

23 STEP GUIDE TO CARVING A GOTHIC PANEL

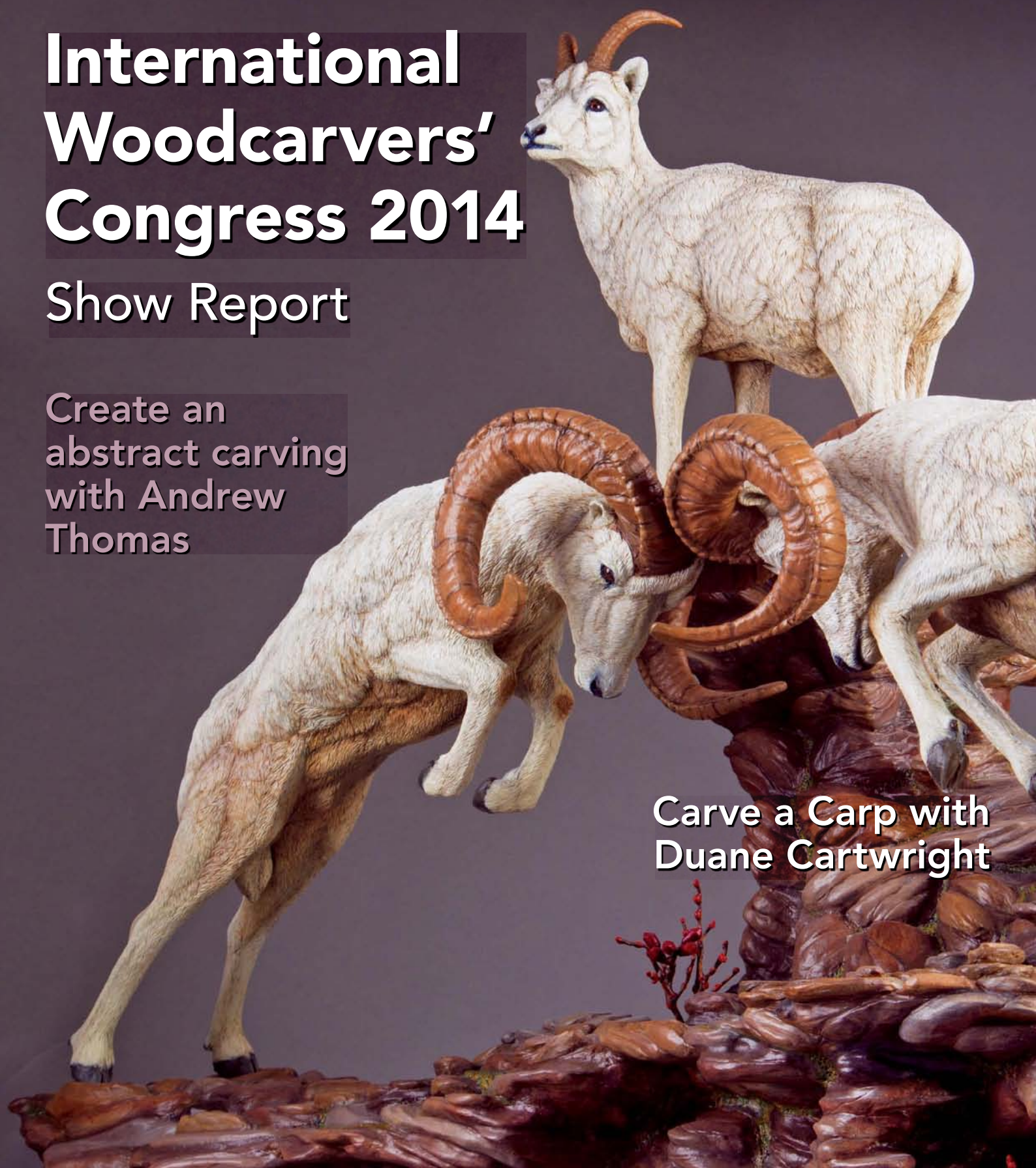
wood CARVING

**International
Woodcarvers'
Congress 2014**

Show Report

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abstract carving
with Andrew
Thomas

Carve a Carp with
Duane Cartwright





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pursuit. Readers should not attempt the
procedures described herein without
seeking training and information on the safe
use of tools and machines, and all readers
should observe current safety legislation.

New year, tidy workshop!

May I start by wishing you all the best for the New Year. No doubt everyone is hoping to get back in the workshop now the festivities are over and start carving. I am not surprised, really. There is only so much food you can eat and TV you can watch and I know that I, like others, get itchy feet to get back in the workshop. I will start by having a clear up. I am starting afresh and will put my workshop in order so that I can find things and not trip over any potential hazards! I know I mentioned clearing up the workshop this time last year, but I do that at the beginning of every year due to my not being disciplined enough to keep it regularly tidy.

Something to bear in mind is that of finishes you use. I do not know how many you have but I have lots: some for use around the house in my workshop and I need to dispose of some which I bought for certain jobs and the remainder has gone off. A friend of mine has a converted shed for a workshop and had finishes go off due to it being too cold. So please do check your finishes regularly. As a point of interest, I am installing a metal cabinet to store my finishes in so I can free up some space but

also minimise the risk of fire. I am also replacing my fire extinguisher cartridge as it is old and out-of-date. I've also just checked my first aid kit – no, I haven't had to use it much at all – and found that my eye wash was also out-of-date. All these little things add up and are worth checking from time to time. I have also just renewed my insurance. I nearly went and got a stiff drink once everything was totted up! It is frightening how much value we have in our workshops, how easy it is to be underinsured and all the implications of that if we should ever have to make a claim.

Have you checked your insurance lately? It might be worth doing so. My New Year's resolution is not to let my workshop get in such a state. What resolutions have you made for 2015?

Have fun,

Mark Baker
Editor of Woodcarving



Just some of my carving accessories

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It can be ordered at any newsagent, or call Tony Loveridge, our Circulation Manager, on 01273 477 374 or email him at tonyl@thegmcgroup.com. Alternatively, save 30% on the cover price by subscribing. See page 36 for details.

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Why not join in the discussions on all matters woodworking on the Woodworkers Institute web forum? Covering all four GMC woodworking titles, including *Woodcarving*, you can view the work from fellow craftsmen, exchange useful hints and tips, or join in on the hot topic of the day on the live forums. To register, simply log on to www.woodworkersinstitute.com, click the register button, and follow the instructions.



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Bringing you all the latest tools, machinery and products to meet your carving needs. All prices, unless otherwise stated, are inclusive of 20% VAT, and are correct at the time of going to press



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Woodcarving Round & About

We talk to the BWA, the BDWCA and take your letters from the forum and important dates for your diary to bring you the latest news from the woodcarving community. If you have something you want your fellow carvers to know, send in your news stories, snippets and diary dates to Tegan Foley at Woodcarving, 86 High Street, Lewes, East Sussex, BN7 1XN or to teganf@thegmcgroup.com



BWA: World War I remembrance project



PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF THE BWA

The Worshipful the Mayor of Darlington and the Mayoress with the project

Here we are at the end of the calendar year and it has been a very busy one for many of the regions. The show calendar seems to have expanded through 2014 and it will be interesting to see if that is sustained in 2015, or if it was just a good summer that made this year seem so full. One of the things noted this year is that with everyone so busy there has been precious little time to share news.

However, our new regions are thriving and it seems more people want to sample the joy of woodcarving. More art exhibitions are wanting a carving input and hopefully that will increase membership.

Commemorative carvings

This year the national project was to carve small tile carvings measuring 100 x 100 x 10mm to be displayed at different locations throughout the country. The theme is to commemorate World War I and is the brainchild of Jason Townsend.

There were no requirements other than the carvings had to be in relief, World War I related and be of a specific size.

Many members found the small size to be quite restrictive. The reason for the specific size was so that members could post their carvings in just a Jiffy bag with a 69p stamp to Jason for mounting on the display stand. The thinking

Contact the BWA

Tel: 07749 769 111

Web: www.britishwoodcarversassociation.co.uk

Or write to: The National Secretary, 32 Beaufort Avenue, Kenton, Harrow, Middlesex HA3 8PF



Display showing the individual tile carvings

behind this was that the project would then be accessible to all members, and of any skill level.

Fortunately, only 40 members submitted their carving towards this display and that made it manageable to transport easily to the different venues. The first of these was The Green Howards museum shop in Richmond, North Yorkshire, then on to Catterick Garrison – the biggest army base in Europe – where it was in situ for Armistice Day. It was displayed in the Help for Heroes building, which is called Phoenix House, and is the recovery centre for wounded soldiers. The next venue was Darlington Building Society and there it was formerly sited by The Worshipful the Mayor of Darlington and his Mayoress. The display was part of the stand of Coniscliffe Carving Club at The North of England Woodworking & Power Tool show at Harrogate and is currently on display in Wrexham, where it is being looked after by The North Wales group. 2015 will see it going into the Southern regions.

2015 promises to be an interesting year and hopefully with better things to come. Members of the National Council are visiting more regions and trying to dispel any feelings that regions may feel a bit remote and cut off. The BWA wishes all its members a happy and successful 2015.

BDWCA: the Festival of Bird Art 2014



Best Intermediate, 'Wren on Old Stump' by Claire Williams



British Champion 2014, 'Flying Mallard Hen' by Maggie Port

On the second weekend of September, 2014 the BDWCA once again held their annual show and competition – the Festival of Bird Art – in Bakewell, Derbyshire.

Over 250 carvings graced the tables, ranging from tiny miniatures to full-size birds of prey, and everything in between. Skill levels ranged from youth and novice through to intermediate and advanced, and the quality and variety of the entries seems to just get better every year. Congratulations to all who entered – you all deserved a prize – and commiserations to the judges who had the extremely challenging job of selecting the winners!

A special mention must go to Maggie Port who won the coveted awards of British and BDWCA Champion with a magnificent flying mallard hen. This carving really swept the board, collecting seven trophies in total. Other advanced level trophy winners were Mark Montgomery, Steve Toher, Dave Clewes, Richard Rossiter, David Askew, Harry Hartshorne, Christine Rose, Gerry Sanger, Pam Wilson and Peter Scott.

British Championship Runner Up, 'Tawny Owl' by Mark Montgomery

Congratulations must also go to Claire Williams who in only her first year competing at intermediate level won the 'Best Intermediate' award with her 'Wren on Old Stump' and 15-year-old Joe Chappell whose 'Long Eared Owl' won the 'Best Youth' award, and all the other prize winners.

It was, as always, a very enjoyable show and we are already looking forward to what lies in store for 2015! The amount of wood that was purchased from the trade stands certainly suggests there could be some interesting carvings.

Contact the BDWCA

For further information on the BDWCA, as well as membership details, visit www.bdwca.org.uk. Membership includes three issues of our 28 page full colour magazine, Wingspan.

Tel: 01442 247 610

Email: pam.wilson@bdwca.org.uk

Or contact membership secretary: Mrs Janet Nash, 26 Shendish Edge, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire

Tel: 01442 247 610

Alternatively, please email: pam.wilson@bdwca.org.uk

Conversion chart

2mm	(⁵ / ₆₄ in)
3mm	(¹ / ₁₆ in)
4mm	(⁵ / ₃₂ in)
6mm	(¹ / ₄ in)
7mm	(⁹ / ₃₂ in)
8mm	(⁵ / ₁₆ in)
9mm	(¹¹ / ₃₂ in)
10mm	(³ / ₈ in)
11mm	(⁷ / ₁₆ in)
12mm	(¹ / ₂ in)
13mm	(¹ / ₂ in)
14mm	(⁷ / ₁₆ in)
15mm	(⁹ / ₁₆ in)
16mm	(⁵ / ₈ in)
17mm	(¹¹ / ₁₆ in)
18mm	(²³ / ₃₂ in)
19mm	(³ / ₄ in)
20mm	(³ / ₄ in)
21mm	(¹³ / ₁₆ in)
22mm	(⁷ / ₈ in)
23mm	(²⁹ / ₃₂ in)
24mm	(¹⁵ / ₁₆ in)
25mm	(1in)
30mm	(1 ¹ / ₈ in)
32mm	(1 ¹ / ₄ in)
35mm	(1 ³ / ₈ in)
38mm	(1 ¹ / ₂ in)
40mm	(1 ⁵ / ₈ in)
45mm	(1 ³ / ₄ in)
50mm	(2in)
55mm	(2 ¹ / ₈ -2 ¹ / ₄ in)
60mm	(2 ³ / ₈ in)
63mm	(2 ¹ / ₂ in)
65mm	(2 ⁵ / ₈ in)
70mm	(2 ³ / ₄ in)
75mm	(3in)
80mm	(3 ¹ / ₈ in)
85mm	(3 ³ / ₄ in)
90mm	(3 ¹ / ₂ in)
93mm	(3 ² / ₃ in)
95mm	(3 ³ / ₄ in)
100mm	(4in)
105mm	(4 ¹ / ₈ in)
110mm	(4 ¹ / ₄ -4 ³ / ₈ in)
115mm	(4 ¹ / ₂ in)
120mm	(4 ³ / ₄ in)
125mm	(5in)
130mm	(5 ¹ / ₈ in)
135mm	(5 ¹ / ₄ in)
140mm	(5 ¹ / ₂ in)
145mm	(5 ³ / ₄ in)
150mm	(6in)
155mm	(6 ¹ / ₈ in)
160mm	(6 ¹ / ₄ in)
165mm	(6 ¹ / ₂ in)
170mm	(6 ³ / ₄ in)
178mm	(6 ⁷ / ₈ in)
180mm	(7in)
185mm	(7 ¹ / ₄ in)
190mm	(7 ¹ / ₂ in)
195mm	(7 ³ / ₄ in)
200mm	(8in)
305mm	(12in)
405mm	(16in)
510mm	(20in)
610mm	(24in)
710mm	(28in)
815mm	(32in)
915mm	(36in)
1015mm	(40in)
1120mm	(44in)
1220mm	(48in)
1320mm	(52in)
1420mm	(56in)
1525mm	(60in)

LETTERS

Treefest – 2014

Mark,
I was pleased to be asked by the events management team at Westonbirt Arboretum to help with the presentation of wood sculpture and carving at their Treefest event over the August Bank Holiday in 2014. This included putting together a team to demonstrate large-scale sculpture as well as overseeing the exhibition of more conventional work. I was also very keen to see if I could resurrect any proportion of the commercial success of the, now defunct, Sculptree Gallery. The sale of work, even by hobbyists, is something which I believe is a very positive activity for both the carver and carving in general, but is very neglected. Perhaps this debate could be the subject of an article?

Westonbirt proposed a contract with three sculptors to each produce a bench over the three days of the event and these would then be donated to schools within the county. The design theme was to be 'Wildlife' and submissions were sought from interested parties. By the end of May, we had received about 12 design proposals from various sculptors and I sat in on the selection committee, which was made up of members of Westonbirt management team from their forestry, events, education and publicity departments. My role was mainly to advise on the practicality and originality of the various designs. The outcome of this was the selection of designs submitted by Ant Beetlestone, Dan Cordell and Paul Sivell.



The winner and the runners up of the 2014 Westonbirt Trophy

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF DAVE JOHNSON

The designs were circulated to schools within the county which were asked a) which of the benches was their choice and b) to submit a case for why they should be chosen as a recipient. The winners of this were: 'Bear With Me' by Ant, which went to Holy Trinity C of E Primary School; 'Staggering' by Paul, which went to Abbey Meads Community Primary School and Dan's piece entitled 'Prickles and Paws', which went to Malmesbury Primary School.

Part of my contract with the arboretum was that they would provide a marquee as a venue for a selling exhibition of both large and small scale sculpture; the display of pieces competing for the 'Westonbirt Trophy', which is given as the outcome of a public vote and to form the nucleus of a 'carving village'

formed from regional displays from the BWA. Gloucestershire, Hertfordshire and South Wales were able to attend but unfortunately, though West Midlands and Essex were interested they were unable to make it this year.

10 pieces of work were sold over the weekend and a grand total of £1,668 was raised.

The Westonbirt Trophy has now been running since 1998 and continues to be a very good method of involving the general public. Voting was lively, particularly with our young visitors and the winner this year was, once again, Stan Kimm for his comic carving of a dog with Richard Pepperd a close second with his blinking owl.

Dave Johnson

Praise for the West Riding Woodcarvers' Association

Dear Mark,
The West Riding Woodcarvers' Association should consider themselves extremely proud for the production of the panel for The Forget Me Not hospice. The idea for the project, the self-funding, commitment and the high quality of the finished carvings are inspirational. The panel will undoubtedly be enjoyed by all of the children who have the misfortune to be residents of the hospice. Well done, West Riding Carvers, you really are a credit to the carving community.

Paul Hudson



PHOTOGRAPH BY GRAHAM LOCKWOOD

The wonderful panel, which was made especially for the Forget Me Not children's hospice

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Simple abstract sculpture

Andrew Thomas carves a beautiful but simple abstract sculpture

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Andrew Thomas is a professional sculptor living in Wareham, Dorset with over 20 years' experience on the subject. Working principally with wood, bronze and mixed media, his work can be seen in many private collections, both in the UK and Europe. Andrew is a qualified tutor in further education and delivers weekly lessons for private students at both beginner and intermediate levels.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANDREW THOMAS



Abstract art – or freedom of expression – is the absolute opposite of a realistic technical study, which does not endeavour to represent the reflection of reality as we see it, but instead delineates a visual expression of form in a partially or non-representational arrangement. This requires the artist to use their inner creativity, to contemplate the substance of their subject or concept and express this essence harmoniously into the composition of their design, with the aim of producing a balanced form in all three dimensions.

The design that I created for this project is very simple in its form and is easy to produce with just a few tools. It can be modified in many various ways to develop the composition of its structure, which I would very much encourage. This will give you some valuable experience with design and problem-solving skills, which are vital for every artist to learn so that they can bring their own original ideas and concepts to life.

Before you start working on the project, please read through the complete step guide and study the stage and finished images to see how the sculpture develops.

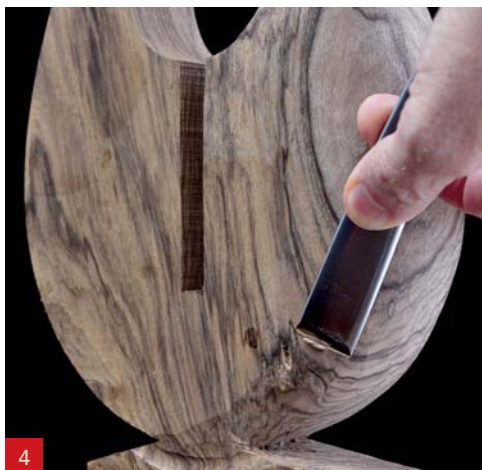
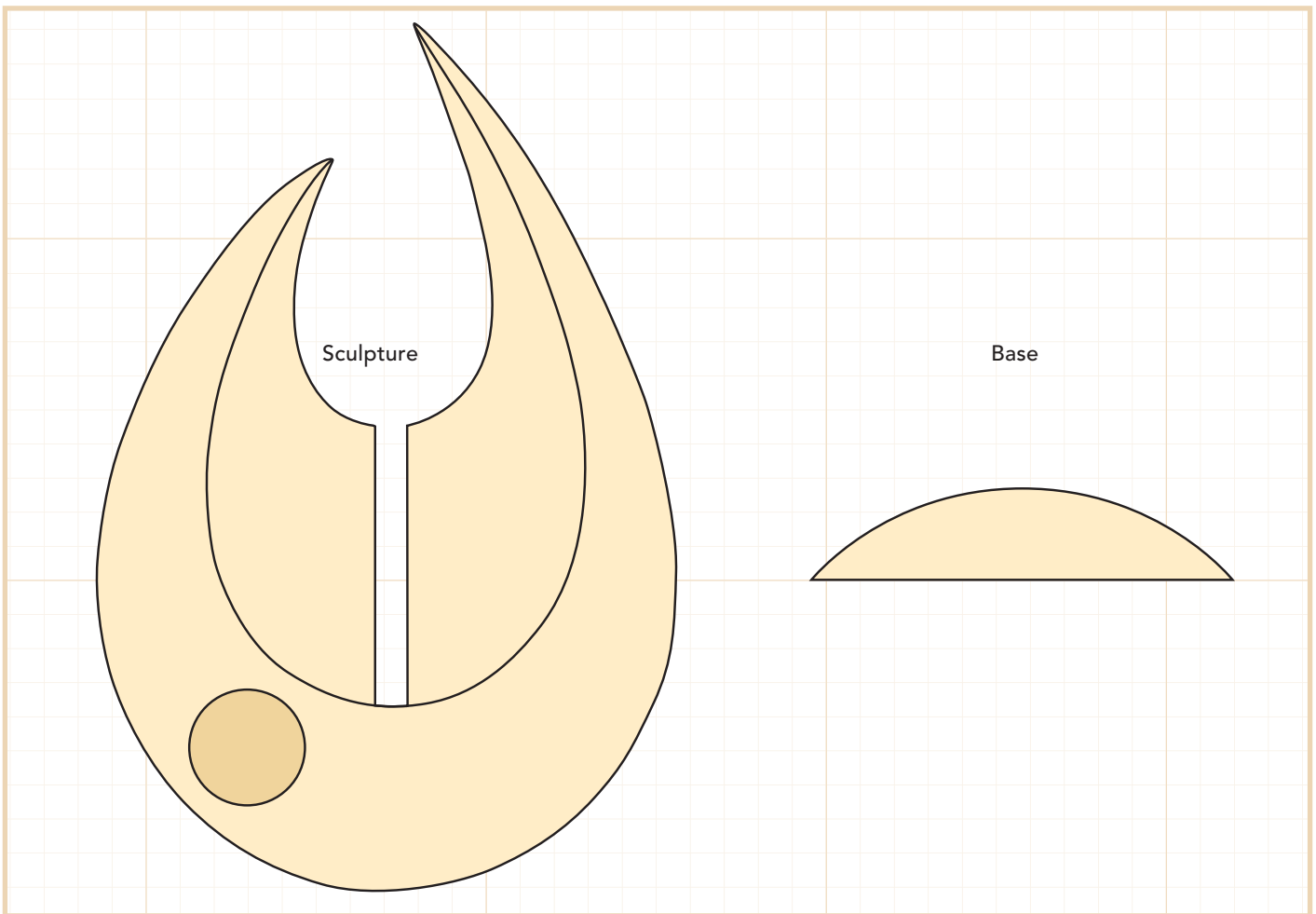
Things you will need...

