



# WOOD FORUM

Newsletter of the Sonoma County Woodworkers Association

[www.sonomawoodworkers.com](http://www.sonomawoodworkers.com)

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## April Meeting Laura Mays, Woodworking Program Director



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# May Meeting Notice

Who: Bruce Johnson, Sculptor

Where: Bruce's Studio, 31400  
Seaview Road, Cazadero,  
CA 95421

When: Saturday, May 19, 2:00 PM

Bruce Johnson is a famous sculptor, particularly well-known for his massive redwood pieces. Educated at Davis, he began professionally as a carpenter and art teacher. From those relatively humble beginnings, he branched out into sculpture and has completed dozens of major pieces for collectors, museums and public spaces all over the world. Locally, wonderful examples of his work can be seen at his "Uprooted" exhibit at the Paradise Grove Winery in Santa Rosa.



The May meeting will take place on Saturday, May 19<sup>th</sup> at Bruce's home and sculpture studio in Ft. Ross/Cazadero/Timbercove. We will meet at 11 am. Driving time from Santa Rosa is 1.5 hours. **Car pooling is**

**strongly encouraged.** Rain will cancel this event, so please check the weather report.

This is not a typical meeting. Besides the chance to see how Bruce works and his inventory of redwood logs, it will be an opportunity to socialize. You are encouraged to bring spouses, friends, and children. We plan to have a potluck lunch, so bring a dish to share and whatever drinks you fancy along with chips and sides. Bruce will have a grill fired up in case you want to cook hot dogs, steaks or whatever. The Association will provide mild Italian sausages. Besides the learning experience, the day should prove to be a festive occasion.

Bruce's directions are as follows: West to Jenner - North on Coast Hwy 1 - Five miles north of Jenner is Meyers Grade Road (also marked Seaview and Plantation) - Take Meyers Grade Road and check odometer. Meyers Grade Road becomes Seaview Road and at about 10 miles from Hwy 1 you will come to Fort Ross School. Just past the school is a stop sign at Timber Cove Road. Continue for one (1) mile on Seaview Road to 31400 and a large wood sculpture next to a metal gate on the east side of Seaview. Enter the gate and proceed to the RIGHT until you dead end in the sculpture yard and studio. Driving time from Santa Rosa is about 1.5 hours. If the drive up the coast is too harrowing for you, you can drive through Cazadero. The route is scenic but adds 20 minutes driving time.

## March Meeting

*By Art Hofmann and Mike Burwen*

### Business Meeting

A business meeting convened at 6 pm, March 6 at the Rancho Cotate High School Wood Shop. Officers present were Wallace, Heimbach, Lashar, Burwen, Stroud, Taft and Hartman.

Treasurer Jim Heimbach announced that 2012 dues payments have been received from 104 Members to date. He noted that Members who have examples of their work depicted on the SCWA website had not been billed the \$60 annual fee for that service. The names of those contributors will be furnished to Jim for billing.

Michael Wallace announced that only one Member has elected to receive a printed copy of the *Forum*. He noted that this will save the Association several hundred dollars per year.

The subject of who should pay for meals at business meetings held at dinner venues was discussed. Michael Wallace will submit a budget proposal to cover that item at

the next business meeting. It was agreed that the Association would reimburse the Program Director for meals when it is necessary to entertain the guest speaker.

Bill Hartman requested that the Association make a \$500 donation to the woodworking program at Rancho Cotate High School. Bill stressed that it is the only high school program in Sonoma County that teaches furniture making and fine woodworking, and that his budget for materials had been slashed effective January 1 due to new legislation. That request was approved unanimously. There followed a discussion of how the Association might continue to support education programs in the County. The subject will be addressed at a subsequent meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:50 PM.

## General Meeting

At the beginning of the General Meeting, Treasurer Jim Heimbach announced that the Association has \$6275 in the bank, and that the annual budget is approximately \$5000. \$2000 of that is attributed to the Artistry in Wood Show, \$2000 to meeting expenses and \$1000 for everything else. He noted that the balance of the \$4000 show cost comes from entry fees.

