yuenben (Magnetic Island).

7. Damien Joyce, *Interference*. 'Television wall art, incorporating retro and modern characteristics.'

8. Margot Feast, *Bow Lamp*, Otway blackwood. 'Curves always feature in my art, with my designs inspired by the human body, the sway of nature, and the energy of dance. One of the greatest technical challenges was threading the electrical cable through the curved form while maintaining strength in the narrow neck section.' *Photo: David White*

9. Martin Pavey, *Clam*, Western Australian sheoak, 450mm wide. Turned, then power carved and decorated.

10. Nathan Day, *Tidal sculptural wall partition*, bleached and soap finished white ash.the individual blades have been steam bent inside a sous-vide cooking bag, which allows us to steam an isolated section of the timber. Each piece is steamed, twisted and clamped against a precision-made form.

11. Mark Frith, *Jewellery Box*, curly maple, silky oak. 'The sloping profile of the box is enhanced by the tapered triangular corner posts. The custom designed removable tray has individual ring cushions and fitted dividers.'

12. Nikki Phillips, *Shadow Vase*, jacaranda, 180mm high. 'The vase consists of 24 delicate ribbons measuring around 1mm in thickness. Inspired by nature.'

13. Gary Field, *Life*, salvaged red cedar. 'A seed pod inspired piece created using a combination of power carving and traditional carving chisels.'

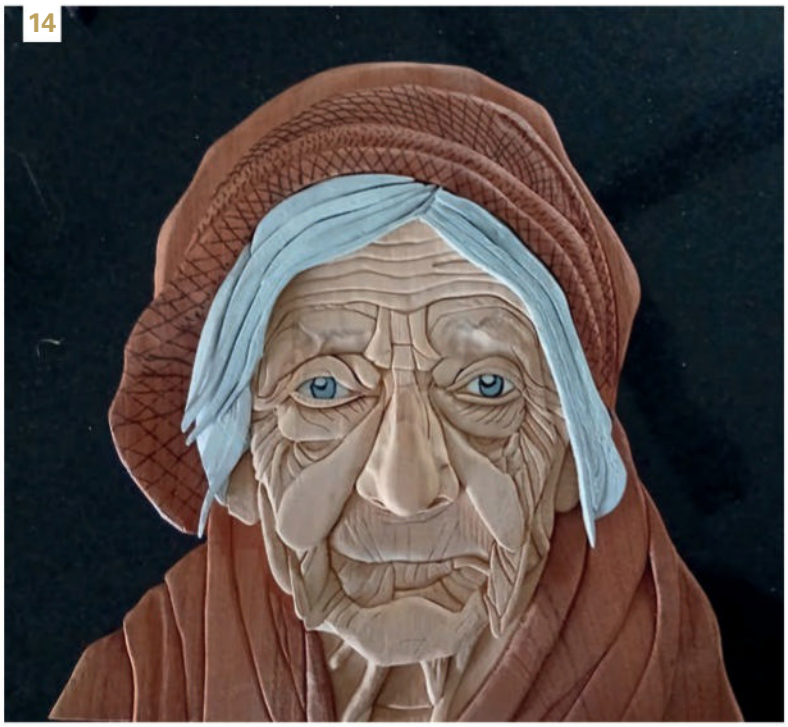
14. Twyler Sasser, *Maggie*. Taking up intarsia (in fact woodwork) at 64, now at 78 I've decided to enter the lovely old lady's head. I love creating wrinkly old faces that always have a story to tell.'

15. Olivia O'Connor, *Chippy Thief*, jelutong, Huon pine, recycled cypress fence post, 685mm high. 'I'm interested in these small, everyday encounters with wildlife – the moments that make us stop, laugh and recognise the wonderfully unpredictable character of the animals that share our environment. The life-sized seagull was hand carved from jelutong. Unexpectedly, Huon pine proved to be the perfect material for the hot chips. Each chip was individually carved with a knife and finished with a generous coating of oil, creating a remarkably convincing result!'











ART & OBJECTS, INTERNATIONAL





1. WINNER: VALDAS BRUCAS, LITHUANIA

Vintage Openwork Handbag: 'This unique, one-of-a-kind openwork handbag is crafted from beechwood, pushing the boundaries of traditional woodwork. The intricate design is inspired by the delicate, complex patterns of crocheted doilies. Emphasising organic asymmetry, every side of the handbag and its detailed patterns vary completely from one angle to another. The piece features fully functional, meticulously integrated wooden hinges and an extraordinary chain carved almost entirely from a single, solid piece of wood.' *Photo: Vilius Sereika*

WHAT THE JUDGES SAID

Valdas Brucas' *Vintage Handbag* is an extraordinary translation of textile into wood. The intricate openwork convincingly evokes the delicacy and complexity of crocheted lace, while the organic asymmetry ensures every viewpoint reveals something new. The meticulous integration of functional hinges, handle and carved wooden chain further elevates the work, demonstrating remarkable technical skill alongside an inventive approach to material and form. **Kate Stehr**

Hovering somewhere between Japanese kumiko lattice work and fine metal filigree – this work is nothing short of extraordinary in its execution. **Jono Everett**

3. Lucas Reid, Canada. '*Eye of the Beast* uses grain direction, natural wood colour, and carefully chosen contrast to create a leopard's depth and watchful expression. Measuring 270 x 190mm, it contains more than 475 veneer elements, each hand-cut with double-bevel marquetry technique.'

4. Talia Drury, USA. '*Reverie* is a triptych of mirrors that draws on my childhood memories of wading through grasses, my fascination with their movement in the wind, and the shapes formed as blades cross and overlap.' *Photo: Elizabeth Lamark*

5. Paul Olson, NZ. *The Kumara Staff*, ancient kauri, 1700 x 80 x 60mm. 'Designed as a reflection of the nourishment and stability that nature gives us. *Photo: Ljubica Grubic*



2



2. RUNNER-UP: ROBERTO BRAMBILLA, ITALY

'*Chamber #1* is part of my ongoing exploration of vessels not primarily as containers for something physical, but as forms capable of suggesting containment, pressure and transformation. The vessel is deliberately closed and visually restrained. Its dark, almost mineral surface gives little indication of what it contains, except for a single rupture cutting across the form.'

WHAT THE JUDGES SAID

In the wide spectrum of crafting objects in wood – whether an artwork or a furniture piece – 'decoration' can often be the killer of greatness. This work is a great example of delivering clarity where the concept is integral to the piece, rather than an application to its surface. It achieves what woodworkers and artists alike strive for: the work's concept, appearance, and execution are all succinctly one. **Jono Everett**

Roberto Brambilla's *Chamber #1* demonstrates how restraint can create considerable visual impact. The simple, contained form is dramatically interrupted by a single rupture, in contrast to its dark surface. The contrast between apparent solidity and exposed interior creates an immediate sense of tension and transformation. A compelling synthesis of form, material and concept, the work is both resolved and evocative. **Kate Stehr**

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6. Niall Walsh, Ireland. *Time Dedicated to You*: 'Natural oak and ancient bog oak coming together in a pattern that reveals itself slowly – just like the craft. A reminder that beauty is often found in the sound of the work, long before the piece is finished.'

7. Finnzarby Richwood, NZ. *A Joining Floor Lamp:* 'The magic of this lamp comes from the back-lit ash veneer – displaying wonderfully the cathedrals and changes in its grain.'

8. Terry Scott, NZ. *Yew Leaves*: 'A turned hollow form has been carved with leaves and inlayed with copper. The piercings in the vessel cast shadows as in a tree canopy.' *Photo: Dick Veitch*

9. Leah Woods, USA. '*Eternal Garden* is a wall hung sculpture that explores how stationary wood forms can feel as though they are alive and growing. I used bent lamination and coopering to construct these forms.' *Photo: Bill Truslow*

10. Rex Kalehoff, USA. *Sculptural Tool Wall*, fumed oak, plywood backing. 'I created this for my studio to provide safe storage and easy access to my fine woodworking tools, while showcasing the beauty of classic hand tool design and celebrating their essential role in my work. The individually carved components are removable and interchangeable.'

MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

1. WINNER: TOM KING

Piano Guitar. 'Believe it or not, this guitar began its life as an upright piano, built in the late 1800s by Newby & Evans, New York. Since then it became a family heirloom, and eventually fell into disrepair. I was asked to preserve its sentimental value by transforming it into instruments for the family's new generation.'

