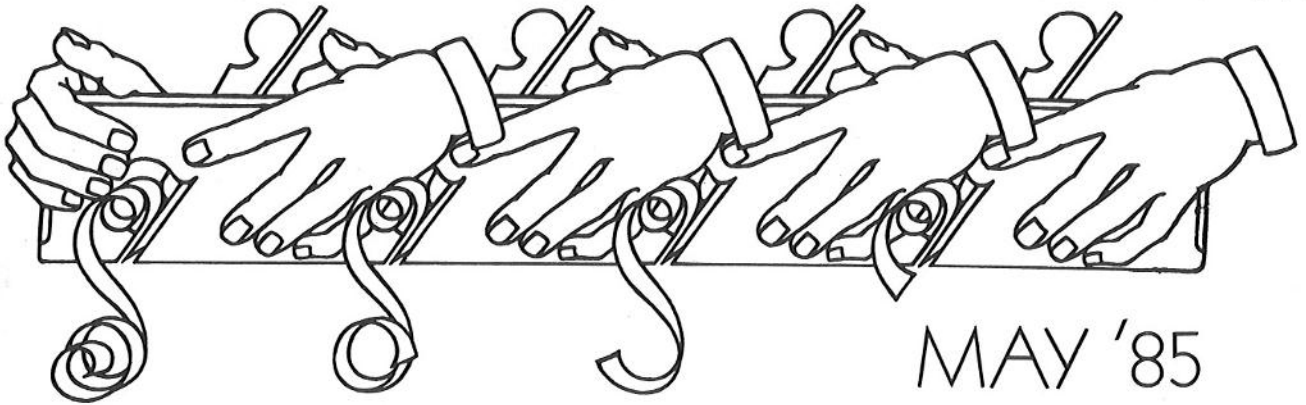


# WOODWORKERS' GROUP OF N.S.W.



MAY '85

## WOODWORKERS' GROUP OF NSW

Chairman — Alan Wale, Sturt School for Wood, Range Rd, Mittagong 2575. (048) 71 2175

Secretary — Les Miller, 6 Balmoral Street, Waitara 2077, 48 2682

Editor — Michael Gill, 1 Bank Street, Pyrmont 2009, 660 7357

Group Fees: Member — \$40pa; Associate — \$30pa.

### FROM THE CHAIR

Since the last newsletter I have had the good fortune to attend the meeting of the ACT Group when Graham, Chris and Mac recounted their travels in the UK, illustrated with slides. No, it wasn't a boring affair showing him feeding the pigeons in Trafalgar Square and the other bloke posed next to Stonehenge at dawn. Instead we were all treated to a stimulating evening of current UK work, shots inside workshops and tales of the eccentricities and problems of other woodies.



What I found particularly interesting was that apparently woodworkers the world over have similar problems. Cramped workshops, long hours, overdrafts and old machinery. So, if it is any consolation, you are not the only one who is crazy.

Now for a general apology to our members. My brain can only handle one week at a time and hence, when the last meeting at Mittagong was arranged two months in advance I had no idea that it would fall on Easter Sunday. I don't blame you for staying away. I would have done the same. We missed you, and thanks for the 'phoned apologies. Sorry.

Judging by the newsletters received from other state and overseas groups, the South Australian Wood Conference should be well attended and a lively affair. The convenors have put in a lot of hard work and I think should be commended for their efforts. Let's all make it worth their while.

This is the last chance I shall have before our great Opera House Woodcraft '85 exhibition to wish all our members the best of luck (in writing, at least).

All the promotional work is in the hands of Martin Williams of the "Promotional Marketplace", the design of the exhibition proper will be the work of professional interior designer Yolande Clarkson in collaboration with our resident master of lighting, Mike Jefferys and three distinguished notables have been invited to do all the vetting, jurying and selecting of pieces submitted for exhibition. They have all graciously accepted our invitation and agreed to do the dastardly deed after luncheon on Monday, June 10th, after which time all exhibits must have been delivered. The three are:

ANNE WATSON — Curator of Furniture and Woodwork, Architectural and Interior Decoration, Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences.

