



WOOD FORUM

Newsletter of the Sonoma County Woodworkers Association

Volume 36, Issue 5

May 2016

Craft: from General to Particular

by Art Hofmann

Scott Constable is the founder of Wowhaus, a multi-disciplinary art/design collaborative whose award-winning work over the past two decades spans public art, social practice, architecture and furniture design. He has done houses in the East and in the Bay Area. A native of Philadelphia's Main Line, Scott studied at the Rhode Island School of Design and the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

Scott is also the founder and author of Deep Craft, a weblog that draws from his ongoing craft-based research and observation. He has taught and lectured at diverse schools and institutions, including the California College of the Arts, where he was the 2010 Wornick Distinguished Professor of Wood Arts. Scott has been Artist in Residence at arts centers and been awarded many honors and distinctions, including an Investing in Artists grant from the Center for Cultural Innovation. Scott was one of our judges for last year's *Artistry in Wood*, so you might recognize him.



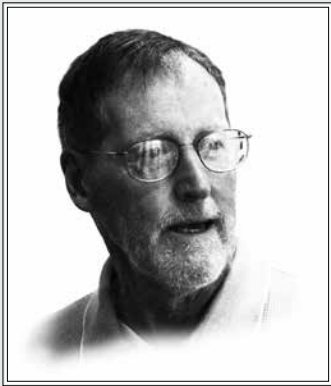
Date/Time: Tuesday, May 3, 2016; 7pm

Place: Cotati Cottages

Directions:

Cotati Cottages is a townhouse development located west of the H'wy 101 and H'wy 116 interchange. Take Highway 101 to Gravenstein Highway (116 West) exit. Head west in the direction of Sebastopol about ¼ mile to Alder Avenue. Turn right on Alder and then turn right on the first street, which is Ford Lane (Cotati Cottages sign). Proceed to the end of Ford Lane and park in the gravel parking spaces. The Clubhouse is the small building on the northeast corner of Ford Lane and Starr Court. There is limited parking near the clubhouse. If the gravel parking area is full, please park on the east side of Alder Avenue. The address is 8050 Starr Court, should you need it for a GPS.





A Note from the Chairman

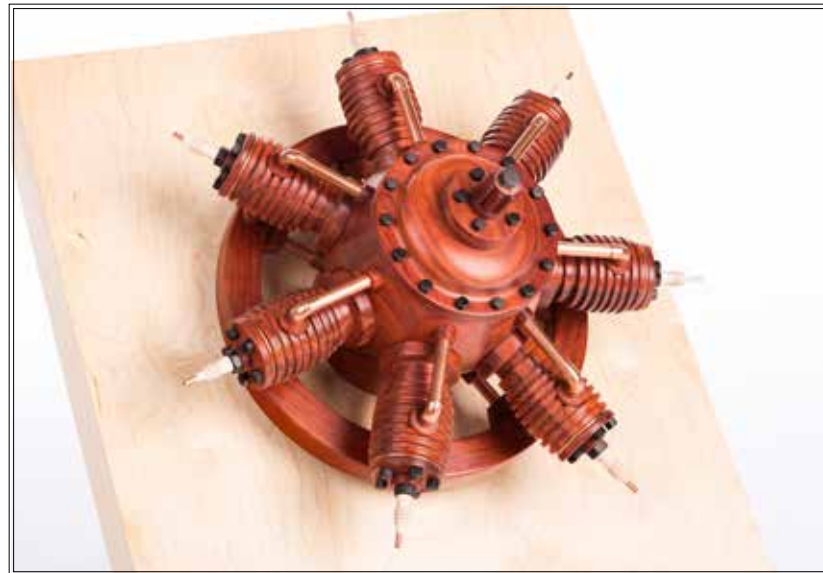
Bill Taft

I have never had a strong appreciation of Studio Furniture. I think it is because I never took the opportunity to look at it. Our visit to Garry Knox Bennett's shop and home sure changed my view. I could have spent the whole day just looking at the furniture in his studio, each piece different, and each piece a work of art. Every meeting I learn something, something about myself, something that changes the way I see things. That's why I like our meetings. Our May meeting will feature Scott Constable, an architect and woodworker, who is active in promoting art and design, both strong interests of mine.

We have been working on our website recently. The Forum column on the homepage has been changed to the Woodworking Internet Roundup. The Forum wasn't being used much. This new feature is being updated frequently. Take a look at it on a regular basis. Thank you, Michael Wallace, for making this work.

