FURNITURE DESIGN MARQUETRY VENEERING CARVING MILLWORK

WOOD FORUM

Newsletter of the Sonoma County Woodworkers Association

Volume 38, Issue 10

October 2018

TIMBER FRAMING TODAY

This month's SCWA guest speaker is Leif Calvin, founder of Timber Creations, Inc. He has been fabricating and raising timber frames all over the West Coast from Alaska to Hawaii since 1995. He has contributed to historic restorations, including Greene & Greene's Pratt House in Pasadena, numerous wineries, Hindu temples, Buddhist retreats, residences, pool houses and even a bus stop in Yosemite National Park.

Timber Creation's specialty is providing heavy timber, architectural and structural building components that feature traditional mortise and tenon joinery. Up until 2003 they fabricated all timber frames by hand, using primarily reclaimed Douglas fir timber, but in that year they invested in 3D CAD software, enabling them to model and design frames more efficiently and show those models to clients. The digital models also enabled them to take advantage of CNC timber mills to automate the milling of some of the timbers.

The meeting will once again be held at

180 Studios
Todd Road, Santa Rosa.

Tuesday, October 2, 7pm

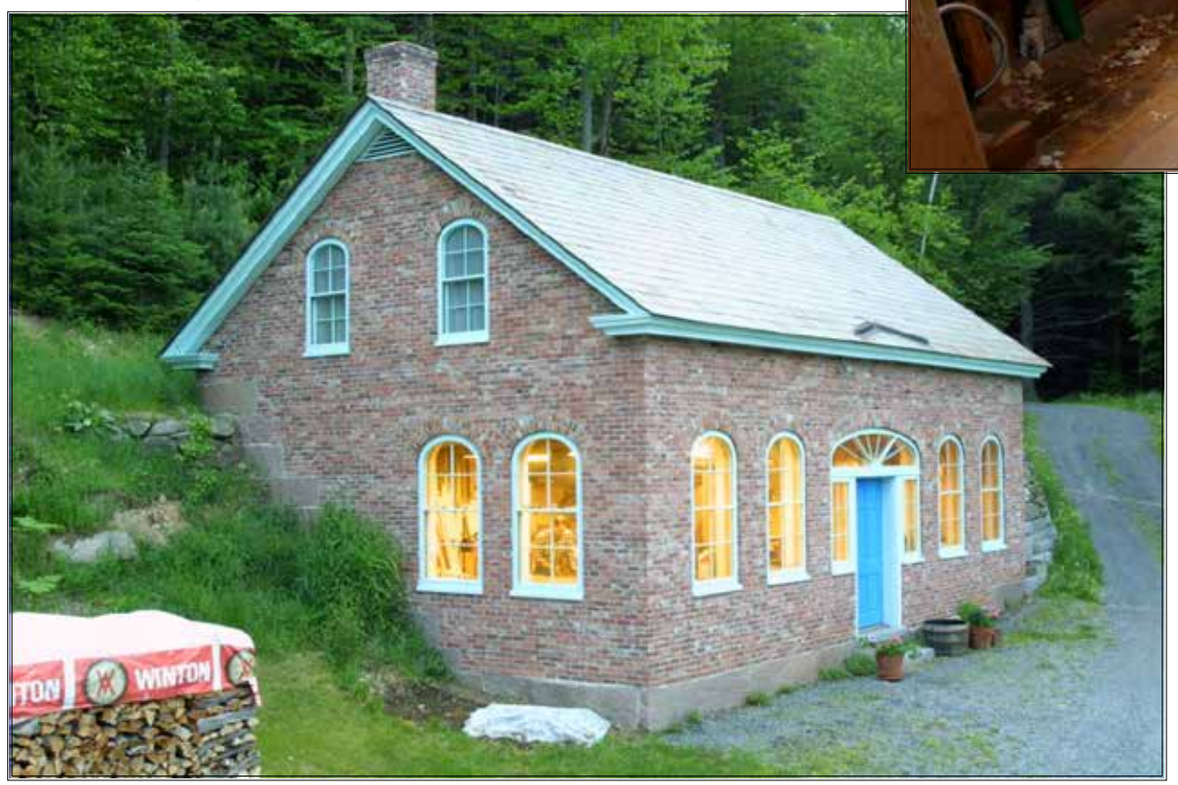
SCWA Monthly Meeting

September 14, 2018

by Joe Scannell

Chairman Thomas Vogel opened the meeting by welcoming guests and members, then Show Chair Don Jereb made a brief introduction of the evening's guest speaker, Garrett Hack.

Mr. Hack makes his home in Vermont, where he performs woodworking magic in a shop he built on 24 acres that includes a sizable woodlot with an enviable variety of hardwood trees that he harvests for his own use, both in woodworking and for heating. He also operates a small farm with his draft horse Jazz, a couple of cows and a calf, chickens, etc. He and his wife Carolyn grow hay and corn for the animals, and vegetables for themselves. Though not completely self-sufficient, they come closer than most; electrical power is derived from solar, water from a well. All in all, a very idyllic existence.