MR JOHN ANDERSSON, F.D.I.A. — Principal of John Andersson and Associates, Design Consultants.

MR HELGE LARSEN — Designer and Jeweller, Head of Department, Jewellery and Silversmithing, Sydney College of the Arts.

A quick reminder that all exhibits are to arrive at the Opera House (Exhibition Hall) by 12 noon, Monday, 10th June (public holiday).

Get those pieces polished — this will be our best bash ever — let's give Australia something to talk about! — A.W.

### OUR LAST MEETING

Now, Alan Wale must not be allowed to take all the credit for scheduling the last meeting for Easter Sunday. It did, in fact, take the entire Junta (executive committee to the uninitiated) to arrive at this memorable bungle. After all, isn't that what a committee's for?

Inevitably, the roll-up was small in number, but what was lacking in quantity was more than compensated for in quality! The Junta falls penitently to its collective knees and begs the indulgence of those forced to miss a meeting through extraordinary commitments to family, long weekend traffic or the lawn. In future, we shall ensure that all such holidays and festive periods be shuffled to accommodate the caprice of your esteemed representatives. Easter had better watch its step in 1986! I do hope Christmas is going to be reasonable this year and not fall on the 25th, which is down for our... oops! These calendar-makers need time to learn!

Alan had prepared a delicious salad adjunct to our barbecue lunch — special thanks to Doreen for her well-appreciated efforts.

Alan's Sturt School for Wood workshop was the venue for our meeting — large, beautifully lit and economically appointed, it was the first most of us had seen of the School's premises as renovated. Alan explained the workings of the School and of his curriculum to an audience full of interesting questions, complaining bitterly about the standard of design and workmanship of some of his new class hand-tools. Howls of ready agreement came from his listeners and the point was made that manufacturers will only improve the quality of their products if such quality is demanded. It is important to be critical and discerning when selecting your tools and to be loudly vocal about their inadequacies. Obviously, retailers and agents cannot be held responsible for every shortcoming in their goods, but you may be sure that serious complaints will be echoed loudly enough to ring in the halls of slap-dash producer.



Alan Wale holds forth at our Sturt School for Wood meeting.

Alan would like to see Sturt become a centre for woodwork activities in NSW, accommodating visiting woodies, hosting workshops, lectures, etc, etc. Its set-up, facilities and geographical position fit it admirably to this rôle. I don't know anyone unwilling to put in the hour and a half drive to Mittagong to relax in its green, calming atmosphere.

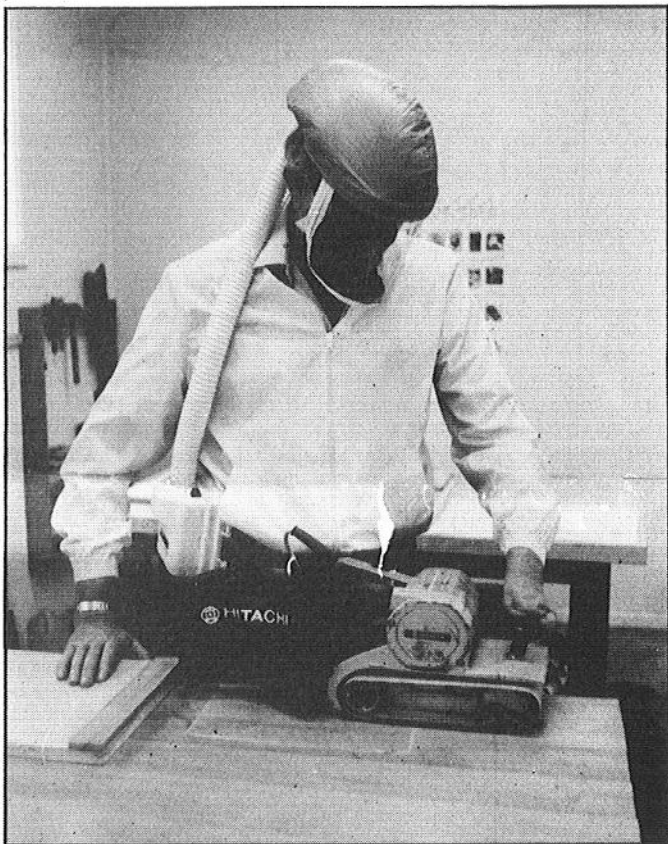
Richard Crosland gave us a run-down on the run-up to Woodcraft '85 at the Opera House — it seems that organisation of Opera House exhibitions recently passed into new hands and our booking (gratis) was not on file! After a sleepless night, some frantic record-searching

