



WOOD FORUM

Newsletter of the Sonoma County Woodworkers Association

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July 2014

Shop 'til You Drop

by Art Hofmann

On Saturday, July 12, we will hold our first "Small Shops" meeting, featuring the private workplaces of four of our members. This will be followed by a BBQ for members and their friends and families at the final shop destination in Penngrove.

The spotlight will be on the shops of Art Hofmann in Santa Rosa, Michael Wallace in Sebastopol, David Hirsch in Petaluma, and Mark Tindley in Penngrove. Here is the schedule:

Hofmann's shop (1128 Utah Court, Santa Rosa) will be open from 11 to 12:30

Wallace's shop (11939 Barnett Valley Rd. Sebastopol) will be open from 12 to 1:30

Hirsch's shop (812 I Street, Petaluma) will be open from 1 pm to 2:30

Tindley's shop (630 Palm Avenue, Penngrove) will be open from 2 pm to 3:30, followed by a BBQ.



Mark has generously invited us to use his yard as a venue for our BBQ, which will start at about 3:30 or 4 pm, with the main meal set for about 5:00 pm or so. We haven't scheduled an end time. SCWA will provide some grilled sausages, and rolls, condiments and a variety of beverages, but the rest is up to you, the members, who are requested to bring potluck dishes that will serve yourself and a few others. Some green salads would be nice, and not too hard, considering the season.

Detailed directions will be forthcoming by email to the membership.

You are welcome, of course, to mix and match or just attend the BBQ, which, please remember, is a social affair to which friends and family are heartily invited. It's a time to socialize and enjoy the company of like-minded friends and the season.

See page 2 for more details.

The 1st Annual Small Shop Tour

What can you expect to see?

Art Hofmann is an amateur woodworker, who makes furniture for his use and for that of his family. He has a very small shop in what was called a two car garage in the 1950's. It features too many tools, which are fairly well tuned and almost organized. The only thing special about his shop that might interest others is his MiniMax combination machine, which features a 12" table saw with a 5.5ft slider, a shaper, a 12" jointer/planer and a mortising machine in the space of a small dining table. Art will demo this machine and answer questions about it as well as he is able.

David Hirsch is a professional woodworker in Petaluma, who built himself an exquisite shop on his property in Petaluma after training with Michael Cullen. His final project in his training period was a workbench that was featured on the cover of Woodwork Magazine about a decade ago. David has an artist's approach to his work, which varies from interesting furniture pieces to deliberate statement pieces. He will show you his shop and is interested in questions and a dialog about woodworking.

Mark Tindley is a professional woodworker who trained in England and is now working in Scott Borski's shop in Petaluma. He lives in Penngrove, in a country setting. In his own words, "I earn my living as a furniture and cabinet maker, but my home workshop is where I play at the weekends making the stuff that pleases me. My workshop is an old barn that I had fun converting into a space I want to spend time in. I hang old maps on the wall, I keep tiny offcuts that I know I should throw away, and I have a competition-ready dartboard. I love my old cast-iron machines as much as my absurdly large collection of hand tools, all for use, I promise! Please come and visit, play with the tools, and ask anything you like. I'll even show you my violin making project as long as you promise not to ask me how long I've been working on it." The violin making project is quite serious; it is a copy of a Stradivarius dating from 1721.



Michael Wallace is an amateur woodworker who has built himself a very nice shop in a country setting in Sebastopol. Mike intends to show some strategies he has for keeping his stuff together and manageable. He is also planning to give away several of the organizers that he uses. He says that he is knee deep into building a bedroom dresser, which he promises will be fun to look at, and has also recently built a wood storage shed. He has some loose items for sale, and maybe some wood as well.

Monthly Business Meeting

June 2, 2014

The meeting was opened shortly after 7 pm by Chairman **Bob Moyer**, who announced that the new website development is progressing well, and he welcomed new members and guests. New member Dave Smith, wearing his Festool hoodie, said that he is a certified tool junkie, and derives pleasure from buying tools, but is running out of room. He has turned 750 pens. Several announcements were made: John Keller has an antique table needing to be repaired and refinished for a friend, if anyone is interested. The veneers are all intact. Bob pointed out that John is the original founder of SCWA. Scott Borski is offering a 14" Delta Rockwell radial arm saw for \$200. Jim Heimbach has wenge lumber for sale for cheaper than you can get it elsewhere, and he will deliver. Don Naples suggested contacting a marimba maker; wenge is the tone wood of choice for tenor marimbas. Art Hofmann mentioned that violin maker Andy Carruthers is part of a group of instrument makers,



Dave Smith

and he might be a resource to locate a marimba maker or someone else who would be interested. Bob thanked Russell Baldon (*in absentia*) for his presentation at last month's meeting, and then thanked Jeff Schallenberger for being our speaker for tonight. He also thanked Joe Scannell for an outstanding job on the design and production of the monthly SCWA newsletter.