Although he studied civil engineering and architecture at Princeton, he quickly moved into woodworking as a career. He has been making furniture full-time since 1976. He further divides his time by teaching, and working as a contributing editor for ***Fine Woodworking*** magazine.

Back in 1993 his shop was a wing of his house, but with five children under the roof, he needed to move out. He built a very picturesque shop a short distance away, with granite for the foundation, used bricks salvaged from a bank building, and slate for the roof. In a very real sense, the shop is part of his advertising. The interior is beautiful: wood floors, cherry wainscoting and plaster walls, large windows providing abundant light, and the sweet smell of wood shavings and shellac. When a customer walks in the door, they are hooked.

He has most of the basic machine tools you might expect: tablesaw, planer, 27" bandsaw, mortiser, lathe, jointer. But the tools he is obviously fondest of are his planes and chisels. English, American, and even some Japanese, he uses them all to produce what he refers to as a "polished" surface. The wood is exquisitely smooth right off the plane, as though it had already been given a few coats of shellac. No sandpaper for this guy. Even a card scraper doesn't get much work in Garrett Hack's shop.

The Shaker style has been influential in his designs. They were known for beautiful materials, good proportion, minimum ornamentation. But because he does not subscribe to minimum ornamentation, you may see pinned joints, rosewood knobs, extra details on a turning, or some inlay to emphasize a line. He designs a piece so that it catches your eye from across the room, and makes you want to draw closer for a better view. When you do, you notice some of these finer details, and the excitement builds. This is what sells his work.

He makes frequent use of cockbeads on drawers, particularly curved drawers, which he implements by bent lamination. The cockbead, often ebony, covers the edges, hiding the laminae. It covers the entire top of the drawer front, and is located in a rabbet on the sides and bottom. He was asked about his bending technique. He finds steam bending to be an unreliable way to get a precise curves, which is especially important with multiple drawers. So he uses a dedicated form to get the shape he wants, and uses LOTS of clamps. He is skeptical about the ability of a vacuum bag to clamp hard enough to get a good lamination. His adhesive choice for bent work is either Unibond or Titebond III.

He has turned to the demilune form many times, and prefers an elliptical shape. He also likes to dress them up with interesting aprons, inlay, banding, legs with socks of ebony or precious metal. He has been exploring the use of mother-of-pearl and abalone shell.

He builds only with solid wood, and uses no plywood or MDF except for templates and forms.

With a slide show, he took us through some of his creations and discussed each. ***Demi Demi*** (above) is a small demilune table featuring a lot of banding and a delicate feel enhanced by the concave bevel of the underside of the top.

He harvests much of the wood he builds with from his own woodlot. One species he seems to use a lot is yellow birch ("White birch is for popsicle sticks"). It is hard and difficult to plane, but exhibits wonderful chatoyance. Another demilune he calls ***X-ray*** (below) is made of curly birch, with Brazilian rosewood inlay. Because the top is 15" deep he had to join two boards. The curly figure made an invisible join impossible, so he scattered ebony dots over the surface to distract. His preferred finish is shellac, and in this case he added some color to the shellac to give the piece an aged look.

Pearl (right) is an investigation of mother of pearl and water. The legs are apple, the apron cherry, and European pear tops it off. The top and the cockbead on the apron are wiggling like water, and mother-of-pearl "fish" swim along the edge.

Photos in this story courtesy Garrett Hack

Hack doesn't make a lot of chairs. This is one that came from a design he picked up in a class in Boston some years ago. It is steam bent ash, with a curved rail and a Danish cord seat, which acts as a tension joint to tie everything together. The joint at the crest rail turned out to be a very complex one, but important, because it must handle a person leaning back against it, or lifting the chair from the crest rail, and it must absorb the shock of the chair falling over backwards and landing on the crest rail.

He touched briefly on his method of design. He is not a slave to the Golden Rectangle or Fibonacci numbers. Instead, he advises "just trust your eye."

As previously stated, Hack likes to dress his work in eye-catching ornamentation, such as the ebony cockbeads seen on this butternut chest of drawers. Not as easily seen are the beads incised with a scratch stock into the horizontal edges of the drawers in the huntboard, below. Another treat for the up-close viewer are the knobs on the huntboard, which feature an inlay of spirally wound brass wire. An unexpected surprise for the alert buyer.

LOTS of clamps!

Port & Starboard

Ripplicious

A straight line is a missed opportunity.

The Class

On Saturday, September 15, twenty five woodworkers gathered at 180 Studios to continue hearing from the master wordworker from Vermont. Garrett Hack again opened the session with some slides, depicting furniture styles that have influenced him and others. This evolved into a discussion of construction techniques, including bent lamination, inlay and cockbeading, handplaning, and the two types of joinery he uses the most: sliding dovetails, and mortise and tenon.

