



# WOOD FORUM

Newsletter of the Sonoma County Woodworkers Association

Volume 39, Issue 9

October 2019

## Japanese Architecture and Furniture Design

Our speaker this month is Debey Zito, who has been creating original museum-quality furniture for over 45 years with a design vocabulary including Scandinavian, Asian, American and European Arts and Crafts and Art Nouveau. The furniture is infused with historical awareness, yet honed by personal vision and design experience.

Debey will be speaking about design elements in Japanese architecture, illustrated with images from a trip to Japan with Terry Schmitt in 2017. Included will be examples of Asian design in furniture.

In 2000 Debey and Terry Schmitt started working together, bringing Terry's relief carving to the furniture and architectural works. Terry's finely detailed and sensitive carving is entirely self-taught.



In 1978, Debey graduated from San Diego State University in Industrial Design, with a focus on woodworking and metalworking. She went on to teach woodworking to junior and senior high school students in San Francisco and Oakland. At San Francisco City College she taught furniture making to adults for seven years. Debey has continued teaching furniture making in workshops for women in her Sebastopol studio.



Where: 180 Studios, Santa Rosa

When: October 1, 2019

7:00 pm

# SCWA Monthly Meeting

September 10, 2019

by Joe Scannell

Our well-attended meeting began promptly at 7pm under the direction of Vice Chair Lars Andersen, who asked the several guests and new members to introduce themselves. He then repeated his appeal for help with the running of the Association. We are still in need of a Board Chair and a Program Chair.

Show Chair Don Jereb told us that plans for the upcoming *Artistry in Wood* show are moving along nicely. He has enlisted three judges for the event: Michael Cullen, Terry Schmitt, and Scott Clark. The assembled members greeted this news with warm applause. All of these judges are accomplished and respected woodworkers and artists.

Entry day will be Thursday, November 14, and judging will be at the monthly meeting, held in the Museum on Tuesday, November 19. Opening night will be Friday, November 22.

Don also reminded the members that there is a need for small wooden items that can be donated to the Museum for sale in their Gift Shop. This is an enormous help in keeping the wheels greased in our relationship with the Museum.

Finally, Don asked if anyone had any piece of art, surplus or otherwise, that they would be willing to contribute to the Museum for their fund-raising Gala auction, which occurs on October 12. Long-time member Don Ajello volunteered to make a donation.

And with that, Chuck Root introduced the evening's speaker, Kalia Klivan. She began her presentation by showing a few slides that demonstrated the range of possibilities using milk paint. Often seen on small objects such as turnings or boxes, or on Windsor chairs, it can also be used on large furniture pieces or even whole room woodwork, as illustrated by the slide of kitchen cabinets she proffered.

Milk paint is especially appealing because it is so "malleable," as she described it. It is common practice to apply two different colors to a piece, the first an undercoat, followed by the topcoat.



Then the topcoat is burnished using an abrasive such as steel wool or Scotch-Brite pad, to burn through that topcoat and reveal the undercoat in selected areas, such as would occur naturally over decades of use. The result is a pleasant, aged appearance, but without the wait.

Even if aging is not the intended result, this use of layers of different colors, followed by burnishing through the topcoat(s) can yield a much more complex design. If the painted object is finished with a vegetable oil such as walnut oil, or with a urethane varnish, it will be non-toxic, free of odor, and quite durable, qualities important if your object will contact food or children.

When used on a large surface such as a cabinet, another "feature" of milk paint becomes apparent.

The color may display a little variation in shading across its surface, which lends it a more organic feel.

Another interesting effect can be achieved by burnishing one area, or color, of a piece, and leaving

the adjacent area in its natural matte finish. Many turners use this technique, painting the outside of a bowl but leaving the interior a natural wood finish.

Kalia spoke in praise of an article written by Kimberly Winkle and published in the December 2012 edition of *American Woodturner* magazine. The article discusses the basics of mixing and how to create custom colors, as well as other hints for expanding your design. One unusual technique Winkle uses is to milk paint a piece first, then use colored pencils or graphite to add designs to the surface, finishing it with varnish to protect the decoration. An example is seen below.



Kalia has found that she loves combining carving and milk paint, and since she went to the “round side” (turners) she likes to turn, then carve, then paint her work. The possibilities seem endless. One form she is fond of is the porringer, a bowl with two handles.



While concluding a design class she once took, she was faced with having to produce a final project. The assignment was to take an ordinary, everyday object, and build something that raised it to extraordinary status. Her whimsical project became a presentation case for...a fly swatter. It was a great opportunity to use milk paint. The outside of the case was under-painted with red, and over-painted with black. The black also contained a bit of acrylic paint, giving the finish a slight sheen.

The inside featured the carved-through milk paint technique, and a similar technique was used to create insect wings to support the fly swatter.

Basic milk paint is a mix of lime, milk protein (casein), clay (to give it body), and pigment. In fact, you can even buy milk paint without pigment, should you wish to add your own. The result is an incredible bond to wood. The normal surface preparation such as sanding is still needed, of course, but there is no need to prime the wood.

Kalia's preferred brand is Old Fashioned Milk Paint, which offers a palette of 20 colors, all of which can be mixed together to further expand the range. The product comes in a small brown paper bag containing a sealed inner bag of the powdered paint. The general formula is a 50/50 mix of powder and water. Any amount can be mixed at one time, even a teaspoonful. The lifespan of the mixed paint is rather short, a day or two at best, after which it will be cottage cheese paint. Refrigeration helps extend this a little. But the powder can be kept seemingly forever if it is kept dry in its sealed bag.