Michael Wallace briefly discussed a meeting held with Museum personnel who said that they would like to see more of a presentation from the artists to the audience. This could take the form of descriptions placed with the show pieces or perhaps be contained in a pamphlet. The idea is to get the audience more involved with the design and thought processes of the artist.

Next, Michael Wallace announced that the Association needed to elect a new Show Director. He stated that Bill Taft had volunteered for the job and asked if anyone else wanted to run for the position. Nobody took up that offer, and Bill was elected by acclamation.

Michael then introduced speaker Laura Mays. Brought up and educated in Ireland, Laura is now the Director of the Fine Woodworking Program at the College of the Redwoods. Her talk for the evening was in three parts: 1) An historic perspective of Ireland in relation to woodworking; 2) A discussion of her own work and experience; 3) The state of and challenges to the Woodworking Program at the College.

Laura described Ireland as an island off an island off of Europe. As a result of its remote location, Europe and even England have had little influence on the country. Unlike the rest of Europe, it did not experience radical social changes like the Renaissance or the Industrial Revolution. Historically, it was agrarian and remains so to this day.

Once covered 80% by forests, Ireland is today the most treeless country in Europe. By 1900 less than 1% of the land was covered by forest. After it gained independence from Great Britain in the 1920s, the Irish State started a reforestation program which has increased the tree cover to about 10% today. Most of the planting was in softwoods. And today softwoods are 95% of the timber. It has not been an environment for promoting fine woodworking.

This is the environment that Laura grew up in. Interested in design, she obtained a degree in Architecture at the University College Dublin. Then she traveled for a period, living in Japan for six months and then attending art school for a year in Paris. After that, she took a two-year course in furniture design at GMIT Letterfrack. A small school with only 30 students, it was a very good place to learn. The instructors were from John Macys in England. They were part time and would come over to lecture and then leave the students to work on developing their skills, focused primarily on hand tool work. After completing the program, she went to work as a cabinet maker at SF furniture in England for 6 months to gain some experience.

Returning to Ireland, Laura opened her own shop, designing and making furniture, which she did for five years. This occurred during the “Celtic Tiger” economic boom in Ireland. Home building accelerated and there was demand for furniture to fill the new homes. Most of her work focused on tables, which she made on commission.

Her modus operandi was to make cardboard models of her pieces before building them. However, the making part of the process didn't produce the feeling of accomplishment that she was looking for. She attributes some of this feeling to James Krenov. In his books he discusses his philosophy of the “human interaction with the make,” or the intimate emotional coupling of the maker with his work. Wanting

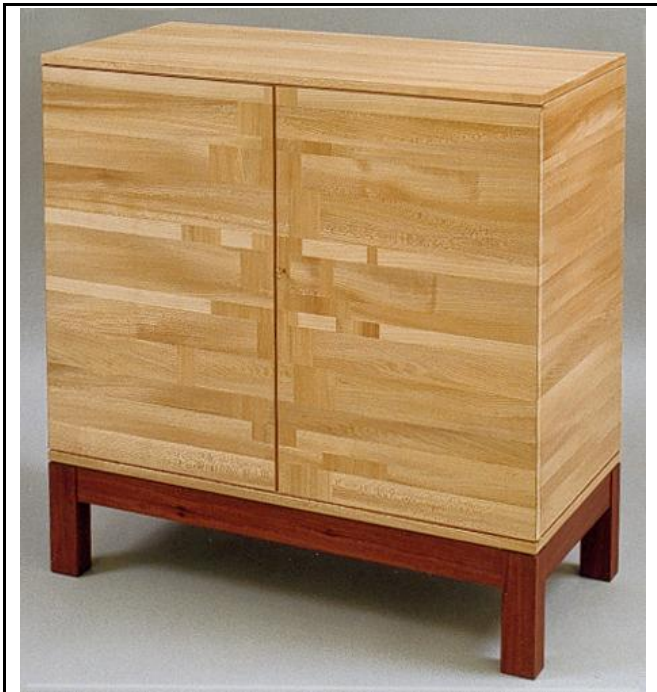
To explore the Krenovian philosophy, she entered the fine woodworking program at the College of the Redwoods in 2001, James Krenov's last year teaching at the College.