The schedule for **Artistry in Wood 2016** has been set. The Show is in September and October again this year. The schedule is included on page 7 of this issue, and all of the information about entering work should be on our website by the time you read this. It's time to get to work on that project; you only have four months left to complete it.

Once again, my goal is to bring more members into sharing the duties of running the Association. If you are interested in finding out what is involved, please contact me.



NCC-1701d by Donovan Miller



Rosewood Dreams by Scott Borski



Geisha Bar Stool by Dugan Essick


Artistry in Wood photos
by Tyler Chartier

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Visiting Garry Knox Bennett

by Art Hofmann

About forty members and their friends visited Garry Knox Bennett at his ground floor shop in Oakland on April 9th at 11 am. We found him seated on a high bar stool chair, wearing his work clothes uniform, seated at his work table surrounded by the machines and implements accumulated through the many decades of his career as a maker of Studio Furniture. Grif Okie, a longtime friend of Garry's, was present, and he and Garry engaged in a kind of extended riff about their friendship in furniture making, a ramble of anecdotes that was endlessly interesting, at times serious, at times hilariously funny, old masters in conversation. Once in a while others posed questions. All this lasted for half an hour, until it was time to explore the premises, which consisted

of a back workroom, accessible through a door, and the whole of the second floor and third floor, where Garry lives with his wife, Sylvia.

Except for the shop, where many pieces are in progress, the entire building is

filled with pieces produced by Garry, or in some cases, pieces that he has acquired over the course of his lifetime from other makers. Names such as Art Carpenter, Judy McKee, Sam Maloof and our own Jeffery Dale are represented here. In addition to this inventory, which is more than enough to fill a museum, Garry referred several

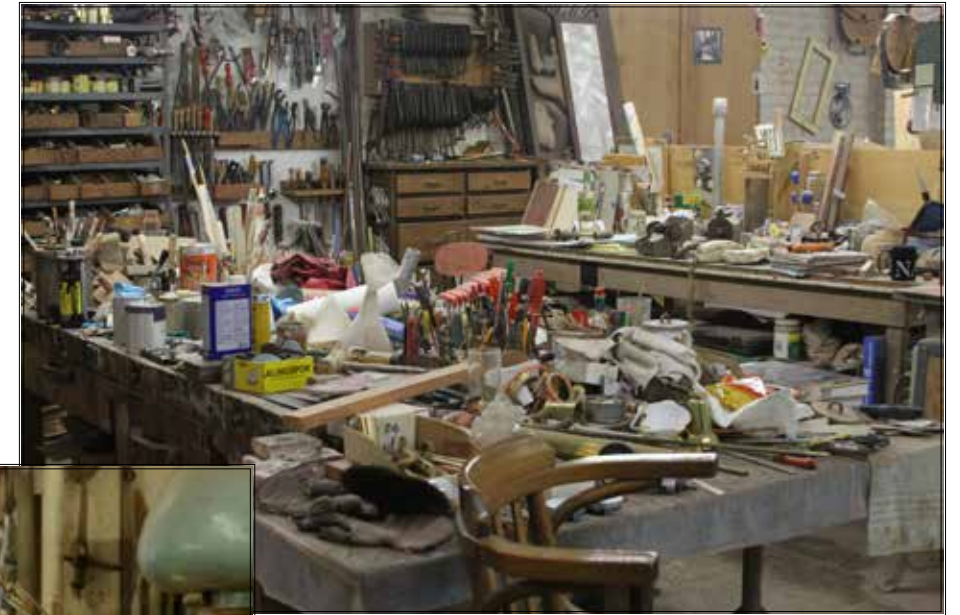


Photo by Jose Cuervo

Sometime at the beginning of his career he began making clocks. He has always made things in series, and so this became a series of clocks. The clocks were shown in Philadelphia, where they sold out. In the years when he was starting (and here he turned to Grif for confirmation) there were many galleries and places to show, unlike today. He would work for a year of a series, and then show at places like Schneiderman in Philadelphia or Leo Kaplan in New York. A show in those days would sell out: people wanted furniture.