Tools:

- No.2, 20mm
- No.7, 14mm
- No.7, 20mm
- No.9, 10mm

Wood:

- English walnut (*Juglans regia*) – 250 x 170 x 35mm
- Spalted beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) – 120 x 28 x 30mm



1 Begin by scanning or photocopying the scale drawing provided, enlarging it to the correct size for your wood and print it out onto card to use as a template. Transfer this design onto your block of wood, ensuring that the grain direction is running vertically up through the design and that there is enough spare wood at the base to attach to your faceplate – 30-40mm. Cut this out and secure it firmly to your vice

2 Draw a curved line on the side view profile – adjacent to the lowest point of the cutout slot in the centre of the form, from the rear edge up to the top of the front edge. Use a No.2, 20mm gouge, or similar, to carve the wood squarely back to the line on the rear side of the sculpture

3 Use the same tool to create an even curve across the back of the sculpture, from the cutout slot, around to the front edge and up to the highest position

4 Now, continue this curved edge down to the base of the sculpture, carefully following the same contour as you created on the upper section

➔ **5** When you reach the base of the sculpture that is attached to the faceplate section, you will need to start carving into the faceplate section to allow you to continue developing the contour of the lower section, from the left side to the right side. Use a No.9, 10mm to cut into the lower section following the curvature of the design line and then use the No.2, 20mm to continue creating the curved edge around this area



6 Repeat steps two to five on the opposite side with the aim to produce a balanced contour of the same curvature

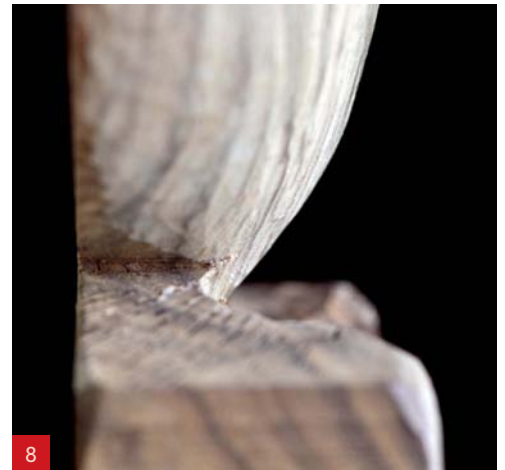


7 The curved section at the base of the sculpture can now be further developed by cutting deeper around its design line and blending both sides evenly together in the middle

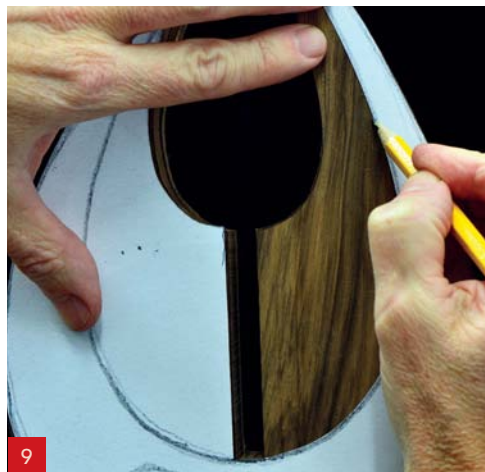


"Start by cutting out the upper section of the template..."

8 This area at the base can be cut back to approximately 20mm from the front edge, or to the point when it is still strong enough to work on the front face of the sculpture. This side of the sculpture is now completed, but do check from all angles to ensure that the depths and curves are flowing evenly across the form and around the edges from one side to the other. Make any adjustments if necessary



9 You now need to turn your attention to the front side of the sculpture. Start by cutting out the upper section of the template, hold the lower section in place on your wood and draw around the design line



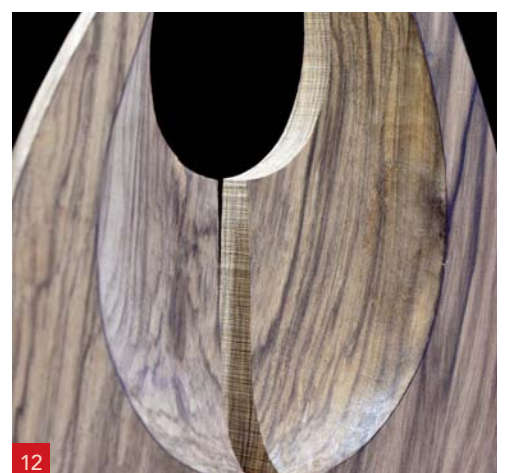
10 Use a No.7, 20mm gouge to create an evenly curved hollow centre, like a bowl, working accurately from the design line, inwards towards the centre



11 Repeat this procedure on the opposite side, making sure that the contour and depths match each other as perfectly as possible

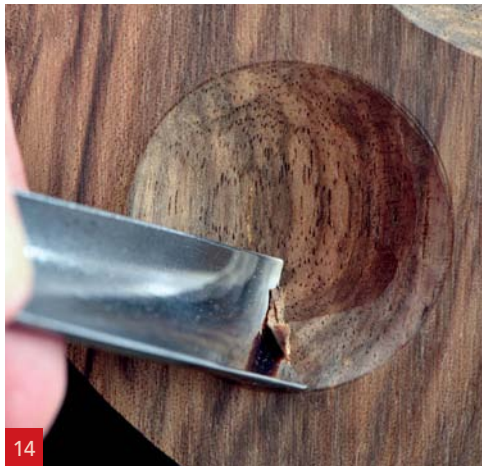


12 Sand both sides with 100 grit abrasive and then check from all angles to ensure that they are symmetrical. Make any adjustments if necessary





13



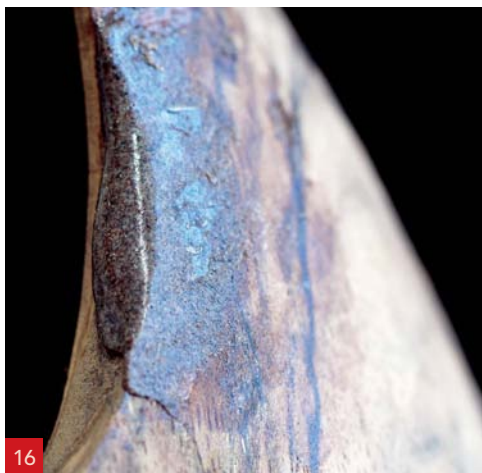
14

13 Use a drawing compass to draw the 30mm circle in its correct position on the left front face of the sculpture

14 Use a No.7, 14mm gouge to carve the hollow detail, working accurately around the line of the circle, into the centre from all angles. The sculpture can now be cut off the faceplate base and secured safely in a woodworker's vice to allow the lowest edge to be finished. Do not attempt to try to carve this hand-held! Use the No.2, 20mm to merge all of the surrounding depths together to produce evenly flowing lines in all directions. The sculpture can now be sanded and finished



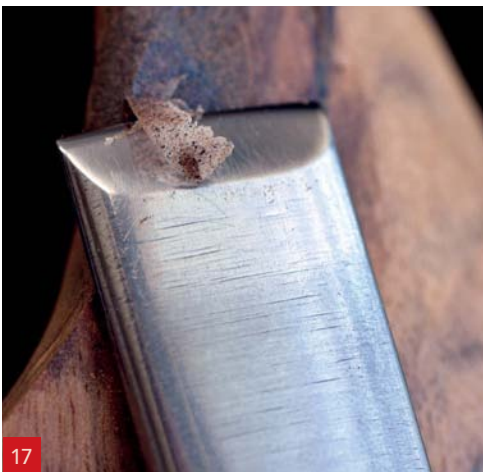
15



16

Technical tip – filling knots, cracks and holes

Occasionally when working with the medium of wood, a knot, hole, crack or other imperfection in the grain may be found as you carve into the material, which wasn't visible when the block was originally selected and cut. This can sometimes lend itself aesthetically to the composition of the sculpture which can add interest and character to it, but conversely it can also ruin the appearance of the piece unless maintenance is made to rectify it, which is what happened to the example in this article



17



19

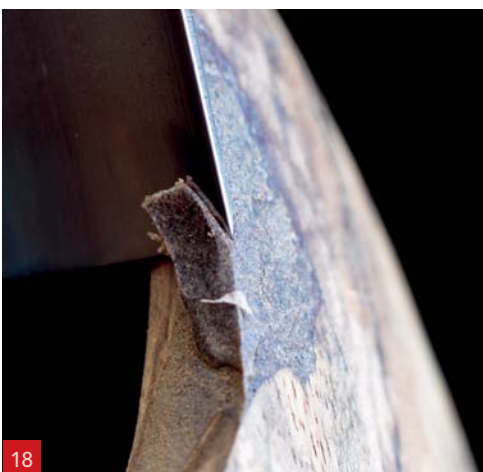
15 I always keep a selection of sawdust from the various species of wood and use this for filling any holes, cracks or shakes that may need attention

16 Mix the appropriate wood dust with a two-part epoxy resin to form a fairly firm paste/viscosity and leave until the resin just starts to go off. Apply quickly to the area, slightly proud of the surface, and leave for approximately two hours to dry to a very hard plastic density. If the hole, crack or shake is deep then this may have to be applied twice to build up to the level needed

17 The rear edge is the first surface to be tackled. Use a No.2, 20mm upside down, making shallow slices into the resin until it is cut flush back to the contour of the surface of the wood

18 Slice the inner edge evenly back to the line of the wood using the same tool but the right way up, leaving a crisp line between the two surfaces

19 Leave the resin to harden fully overnight before sanding through the different abrasive grits



18

→ Sanding

20 Start with 100 grit and work over the complete surface of the sculpture, following the line of the grain wherever possible, to remove every tool mark and blend all of the details smoothly together. When you are sure that it is perfectly smooth, clean the sawdust off all of the surfaces and then brush or pour hot water over the complete sculpture and leave it to dry, thus raising the grain and allowing the following grit to be worked more easily and effectively

21 Next, work through grits 150, 240 and 400, removing all of the scratches from each previous grit and repeating the hot water process in between

Base and mounting

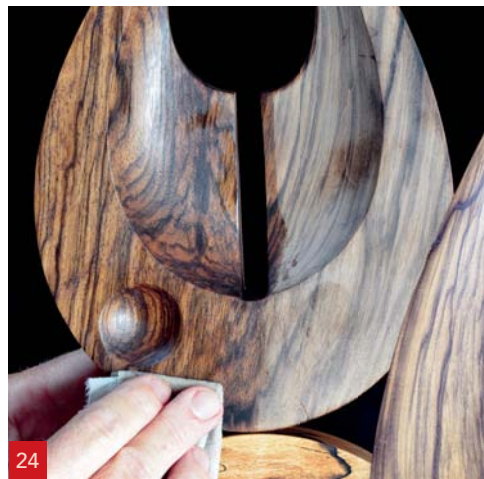
22 The base for this project is a simple arc shape in spalted beech (*Fagus sylvatica*). Transfer the scale design provided onto your wood, ensuring that the grain direction is running horizontally through the design. Cut it out and sand all edges as outlined above. Measure approximately 8mm in from the centre position of the front edge and mark with a bradawl. Drill a 4mm hole in this position, with a brad-toothed wood bit to a depth of 16mm. Cut a piece of either 4mm stainless steel rod or hardwood dowel, at a length of 35mm and insert it fully into the base

23 Measure approximately 8mm in from the centre position of the front edge at the base of the sculpture and mark with a bradawl. Drill a 4mm hole in this position, carefully and accurately to a depth of 20mm. Mount the sculpture onto the base to see the result of your work

Finishing

24 The example used for this project was finished with one light application of boiled linseed oil, which enriches the natural colour of the grain. This was left for a week or so to dry, before applying several coats of dark wax polish, which sealed the grain and gave it a wonderful sheen. You can do the same as this or use your own favourite choice of finish

25 Your final piece should look like this ▶



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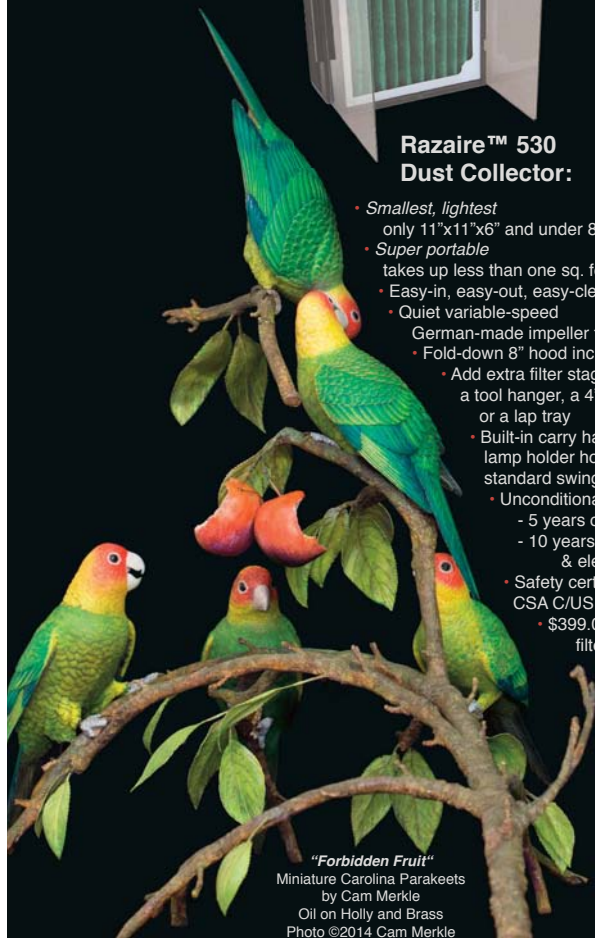
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"Forbidden Fruit"

Miniature Carolina Parakeets
by Cam Merkle
Oil on Holly and Brass
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20 minutes with... Victoria Claire

We spend 20 minutes speaking with Victoria Claire

Victoria started carving at the age of 17, while studying for her A-level Art and BTEC Art and Design Foundation course. Having already been accepted into Art College at West Kent College, for her final exam piece Victoria wanted to do something a little different and after finding a book on carving in the library, she knew what she wanted to do.

At 19, she was diagnosed with retinitis pigmentosa, a disease of the eye that leads to loss of vision and blindness, meaning she was unfortunately unable to continue her figurative sculpture degree course at Staffordshire University; it was a prestigious course of only 28 places in Europe.



'Fall to Grace'



PHOTOGRAPHS BY VICTORIA CLAIRE

Now, at the age of 38, Victoria works mainly by commission. She has also worked in schools, teaching different age groups from 4-60 years old. She has taught in Italy and has run classes for the mentally challenged and now, Victoria's latest venture is exhibiting her latest collection.

Why do you carve?

My sculptures are an extension of me, my life, my loves and my losses. The journey I take through my life has been sometimes very challenging. The frustrations of being a visually impaired

person sometimes are hard to bear, but no matter how difficult life has got, my love for creating sculpture from wood has always been there. It's been a learning curve, in adapting my working abilities and even allows me to take the odd spout of frustration out with my mallet! As long as I am able, I shall continue to carve.

What inspires your carving?

Inspiration comes from my need to express myself. I enjoy the outdoors and love nature, so I try to create work that represents the natural environment, i.e.



'Leap of Faith'



'The Ripple'

water, flowers, wildlife, etc. I also am very inspired by faith. I have recently created pieces that hold a great spiritual connection for me, such as 'Fall to Grace' and 'The Guardian'.

I like to show a more symbolic side to the human form. In trying to freeze time by capturing moving elements, I represent those elements through suspension.

What are you currently working on?

Over the past year and a half I have been creating 13 new pieces, which are all part of a 16-piece exhibition.



'The Guardian'

Which tool could you not be without, and why?

I have so many old favourites! I will give you three. Firstly, my bell mallet. I've made several bell mallets but all have taken a lot of battering and eventually split, so I bought my last one which is made of beech and holding up well. I modified the handle to avoid blisters on my hand by buying cricket bat handle rubber grip.

Secondly, my large 75mm gouge chisel, which is always my first port of call when roughing out the initial shape, and thirdly my spokeshave. I love the feel of it too when I'm using it.

What do you think has been your biggest achievement?

I hope my exhibition will be my greatest achievement; however, the rest of the year could hold much promise. As for past achievements, my very first commission is right up there.

I remember the sheer elation of selling to my first client – it was amazing and made me feel good about my ability and that someone actually wanted to own something I'd created! I have been lucky enough to have some of my work in places such as Italy, Australia and Ireland, and have been commissioned by someone high up in the Church, too.

Whose work do you most admire?

I have always been inspired by and admired the great Henry Moore and the incredible Barbara Hepworth. I studied them at art college and just love their adaptation of figurative forms and nature. I think my style of work reflects my adoration for these two artists.

Describe the view from your workshop/bench

My studio is at the end of my garden, on a shingle area. It looks like a green-with-cream-beams beach hut. For me it's more to do with what I can hear; I love to hear the birds singing in the apple tree.

What are your interests outside of carving?

I have many interests other than carving – running, for example.

I used to road run for fitness three times a week but my vision doesn't allow that now, so instead I run on my treadmill three times a week.

I enjoy listening to audio books and recently have been able to return to reading due to e-books on my iPhone. I also love

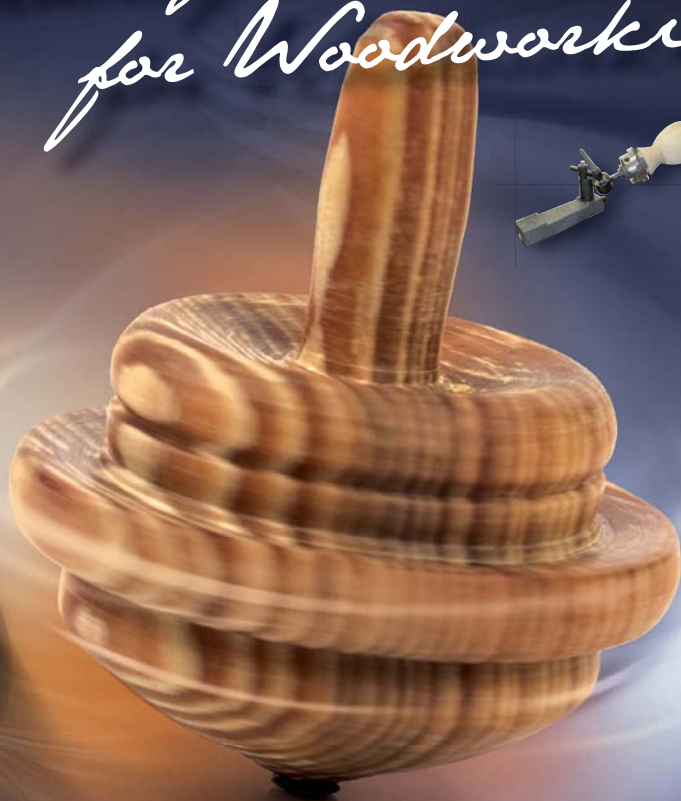
to travel, having backpacked around America, Canada, Mexico, Italy and Australia. My latest hobby has been one that I've always wanted to try but my eyes have always stopped me – surfing. My husband can surf and is currently teaching me. It's a bit challenging as I can't see when the waves are about to come, but Adam tells me when to start paddling. In my current collection I have carved a wave to represent my love for the surf. ▀

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Koi carp

Duane Cartwright shows you
how to carve this koi carp

PHOTOGRAPHS BY DUANE CARTWRIGHT



I got inspiration for this carving when sitting by my pond watching the fish catching insects on the surface, with dragonflies flying around. I've stylised this koi carp to make the project easier to carve. I've also carved the fins quite thick for strength, as the grain direction goes across the fins, thus making them weaker. You could carve the fins separately and add them, in which case you could carve with the wood grain direction making them thinner and stronger – this could possibly make carving the sides of the fish easier as well.

I've also carved the anal fins sticking out the side so they can be seen, where they would normally be further underneath

the fish.

The side profile of this carving is squashed, as this piece is a pierced relief and is to be looked at from above. I've not carved any scales on this fish as gaining access under and around the lily pads could be difficult, especially when trying to keep the scales of a uniform size.

You could carve the scales or stab an impression with a stop cut of various sweeps, or even use pyrography to give the impressions of scales. Try these various techniques on a piece of scrap wood before committing it on the carving itself.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Duane Cartwright is a self-taught woodcarver based in Hartland, North Devon. He has been carving on and off for about 15 years. His interest in carving began while undertaking an apprenticeship in antique furniture restoration. His work can be found in the UK and as far away as Australia. To see more of Duane's work, visit www.duanescarving.blogspot.co.uk.



Things you will need...

Tools:

Bandsaw/coping saw
Carving vice
Sweep gouges:
No.11, 3mm
No.11, 2mm
No.9, 14mm
No.9, 8mm
No.8, 25mm
No.6, 6mm
No.3, 10mm
No.2, 20mm
No.7, 9mm – eye
No.5, 8mm – eye
No.3, 6mm fishtail sweep

Hooked skew

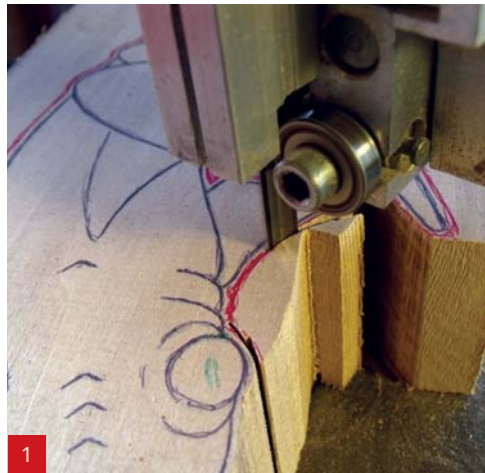
Left and right No.4
sweep skew gouge –
inside mouth
Abrasive: 150, 240,
320 & 400 grit

Wood:

Basswood (Tilia
americana) – 300
× 145 × 50mm

Finishing oil – or any
other finish you prefer

➔ **1** Begin by printing out the design at the required size for the piece of timber you wish to use, then transfer the design onto the piece of wood. For this, use a carbon stick and rub it all over the back of the printout, then trace the design onto the wood. You could use carbon paper or even glue the printout in place. With the design on the wood, use a red pen and draw around the edge of the design. This will aid visibility while you are cutting it out on the bandsaw. Once you're happy with the placement of the design, begin cutting out on the bandsaw if you have one, but if not, then a coping saw will do just as well

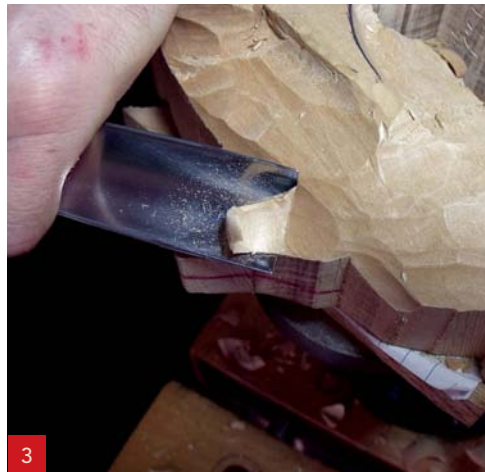


2 You are now ready to mount the project on your carving vice/ clamp. Glue a piece of scrap wood to the front half of the underside of the carving, then fix the vice to the scrap block. With the carving mounted on the vice, draw some guidelines around the edge of the lily pads; this is for the rough thickness of the dragonfly, which is level with the top of the large lily pad and the thickness of them. Remember the middle pad goes under the other two



Bolstering in

3 Using the No.8 and No.9 sweep gouges, start bolstering in the fish. Start with the No.9 sweep and mark out around the lily pad, then roughly shape the front half of the fish, leaving the dorsal for now and roughly carve the tail, just enough to separate from the lily at this stage



