



WOOD FORUM

Newsletter of the Sonoma County Woodworkers Association

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September 2014

Artistry in Wood 2014

Well, here we are again, the drying leaves signaling the end of another summer, and indoors the smell of wax is in the air as the members put the finishing touches on their projects, with an eye on the calendar. The 26th *Artistry in Wood* show kicks off in just a couple of weeks, and the entries must be delivered to the Sonoma County Museum on September 3rd.

The judging will be conducted during the daytime on Wednesday, September 10th, and that same evening we will hold our monthly meeting inside the Museum, with the judges (see page 2) in attendance, where they will render their decisions.

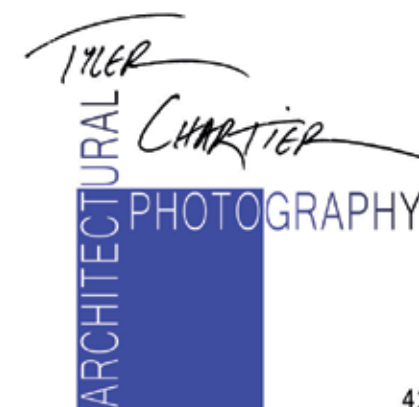
But before that date, there are many things that must be accomplished to make the show a success. Not surprisingly, we need some volunteer labor to prepare the rooms and displays, both on September 2nd and 4th. Also needed is help handling and moving pieces during the photo shoot, which will be done on September 8th.

The *Artistry in Wood* Opening Reception takes place on September 12th from 6-8pm, with free admission to museum members.



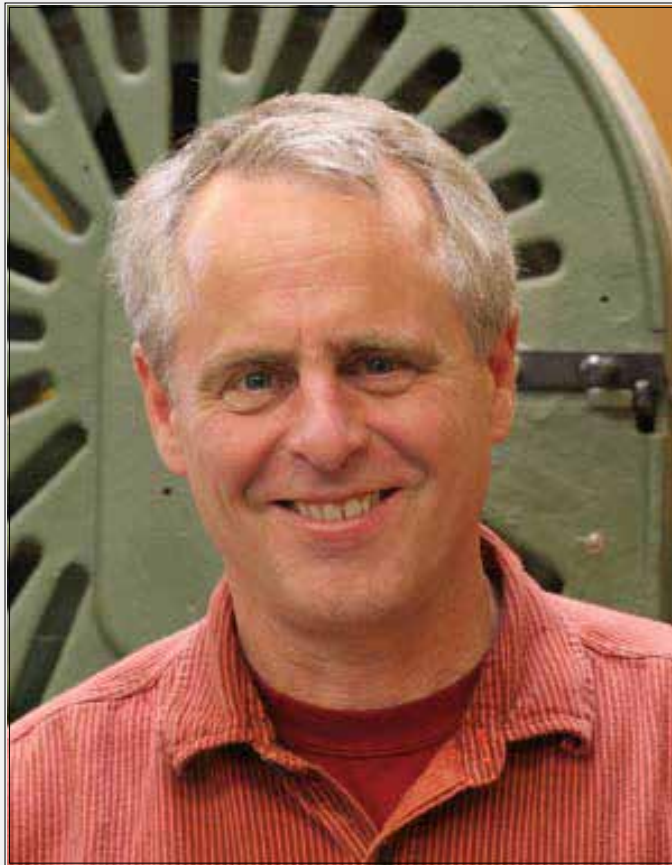
Maple Burl Hollow Form by John Cobb Photo by Tyler Chartier

Also on September 12th, our friends at Mount Storm Forest Products in Windsor will be sponsoring an Open House from 12 noon to 4pm, and it is open to the public. This is a repeat of last year's event, which Art Hofmann reported was a good time for all. There will be hardwood lumber, plywood, hardware, and machinery reps in attendance doing their repping (is that a word?) and did I forget to mention, they are putting on a FREE LUNCH!!! See you there.