The first piece that she made during her first semester at the College of the Redwoods was a flat-fronted patchwork cabinet with ten drawers and two doors, each made of a different wood. This cabinet was made of solid wood as is the tradition in that program; first semester solid woods, second semester veneers.

The second piece that she made that year was a Parquetry Cabinet, a veneered cabinet with the veneer arranged in patterns that produced changes in the reflections as the viewer changed the direction of view. In making that piece, she wanted to ensure that it was evident that it was made using veneer. During her second year at the College of the Redwoods Fine Woodworking Program, Laura made chairs both semesters.

After completing the course work at the College of the Redwoods Laura returned to Ireland and opened another shop, concentrating on studio furniture. The first piece that

she made was a display cabinet on a stand, commissioned by a collector.



**Parquetry Cabinet**

Laura next presented a series of photos of some of her work during this period. One was of Three Walnut Boxes with carved tops and sides, commissioned by the Office of Public Works for Farmleigh House in Dublin. Another was a photo of two of the ten different colored boxes exhibited in the 'Of Colour in Craft' a traveling exhibition organized by the Crafts Council of Ireland.

She made a second Patchwork Cabinet, this time made using Irish woods. This cabinet was made for the Natural Museum of Ireland's permanent collection. It was similar to her initial Patchwork Cabinet except for the use of Irish woods and the addition of two Sycamore frameworks that divided the front into sections.

During this time, Laura formed a partnership with Rebecca Yaffe whom she had met at College of the Redwoods. They began using the logo Yaffe-Mays, a professional partnership aimed at designing and making one-off pieces of enduring value.

Laura was also teaching at GMIT (Galway Mayo Institute of Technology) in Letterfrack, where she had been a student previously. She was a lecturer in Furniture Design and Manufacture, teaching modules in the design process, projects, innovation and prototyping.

In 2007, Laura started working towards an MA in Design degree, in a program of 'Research Through Practice' at the National College of Art and Design in Dublin. The subject matter of her studies was the current meaning and value of

craft, its defining characteristics in relation to history and tradition, place, the body, function, materials and technique. Her thesis consisted of both a written report and the making of several chairs, which explored these relationships. Laura presented a series of photographs and diagrams showing the chairs she designed and built for the thesis.



**Patchwork Cabinet 2**

The first chair was the Sligo Chair, an old Irish three-legged chair design. A Sligo chair is basically a plank or board chair where most of the members are wide and relatively thin as opposed to stick members, which are

generally square or round. The traditional Sligo chair has a triangular seat that is made of four planks, a single plank shaped back leg and two stick shaped front legs. Over time there have been many modifications to the basic Sligo chair, such as adding rails to strengthen the legs, adding arms and curving the back for comfort.

Laura made four different Sligo chairs, which she shared with us:

The first chair, Sligo 1, made of Irish Oak, has the triangular shaped plank seat. The back leg has been bent and topped with a curved member that is joined to the arms. The front legs are the only members that are not plank-shaped as was common for the traditional Sligo Chair.

Sligo 2, 'The Twins' made of Irish Walnut, consists of two chairs, each being one half of a large, or wide Sligo Chair. Each chair is a mirror image of the other. They are mostly flat plank construction with one side and one back straight plank leg. Each chair has one stick arm and one stick leg. The seats are made of three planks and appear as one-half of a typical Sligo triangular-shaped seat. The design is very square with all members at right angles.