Lily pads and dragonfly

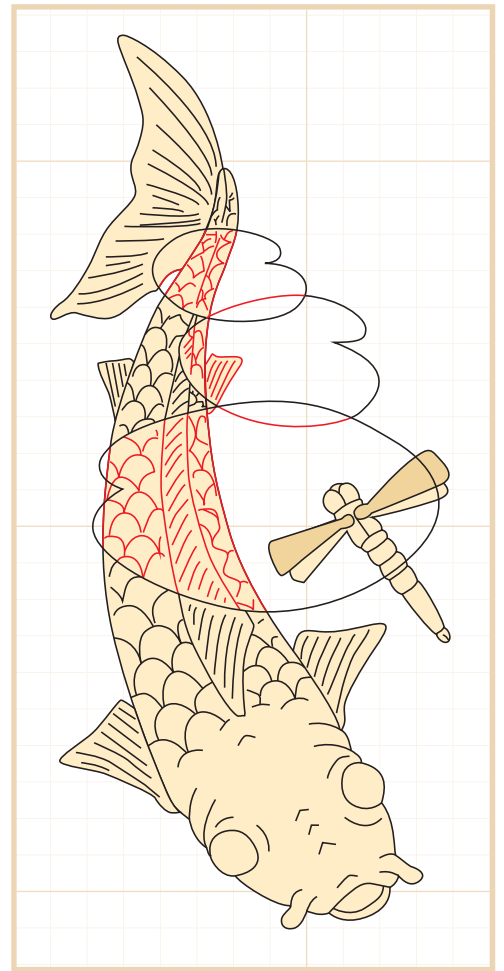
4 Using the No.11 sweep, mark out around the dragonfly. Then, using a shallow gouge, take down the lily pad to just above the guidelines drawn on the side



5 Where the lily goes over the dorsal fin, there is a bend just above it, which is also on the dorsal fin. Draw a line on the lily pad where the dorsal should be. Then, using a No.9 sweep, begin to carve a groove to create the bend/ridge in the lily pad, then continue shaping the pad

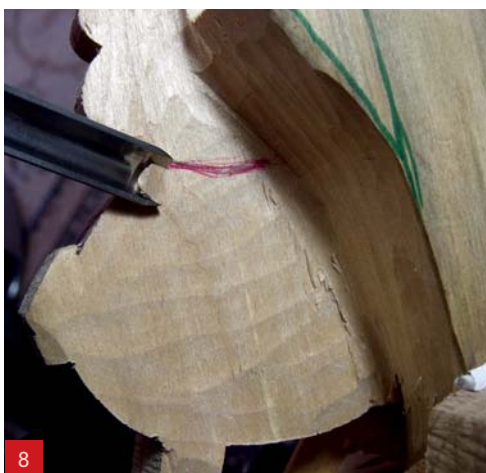


6 With the first lily pad now roughly shaped, cut in and carve down the other two lily pads. The middle pad goes under the other two. Then, using a hooked skew, finish lowering the lily pad and cut in around the dragonfly

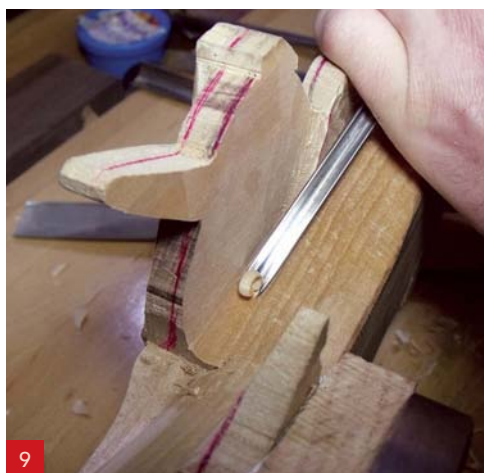




7 With the pads roughly carved to depth and using the red areas on the design pattern as a guide, draw the rough profile of the fish on the underside of the carving, making it a bit larger than actually required. Then, using a No.9 sweep gouge, carve away the waste to the underside of the lily pads. Remember to keep these pads thicker than required for now



8 Continue carving in the side of the fish, shaping and blending the rest of the fish as you go. While carving the side of the koi carp under the pads, beware of the changing wood grain direction – a rolling slicing cut is required here. With the side of the fish bolstered in, draw the shape of the middle lily pad as it overlaps the outer two from the underside, then cut in and take down the largest pad to its rough thickness. The lily will be carved to its finished thickness later



9 The dorsal fin bends over as it goes under the pads; this adds strength to the project. Using a deep gouge, clean up where the dorsal fin and the side of the fish meet the pads; this will add the inside curve to the dorsal fin. Remember that most of what is carved under the pads will not be seen when the carving is finished



10 Using a shallow No.3 sweep, move round to the other side and undercut the lily pads so they are an even thickness all round, then reversing the gouge, continue shaping the fish's body



Dragonfly

11 I've stylised my dragonfly but you could carve a particular species. The choice is up to you. Use a veiner to separate the wings and a shallow fishtail gouge to take down the lower wings. Using the same gouge reversed, round over the body



12 Now to draw on the detail. Once happy with the placement, use a veiner to carve in the detail of the head and body, then using the fishtail reversed, round over the eyes, etc. With the head and body carved, use a medium sweep gouge to cut in around where the wings join the body, then round over and use a shallow gouge to slope the wings back. With the top of the dragonfly carved and undercut, round over and carve in the detail of the overhanging parts of the dragonfly

➔ **13** With the dragonfly and the top of the lily pad carved, you can now continue with the other lily pads. Draw a line about 4-5mm from the top of the lily around the edge; this will be the finished thickness of the lily, then, undercut the lily to this line

14 When undercutting the lily keep checking the placement of the dorsal fin. Using a coping saw, cut out a wedge from under the small lily pad above the tail; this will make shaping the tail area easier and create more shadow

Carving the tail

15 Use a deep gouge, starting where the body meets the tail. Create a hollow curl to the tail, keeping aware of the thickness and strength as the grain can be weaker near the end. Once you're happy with the shape of the inside curl of the tail, carve back the other side of the tail, following the curvature and keeping an even thickness along the tail

Anal fins

16 Draw a rough centreline on the underside, then use dividing callipers to measure and make sure the fins are of an equal size and equally apart. Using a deep gouge, carve down between the anal fins and around the bottom of the tail to create shadow at the back of the fish. This also gives you somewhere to place a picture hook later. Slope the anal fins from the outside edge of the fin into the body of the fish

Head and eyes

17 Draw the eyes roughly in place using the pattern as a guide. Once you're happy with the placement, use a medium sweep gouge that best fits the eye and cut in so you curve the gouge round to create a circle, then carve away around the eye until it's a couple of millimetres in height. The next step is to draw some guidelines from the carved eye over to the other side; this will help to make sure both eyes are equally placed. With the eyeballs now cut in, draw another circle around the outside of the eyeballs and, as before, cut in and carve around. While carving the outer circles of the eyes, cut in and carve two gills on each side behind the eyes, but in front of the two pectoral fins, then round over and shape the fins





18



19



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23

Mouth and barbels

18 Using the pattern as a guide, draw the open mouth in place. The top lip curls up and the bottom lip will protrude. Using a deep gouge, hollow out the mouth. Once the first part is hollowed, you then start cutting into end grain. Using skew gouges with slicing cuts, carve the inside of the mouth. Only carve in deep enough to make the mouth look hollow, keeping the inside of the mouth as clean as possible

19 Then using a No.3 sweep fishtail, cut in the corners of the mouth up to the barbels. Use a deep gouge to carve a groove over the top lip from the sides of the barbels and blend in, then round over the bottom lip

20 Using a hooked skew, cut in both sides of each barbel and round over. Be careful not to undercut the barbels as they will otherwise be too weak and eventually break. Finish carving in the rest of the head detail and round over the eyes

21 Using a filler knife or spatula, gently prise the carving away from the fixing block. Use a hooked skew to round over the body and behind the fins, generally cleaning up the bottom of the carving

Finishing off

22 I chose to sand this carving, but you could leave it tooled with facets that could resemble scales. I started with 150 grit. Going with the grain direction, remove all the tool marks until smooth, then brush down before moving onto the next grit size. I finished with a 320 grit and brushed again. Once the sanding is done, use a 'V'-tool and carve some detail lines into the fins and tail

23 Here's the final carving ▶

Top tips

1. Take a scrap piece of wood/ offcut and using the medium sweeps of your gouges, cut in and create some circles. Pick the two circles that best match the sizes of the inner and outer parts of the eyes
2. When attaching to a fixing block or carving vice, make sure to leave the back half of the fish and the mouth area so they can be carved

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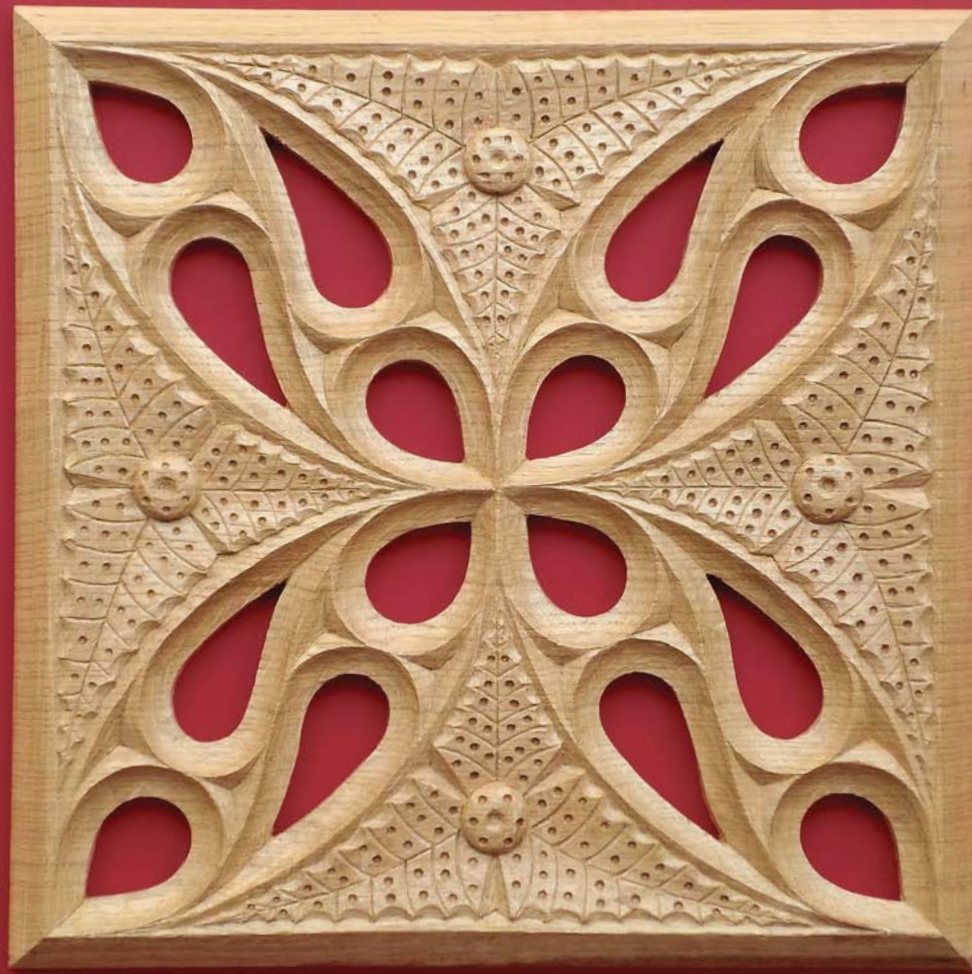
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PHOTOGRAPHS BY STEVE BISCO



Authentic medieval Gothic openwork panel

Steve Bisco shows you how to carve this openwork panel in oak

This attractive pierced tracery panel is a fairly straightforward project, which relies for its effect on neatness and accuracy rather than technical complexity. It is a thin, flat oak (*Quercus robur*) panel measuring 305mm square x 18mm thick, which, after cutting out the voids of the 'openwork', allows you to get straight into the detail carving.

This Gothic design from the late Middle Ages comes from a door panel illustrated in the *Manual of Traditional Woodcarving* – first published in 1911 and still available from Dover Publications – which is described as 'a fragment of a buffet door in oak, carved partly in openwork'. It is said to be English and to date from around 1500 when Henry VII was king, which puts it in the transition from late-medieval to Tudor Gothic.

If we look at the geometry of the panel, the 'pierced' or 'openwork' parts

are formed by four intersecting semi-circles centred on the half-way point of each side of the square, passing from corner to corner through the centre of the panel. The resulting almond-shape from each corner to the centre is called a mandala. The curvilinear tracery in the mandala features the 'tadpole' or 'ghostie' shaped voids, which are known as mouchettes. Normally a mouchette would have cusps – pointed projections near the widest end to divide a round foil from the rest of the void – but our late-medieval carver decided to leave these out, possibly as a touch of Tudor modernity or perhaps because they would overcrowd the small space.

The triangular space between each mandala and the sides of the square is called a spandrel. Each spandrel is filled with a stylised spiky leaf, carved in a form of incised low relief – similar to chip carving. This is where you need to be really neat to get the best effect.

You have the option to darken the oak to a 500-year-old dark brown by 'fuming' with ammonia – see sidebar – but I decided to leave this panel in its new oak colour. The shadow lines in the shallow carving show up better on a light background, and this is how our medieval carver saw it and intended it to look.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Steve Bisco has been carving as a hobby for over 25 years, specialising in decorative carving and period styles.

He is inspired by a love of historic buildings and aims to capture the spirit of a period in pieces for display in the 'home gallery'.



Things you will need...

Tools:

20mm, No.3 fishtail gouge
10mm, No.3 fishtail gouge
10mm, No.3 gouge
7mm, No.5 gouge
3mm, No.9 gouge
16mm, No.9 curved gouge
V-tool
10mm skew chisel
6.5mm flat chisel
2mm veiner

Wood:

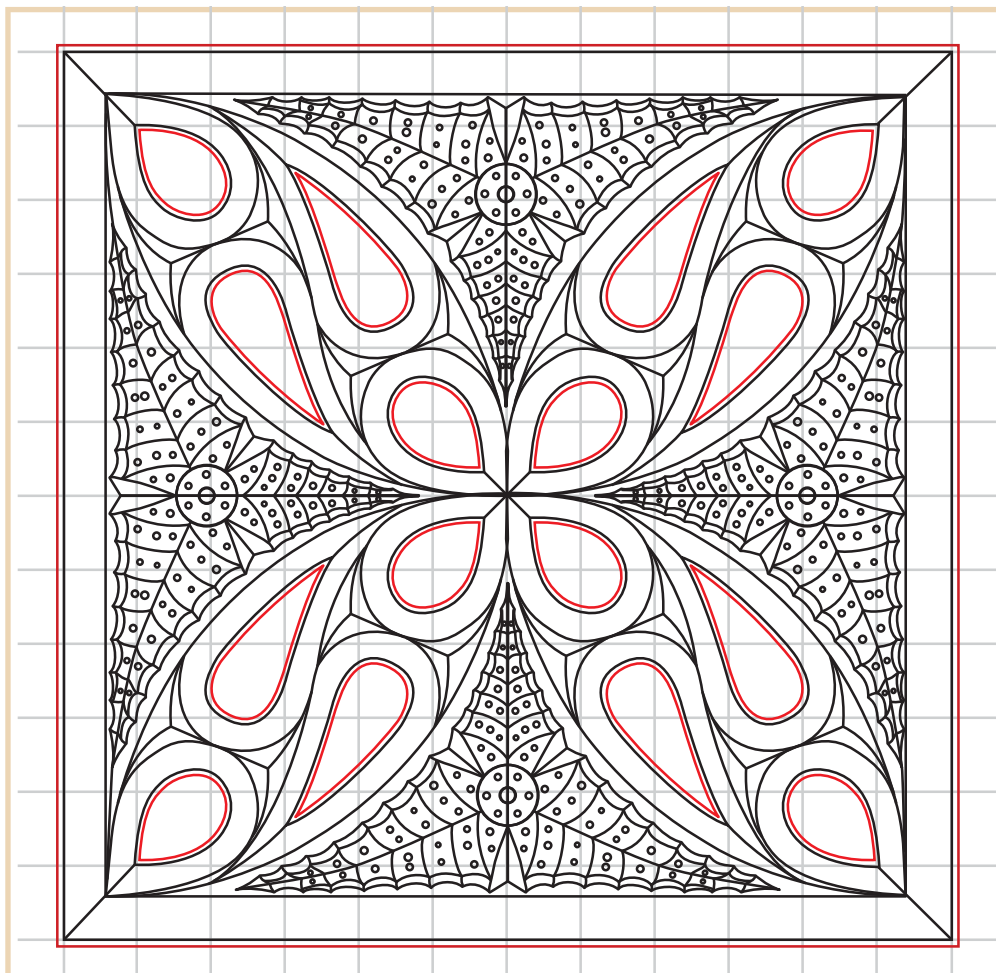
Oak (*Quercus robur*) measuring
305mm square × 18mm thick

Using the pattern

This is a square pattern, which can be made any size big enough to work with, but I have made it for a 305mm square panel.

The easiest way to make a full-size copy is to transfer the pattern into a computer using either a scanner or a digital camera. Crop the drawing in half down the centre and crop off part of the top and bottom border. Print it out on a full A4 sheet so the pattern area, excluding the border, is 279mm top to bottom.

This will fit the 305mm square panel. The pattern is symmetrical so you can use one half twice

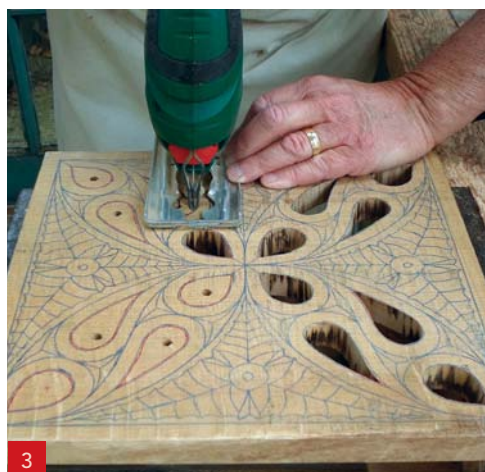


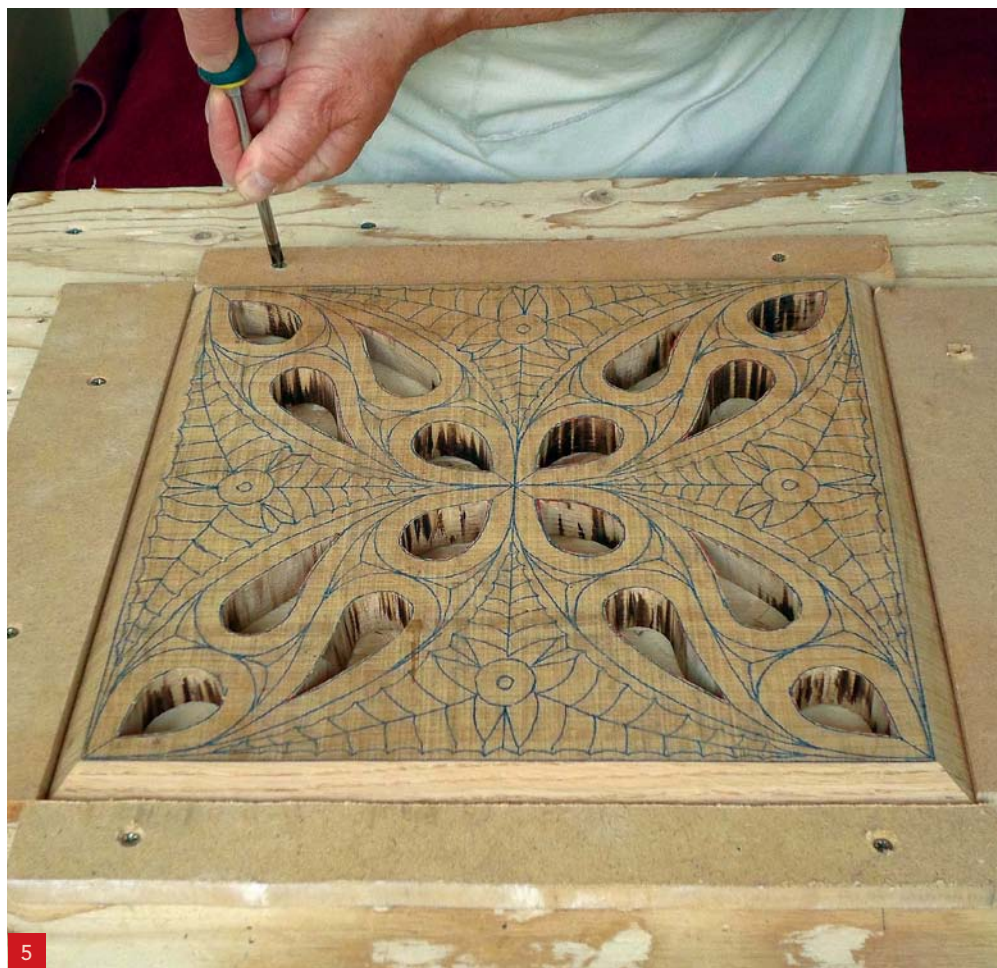
1 Take your piece of oak and make a full-size copy of the drawing. 'Green' oak is easier to carve than fully dried oak but the thin panel may warp as it dries, so aim for a piece that has been air-dried for about three years

2 Trace the pattern onto the wood with carbon paper. It is a complex pattern and you will miss some bits, so keep the drawing taped at one edge while you check and re-fix it to fill in the missing bits

3 Mark the cutting lines in red and carefully cut out the voids of the tracery. Use a 4mm jigsaw blade to turn round the tight curves – keep it moving as much as possible

4 Mark a line around the edges of the panel 13mm below the top edge and plane a 45° chamfer from this line to the edge of the pattern. On the end grain sides, plane inwards from each end so you don't break out the corner





5

Optional fuming

If you want to darken this oak carving to an ancient dark brown, you can 'fume' it with ammonia. This replicates the natural ageing process of oak at a rate of about a century an hour. See the Gothic boss in *Woodcarving 133* for instructions on fuming

5 To hold the work for carving, fix strips of wood to the bench around the edges of the panel

Carving the tracery

6 Starting with one of the small mouchettes in the outer corners, use a 16mm, No.9 curved gouge or similar to carve a cove around the inside of it up to the pattern line. The cove should be as deep as it is wide and the bottom edges of all the coves should be at the same level. Take care to carve 'downstream' with the grain

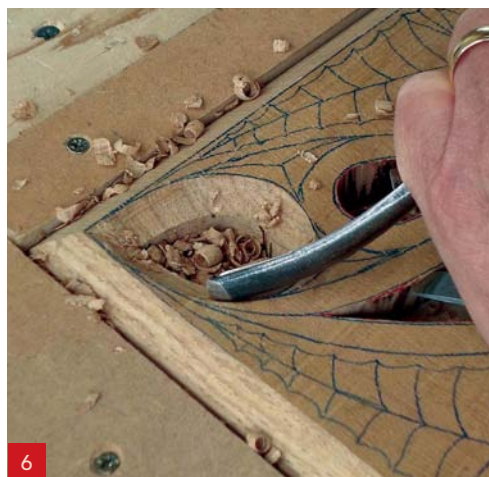
7 Where the grain changes direction in the curves, carve downwards across the grain with a shallow gouge to get a clean cut