and phoning, all was found to be well and we may all once again rest smugly assured that this show is a reality! Alan thanked Richard and Mike Jefferys for their efforts on our behalf.

Richard also gave the assembly an idea of the exhibition poster — he has been working solidly on its production and says the final photography and layout looks great. The artwork and layout for our catalogue is also completed — it goes to the printer as I write. Both poster and catalogue are in full colour. In fact, Richard Crosland has shouldered much of the burden of this exhibition's planning and I would like to add my personal thanks to that of Alan.

The Adelaide Wood Conference was discussed and feelers were put out for interested parties to commit themselves for the sake of transport charters. With this newsletter you will find enclosed a photocopy of the official Conference prospectus — if you wish to join those travelling down, ring or write to Alan Wale now and let him know. Don't assume you will be further prodded or reminded — decide soon and commit yourself for the sake of group travel arrangements.

Alick Denniss brought along and demonstrated the Racal "Airstream Dust-Master" which is a smaller, lighter, cheaper version of the Anti-Dust Helmet that Paul Freeland introduced to us in the March Newsletter. Not such a heavy-duty business as Paul's, this one looked useful nonetheless and certainly did the job required. I'm sure Alick won't mind giving you details on 46 6242.



**Alick Denniss models the latest Mittagong styles in Dust Masters.**

Alan later demonstrated the glories of the "HELI-COIL" fastening system — when fixing into timber (especially into end-grain). A metal thread is wound into a pilot hole bored accurately to size. The matching "screw" is then fed into this thread producing an incredibly strong, safe connection. There were mouths hanging open all around! Not only would this system be a dream for all end-grain (and face-grain) screwing, but it seems that better results could be achieved on clip-board and plywood as well.

#### WELCOME TO OUR GROUP

Our last committee meeting was the scene of yet another carve-up; another gory dissecting-room drama with the work of aspiring members on the operating table. Nothing malignant, however, no complications, and the side effects rather pleasant — we welcome two new members into our ranks — Peter Dorman and David Tucker. I will allow them to introduce themselves:

**Peter Dorman — ph. 319 1537**

My interest in woodwork has been ever since I could hold a hammer and make rockets, through to teaching the subject, to establishing my own business.

The joy of teaching the subject to interested pupils made up for the disillusion on finding one of your worst pupils was to be an apprentice carpenter — oh well, who said something about 'wood butchers'? I gave up teaching to overcome the dulling effect of the bureaucracy.

After starting a workshop and gallery in Quirindi, where I was teach-

ing before resigning, I found the need for cheap furniture was greater than the need for quality.

The move to Sydney has allowed me to concentrate on quality work through my business, "Wood Designs" in Chippendale.

A lot of my work involves construction of chairs, dining and slung leather lounges. My work being influenced by Scandinavian styles and Sam Maloof in the USA.

**David Tucker — ph. (066) 57 8110**

To be working in wood again feels like a homecoming. Following a childhood interest and a secondary school education in traditional woodwork, I decided at sixteen to come to Australia and design furniture.

