



WOOD FORUM

Newsletter of the Sonoma County Woodworkers Association

Volume 37, Issue 4

April 2017

Greene and Greene Redux

Our meeting this month (Tuesday, April 4, 7pm) will feature an in-depth look at a pair of tables built by Mark Tindley and shown in the 2016 *Artistry in Wood* show. The mahogany and ebony tables are executed in the style popularized by the brothers Charles and Henry Greene in the early 1900's. While faithful to the Greene and Greene style, Mark has advanced the design in several ways, as he hinted at during the October 2016 Maker's Meeting at the Museum. If you missed that meeting, don't miss this one. As an exhaustive documentarian, we can expect Mark to take us on a detailed trip through the process of building these showpiece tables. Guests are welcome.

- Joe Scannell



Photo by Tyler Chartier

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

Thomas Vogel

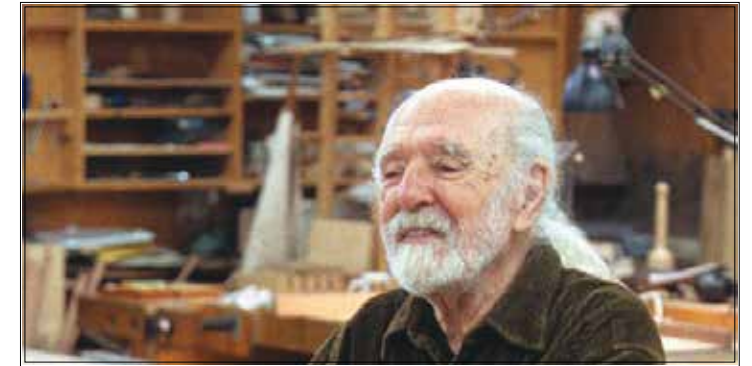
Well, April is here and we have had three amazing lectures already this year. Tim Killen killed it with his lecture on SketchUp, thanks so much Tim. Michael Wallace illuminated us with his knowledge of Mid-Century Modern furniture, Michael you gave a great lecture, Bravo. Tyler Chartier's presentation made me buy a new lens for my camera. Mark Tindley is next, I cannot wait. Mark is an experienced presenter, so this should be great.

Hopefully the great take away from the preceding paragraph is that the SCWA has a rich schedule of lectures/presentations, social functions, and *Artistry In Wood*. Which is basically why we are all members, right? We have no Program Director right now. It is here I ask for one of you dear members to step up and take on this ultimately quite fun responsibility. I have full confidence that the board can handle the upcoming year and make things work out smoothly. That is, however, not enough. We need someone who will add some vision and lead us into the next year. I guarantee a rich and rewarding experience for anyone stepping up to this important responsibility.

Having said all that, our association is in good shape, with money in the bank, a nearly full schedule of speakers/ events, a board of dedicated officers, and *Artistry in Wood*, which is really a unique type of event here in North America. So go to your benches and let's fill our show with amazing woodwork.

THE *Krenov* FOUNDATION

2016 Artistry in Wood Krenov Award Winner



Local Motif (Coffee Table) by Derek Taylor

Photo by Tyler Chartier

SCWA Monthly Meeting

March 7, 2017

by Joe Scannell

The March meeting was called to order promptly at 7pm by Chairman Tom Vogel, who reminded us that the Program Chair is still empty and needs to be filled if the organization is to continue to function.

Tom asked if there were any new members or guests; there were none. He then introduced Show Chairman Don Jereb, who outlined the details for the next *Artistry in Wood* Show, as follows.

The museum is only able to offer us a November/December show slot. Our usual slot of August or September has been taken by a show that has a significant endowment committed to the museum. October is reserved for the annual Day of the Dead show. Unfortunately, there is no room for negotiation on the dates, which are November 17, 2017 through January 7, 2018.

On a positive note, Museum Director Eric Stanley said that their visitor traffic during the holiday season is significantly higher than their usual traffic in September.

The show in 2018 would be revert to the August/September slot. A member asked whether or not we could keep the November/December slot if we found that it was to our advantage. Don felt that was very likely should that be the case.

The business meeting was concluded with an introduction of the evening's speaker, Michael Wallace. Michael is a long time member of SCWA, and over the years he has served in various Board positions, most recently as the Web-master. His topic of discussion was the furniture style known as Mid-Century Modern.



