

Sonoma County Museum

Educator Guide

Artistry in Wood
25th Anniversary



Don Ajello, Petaluma Pecker Series, *Not Another Pecker*

Sept. 21st - Oct. 20th, 2013

History of Exhibition

For twenty-five years, the Sonoma County Museum and the Sonoma County Woodworkers Association (SCWA) have collaborated to present *Artistry in Wood*, a major showcase of fine regional craftsmanship. Over the years, *Artistry in Wood* has evolved from a modest exhibition featuring the work of local woodworkers, into something greater. While firmly grounded in Sonoma County, *Artistry in Wood* also now has a broader, regional reputation, drawing participants from Sacramento, Mendocino County, San Diego, and other areas of California. It has become one of the most respected annual exhibitions of woodwork in the state.

For the twenty-fifth anniversary of the exhibition, it is important to recall the genesis of the Sonoma County Woodworkers Association, formed by a handful of local woodworkers in the spring of 1978. The SCWA, initially formed to assist professional woodworkers, has stood the test of time and made a lasting impact on regional woodworking for both amateurs and professionals. The influence and reach of the organization only increased with the first *Artistry in Wood* exhibition in 1988.

The exhibition reflects the legacy of arts and crafts on California's north coast, as well as the local resonance between wood and the landscape. The work in the exhibition shows strong historical and regional influences, such as the distinctive style and philosophy exemplified by the woodworking program at the College of the Redwoods in Fort Bragg, led for many years by James Krenov. Instructors and students from that program make frequent appearances in the exhibition, both as judges and exhibitors. Beyond the more traditional forms of furniture and classic objects, *Artistry in Wood* is also known for work that pushes the boundaries of wood as an artistic medium. The large-scale work in the Museum's sculpture garden, *Sequoia* by local artist Bruce Johnson, is representative of the unique and bold approach taken by some of the artists who exhibit their work in this show.

The exhibition was evaluated by expert judges for the Best of Show and other recognitions. This year's judges are Jefferson Shallenberger, a classically trained craftsman from the College of the Redwoods' Fine Woodworking Program in Northern California; Elizabeth Lundburg, an accomplished wood-turner from Benicia, California who studied with master turners, such as Allan Batty of England and whose work has evolved to include vessel-oriented forms and sculptural carvings; and Patricia Kirkish, the creator and manager, along with her husband, Steve, of Dovetail Collection, one of the most respected galleries on the west coast dedicated to fine woodworking. The gallery has built a nationwide reputation for quality and its rigorous evaluation of work for artistry, craftsmanship, functionality and emotional appeal. All entries were juried by the SCWA Guild. Awards and recognition for amateur entries were also determined by the Guild.

Select Artist Bios

Joseph Scannell

Joe Crow's Book Nook

Curly alder, jatoba, California live oak, madrone, bloodwood, maple, shellac finish



AWARD OF EXCELLENCE

Artist Statement:

I spend a lot of time at the kitchen table, both reading and drawing. Because many of the books to be stored were oversized, wither horizontally or vertically, and space for a bookcase was quite limited, a curved design evolved that accommodated both requirements. I had a lovely piece of bloodwood that demanded to be made into drawer fronts. It was my venture into bent lamination; the blood wood started out as a board only four inches longer than the end product, and just under an inch thick. It was bandsawn into five equally thick veneers, and glued over a curved form. The finished drawer fronts are 5/8" thick. The handmade dovetails were an additional challenge, due to the curve and odd angles.

The jatoba legs taper 1/32" as the pass through the curvy alder shelf, and the remaining parts are joined for the most part using unseen dovetails. The end panels are California live oak, from a tree that fell on my house a few years ago. The crow is ebonized madrone, the beak is black locust, the eye is wenge (iris) and ebony (pupil); the glint is a chip of enamel from a cow's tooth.

Tom Ribbecke

Seven String "Monterey" Guitar Arch Top

Spruce, big leaf maple, ebony fittings, koa inlay



BEST OF SHOW

The 17" arch top is an "X" braced traditional instrument, descendent from the D'Angelico school of instruments. It features a hand carved and graduated top and back. In most cases the back is of bigleaf maple. Tops are either Sitka spruce or Englemann spruce. Necks are constructed from matching maple and feature the same quality construction method detailed for the semi-hollow type.

They are available in traditional or modern shape and several peghead designs are also offered, which are bound in wood. Scale length, inlay, body depth, pickups and finish are all arranged to achieve a particular performance goal. Hardware is the best available quality and tailpiece is ebony and graphite. Single cutaway is standard; binding is plastic or wood. Pickguard, bridge and fingerboard are ebony.

There are two predominant models of archtop; the Monterey and the Homage. The Monterey features a cascade type peghead design and the Homage which has a peghead design that resembles a D'Angelico.

Bio:

Tom Ribbecke has been playing and carrying on with guitars most of his life. Always a musician as well as a maker, he has built a reputation as one of the world's foremost luthiers and makers of archtop and Halfling™ guitars. In 2004, Tom founded the Ribbecke Guitar Company, and maintains his private practice in Healdsburg CA.