WHAT THE JUDGES SAID

This work demonstrates a great example of complex woodworking by repurposing a redundant musical instrument into a new one. The works exemplifies how treasuring salvaged materials, honours both their history and imbued memories. **Jono Everett**



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2. RUNNER-UP: FRANCIS RUSSO

Druid Guitar. 'The client entrusted me completely to create an instrument uniquely for them. The considerations here were deeply inclusive of my sense of the person's character as well as their playing style, body and hand size, aesthetic tastes, their love of art, geometry and musical interests. The result was a guitar both bold and gentle in appearance and sound.' *Photos: Gerard Russo*



WHAT THE JUDGES SAID

Superb making and a great example of the importance of careful and deep consideration in form and execution. **Jono Everett**



3

3. Tyler Schrader (USA), *Electric Baritone Guitar*, mahogany, oak, ash, walnut, cherry, and maple entirely handmade and cut on my bandsaw.

RECYCLED & RESCUED

1. WINNER: ANDREW WARD

The Child Cabinet, salvaged oregon, shop sawn veneers. 'For me, the true value of a work lies in the process and not the finished piece. The making of this cabinet came at a particularly challenging time. I was navigating a period of severe autistic burnout. Prolonged masking, stress, and navigating life in a neurotypical world had finally caught up with me. For me, this meant the loss of coordination, fine motor skills, and my ability to communicate beyond anything immediately necessary. I had the lofty idea that this piece would do the explaining for me. One of the interesting things about autism for me is the tendency to pattern-seek and connect the dots on things that shouldn't always be connected. My approach to the material and minimalist design of the cabinet was to replicate the autistic experience and the consequences of masking. The cleanest, most defect-free material was oriented outward, while the interior of the cabinet displays nail bleeds, knots, and burn marks, remnants of its previous life as ceiling joists in the CBD of Melbourne.'
Photos: Claire Armstrong





WHAT THE JUDGES SAID

Achieving a level of simplicity that still hooks the viewer is one of the greatest challenges for a designer. *The Child Cabinet* is an absolute stunner. An exemplary resolution of materiality, detailing and narrative. Ward's decision to reserve some of the finest veneer work for the unseen back is wonderfully contradictory. A deeply personal piece, but also an exceptionally well-made one. **Bryan Cush**

Andrew Ward shows a very delicate way of upcycling old construction materials. The qualities of the old growth material are used with a good sense and combined with the clean design it gives me a Japanese feeling. I like the very personal approach to the design and making process. All the embedded stories contribute to a better understanding of the artist's personality. **Rasmus Fenhann**





2. RUNNER-UP: CRAIG HARRIS

AC'S Lectern, reclaimed claret ash (street tree). 'Made to to commemorate Orana Steiner School's 40th anniversary, it ultimately became something more personal. Former student AC was killed in a motorcycle accident, a loss that shook the entire school community. I taught AC through his senior years in Design and Technology. Alongside his best friend, our conversations brought a level of respect, curiosity and design maturity well beyond their years. The greatest lesson AC left with me was simple 'push your limits'. This became the philosophy behind the work. It is my first major original piece since becoming a teacher in 2012, and it was important that it challenged the idea that 'Those who can, do; those who can't, teach. By creating in front of my students, the making itself became a lesson for us all.' *Photos: Rohan Thomson*

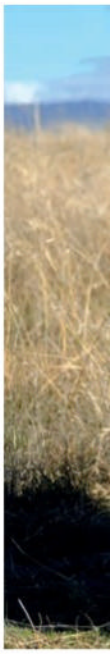
WHAT THE JUDGES SAID

This is an innovative and functional take on the old coopering craft tradition. The use of old street trees and incorporating irregular grain contributes to the overall impression. The project is filled with personal stories and using the Steiner philosophy in the design also brings interesting perspectives. The piece shows that challenging yourself will bring you to new levels of understanding. **Rasmus Fenhann**

An elegant piece that obviously holds some painful memories, but also demonstrates the power of our craft. The technical ambition, sculptural form and detailing are exceptional, particularly in it's use of reclaimed timber. The final result is a piece with presence and meaning, and one that will undoubtedly be treasured by the school. **Bryan Cush**











3. Siegfried Chaloupka. *Pincushion Stool*, recycled timbers and materials. 'Over many years, I patiently collected every piece of rare timber and metal used in this stool from the scrap bins in the workshops of the mentors and teachers who helped shape me as a craftsman – their legacy is carried within the stool. Even the fasteners were from a teacher's dismantled piano. African blackwood, Burma teak, Swiss pear, wenge, Cuban mahogany and Jerusalem olive are combined with stainless steel across 76 turned components, none square... Beneath the stool, a carved inscription reads: "Together we bear, Alone we break."'

4. Adriaan VanDerVeen, *Cantilever Rocker,* 'Inspired by Nakashima's *Conoid* chairs I challenged myself to create a two-legged rocking chair with a cantilevered seat. The red tulip oak, Caledonian oak and Northern silky oak used was salvaged and milled by me after Cyclone Larry in 2006 in North Queensland. *Photo: Colin Pett*

5. Adam McNamara (Canada), *Hive Mind*, storm fallen maple burl, curly maple. 'No single bee functions on its own, but as a collective. To me this represents the woodworking world and I am thankful to be part of this community.'

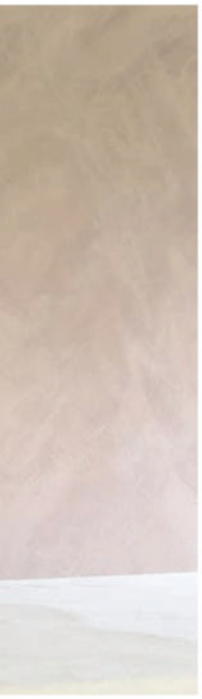
6. Phil Taylor (NZ). '*Parthenogenesis* translates the biological concept of asexual replication into a self-supporting structural grid, built entirely from salvaged and rescued industrial timber pallet stock.'

7. Kim Neave, *Drawer(n) Together #1*. 'The collecting of orphaned, neglected and lonesome drawers, was enabled via visits to op shops, markets, second hand stores and also, being gifted some. Some were finely crafted, others less so. But one thing in common, most had pretty tough lives. Some needed slight re-sizing and others required new hand-cut dovetails. The narrative is twofold: an observation on recycling potential, plus a deeper comment about homeless things or people – the need for security in housing and in repurposing or integrating the past.' *Photo: Ryan Bloomfield*

8. Georgie Szymanski. '*Szafka* is a tall, slender cabinet that uses drawers, doors, and openings to display and contain objects – whether sentimental or ordinary. Named after the Polish word for cabinet, it's made from the blackwood timber doors of the kitchen cabinetry formerly in my childhood home.' *Photo: Issy Connelley*

9. Jina and Derek Peña and Urey (Panama), *Elena Cabinet*. 'This piece is inspired by the remarkable beauty of fungi and the hidden life within wood. A discarded tamarind log was used as a veneer, paired with a solid teak structure sourced from a family cattle farm, where some teak, planted as a monoculture, was removed to restore native biodiversity.'

10. Brian Dawson, *A Phoenix of Cedar and Rosewood*. An integral piston-fit 'whoosh' box sits atop this cedar and rosewood table which is a response to the NSW Woodworkers Association recycled wood challenge.



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JAN PENNELL AWARD FOR WOODTURNING



1

1. WINNER: JASON BREACH, UK

Art Deco Orbital Arc. 'Turned boxes made of rippled ash and ebony – the small central box is removable.'

WHAT THE JUDGES SAID

Jason Breach's piece is a truly amazing piece of turning. A beautifully balanced, well thought out design and a nice choice of timbers. As a woodturner I can see the incredible difficulty in turning this piece, very impressed. **Paul Barton**

2. RUNNER-UP: RAY JONES, USA

Sharon's Box, 330 dia x 152mm high (closed). 'The body is shopmade sapele plywood with turned ebony hinges and door pulls. Inside are two levels, both made of maple burl. The circular tray rotates on a lazy susan bearing.

WHAT THE JUDGES SAID

Sharon's Box drew me in with its many layers, each photo revealing yet another detail with all parts fitting together perfectly. A beautifully turned and constructed box. This piece also impressed me with its high level of difficulty and nice attention to detail. **Paul Barton**



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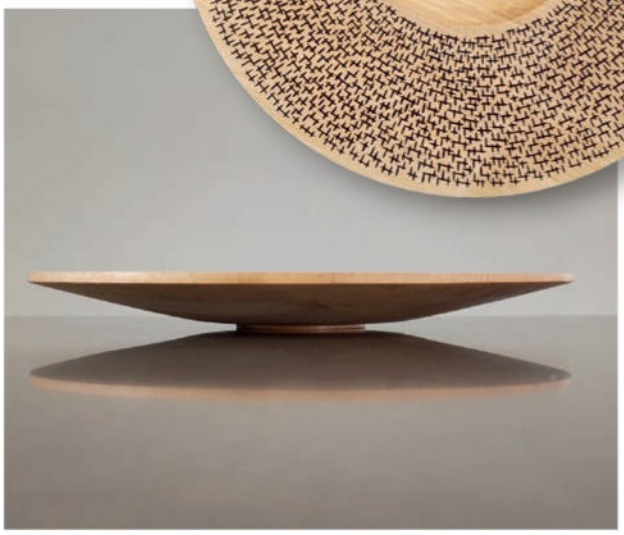


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3. Damien McNamara, *Techne 1*, blackwood. 'Inspired by classical Greek pottery, the vessel was turned green to achieve its distinctive form as the timber dried, with hand carved handles shaped from the single piece. The surface was fumed with ammonia to deepen the natural tones of the wood. Copper wire stitching unites its transformation.'