8 Shape the coves into a neat mitre in the corner, using a shallow gouge like a 10mm, No.3

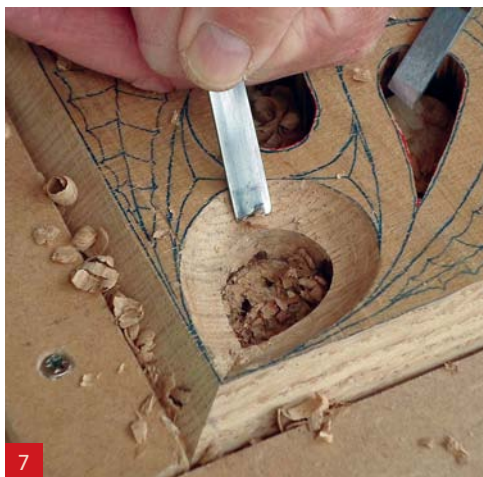
9 Move on to one of the bigger mouchettes and carve the cove as before. Where the two mouchettes meet, take great care to make them touch with a neat sharp ridge

Top tips

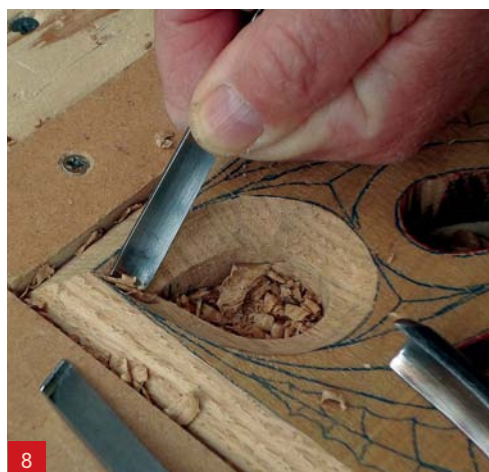
1. The key to neat carving is to approach every cut from the right direction. I use a sturdy freestanding bench 530mm square, which I can walk around so I don't have to keep moving the work. It makes carving much easier



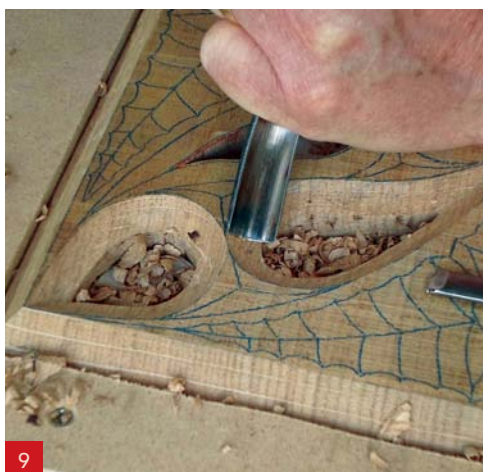
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➔ **10** The larger mouchettes have a long thin tail and a slight ogee – backward – curve on one side. Using a skew chisel here will allow you to make a sharp mitre where the coves meet in the tail

11 Complete the neighbouring mouchettes and carve the 'eyes' in the triangles between the curves. Eyes are a key feature of tracery and need to be neat. Cut an incised 'V' in the eye with the sides following the curve of each adjoining mouchette, with sharp mitres where the sides meet. Remove the carbon paper pattern lines by slicing very carefully and finely along each ridge

12 Repeat the whole process to complete the tracery in all four of the openwork sections. Tidy up the vertical edges inside the openwork to remove all scorch marks and make sure the voids are perfectly shaped

"Tidy up the vertical edges inside the openwork to remove all scorch marks"

13 You can now turn the carving over and put a small chamfer around the bottom edge of each void to give it a neater appearance from the front

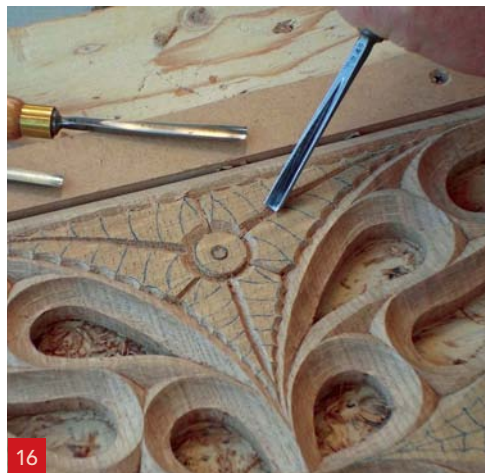
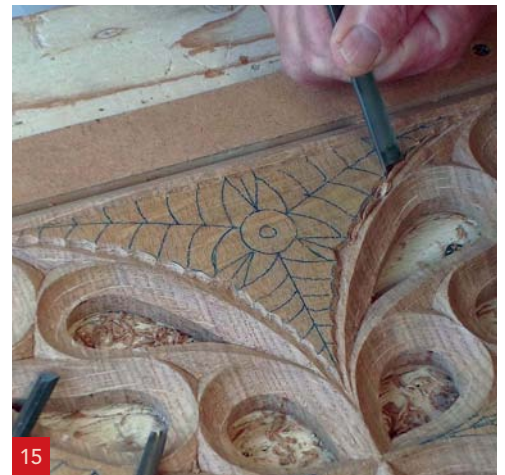
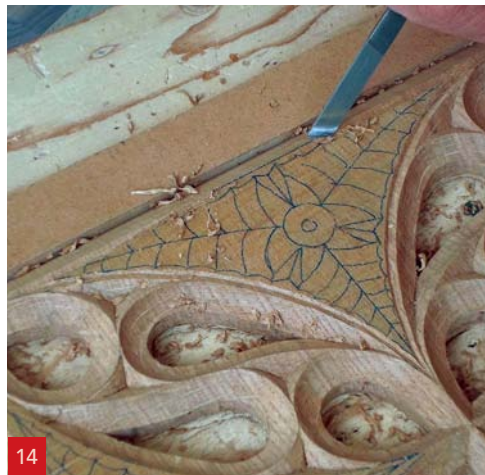
Carving the spandrels

14 Start the spandrels by carefully carving a chamfer along the ridges beside the mandalas and the edges of the panel. Slope this into the leaf. The ridge on the end-grain side of the panel is liable to crumble, so use a slicing cut from a skew chisel to avoid this

15 Cut the scallops around the edges of the leaf and shape the chamfer into them

16 Isolate the roundel in the middle of the leaf by cutting a groove round it, then cut a 'V' along each main vein line, starting shallow at the corners and getting deeper towards the middle

17 Use a broad shallow gouge to carve a smooth hollow in the leaf down to a depth of about 4mm in the middle





18 Re-cut the main vein lines with a skew chisel; this will allow you to achieve a clean edge. Round over the roundel and put a hollow in the middle of it. Use the skew chisel again to cut the deep 'V' midway in each side of the leaf



19 You can now begin to cut fine secondary veins all along the leaf by making 'chip' cuts with a gouge of the right size and profile – preferably a No.3, 20mm



20 Tidy up the scallops at the edges with a sloping cut into the chamfer. Finish the leaf with rows of tiny holes made with a 2mm veiner – push it in vertically and rotate it



21 Repeat the process with the rest of the spandrels. Check the carving with the light at different angles and tidy up any rough bits, which will ensure that you get a good sharp glossy finish straight from the tools. Don't use abrasives on oak as it kills the finish

Finishing

22 Polish the oak to a soft satin sheen with a good wax polish. Use a stiff brush to work the wax into the crevices, then buff it up several times with a dry cloth

23 Hang it in a place where the light strikes it sideways to show up the shallow details on the leaves. The completed Gothic panel should look something like this ▶



Top tips

2. When cutting out tight curves with a jigsaw, it is best to use a 4mm blade. You'll find that it will get very hot, so keep it moving to reduce the amount of scorching on the wood

3. Avoid using abrasives on oak; they give it a dull opaque finish and blur the detail. A good tooled finish will give you a naturally shiny surface and crisp edges that will look more lively. Practice working the carving to its final finish by making slicing cuts with sharp tools of the right size and profile

4. Use a skew chisel for making clean cuts across short grain. Its angled cutting edge slices through the wood fibres instead of pushing against them and tearing them out

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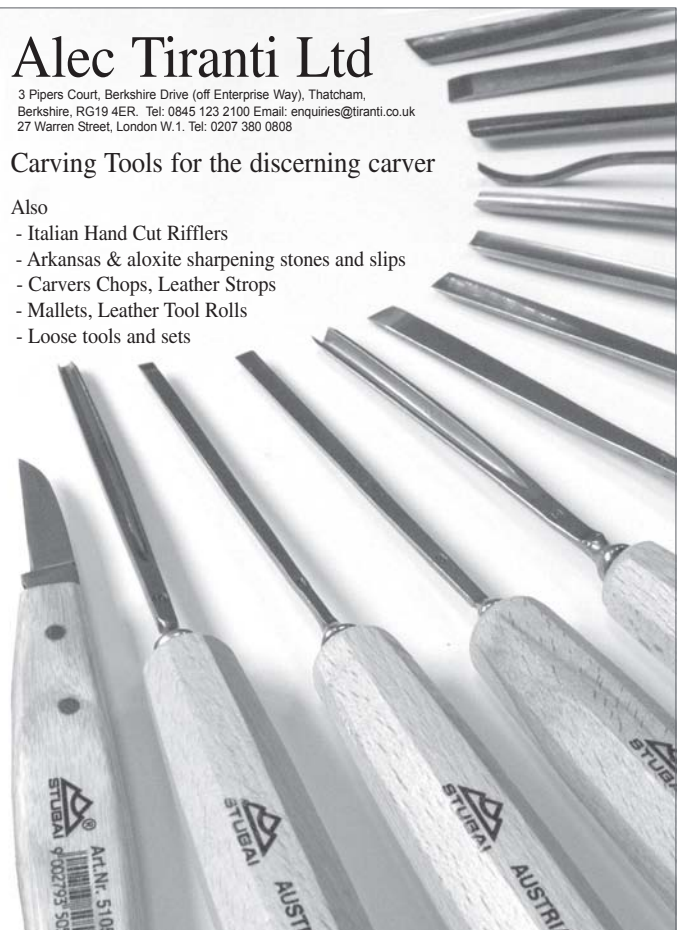
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Carving a Bonsai tree

John Samworth outlines the planning and carving processes for making a bonsai tree

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JOHN SAMWORTH



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

John Samworth is a relatively recent convert to carving, having only taken it up about five years ago. Like many other carvers, he describes himself as a slightly eccentric, enthusiastic, amateur. He has been a member of the Cornwall Woodcarving Association for the past two years. For carving subjects his particular interests are the interaction of human figures and bonsai trees. The current piece he is working on is a personal interpretation of 'A partridge in a pear tree'.



As woodcarvers we have all been, from time to time, guilty of not seeing the tree for the wood. I have always enjoyed being out in nature, especially within the presence of majestic trees, be it a long walk in a forest or the dappled shade of a single tree on a summer's day. So here is my homage to those specimens which have given me so much pleasure over the years and I hope the irony of the subject is not lost on you.

Rather than jump right into a step-by-

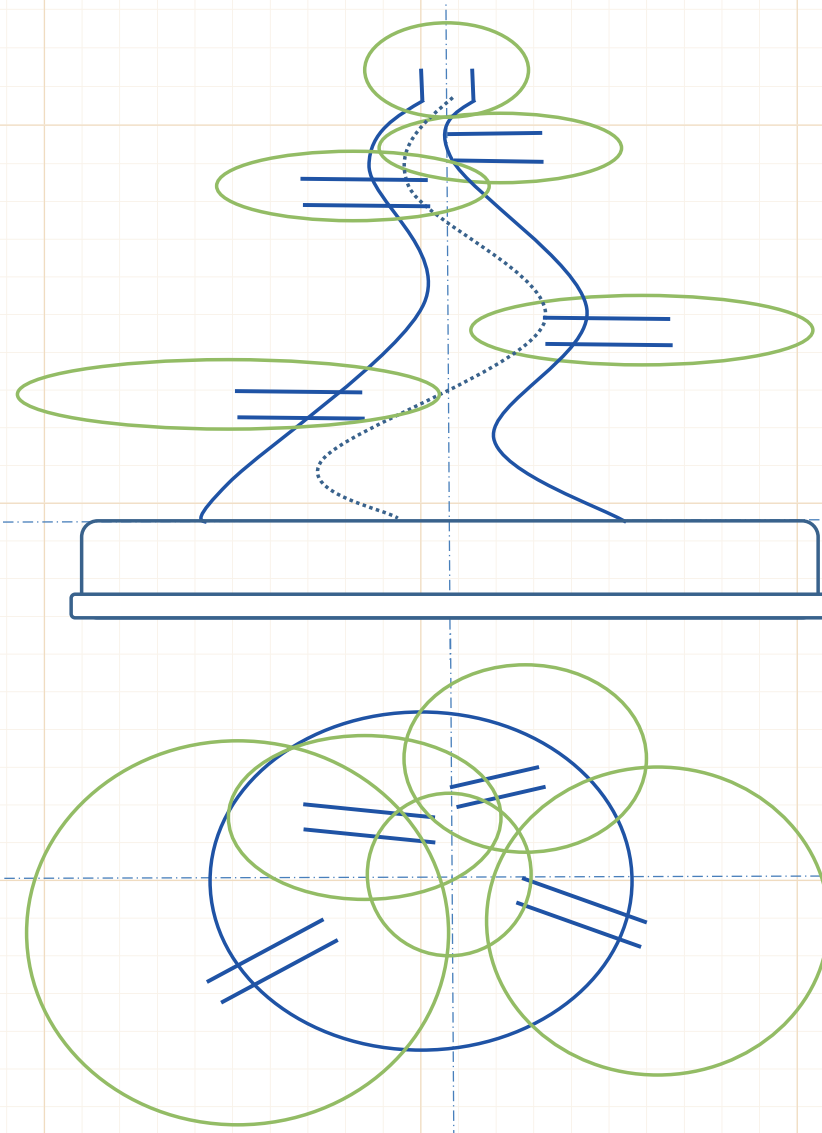
step guide to carving a bonsai, my aim is to produce in an extended preamble a guide to inspire you to carve any bonsai of your choosing. In doing so, you will be able to control the demands of the project to suit your personal circumstances. Perhaps a simple leaf for a beginner and pine needles to stretch the talents of the professional. This would be a good place to recommend to you that you take a little time and study a tree or visit your local bonsai centre.

➔ Planning the bonsai

Before committing a gouge to wood, it is essential to have a plan to work to. When working from scratch, as here, I like to produce mine on graph paper. I'm going to create an informal upright style tree based on the cherry (*Prunus spp.*) leaf. The overall design will be slightly squat, using the guidance on the right and the artist's golden ratio phi – mathematically two numbers are in the golden ratio phi if their ratio is the same as the ratio of their sum to the larger of the two quantities. This is approximately a ratio of 1: 1.618.

I start by drawing a horizontal line across the page; this will represent the top of the base of the soil level. Next, mark in the vertical line to the centre of the page; I shall plan the bonsai about this line, but a touch offcentre. About the vertical line I lightly sketch a waving line as the centre of the trunk, then carefully construct the outline of the outside profiles of the trunk. Three inside curves will give a harmonious balance to the bonsai, two will look crooked and four too fussy for a small bonsai.

Four branches and the crown have balanced the trunk, filling the vertical space but allowing the viewer to look into the bonsai. The width of the branches is 160mm while the height from the bottom of the first branch to the top of the crown is 100mm – in a ratio of 1.6:1. I have brought each branch out from the outside curves of the trunk and taken the first branch about one-third of the way up the trunk.



The leaf

A good place to start is with the leaf. Only one leaf design is needed to produce the entire foliage canopy. Although we will draw each leaf the same, we will not manage to carve them all the same. Each one will be slightly different.

Shown are three caricatures of cherry, oak (*Quercus robur*) and maple (*Acer campestre*) leaves respectively. Pictures like these can be found in most word processing software. Alternatively,

forage the internet or better still your local wood for specimen leaves which inspire you. Modern photocopier machines will produce an excellent copy of a leaf, simply by photocopying the real leaf, onto a sheet of paper.

The outline should be the first consideration. A cherry leaf, with its smoother outline offers less challenges for the carver than the deeply in-cut maple leaf. Choose the degree of difficulty to suit you.



Maple and oak leaves

Next, give some consideration to the profile of the leaf. The leaf of the cherry is much less curved than the maple and would be a suitable starting project. The curve on the oak is repeated in each lobe along the entire length and on both sides of the main vein. The oak leaf is an exciting choice of leaf as it allows the carver to choose to incorporate acorns or not. I encourage you to set your own limits.

Study your chosen tree carefully and look to see how one leaf lies in relation to the next leaf. With the maple, one leaf will lie over another part covering it; the oak leaves radiate outwards from the branch creating a rosette at the end. This will be important when planning the leaf carvings in order to capture the nature of the specimen.

Finally, we need to consider the size

of the leaf. The overall size of the leaf has to be in proportion to the bonsai's dimensions and the overall size of the tree and base. This decision is best made after the bonsai and base design have been chosen so we shall postpone this decision for the moment. But remember that the leaves on the bonsai grow proportionately larger than on a natural tree.

The tree shape

The study of bonsai, a work in itself, has given us a number of distinct tree shapes or styles. If you are uncertain where to start, visit the websites of reputable organisations such as The National Bonsai Society in the UK – www.thenationalbonsaisociety.co.uk – or the American Bonsai Society – www.absbonsai.org. Both sites, and many others, offer a wide variety of advice and have online galleries. The Formal Upright, Informal Upright, Windswept and Broom styles respectively on the right are typical examples of popular bonsai shapes.

Some important tips here are to start the first branch about one-third of the way up the tree. Open and airy branches are good as they allow the viewer to look into the tree and study the trunk. Keep the number of branches odd. Five, seven and nine are so much more



pleasing to the eye than four or six. The crown can be joined as a mass of leaves to cover the tip of the trunk. The gaps between each branch should reduce as you climb up the tree. Remember that the tree is a three-dimensional object and branches will be growing forwards and backwards as well as side to side.

Each branch should tend to lay horizontal, giving an illusion of age. And should you choose one of the first two styles, then the lowest two branches should both face outwards and forwards as if the tree is greeting the viewer with open arms. Remember that a bonsai has a front.

The bark

Aesthetically you could carve a bark to match the tree species, use a caricature to represent a generic bark or simply leave the trunk smooth with the wood's natural grain showing. In issue 138 of *Woodcarving* there is some wonderful inspiration to be gained from the article on Janel Jacobson and her interpretation

of bark. If you study the barks on different trees, you will see they are quite different.

Below are photos showing different varieties of bark for six different trees. As you can see, all are quite different: three are deeply pitted while one is quite smooth. Notice the difference between the oak and chestnut where

the deep vertical channels are inter cut by horizontal cuts in the oak, which are absent in the chestnut. The pear has a patchwork appearance, while the cherry is distinctive in its smoothness and horizontal blemishes. These blemishes are raised above the surface of the bark and must be carved before sanding, not afterwards.



Cherry



Chestnut



Oak



Pear



Scots pine



Silver birch

→ The base

You could either purchase a porcelain ceramic pot or carve your own designed base. If you choose to use a ceramic pot, then allow a little extra height in the trunk, attach a piece of ply to the bottom and hide it with gravel. If you choose your own design then many options are available. The base could be decorated with floral patterns, chip carving, relief pictures or simply sanded smooth.



Ceramic base



Carved base

Carving

1 Draw out a single leaf onto some stiff card or thin ply. The scale will depend upon the height of your bonsai and your own preference. As a guide, I would recommend that for a bonsai as small as 120mm, then a leaf of about 20mm will work. Scale up accordingly, but do not draw a leaf bigger than they naturally grow. My pear tree is about 400mm tall and my leaf is 80mm long, near life-size. The bottom leaf pattern that covers the branch will be 200mm long.

For carving the leaves, choose a board between 25mm and 50mm thick. Thinner boards result in a flatter appearance to the branch, while thicker boards allow more slope in the branch carving. Align the leaf pattern along the grain so that the grain radiates out from the centre of the tree along the branches. Sketch the outline of a simple branch structure and start covering it with leaves. The base of each leaf should appear to be anchored to the framework of the branch. I have deliberately avoided exposing the branch because to carve this requires carving a fragile piece of wood and more care in placing other leaves for support. I have also avoided showing where leaves attach to a branch, for the same reason. For consistency in this article, all photos and drawings will assume the tree trunk is to the right of the

The trunk

Having selected your wood for the trunk, make sure that the bottom is flat and square to the vertical. This will later be attached directly onto the base. Transfer the outline of the trunk onto a piece of wood, with the grain running vertically. Leave plenty of space so that later you can incorporate a join in the end of a branch. The final shape of the branches can wait until later. Remember that the tree is three-dimensional; check that you have branches angled forwards and backwards not just left and right. Rough out the basic shape. If you are using a carving post or are a confident whittler, then you may carve the entire length of the trunk. Otherwise leave a small section right at the bottom 10-20mm for holding in the vice. Smooth off. It is easier to draw your bark design onto a smooth surface than a rough one. Check that you are happy with the overall shape and that the ends of the branches and tip of the trunk are smooth and square ready for joining. The final section of trunk may be removed over a waste piece of wood and the bark extended. The planning process guides you through planning an informal upright but to quickly demonstrate how versatile this process can be, I will guide you through the carving of a branch for the pear tree project I am currently working on. I have already started the trunk and will demonstrate the carving of a branch.



The trunk

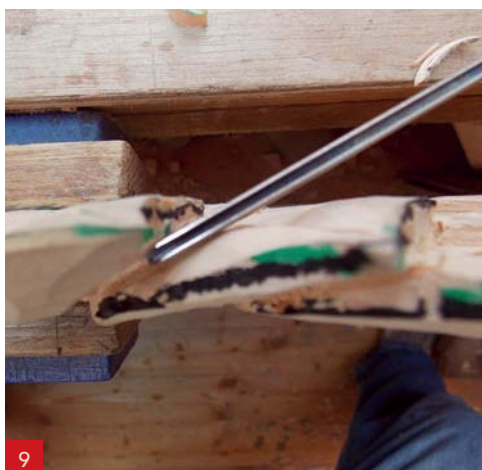
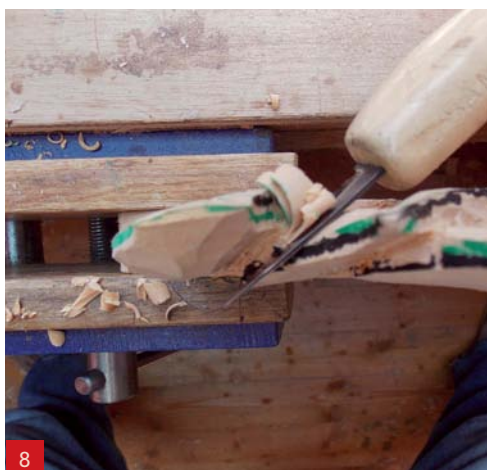


leaves and the leaves are to the left of the trunk.

This particular pattern is only the first layer to form the overall branch. A small rectangle is drawn along the centre of the pattern, overhanging next to the trunk. This part is left uncarved and will allow a joint to the trunk and an attachment of more leaves above. To avoid later confusion, draw over the pattern with a clear marker pen picking out those leaves

which may be seen in the full and those partly exposed. I'm comfortable drawing directly onto the timber, but you may prefer to work on a sketch and transfer the finished pattern to the timber.