Sligo 3, made of Irish Cherry, was somewhat of a departure from the mostly plank construction of the traditional Sligo Chair. This chair was a study in making a Sligo type chair using the minimum number of simple elements, a plank as the seat and back and stick elements for all of the other members.



**Sligo 4**

All of the 'plank' members of the final Sligo Chair of the series, Sligo 4, were made using bent laminations. This chair, made of ash, had four legs. However, the two rear legs were formed angle members that were also the side members of the seat. The third center member of the seat is a similar formed angle shaped member that extends upward to form the lower part of the back. The seat front member is u-shaped with the legs of the u extending upward to support the arms. The upper member of the back is also u-shaped, with the arms extending forward and joined to the arm supports with miter joints.

The Stefan Chair is a mass-produced chair made and sold by Ikea for less than \$20. Laura's first Stefan Chair, Stefan 1, is a straight reiteration of the original Stefan Chair, except it was made as a one-off piece in pear wood. The purpose of making this copy was to compare the value of process; craftsmanship value (workmanship of risk) with mass-production value (workmanship of certainty). She explores the question "Does creating something unique add sufficient value so that the owners will treat it with respect and not consider it as disposable?"



**Stefan 1**

The second Stefan Chair is an Ikea Stefan Chair that was smashed into pieces and restored to a usable condition. This was done as a demonstration of the value of adding time and labor to maintain and restore an inexpensive item.

Stefan 3 was made from two Stefans. One Stefan cut in half at the center, with a central slice of the seat and back of the second Stefan inserted into the center of the first Stefan in order to make a wider chair. Then the front legs and rails of the second Stefan were used to add arms, and the rear legs were used to add rockers to the wider first Stefan. This converts the two chairs into a more comfortable rocking chair.

Stefan 4 was made to explore the relationship of new technology and craft by using a computer-controlled laser cutter in the making of the chair. This chair, made of corrugated cardboard also explores the relationship between the body and a chair. This relationship is expressed by building a body into a chair. The outside profile is the Stefan Chair. The inside is the profile of a person.

For the final part of her presentation Laura presented some of her thoughts on the future direction of the College of the Redwoods Fine Woodworking Program. She has two primary considerations: One is the fact that Community College programs are suffering from budget cutbacks making it increasingly difficult to maintain a quality woodworking program.

The other challenge she faces is how to carry on a program that was founded by a famous but idiosyncratic person. To what extent should she continue to use James Krenov's ideas? Should she try to move the program in new directions? How do we use his ideas but still move the program forward without getting stuck in some of his idiosyncrasies?

Laura's plan is to use this year to determine how well the school is working today, and then to propose appropriate new directions taking into account today's economic realities.

A question and answer period ensued, mostly about the Fine Woodworking Program. Laura received a big round of applause and then talked individually with many of our members.

## Calendar

May 19: Bruce Johnson; Sculptor

June 20: John Economaki, Tool-maker  
extraordinaire

July 10: Tripp Carpenter, Kathleen  
Hanna, Grif Okie on Arthur Espenet  
Carpenter

## From the Chairman

*By Michael Wallace*

Ah, spring; the weather is getting drier and warmer, and thoughts may well turn to building something new.

My woodworking thoughts are: 1) I need a bench –a real one, not the door across two sawhorses kind of bench. But not a Roubo or Shaker or gonzo one either that will take me a year to build. I need something that can be done easily and quickly but has some heft as well when I start banging out dovetails on it. I think I have settled in a set of plans. Let you know next month. 2) The Artistry in Wood show. I really, really, really want to build something for this year's show. Too many times over the last 3 or 4 years, I'll spot a project I want to build and say, OK, that's going to be for the show, but for one reason or another it doesn't get done. I promise this year is going to be different!

