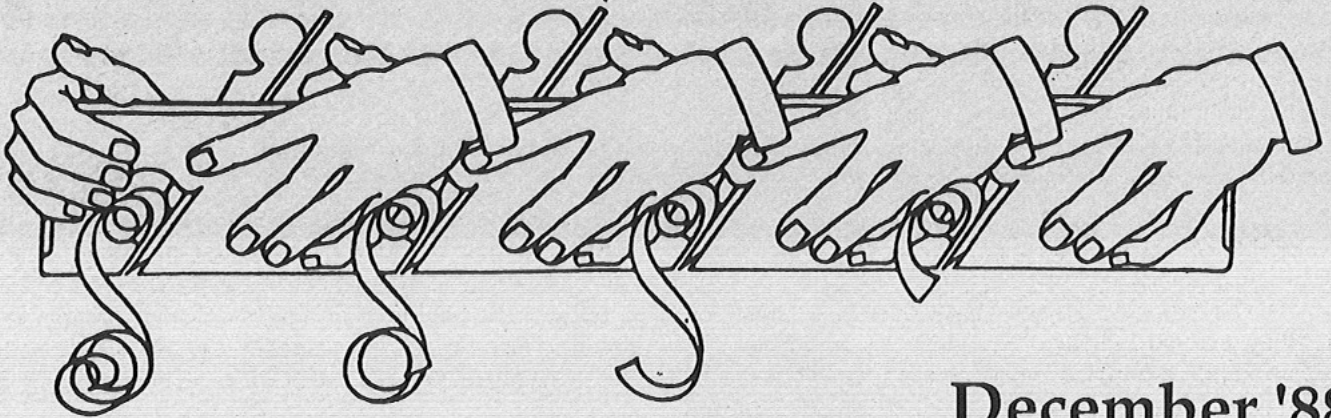


WOODWORKERS' GROUP OF N.S.W.



December '88

WOODWORKERS' GROUP OF N.S.W.

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Opinions expressed in articles in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the editor or the Committee.



Gayl Leake's banksia chair.

FROM THE CHAIR

Incorporation

Thanks to those few members who put forward comments on the draft rules. These were considered by a small sub-committee consisting of David Lockwood, Leon Sadubin, Gayl Leake, Les Miller, Jim Littlefield and myself.

The main areas of amendment was in clause 3, incorporating the definition of the categories of membership and the requirement and assessment of work to full membership.

The sub-committee consider the rules now suitable to be submitted for acceptance by the Corporate Affairs Commission. However, if anyone has any last minute comments please let me know prior to the December meeting when a formal vote of acceptance will be taken.

Opera House 1989

We had hoped to again have the Opera House exhibition hall in September of next year. Unfortunately, due to extensive refurbishment and redecoration works to be carried out over the next two or three years this venue will not be available to us (or any other) proposed exhibition. While this may seem a bit of a blow, perhaps we should see it as a challenge to create some new stunning environment in which to display our work at a major level. From those members who were looking forward to a change in venue, we anticipate some useful suggestions as to alternatives. Please bear in mind, however, the prohibitive hiring costs of such venues as Darling Harbour.

Publicity Brochure

Our brochure is at last in print and a copy is enclosed with the newsletter. The initial run is 5000 and the first opportunity to distribute them will be at the Craft Show at Sydney showground.

Our intention is to distribute these at exhibits in a discretionary way to people who express an interest in our work, either as possible commissioners of work or as new members. The brochures are too expensive to leave in a pile on a counter for the general public to grab and the deposit in the nearest waste bin. We also aim to distribute copies to designers, architects and the media etc as a publicity medium. If any member has a particular outlet to which a brochure should be directed please let your committee know.

Laurie Oliver.

OUR NEXT MEETING

This will be, as usual, in the Powerhouse seminar room 7pm, 12 December with, it is hoped, incorporation to be finalised and a slide show and talk by Anne Watson on the Powerhouse furniture collection. (A guided tour is off as security requested \$1000 to cover the evening tour, so we will organise a tour during working hours in the new year).

\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$ Subscriptions \$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$

Having brought you such a busy years' entertainment and having incurred a variety of extra expenses we are getting very low on the cash front so your subscriptions will be very welcome as they are due in January. Please be on time. Those who neglected to pay this year might offer up two years at once to cover our shortfall of '88.

Nick Hill.