4. Percy Herbert, UK. *Shallow birch bowl* with a freehand, pyrography design. 'My approach is to keep things simple and elegant, to showcase the beauty in the wood.'

5. Gregor Novak, Slovenia. *Devin Chess Set*: 'Precision-turned from select walnut and maple – the finest noble woods – to honour the distinctive design created by Oskar Kogoj.'

6. Sean Staniforth, *Tornado Bowls*. 'The Tornado pattern arises from the interplay between the contrasting timber pieces, and the degree of rotation applied. Roughly 80% of the time is invested in creating the blank, gluing each piece together into a form that, once complete, is rugged and raw. Turning the blank is unforgiving. Excess glue ejects at high speeds, striking. the skin like shards of glass and tear-out is the norm, even using the sharpest tools and lightest passes.'









7. Tom Windross, (Ireland). '*Tonnach* (Irish for wavy) is turned thin from green oak. During the drying process, the form is gently manipulated to guide and shape the movement of the wood. The shape is intentionally quiet and uncomplicated; a simple, flowing form that allows the character of the oak to speak for itself. The vessel has been fumed to bring out greater depth and warmth, while white liming wax gently highlights the grain.' 140mm wide x 110mm high.

8. Janine Wang, USA. *Hand and Feet Stools:* 'These look at ways woodturning can be employed to welcome people into furniture. Split-turned and multi-axis turned details are embedded into each piece. Each stool highlights each invitation.'

9. Terry Scott, NZ. *Trio and Mallee*. 'I have developed a technique so the underside of a burl shows no evidence of how it has been held. The three bowls are turned on different axes with the aid of counterweights. Meticulously carved leaves further enhance the beauty of the burl's grain and finish.' *Photo: Dick Veitch*



STUDENT, TERTIARY

1. WINNER: EOIN DALTON, IRELAND

Atlantic Technological University, Connemara, Ireland

'*Solaris* is a small luxury whiskey cabinet designed with a unique wooden opening mechanism, which adds a theatrical flair to the ritual of its use. The opening sequence begins as the user pulls on the pouring tray at the bottom of the carcase. As the tray comes out, the two doors are pulled open simultaneously, and a revolving oak cylinder reveals the contents inside. The oak veneer starburst on the front wraps around the entire exterior of the cabinet, inspired by the opening of blossoms in nature, and leads the eye to the opening touch point.

'The pouring tray and back panel are pressed with reconstituted veneer to make the contents of the cabinet stand out. The leg frame is made from solid oak, with traditional haunched mortise and tenon construction. All of the jointing in the project was done with reversible fish glue which will allow future craftsmen to repair the cabinet. *Solaris* was designed with longevity in mind, which is why traditional methods that enhance durability and enable its conservation were used.'

WHAT THE JUDGES SAID

Solaris' well executed starburst veneer grabs your attention first, but the real magic lies internally. The theatre of the decanter turntable revealing itself as the door and drawer open changes a simple interaction into a ritual. The piece demonstrates Dalton's advanced understanding of kinetic design, while the consideration given to longevity and future repair adds another layer of maturity. **Bryan Cush**







2

2. RUNNER-UP: ANNE McNEVIN

Sturt School for Wood. Tutors: Andrew Carvolth and John Goulder

Cankle Sideboard is inspired by Japanese cabinetry and the work of Isamu Noguchi, who combines stone and wood in large, highly textured and organic arrangements. I chose poplar for its light weight, warm finish, and varied figure and tones. Removable oval feet are made from laminations with stacked endgrain patterns that appear like marble when finished. Sliding door frames are covered in vintage Japanese silk with hand-stitching. The name emerged from the feet that resemble the much-maligned cankle.' *Photos: Ashley Mackevicius*

WHAT THE JUDGES SAID

Cankle's balance, cantilevers and clear structural language appeal to the inner architect in me. There's a lovely tension between mass and lightness, while the silk doors and asymmetric hand-stitched detailing display a human touch to the piece. The layering of materials, texture and negative space makes for a sophisticated, well-refined work.
Bryan Cush



3



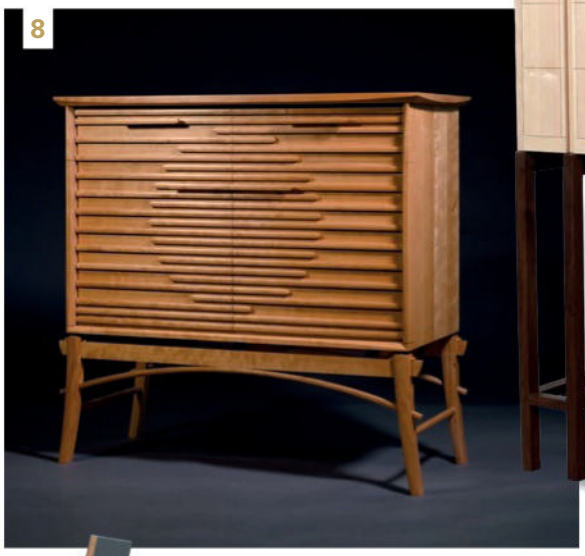
4

3. Riley Hearn, Sturt School for Wood. Tutors: Neil Erasmus and Pam Erasmus. 'Designing the *Villain Chair* began with the pursuit of function; to give you the quiet confidence that comes unconsciously with using something that just works.' *Photo: Connor Patterson*

4. Stefan von Hallberg, The Krenov School, USA. *Faberge Desk*, Macassar and Gabon ebony. 'Stance and character are inspired by the work of the Faberge house and Emil Ruhlmann. The case was intended to hover within a nestled stand just like those bejeweled eggs.' *Photo: Todd Sorenson*

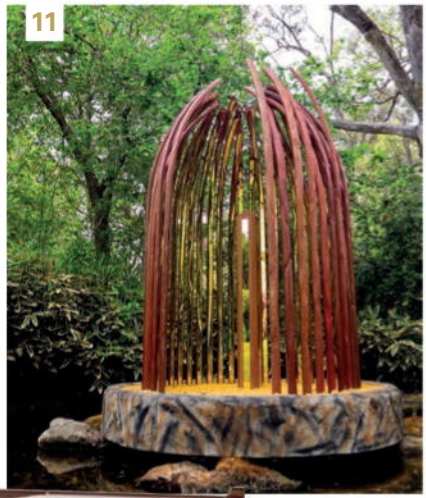














5. Viktor Hubbertz, University of Gothenburg, Sweden. *Between Engineering and Craft Table.* 'A case study developed as part of my master's thesis, investigating how digital analysis and traditional craftsmanship can complement one another.'

6. Thomas Davies, Waters and Acland Furniture School, UK. '*Cabinet for B.* is designed to accommodate a sewing machine alongside its bobbins and other sewing supplies. The hinged front means that half of the cabinet top lifts to enable the machine to be lifted clear.'

7. Karissa Mendez, Centre for Fine Woodworking, NZ. Tutor: Lou Fuller. *Mantarraya Occasional Table*, blue gum, maple. 'The body opens like a pair of wings gliding through water. Its curves meet in a sculptural central spine, giving the piece balance.' *Photo Daniel Allen*

8. Maximilian Zander, Waters & Acland, UK. Tutor: Tim Smith. '*Confluence Cabinet* in solid American cherry explores the tension between geometry and perception.'