Use a saw to cut around the outline of the leaf pattern. Plan the profile of each leaf, considering carefully which leaf overlaps the next and mark out the side views, then mount the piece onto a backing board with a sacrificial piece of card between the board and the carving



2 Now to carve the top surface of the leaves. Start with the small sections of visible bottom leaves, carving deeply into the wood, working around the pattern and finally carving the top leaves

3 When clearing out the waste wood, do not cut down through to the lower leaf – use a V-tool on its side and slice through the waste

4 Mark the spine of each leaf, either by carving the spine into the leaf allowing a shadow to mark its place, or by reverse carving a spine to stand proud of the leaf surface. No leaf should be considered as flat, but allow some to curve upwards along their edges and others to curve downwards. Some leaves may curve up at the tip while others curves downwards. Continue to rough out the top surface. The spines on three of the more prominent leaves have been carved proud of the surface while the rest have been carved out with a V-tool. Round the surface into the spine for appearance

5 Viewing the carving from the side, mark the leaf edges where they have been carved off

6 Once complete, prise the carving off its backing board and mark out the underlap of the leaves. Do not worry about the messy card, simply draw over it and carve it off. Again start to carve those leaves least exposed from the bottom view; these are the whole leaves on the top. Work around the pattern until you finish with those leaves where you can see the entire leaf bottom. The bottom view will not form part of the visible parts of the carving. Leave plenty of thickness to the centre leaf for strength

7 Mark the spine on the back of the leaf and rough out. Working away from the spine towards the leaf edge, sweep across the leaf with the bottom cutting edge, then sweep over again with the flatter side edge. Go over the carving with a shallow gouge

8 To begin undercutting, clearly define each leaf. The initial plan is still visible. Here I have reconsidered the exact lie of each leaf and marked the new adjustment with black pen

9 Begin working the edge using a variety of tools. I find a mixture of knives and V-tools work well

PROJECT

Bonsai carving

10 Here, I decided to sand the project

11 Go over the prime areas on show and ensure that all edges are crisp and clear of waste. Lightly run a V-tool in the vein channels to ensure they are clear, then mark in the side veins

12 The mind's eye should always be on the question, how will I join the branch to the leaf? That way you will leave the correct amount of wood to build the joint. On this piece I am planning a simple dowel joint and have left an uncarved part of the branch, thick enough and long enough to take the dowel. First trim the carving to the required length and mark and then drill small holes into the end of the branch and on the trunk and insert a piece of dowelling

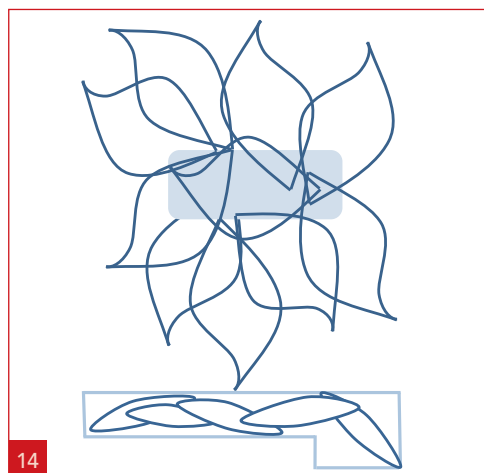
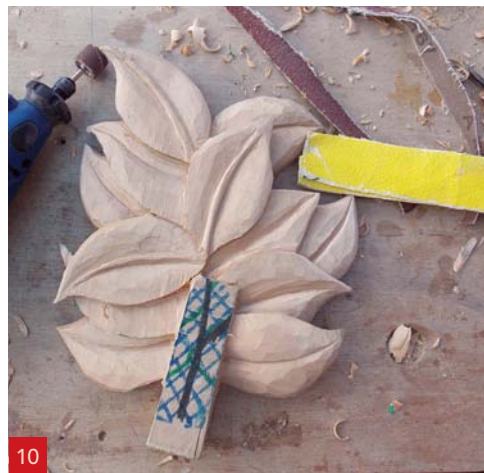
13 Use a hole centre to locate the correct point to join on the trunk. I had prepared the trunk earlier and have left a square core to take the branch joints. The entire upper part of the pear tree will form a dense canopy hiding this core and all the joints

14 This completes what I wanted to show on carving the leaves, but I'll now return to the original design of the informal upright design. Here the branch would differ in two ways: first, the joint would be into the end of another branch stump protruding from the trunk and second, there would be another layer of leaves on top. Here is a plan of a top section. This time the uncarved section is on the bottom for attachment and the leaf pattern will allow leaves to hang down and cover the joint with the branch. The profile drawing indicates how the leaves should nest together. Notice how the left of the pattern has only been drawn high on the outside edge of the carving, allowing the right-hand side to be carved tilting down towards the trunk

15 The joint can be simply achieved by a dowel joint, either hidden or by undercutting further

16 The crown may consist of one, two or three layers of leaves, but the joint is made by cutting a hole in the centre of the bottom layer and sitting it on top of the trunk

17 There is still some work left to do: the entire base, some more branches, finishing the trunk and one or two more pears



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The 48th Annual International Woodcarvers' Congress

Susan Alexander, author of the popular carving blog susanalexandercarves.com, brings us news from the 48th Annual International Woodcarvers' Congress



PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARC FEATHERLY

The little town of Maquoketa, Iowa, almost doubled their population over 8–14 June, 2014, when woodcarvers, exhibitors, as well as patrons of woodcarvers and their families, from across the United States, Canada and overseas attended the 48th Annual International Woodcarvers' Congress.

The Congress, a week-long celebration of the woodcarving arts, is the longest running judged wood-art show in the United States. Held the second full-week in June each year at the Jackson County Fairgrounds, Congress Week activities included educational seminars that covered a variety of carving and related subjects; seminars for the non-carvers; competitions in over 85 separate categories; an open-to-the-public woodcarving show; annual awards banquet; judges' critique sessions and the annual AWC Membership meeting.

Awards and prizes

Awards and prizes for the 48th Congress exceeded £9,250. Historically, Congress

judges are chosen because they are recognised experts in their specific carving field.

This year's Congress judges were Fred Cogelow from Willmar, Minnesota, winner of more than 12 Congress Best of Shows; Josh Guge from Pingree Grove, Illinois, a Best of Show winner in the world of fish carving and expert bird carver and painter; and Rick Harney, a consistent blue-ribbon winner in bas-relief woodcarving. This judging team devoted two full-days to review and consider over 500 competition pieces in over 85 categories.



Best of Show: Carved from black walnut, 'Cross Hobbled' by John C. Sharp

Best of Show First
Runner Up: Relief
carving, 'Harvey'
by Debra Bergum



Best of Show
Second Runner
Up: Bird carving,
'Trout Hunter' by
Randy Hansen



HIGHLIGHTS

One of the Congress' highlights is the critique session. This session provides a rare opportunity for exhibit carvers to receive expert advice and support from the professional judging team. During the 90-minute critique session slide show, each judge provided opinions on how specific carvings could have been improved and why other carvings won blue ribbons. Afterwards, the judges were available to any carver who wished to speak to them privately.

The judges had an opportunity to pick a favourite carving, out of the entire competition, that touched them in a special way.



Judge Rick Harney chose Warren Rauscher's carving
'Lotta Chips' in the Ornamental Carving category

49th Annual International Woodcarvers' Congress

Judges for the 49th Annual International Woodcarvers' Congress have already been chosen. The first judge will be Janet Denton Cordell, from Fayetteville, Arkansas. A recognised master artisan, Janet has been carving for 43 years. In 1994, she opened her school of wood sculpture, The Ozark Mountain School of Sculpture. The second judge is Helli Mayr, from Mutters, Austria. Helli is a Tyrolean master woodcarver, who has taught carving classes in Europe and in the United States. His carving background includes restoration of European castles and cathedrals. Lastly, Vic Hood of Franklin, Tennessee, has won over 85 awards, including several Best of Show awards and has taught carving classes throughout the United States. As a restorationist his company, Leatherwood, Inc., has been responsible for the restoration of several presidential houses, national landmarks, national monuments and house museums. To meet these judges, participate in the 49th Annual International Woodcarvers' Congress, Maquoketa, Iowa, 13–21 June, 2015.



'Conch Shell' by Robert Wills, from Coal City, Illinois



Judge Fred Coglow chose Ed Sowulewski's 'B-O's Fish Wagon' in the Caricatures category



Judge Josh Guge chose Chris Howard's 'Guardian' carving, in the Impressionistic/Free-form/Stylised Carvings category



'The American Farm'
by Dylan Goodson
from Rockford,
Alabama



'Happy Boy' by
Bruce Futterer,
from Russellville,
Arkansas

'A Battle for the Queen'
by Ben Manor, from
Durand, Wisconsin, which
won the much coveted
People's Choice Award





Tutor Vic Hood teaching his class how to carve a bust in butternut

'Amish Children' by
Richard McQueen,
from Morris, Illinois



Tutor Carole Jean Boyd showing a student how a cut is made

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Five-Day Classes

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Architectural/ornamental carving
in Euro style

Carole Jean Boyd

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Dylan Goodson

Realistic human figures

Tom Gow

Cottonwood bark carving

Vic Hood

Carving a bust in butternut

Don Mertz

The ABCs of face carving with
a knife

Harley Refsal

Caricature carving – whittling
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Three-Day Classes

Sharon Bechtold

Woodburning workshop

Rick Harney

What a relief it is to work in clay

Fred Cogelow

Carve a caricature mask

Josh Guge

Design and composition class

One-Day Classes

Bonnie Adams

Gourd carving and filigree class

Nina Stachewicz

Oil painting for carvers

Bonnie Adams

Thunder drum gourd

Gay Greer

Kumihimo (Japanese braiding)

Leather bracelet, appetizer picks
and holder, beaded serving
pieces, freeform bracelet,
herringbone super duo bracelet

Tom Gow

Bark ornament carving ▶

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We're sure that Aladdin would agree with us, that all carver's have one thing in common - they're all different! They each has their own needs, wants, hopes and ambitions. That's what we at The ToolPost try to match. We don't offer a Hobson's choice of products, we offer a real choice. Of course, we only offer trusted, proven and reliable brands, from the world's "top drawer", but where we can offer a choice, we do: where we can't, we simply offer the best. Equally we appreciate that some carvers are whittlers - and some whittlers carve. Some like to use bench tools, with fixed handles, whilst others like the convenience of interchangeable handles. Some use power carvers and some wouldn't go anywhere without a knife in their pocket. They're all different, but they are all "right" and that's why we are happy to go the extra mile to supply their diverse needs and wants.

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Robert Sorby



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We also understand that there are always other bits and gizmos that go to make up the woodcarver's armoury so we keep a good range of essential accessories such as carving clamps, sharpening equipment, abrasives, finishes etc. in stock too.

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Carve & paint an Indian pitta

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MIKE WOOD

Mike Wood shows you how to carve and paint this colourful medium-sized passerine bird

The Indian pitta (*Pitta brachyura*) is a medium-sized passerine bird, which breeds mainly in the sub-Himalayas and winters in southern India and Sri Lanka. These birds are found in thick undergrowth and are often more easily detected by their calls.

It is a small stubby-tailed bird that is mostly seen on the floor of forests or under dense undergrowth, foraging on insects in leaf litter. It has long, strong legs, a very short tail and stout bill, with a buff coloured crown stripe, black coronal stripes, a thick black eye stripe and white throat and neck. The upper parts are green, with a blue tail, the underparts buff, with bright red on the lower belly and vent. The bird normally hops on the ground to forage and has been known to get caught in ground traps meant for small mammals. It has

been suggested that the width of the coronal stripe may differ in the sexes.

Pittas are among the few Old World suboscine birds. The Indian pitta is the basal member of a distinct clade that includes many of the Oriental species.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mike Wood has been carving all his life and professionally since 1986. Carving mostly birds, he is self-taught and takes great inspiration from the American bird carvers. To see more of Mike's work, visit: www.mikewoodbird.co.uk



Things you will need...

Tools:

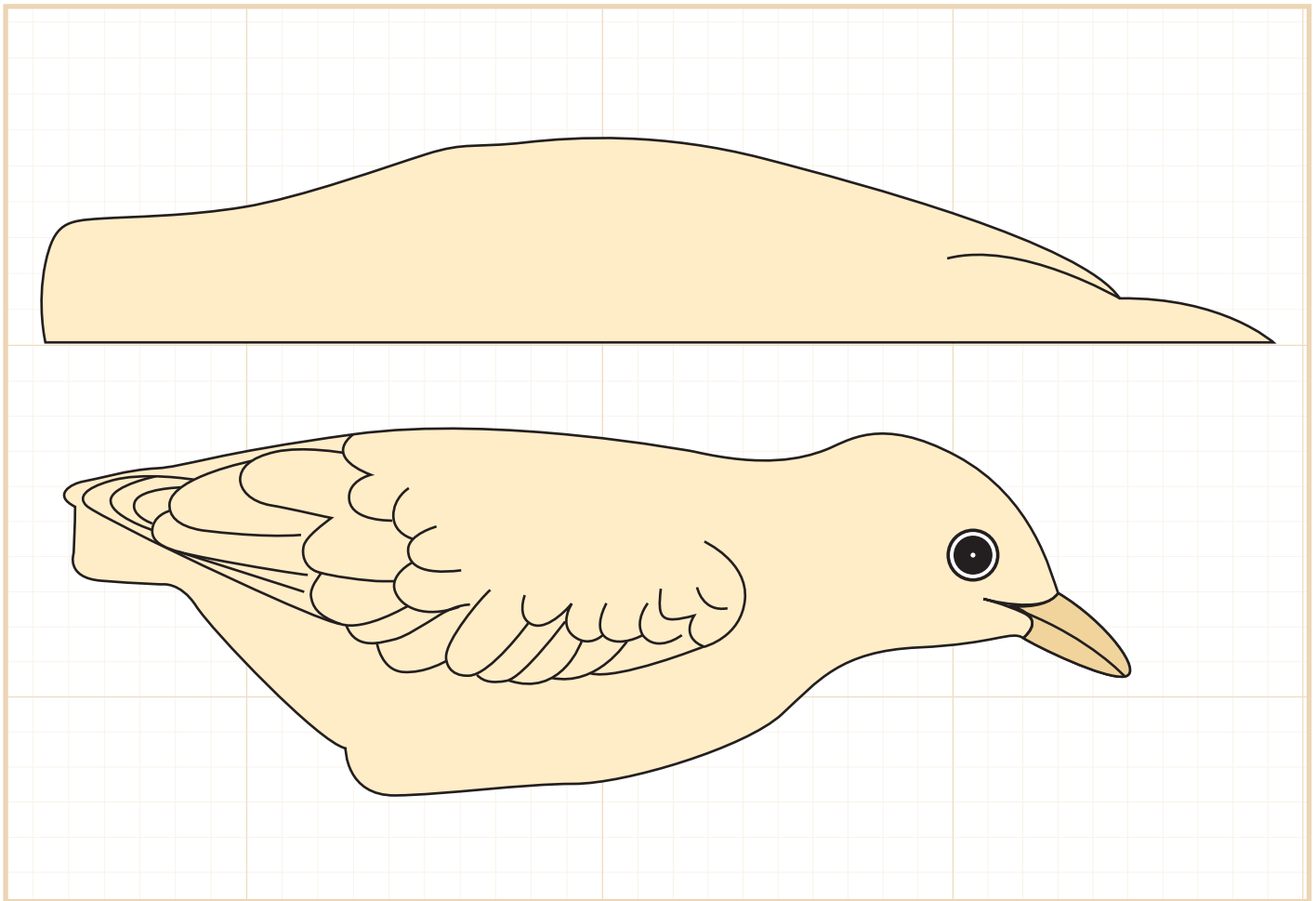
- Rotary carving unit
- High-speed grinder
- Small taper
- Small Kutzall burr
- Small round burr
- Small white stone
- Range of abrasives
- Sanding bobbin
- Pencil
- Ruby taper
- Plastic eye
- Bull-nosed stone
- Pyrography unit
- Rigger paintbrush

Paint:

- White gesso
- Hookers green
- Yellow
- Cream
- Light blue
- Scarlet
- Yellow ochre
- Orange
- Black
- Golden yellow
- Flesh colour

Wood:

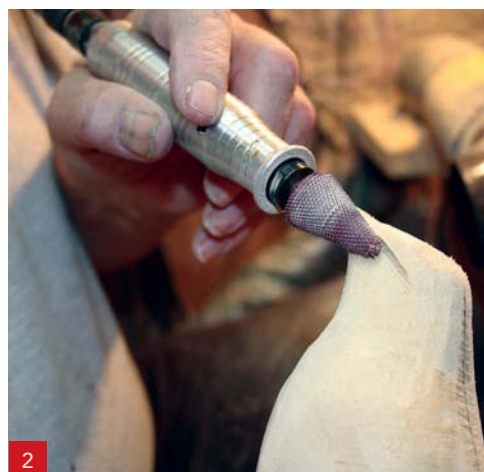
A piece of lime (*Tilia vulgaris*) measuring 190mm long x 70mm dia. x 70mm wide



1 It is useful to start with a good set of photos of the project you intend to make; these will help you to get a good idea of the shape and colours before you start. Research is the key if you want any hope of getting anywhere near true to life proportions and detail. You will usually draw out quite a few variants. Once you are happy that your composition is correct, trace the pattern onto your chosen timber blank and cut it out using a coping saw or bandsaw. Both methods will work for this project and people definitely have a preference to use either hand or power tools



2 The next step is to rough out the basic shape of the bird. You can do this by hand with conventional carving tools, but I use a coarse-toothed taper burr in a rotary power unit, which is a faster way of working. That said, it does create a lot of dust, so extraction is vital and it is best done in a workshop rather than in a living room. Using the same taper, put the eye in the recess

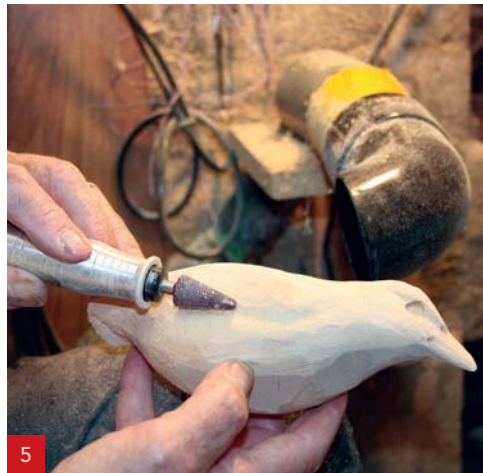


3 Using a ball-end or straight cutter, cut the eye socket and cut in a hole for each eye





4



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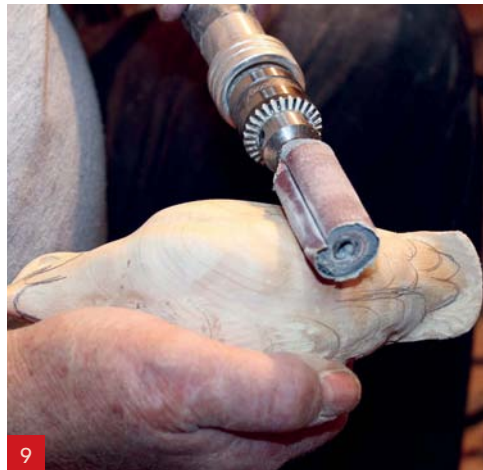
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10



11

4 Now is a good time to draw in the wing shapes. After you have completed this step...

5 ... use a small taper and carve in the wings of the bird. Note the outlined depression being cut. You need to create definition and from the depression, it is easy to make the raised wing section. You need to make sure that this is kept distinct from the main body curve

6 The eye recesses need refining and this can be done using a small fine-grit grade flame-type burr. Check your research material and make sure you get this correct, as a small error here will greatly affect the appearance of the bird

7 When you are happy with the overall shape and definition of the respective sections, use a coarse grit of abrasive – 80 or 100 would be a good start – and sand the entire bird until it is smooth. I forgot to take a photo of this stage and had to backtrack to get a photo after I had started detailing the underside of the bird

8 After sanding, you need to add texture to the breast and side of the bird. I use a high-speed grinder and a small round burr to carve in some 'bumps', which is the term I use for describing the creation of the outline of the chest feathers

9 Next, use a fine abrasive attached to a sanding bobbin to make the surface smooth

10 You can now begin to draw in the wing feathers

11 Using a high-speed grinder and a fine-grit ruby or similar cutter, carve in all the wing feathers. This is where the detail is created

Top tips

1. Both power and hand carving can allow you to create minute fine detail. The trick is to decide straight away what you want to create. Do you want an exact replica of the real thing or a stylised version? Sometimes it is easier to go for fine detail. Stylised birds are tricky in that you need to decide what to leave out. The key is thinking about what parts of the bird the carving process makes unique

➔ **12** Using a high-speed grinder and a small round ruby carver, you can now begin to soften the edges of all the feathers

13 Now, using a fine grade of bull-nose stone attached to your rotary grinder, soften the edges of the feathers on the breast of the bird. It is necessary to create the soft pillowy effect of the feathers

14 You can now fit the eyes. Plastic wood is a good product for this task; it gives you time to fill the holes, set the eyes and then clean up the areas prior to it setting. Use a brush to smooth out any excess plastic wood

15 Using a high-speed grinder fitted with a small fine-grade white stone or similar, finish the detail on the bird's head and bill

16 Now, using a pyrography machine, you can burn in all the feather shafts. A chisel-edge tip will allow you to create fine crisp incised detail, which is what you need here

17 Once complete, you can then burn in all the side and breast feathers. You are now ready to burn in the detail around the eyes. A standard wire tip is used here

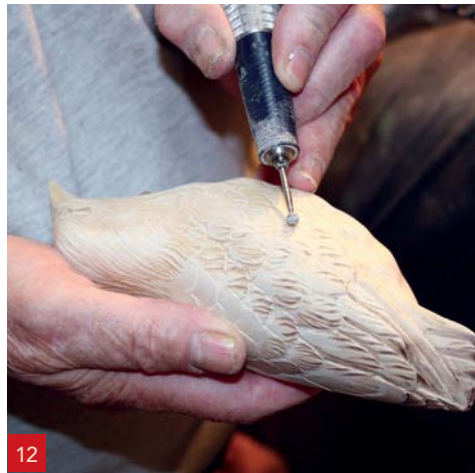
18 You can then finish burning in the feathers on the rest of the bird

19 After the pyrographing, you can begin to drill the holes for the feet – which can be homemade or bought – and then fit the feet in place using plastic wood, building up a small section where the feet meet the body. Once you have burned in all the feathers and fitted the feet, your carving should look something like this. Note that I am already checking to see how the base works

Top tips

2. The fine carved detail needs to be deep enough to allow the detail to show through after a fine coat of gesso is applied to the whole bird. If the detail is not deep enough, you will fill all the detail up and the pyrography/carving process will have been in vain

3. Be careful when pyrographing not to breathe in the burning fumes. A small fan or extractor situated off to the side of your workspace will remove the unwanted vapours





20



21



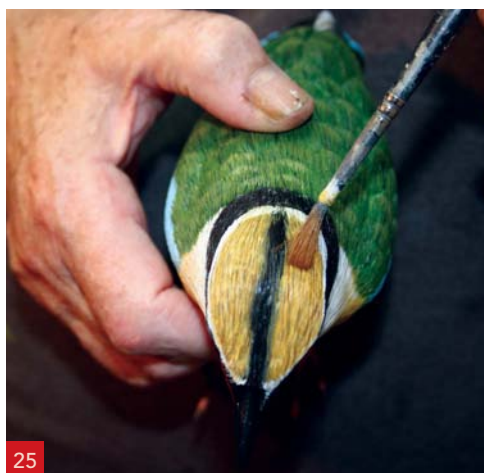
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23



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25



26



27

20 You are now ready to begin painting your bird. The first step is to undercoat the carving using white gesso. When this is dry, you can then start to block in all the colours. For the green detailing, use a mixture of Hookers green and yellow; for the breast and side, use cream; use a light blue for the top of the wing and scarlet for the under tail coverts. This is a brightly coloured bird and the colours used should reflect this

21 Using a rigger paintbrush, edge the side and breast feathers with yellow ochre. Note the cream highlights used here

22 Using the yellow ochre with a small amount of white gesso, you can now edge all of the wing and back feathers

23 Using a very watery Hookers green, give the back of the bird several glazes; this will help to bring back the burn detail

24 Use orange to paint the gape of the bird; airbrush the bill black; paint the eye stripe white and the top of the head the same colour as the breast

25 The final colour for the top of the head, breast and sides is golden yellow

26 You can then edge the primaries and tail feathers. The feet and legs should be painted a flesh colour. Once you have finished painting the under tail coverts scarlet...