Send subscriptions to :
Gayl Leake, Treasurer
Woodworkers Association of NSW
1002 Pacific Highway
PYMBLE NSW 2073

members : \$46 includes \$1 levy for National Guild
associates : \$36.

OUR FEBRUARY MEETING

Our February meeting has been tentatively set for Sunday, 12 February at Austral Machinery, Mary Street, Ermington.

Jack Thompson, group member and wood machinist of many years' experience will give us a wood machinist's primer, covering the spindle moulder, lamello, bandsaw mill (video) etc, etc. We also hope to have Peter Jacobs from R.L. Newman & Partners to talk about and demonstrate their wares, namely poplar. A definite date and time will be announced in the next newsletter.

OUR LAST MEETING

Once again minutes in the formal sense are not forthcoming as our rules were not finalised before the meeting. The rules for the December meeting are ready, so this time incorporation will be upon us.

We accepted affiliation with the National Woodworkers Guild and Michael Gill is our delegate. The fee for the National Group will be a levy of \$1.00 per member which will be added to the subs.

The interesting part of the meeting was the very stimulating lecture by Chris McElhinny who kept us entertained for a good two hours (a review of his lecture is in this newsletter for further info).

Nick Hill.



Old Bakery Gallery Exhibition

The group exhibition at the Old Bakery Gallery is set to run from 3 March 1989 to 21 April. The exhibition is intended to be a flexible one, that is, pieces can be changed during the course of the exhibition. We believe a small promo has been secured in *Belle and House and Garden* magazines. Nick Hill needs to hear urgently from those interested in exhibiting.

Five Years On

An exhibition of woodwork featuring the work of students from the Canberra School of Arts, past and present. November 27 to December 9. At the Craft Council Gallery, 100 George Street, The Rocks.

WWG MEETING DATES FOR 1988

Group Meeting in 1988 :
December 12

Newsletter Deadlines in 1989 :
9 January

Newsletter articles : the Editor requires copy to be easily legible, typed or handwritten.

Photos supplied with articles : to preferably be black and white or, if colour, only high contrast shots are suitable for screening for printing purposes. Line drawings should be in black pen.

Committee Meetings in 1989

Committee members will be advised by phone.

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GARRY KNOX BENNETT

Robert Howard reviews the G.K.B. slide evening and workshop

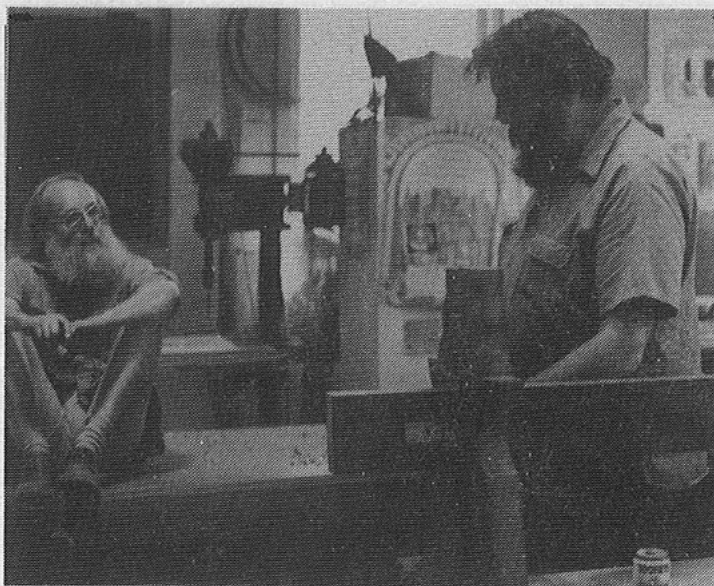
Gary Bennett came to woodworking via jewellery. He still owns the major share of a jewellery corporation in California and this has provided the financial support that has allowed him to explore his way into woodworking.

He seems to have done very little work on commission, preferring instead to make what he wants to make and sell it through galleries. He does not sell direct to clients, as he believes galleries are better able to find an ever increasing base of clients and command better prices.

His whole approach reflects his strong art background. He approaches wood like a painter does canvas. He has an idea of what he wants to do, an idea by now buttressed by years of experiment, experience, thought and plain hard work. He does not design on paper at all, preferring the spontaneity of drawing directly on the material he proposes to use. He then works from drawing to machine, to more drawing, to machine ... designing, measuring, elaborating or solving problems as he goes. His bandsaw is a favourite. It has a 36 inch throat and an 18 inch resaw capacity and from looking at his slides, I'd say he's used very much of both of them. A large man physically, he seems to like to use large slabs of material. One slide sequence showed a table made in wood, which he then

copied out of solid steel plate. The trestle ends were slabs 4 inches thick and the completed unit weighed 3000 lbs ! (And he has sold three or four of them ...)