9. Louis Oakes, Atlantic Technological University Connemara, Ireland. *From Trees...* 'This book display was inspired by the wind bent trees of Connemara, not just for their form but also for their kindred resilience with books as the winds of change constantly howl by.' *Tutor: Davin Larkin*

10. Patrick Davis, The Krenov School, USA. *Record Console*, Brazilian rosewood, European cherry. 'I built this piece during my final semester. One of my goals for this cabinet was to learn new mechanisms. This involved nearly three weeks of prototyping and making 15 pieces of custom brass hardware.' *Photo: Todd Sorenson*

11. Joey Marsden, Sturt School For Wood. Tutors: Andrew Carvolth, Jon Goulder. *Afghanistan Memorial Sculpture '42'*, spotted gum, acrylic mirror 'linings': *'42* represents the 41 Australian veterans who paid the ultimate sacrifice in Afghanistan with the 42nd representing those who have lost their fight since or returned with injuries and or mental illness.' *Photo: Riley Hearn*

STUDENT, SECONDARY

1. WINNER: NINA CUDDY

Canowindra High School, NSW. Tutors: Timothy Roberts, Joshua Conliffe

'Tambour Terrain is a fusion of mid-century design and natural forms blended into a functional statement piece. It is made from sapele mahogany, with brass highlights. Another thing that was very important to me was paying homage to the rolling hills and waterways of my hometown. I tried to incorporate this in as many ways as I could, particularly with the natural forms of my tambour resembling a topographic map.'


1

WHAT THE JUDGES SAID

Tambour Terrain demonstrates an impressive level of design ambition and making skill. The carved tambour is both the defining visual feature and a thoughtful reference to the rolling landscape of the maker's home, while the brass details, drawers, floating shelf and carved feet create a cohesive whole. An imaginative and beautifully resolved piece that balances functionality, craftsmanship and shows the beginnings of a strong personal design language – an especially important attribute in an emerging maker. Congratulations Nina. **Laura McCusker**


2

2. RUNNER-UP: ZAC CASSINGER, USA

Home schooled

'The Rolls Royce Puzzle Box is a mechanical puzzle box inspired by the world renowned furniture craftsman Craig Thibodeau's box made for Chris Ramsey. Although the exterior is similar, the interior is completely original one of a kind solve in 55 moves. There are 10 drawers to unlock, including the final drawer which has maple inlaid dovetails and a sliding tile puzzle lid on top.'

WHAT THE JUDGES SAID

The Rolls Royce Puzzle Box is an ambitious and technically impressive piece that demonstrates an extraordinary commitment to precision and problem solving. The complexity of the mechanism is matched by the quality of the making, with ten drawers, multiple puzzles and finely executed inlay revealing themselves through play. A wonderfully engaging object that celebrates both craftsmanship and the sheer joy of making. The technical skill exhibited in this piece is incredible; that it comes from the hands and studio of a secondary school student who is just beginning their practice is fantastically exciting. Well done Zac. **Laura McCusker**

3. Clarita Toma, Freeman Catholic College, NSW. Teacher: Alessandrio Lettieri. '*Buffet Cabinet* has a floating carcase and features angled A-frame legs with curved arches throughout. The top has detailed floral marquetry and contrasting inlay.'

4. Kenan Drury, Taree High School, NSW. Teacher: Andrew Herps. *Engineering Desk:* The desktop is made of 64 laminates joined with dominos to ensure flatness. The legs are made of 96 x 2.5mm laminates bent on three different moulds using rachet straps and two part epoxy. The drawers are grain matched across their fronts. Cable management holes were cut into the back to reduce clutter in the workspace.

5. Jackson Arnold, Cabra Dominican College, SA. Teacher: Alex Radzikiewicz. Photos: Matt Arnold. *Tensegrity Coffee Table* embodies the physics principle it is named after, appearing to defy gravity with the upper section suspended by stainless steel wire rope.



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6. Georgie Statham, Canowindra High School, NSW. Teachers: Timothy Roberts, Josh Conliffe. *Sewing Machine Cabinet:* 'I enjoy sewing and was recently gifted a treadle sewing machine that was used to make clothes for a whole family generation and I wanted to pay respect to that by bringing it back to life. As the machine recently went through a local flood, I decided to recreate the old rickety cabinet with recycled orogen timber.'

7. Dominic Toson, Santa Sophia Catholic College, NSW. Teacher: Jacob Lewis. *Sculpted Hall Table*, American black walnut and Tasmanian oak. 'Steam-bent and laminated legs create the main form of the table, while the sculpted drawer fronts draw inspiration from a Pedulla Studio piece. The kumiko shelf was inspired by a project displayed at the 2026 SHAPE Exhibition. Traditional woodworking techniques, including steam bending, laminating, dovetail and mortise and tenon joinery, are combined with modern processes such as CNC routing and laser cutting.'

8. Alex O'Brien, Concord High School, NSW. Teacher: Luke Shephard. *Outdoor Storage Bench:* 'The bench sits on my front porch, where the hand carved design on the backrest and armrests mirrors the leadlight window above its location, and the leaf details reflect the rose bush beside it. I chose jarrah, an Australian hardwood known for its durability and strong grain. The hinged seat opens and offers storage.'


7


8

Wood Diary

For more events and news sign up to AWR fortnightly newsletters at:
www.woodreview.com.au

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

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

UNTIL 1 DECEMBER 2026
Perfect Places
Woodblock prints and woodcarvings
by Olivia O'Connor
Little Oberon Café, 9am-2pm
15 Falls Road, Fish Creek, Victoria
www.oliviaoconnor.com.au

UNTIL 7 FEBRUARY 2027
Plant Life: The Nature of Design
Explores the future of plant-based materials as an alternative to plastics and non-renewable materials.
National Gallery of Victoria
www.ngv.vic.gov.au/exhibition/plant-life

12 NOVEMBER–6 FEBRUARY 2027
Visionaries 2026 curated by Tali Roth
Presented by Craft Victoria, the exhibition will showcase more than 50 Australian makers and artists, celebrating a bold and playful approach to living with craft.
craft.org.au/whats-on/all-events/visionaries-2026

14 NOVEMBER 2026
Tools & Trades Day Conference 2025
Hand Tool Preservation Assoc Australia Inc
Seven speakers, tool displays and sales
St Anthony's Parish Hall, 164
Neerim Rd, Caulfield East, Vic
For attendance details, contact
Dick Lynch on 0419 392 042
www.htpaa.org.au

14–15 NOVEMBER
Eltham & District Woodworkers Club Annual Exhibition
Demonstrations and sales daily from 9am–5pm. Free hands-on workshop for children.
Eltham Community Centre
Cnr Pitt Street and Main Road Eltham, Victoria
www.elthamwoodworkers.org.au

22 NOVEMBER
Members and Friends Tool Sale
The Traditional Tools Group
9am–12:30pm
Old Eastwood Town Hall
74 Agincourt Rd, Marsfield, NSW
tttg.org.au

21–22 NOVEMBER
Goulburn Valley Woodworkers Wood Show
Woodwork sales, trade stands, demonstrations, milled timber, food trucks
Multipurpose Pavillion, Shepparton Showgrounds, Vic
Email gvwoodworkers.show@gmail.com
www.gvwoodworkers.com.au

25–26 NOVEMBER
Melbourne Build 2026
Construction and design show featuring speakers, trade exhibitors and live demos, networking parties, conference stages and more.
Melbourne Convention Exhibition Centre (MCEC)
1 Convention Centre Pl, South Wharf
melbournebuildexpo.com

27–29 NOVEMBER
Christmas Craft Fair at the Tramsheds
Society Arts and Crafts NSW
10am–4pm daily
Tramsheds, 1 Dalgal Way, Forest Lodge
www.artsandcraftsnsw.com.au

2027

5–8 FEBRUARY
Australian Wooden Boat Festival
Hobart, Tasmania
www.australianwoodenboatfestival.com.au

21 FEBRUARY
TTTG Sydney Tool Sale
Traditional Tools Group annual event
The Brick Pit Sports Stadium, 9am–1pm
1A Dartford Rd, Thornleigh, NSW
tttg.org.au

MARCH
Maker of the Year 2027
Entries open for Wood Review's awards for fine woodworkers and wood artists.
Information and entry at
www.makeroftheyear.com.au

13–14 MARCH
Kiama Woodcraft Group Annual Woodcraft Expo
Demonstrations and sales by members plus timber sales.
Kiama Masonic Hall, Collins Street, Kiama, NSW
9am – 4pm Saturday and Sunday
www.kiamawoodcraft.org

19–21 MARCH
Turnfest woodturning symposium
Demonstrations by international and local woodturning and woodcarving professionals
Seaworld Resort and Water Park, Gold Coast, Qld
www.woodworkingsuppliesqld.com.au/turnfest

20–21 MARCH
Lost Trades Fair
Lost arts, rare trades and heritage crafts
10am–4:30pm
Hanging Rock, Victoria
www.losttradesfair.com.au

7–11 APRIL
International Wood Collectors 80th Anniversary Jubilee and Annual Meeting
Milestone event brings wood hobbyists, collectors, and artisans together for a multi-day anniversary celebration.
Camp Lonestar, La Grange, TX
woodcollectors.org

30 APRIL–2 MAY
Woodcarving Weekend in Bacchus Marsh
Hosted by Woodcraft Manningham and Woodcarvers
Woodcarvers from around Victoria (with basic carving skills) gather to share experiences and do woodcarving. Includes two nights accommodation and food.
Lady Northcote camp, Bacchus Marsh, Victoria
John Paine 0484 278 73
https://bacchusmarshcarve-in.org/

30 APRIL–3 MAY
Wootha Prize Event
Competition and events including: Montville's Long Weekender, the Makers Design Fair, and the Blackall Range Woodcrafters' Guild mini Wood Expo.
Montvale, Montville, Qld
barunglandcare.org.au/woothaprize

1–3 MAY
Montville Timber Trail
Displays, demonstrations by makers, artisans and teachers. Includes woodcarving workshops, stool-making classes, and live demonstrations. Hosting Wootha Prize exhibition.
Montville Woods Gallery, Village Hall & St Mary's Hall, Montville, Qld
www.montvilletimbertrail.com

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A Woodworker's Workshop

Build your own workshop with green wood, and mortise and tenon joinery? Yes, you can, explains Lachlan Park.