As for club stuff, things are going well. Bill Taft has taken over as Show Director. We had a meeting with Eric Stanley, the history curator at the museum to discuss various aspects of this year's show. We are going to make a stronger effort to get the public to connect to the artists in order to learn more about how the works were inspired and came to be created. I was inspired by the museum's latest show - "The Tsar's Cabinet" and how paint, decoration, and signage can bridge the distance between the objects d'art and the public. Knowing who and what we are about, I think will go a long way towards informing and connecting with the public. Bill Taft will be working on this as part of his plan for this year's show.

Our membership drive was successful. Membership in 2011 was close to 130, and, as of today, 110 have renewed. We normally pick up 5 to 10 members just before the show, and usually attract several new members during the year. Growing the membership, or at least keeping it stable, is important. More members mean we are able to

hold down membership fees and continue to bring in wonderful presenters like Laura Mays who charmed us with her tales of woodworking in Ireland.

This year, I am heading to the *Popular Woodworking* conference, *Woodworking in America*, to be held in Pasadena this October. (See <http://www.woodworkinginamerica.com/ehome/index.php?eventid=35763&> for details.) All of their editors/writers will be there including our very own David Marks. For the last several years, I've read the reports and/or seen the videos that came out of these conferences and wished that I had been able to go. I am delighted this year's conference will be on the West Coast. Should be a great success.

See you at the next meeting!

Michael

## 2012 Artistry in Wood

*By Bill Taft*

The 24<sup>th</sup> Annual Artistry in Wood Show will run at the Sonoma County Museum from August 25<sup>th</sup> through September 23<sup>rd</sup> this year. Entry day will be in mid-August, just a little more than three months from now. I hope that everyone is busy working on their entries. We will be providing more information and entry forms in about a month.

## Digital Workshop

*By Michael Wallace*

This month's column is about the *Woodwhisperer* website: and it's owner Marc Spagnuolo. Marc is a professional furniture maker from Arizona. He studied with David Marks, but his background is in biotechnology. Over the years, he honed his skills and then decided he wanted to share them, resulting in the website that he began in 2006. You may already be familiar with Marc from his articles in *Fine Woodworking* and *Popular Woodworking*.

The website has lots of videos that show Marc building a variety of projects. He explains shop layouts, tool setup, safety procedures, etc. All of his videos can be downloaded for FREE from e-media stores like iTunes. They are produced with much care and clarity.

In addition, Marc has a Forum on another website he manages called *Woodtalkonline*. He has also posted over 280 articles on his website covering every aspect of woodworking.

I have tried to exhaust every free aspect of Marc's site and I still don't think I have covered more than a small fraction. For instance, although I've watched his videos several times, he continues to make more of them!

Perhaps the biggest component of Marc's offerings is what he calls the *Guild*, a membership-based service wherein he walks members through projects step-by-step. Here is his verbatim explanation of how it works:

"During a build, we will release one video per week covering a specific part of the project. You'll also receive a detailed SketchUp/PDF plan and cutlist. We will also have live meetings and demonstrations where you can get answers to your questions and interact with your fellow Guild members. You do NOT need to build along in order to enjoy this membership. Previous builds will be available in the archive for you to download and view at your leisure."

In addition to step-by-step instructions, the Guild offers its member's discounts on the products sold in the Wood Whisperer store, from major tool, supply and lumber dealers, and participation in giveaways.

The Guild is a fee-based service. It costs \$99 for 3 months, \$149 for 6 months, or \$199 for 12 months. I'm going to try out the 3-month offer and will let you know my experience later this year.

Marc paid SCWA a visit about 3 years ago. If he's in the area again, perhaps we can get him to come to a meeting. He is one of those people any woodworker would want to know.

Go to [www.thewoodwhisperer.com](http://www.thewoodwhisperer.com). You will not regret it.

## Teak: Coming Back Strong

*By Mike Burwen*

Teak used to be one of the most common woods used in furniture making, ship decks and other projects that could take advantage of the wood's weather-resistant and finishing properties. Unfortunately, natural teak forests were heavily overforested. Old teak is still cut in limited quantities, but, as woodworkers know, it is very expensive.