One of the most impressive lessons I learnt from watching him work was what I would call the efficiency of his approach. His work is impressively large and visually very striking, yet it is remarkably labour efficient. Some measure of this is the fact that he is able to regularly complete projects in a day, from initial design to final polishing. He did this with a trestle table in his Melbourne workshop and a trestle bench here in Sydney. His joinery is technically sound but with a simplicity not apparent to the untrained eye. It is often large scale, with bold shapes and sizes and is meant to be a design feature: large tusk tenons on the trestle table, for example.



Big Gary, little Henry, in Henry's workshop.

By his own admission, Gary does not much enjoy the process of woodworking. Rather, he enjoys the results and this has worked for him in that he is able to achieve a prodigious output for the time he puts in. His use of colour, of mixed media (glass, aluminium, steel, etc), of free flowing forms, all combine to make his furniture funky and fun and more in the category of art than most furniture. Consequently, even by American standards, he is able to command impressive prices.

This overall combination of direct, fast, spontaneous work, simple yet visually striking joinery, creative use of his media and the large scale of his work adds up to an extremely successful formula, artistically and economically.

To complete the formula, he has shown a considerable flair for gaining publicity. His finely crafted padauk cabinet with a bent over four inch nail in its highly polished front gained him a lot of attention and he echoed Richard Blizzard's conviction that publicity is extremely important to any aspiring artist or craftsman, as well as to our craft generally.

Gary Bennett is one woodworker who is successful and even if his work is not to our particular taste, I think we can nevertheless learn a lot from thinking about the various ingredients of his somewhat eccentric style.

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From the 21st to the 23rd October, the National Woodwork Exhibition was held at the Exhibition Buildings in Melbourne. Running in conjunction with 'Working with Wood' trade fair, this well publicised competitive exhibition offered financial awards totalling \$9,000 as well as a \$10,000 acquisitive award for a piece representing the significance of the tree to Australian development. To be called the Bicentennial Woodcraft Gift to the Nation, the winning piece would be housed at the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney.

In its publicity statements, the organisers, Interwood Holdings, expressed a hope of providing an ongoing national platform for Australia's craftspeople through a prestigious exhibition covering all major categories of woodwork including traditional, contemporary and commercial furniture, turning, sculpture, carving and musical instrument making, among others.

The judging panel originally selected to allocate excellence and financial rewards was mostly taken from curatorial ranks in craft related areas rather than from among woodworkers and was one that would call for a high standard in their critical evaluation of the pieces. They included Terence Lane, Senior Curator of Decorative Arts, National Gallery of Victoria, Judith O'Callaghan, Senior Curator Australian Design post 1945, Powerhouse Museum, Pamille Berg of Mitchell, Giurgola and Thorp, architects of the new parliament house and Gary Knox Bennett, a visiting American woodworker. The exhibition was to have been opened by the Minister for the Arts.

Unfortunately a number of alterations made to the judging panel and to the presentation of the awards led (at least for this entrant) to disappointment on the opening night and suggested shortcomings in the administration of the exhibition. The absence of Terence Lane from the judging panel - the organisers apparently failed to confirm with him the day before - reflected poorly on the level of organisation overall. Gary Bennett opted out of the judging (he had only been given last minute notice rather than invited formally in advance of his Australian visit). For less preventable reasons, the Minister for the Arts and Pamille Berg proved unobtainable for that day. Their places were made up by Richard Raffan, notable Australian woodturner, Aldo Giurgola, a principal of Mitchell, Giurgola and Thorp, and Linda Nathan of Interwood Holdings. The range of expertise in the revived panel of judges in the diverse areas of woodcraft was perhaps less than the original panel may have offered.

Quite controversial on the opening night and a great disappointment to the organisers of the event as well as participants, was the non-allocation of the \$10,000 Bicentennial Woodcraft Gift to the Nation. No single piece, it seemed, merited the historical status or exhibited the stature of excellence called for by such an award and a number of smaller 'special' awards were created in its place.