This photo does not show construction of the design proposed in this article. The proportions are very similar however, with the overall size being 4 metres long x 2.5 metres wide x 3.1m high. It's made from messmate.

Ever dreamed of building your own workshop space? Somewhere to store a few of those precious boards of fine wood, your workbench and a home for a bandsaw. Well, a 10sq/m mortise and tenon timber-framed structure may just be the answer, or at least a good place to start – and I promise you will have a lot of fun (and toil) building it.

I hear you already: 'Ten square metres isn't very big.' Of course, if making dining tables is your schtick then this space may not be for you, but if making things on a smaller scale, such as fine cabinets, chairs, woodturning or perhaps musical instruments, then a cosy space like this will do just fine. And who knows, if you enjoy making one perhaps you could make another.

The concept design shown in **fig.1** shows double barn style doors at one end, a window on one wall and suggested glazing in gable ends to allow for extra light. In **fig.2** the three cross frames differ slightly from one another whilst the two wall frames are identical. A suggestion for secondary framing is a combination of LVLs (laminated veneer lumber), 90 x 45mm and 70 x 45mm pine.

Design rationale

This basic workshop design is meant to be an achievable project for the home woodworker, made with a few simple hand and power tools and maybe a helpful neighbour or patient family member.

The frame is of mortise and tenon pegged construction using freshly sawn 'green' timbers, although second hand seasoned timbers could be used instead. 'Traditional timber framing' refers to the methods used to frame together large timbered structures, often with pegged, mortise and tenon joinery.

Traditional timber framing is undertaken all over the world and varies significantly in style, methods



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1. Another example of a traditional timber frame construction by the author. Note the use of adjustable supports which sit on stone footings – easy to check for termites!
2. Many of the tools used for traditional timber framing are shown, with more itemised on p.72.

and species of timber. If you follow this guide and use the green wood method, 'English scribe rule' will be your friend, however if you choose to use seasoned (dry) timbers, then American square rule may be more appropriate. Whichever method you choose, books will help guide you or perhaps YouTube if that's your thing. Better yet undertake a beginner course in traditional timber framing or find your nearest expert and bug them for advice.

English scribe rule

This is a historic timber framing technique that involves laying timbers next to or on top of each other and then marking out mortise and tenon joinery. You use tools like a level and plumb bob to find irregularities in the timbers and then transfer the unique shape of one timber to another. When done correctly this ensures a tight joint and a square and level frame is achieved. English scribe rule is particularly helpful when working with timbers which are bowed and twisted, which is common when working with rough sawn green timber.

What wood do I need?

A cutting list for the design shown below. Finding large section timbers can be challenging in today's ever changing timber marketplace. Using green wood you have the advantage of sourcing directly from a sawmill or plantation. 'What species should I use?' *Cypress macrocarpa*, native cypress, ironbark, sugar gum, messmate, spotted gum, turpentine, blackbutt are some of the options. Think local and seek out local sawyers for advice. Different species will behave in different ways, best to do some study and consider shrinkage rates, durability and strength.

If you would like to start at the tree, I can highly recommend contacting your local growers through Forestry Australia (www.forestry.org.au). You will find a connection to passionate foresters, landholders and groups with sustainably managed plantations who may sell you the trees you need. From there you will need to have them sawn either at your local sawmill or by the means of your own toil with a chainsaw mill, or for the few lucky readers who have their own swing blade or bandsaw mill, you are already ahead of me.

A green wood timber frame?

'Why green wood? Won't my timber split and crack?' Well yes, it will, but wood is alive, isn't it? Your anxiety is real but don't let it put you off. Us woodworkers have been working with freshly sawn greenwood for thousands of years. Traditional timber framing is not an outdated method from a bygone era but perhaps more relevant than ever. In saying that there are some things you can do during your project to slow down and prevent your timbers from drying out too quickly.

Some log end sealing wax will be essential – paint the endgrain as soon as you gather your timbers, then repeat this any time you expose freshly cut endgrain, for example after you have cut a tenon. Cover timber with a tarp whenever possible to protect it from harsh drying sunlight and wind. If possible, source timber in autumn and work with it during the winter. This will allow a slow drying period before summer heat arrives. If there is a long delay between sourcing the wood and construction, consider stacking your timbers with stickers between boards to allow for even curing prior to using.

Tools

- Pen/pencil, chalk or ink line
- Builders square
- Level, 600mm (or longer)
- Marking knife
- Circular saw, 160mm or larger
- Handsaws, crosscut and rip saw
- Framing chisels, 25mm
- Cordless or electric drill
- Auger drill bits, 16mm and 19mm dia
- Offset punches, 16mm (2mm offset) and 19mm (3mm offset). Or make from dowel and a nail
- Podgers, 16mm and 19mm, or use pegs but be careful not to break during test fitment
- Chain mortiser, this one is a luxury, otherwise drill out waste and chisel to size
- Mallet, hide or dead blow, 800g–1200g
- Hand planes, #3 Stanley and rebate or shoulder plane
- Small carpenters axe
- Froe or wedges for splitting pegs
- Drawknife, I prefer a slightly curved sole

Materials

- Log end sealing wax
- Foundation supports, adjustable for deck/post
- Foundation stones, pavers, concrete blocks or bricks

CUTTING LIST

COMPONENT	QTY	SECTION SIZE	LENGTH
RIFT OR BOXED-HEART SAWN			
Bottom plates	2	140x140	4800
Posts	6	140x140	2700
Tie-beams	3	140x140	2820
Top plates	4	140x140	2390
King posts	3	140x100	1180
RIFT OR FLAT SAWN, FREE OF HEART			
Rafters	6	140x100	2075
Door posts	2	140x75	2400
Braces	8	125x75	1300 (4 @ 2700)
Long noggins	6	125x75	1300 (3 @ 2700)
Short noggins	4	125x75	600 (1 @ 2400)

- If long lengths cannot be sourced for the bottom plates, use a scarf joint to join two lengths
- 400mm of extra length is included so you can cut off end cracking
- Always buy more wood than you need! A few spare timbers will be a wise investment