27 ... the bird is finished. You can mount the bird on a wooden base – this one has been carved and coloured to look similar to that of the bird's natural habitat

Top tips

4. Bases or mountings for carvings can make or break the piece visually. Of course, there is an amount of subjectivity in the selection of the base. Depending on your views, you can opt for a naturalistic base, mimicking a natural setting, which is suitable for the project, or a stylised plinth-type, which has to work in symbiosis with the carving. Note how the detail of the base has changed from the one used in step 19 to the final one used in step 27. Decide which you prefer

Eagle wall plaque

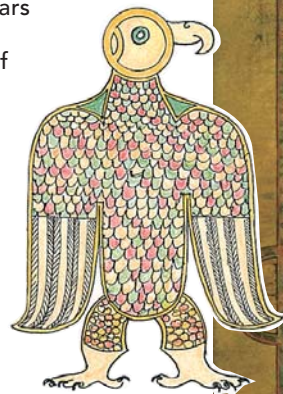
In this book extract, taken from *Celtic Woodcraft: Authentic Projects for Woodworkers*, Glenda Bennett makes an eagle wall plaque



The eagle is associated with strength and wisdom. It appears many times in illuminated manuscripts as an evangelist symbol for St John, although in *The Book of Durrow* the eagle is used to represent St Mark. In *Durrow*, the eagle is very stylised, having a perfectly round head and eye facing right, with a forward facing body.

In *The Book of Kells* the eagle appears much more frequently, giving the opportunity for a far greater variety of designs. Some eagles are depicted with four wings and one has even been given a hand with which to hold a book.

Along with the three other evangelist symbols, lion, calf and man, the symbols were taken as a reference to Christ's incarnation, the soaring eagle representing the ascension.



Eagle in the style of The Book of Durrow



Eagle in the style of The Book of Kells



Folio v from The Book of Kells

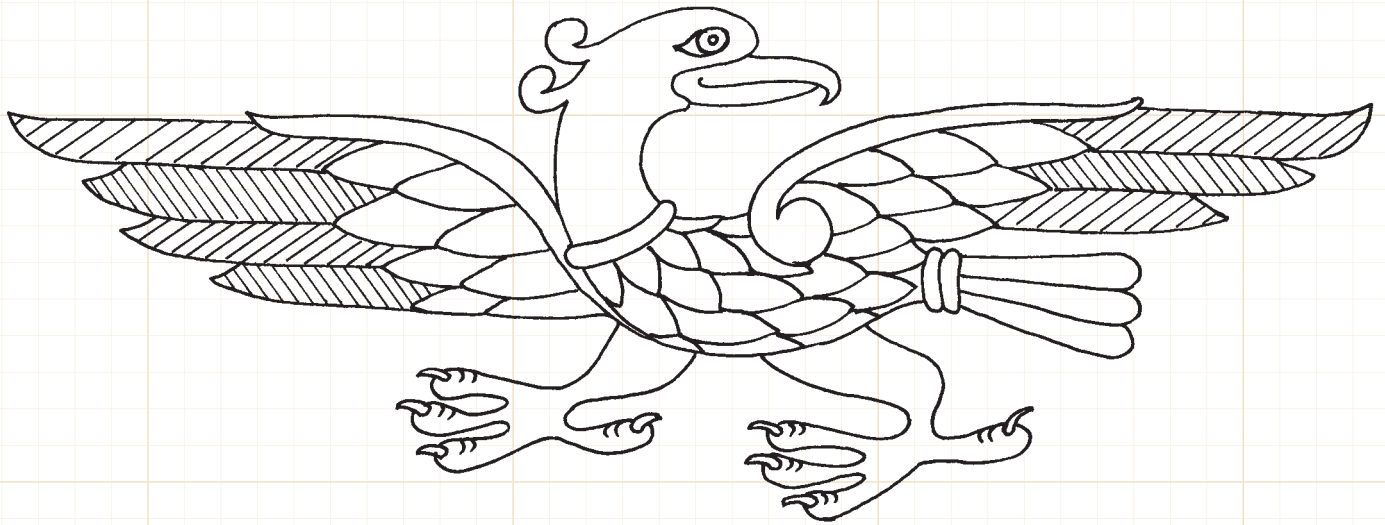
You will need...

Materials:

- Photocopy of template, enlarged to size required
- Repositionable spray adhesive
- Clear wax or preferred finish
- Scrollsaw or fretsaw
- Chisels and gouges
- Rotary tool – optional
- Craft knife or chip knife

Wood:

- Timber measuring 390 x 165 x 25mm – lime (*Tilia vulgaris*)



1



2

1 Begin by pasting the enlarged template onto the timber and cut around the outside using a scrollsaw or hand fretsaw. Take particular care around the head and feet and make sure the corner cuts are nice and sharp. Transfer the lines of the design onto the timber, but don't transfer all the chest feather details at this stage, as they would disappear during the initial shaping

2 Begin roughing out the shape of the eagle, reducing the depth of the front leg by about half and the back leg by about a third. Reduce the depth of the left-hand wing by about a third, working around the neck-ring. To save time I reduced most of the bulk using a structured tungsten carbide bit in my Dremel, but it could also be carved with chisels and gouges



3

"Reduce the two head feathers at the same time by about 6mm"

3 To allow the neck-ring to sit proud, reduce either side by 2mm and then round over the sides of the neck and head. Reduce the two head feathers at the same time by about 6mm. Reduce the beak by about 6mm as you round off the front of the head

➔ **4** Round over the edges of the chest, back and body down towards the legs. Round the legs and taper in the ankles. Take about 2-3mm off the depth of the whole right-hand wing, below the topmost feather and large curl. Keeping the overall depth uniform, round over the top and bottom edges of the neck-ring and curve it around the neck. Once all this basic shaping has been achieved, add the finer details. First step down the wing feathers from the top row, nearest the body, to the wing tip. To achieve this, pencil in the lines for the top row of feathers, then score around them with a sharp chip knife or craft knife. Create the step-down effect by reducing all the material behind the lines to a depth of 2mm, working in the direction of the wing tip. Once the first row of feathers is complete, mark out the next row, repeating the process and stepping down each time by about 2mm



5 Work the long lateral feathers in a similar way, stepping them down from top to bottom lengthwise. When all the long feathers have been stepped down you will notice that the previously carved feathers have been left with irregular depths and these can now be sloped down towards the bottom of the wing to regain uniform depth. Round over the top feather that runs the length of the wing, reducing the tip as necessary to give an even depth. Smooth the chest of the eagle and taper the body where it meets the ring of tail feathers by about 5mm. Round it over into the back at the same time



"Make sure that the original shape of the body is maintained...."

6 Draw in the feathers on the chest and then score along the lines. Working from the neck end towards the tail, define each feather by lowering the adjacent feather where it meets, but keep the tip of the next feather at its original height. Make sure that the original shape of the body is maintained while these feathers are being carved



7 Round over the edges of the large curl at the front of the right wing, to make it into a dome shape





8 Round the two feathers at the back of the head, making the terminal into a ball shape as shown. Reduce the depth of the tail feathers, behind the two rings, by about 5mm as for the body, and then round over the sides



9 Mark the line in the middle of the ring, notch a 'V' along this line and round over the sides of the rings. Also shape the rings around the body, keeping the depth uniform. Mark in the two lines along the length of the tail feathers and notch a 'V' into them, widening the 'V' towards the tip of the feathers. Round over the side edges of each feather as before

10 Round over the sides of the legs and toes, but leave the claws as high as possible to allow for shaping. Make each claw appear to grow out of its cuticle, by notching into the base of the claw to create a crease

11 Taper the tip of the claw downwards and round along its length. Next, make two creases behind each cuticle by marking out with a curved gouge and then undercutting behind the curve



Subject matter

The Book of Durrow is a medieval illuminated manuscript gospel book in the Insular art style. It is thought to have been created between 650 and 700. Today it is in the library at Trinity College, Dublin. It is the oldest extant complete illuminated Insular gospel book and predates The Book of Kells by over a century.

The Book of Durrow is unusual in that it does not use the traditional scheme for assigning the symbols to the Evangelists. Each Gospel begins with an Evangelist's symbol – a man for Matthew, an eagle for Mark, rather than the lion traditionally used, a calf for Luke and a lion for John, rather than the eagle traditionally used.

The illustrations and ornamentation of The Book of Kells surpass that of other Insular Gospel books in extravagance and complexity. The decoration combines traditional Christian iconography with the ornate swirling motifs typical of Insular art

PROJECT

Eagle wall plaque

➔ **12** To finish the head, reduce the lower half of the beak by scoring along the mid-line and paring away about 2mm. Round over the top and lower edges of the beak

13 Undercut the point where the forehead and cheek meet the beak to give greater definition

14 Pencil in the eye, then use a gouge with the same sweep of curve to mark it out, keeping the tool at right angles to the head. Shape the eye by chamfering into the marked line with a sharp knife, leaving the centre of the eye dome-shaped. Mark the small circle in the centre of the eye with the tip of a knife. The diagonal lines along the wing feathers are made by cutting down at right angles with a straight chisel, or by using a V-tool to mark along the line. If necessary, sand lightly and then apply the finish of your choice. I used a clear wax polish and then, to give the appearance of age, I went over it with a dark wax polish. I wiped this off before it dried, so that it stayed in the lines and creases, then applied a further coat of clear wax polish. To allow the eagle to be hung on a wall, drill a 2mm hole in the back, slightly offcentre to counterbalance the difference in size and shape of the wings. This can then be hooked over a small nail tapped into the wall

15 The completed wall plaque should look something like this ▶

Details

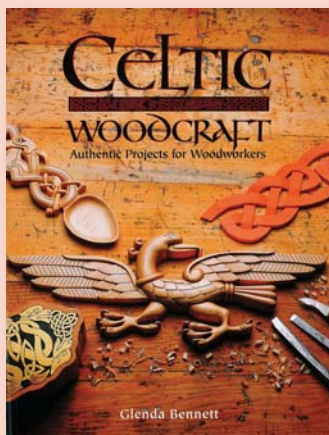
This extract was taken from Celtic Woodcraft: Authentic Projects for Woodworkers, by Glenda Bennet

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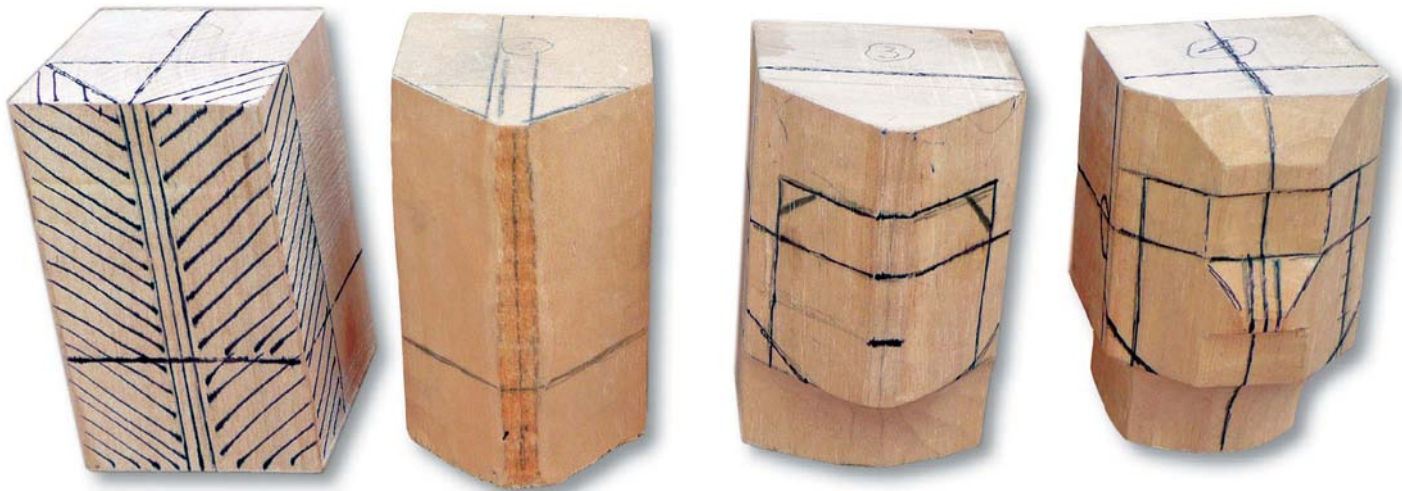


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Technical know-how: Form and detail

Peter Benson looks at carving form and detail



One of the biggest problems facing any tutor of sculpture, whether in clay, stone or wood, is that of the student's desire to apply detail to the piece before the actual form has been achieved. By this, I mean that carving eyes, nose and mouth will not make a realistic face if the piece isn't actually face shaped. Nor will the addition of fingers to a hand make it right if the hand shape isn't accurate to begin with.

This principle applies to whatever we are trying to carve. The differences between many of the individual members of various groups of animals are often very slight. Essentially, horses, cows, deer, etc. are basically the same structure yet look very different. Members of the dog or cat families are similarly very much alike in anatomy, but look very different in real life. We don't need to re-learn each one every time we do a new carving.

Studying anatomy

We should study, first of all, basic human anatomy so that we have a clear understanding of the human structure. We can look to find the similarities and differences for each new animal or figure we want to carve. You will be very surprised how little these are. What is most important when carving animals is that you determine where the various joints are. You will find that the movement in these joints is the same as those in the human body as a rule.

Once you have decided on your subject, find a decent photograph and list all the important dimensions in 'head

lengths'. Then look at as many pictures and films or videos of the subject so you can get the essence of the animal – how it moves, sits, stands, runs, walks, etc. Is it a fast or slow mover? How does it eat? Is it a predator or prey animal? These have very different characteristics.

Next, you need to imagine its shape as a silhouette, with no obvious detail at all. You may prefer to imagine it wrapped in cling-film or similar to an Egyptian mummy, wrapped in bandages. Whichever works for you is fine, but what you are actually doing is seeing the subject simply as a shape with no detail or features. It is this shape that you need to get right, before you even think about adding any detail to it. Look at silhouettes – they are only black shapes, but you can get a lot of information from these shapes.

I am sure many of you will have seen the rough outs that are very common in the United States and are becoming more readily available in Europe. These can range from being very rough indeed with a considerable amount of work needed to get any sort of decent carving as a result, to being extremely finely done and therefore needing virtually just cleaning up. Whether you like these or not is a matter of personal preference – they certainly save a lot of time and don't require anything like the amount of knowledge of the subject to complete the carving. Here, though, is where I have problems with these: the carver doesn't go through the 'body language' stage and as a result has little understanding of the actual structure of

the subject. Rough outs are fine for the professional who wants a quick result time after time, but I am not sure about the rest of us. Each to his own.

Roughing out

The photos here show a rough out that I received from Dave Stetson, a friend of mine in the USA. I think you will agree that the body language is very evident without any detail at all. The tilt and turn of the body are already there, as well as the angle and direction of view of the head. This is the sort of thing I feel we should be aiming at before we attempt any sort of detailed refining. I am not saying that we should carve from rough outs, but that the simplicity of form shown is something we should aim for before trying to include more detail.

Exactly the same principle applies to relief carving – many carvers draw all the detail of their proposed carving onto the wood and then carefully and tentatively cut away as much as they can without losing the lines they have drawn. This will inevitably result in a carving with very little depth produced very slowly and probably under a great deal of stress and will involve much re-carving.

Rather than drawing the pattern on the wood, I recommend that it is drawn on a piece of clear acetate sheet and only enough of the outline drawn on the wood so that the background can be removed. Once this background is gone any prominent parts of the picture can be drawn by laying the acetate over the block and then drawing any features underneath. In effect, this means that when you carve this, you are carving

from the back coming forward. The background depth has established how deep the carving is going to be and you know exactly how much wood you have to play with. All your angles and perspective should be included at this stage, but the finer detail should only be added when you are satisfied that everything is as you want it. With relief carving there will inevitably be minor adjustments necessary throughout the

carving process and detail added too soon will only have to be removed and carved again during this process. It is useful with any relief carving to try and divide your picture into a series of box shapes that will give you an idea of the various angles and planes involved. In the photos of the gorilla head on page 58, you can see the outline taken from the preliminary sketch of the head transferred to the wood and the basic

box shapes within which the head fits drawn onto it. Once the background has been removed, you need to cut the angles created by the box or boxes; this will make the final shaping so much easier. The fourth photo shows the angles formed prior to adding any detailed shaping and the first photo shows the finished piece.

If you have an irrepressible need to have detail earlier, add it with your



The steps for carving a face

PHOTOGRAPHS BY PETER BENSON



A rough out from Dave Stetson

pencil – you can always rub this out if you wish to change.

Back to carving animals – one of the most useful pictures you can get is the basic skeleton. This will give you all the proportions you need and you can add the 'flesh' yourself. Forget the eyes, mouth, and nose, etc. on any mammal carving as once the head shape is correct, these will fit in very easily.

Carving humans

This is especially relevant with human carvings. Many carvers have this need to add all these details to faces while they are still square and flat. Unless the angles and curves are right on a human face, you have absolutely no chance of getting any of the facial detail correct and you will never get away from carving flat faces. In fact, if these are accurate you may even not need to add all the detail you feel you need. The average face will go back at a maximum of 45° each side of the nose making a total angle of 90°. One of the final two face stages shown above is with a total angle of 90° and the other is 75° – neither looks unnatural in my view. In case you are worried, the one on the far right is carved at 75°. The most important thing is to get a definite angle to the face before adding any features. You might find the exercise of following the stages shown quite therapeutic and helpful if you have problems with heads and faces.

Why should eyes be the problem that they are to the carver? Most of us carve faces that are not more than a couple of inches or so in height, so how much eye

detail do we need to see? If you look at someone more than a few feet away you will only see a shadowy line and it is more often the position of the head and body that will give an indication of the direction in which the subject is looking. Too much fine detail in small carvings can destroy the piece unless the tools, material and skill of the carver are up to miniature carvings and the fineness they require. We don't all want to carve in boxwood (*Cornus florida*), fruitwoods or ivory all the time.

I think one of the problems most of us have is that we want to carve a different subject each carving we do. Unfortunately, for any carving to be successful a great deal of work and research is necessary to get everything correct. As I mentioned earlier, you really need to spend weeks studying the anatomy, the way the subject stands and moves, what sort of life it leads, in order to understand what you are trying to carve. All these things affect its build, the shape of its body and legs, the way its eyes are placed and so on. If you are going to put in all this effort, it makes sense to do more than one carving of that subject before moving to something else and starting all over again.

So, I leave you with one small thought. You cannot possibly carve something that you don't know and expect it to be successful. You may copy someone else's piece but, if you haven't gathered all the necessary information about it you will only produce a very poor substitute and are relying on the knowledge and accuracy of the original artist. My belief is that it doesn't take a great deal of skill to push a chisel or gouge through a piece of wood – it is knowing what wood to cut away and what to leave that creates the problems. Also, if you can write your name, then you can draw. The limiting factor in both of these is how much you actually know about your subject. It is the ability to see what we are looking at that we have to learn and that is not easy.

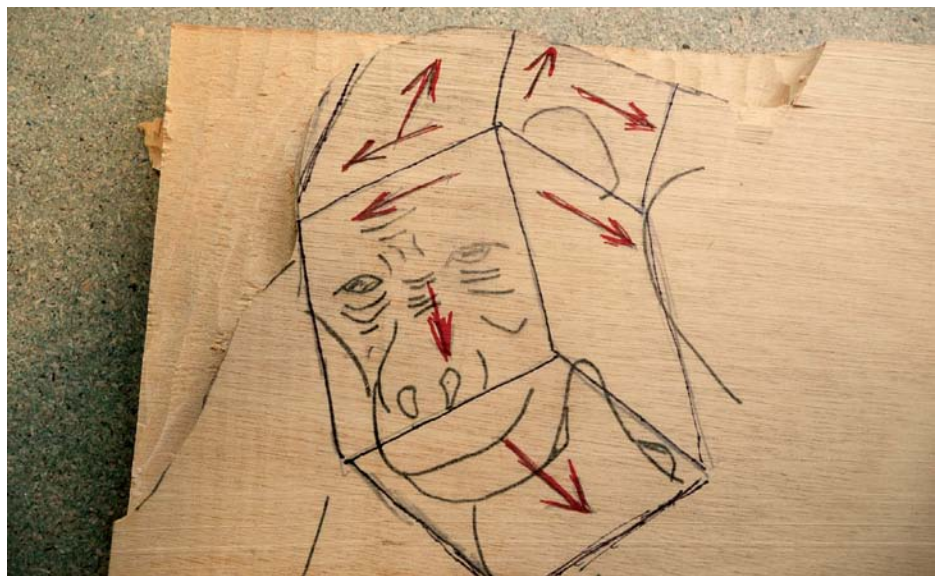
You might try some simple exercises. Try explaining the following as if you are talking to someone who is blind:

1. Tell them what a robin looks like in detail without using the word red so that it can't be any other bird.
2. Without using the words water or fish, explain the difference between an otter and a stoat, ferret or marten.
3. Explain the difference between the eyes of a carnivore and a herbivore – prey and predator – and explain why they are different.

All of these require you to look at things in a very different way as much more information is needed than we normally gather when we look at something.



Shallow relief carving of a Gorilla head



Boxes drawn on the head to show the angles that should be borne in mind when carving



Cutting these angles

It is this information that we need to produce a successful carving.

Once you start to see things in this way it will change your life. ▶



Angles in place prior to rounding off and adding detail

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Ronnie Sexton *in profile*

We take a look at the remarkable carvings in Ronnie Sexton's WoodHenge exhibition

Originally from County Cork in Ireland, Veronica Sexton – known as Ronnie – moved to England in 1988 in order to study at the London College of Furniture. She then earned a Higher Diploma and Graduateship in woodcarving and gilding at the City & Guilds of London Art School. She won the William Wheeler prize for outstanding work and was part of a select group of artisans chosen to work on the restoration of Windsor Castle, which had been damaged by fire. Since then she has worked on a number of commissions in Ireland, England, USA, Malaysia and Australia. She now lives in Australia.