The decision appeared, in view of the work presented, to be justly made. One of the judges, Judith O'Callaghan, felt that lack of familiarity on the part of woodworkers with such a pioneering and ambitious event contributed to the absence of significant pieces when clearly the volume of work and the

number of good pieces presented showed woodcraft to be an active area. I felt that perhaps this award was ahead of its time and the lack of contenders suggested that the state of woodcraft in Australia has not yet reached maturity. One hopes that future awards will offer an incentive to achieving this requisite advance and development in our artform.

The presentation of the exhibition left some woodworkers who had gone to considerable effort to bring their work to this forum dissatisfied. Criticism could be made of the level of curation in a number of aspects. The lack of good lighting and the uneven quality of arrangement of the pieces in the space was a reflection of the fact that the show had not been professionally mounted.

Placed in the open space of the large hall of the Exhibition Buildings, the exhibition presented a plethora of work covering the whole gammut of woodworking. Here was diversity of media, traditional and modern, loud and mute, all side by side. Variety in types of objects, scale and, especially, quality is hard to co-ordinate into a unified show. The designers of the exhibition opted to divide the work into roped off sections that simultaneously created walkways to guide the large crowd through the exhibition and protected the pieces from handling. This arrangement, however, meant that pieces calling for a close inspection of delicately wrought work were often placed at too great a distance for proper appreciation to be made of them and that the clear view of pieces was often impeded by other works. Without plinths and directional lighting it becomes difficult to isolate works in the viewers' mind. The name tags and numbers on the floor must have also been out of some viewers' range.

From the exhibitors' point of view, the show was probably too short to warrant the difficulties in getting the pieces to and from the show and to warrant the fee payable to exhibit their work. The show was especially unrewarding for exhibitors in that the organisers paid little attention to salesmanship. For such a large show, the area was understaffed and those present had no knowledge about the pieces or processes involved in wooden manufacture with which to encourage and interest prospective buyers. The information desk displayed no paperwork, pen or roll of red stickers.

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WOODWORK EXHIBITION

Exhibition space.

There were, however, some very worthwhile aspects to the show which made it, if not attractive for individual craftspeople, certainly good for our vocation as a whole. The venue was a prestigious one which took woodwork out of the traditional area for displaying craft. The link with industry in a two part show composed of an exhibition component and a trade fair representing over sixty wood-related companies meant exposure for the woodcraftsman's art to a wide audience - certainly outside the usual gallery audience. The task of fostering widespread education about woodcraft and of promoting Australian design was surely helped here when one considers that the numbers that went through this show were approximately 20,000.

Another benefit for exhibitors was of course the numerous awards, each for \$1,000, made up in cash and equipment, that were given. Among these, the traditional furniture award was given to Geoff Hannah for a three tiered serving table inlaid with floral motifs. He is surely one of our finest exponents of traditional marquetry work, producing wrought work which satisfies the most intimate inspection. The Contemporary Furniture Award went to a classically conceived carver chair by David Uphill-Brown. The simplicity of the laminated curves in this Chinese style chair made it an exercise in formal elements. David Uphill-Brown's other entry, a skeletal ultra-light looking side table entitled 'A dry white season' seemed to indicate a new direction in his normally classical English style and was one of the highlights, for me, of the exhibition. Anthony Russo and Mark Weichard were the joint creators of the 'Corporate Suite', a desk and low table, which received the Commercial Furniture Award. An ensemble of painted fibreboard, Silver Ash and Rosewood, was used in their angular and linearly conceived office furniture.

A box in craftwood and mahogany entitled 'Naug' by Helmut Leuckenhausem received the Decorative Woodwork award. This piece, as well as his small side table (which had a lightness and delicacy I have not always found in Lueckenhausen's work) showed a confidence in the rendering of sculptural form that is the hallmark of a mastercraftsman. There are no ill-defined aspects of the image here; the form is clearly articulated and beautifully finished. A quite different approach to sculpture, that of the constructivists' assemblage of rude units of mass, was seen in the work of Philip Cooper, whose entry, 'Birth Dance', received the sculpture award.

Steven Smit took both the Cabots and Joinery awards. His very traditional 'Centurion Chair' was beautifully made and showed a fine eye for muted colour and delicate proportion. His 'Eucalypt Bed', though lightened visually by the grey weathered look of sandblasted wood, was surprisingly different with its massive through joints.