Mid-Century Modern Furniture Design

by Michael Wallace

The term "Mid-Century Modern" covers all the "visual" arts from roughly 1945 through 1957 or perhaps later (there is no strong consensus as to the end date). During the production of most of the furniture and other objects (like buildings) of this time, there was no collective name for the things that were being produced other than "modern." It wasn't until the publication of the book, "Mid-Century Modern: Furniture of the 1950s" by Cara Greenberg (Harmony Books, 1984), that the name became into being. According to one account, Greenberg created the name on the fly.

It is now recognized as the name that encompasses the works that were being designed and built globally during these years, to include even Danish Modern. There were Mid-Century Modern works done not only in the US and Scandinavia, but France, the UK, Italy, and even Japan.

Beginnings

Mid-Century Modern, at least in furniture, can be derived from the ideas represented by the German

Bauhaus school. Founded in 1919 and lasting until 1933, Bauhaus was a school of art and craft founded by the architect Walter Gropius. Located initially in the Weimar Republic in Germany, it had attracted a stellar teaching staff, among them Paul Klee, Le

Corbusier, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, and Wassily Kandinsky. Adhering to the dictum "Form ever follows function" that came from American architect Louis Sullivan, Gropius defined the motto of the school as "We want an architecture adapted to our world of machines, radios and fast cars." It attracted students from all over Europe as well as North America.

One of the iconic Bauhaus furniture pieces is the Wassily Chair created in 1925 by Marcel Breuer, who was a carpenter at the school. He was enamored of steel tubing, and created a chair that is certainly forward looking. Just leather and steel, no wood, and a design that departs from prior periods.

In 1939, at the New York City Worlds Fair, the

American public was exposed to the modern designs not from Bauhaus but from Scandinavia. In 1940, the



The Wassily Chair

Museum of Modern Art sponsored a design contest called “Organic Design in Home Furnishings.” The top honors in the furniture design category were taken by Charles Eames and Eero Saarinen, who were instructors at Cranbrook Academy in Michigan. The ideas of Mid-Century Modern were starting to take hold.



Small Desk by Eames and Saarinen

During the lean war years, when not much furniture was being produced, two companies made movements that allowed them to dominate furniture manufacturing in the 1950's: Herman Miller and Knoll International.

Herman Miller and Knoll International

Founded in 1905 as the Star Furniture Company, Herman Miller as a company was formally incorporated with that name in 1923 by a former clerk who rose to president – Dirk Jan De Pree, who named the company after his father-in-law. De Pree was convinced to build modern furniture by his chief designer, Gilbert Rohde, who was hired in 1932.

Rohde's designs bridged the Art Deco and Modern worlds. However, Rohde died in 1944. In 1945, after publication of an article in Life magazine about a storage wall designed

by him, George Nelson was hired by De Pree as the company's main designer. Nelson believed that “Total design is nothing more or less than a process of relating everything to everything.” He promptly built a world class team of designers. Among them was Charles Eames. Along with Eames came his wife Ray, who he married when they were both at Cranbrook. It was a stroke of genius on Nelson's part. Though Nelson's designs were forward looking and certainly considered iconic Mid-Century Modern, the Eames were an added punch to the Herman Miller line. The Eames lounge chair and ottoman are recognized as a work of beauty and craft. Crafted in leather and rosewood veneer on molded plywood, the chair became an instant classic. While only a few hundred were built in 1956 when it was introduced, it has been copied and replicated around the world. Herman Miller continues to sell this chair today and is the only company authorized to use the Eames mark on the chair.

Knoll International was founded by Hans Knoll in 1938. He hired Florence Schust in 1941 as a designer, and they were married in 1946. They were responsible for getting the rights to sell Bauhaus furniture in the



Herman Miller Executive Desk by George Nelson

United States. Florence was the chief designer, and she brought in a team that included architect Eero Saarinen, furniture maker George Nakashima, and Danish designer Jen Risom. The company produced modern furniture and helped to bring the Danish Modern pieces to the American public.



Eames Lounge Chair and Ottoman

All in all, the ideals of the Mid-Century Modern designers and makers were to sell mass market furniture using materials like molded plywood, foam rubber, steel, etc. The items produced followed the Bauhaus aesthetic of no adornments, simple joinery (in fact most the joints were either dowels or butt joints), use of veneers, and design that facilitates building in a factory.

Rise of the Scandinavians

The element of craft was missing from Mid-Century Modern furniture from Herman Miller and Knoll, but it is an element present in works coming from Denmark, Sweden and Finland.