Background

Ronnie did not learn woodworking as a child, during what she describes as a very normal Irish upbringing. She attended a Convent school which mixed academic subjects with instruction on how to be a 'good housewife' by learning cooking and sewing. Ronnie selected art as one of her honours subjects, even though it wasn't taken seriously at the school. "There were only three of us in the class, which was taught by a nun in her 70s with obvious signs of failing mental capabilities. We were left totally to our own devices. Amazingly, I did pass with a good grade."

As she enjoyed making clothes for herself and her sisters, Ronnie originally wanted to become a fashion designer. However, this was not to be. "I applied to two art schools to further my studies in fashion design. To my shock, I wasn't accepted. Following that I went to London and went on a major 'sulk' for three years. Like any 18 year old, I thought it could only mean one thing – that the universe was conspiring against me! Over that time I entered many low paid, dead end jobs and always felt a great loss within me – a void. Like there was something missing, a space that needed to be filled," she explains.

She returned to Ireland and enrolled on an art foundation class that covered everything: writing, jewellery, metal work, drawing, painting and wood. This was an instant success: "The very first few minutes working with wood I fell in love, it was the beginning of my 'love



PHOTOGRAPHS BY RONNIE SEXTON

Ronnie and her 'Celtic Cross' carving, which stands at over 3m tall

➔ affair' with it, every part of me knew that I would be a carver." After this, Ronnie returned to London to take a short basic woodworking course, she then applied to The City & Guilds Art School, the only place in the UK that taught traditional woodcarving. It was a three-year course but Ronnie was accepted straight onto the second year as she was seen as a gifted student. On completing the course, she won the William Wheeler prize and was then selected to work on the restoration of Windsor Castle.

Moving on

Although she had enjoyed her time in England working at Windsor and in restoration workshops, Ronnie wanted to move on. She went first to America, where she worked as a master carver, before being offered an all expenses paid job working on a private mansion in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. From there she went to India, where she met the head priestess of the Hindu temple in Belfast. It was agreed that she would go to Belfast to design and carve the altar, which was a two-year project. "The altar for the Hindu temple was the turning point of my career. Up to this point, I was carving for very rich people and my work was put behind closed doors. On arriving in India I started listening to my heart and I made a decision to no longer only carve for rich people. On my third day there I was standing in front of the most amazing carved altar and Gopi, the priestess I was introduced to, was standing beside me. I said to her 'do you want me to carve you an altar?'. She looked wide eyed at me and said, 'can you do that?' 'Yes', I replied. Tears filled in her eyes, she said they had been looking for a carver. So it was agreed then that I would carve them their dream altar. It was the turning point in my career that I would only ever again carve for the people, for public places, pieces that would be seen by rich and poor alike."

Ronnie got married and had her first child while working on the altar. Once it was complete, she moved to Victoria, Australia.

Sculpture

A chance encounter in Australia led to a change of direction in her work. "While driving around in the Dandenong Ranges where we live I discovered a guy, Ken, with these great big slabs of wood and we got chatting. I said I was a carver and told him about my work. A few days later he phoned me and said he would like to give me a gift of a slab. When I got off the phone I thought 'what a generous man'. The following day I went to his place to receive this generous gift. When I got there he went under his basement and pulled out a very ugly piece of wood, about 1.5m. I just looked at him thinking this must be a joke, but

he didn't laugh. As I drove off I thought this man must be crazy. If it hadn't been given as a gift I would have cut it up as firewood, but I knew he would ask about it so after a few days I cleaned it up and removed the rotten part and dragged it inside. Over the next few weeks looking at it while sitting having a coffee, I slowly saw something among the knots and ugliness. I started to draw lines, then I started carving, and slowly it started to reveal itself, it was an angel." 'The Faceless Angel' was Ronnie's first sculpture and marked her turning point from traditional carving into sculpture. She quickly got on the phone to Ken and told him she wanted the biggest slab he had. This was eventually used for the first of the WoodHenge sculptures.

New style of carving

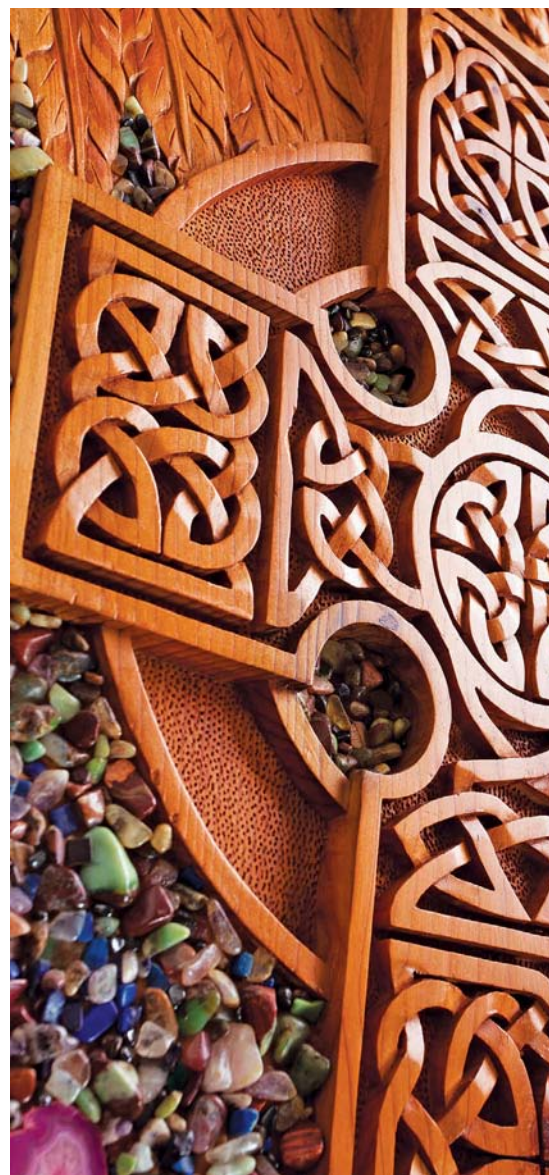
Ronnie allowed her strict European classical training in Gothic, Baroque and Rococo woodcarving to evolve into a more relaxed and free-flowing style that forms the basis of her unique contemporary sculpture practice and the nine sculptures of the WoodHenge collection. She now predominantly works with salvaged timber from the Dandenong Ranges. This timber comes from trees that have blown down or that have died a natural death. "In traditional, classical carving we always worked out the design on paper then sourced the wood. The wood always had to be 'perfect', devoid of knots or imperfections. Now, in sculpture I work completely differently. I embrace imperfections and I draw directly onto the wood. My philosophy now is working with the wood rather than making it work for me, that is why I work with knots, cracks and imperfections and incorporate them into my overall design, it's working with Mother Nature."

Ronnie discovered that she could use crystals and rocks to disguise some of these imperfections, which resulted in them enhancing the piece by adding a new and vibrant energy to her work. Working in this way with wood is what she believes makes carving "inspiring and fun."

Unlike traditional carving where Ronnie was restricted to mostly copy carving traditional classical styles, she goes on to explain: "In sculpture I am free to channel from the source of my creativity and in doing so, capture this essence in my work. It is this essence that touches and resonates with the viewer. I believe this is the true job of an artist and my job as a carver."

WoodHenge

Ronnie's WoodHenge exhibition is comprised of nine carvings. Each sculpture carries intricate and detailed symbolism of many cultures, continents and historical backgrounds from around the world. As a collection, they tell a full



story from prehistory to the present day. They range in measurement from 3m to 4m and are adorned with hundreds of crystals, stones, rocks, glass, painted fabric and gilding. The sculptures are not for sale as Ronnie prefers that the collection stays together and travels as an exhibition. She says these nine sculptures are her favourite pieces as they represent such a personal journey for her.

'Celtic Cross'

This was the first of the sculptures that Ronnie made, although at the time she did not plan to create a series. "When it came to carving the 'Celtic Cross' I returned to my ancient culture," she says. The Cross is carved in cedar (*Cedrus spp.*) and embellished with crystals. This piece features a Christian cross with a circle symbolising the Sun God. The interlacing knot work was used by the Celts as a form of meditation. Other traditional Celtic details include the human figure with an out-of-proportion head and the animal with a human head.



'Human Butterfly'

This carving was made from cedar, rocks, acrylic paint and gold and silver gilding. It features a carved dove, symbolic of peace and the Holy Spirit; a painted butterfly, representing metamorphosis; and a dragon, which represents ley lines.



LEFT: Detail view of 'Celtic Cross'

RIGHT: 'Human Butterfly', 3.7 x 0.7m cedar wood, rocks, acrylic paint and gold and silver leaf gilding

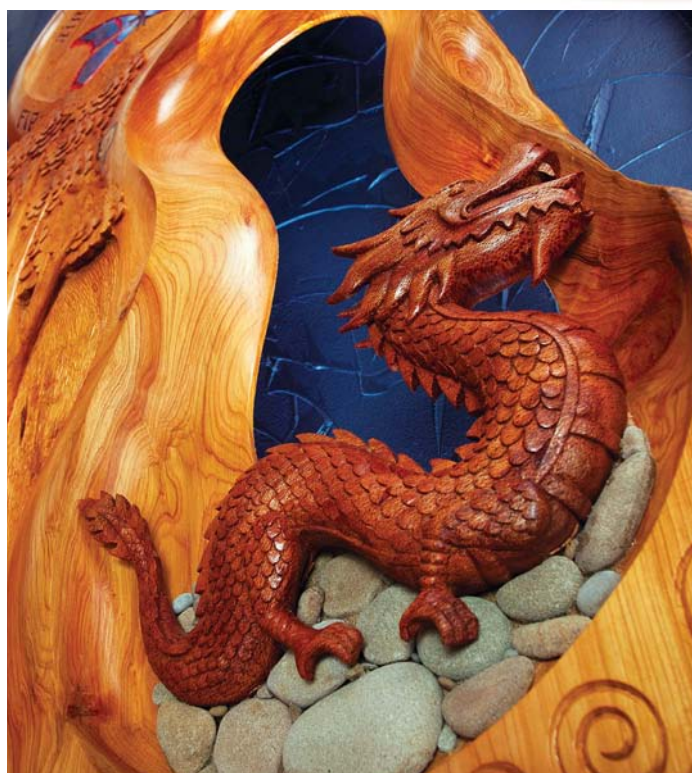
BELOW: Dragon detail on 'Human Butterfly'

'Lady of Light'

This angel figure was carved from cypress (*Taxodium distichum*) wood and decorated with crystals. The lower part of the sculpture features the Celtic symbol 'triquetra', which here signifies the three lunar or solar phases.



Detail photos of 'Lady of Light'



FEATURE

Ronnie Sexton

'Male and Female'

This cedar wood sculpture represents the union of male and female. It has an organic, flowing form and is adorned with rocks and leaves set in resin.



'Mother Earth'

Ronnie carved this sculpture as a reminder of the never-ending love Mother Earth has for us. It is made from cedar wood, rocks and leaves set in resin.



'Mother and Child'

With this piece, Ronnie set out to create a universal image of a mother and child. The mother figure sits on top of a labyrinth, which is a metaphor for the soul. The sculpture is made from cedar wood, rocks and painted silk.

'Return to the Source'

This piece was made in honour of Aboriginal peoples. The image of the mother and child flows into Celtic knot work, combining Ronnie's Irish heritage with her interest in Australian Aboriginal culture. The sculpture is made from cedar wood and glass.



Tree of Life

This piece symbolises the connecting of all forms of creation from the heavens to the earth and is a reminder to us to 'reconnect with nature'. The sculpture is made from cedar wood, rocks and leaves set in resin.



'The Rising Goddess'

This sculpture represents the rising of the divine feminine force. It is made from cedar wood, crystals and fabric.

Contact

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Five loaves and two fish

John Vardon explains how to make this relief carving to showcase your skills

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JOHN VARDON



This is another simple relief carving suitable for the beginner and is on a religious theme. If you have followed the previous articles in this series, this is one you could display at your local church or fête to show off the skills you have attained. The carving should take about two days to make. The gouges referenced in the following steps are those I used but any suitable gouges will do. Ensure your gouges are sharp not only at the start but also throughout the carving. This is especially the case when working with woods like teak (*Tectona grandis*) or afrormosia (*Pericopsis elata*), which can blunt your

tools as they may contain silica. Also, teak and afrormosia can be irritants and therefore care should be taken, especially when sanding. I've used a variety of wood types throughout this series so that the beginner carver can experience the differing characteristics of woods.

The design could be modified to show the loaves in a different arrangement or the cross could be made longer, in which case a larger piece of wood would be required. Read through the whole article before you start carving so that you have an understanding of the various steps.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

John has been carving for the last 19 years. He is an enthusiastic amateur and likes to carve mainly in relief. John is a member of the Solent Guild of Woodcarvers and Sculptors and is currently its Secretary. John also demonstrates once a month, together with other carvers, at the Weald & Downland Open Air Museum near Chichester. Together with Jess Jay they run two carving courses at the Museum.



Things you will need...

Tools:

No.11, 6mm straight gouge

No.2, 25mm straight gouge

No.9, 12mm straight gouge

No.11, 2mm straight gouge

No.5, 6mm straight gouge

No.1, 12mm chisel

Mallet

G-clamp – optional

Range of abrasives

Sealer and beeswax

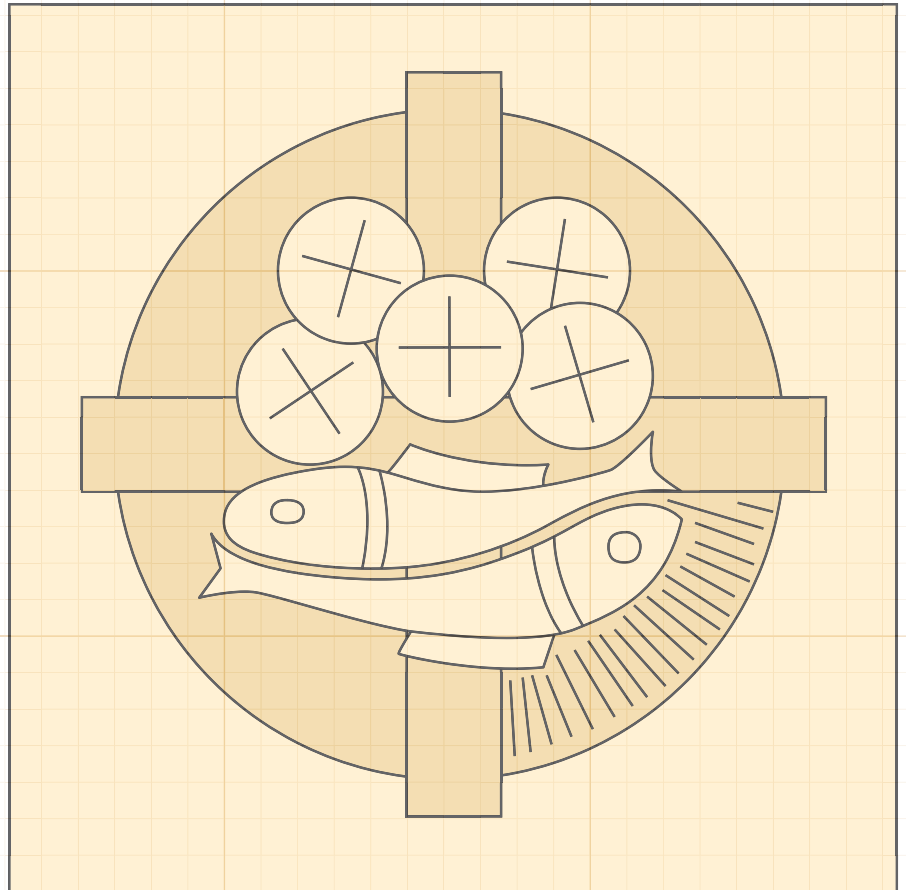
Wood:

Afrormosia (*Pericopsis elata*),

or any hardwood, e.g. lime

(*Tilia vulgaris*), measuring

153mm square × 25mm deep



1 Take a suitable piece of hardwood measuring 153mm square × 25mm thick. The symmetrical cross is about 4mm above the background and the loaves and fish a further 4mm above the cross, i.e. a total of 8mm above the background. Therefore the thickness of the block could be reduced to about 18mm if required. Also, the actual height and width of the block can vary to suit the wood available. Scale the design as required. Next, draw the design onto the wood. You do not have to put in every detail, e.g. the large circle – diameter 115mm – is shown but this is carved away in the early stages. This circle is the boundary of the fluted background – see step 11. You may also find it useful to mark on the cross where the circle meets it – see step 4. The loaves are shown as circles to indicate their position more than their shape. They are also shown overlapping or squashed together but you could separate them if preferred. Secure the carving in the vice with a block of sufficient size underneath; this will help to support it and will ensure the top surface is at least 10mm above the top of the vice





2 The first stage of actual carving is to remove the waste wood around the cross, leaves and fish. Begin by scribing a line around the sides 8mm from the top surface; this is the depth of the background. Using a No.11, 6mm gouge, carve a groove around the outline about 1mm outside the boundary. Do not stab the outline with a gouge and mallet

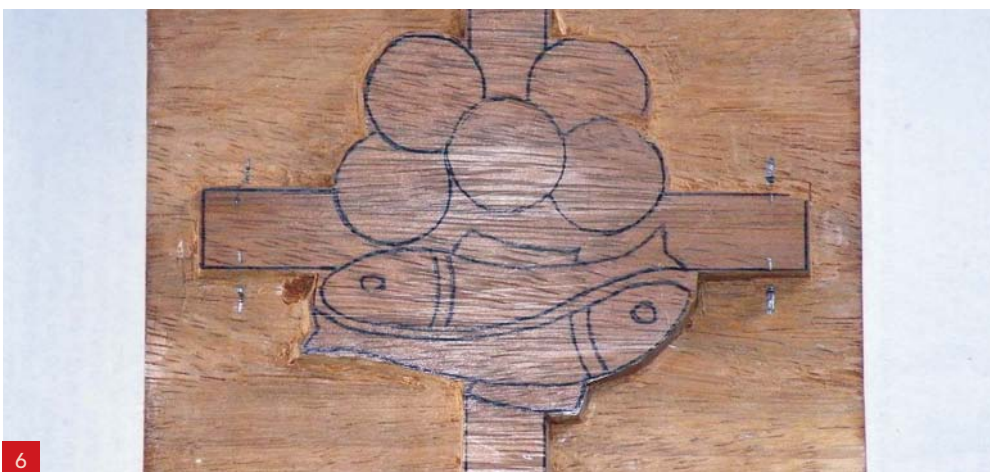


3 Using a No.9, 12mm or appropriate gouge with a mallet, remove the waste wood to the level of the background. Let the mallet do the work here. If you do not use a mallet, then there is the danger of the gouge slipping and removing some wood that you shouldn't! Carve away from the design, starting at the edge and working back towards the design outline. Don't take too large a chip at this stage, as the top of the gouge is below the wood surface and this may cause the wood to break out

"Carve away from the design, starting at the edge and working back towards the design outline..."



4 Finish off the background using a No.2, 25mm gouge to give an almost flat surface. Be careful at the ends of the cross as this is an area where unevenness could occur. Going across the grain with a shearing action will help. Use the depth gauge shown in the fruit panel article in issue 139 to ensure the correct and even depth. Note the scratch marks; these indicate that the required depth has not been achieved at this stage



5 Using the No. 9 or 11, 12mm gouge, make the sides around the leaves and fish approximately vertical. Similarly, use a No.1 chisel or No.2 gouge to pare down the sides of the cross. In both cases, try to stop the gouge just before the bottom, which will avoid you digging in. If you do dig in, then you may need to lower the background a little. Do not carry out any undercutting at this stage. Note: the location of the large circle has been indicated on the cross and background

6 At this stage, the carving should look like this

➔ **7** The next stage is to reduce the level of the cross by 4mm. Draw a line 4mm below the surface of the cross and, using the No.11, 6mm gouge, carve a groove around the outside of the loaves and fish that intersect with the cross. Then, using the No.2, 25mm gouge, reduce the level of the cross down to the 4mm line. Don't forget the area between the loaves and fish; you may need to use a No.11, 2mm or other small gouge for this. You should now have three levels – loaves and fish, cross and background



8 Now you can carve the loaves by marking the approximate centre of each loaf. Although the design shows the loaves being circular, this is only for guidance. Also, note that some of the loaves are squashed against adjacent ones. Using a No.5, 6mm gouge or similar, stab down between each loaf. Working from the edge back towards the centre use a No.2, 25mm gouge to 'round' over the loaves so they start to look like large flattish buns. Don't make them spherical or the same size and try to get the outer ones 'slightly under' the centre loaf, which can be achieved by undercutting

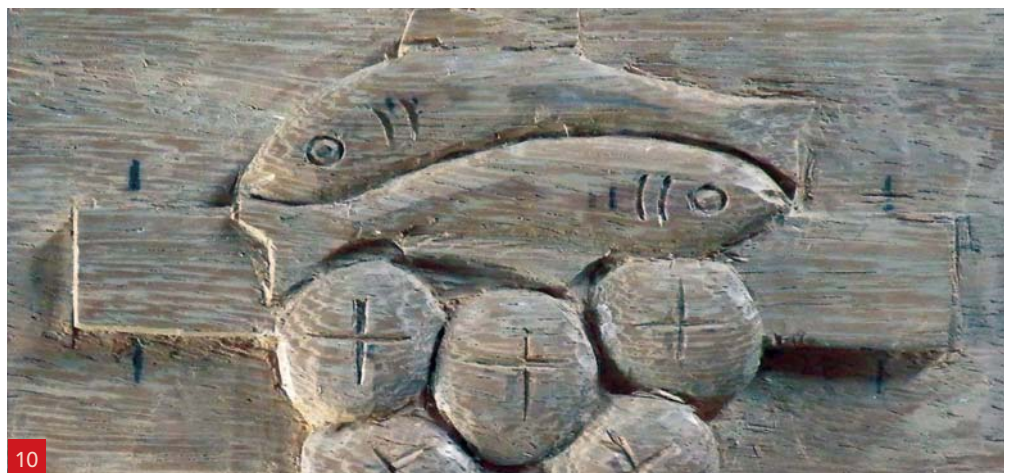


"Carving the fish is a similar process to the carving of the loaves"

9 Carving the fish is a similar process to the carving of the loaves. Using an appropriate gouge, stab down between the two fish and the fish and fins. Be careful with the latter as if you are too heavy-handed, then the fins could break off, especially with the grain running along the length of the fish. Lower the fins to about half depth. Use the No.2 gouge to shape the fish so they are slightly rounded. Reduce the level of the tails with a slight curve to about half depth. The eyes can simply be gouged out or stab around the eye with a No.5, 6mm gouge and round the eye over. Carve in the gills and mouth. Now undercut the two fish but be careful near the tail and round over



10 Put a cross on the loaves using a No.1, 12mm chisel and two cuts at about 30°. Don't be tempted to use a 'V' gouge as it will carve on one side OK but will be against the grain on the other





Top tips

1. If your carvings don't curl as you carve, then you may find that your gouges aren't sharp enough
2. Before you start a carving, think about where it is going to be placed. For example, if it is a relief carving and hung above eye level, then you must consider the parts of the carving, even the undercutting, that you see when looking up
3. Taking digital photos of your carving and homing in to parts often highlights areas that need further attention
4. If your carving, in particular relief, is too big for the vice, then glue a block on the back. Placing a sheet of newspaper between the block and the carving will make it easier to separate



11 To make the carving 'stand out', I suggest that you make the background between the circle and the loaves, fish and cross fluted. Draw the large circle back in; the marks on the cross and background will assist with the correct position. An old CD, although slightly larger in diameter, could be used with the pencil leaning in slightly. Using a No.11, 2mm gouge, carve small grooves from the circle towards the centre. You may need to refine the undercutting of the fish and loaves. Do not use a 'V' gouge to do the fluting as the tips would dig-in other parts of the carving

12 The carving should now be 'tidied up' as required. Making the background flat is quite difficult so take your time; using a No.1 chisel or No.2 gouge – with the corners ground off if possible to prevent digging-in – as a 'scraper' will help. Using a rule on the background will identify high and low spots, as will gently rubbing your fingers over the surface. Holding the carving at different angles, upside down, etc., will also help to identify problem areas. Leaving some of the items 'tooled-finished', e.g. the loaves, may be preferred. The carving should now be sanded, going through the various grades of abrasives

13 Finally, apply a sealer and wax, or other appropriate finish and the completed carving should look something like this ▶



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Continuing with this series, Chris Pye looks at achieving smooth, untextured, unfaceted surfaces



PHOTOGRAPHS BY CHRIS PYE

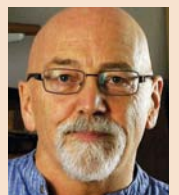
To achieve a smooth, untextured, unfaceted surface, you need to scrape, or for an even smoother finish, sand. Scraped or sanded finishes look and feel different from surfaces left from carving tools.