Neil Scobie, Ray Lilford, Steven Hughes and Greg Collins all took awards in the field of turnery and bowl making. In the very well represented area of musical instrument making, Kelvin Freer's Stingray Guitar was the award winning entry. Surprisingly few pieces were composed



of laminex craftwood and the award in this area was given to David Shaws' Memphis style 'Stereo Cabinet'.

Donald Fortescue received an award for his Music Stand which has been seen previously in Canberra and in Sydney. While not wishing to detract from the merit of this prize winning piece of design (the paring down of the material to its structural limits where one is left with sheer sticks in space is indeed memorable) it is disappointing to see the same pieces winning new prizes and suggests that the state of our artform is not as lively and flourishing as it should be. A number of old pieces made me think that it is up to both woodworkers and curators to be committed to showing new work and to encouraging advance.

Other pieces of interest were Gary Knox Bennett's 'Outback Table' with its bold approach to colour and form, and David Owen Tucker's two chairs called 'The Moon Rising' which took my fancy. The formal arrangement of solid and void, articulated by thin rectilinear elements, gave this piece a Japanese elegance.

In a final appraisal of the show, I don't believe it was the organisation or curatorship or salesmanship that was unsatisfactory, as the lack of significant showcase work that was to be seen. This may have been affected by the fact that many big names were missing from this premier event (both Grant Vaughan and David Emery, whose works fronted the brochure and poster for the show, were unrepresented) and by the fact that the prize money, apart from the big award, was not attractive enough.

The concept of the organizers for mounting a national exhibition that would showcase Australia's best work was an excellent one. The benefits of the hard work undertaken by Interwood Holdings went both to charity and to the promotion of Australian woodcraft. That this was the first occasion of this event meant that organisational problems would be inevitable. A show of such ambitious scope needs to be ongoing in order to build up the experience and expertise necessary to make it the future success that it should be. With such laudable aims to which all craftsmen should give their support, I hope Interwood Holdings will not be daunted. - Gayl Leake.

the 'new look' at Thornleigh

Ten years of continuous slog at our Thornleigh workshop convinced Ginny and myself that the time for either a job change or a location change had come. Thus at the end of 1987 we started looking at distant vistas - perhaps a country workshop, maybe a nursery for cultivating shrubs and trees.

The problem of course was to reconcile our city-based needs as well as the needs of three children all at the local high school (which they enjoy) with the dreaded urge to move on. Added to this was the sheer practicality of our workshop - bad habits are hard to shake and woodworking must be ranked as a premier bad habit !

So perhaps the change needed to be structural rather than fundamental. Could we use the workshop facilities in a different way and hence challenge ourselves by staying on at WoodWorks ? At about this time Ginny expressed an interest in running a horticulture bookshop but found that the market was already well catered for. I suppose the jump from horticulture to woodworking was akin to suddenly seeing the wood despite the trees. The idea took form in this manner :

The workshop had over the years attracted many a passing woodie - why not cater for all these woodies' needs - as well as the aspiring woodies who desperately needed advice and information. After all, my philosophy in the workshop has always supported the Woodworkers Group precept of information sharing.

The idea of running a bookshop from our showroom became compelling. A bit of searching revealed that Sydney's woodworkers are not particularly well catered for. Woodworking books are available from a few sources but not one specialises exclusively in the subject. Our aim therefore is to operate a bookshop which rises to the challenge of its specialist status. The information will range from furniture making to other woodbased crafts such as turning, sculpture, carving, boat building, musical instruments, traditional techniques, toys, craft history, restoration and contemporary design. Books emanating from Australia, the UK and the USA will of course be on display but how about Scandinavian, French, Japanese and German publications ? Periodicals from diverse sources will also be included in our stock as the business expands. Other information sources : videos, wall charts and construction plans will no doubt be added.

As I write, five bookcases are nearing completion, the showroom is getting a lick of paint, our bowsaw door a lick of varnish and dozens of book publishers' stock lists spill off the roll top.

How about tools and special, hard to get hardware ? Most fine woodworkers have to sift through US mail order catalogues for the genuine article. Should we stock a specialist range ? Well made block planes, nicely balanced cabinetmakers' paring chisels, knife hinges, biro springs

(with a special bin near the door!) How about all of Feast Watsons' speciality finishes on the shelf, quality brushes, tins of Alna wax, Ulmia tools, Vonergut (you know ... you sanderheads). How about some knowledgeable woodworkers behind the counter with some first hand experience about the products sold ?