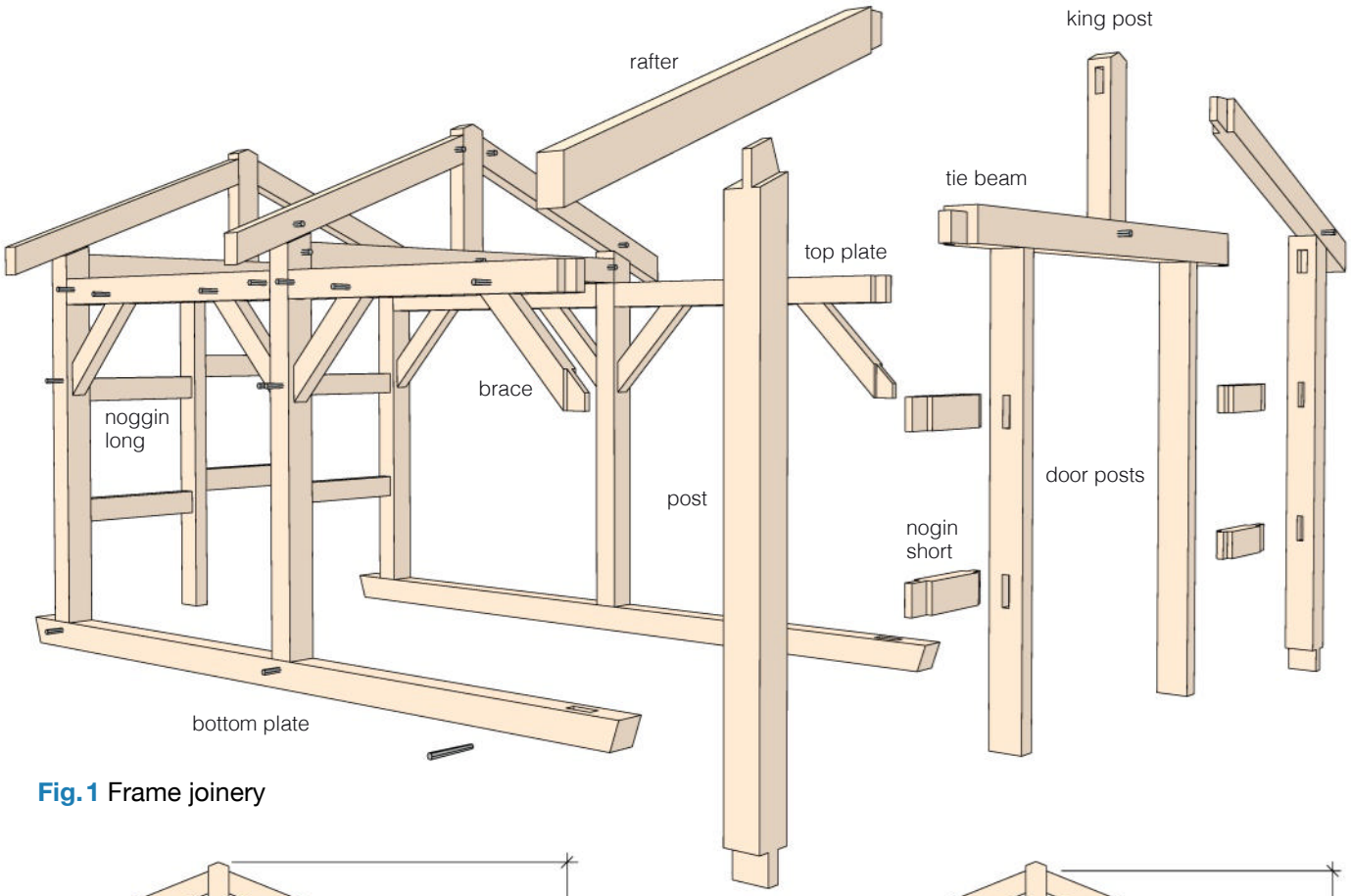
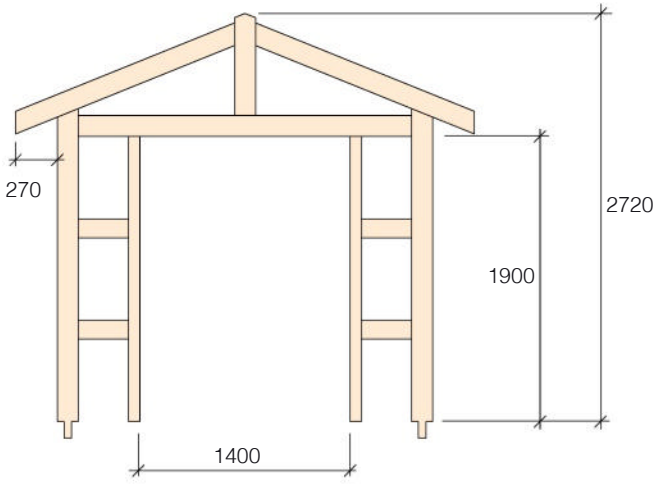
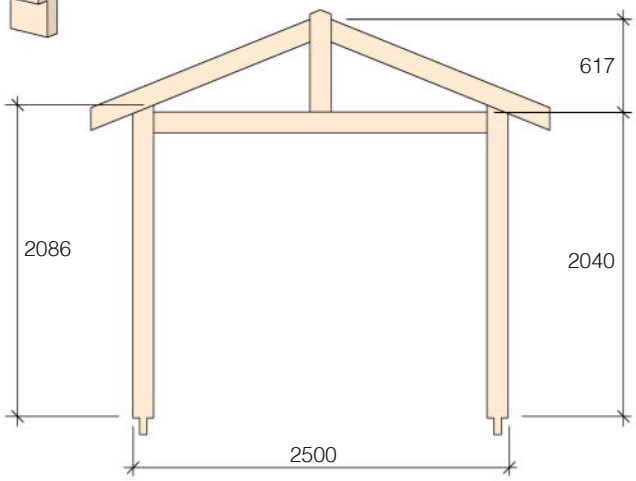


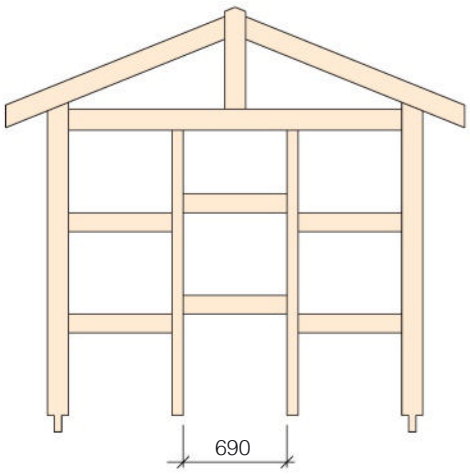
Fig. 1 Frame joinery



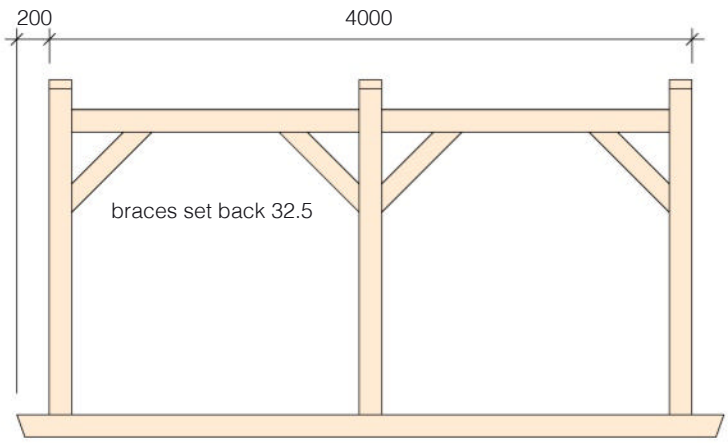
cross frame 1



cross frame 2



cross frame 3



wall frames

Fig. 2 Frame elevations (mm)

Terminology

- **3-4-5 Method:** Using the Pythagorean theorem to check a right angle is perfectly square
- **TTF or Traditional timber framing:** Making large timbered structures, often with pegged, mortise and tenon joinery
- **Bow:** A longitudinal curve along the face of a timber where the ends are higher or lower than the centre.
- **Carpenter marks:** Marks or symbols made using a chisel and/or gouge to label the timbers within a frame
- **Face and edge mark:** A squiggle mark, universally understood by carpenters, which labels the bowed face and edge.
- **Face aligned, back or centre aligned:** Alignment of timbers and subsequent joinery layout. Face aligned timbers will be flush to the outside frame face.
- **Critical edge lines:** The lines which determine the critical edges of joinery
- **Ink lines:** Made using a Japanese ink line, usually 40mm from face edge depending on timber sizing
- **Knife and pen lines:** Layout lines marked on timbers
- **Kerfing:** Cuts on a shoulder of a joint using the crosscut saw
- **Level:** Perfectly flat and parallel to the horizon; in TTF this could be a line, surface or plane
- **Mortise depth:** Depth of mortise hole inside timber
- **Nose:** The corner of a brace, the longest length
- **Plumb:** A perfectly vertical line, found using a plumb bob or level.
- **Podgers:** Steel pins used during the framing process to hold joinery tight together
- **Shoulder:** The surface cut into the tenon which determines its length
- **Square:** A 90° angle between two edges or lines
- **Twist:** The longitudinal warp of a timber from one end to another
- **Undercutting:** The process of chiselling tenon shoulders or inside the mortise
- **Waste:** The wood to be removed from an end, or around or inside a joint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The mortise & tenon joinery

You're ready to begin actually cutting wood! Find a clear and as level as possible working space, you may be lucky and already have a workshop or carport to use. If not don't stress, the front lawn or backyard will do. I began my framing on an old tennis court – it was reasonably flat but having no shelter from the sun and rain wore thin after a few builds.

The following will be a general guide on how to approach the layout and cutting of joinery. You will work in the horizontal plane and when ready raise them vertically as your workshop structure.

Laying out

The frame of proposed structure comprises three cross frames and two wall frames. We'll start with cross frame #1. From your stack of timber, select wood for two posts, one tie-beam, two rafters and one king post.