Michael Wallace gave us a brief update on the new website being developed. The website is nearing completion, and he asked for anyone interested in being a beta tester to contact him. He displayed an image of the home page. In addition to the

standard features found on most websites, members have access to more features like forums, and will have passwords. Five years of past newsletters will be available, soon to be expanded to 12 years. Art commented that there will be access to historical event calendars so members will be able to immediately determine the relevant newsletter items of past meetings. **Larry Stroud** explained that the header of the website would present a slide show of members at work, teaching and demonstrating techniques. A gallery section will be available to all members to display images of their work. Bill Taft has worked on membership issues. Larry designed the home page, and Art worked on the events section. The committee's objective is to have the website completed before the show in September.

In his Treasurer's report, **Bill Taft** reported that we have 92 members, 2 in the last month, and 11 new members this year. Our finances are on target with the budget. Entry day for *Artistry in Wood* is exactly 3 months away, on Sept 3rd.

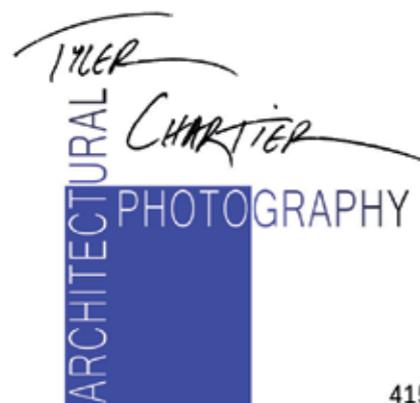


Maple Fantasy by Chuck Quibell

Photo by Tyler Chartier

Art Hofmann announced that the July meeting is being adjusted. A tour of small shops was planned, but various members have had to withdraw for various reasons. Mark Tindley has offered to host a potluck BBQ at his shop in Penngrove. Michael Cullen is our August speaker, discussing old tools that his late grandfather collected, and showing projects he is working on.

The September and October meetings will be related to the show at the Museum. November is at Andy Jacobson's shop where company reps will be showing new materials and tools. December will be the annual holiday potluck. Art thanked Michael Wallace for his leadership in creating the new website.



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The Curves Keep Life Interesting

by Walt Doll & Art Hofmann

The evening's presentation began with an introduction by Art Hofmann of the guest speaker, Jefferson Schallenberger. Jeff has two thriving woodworking enterprises. One is a custom furniture business, Jefferson Designs, and the other is Sugar Percussion, which makes stave-built drums.

Jeff was born in Hawaii, grew up in Palo Alto, and ended up in Santa Cruz. He earned a college degree in US History, planning to become a teacher, but Fate had other plans. His first job out of college was building doghouses, then kitchen cabinets. On the advice of his uncle, Jeff migrated up to College of the Redwoods and into the woodworking program, where he completed a summer course before embarking on a teaching credential program. Then he caught fire and never looked back at teaching. He immediately started the year-long program at COR, where his initial inspiration was fed by looking at furniture books, which he no longer does. The class was composed of young people, who were quite experienced, and a healthy sort of competition ensued in which they goaded each other to doing better work than they might otherwise have done. Jeff showed a slide at this point of a cube-shaped cabinet of



Jefferson Schallenberger

holly (left) that had many drawers, but no pulls. There was one knob at the top that produced a 'key' that contained a magnet. When the 'key' approached a drawer, another magnet inside the drawer front responded and the drawer opened: clever and lots of fun.

At the end of that first year, while waiting for some wood to be delivered, he built his first drum set with cannibalized hardware, simply because he wanted one. These were stave built, and even though he wasn't satisfied with how they turned out, another seed was planted for the future. After graduation, he and Nick Clark, a fellow student, decided to open a shop together in the East Bay, where they worked on their own separate projects and occasionally collaborated on others for six years. Most of his commissions at first

were courtesy of friends and family. His dog's dentist received a small cabinet in barter for doggie's root canal. One of his first jobs was for someone who saw his work on the COR website, and he's been working for him ever since. This person single-handedly kept him alive for many years. The client loved Japanese design influences and Jeff worked on many Asian-inspired projects for his home in Palo Alto. He also worked on spec pieces which gathered dust and never sold. Alas, he realized they were clunky designs because he was trying too hard to impress. Along the way he relaxed a bit and quit trying to put everything he knew into each piece. Some of this healthy outlook appeared after his daughter, Ruby, was born in 2002. He had a shift in priorities after that and he began calming down in his woodworking.