And so to hands-on experience. Last week we (Tony MacDougal and Colen Clanton and I) got stuck into the unenviable task of removing every last piece of wood from the downstairs timber rack (you know, 10 years work of off cuts and bluegum dust). The rack was dismantled, reassembled in a shed and the timber restacked. Low and behold we have a spacious ground floor machining area which deserves creative use. Six workbenches will complement 'H.M.A.S. Wadkin' (the thickener) and our 'Aircraft Carrier' (the jointer), four workbenches will remain upstairs and on 2 January 1989 a two week summer school for advanced woodworkers gets underway.

Ten students, two instructors and access to the full workshop facilities, should see a nice range of finished projects such as coffee and dining tables, small cabinets, bookcases, maybe a frame and panelled front door (see David Mustons article in our WWG of NSW March 85 issue, about the first Summer School).

Other classes during the year will be directed towards a variety of subjects : beginners (5 day intensive course), chair design, prototyping and production (5 day), wood finishing, woodmachining techniques, hewn furniture making and so on.

Our programme is :
beginning of December 88 : bookshop gets underway.

“ “ January 89 : wood classes “ “
“ “ February 89 : tools/equipment “ “

Come visit us - let us know what you think we should stock, the range will increase as the months go by. Or phone if you require further information on the classes.

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Leon Sadubin.

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BONDING OF DIFFICULT TIMBER

Teak and some similar species have a reputation as being particularly difficult to bond and, while in some particular cases this may be justified, we have experienced no significant problems.

Where difficulty has occurred in the past, it has often been attributed to the presence of excessive amounts of teak oil preventing resin penetration. We doubt that when bonding with epoxy the presence of moderate amounts of teak oil will be a problem and certainly we see no advantage being gained from solvent wiping which, it can be argued, may well serve only to concentrate oil at the surface by a process of 'elution' as the solvent evaporates. At best any attempt to 'degrease' can only be superficial and of little real value.

We have noted that some teak is very wet and we have clearly demonstrated that this timber does not bond well until it has been dried adequately. One imagines that the excess water in the timber cells restricts the penetration of epoxy into the timber as well as messing up the cure. So in the case of teak-like timbers adequate water dryness is of greatest importance.

Kauri is a very fine boat-building timber with an ample history of successful bonding. However we regard it as one of the more difficult timbers to glue and it requires some care. Because of its fine grain structure it is prone to a phenomenon called 'case-hardening' of the surface when it is machined.

During WW2 a serious problem occurred in the large scale mass production of the wooden Mosquito bombers when it was found that ply wood which had been made in a hot-press was virtually unstickable until it had been thoroughly sanded. What was found to be happening was that the cell walls at the surface were being crushed over (turned inwards) by the hot platters and, as a result, bonding was only occurring to the damaged cells. At the same time these were effectively preventing the adhesives of the day from penetrating into the undamaged cells and so bonding to the intact timber immediately under the surface. This is not a consideration with modern commercial ply which is very well sanded as it is finished.

However there is a present day parallel with Kauri which has a tendency to give the same effect when it is heavily machined with thicknessers etc. Over the years we have observed occasions where destruction of glue-joints gives a failure mode in which the adhesive appears to have hardly penetrated the surface and to have come away almost as if from a release-waxed surface. The fact that Kauri, like the birch of aircraft ply, is such a non-splitting timber accentuates this peeling mode of failure but it seems certain that the case-hardening phenomenon is the major contributor.

Of course we do not wish this to be taken as a warning not to use Kauri (which in New Zealand would be taken as heresy) but we want people to know of the phenomenon and to recognise it when they see it. It follows that it is a sound practice to thoroughly sand Kauri and similar timbers with good *sharp* paper before bonding (we suspect that blunt paper may only serve to burnish the surface and not improve the situation).

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CHRIS McELHINNEY

Members who attended the October meeting expecting to hear Chris McElhinney deliver a deep and meaningful philosophical discourse on the subject of 'Design and the Drawing Myth' were disappointed (or relieved) as Chris made it quite clear from the start that, in his opinion, the 'drawing' was just one of the procedures or processes involved in realising any particular design.

As part of their course at the Canberra School of Art, Chris's students are required to produce designs for set projects by manipulating given materials with no recourse to drawing until the design has been clearly formulated. It was evident from the slides shown that this method of working developed the students' 'feel' for the materials being used and some very unusual solutions to design problems were produced. Whether I, for one, will ever have the courage to tackle an important project in such a way remains to be seen; but I am sure Chris is right - that a blank sheet of paper can be very daunting and is more than likely to lead to a conservative design.

