



WOOD FORUM

Newsletter of the Sonoma County Woodworkers Association

Volume 35, Issue 8

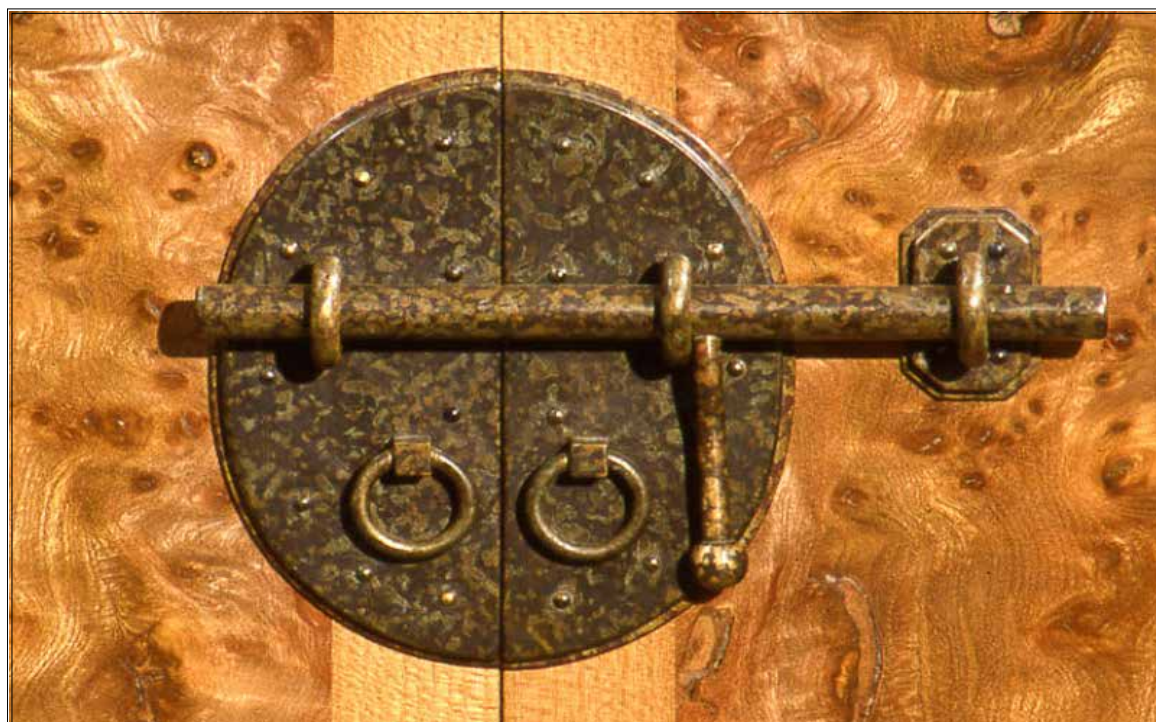
August 2015

Precision Hardware Man

by Art Hofmann

The speaker for our August 4th meeting will be Bob Sanderson, who owns Sanderson Hardware, a division of Wood Joint Studio. Both are owned and operated by Bob Sanderson and Taimi Barty, his wife. The businesses are in Mendocino, and both are graduates of the College of the Redwoods Fine Woodworking program.

Frustrated by the inability to find well designed hardware for his woodworking projects, Bob Sanderson began designing his own. As James Krenov and other woodworkers began to request his hardware, he created Sanderson Hardware as a side project. *Woodwork Magazine* said of Sanderson's hardware that they are "excellent products designed and built to very high standards. These hinges are ready to go and need no clean-up or finessing." Bob will speak to us about his business and the process of building hardware intended for woodwork, such as hinges and pulls.



Directions:

To get to David Marks' shop at 2128 Marsh Rd. in Santa Rosa, take Hwy. 101 and exit on Steele Lane/ Guerneville Rd. Go west on Guerneville Rd. for about 1.5 miles to Marlow Road. Turn right onto Marlow Road and proceed north about 0.2 miles to Marsh Road. Turn left onto Marsh Road. David's home and shop are about 0.3 miles from the intersection, on the left.

Please enter the second driveway (along the redwood fence) and pull back to the studio/workshop.