Lay your wood on bearers, or better yet sawhorses. Place the timbers with any 'bow' up and out. Here 'up' means to the sky when your frame is raised, while 'out' means towards the outside of the structure. This bow defines the face and edge and can be marked as such. Label your timbers from left to right all as cross frame #1and then as post #1, post #2, tie-beam, rafter, king post.

Level and twist

Using an ink line (or chalk line) snap a line on the two bowed faces of the timber. This line can be either 30–40mm from the edge or centred approx. 70mm from the edge for a 140mm timber. The ink lines are now your reference/datum lines. Place your timbers in level by holding your level along the ink line on the vertical face of timber and use packers to raise the timber at one end as required. Now place your timber in twist by holding the level on the horizontal face of the timber at approximately the mid-point of the length. Use wedges to tilt the timber as required. The timber is now in 'level and twist' and the joinery ready to be marked.





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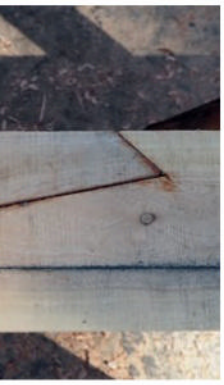


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Marking the joinery

Refer to **fig.1** for the joinery specifications. To mark out the joinery, start with a post and tie-beam. The posts will have mortises for the tie-beam which will have a tenon cut on both ends. Leave the posts over length for now as later on you will cut tenons on the bottoms to go into mortises in the bottom plates. The key to accurate marking out is the ink lines; they are your reference for level, twist and square. Each mortise and tenon should be marked accordingly in relation to the level and twist, which will be unique to each joinery location and the relevant timbers.

Cutting the tenons

First cut the shoulders and then rip cut the length either with a hand saw or circular saw. The circular saw will be quicker but the handsaw gentler and safer. After the cutting use your chisel to clean up the tenon, undercutting the inside of the tenon a few millimetres. Note: the tenons which are 100–110mm long have a 19mm peg through the joint. The shorter 65–70mm long stub tenons need to be fixed with mechanical fasteners such as construction screws.

Cutting the mortises

Using either a chain mortiser, electric drill or hand auger, remove the waste, then with your chisel tidy up inside the mortise and undercut a little so the tenon does not become jammed during assembly and can twist a little inside the mortise. This will allow you to bring frame into level, twist and square before pegging.

All the mortises are cut perpendicular to the face of timber and the tenons to suit. The tenons range in thickness from 30mm for the braces to 50mm for tie-beams and posts. The lengths range from 65mm for top plates to 110mm for tie-beams, posts etc. The longer 100–110mm tenons are to be pegged with a 19mm diameter tapered in length draw bored peg. Whereas the shorter tenons cannot be appropriately pegged to they are to be discreetly fixed with a mechanical fastener such as construction screws.

3. You can harvest your own wood, but be sure to check for and obtain any necessary permits.

4. Processing your own wood can save money but not necessarily time.

5. Alternatively, think local and seek out local sawyers. Shown here, a delivery of sawn *Cypress macrocarpa* arrives at the worksite.

6. Scarf joints can be used to join lengths of timber.

7. When marking out, lay your wood on sawhorses with the 'bow' up and out.

8. Showing a brace tenon, cut on an angle.


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The pegs

Other names for pegs are tree nails, trannels or trunnels. On the other hand, 'podgers' are used for assembly while pegs are only for the final 'barn-raising'. The pegs are made from freshly sourced un-seasoned (green) logs. Suitable species that I have sourced locally include messmate, candlebark, sugar gum, English oak, yellow gum and robinia. I have also used blackwood and applewood, but I would only recommend these less durable species for internal feature pegs. It is important to find straight grained logs, free of rot and defects.

The pegs are split from the logs using an axe, froe or wedge. Split (or riven) timber is much stronger than sawn timber as the fibres have not been severed by the saw cut.

We are aiming for pegs 25–350mm in length, depending on the size of timbers. But it is best to cut logs in lengths of 400mm or greater. I find this length easier to hold while working on the shavehorse and also logs will dry out and crack from the ends so best to have them longer than the desired finished length.

The pegs are made tapered and to fit through a 19mm or 25mm hole, it is best to shave them hexagonal and not smooth – this way they bite into the sides of holes and remain tight.

Foundations

Okay you're almost there, but this frame needs some foundations. It could of course sit directly on the ground like a 19th century trappers hut, but moisture and termites will love you for it. Instead I propose readily available adjustable supports attached to the base of posts which sit on stone footings. In the past I have sourced stones from my local granite quarry, hand split with feathers and wedges by expert stonemasons. Placed on firm level ground, these stones lift the timber frame off the ground and provide a visible termite inspection point.

Raising your frame

With your frame completed, site foundations ready and some eager helpers, you are now ready to have a barn raising. You may need a lifting device such as a gin pole, gantry, crane or tele-handler. Ladders and a scaffold will be helpful too.

As the framer, you will be the best person on-site to direct where each timber goes into the structure and how best to plan the sequence of assembly. Cross frames can be assembled on the ground in the horizontal plane and then raised by hand or using a lifting device. For a frame of this size four to six eager helpers should be sufficient.

Once standing the frame can be braced with 2x4s and star pickets while another cross frame is raised and connected to the first frame with the wall frame top plates. Things get easier once two cross frames are connected to one another as now the structure is self-supporting. Work steadily and safely and if things go awry, stop and check that joinery is not over tight and each component is in its correct location.

What next?

You have a frame! The afterglow has worn off and what next? You have options. Your frame is load bearing and ready for its roof, walls, floor, doors and windows.

Take a note of your surroundings, what do you see? What materials can be sourced locally and will suit not only your own aesthetic but that of the surrounding architecture. Better yet throw those considerations out the window and go for eclectic, it's your call. The best advice I can





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offer is to sit with your frame and a slow cup of tea or ale, sometimes the 'right' decision comes slowly or spontaneously.

A roof of corrugated iron will do just fine, even secondhand sheets will be adequate if in decent condition. For walls you have too many options. Conventional stud framing with 70 x 35mm pine, plywood lining and more iron or timber cladding will be nice. Or perhaps you are feeling adventurous and would like to try wattle and daub, hempcrete or some secondhand refrigeration panels held in with angle iron. This is your workshop remember, a cosy space from which to find calm and balance from everyday life. A refuge of sorts, but a refuge which should be comfortable, with good lighting and perhaps a 14-inch bandsaw and your workbench.

Photos: Lachlan Park
Illustrations: Graham Sands



Lachlan Park is director and tutor at Newstead Wood School. His school offers workshops in fine woodworking and traditional timber framing. Learn more at lpwoodwork.com

9. Careful layout, labelling and cutting will ensure components come together.
10. Timber that is riven along its grain will be stronger. A froe is used here to split off sections for pegs.
11. The drawknife is an efficient and pleasurable way to shape pegs.
12. Seated on a shavehorse you can clamp timber while shaping the pegs.

Suggested reading

Jack Sobon, *Build a Classic Timber-Framed House*

Jack Sobon, *Timber Frame Construction*

Richard Harris, *Discovering Timber Framed Buildings*

Tedd Benson, *The Timber-Frame Home*

Steve Chappell *A Timber Framers Workshop*

RW Brunskill, *Timber Building in Britian*

Rupert Newman, *Oak-Framed Buildings*

Websites

www.timberframehq.com

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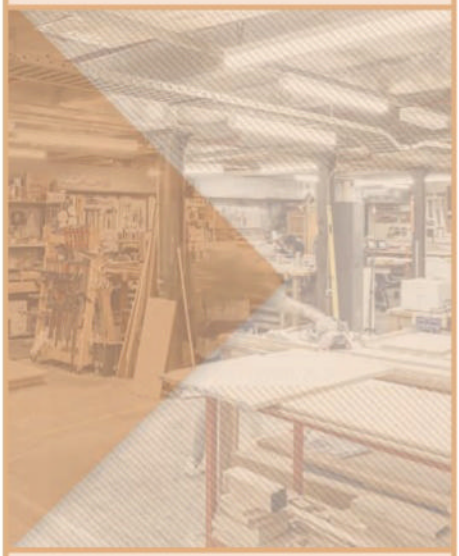

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Main: Patt Gregory demonstrates the basics, however 'the real learning happens when the student gets to do it,' she says.

Learning and Teaching Woodwork

Knowing woodworking is not the same as knowing how to teach it, explains Patt Gregory.

At wood shows I used to ask people passing my stand, 'Are you a woodworker?' Quite often the answer was, 'Oh no, not really.' Then I'd ask what they had made. 'Well, I built the kids' bunk beds...and a cubby...and the dining table...and the shed.' I would laugh and say, 'And you wouldn't call yourself a woodworker?' 'Nah.'