Most of my own work is left 'from the chisel' but I'm happy to scrape or sand where I really need fine surface smoothness. I'm often selective: sanding a beak or a snail shell, for instance, while leaving the rest of the work with a tooled finish. In this carving, I've sanded the top of the pelican's bill, which is hard and shiny, but not the feathers, which are soft and 'fluffable'.

That's an important point about sanding: a very smooth surface will bring out the figuring in wood – as woodturners well know, and they choose beautiful woods accordingly – but it does make the surface look hard. So the issues for us are: do we want to show off the grain or will that interfere with the light and shadows that make up a detailed carving? Does 'hard' work for the surface you have in mind?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Chris Pye is a member of the Master Carvers Association; a woodcarving instructor both in Hereford and the USA; the author of some seven woodcarving books and numerous magazine articles and co-founder with his wife, Carrie Camann, of the online instructional website: www.woodcarvingworkshops.tv. His work can be viewed at www.chrispye-woodcarving.com



Learn with Chris

You can see more of Chris practising various carving techniques at www.woodcarvingworkshops.tv

Chris' carved pelican features a sanded bill and unsanded feathers

➤ Scraping

It's not unusual to see a 'traditional' woodcarver use their gouge or chisel to scrape smooth a bit of wood, usually in a recess. Effective though this may be, showing that all you really need is a keen edge, it's also a good way to blunt it! An alternative, and for larger areas, is to work the surface with a dedicated woodcarver's scraper.

The woodcarver's scraper is simply a thickish blade with a profiled, sharp edge. It differs from the familiar 'cabinet' scraper, which is made from thin, wide, flexible metal, 'ticketed' with a wire edge. A carver's scraper can be any width or any profile. Here are a few, with a handled one made from an old file.

Making a scraper is straightforward. You need a hardened metal bar such as an expendable tool, knife blade or, as here, an old industrial 25mm hacksaw blade. Keep the metal cool as you shape your end profile on a grinder. Then, using the fine wheel, create a 20-30° bevel on one side right up to the cutting edge. Remove any wire edge by rubbing the reverse side of the scraper flat on your fine bench stone.

You can use the scraper like this, straight from the grinder; or, for a keener edge, sharpen further like a carving tool. Always keep one side flat, without a bevel.

Push the scraper away from you with your thumb(s) or pull towards with your finger(s). Along the grain works best. Angle the blade with its flat face about 20-30° to the wood. You should generate an actual shaving – if not, the scraper isn't sharp enough.

I've left many 'smooth' carvings with the surface simply scraped. Different woods respond differently so you might need to experiment with the bevel angle of your scraper or angle of attack.

Top tips

1. It's a surface and, as such, tells the viewer a lot about the subject independent of the subject matter itself. Sanding often seems to be a sort of quick fix, but there are so many choices open to you that are worth taking the time to explore. Make sanding one option that you choose from many surface possibilities
2. Sanding is a skill, which you can learn, practice and become very good at



A selection of carving scrapers



Sharpening a scraper



Sharpening a scraper as you would a carving tool gives a keener edge

Sanding

It's a mistake to think sanding to a finish is an easy option. It isn't, not if it's done well; it takes time and care. Carvings that are totally sanded tend to look similar and can look like a boiled sweet that's been sucked, so do take care to preserve your lines and edges.

Sandpaper

We've all seen 'sandpaper': sheets of paper or cloth to which different sizes of abrasive 'grits' are glued; used to impart a smooth finish to a surface.

Common abrasives are aluminium oxide, silicon carbide and garnet. To me there doesn't seem to be much difference between the first two but both are more aggressive – faster cutting – than garnet paper. Not all woods respond to sandpaper the same way. For example, lime (*Tilia vulgaris*) or basswood (*Tilia americana*), great carving woods, often don't sand to a finish as well as harder, denser woods, such as maple (*Acer campestre*) or sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*).

Sandpapers are given a grit number: the smaller the number, the bigger the grit particles and thus the coarser the sandpaper: the bigger the 'teeth'! So 60 grit is very coarse, cutting quickly and deeply into the wood surface. From here you get a spectrum of finer grits: 100, 120, 150, 180 and 220. I usually stop at 240 grit, very fine, but you can run beyond to 400 grit if you need it.

Sanding sticks, with points and made on a need-to-use basis, get into awkward corners and recesses. Chamfer the reverse side. Narrow cloth strip paper is also very useful.

'Rhossilli Girl' by Carrie Camann is fully sanded, except for the hair. The combination makes a terrific sculpture. The smoother the surface, the more the figure in the wood stands out.

On the other hand, the smoother the surface, the harder it looks. So be selective.

10 rules for sanding

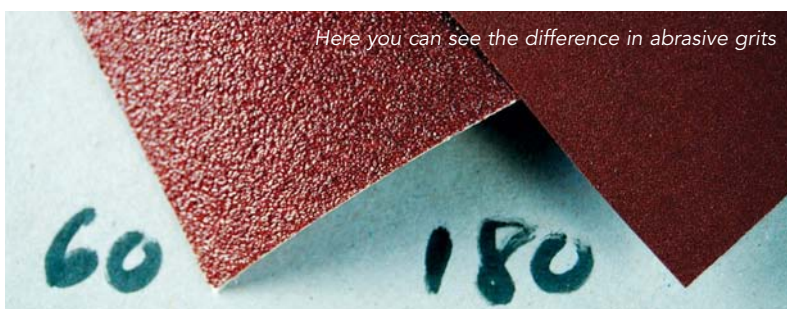
1. Become familiar with an established manufacturer and a particular product. What constitutes a 'grit' size varies between manufacturers. Cheap sandpaper will have less uniformity in grit size and will wear out more quickly – so don't buy it!
2. Smooth the surface as best you can first. Sanding is dusty and laborious. First level with carving tools and finish with a fine rasp or riffler. Better still, scrape before turning to the sandpaper.
3. Start with coarse grit sandpaper – not necessarily your coarsest. Choose whatever grit will consolidate the surface most efficiently. Follow this with a finer grit – higher number – then finer again and so on until the surface is as smooth as you want.
4. Sand out the previous grits before moving on. This is very important and where many come to grief. Examine the surface with cross light and remove scratches from the previous grit completely before moving on to the next.
5. Vacuum between grits. Always clean the grit from the surface entirely before moving on to the next, finer one.
6. Don't breathe in this sharp, abrasive dust. Brushing and blowing just spreads it around, so vacuuming is best. Wear a face mask too and don't wipe your eyes with dusty fingers.
7. Finish off each grit by sanding along the grain. Working across the grain tears the wood fibres so scratches are much more obvious.
8. Worn out, coarse paper is not a substitute for a finer grit. Throw worn sandpaper out!
9. Damp the wood surface after the final grit. Let the wood dry thoroughly. Fibres you compressed by sanding will be raised and you can have at them again. You may need to repeat.
10. Be methodical and assiduous. Oil and stains will bring out tears and rough patches in the surface, including scratches left from sandpaper. ▀



Sanding sticks are useful for getting into awkward corners and recesses



'Rhossilli Girl' by Carrie Camann, is fully sanded, except for the hair



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Jet DC-2300 extractor

The Jet DC-2300 is a twin bag chip and coarse dust extractor, which is suitable for many machines in the workshop.

It can be connected to up to three smaller machines via its three 100mm connectors. The manufacturer recommends connecting it to a simple 125mm metal duct system.

An alloy bodied motor drives a high efficiency impellor fan; the air flowing into the bags is via metal tubes, again creating efficient airflow. Plastic waste sacks are

used, which are easy to replace and held in place with quick-release metal straps. Large polyester air filters are fitted; these can be replaced with two cartridge filters which upgrade the filtration capability of the machine to be able to handle sanding machines.

The base has castors for easy mobility around the workshop. It is fitted with a 13A plug, but in some cases it may need a 16A supply. Plastic 785 x 1,200mm waste sacks are available in packs of 10.



£419.95

Please note that the hose is not supplied. This machine has a Performance Rating 1.

Contact: BriMarc Tools & Machinery
Tel: 03332 406 967
Web: www.brimarc.com

Mystisa portable micromotor

Available from Treeline USA, this product allows you to carve anywhere. The battery powered micromotor has variable speed from 3,000-30,000rpm and is incredibly quiet and smooth. The Mystisa Li-ion battery takes between 2-3 hours to charge but you get between 5-7 hours of carving time out of a single charge. The Mystisa can also be used while the battery pack is charging. The Mystisa handpiece has plenty of torque to rough out a project and can spin fast enough to carry out fine detail. The handpiece comes with a 1/8in collet and can be used with the 3/32in and 1/16in reducers – sold separately. The kit includes the Mystisa quick-release handpiece, pocket control box, A/C charger, leather pouch with belt clip, handpiece stand and carry bag.



Approx. £272

Please note that all products from USA to UK are subject to shipping & taxes

Contact: Treeline USA
Tel: 0800 598 2743
Web: www.treelineusa.com

Stubai No.5102 20-piece woodcarving set



£283

Handmade in the midst of the Alps, these tools from Stubai are of the highest quality available on the market. All of the irons are '52' models and vary in form and cutting width. The handles attached to them vary in length, depending on the width of the cutting edge. Tools in the set include a straight chisel, various sizes of straight flat gouge and straight hollow gouges, plus a spoon chisel.

Contact: Stubai
Tel: +43 5225 6960 0
Web: www.stubai.com

Chris Pye letter carving set

Seven new tools have been introduced within the Chris Pye letter carving range, which are hand forged using the traditional method by Auriou Toolworks in France. The new tools include: the 14mm double bevel fishtail chisel, the 11mm straight gouge series 5, the 20mm allongee gouge series 5 and the 10mm fishtail gouge series 4. These are added to the previous tools in the set, which now make a total of 14 tools within this collection. The tools can be

purchased individually or you can purchase the entire set. The allongee chisels feature a slim blade section and octagonal handles with brass ferrules. This is the start of a range of lettering tools that Auriou will be making for Chris. It may also be useful to purchase Chris' book on letter carving tools as well as his DVD.

Contact: Classic Hand Tools
Tel: 01473 784 983
Web: www.classichandtools.com

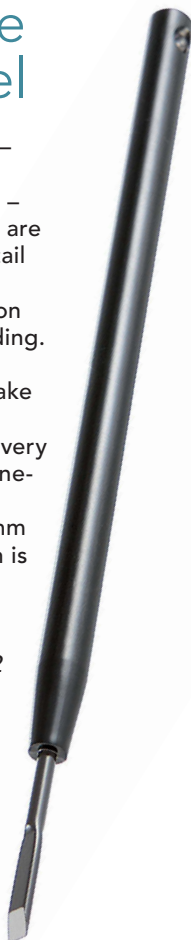


Nano One mini-chisel

These small chisels – of which there are four options available – made from SK-5 steel are primarily used for detail work in relief carving as well as in restoration work and model-building. The long, lightweight aluminium handles make them easy to guide. These chisels feature very hard – 55-60 HRC – fine-ground head shapes. The blade width is 3mm and the overall length is 140mm.

Contact: Dictum
Tel: +49 991 9109 902
Web: www.mehr-als-werkzeug.de

£11 each

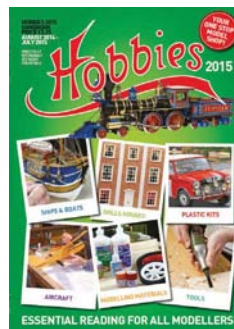


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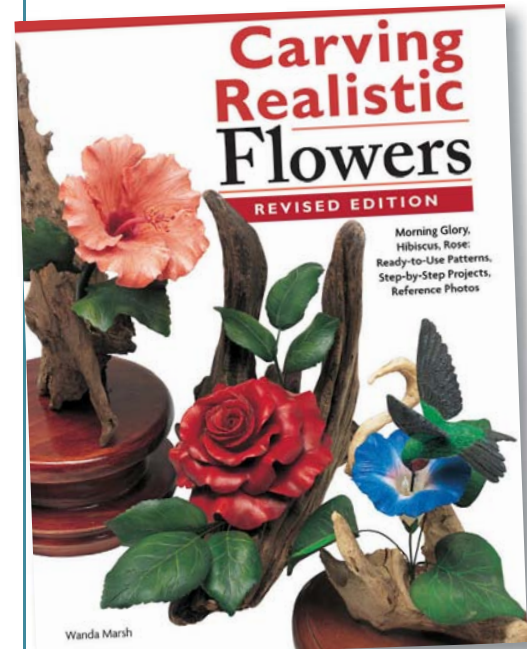


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BOOK REVIEW

Carving Realistic Flowers – Revised Edition

by Wanda Marsh



Carving Realistic Flowers – Revised Edition is by award-winning flower carver, Wanda Marsh. Wanda not only aims to teach you how to carve flowers, but also how to look at them differently and see the curves in the leaves and petals. The guide consists of only three projects, from a fairly simple morning glory to a complex rose, taking an in-depth look at how the carvings develop with step-by-step, start-to-finish instructions. The 'intermediate' project in the guide is of a hibiscus with fringed petals.

The photographs throughout the book are of great quality and illustrate the detailed instructions perfectly – you can't go wrong. Wanda also includes full-size, ready-to-use plans. Not only does the author instruct in the carving of flowers but also takes you through the painting of them, which ensures that the flowers you create will be truly realistic looking. With step-by-step instructions on painting the flowers and a list of common tools to use, Wanda talks you through the process for creating three beautifully realistic flowers that you can be proud of, all the way from start-to-finish.

Briony Darnley

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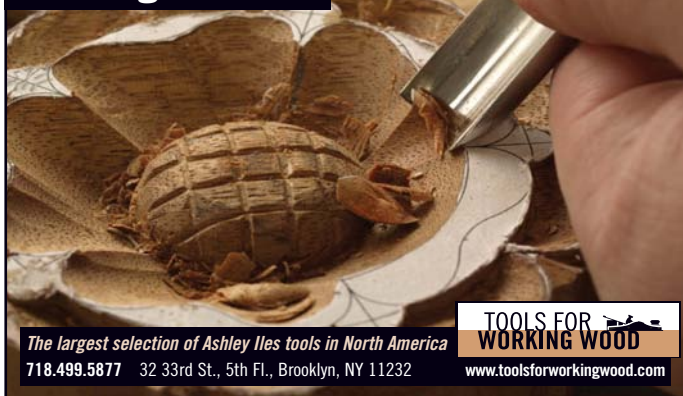
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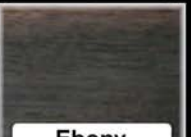
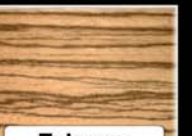
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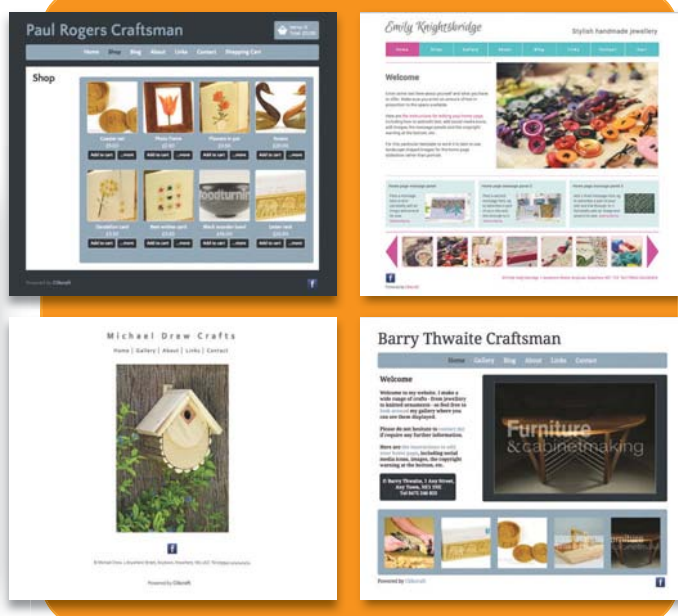
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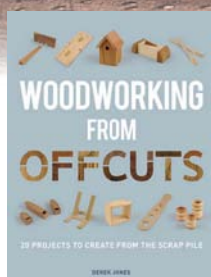
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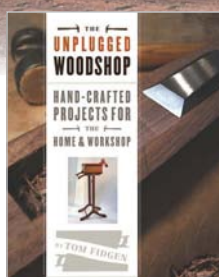


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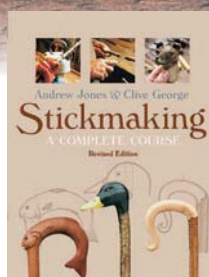
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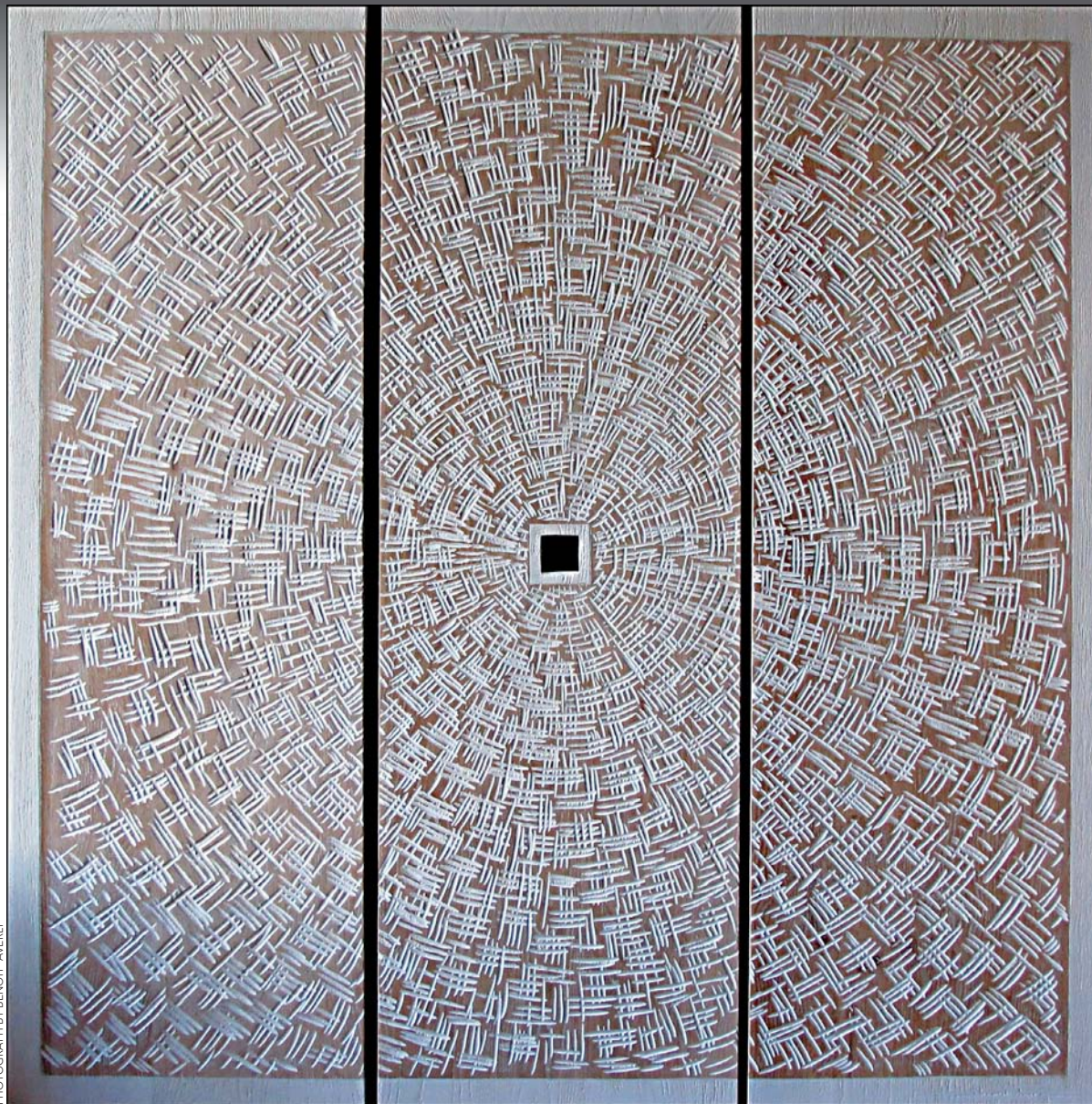


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Vortex

Benoît Averly shares this three-piece wall sculpture in oak, which features a carved and textured surface



PHOTOGRAPH BY BENOÎT AVERLY

'Vortex',
oak, 1,500 x
1,500mm, 2013

I have always enjoyed patterns and one of my hobbies is photography; I like to go hunting for natural patterns with my camera. Sand on the beach, roof tiles, stones in a wall and bubbles in the water are all excellent sources of inspiration for me.

The idea with this wall piece, as with many of my sculptures I make, is to create something that is easy to look at. The simple square shape with the hole in the centre – square as well – called for a simple and consistent texture.

To make this sculpture, I used oak (*Quercus robur*) from the region of Burgundy, France. I first laminated several pieces to get stable panels of the size I wanted. I then drew concentric circles on the wood as well as the radius of the circles. Then, using the Arbortech, I created the texture, starting from the centre and working my way out to the sides. I like repetitive patterns; to me a nice pattern should be consistent without being too mechanical. Here instead of having the pattern laid out randomly, I aimed towards the

centre as it was denser around the small hole, which allows the eye to be immediately drawn to it.

Once the wood was carved, I brushed it slightly and painted it white. In the end, I decided to sand the surface. This way, the paint remained in the grooves and the natural wood showed up on the flat surfaces. I made sure I left a white area similar to a frame around the piece. ▀

Contact

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