Parking problems: There is a little room around the shop, but directly across the street from David's is Marc Lane, and it offers abundant parking. If parking around the shop is problematic, use Marc Lane. Or use the other driveway and the side streets off of Marsh. Parking is not allowed on the shoulder of Marsh; you may be ticketed.

Note: As Marlow Road continues south past Guerneville Road, it becomes Stony Point Road. So you can take Stony Point Road off of Highway 12 and continue north if you are coming from Sebastopol or thereabouts.

Bring a small flashlight, it gets dark out there.



July Membership Meeting

by Walt Doll & Art Hofmann

The meeting began shortly after 7:00 pm with Guild chair Larry Stroud still standing in as Chairman, a position that no one seems willing to step forward and assume. Larry welcomed the membership and asked if there were guests, and several introduced themselves. Larry mentioned that Wild Apricot, our website provider, was down briefly, but came back up after a while. Our video library is up and running and getting a pretty good workout. There are 26 available titles so far, and the whole thing is free to members. Just send an email to the Guild Chair, who is Larry, and you'll get the DVD in the mail in a Netflix-style mailer. It is free, and you have two weeks to watch the video and mail it back, postage free and already affixed. What a deal! Titles available on the website.

Bill Taft took the floor and said that Jack Bethards of Schoenstein Organ is using the stipend we sent him to cover dining expenses from some of his traveling employees. Secondly, Bill Taft announced that he is the artist at the Meet the Artist event at Gallery 35 in Sonoma, where he is part of a show. This is a chance to see his marquetry in all its variety. Larry Stroud reminded us that September and the show were coming right up, and that it was time to get rolling on any pieces that members might want to enter. (See website for details and entry forms!) Michael Wallace congratulated Greg Zahl for winning first prize for a cremation urn in the Marquetry-Furniture category at the *Design in Wood Exhibition* in San Diego, which elicited a round of applause from the assembled membership. Tom Stockton, another member, received a second prize in Contemporary Woodworking Furniture. Bill Taft added that *Woodworker West* features Greg's piece on its cover.

Art Hofmann then introduced the evening's speaker, Chris Weiss, who studied architecture in this country and abroad, and then became involved in the Japanese

tradition. He and his wife operate a studio and a shop in Oakland, and do a kind of contemporary take on the Japanese aesthetic. Chris began by telling us about his architecture background, how he took a degree from the University of California, but that his junior year abroad turned into three years, first London, then Stockholm, and Berlin for several years before he finished at Cal. Chris had always been attracted to Japanese architecture, and after a friend told him about Joinery Structures in Oakland, he went there,



Chris Weiss

Photo by Jose Cuervo

introduced himself to Paul Discoe, and signed up for a five year apprenticeship with Paul, whom we visited at his compound in April of last year. Joinery was important to him, said Chris, because he felt that in order to design, he had to know how things fit together. Chris stayed with Paul for nine years. Paul's outfit was very small when Chris started, but some jobs came, and finally, a big job. Chris left in 2002 and started his own design business with his wife.

Chris continued his talk on the basis of slides that he had collected of his work. His first year with Paul was spent sweeping floors, pulling nails out of the recycled Doug fir and watching what was going on. The work was in Occidental on a house. (The pictures, particularly of its crooked horizontal beam, evoked memories, namely of a visit by SCWA to this home after its completion on the invitation of the Sonoma County Museum.) The house had some Chinese and some Japanese-inspired elements, and the garden was designed to include the surroundings to form an integrated whole. Chris said he recalls spending a lot of time pulling boards through a horizontal bandsaw mill. The house was designed by Denny Abrahms of Berkeley, though it went through many revisions. One feature was steel framed sliding doors and steel framed windows, mimicking the sliding doors and windows of a traditional Japanese home. After working through smaller projects, such as this house, when the work on Larry Ellison's compound in Woodside took off Paul no longer worked hands-on, but took charge. Lots of talented timber framers and Japanese-oriented carpenters took part, like Lenny Brackett from East Wind in Nevada City, so that Chris was still learning firsthand. As the company expanded to sixty or seventy carpenters, it changed from an outfit where everyone did everything to one more divided into specialized groups, one for post-and-beam, another for doors, another for the roof. Chris' task was to mark timbers in the Japanese fashion so that others could cut them and fit them with joints. Pre-fabrication at the shop in Oakland meant that the structures could rise quickly. The scale of the enterprise and the fact that Paul had never done a job of that size, meant that mistakes were made. Here Paul's real art, in Chris' view, was that he learned on the fly, and turned errors into opportunities, a trait that Chris learned from. Figuring out ways to conform with the building codes and still retain the integrity of the building is quite a challenge.