The recognized “Father” of Danish Modern was Kaare Klint (1888-1954), who created a school

for furniture at the Danish Royal Academy. Of the many well known furniture makers who followed in his footsteps, if not actually taught by Klint, were Hans Wegner, Finn Juhl and Børge Mogensen.

Many of the designs of Hans Wegner (1914-2007) are still in production today. His most famous piece, created in 1949 and simply called “The Chair” became famous because of its use by Kennedy and Nixon

in their Presidential debate in 1960. Wegner is known for his craft and careful selection of woods in his pieces. He designed over 500 chairs. He was quoted as saying “The chair does not exist. The good chair is a task one is never completely done with.”

Juhl and Mogensen were excellent designers whose works are highly desirable today and show a high degree of craftsmanship even though they were built in factories.

End of Mid-Century Modern

According to Cara Greenberg, the Mid-Century Modern era ended in 1957. Herman Miller found that it could not compete against cheap knockoffs, and abandoned the home market. Knoll also concentrated on the corporate market more as well. The market was swinging away from Modern furniture and toward the many alternatives. However, many other critics believe that Mid-Century Modern continued through the 60’s and even, some believe, into the early 1970’s.

Among the well known woodworkers during this later time period were Sam Maloof, Art Carpenter, and Wharton Esherick. All developed pieces that could be

considered part of the Mid-Century Modern aesthetic.

Today, Mid-Century Modern is again “red hot.” Magazines like *Atomic Ranch House*, *Dwell* and even *Architectural Digest* still tout the Mid-Century Modern look. It’s not going away. It seems to be a favorite among set designers, and shows up quite a bit in TV commercials and shows. The clean, simple, futuristic look fits into our style of living. Because it was developed as furniture with multiple purposes (a dining chair could easily be used as a side chair in a living room), it fits in with urban housing and its limited floor space.

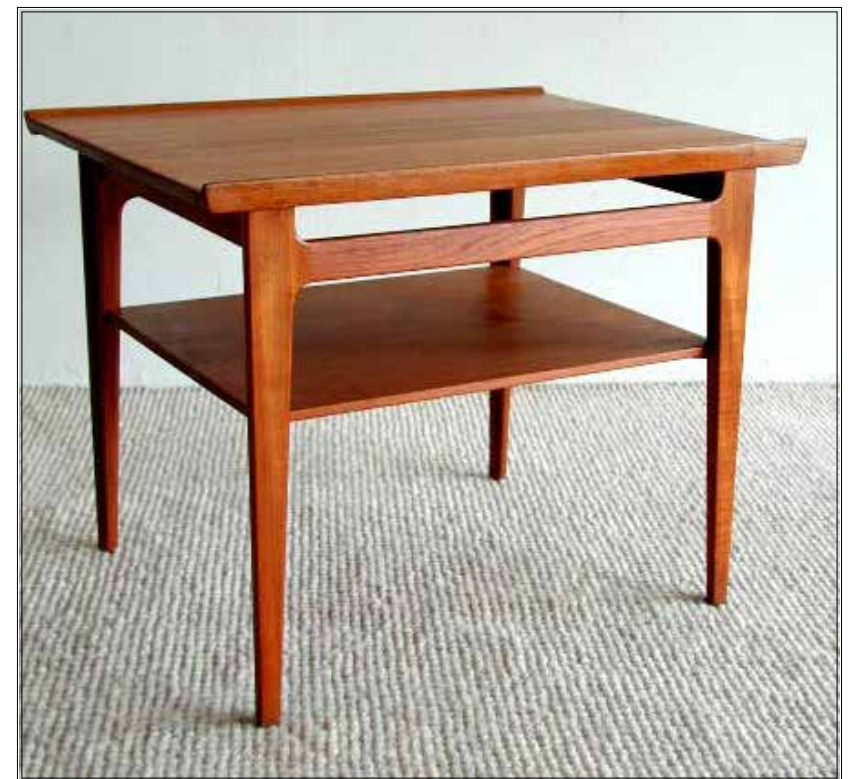
Christopher Kennedy, who just published “Making Midcentury Modern,” was asked when people would move away from Mid-Century Modern objects. He replied:



The Chair



Cabinet by Hans Wegner



Mid Century Danish Teak Side Table by Finn Juhl

“For me, the style is about simplicity in building materials, eschewing excess adornment, having a connection to the environment, and surrounding yourself with fewer things but things that have meaning. Those qualities are always going to be in style.”





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tylerchartier.com
tyler@tylerchartier.com
415.264.0638 • 707.386.4882

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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 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