That always fascinated me. Perhaps they were comparing themselves with the extraordinary work they saw in magazines. Yet these were often the people later asked to show somebody else how to do something. And that is where another skill begins. Knowing woodworking is not the same as knowing how to teach it.

One of the clearest things I have learned in more than 30 years of teaching complete beginners is that some explanation is necessary, but the real learning happens when the student gets to do it.

As a new teacher all those years ago, I thought I needed to prove I knew what I was talking about, explain everything and answer every question, even those that took the group away from the lesson. I've become comfortable saying, 'Great question. I'd love to cover that another time.' Or even, 'I actually don't know. Good homework for us all.' Authenticity builds trust.

We talk, we do

When I teach, I break the learning into small segments. We talk, we do. We talk, we do. I tell students at the outset that the first demonstrations will be short and sweet. We start in small steps, and those steps grow longer and more complex as the day goes on.

Once they have chosen their timber, we might begin by identifying the face and edge they want to show. They mark those, then come back. Next we check whether the end is square, and only then do I introduce the square and how to use it. After that we move on to measuring, including why the hook on the end of a tape measure moves.

Starting at ground level

At the beginning of a complete beginner workshop I don't ask what people do for a living or how much woodworking experience they have. Everyone begins on equal ground. Nobody has to live up to being 'the engineer', 'the architect' or 'the handy one'. I have seen confident students rush ahead, only to miss something fundamental.

Starting together also gives me time to notice how people approach the work. Some need more time, some need reassurance and some are itching to move ahead. I can adjust from there.

Woodworking asks a lot of a beginner

The tools may be noisy, sharp, powerful or unfamiliar. A student may be trying to remember where to put their hands and feet, which setting the tool should be on and what comes next. I pay a lot of attention to body position. Before technique, I want to see balance. Are they physically in control of the tool? Do they need eye or hearing protection?

Confidence comes from their own experience of using the tool and discovering, 'Oh. I can do this.' One of my favourite questions after a student has tried something for the first time is, 'How did that feel?' Their answer tells me a great deal and gives them a moment to notice their own experience.

Mistakes tell us things

I've learned as much about teaching from mistakes as from anything else. My own included. When I first taught hand tools, I almost enjoyed making the occasional slightly crooked cut with a tenon saw. It showed students what the mistake looked like, and that I wasn't perfect or troubled by that fact.





If a screw has come through the side and the student hasn't noticed, I might sit nearby and ask where they are up to and what they did last. Very often they find the problem themselves.

Then I ask how they feel. Some are devastated. Others say, 'Can we fix it?' If we repair it, I get what is needed and guide them through it. I don't fix it. They do. It can be tempting to rescue somebody because we don't want them to feel bad. But sometimes rescuing removes the most useful part of the experience.

The project is evidence of the learning. It is not the learning. For me, the real pleasure is the moment somebody begins to feel a skill for themselves: the sound of a hammer striking properly, a screw driven at just the right speed, a razor-sharp chisel used safely and deftly, or a plane blade slicing through timber in long, even, delicious ribbons.

There is a particular look when someone gets it. The tool stops feeling foreign and becomes an extension of them. That skill is now theirs.

Where to learn woodwork

Frangou Design, Windsor chairmaking classes
tony@frangoudesign.com.au
www.frangoudesign.com.au

Geoff Tonkin, woodworking short courses in Windsor chairmaking and toolmaking
www.geofftonkin.com.au

Newstead Wood School, courses in woodworking and traditional framing
www.lpwoodwork.com/newsteadwoodschool

Phoebe Everill, ongoing classes in woodworking, short courses in woodworking and toolmaking
www.phoebeeverill.com

Richard Crosland's School of Fine Woodwork, fine woodworking classes with Adam Crosland
www.crosland.com.au

Robert Howard, classes in woodcarving
www.roberthoward.com.au

Wood Academy, woodworking, woodturning classes, short and evening courses
woodacademy.com.au

Woodwork for Women, woodworking with Patt Gregory
woodworkforwomen.com.au



Above: 'At the start I don't ask what people do for a living or how much woodworking experience they have,' says Patt Gregory. 'Everyone begins on equal ground.'

Perhaps that is what I have loved most about teaching. Watching someone come into possession of something they get to keep.

And if you are one of those woodworkers who would still hesitate to call yourself one, it is worth looking again at what you already know. There may be a skill in your hands that someone else would be grateful to learn. Teaching can begin very quietly: with one skill, one person, and the willingness to stand beside them while they discover what their own hands can do.

Photos: Patt Gregory

Patt Gregory is a woodwork teacher in Northern Rivers, NSW. In May 2026 she published 'Ready to Teach – Woodwork' which is available in print and digital editions from www.woodworkforwomen.com.au.



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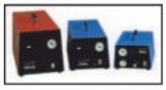

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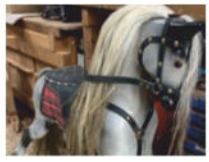

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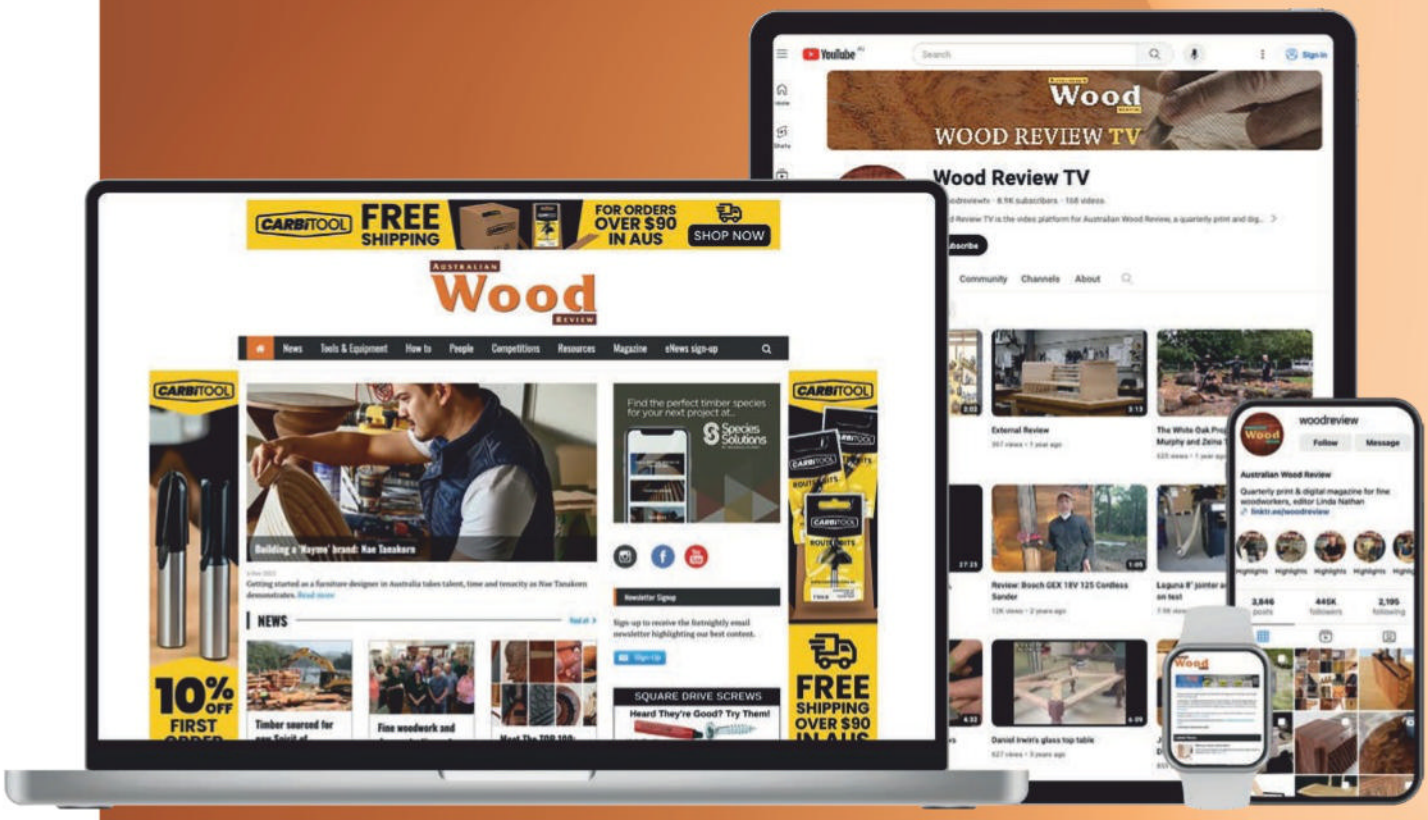

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