In response to questions, Chris said that the infill in the walls is plaster on standard framing. The large

timbers, the logs, are finish-planed and fitted off site at the shop, where better machinery was available. The head carpenter only wants to know where the posts and beams are. Everything is laid out on a story pole, and they are quite sacred. If the house is thirty feet long, then the pole is that long, or else a few poles are tied together. The tolerance is pretty much zero. There can be no discrepancy. All the joinery is laid out from center line and cut without any pre-fitting. Logs get scribed to each other, no purlins or rafters are fitted. Chris hovered over a slide of the entertainment hall at the Ellison compound, 36' x 72'. These were all natural logs, all chosen for this purpose, massive amounts of them, of which about one third were utilized. The chosen ones, kiln dried, were then hoisted into place. Chris' job here was the layout; he was the *torio*, or layout man, and a crew of six or seven cut the joints.



A *sewari* is cut in the log to help with drying: anything with a heart center is treated this way. (A *sewari* is a lengthwise cut on a beam in a place that does not show. The cut is made by hand or with a chain saw.) This *sewari* is a trough on the top side of the beam. In our western world it turns out to be useful for running communications cables and other low voltage wiring. Earthquakes safety: The Occidental project was redundant, having been designed to both western

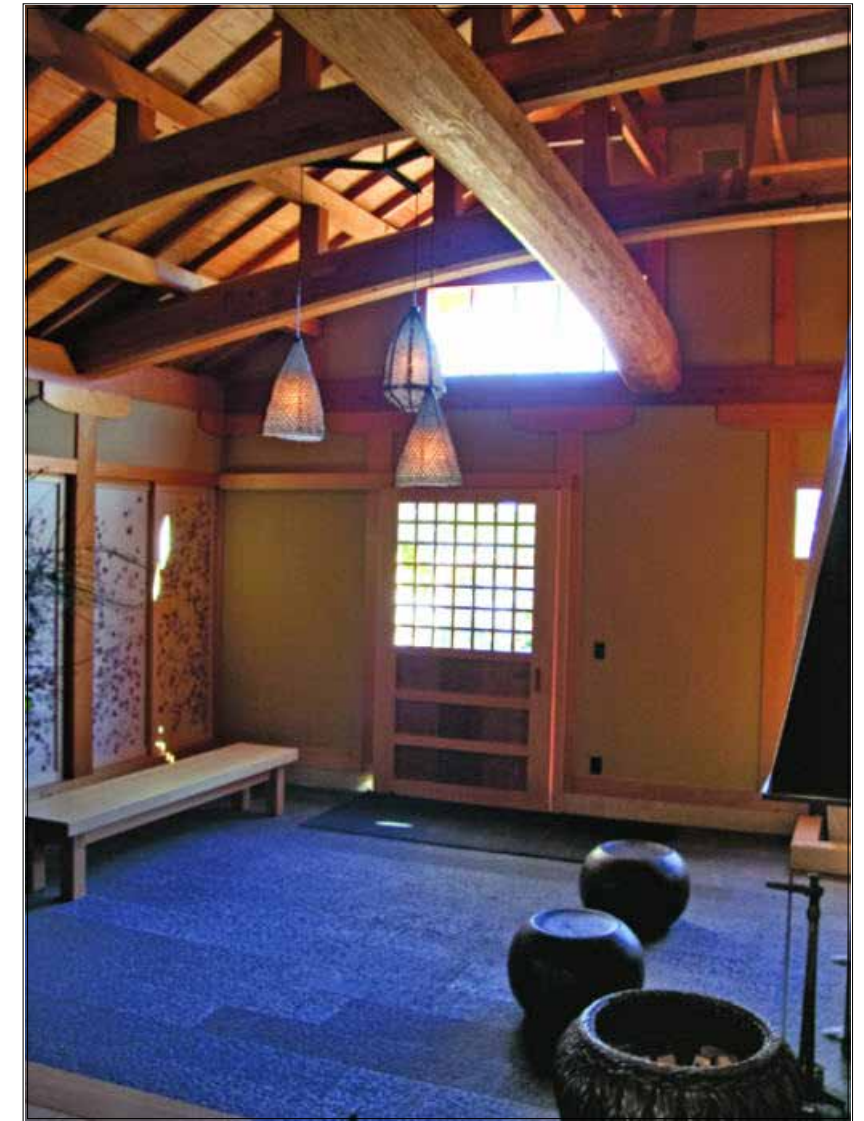
and Japanese standards. Engineering in Japan is the antithesis of western engineering, which relies on stiffness in every element. Japanese buildings do not fail in earthquakes, but roll around on rocks that are underneath the stone that bears the post. The timber frame remains intact, though the infill might give way. This is the thinking behind modern designs for skyscrapers in earth quakes, where the motion is transferred to rollers underneath the building, such as in San Francisco's Transamerica Pyramid tower.