This continued into the mid-nineties, when it all stopped. Schools are not teaching art now; they are teaching computers. (Garry professed to know nothing about this world, not even how to turn one on, though he admitted knowing how to work his TV pretty well). But the years before computers came to dominate our lives were heady times. Grif chimed in: Baulines Craft Guild taught classes through U.C. Berkeley that were held on weekends. Shop tours were a featured part of these; their catalogue went out to 250,000 people and courses were often sold out. Garry opined: Wendel Castle, who is the best wood artist that has ever come along, has made the transition



Grif Okie & Garry Knox Bennett

Photo by Jose Cuervo

times to another place somewhere beyond Fruitdale Avenue, where he owns or rents space, also filled with pieces.

Garry started off by telling us that he went to art school, to Arts and Crafts (now CCA, formerly CCAC) and got a very good education in design —art design, not furniture design. He has told students throughout the years of the importance of a design education, the study of proportions and such, and color, too. Color is an element that is very difficult to deal with in furniture making.



Photo by Jeff Rice

to computers, but his work suffers a little bit because some of it looks computer derived. He uses the computer and a CNC machine to do the stack laminations in one-tenth of the time.



Photo by Jose Cuervo

Garry has been in this building since 1968, but had a large fire there that destroyed the third floor. Not a good idea to have your house burn down. After the Loma Prieta quake in 1989, the city made him reinforce the structure, and now it is overly strong, enough to support two more floors. A discussion about the history of the building ensued. Here, after he bought the place, Garry manufactured roach clips, for which purpose he bought some used plating equipment. Intel had him plate products, too, as the computer industry started up.

The “nail cabinet” was mentioned by Grif Okie, and Garry gestured to a remote wall, where it was stored in a box container. One incensed furniture maker asked him how the cabinet must

have felt when he drove the 16 penny nail through its door. He responded by asking how the tree must have felt when it met the chain saw that felled it. The nail was a reaction to the what Garry felt was the over-fussy craftsmanship and pretense about woodwork.

This led to a story about James Krenov, who, in his inimitable fashion, inhabiting the role of the ever-principled artist per se, was less than friendly in meeting Garry for the first time at a show venue in Ghirardelli Square. JK stood for quiet, contemplative woodwork, well executed; Garry for art pieces that make the viewer see the world anew. Krenov refused to shake hands, and walked away; Garry wrote him a note, calling him a rude little turd. Krenov subsequently apologized for his actions in a note. Garry has and

had nothing against the fine craftsmanship, and to this moment maintains a live-and-let-live attitude.

Mike Wallace mentioned Art Carpenter, who had written about Garry and Grif in the preface of his



Photo by Bob Roudman



Photo by Bob Roudman

book. This led to Garry’s talking about Art Carpenter, about drinking with him in Bolinas, and the fact that the San Andreas Fault ran right through his property. Grif said all of Carpenter’s buildings were just put up on cinder blocks, on the principle that if the building fell over, it would be a simple matter to get it functional again. It was apparent that Grif and Garry enjoyed each other’s company back in the day. Also, Art Carpenter wrote really well, says Garry.

Jeff Rice brought up the Michael Stone book, *Contemporary American Woodworkers*, now a classic, about which Garry reminisced. Sam Maloof was generous to a fault, but tight as a tick with a dollar.



Photo by Jeff Rice

Garry, speaking of himself, says he made furniture without the influences of other furniture makers. Instead, he sees his influences in artists like Brancusi and Noguchi. "I am a furniture maker, a decorative artist," he says of himself. He does not consider himself a big-name artist, but a skilled maker.

Garry has never drawn plans for his furniture, nor made models, just went for it. Found objects aim him in a certain direction. He prides himself on being able to put together something quickly and well. Grif said that the way Garry worked was almost like watching a film: one table might have a cloud for a base; the second, a lightning bolt; the third, God himself. You could almost see the visual logic of the progression as the series unfolded. Garry did a chair show once, and he said chairs are hard to make. They have to be comfortable, strong, and aesthetically pleasing. After his house burned, he says, he had to get back to work. He did a chair series working twelve to fourteen hour days, and produced 120 chairs. He had two or three different chairs going at one time. A friend gave him

a show, which then traveled around the U.S. to seven different museums. Luckily, too, the chairs sold out. Grif is one lucky owner.

As this phase of our visit was ending, Garry talked about his assistant, Alison McLennan, an excellent craftsman and very able furniture artist. He then urged us to visit his collection and the back workroom.