Another brand on the market is The Real Milk Paint Company. They have a brighter array of colors, but Kalia has found their powder is noticeably more difficult to mix, so she generally only uses them for accent colors or as additives.

The entire palette of milk paint colors seem to be compatible with one another, so it's easy to use virtually any colors together to good effect. The liquid paints can also be mixed together before

application to generate any color you might be looking for. When doing this, Kalia recommends adding the darker color to the lighter, a little at a time, until you have the color you are seeking. You can even add liquid acrylic, universal tinting colors, any water-based colorant.

Getting started is easy if you buy the sample packs, one-ounce baggies of each color, available online. A word of caution: the final color does NOT look like the dry powder, so she strongly recommends making a chip set of all your colors, so you will have a realistic idea of what you will be getting. And of course, make a sample board if you are mixing colors, and write down what you did, or you will never know how you got that award-winning color.

Milk paint can be used in the normal ratio of roughly one part water to one part powder, or it can be used as a wash, where the paint is diluted with more water. This can work well with open-grained woods such as ash or elm. After the wash coat dries, the surface can be sanded back to expose the bare wood, and the pigment will be retained in the open pores.



*Photo by Bob Roudman*

Kalia spoke of the importance of using a good brush for milk paint. Do not be tempted to use one of those cheap throwaway brushes. She recommends a good quality synthetic bristle brush with a nice spring to it, and good chisel edge. And she shared a good tip: before starting, dip the brush in plain water, getting it wet all the way into the ferrule. This will prevent paint from migrating into the base of the bristles, where you will never be able to wash it out. And about washing: do not delay. This paint dries quickly, so as soon as you are through, wash your brush with soap and water.

Kalia demonstrated the mixing process, beginning by adding a few drops of water to the dry powder, forming a thick paste. When the water is thoroughly mixed in and the paste is free of lumps, she adds a few more drops and continues mixing, until the mixture resembles cream. You don't want guacamole, and you don't want water. At this point she recommends waiting at least 15 minutes, or an hour if you can, to give the water a chance to be completely absorbed by the granules. The results will be a much smoother and less gritty finished surface. After the wait, the surface of the liquid paint will be covered with foam, which must be skimmed off with a damp brush and disposed of on a paper towel. Then you must stir the paint again, because it has stratified.

At this point you are ready to paint. The surface will be somewhat gritty, because that's the nature of milk paint. The paint should be applied using slow strokes, to avoid creating bubbles. She generally uses several coats of paint, depending on the project. The time between coats is very short. In fact, by the time you've finished most surfaces you're ready for another coat. You can then sand with 320 grit to refine the finish, or burnish with Scotch-Brite red for a different surface.

When she began applying milk paint to carvings, which could not be sanded without rounding the crisp edges, she realized she had to filter the paint to get the nice finish she was seeking. After trying tea strainers and other culinary strainers, and a mortar and pestle, she stumbled upon industrial mesh. TWP is a company in Berkeley that sells 3x3" sample-sized swatches of various meshes. The one she found best served her purpose was their 400 mesh stainless steel, which can be purchased for \$10 plus shipping. This size perfectly fits the lid of a canning jar, so she cut a jar in half and



*Photo by José Cuervo*

voila! she had a strainer. Using a small rubber kitchen spatula, she coaxes the milk paint through the fine mesh, and the result is a very smooth finish. The mesh can be found here:

<https://www.twpinc.com/400-mesh-woven-stainless-0010>

She recommends applying a topcoat of some kind to protect the absolute matte milk paint finish. Her favorite topcoat is General Finishes Arm-R-Seal Urethane Topcoat, a wipe-on urethane resin. For functional bowls that will contact food or children, she prefers Mahoney's walnut oil, or you can substitute edible flaxseed oil if nut allergy is a concern. Avoid using linseed oil - the smell never goes away.

Wax can also be used, but it is not very durable, and if the piece is likely to be washed, find another finish. Other topcoats she has used include brown or black shoe polish, Watco, and gilding paste wax. The message she left us with was: experiment. The evening concluded with a hearty round of applause for a very well organized and informative presentation.



# *Artistry in Wood*



*Michael Cullen Inspired Bandsaw Boxes by Victor Larsen, 2018*

*Photo by Debbie Wilson*

## Officers of the Association

<u>Chairman</u>		<u>Secretary</u>	Lars Andersen
<u>Program Chair</u>	Chuck Root	<u>Guild Chair</u>	Mark Tindley
<u>Treasurer</u>	Judith Garland	<u>Show Chair</u>	Don Jereb
<u>Editor</u>	Joe Scannell	<u>Web Master</u>	Rod Fraser

*Wood Forum* is the monthly newsletter of the Sonoma County Woodworkers Association. Please feel free to submit articles and photographs for inclusion in the publication. You can send your submissions to the Wood Forum Editor at [SCWAEditor@gmail.com](mailto:SCWAEditor@gmail.com). Advertisements are also accepted with a nominal cost for paid members.

## Membership Application

I would like to join the SCWA to meet other people interested in the craft, the art and the business of fine wood-working. Enclosed is my check in the amount of \$35 for the annual dues. I understand that this fee entitles me to attend monthly meetings and to receive the Wood Forum newsletter by email or via the SCWA's website.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone \_\_\_\_\_

What can you do to help further the organizational goals of our volunteer-run association? Please tell us how you would like to help:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Please send check and completed application to:

Sonoma County Woodworkers Association, PO Box 4176, Santa Rosa, CA 95402