Then he began a demonstration of each joint and how it might be used. Since he works only with solid wood, wood movement merits serious consideration. In a typical cabinet the corners are formed by two boards meeting at their ends. One mechanically sound way to join them is by using traditional dovetails. This can be a lot of time-consuming work, but it solves the front-to-back expansion problem. A much simpler solution is the sliding dovetail, where one side is left long and a cross-grain dovetail slot is cut in it. The other piece is then cut to form a tail along its width. The difficulty with this method arises when assembling the joint. If the fit is snug, which it should be, it will seize up when the glue causes the wood to swell. At this point you will be lucky to get the joint to either seat completely or come apart. The solution is to make it a *tapered* dovetail joint, which as he demonstrated is not much more difficult to implement.

His method for mortise and tenon joinery involves outfitting a tablesaw with two identical sawblades separated by a spacer. The spacer thickness is such as to create a tenon thickness that fits in the mortise

made by a standard router bit. With these two tools you can cut joints all day long with consistent results. The shoulders are also cut on the table saw, although he likes to refine these with a shoulder plane, which he also demonstrated.

Along the way he used his handplanes incessently. But eventually it was time for sharpening, which he did using a very fine Shapton glass stone and a hone he made from a piece of wood and some diamond paste. Essentially, he squeezed a bit of fine diamond paste onto a flat board, added a drop of kerosene, spread it around, and gave "scary sharp" a whole new meaning.

He says he does not have a lot of jigs in his shop, preferring to improvising them as needed. By way of demonstrating, he quickly set up a "shooting board," sloped to use the entire blade, right on the benchtop. When he was through edging the board he was working with, the shooting board went back into the scrap pile to become something else.

On Sunday afternoon of the two day class he showed some of the techniques he uses for inlay and banding. The banding is done with a double-toothed blade in a scratch stock when the groove is near an edge. Curved grooves are made with a beam compass set for the required radius and outfitted with a scratch cutter of the appropriate width (photo below).

Photos in this story by Jose Cuervo

The same scratch stock (right) can hold a cutter of virtually any shape, and he has many dozens of cutters he makes from saw blades. With these he cuts beads of any size called for, and these can be cut on a straight edge or a curve. The ultimate in versatility.

In conclusion, a very big thank-you to Don Jereb for arranging this memorable weekend, and to Garrett Hack for giving us his time. It was wonderful to watch how one of the greats of modern woodworking approaches the art, and how he works around problems as they surface.

Old Dog, New Trick, Revisited

by Joe Scannell

Last month I wrote about an adaptation I made to a shop-made tablesaw fence attachment. If you don't recall the article, go back and read it again.

When Mark Tindley read the article he emailed me that "Your zero-clearance trick scares me a little - I worry that the weight of the fence is inadequate to hold all the forces that could make the 1/8" sheet move and kick back - from the workpiece being cut, or just the movement of the blade itself, or, worst of all, accidentally knocking it."

I immediately took another look at my arrangement and realized he was right. Although I have used it a few times without repercussions, it is still *a potential accident waiting to happen*. My apologies. I have discussed this with Bob Roudman, who suggested perhaps some magnets would be useful to stabilize the plywood and keep it from moving. As it happened, I had a very powerful magnet available which I used. I placed it on the outer edge of the plywood "insert" and it worked so well I could only remove it with difficulty. So, for me the problem may be solved (thanks, Bob), but I think anyone considering adding my "zero clearance insert" to their tablesaw should give the concept their own evaluation.

Photo by Jose Cuervo

Shiva/Shakti by Jeffrey Dale

Volunteers Needed for *Artistry in Wood*

November 5th (Monday) 12-4PM: 2 volunteers

November 6th (Tuesday) 9AM-3PM: 2 volunteers

November 7th (Wednesday) 9AM-4PM: 2 volunteers

November 8th (Thursday) 9AM-5PM: 2 volunteers
Offloading and placing entries on the floor.

November 9th (Friday) 1-3PM: Guild Review of entries
No volunteers needed.

November 12th (Monday) 9AM-5PM Photo Day:
3 volunteers needed to help photographer move, stage, and photograph pieces. Volunteers instrumental in lighting.

November 13th (Tuesday) 9AM-11AM 1 volunteer
Judges arrive at 11AM

November 14th (Wednesday) 9AM-4PM. 1 volunteer

November 15th (Thursday) 1 volunteer

November 16th(Friday) 9AM-12noon 1 volunteer

Officers of the Association

Chairman	Tom Vogel	Secretary	Lars Andersen
Program Chair	Chuck Root	Guild Chair	Mark Tindley
Treasurer	Judith Garland	Show Chair	Don Jereb
Editor	Joe Scannell	Web Master	Rod Fraser

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 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.

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