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Meet the Judges



David Welter

David is a woodworker long associated with the College of the Redwoods. After attending the college in '83 and '84, he returned in '86 to be employed as a "Fine Woodworking Specialist," which is the position he still holds today. David describes his job as "chief bottle-washer," "secretary," "quasi-technician," and "materials provider." He has helped successive generations of woodworkers attain high levels of skill.



Jim Rodgers

Photo by Fred Deadrick

Jim is the Director of the Mt. Diablo Woodturning Center located in Pleasant Hill. His specialty is segmented woodturning, and hollow vessels. Jim has published many articles on woodturning and other subjects both in the USA and internationally. His new book, "A Lesson Plan in Woodturning" has recently been released. He serves on the boards of numerous turning associations.



Paul Reiber

Photo by Larry Wagner

Paul Reiber is a woodcarver from the Mendocino coast, who specializes in sculpture and relief carving. He was an early graduate of the College of the Redwoods Woodworking program and has taught carving at summer programs at Anderson ranch and the College of the Redwoods. His work is collected internationally and may be seen at the Highlight Gallery and the Mendocino Art Center in Mendocino, California, and his studio in Caspar, Ca. He last juried a SCWA show in the 1990's.

Annual Guild Meeting: An Evening with Michael Cullen



by Bob Moyer & Art Hofmann

The August meeting, held in the magnificent shop of SCWA Guild member Michael Cullen, was called to order shortly after 7 pm by Chairman Bob Moyer. He began by welcoming two new members, Lars Anderson and John Childers. Lars is somewhat new to wood-working, and inquired about classes. There were several responses. John is an amateur but has quite a bit of experience, especially in lathe work and cabinets, with a bent toward Shaker style. Guests were then welcomed, including Ann Hartman (Bill's wife), and Rick Gorman, a past member of the SCWA and former apprentice of Michael Cullen. Karl Shumaker, a blast from the past, was present as well, and said that he would re-up.

Moyer then thanked Jeff Shallenburger for the June presentation, Michael Cullen for the current meeting, and Art Hofmann, Michael Wallace, David Hirsch and

Mark Tindley for hosting the Small Shops meetings and the BBQ. Michael Wallace followed with a report on the newly completed website, and handed out a how-to-sign-on sheet, winding up with a round of thanks to the website committee and beta testers: Larry Stroud, Bill Taft, Michael Burwen, Mike Wallace, Joe Scannell, Art Hofmann, Terrie Noll and Steve Thomas. Bill Taft then gave a membership report: we have 93 paid up members and we expect about ten more at the time the show starts next month. Bob announced that elections are coming up soon and we very much need volunteers for the board and committees.

Art Hofmann talked about the two upcoming show meetings, the first on September 10th with the judges ("Judgment Day"), and the second on October 7th with the makers of the pieces. Also, there is an Open House at Mt. Storm in Windsor on Friday, September 12, where we will have a table with a slide show featuring

pieces from past shows. The point of this effort is to get the word out about SCWA and to recruit new members. Mt. Storm provides free space for vendors, food and drink.

Larry Stroud then introduced Michael Cullen, a highly accomplished woodworker and a Guild member, whose background includes a degree in mechanical engineering from UCSB, plus a course of study with David Powell at Leeds Design Workshop in Easthampton, MA. As we learned from Michael (see page 5), David Powell trained and worked with Edward Barnsley, the great English furniture maker and workshop owner, who worked in the Arts and Crafts tradition. Powell died in the early part of this century.

The evening was conducted as a three act play. In Part I, Michael described his experiences at SUNY Purchase, a campus north of New York City, where he was Artist in Residence during the Fall 2013 semester.