The next slide showed Chris wielding a large curved Japanese saw that they had found in an antique store and tuned up. It is really the only way, he observed, to cut a log that big, and he cut tenons with it in the range of 3" wide by 10" long. These saws track really well because they are so large; a rough cut is made and the joint cleaned up with hand planes. Chris showed a water wheel that Joinery Structures made, and then, another slide showed some joinery that was cut, finish-planed, and oiled and about to be wrapped in paper and marked with identification numbers, to be delivered to a site for placement in construction. There is no question at that point about where the piece is to go.

The Ellison project used Port Orford cedar posts and Douglas fir for the beams. Glum-Lam beams were used too, but hidden, their weight transferred to posts that went into the basement, where they were connected with threaded rod. The buildings were mightily engineered. Every building code is different: building codes seem to have been written by Simpson, who required use of their products throughout. There was an extensive discussion relating to codes.

Moving on after his years with Joinery Structures, Chris opened his own shop. Initially he shared shop space until he acquired enough machinery to outfit his solo shop. A Pasadena carriage house, a structure with an interior construction based on Japanese principles. Gates and fences were done, as well as a project in Belvedere. Tree trimmers call Chris when they have a re-

ally big tree. He continues to use the off site fabrication techniques that he was using at Joinery Structures. Every piece is planed to finish dimension, oiled, wrapped in paper and sent to the job site. Chris acquires logs



from sawyers like Evan Shively, and gets calls from local tree trimmers. He slabs the tree on an Alaska Mill, stickers it, and lets it air dry. Chris prefers to avoid kiln dried lumber, so he has a large inventory of lumber air drying. The interior designer of the Ellison project commissioned Chris to make a series of tables for the Woodside residence using slab lumber, all hand planed and fitted together without metal fasteners.

One slide showed a table that Chris cited as being the most difficult joinery that he had done to date. An understated piece. A table in claro walnut, another in

black acacia, another in Monterey cypress. A bathroom sink shared a faucet in common with a *furo*. Everything was sealed with epoxy. There was a problem with the code here. In Japan, a bathroom is considered differently than in the U.S., where the inspectors are not used to seeing wood in bathrooms. Another project showed a wall of lozenge paneling in ribbon Mahogany. Then came a series of smaller projects.



In time Chris began using steel as a component of his furniture, helping with structural elements. He started to explore using metal and wood combinations to create more contemporary designs, with graceful, curved lines reminiscent of Art Nouveau that looked contemporary in design. The metal sandwiches the outside of the wood, and is laser-cut 16 gauge steel. This gives him the flexibility of hiding non-traditional joinery. Chris can also use the steel jacketing as the templates for the router. The steel is laminated to the wood with an epoxy-like construction adhesive. In this furniture, Chris plays around with exposing the structure as in a timber framed building, true to the Japanese ethic.

“Everything needs to be perfect,” says Chris. Chris is always looking at grain, following the precepts that Discoe taught him. He uses slab-cut material throughout, and this respect for wood helps his design process. Air seasoned wood behaves a lot better in the long term. A clear wax is applied on the mill finished steel, again adding another unfinished element to the designs. Chris

continued to show us other projects using steel and wood, playing with these elements, using honest materials in an honest way.