The number of pieces and their quality was astounding, and impossible to describe in detail. There was a great deal of variety. Impressions of the day by the members must have been startlingly diverse. Each piece demanded that the viewer re-think that object's everyday function: yes, there were lamps, clocks, chairs, sofas, rockers, desks, and, and, and... But each piece challenged the everyday concept of its function.

Two pieces are embedded in my memory, though I have no idea why. The first is a step stool in the kitchen on the second floor. It looks like a few very thick boards just thrown together, possibly of elm. There is a hole in the center that is just right to put a hand through and carry. It has a rustic quality, barely a lump on the floor in some ways, but its clunky chunks invite use because it looks reliable. It is a real object, not some manufactured thing, refined and rustic at the same time.

Another detail that stood out for me was the orange center of a clock. I had to look at it twice, and then a third time to see that it was the hour hand, and actually moving. I think that this clock imitated the solar system, earth, moon and stars. And so on and so on, one amazing piece after another, as if someone had gone

into a gallery waving a checkbook and simply said, "I'll take all of it."

This collection represents earthly riches worth having. None of the pieces are labeled, and Garry's own pieces are displayed with the others, all of them absorbing. The intermingling continues to the third floor where there are some of the most iconic pieces from the last fifty years. The third floor has an atrium, so the Bennetts' home is filled with light, a wonderful way to live in the city. There are great pieces by Judy McKee, Art Carpenter and Sam Maloof there, where the maker is so apparent no label is necessary. Garry is an admirable man, a protean spirit and a hard worker, who has a generous spirit. He has led a life closely surrounded by his own art and the art of others. These furnishings reflect his vision and the utter delight of their making.

Our profound thanks to the Bennetts.



Garry & Sylvia Bennett, Carol & Bob Roudman

Photo by Alex Lobodovsky



Photos this page by Jeff Rice, Bob Roudman, Alex Lobodovsky and Jose Cuervo



Artistry in Wood 2016 - Call for Entries



Since 1978 the Sonoma County Woodworkers Association has presented to the public an annual exhibit showcasing our members' creativity. Beginning in 1989, the Sonoma County Museum has partnered with the SCWA in providing the venue for the exhibit. **Artistry in Wood** has become an annual favorite, attracting thousands of individuals interested in fine woodworking.

Entry in **Artistry in Wood** is open to all woodworkers. If you are not a member of the SCWA, a requirement to enter the show, you may join when submitting your entry. Entry Guidelines and Entry Forms as well as Membership Application Forms are available on our website: <http://sonomawoodworkers.com>



Horses by William Taft

Artistry in Wood 2016 – Show Schedule

Thursday, September 8th, 9 am to 4 pm - Entry Day

Wednesday, September 14th, 7 pm - Judging and SCWA Show Awards Meeting

Friday, September 16th, Museum Members Opening Reception

Saturday, September 17th, - Show Opening

Tuesday, October 4th, 7 pm - SCWA Members Meeting at the Museum

Sunday, October 9th, - Show Closing

Monday, October 10th, 9 am to 4 pm - Pickup Day



Radio California by Stephen Hamner

Entry Information

The Entry Deadline is Entry Day, Thursday, September 8th. Submission of Entry Forms prior to Entry Day is not required. All entries are to be delivered to the Sonoma County Museum by 4 pm, Thursday, September 8th.

Entries are to be picked up from the Museum by 4 pm, Monday, October 10th.

Artistry in Wood is a juried Show. Entries will be juried by the SCWA Guild in accordance with the Jury Guidelines published in the Prospectus / Entry Form. All entries should be within the scope and spirit of fine woodworking.

Entries will be judged for awards by an independent panel of judges. Entries are accepted in the following categories: Furniture, Turning, Art, and Miscellany.

For further information, please review the Guidelines in the Prospectus / Entry Form found on the website.



Bowl from a Board by Alan Brickman



Shaker Modern by Dugan Essick

*Artistry in Wood photos
by Tyler Chartier*

Officers of the Association

<u>Chairman</u>	Bill Taft	<u>Secretary</u>	Lars Andersen
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<u>Treasurer</u>	Judith Garland	<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 nominal cost for paid members.

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.

Name _____ Email _____

Address _____

City, Zip _____ Home Phone _____

Cell Phone _____ Work Phone _____

What can you do to help further the organizational goals of our volunteer-run association? Please tell us how you would like to help:

Please send check and completed application to:

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