In 2003 he went back to COR for a second year, where the main goal was creating spec pieces for galleries. Jeff closed the business in Richmond with Nick Clark, saved money for this year, and churned out pieces in an attempt to achieve this goal and build a portfolio to shop around to the gallery circuit. A lot of his inspiration at this point came from observing nature and architecture with a sense of graceful symmetry. He prefers to laminate and bend using that method as opposed to steam bending, which never seemed to work out for him. As well, he started looking at art books and architectural magazines instead of furniture books, and achieved a broader view of things. Art Deco was an influence, as well as all things Japanese.

After finishing at COR, he worked with Len Brackett, who designed and built houses in the Japanese style, and continued on the interior furnishings for his good customer/friend in Palo Alto. He talked and worked with Japanese style craftsmen, and this influenced his design sensibilities. He also had pieces from his time at COR accepted at Pritam and Eames, and Wexler galleries on the East Coast. Brian Newell was a friend in Fort Bragg who was a master, and after talking to him Jeff realized that even though galleries were selling all

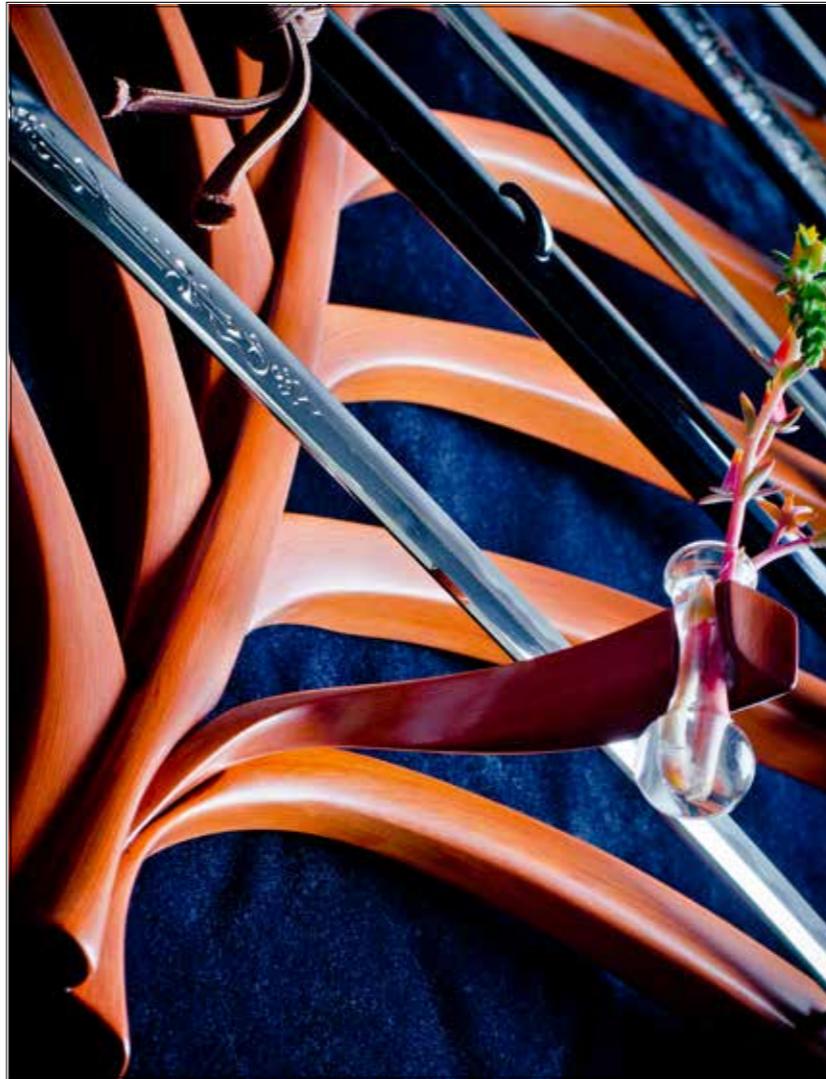


the work Brian produced, he was just getting by and depending on his wife's income to make ends meet. Jeff realized then that the person he held as being the most talented of all was struggling on the gallery circuit, too. Clearly this was not the way, and so Jeff rethought his plan.

He and his family moved back to Santa Cruz, and he did mostly commission work, some cabinetry, and began finish carpentry and concrete work on his home. His customers were very happy with his work, even though it hardly qualified as fine woodwork to him. That was liberating to him. Ruby was showing him some of her drawings at the time, and they inspired him to collaborate with her in a playful way. This eventually led to his other business, Sugar Percussion, derived from her middle name. It is intended to make a contribution to Ruby's college fund.



Mimicry, 2013 by Jefferson Schallenberger



In his way of working, he prefers to let mistakes happen, and takes that as his inspiration at times. Instead of throwing something out and restarting, he responds in a positive way and most of the time it turns out to be a serendipitous change.

Jeff did some buildings as well, like a red cedar storage shed for his 'good' client, the one devoted to the Japanese style. Other commissions followed. He worked on his own home as well, making all the doors and doing lots of the construction work. Jeff started a business with his daughter, who drew a chopstick holder, and then a cutting board.

