



WOOD FORUM

Newsletter of the Sonoma County Woodworkers Association

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November Meeting



The November 3 meeting features a presentation by Brian Condran, a furniture maker from Martinez. Brian made a career change in the early 1990's when he quit his day job and enrolled in the College of the Redwoods, spending two years working with James Krenov. He has been doing furniture commissions and spec work ever since. He will talk about the design

process, show how ideas come up and are developed, how a project evolves, and material selection for the idea. He will base this on a few of his projects, some old, some new. Brian has taught classes and lectured on this subject for College of the Redwoods and Diablo Woodworkers Association, and is well-known in the area.

www.sonomawoodworkers.com

People's Choice Award



Escher's Inspiration by Joseph Scannell

Photo by Jose Cuervo

The meeting will be held in the Cotati Cottages townhouse development west of the highway 101/116 interchange. The clubhouse address is 8050 Starr Court, and the meeting is on Tuesday, November 3, beginning at 7 pm.



The Makers' Meeting

by Art Hofmann

About thirty members turned out for the October meeting, held in the *Artistry in Wood* gallery at the Sonoma County Museum. Larry Stroud, Guild Chair, opened the meeting shortly after 7 PM. He began by making announcements and then went on to ask for two volunteers for the nominations committee. None of the assembled members were forthcoming, and so we moved on to other issues. Larry announced that Brian Condran, a woodworker from the East Bay whom we have seen in the past in various contexts, will present next month's Guild Presentation on the topic of Design. Members are advised to stay tuned to the events section of our SCWA website for more information.

Larry turned the meeting over to Scott Clark, Show Chair, who introduced the Makers, beginning with Greg Zall, the winner of both the Best in Show prize, and the Krenov Award for his *MJ Box*. Greg discussed the container: occasioned by the loss of his sister-in-law, the piece is intended as a repository for her ashes. He talked about making the holly sides and applying the marquetry irises, his sister-in-law's favorite flower. Essentially, each side was shaped in nutmeg, then veneered with holly by means of a vacuum bag. He was particularly proud of the iris leaf that wraps one corner. It is a stunner of a piece, the white of the holly, the purple and green of the flowers.

All photos in this story are by Tyler Chartier unless otherwise noted.

David Marks talked at some length about making his patinized hollow turning. It is a three piece construction: a poplar base, a walnut burl top, and a neck of African blackwood. This is one of David's signature pieces, something that he developed over a long period of time. The piece won a prize for Best Turning and will be featured on an upcoming episode of *Rough Cut* with Tommy McDonald.

Untitled by David Marks



MJ Box by Greg Zall

Photo by Jose Cuervo



Sierra Salad Bowl by Chuck Quibell

Chuck Quibell, who won an award for his *High Sierra Bowl* in lodgepole pine, discussed making the bowl, an interesting contrast to David Marks' methodology, in that his finishing technique relies mainly on careful scraping and sanding and applying one light coat of Minwax polyurethane and some wax. The finishing is simple and perfectly appropriate to the bowl, which evokes the Sierras with its light color and contrasting grays.



Side Chair by Dan Stalzer

Dan Stalzer talked about his three Appalachian greenwood chairs, all of tanoak, a wood he discovered years ago upon coming to California. It is an undervalued species, and in this application, handsome indeed. Dan splits the trees after they are freshly downed (“yesterday would be the best”) and keeps on splitting sections out of them until he has sticks that can be worked on a shaving horse with draw knives and spoke shaves. Round in section, these pieces have never been near a lathe, and the hand can feel the resulting facets still on every part of the chair. He wove the fiber seats to the chairs, one of which features material from his old blue jeans. Dan teaches classes in making these chairs.

Brian Frazer discussed his coffee table, the top of which is made of western big leaf maple, and features a trestle-like base. He used Bondo mixed with a colorant to fill the voids left by the borers, the result an abstract grid of color across the tabletop.

Big Leaf Maple Table by Brian Fraser Smith



Venus of Chickendorf by Don Ajello

Don Ajello told us about the processes he uses in sculpting his Petaluma Peckers: with a small foundry set up in his studio, he casts the bronze parts and carefully inserts them into mortises he makes in the wooden components, which are usually lacewood. The lacewood is first turned, and the top carved with a rotary tool. His piece this year was *Venus of Chickendorf*, a play on the ancient stone figurine.



Set of 3 Imagination Containers by Carol Salvin

Carol Salvin discussed her multi-purpose containers. She uses veneers and bends them over forms in a vacuum press, working them around solid wood to form the handles, which are cut in a variety of pleasing shapes. She set out to make something that would target a given price point, but the amount of labor is great. The quality of her work reflects it.



Violin - Copy of 1721 "Kruse" Stradivarius by Mark Tindley

Mark Tindley spoke about making his copy of a Stradivarius violin, a topic on which we heard extensively earlier this year. It is a remarkable achievement, especially considering that he is a furniture maker, and was trained in that skill and not as a luthier.

Bill Taft talked about his *Dogwood* sculpture entry. This piece is a continuation of his exploration into combining marquetry and carving. The dogwood flowers were made using double bevel marquetry to join the four petals and form the basic flower shape. Then each flower was carved. He said that the most difficult part with this piece was making the branch, because he made it too thin when he initially cut it out, which made it very difficult to carve. All of the pieces were carved and finished before being glued together.