As the presentation concluded, the meeting spilled over to a Q&A period. He does not do chairs, but selects them for his client. This led to a discussion of the showroom that MRCW opened two years ago, called Turtle and Hare. Here they feature their designs as well as show wares that they import, largely from Japan, that fit well with their concept of modern living. A delegation from Japan visited the Bay Area with an eye toward stores dedicated to modern living. They selected MRCW, and invited Chris and his wife, Monica, back to Japan. There they toured companies and picked items for Turtle and Hare. They are going to go again this Fall and hope to bring back some Japanese furniture, including chairs.

Chris conducts Japanese woodworking classes in his shop; a recent one was on Japanese hand planes. In terms of his relationship with his wife, she is very visually oriented, says Chris, and designed many of the pieces we saw this evening. Chris feels challenged sometimes as to how to come up with plan for building these designs, and enjoys rising to the occasion. His wife handles the store, Chris the shop. Clients come to the store, and at times to the shop as well. Mostly, Chris works with one apprentice, and sometimes pulls in two or three more as necessary.

Asked about how he handles bugs, he replied that bay laurel and elm have to be sprayed with borate. He hasn't found a bullet proof solution to the problem. One product that stood out in the finishing of Ellison's house was Sutherland-Welles tung oil, and Chris highly recommends it. This particular tung oil was compared to every other finishing product on the market and made the grade. Chris works with aluminum and brass and likes them both, fashioning elements for his furniture. Chris has a 24" Whitney planer, a 36" Powermatic bandsaw, a Jet table saw souped up with an Incra fence system, all old school machines, and a portable

Makita mortising machine. It works on the bench or on a beam, and uses Japanese square chisels. At times, he sends things out, say, to Joinery Structures if specialized machines are called for. Chris had opened his presentation with an image of a *sumitsubo*, the Japanese marking device, basically, an ink well, and a silk ink line. It is accompanied with a brush 'pencil' which is dipped in the ink and used to mark joints precisely. This is the thin end, while the thick end is used to label the joint. Everything is indicated, such as whether the mortise is through or, if not, its depth. Precise lines are marked with the aid of a flexible square, a *sashigane*.



Paul Discoe taught Chris what he knows about using a Japanese plane. Chris had no prior experience in building before his apprenticeship, and thus he uses only Japanese tools. The most difficult aspect for him was learning how to lap the back of the plane to a shiny flat. Chris thanked us again for being such an attentive audience and this concluded the evening. There was a second round of applause.

It was interesting to see and hear how a Discoe apprentice is facing the world of woodwork and making a go of it. There is continuity here. Chris Weiss has taken up the challenge and is producing furniture of integrity by paying close attention to the honest use of materials. The tradition finds a way and goes on.



2015 Artistry in Wood Schedule

Wednesday, September 2nd, 9am to 4pm - Entry Day

Wednesday, September 9th, 7pm

- Judging and Annual Show Awards meeting.

Saturday, September 12th - Show opens to public

Sunday, October 18th - last day of Show

Monday, October 19th, 9am to 4pm

- Pick-up day for all entries.



tylerchartier.com
tyler@tylerchartier.com

415.264.0638 • 707.386.4882

SCWA Member featured in Gallery Show



Photo by Jose Cuervo

Bill Taft was the featured woodworking artist in a show that opened on July 10 at Studio 35 in Sonoma. Bill was showing a nice cross section of his work, including, but not limited to, the pieces in the photo above.



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Artistry in Wood

...coming soon

Willow Bowl by Steve Forrest



Returning to Life by Michael Palace



Photo by Jose Cuervo



Oriental Desk by Thomas Stockton

Photos by Tyler Chartier



Maple Hollow Form 1 by John Cobb

Officers of the Association

<u>Chairman</u>	(vacant)	<u>Secretary</u>	Walt Doll
<u>Program Chair</u>	Art Hofmann	<u>Guild Chair</u>	Larry Stroud
<u>Treasurer</u>	Bill Taft	<u>Show Chair</u>	Scott Clark
<u>Editor</u>	Joe Scannell	<u>Web Master</u>	Michael Wallace

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 woodworking. 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 _____

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City, Zip _____ Home Phone _____

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Please send check and completed application to:

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