Kerry Marshall

Sound+Beauty=Music

Re-used white oak barrel staves, Japanese calligraphic on redwood



AWARD OF EXCELLENCE

Artist Statement:

This Music Stand is part of a series of designs I have been working on using French white oak wine barrels that have finished their usefulness for making wine. I am interested in creating furniture from these barrels instead of having them cut in half and turned into yet more planters. Working with the natural curve of the oak barrel staves is what attracted me to the project, and it is also a constant challenge. The wonderful color of the wine soaked interior was an additional treat.

The slice of Old Growth redwood comes from reclaimed logs from Big River in Mendocino. The two Japanese calligraphy characters are “sound” and “beauty”, which when written together create the word “music”.

Michael Masumoto & Kai Herd

Fantasium

South American walnut, North American black walnut, alder, kiln formed glass



AWARD OF EXCELLENCE

Artist Statement:

The *Fantasium* is an illuminated presentation table designed to greet visitors in a large front foyer; it could also substitute for a fireplace mantel as a focal point in a seating arrangement.

The *Fantasium* was inspired by Disney's 1940 animated film, *Fantasia*. It depicts a Japanese Maple tree, dancing for Joy, its anthropomorphic leaves thrown into the wind in a celebration of Living; it is a meditation on permanence and impermanence, on Life and Death, on the natural cycle. It says, Rejoice, for Life is Fantastic... and don't take it for granted. All we have is Now.

The *Fantasium* tree is made of hundreds of individually tapered pieces of South American walnut, glued into bent laminations; the tree took more than one year of full time work to sculpt. The panes are not painted, they are fused in multiple planes of custom-made glass created from powders applied with thimble-sized sifters, cut, fit together and kiln-carved; these 18 panes of glass represent two years of full time work. The lighting system is custom-made with 11 separately controlled zones of color-shining RGB LEDs. All together the *Fantasium* required two shops working full time for three years to make it.

Glossary of Terms

Applied Carving

A background which is worked separately and then applied, rather than being worked in place.

Birds-eye Figure

A figure on wood, usually maple and a few other species, composed of many small rounded areas resembling a birds eye.

Cross Cut

A cut which runs across the board perpendicular to the grain.

Curl

A term to describe what happens to wood as it grows. Curly wood looks like sand on the beach or river bottom with repeated ripples in the grain. The grain goes up and down causing the unusual look in the wood. Also called "tiger" grain or "fiddleback".

Inlay

A decorative technique of inserting pieces of contrasting, often colored materials into depressions in a base object to form patterns or pictures that normally are flush with the matrix. In a wood matrix, inlays commonly use wood veneers, but other materials like shells, mother-of-pearl, horn or ivory may also be used.

Filler

A substance that is used to fill pores and irregularities on the surface of material to decrease the porosity before applying a finishing coat.

Flush

When two adjoining surfaces are perfectly even with one another.

Gouge

A chisel like tool with a curved cutting edge.

Grain

The appearance, size and direction of the alignment of the fibers of the wood.

Joint

The point at which two or more pieces of wood are joined together.

Marquetry

The art and craft of applying pieces of veneer to a structure to form decorative patterns, designs or pictures. The technique may be applied to case furniture or even seat furniture, to decorative small objects with smooth, 'venerable' surfaces or to freestanding pictorial panels appreciated in their own right.

Laminate

The product of bonding layers together as in beams or plywood.

Primary Wood

This is the wood that is on the main or primary surfaces of a piece of furniture. These are the premium or money woods of the cabinet. Woods of lesser value, that are on the sides or not seen is called Secondary Wood.

Raised Grain

The roughened condition of sanded wood when the hard latewood rises above the soft early-wood when moisture is applied.

Turning

An ornamental or functional part formed by rotating it on a lathe (a machine with a rotating drive for shaping wood or other materials).

Patina

A sheen on wood produced by age, wear, and polishing; or any such acquired change of a surface through age and exposure. Patinas can provide a protective layer to materials that would otherwise be damaged by corrosion or weathering. They may also be aesthetically appealing.

Wood Finishing

Refers to the process of refining or protecting a wooden or carved surface to create a sheen with oils, varnishes, etc.

Glossary terms contributed in part by www.sawdustmaking.com and Wikipedia.

Lesson Plan Resources

1. Art Projects: Themed projects without using wood

Grades 3rd -12th: Create an ancient carving using cast paper:

<http://cdn.dickblick.com/lessonplans/ancient-bas-relief-casting/ancient-bas-relief-casting-ancient-bas-relief-casting.pdf>

2. Science and Art : Learning about types of trees, wood and bark rubbing art project

Activities for Grades 2nd -5th and 9-12th:

<http://voices.yahoo.com/wood-lesson-plans-children-3854718.html?cat=4>

3. Art and cultural traditions of wood carving: Iowa artist Harley Refsal (independent artist not connected or in SCM's exhibition).

Activities and video for elementary and high school:

<http://www.iowaartscouncil.org/programs/influence-and-inspiration/assets/lesson-plans-harley-refsal.pdf>

Other resources:

- Sonoma County Woodworker's Association
(Only members of SCWA are exhibited in *Artistry in Wood*.)

<http://www.sonomawoodworkers.com/>

- James Krenov website. James led the College of the Redwoods' Fine Woodworking School that influenced the styles and techniques of many artists in the exhibition. The latter video link shows James in action while discussing his techniques.

<http://jameskrenov.com/>

<http://www.finewoodworking.com/woodworking-plans/video/james-krenov-on-handplanes.aspx>