# Ikea Hacker?

*By Mike Burwen*

Laura Mays mentioned a website called Ikea Hacker. I looked it up and found it at [www.ikeahacker.net](http://www.ikeahacker.net). The site is run by a young Malaysian lady who calls herself Jules. She says she lives 15 minutes from an Ikea store and loves their curry puffs, which I've never seen at the Ikea in Emeryville!

In any event, this website could be worth a quick looksee. People from all over the world provide pictures and descriptions of modifications that they have made to Ikea products in their homes. Some of the stuff is trivial, but some is inventive, and the hacks are sometimes elaborate. There is useful advice, like how to get a quality, durable paint finish over a typical Ikea wood finish or vinyl surface without sanding. If you are looking for some ideas for your next furnishings project, you might find it there – or not.



**Jules, the Ikea Hacker**



**Old Growth Teak Logs**

Most of the old growth material goes into veneers and is rarely available as lumber.

Teak is the tropical hardwood in highest demand worldwide. Unlike most tropical hardwoods, teak trees adapt very well to plantation growing, and teak plantations are springing up all over the world. Some of the hot spots include India, Thailand, Indonesia, West Africa, Ecuador, Costa Rica, Trinidad and Panama. In Thailand, teak plantations are sponsored by the government, anxious to protect the 400,000 jobs of people engaged in the manufacture of teak furniture. In most of the rest of the world, teak plantations are a private enterprise. It takes 20-35 years before plantation teak can be harvested. The folks who invest in teak are either crazy or incredibly patient.

Today, teak is the third most widely planted tropical plantation species in the world. About 7.5 million acres are under cultivation and the number is growing steadily as prices rise. In the log, plantation teak currently sells for \$600 - \$900 per cubic meter. Old-growth teak logs from Burma that produce fine quality veneer can fetch \$3000/cubic meter. Because there are so many new plantations being started, some speculators worry that the price will fall in a few years. That would be good news for woodworkers.



## About the Association

The *Sonoma County Woodworkers Association* is a 32-year old association of more than 100 professional and amateur woodworkers. Monthly meetings are held at member's shops and other venues to share experiences, ideas and techniques, and to hear well-known woodworkers discuss their work. Each year, the Association sponsors the *Artistry in Wood* juried exhibit at the Sonoma County Museum at which members are invited to submit pieces. Annual dues of \$25 cover membership for one calendar year

*Wood Forum* is the monthly newsletter of the Sonoma County Woodworkers Association. Please feel free to submit articles, notices, photographs, announcements and comments for inclusion in the publication. Advertisements are accepted with a per-entry cost of \$5 per column inch. Submit your entries to:

Michael Burwen, Editor  
Email: [mike@pamg.com](mailto:mike@pamg.com)  
Phone: (707) 658-2844

## Officers of the Association

|                  |                   |          |
|------------------|-------------------|----------|
| Chairman         | Michael Wallace   | 824-1013 |
| Vice-chairman    | Michael Burwen    | 658-2844 |
| Treasurer        | James Heimbach    | 355-9013 |
| Secretary        | Bill Hartman      | 696-0966 |
| Program Director | Art Hoffman       | 542-9767 |
| Guild Director   | Larry Stroud      | 823-1775 |
| Artistry in Wood | Michael Matsumoto | 869-1205 |
| Librarian        | Dennis Lashar     | 823-8471 |
| Forum Editor     | Michael Burwen    | 658-2844 |
| Seminars         | Bill Taft         | 794-8025 |

# 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 \$25 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 Web site.

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

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

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Address 2 \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

Please send check and completed application to: Sonoma County Woodworkers Association, PO Box 4176, Santa Rosa, CA 95402

[www.sonomawoodworkers.com](http://www.sonomawoodworkers.com)



Santa Rosa, CA 95402

PO Box 4176

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