Michael Cullen

On his mind, as he set off driving to the East, was the problem of what a woodworker who had established a good reputation in California might bring to a set of younger people, aspiring artists. One could assume that they had expectations, and so did he, but what could he bring them? What was portable, literally and figuratively, from his own background? As Michael drove back east, he was continually confronted with the broad changing landscapes of the U.S. and its changing weather conditions as the season shifted to Fall. He took photos and posted them on Facebook, which has become part of his routine, a way of processing experience. Not a stranger to digital technology in his own life, Michael found himself confronted head on with students who were totally immersed in IT. Now he had returned to the East, where in his youth he had come in search of tradition, and the legitimacy it conferred, to find himself regarded as an old fogey. "Without warning I found myself to be a dinosaur thrown into a ring with students obsessed with YouTube videos and programming robots." Art schools are notorious for their openness

and experimentation, but here, there seemed to him no solid common ground to stand on. The students are confronted with a post post-modernity, where everything is instantaneously available for inspection on screens small and large. Tradition? Out the window! In their confusion they react to instruction with assertions that are shocking, frustrating, and sometimes intimidating. What could he bring? Michael turned to a basic form that he has worked with since his youth. His very first piece was a box, and he had built a series of them over the years, very formal ones, which evolved over the years to milk-painted bandsaw boxes that exhibited a variety of forms and colors. "In the midst of this chaos I was able to reach for simple tools to embark on a making-fest adventure which was chock-full of fun, hilarious moments and discovery." He was assailed at every turn by the students. "What are they for? What's your concept?" Michael held firm and made things. While the tech shop was very well equipped and maintained with high quality machines, the space he was assigned for his own use was poorly lit and ill-equipped, with an inferior work bench. Here, he turned out a series of small exquisite bandsawn boxes that were very well crafted and beautifully decorated, incised with carvings and charming colors, things that were almost organic, that related to nature. In the end, the students did join in turning out an end-of-semester art show, *The Box Factory*, which was generally enjoyed and deemed a success. Via a



Photo by Jeff Rice

slide show, Michael took us on a tour through the creation of his box series, all the while talking about the students and the school. He appreciates their plight. They want to become artists, and are confronted with the pressure of producing works that are completely differentiated from other artist's works to the point of being utterly unique. Good luck with that! When a student came to him with a box he had made, a quick-and-dirty attempt to mimic what Michael was doing, he advised the student to throw it away and start over again. Michael's response to his students' recalcitrance was to put his head down and go back to basics, which at this time and place meant making boxes. Michael's slides showed us how, step by step, the boxes were sawn, constructed and finally decorated. Out of nothing much, came something that was indeed whole and had integrity.



Photo by Jeff Rice

Part II: After the slide show, Michael directed our attention to a work table, where he had laid out a progression of boxes that were made over a period of close to forty years. He started with a box from the late 70's that he had made while in high school that featured some exotic woods in the top glued to a piece of solid wood. The sides were rabbeted and doweled. Next was a box from the

80's that he made while a student at Leeds that featured hand cut dovetails. Previously, he had thought that dovetails were made only with routers. In the 1980's he went to Boston to work with Jamie Robinson at the Emily Street workshop, where he learned to work with veneers. He showed us a box with a top that featured triangular pieces of veneer. It was tricky to do, and he



Box Factory show. Carving? Michael said it was the play of light on surfaces that got him started on this path.

Part III: Michael walked us through a short history of some of the hand tools that had belonged to his grandfather and great-grandfather which were spread out on a table. After finishing his residency in the East, he traveled back across the country, keeping an eye on the weather and wondering if he should bother to swing back up to Pocatello, Idaho, to visit the town where his grandfather and great-grandfather had lived and worked in the carpentry trade. He decided he would go there. A cousin showed him a closet full of their old hand tools, which he then gave to Michael. Michael was most grateful of course, and is proud of this piece of his own heritage. Many of the tools are from around the turn of the century, the 1800's to the early 1900's, a time when hand tools were often the only tools available.