Being a back sufferer I was particularly interested in the slides Chris showed of the College's ergonomic experimental chair which the students were encouraged to use to gain an appreciation of the desirable support features for the development of a comfortable chair. However, I can't say that any of the finished designs shown paid more than lip service to this important functional requirement. It would seem that novelty and comfort are incompatible at this stage of personal development. I was also disappointed that none of the students elected to design a commercial chair that was stackable. Wouldn't it be great if someone could come up with a chair - made predominantly of wood that was comfortable, elegant, stackable and competitive with moulded plastic!

The slides of Chris's own work were impressive and showed the development of his design approach. Unlike his colleague George Ingham at the June meeting, Chris gave little of his background before taking up his Canberra appointment for which I, for one, was sorry as I am sure it would have completed a profile of an original and accomplished woodworker with an obvious gift for teaching.

Many thanks Chris for a most interesting evening.

Bob Dixon.

MIKE ST. CLAIR - Woodturner

Pam St. Clair introduces Mike - old hand and new member

'Scribble up a quick profile of me for the NSW Woodworkers' Group - Nick Hill has been nagging me for months for info on what I do and you know what I'm about - by the way, I need it today.'

Sometimes I hate him, particularly when he asks for the impossible! How can anyone be summarised in just a few paragraphs - and particularly one who's complex, irritating, irascible, talented, gentle and infuriatingly blunt. I may have shared his life for twenty two years and share a love of wood and beautiful objects but I still don't know why the fascination for round spinning lumps of wood.

I know the need to salvage wood probably emerged during Mike's eleven years as a landscape contractor and designer, when clients frequently insisted on removal of perfect living trees because they were inconvenient. The abiding passion to save lumps of wood has now become an incurable obsession.

It's why there's always a chainsaw in the back of the vehicle, even when we're off to a ball. It's why we have a 4 wheel drive with massive trailer and not a Porsche. It's why he grabs pieces of 'interesting' wood before our hosts puts them into fireplaces, it's why return flights from Tasmania are always with impossibly heavy suitcases and I'm wearing everything which had been in the case because *'it's a bloody beautiful piece of fiddleback blackwood and it would be criminal to leave it behind'*.

It's why he'll travel 20,000 kilometres a year to collect and season obscure Australian timbers, why I can spot a burl 30 feet up in a tree at 120 kilometres an hour! It's why he's building another 12 square workshop complex on the property where we live - 44 acres just outside Canberra 'where the yobboes can't hassle me'.

All woodies are mad, I'm quite convinced of that - but woodies wives are crazier to put up with a constant procession of interstate and overseas visitors afflicted with the same mania. Do they arrive with champagne or flowers for their hostess? No way - a carton of tinnies, plus lumps of wood and unintelligible conversation about the merits of skewers versus scrapers!

And what does he do with all this wood? He creates pieces which can take your breath away with their apparent simplicity of line. I'm continually awed by what nature and a good craftsman can achieve together. Seemingly simple bowls which I know have been agonised over for weeks and the constant assertion that the wood must speak for itself and not be dominated or overshadowed by the turner's technique.

No Mike, I really can't do the sort of profile that's expected. I really don't know why you love creating wondrous things from lumps of tree any more than you can understand why I'm passionate about cats and chocolate. I do know I respect and admire your skills, your unselfishness in sharing secrets and techniques with both fellow professionals and students, your honesty in not making 'meaningful statements' when pressed to philosophise. When you tell them *'I do it because I love wood'* I'd do wish they'd listen.

Nick, the profile you really want is :

Mike St. Clair, born Sydney 1943.

- Self taught woodturner
- Owns and operates Ginninderra Village tourist complex, Canberra, where he operates The One Tree Woodturning Studio
- Past President ACT Wood Group 1985-1987
- Convenor Third National Wood Conference, Canberra, November, 1987
- Conducts workshops and classes
- Australian representative of World Wood Turning Committee

Coming

at traktshund

- Mike Darlow takes a turn through New Zealand
- David Lockwood promises a workshop device to measure the dryness of a dead dingo's donger

*Merry Christmas to all.
And many thanks to
Fiona Campbell and Phil
Bohringer for all their work
on the newsletter in 1988.*



Ed.