He created a sculptural piece for the Herradura Tequila Co., which annually holds a Barrel Art contest (with a very nice cash award to the winner) in which they give

selected woodworkers a wooden barrel with which to make something artistic. He took his apart and made a fantasy piece of it, shown at far left. Alas, the \$100,000 prize went to another.

A recent client had a major collection of very old and authentic samurai swords, for which Jeff made a stand of laminated wood. In a give-and-take between members and the speaker, Jeff explained the ins and outs of designing the sword stand. He used a variety of shaping tools, from spoke shaves, to micro planes, the ones used in the kitchen for zesting lemons.



The client in Palo Alto decided to quit commissioning furniture and get his retirement finances squared away. His last work for him was building a center console for the man's Tesla. He ended up tearing out the entire dashboard to replace the wood trim so it would match the console. The Tesla parts manager was dumbfounded. They never planned for replacement parts this early in the car's development. It ended up taking 12 weeks to get dashboard parts, so that the owner could use the car while Jeff designed and created the console and dash, using mahogany and ziricote. It was probably the most difficult woodworking job he's ever done, and so he doesn't plan to continue with console customizations.

Jeff talked about his client responses: the Japanophile engineer who commissioned much of his works displayed very minimal reaction on seeing the finished job. "Hhum," Jeff learned over the years, was an overwhelming sign of approval. In response to members questions, Jeff went into detail about the job, about making the forms, doing the finish. Today, he says, he would charge much more.

Along the route, he began making drums. He cut up all his stored pieces of wood into staves and made 75 snare drums, just so he could hear the tonal differences between woods. It was kind of a waste of wood, but he quickly determined which woods he never wanted to use again. He glues up the staves after he mills the edges using a jig, passing it by a shaper head ground precisely to the needed angle. Using plain white PVA glue, he lets the drum blank dry at least overnight, held with strap clamps. The next step is the lathe; his lathe is actually an old metalworking lathe, refurbished by a local machinery company. He needed a 28" throw in a small footprint, so this lathe was a good size, not too long. The cutting action on the spinning blank is from two routers mounted on the carriage, the bits facing each other, one on the outside and one on the inside, and running while the blank turns at 350 rpm. Very noisy and slow! Then he shapes the rims using hand tools.

Jeff makes two variations, a studio kit and a live kit. He enjoys working with musicians in collaboration rather than the usual furniture clientele, because the musicians are passionate about their drums. The musicians are much more invested in the process of drum making, and see the finished product more as a tool for their work rather than just being a thing of beauty. However, Jeff has to educate his potential buyers on the fine craft he employs in his products. On the marketing side, he



supplied the drummer for the Black Crowes and kept getting good feedback. The guy was happy with each "test" snare drum that Jeff sent, didn't want to send any of them back and now wants a complete kit. So now Jeff is making 25 drums and sending them out as samples to various drummers, hoping to replicate that. Another drummer in LA wanted a studio version and has it tuned for the recording studio. Jeff received five new orders on the recommendation of this studio player, Eric Valentine. It turned out that they had played together in a 6th grade all-city band in Palo Alto. This is another guy who wouldn't send the sample back, and wanted more. Jeff has sold five drum kits based on Valentine's recommendations.

Cherry wood is a very popular customer preference for his drums. In general he now personally prefers the slightly softer, more round sound of the softer woods like spruce. The harder woods produce a sharper, more percussive sound. The studio kits are a slightly shallower version of the live kit; this helps keep stray resonances at bay. They are also designed in prime number dimensions, such as 13x7, and that also helps produce a cleaner sound. Wipe on polyurethane is the finish he uses.

Jeff works currently and plans to work in the future in both realms: music and commissioned furniture. Each has its own demands, and it's good to shift to the other when he gets bored. He has crossover products, though. For example, a woman wanted a cremation urn for her drummer husband in the shape of a drum, with drumsticks to match. In general, the drum clientele is more interesting and passionate about his products than the furniture customers.

To sum things up, the evening showed Jeff Schallenberger to be a premier furniture maker, who has two ongoing enterprises, custom furniture and stave-built drums. His pieces are a testimony to prodigious energy, talent and dedication. Viewed from every angle, they display of mastery of detail in joinery

and construction, part of the COR legacy, as well as innovation and creativity, a desire to explore new ways of doing things that led to a style that shows flair, where curves and sinuous lines abound.

Jeff gave us a re-cap of fifteen years in the 'game,' which showed him to be radically honest about his path, its successes and failures on the mental and emotional plane, and on the financial one as well. He is ultra-modest about his achievement and about surviving with his twin businesses in difficult fiscal times. His presentation was appreciated and rewarded with a solid round of applause.



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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 joejakey@comcast.net or at SCWAMESSAGES@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.

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