Michael felt that the circle had been completed. He had journeyed East as he had when he was young, only to



Early Festool, ca.1900

find this time around a changed world in terms of the art students at SUNY, and then back to the West, where he found a strongly personal connection to the past in the well-used tools of forefathers. All in all, an odd but well rounded journey. At about 9:30 we ended the evening with a big round of applause for Michael.



only succeeded on the third attempt, due to the veneer moving around during the vacuum bagging process. The purple heart banding on the top's edge was carved, not a process he would care to repeat, since carving that wood is nightmarish. Next, he showed us a milk painted box from the 1990's featuring a carved top panel and sides, which he called the "Elephant Box" after Elephant Mountain in Marin. This was followed by a pencil box from the 00's that has a top that forms a snug, latching fit as it draws to a close, and finally the work from the residency that we had seen take shape in the slide show, the ones installed in the *The*

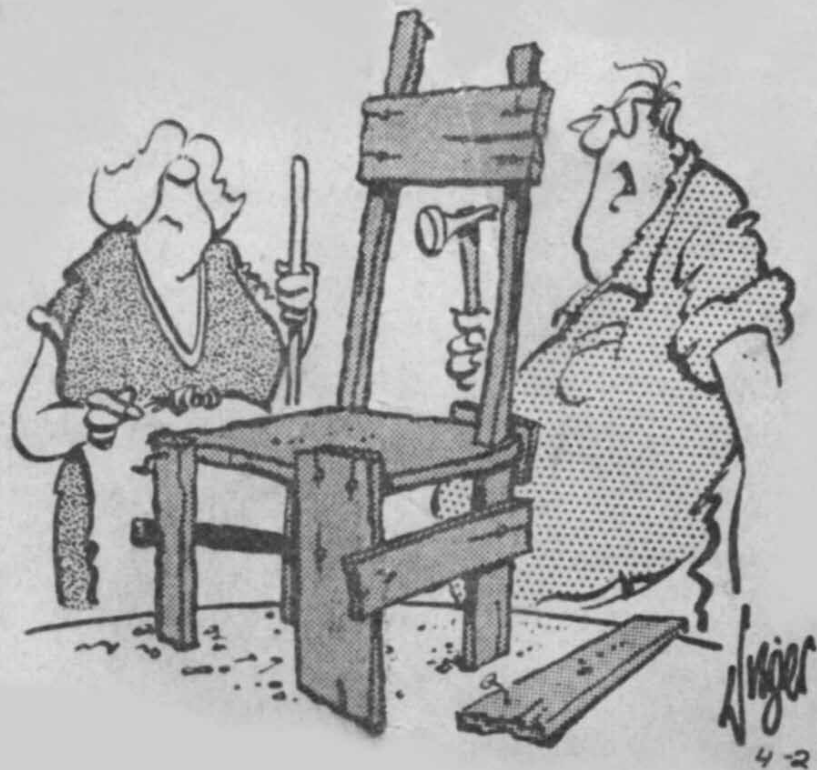


Photo by Jeff Rice

Here's a little back history about David Powell. His parents were very good friends with the Barnsley's. David's father, Alfred Powell, was a distinguished bookbinder in England and was awarded an OBE by the queen for his work. The Barnsleys and the Powells left London to set-up shop and to embrace all aspects of country life. Much of this philosophy was driven by William Morris' writings and the Arts & Crafts movement at the time. David was given special privilege in the Barnsley workshop. He was trained as a designer and apprenticed with both Edward and Sidney. After completing his apprenticeship, he went off to study at the Royal Academy of Art. After completing his studies he returned to the Barnsley Workshops to work. He then emigrated to America to set up his own workshop and eventually his own school.

- Michael Cullen

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*Website Construction Crew: (L to R) Larry Stroud, Bill Taft, Joe Scannell,
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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. Advertisements are also accepted with a per-entry cost of \$5 per column inch.

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.

[] I am enclosing an additional \$15 to receive the Forum by regular mail.

Name _____ Email _____

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Please send check and completed application to:

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