Dogwood by Bill Taft

Brian Cullen talked about his *Torricelli's Paradox* bowl, explaining how he had turned it, especially the deep throated center section. Along the way, he mentioned how much he had enjoyed his time in David Marks' class on turning.



Walnut Buffet by Thomas Starbuck Stockton

Tom Stockton told us about the latest iteration of his fascination with Federalist Furniture, a beautiful buffet. The walnut veneers on this imposing piece were all shop sawn. He also talked about the abalone inlay and the trim around the top edge.



Torricelli's Paradox by Brian Cullen



Contemporary Bamboo Side Table by Lars Anderson

Lars Anderson made his *Contemporary Bamboo Side Table* using 'plyboo', a bamboo plywood. This material is easy to work with and can be treated just as one would treat wood. This table was made as a development project. Rather than making mockups, Lars made the pieces, dry assembled the table, and then modified some of the pieces until he got the look that he wanted.



Mike Gutsch talked about his *Pedestal*, which appears to be very heavy. However, it is hollow and was made using Amazon rosewood veneer which he sawed himself. The veneer is mitered and there were many steps involved. The piece evokes a musical instrument in its shape.

Pedestal by Mike Gutsch

James Heimbach, who lives in Lake County and whose house survived the fire, told us about his hall table in walnut. He put an image of the wood in the computer, found a section he liked, and took his inspiration from that. It is, really, a series of ellipses, and the ellipse theme is repeated throughout.

An Elliptical Entry Table by James Heimbach





Maple Bowl by Scott Chilcott

Scott Chilcott's *Maple Bowl*, delightfully thin and light, was produced from a scrap of quilted maple from a cabinetmaker's shop.



Catherine's Box of Dreams by Joseph Scannell

Joe Scannell talked about his two boxes, one of them based on an M.C. Escher pattern, which he put into Sketch-Up and manipulated (photo on page 1). John Keller lavished praise on Joe's ox-bow shaped madrone box (pictured above). He thought it very well composed and complimented Joe extensively on the piece. And with that, the evening was done.



Padauk Bowl by Scott Chilcott

Scott described his *Padauk Bowl* as "classic Stocksdale" in shape and proportion, a pleasure to hold in the hands. The dark complexion is due to sunlight exposure.



Welcome Aboard

by Walt Doll

I spoke to Lionel Murphy at one of our monthly meetings, and, recognizing a British accent of sorts, I asked him where he was from. Expecting Australia or New Zealand, I was surprised to hear him say: Zimbabwe. From my limited experience of Africa, I knew that this country, a former colony of the British Commonwealth, has, in the last 30 years, experienced tumultuous political changes. He told me he'd recently immigrated here - some twenty months ago, having obtained green cards for himself and his family through his mother, who had lived in the United States for over forty years. Lionel is a third generation Zimbabwean. Sensing a life story that I thought would be of interest to fellow woodworkers, I decided to interview Lionel, and drove to the Tomales Bay area to meet with him and his wife, Kathy, on August 7th. Kathy and Lionel made their living in the capital city, Harare. They built a film/video production studio, producing local and regional advertising and documentaries. Lionel produced and directed, and Kathy edited, a job she still does here in the United States. They are blessed with three daughters: Shannon, Erin, and Carey.

Lionel, a qualified Industrial Designer, likes to sketch and draw from life. His work is sculptural, very free-form and organic. He is not a cabinet maker. He set aside a quiet corner of his shop that is curtained off, just for drawing and working on design ideas. Once the design is sketched out, he puts the fretsaws, rasps and scrapers to work. Often, it is the particular piece of wood which determines the design of the piece.

Q: How did you get started in woodworking?

A: My grandfather had a business building structures and conveyances for the mining industry and had a workshop filled with tools that I was able to explore. He had metalworking as well as woodworking tools. My formal education is in Industrial Design. When

the film studio was built it included a workshop, so I spent much of my free time between projects creating furniture in there. These days I like to make functional art out of wood, much of which includes lamination, steam bending and dowel joinery.

Q: What are your favorite woods?

In Zimbabwe, wenge grows in abundance, we call it panga panga. Nasty stuff to work with, but a gorgeous wood nevertheless. I liked to work with air dried slabs of jacaranda and the indigenous "pod mahogany." The large selection of American timbers has opened up a whole new universe of possibilities, and what is exciting to me is having several top class suppliers within striking distance, Evan Shively's operation and Heritage Salvage being two cases in point, as well as driftwood collected legally from the local beaches.

Q: Is Zimbabwe rediscovering itself after its past troubles?

A: Zimbabwe is generally on a path of disintegration, despite the attempts of many good individuals to keep



Lionel Murphy

things going. Many artists and creative individuals thrive in the rich, beautiful land but they're not making a decent living. The corruption and greed of the governing class is destroying the land. The story of Cecil the lion is going on every day in Zimbabwe, chapter by chapter. You pay the price, you can have it. The minerals, the wildlife, are disappearing rapidly, I'm sorry to say. The British colonists extracted plenty, too, but they built infrastructure like schools and water systems. These days there is none of that, the highest politically connected bidder comes in, extracts, and gets out. The once productive farms have been dismantled and are no longer producing in what used to be one of the breadbaskets of Africa. In time, given a change of leadership, things may turn around, because it's a nation of decent and talented people.

Q: Would you go back if things changed?

A: No. America is my new home and I'm looking forward to all the opportunities that this beautiful land offers.





Thanks,
Tyler

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Remember what David Marks says, "Forgetting your safety glasses can change your whole outlook on life."



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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 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.

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