Arriving in Melbourne, I began an apprenticeship in photo-engraving! Towards the end of 'doing time' I was spending considerable amount of time making lost-wax jewellery. My apprenticeship was shortened. I continued making jewellery and began to sculpt. First in fibreglass, and then small pieces in bronze.

In 1978 I moved permanently to Durrumbidgee with Lyn and one-year-old Emily. Years of building a cottage, raising a family, planting an orchard, joy of hot water, etc. With just a little jewellery and sculpture. I was using wood though, and becoming acquainted with a chain saw.

When the cottage was complete enough to accommodate a dining table, and after meeting and talking with Rob Parker, I embarked on my first bit of Zen Chain Saw. Oh the awareness required with these marvellous beasts!

Rob and I started working together about a year ago. Sometimes coming from distinctly different considerations, we work in a sort of sensitive anarchy producing joint and individual pieces.

#### FUTURE WORKSHOPS

A very experienced and well-respected Japanese wood-lacquercraftsman, Mr Fujisaki will be in Sydney during September this year. He is prepared to give two demonstration/lectures during his stay. Alan Wale would like to stage one at his Sturt School in Mittagong and another in a Sydney workshop. Alan wants to gauge the response from you all to be sure attendances will warrant the effort of organisation, so, if you are in the least interested, do ring him now and tell him so. This means **you!** Your enthusiasm is required. If no one rings, nothing will happen — it's up to the Group to support its chairman's efforts.

He has the support of his committee so far, but the interest of the masses must be made apparent. Alan's number is (048) 71 2175. Keep it brief — the man is frantically busy.



# WOOD TURNING TOOLS

A full range of these world famous tools is now available for immediate delivery throughout Australia. Standard, long and strong, scraper tools, sets, draw knives and the 6 in 1 Universal chuck. Warehouse open for personal sales Monday to Friday 9 am to 4.30 pm. Mail orders are dealt with efficiently for those unable to call.

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## THE CONSTANTIA EXHIBITION

*Comment on an exhibition of South Australian firm — "Constantia Designer Craftsmen" held at the Australian Design Centre, 70 George Street, The Rocks, Sydney from April 4-18, 1985.*

Robert Neville, one of our newest members and a fine cabinet-maker himself writes:

Constantia is the partnership of Bernie Koker who handles the cabinet-making, Ken Martin (carving) and Malcolm Averill (polishing). Based at Port Lincoln, SA, which they claim has near-perfect moisture levels for working wood. Their show, which I found quite impressive had a distinct Art Nouveau flavour, particularly evocative of the "Nancy" style, drawing heavily, as Ken Martin said, from nature.

Timbers used were very diverse, using over half a dozen species in some pieces. Their Ghost Gum series, highlighting the show, included a writing table in Old Walnut, Silver Ash and Sheoak priced at \$12,300 — limited edition of ten. Surface decoration abounded here with handles of entwined gum leaves cast in sterling silver. A chest-on-chest had carved Huon Pine belts lashed around its plinth. Drawers ran very smoothly with Teflon strips on the runners. Drawers were constructed in the NK style, rarely seen today (see Fine Woodworking Winter 1977). Backs of cabinets were finished to the same standard as the fronts.

The polishing, which I thought too thick and glossy was all done by hand using the makers' own finishing products — they are totally "organic" and the aroma is beautiful — well worth a trial, especially the Chinese Oil and wax. (Constantia markets their own polishes.)

We have three individual specialists working on one piece, each man putting in a lot of effort. Consequently, some of the pieces were a bit overworked — surface decoration for the sake of it.

Some of the isolated ideas were lovely — the occasional table from the "Mallee Series" made of Honduras Mahogany with a section of Mallee burl inlaid into the top. Carved legs complete with carved creatures peeking out of crevices at you.

Woven kangaroo hide was used to good effect on some seats.

To sum up: Tradition flowed through the work, especially in their updated cabriole-leg dining suite. Abundant carving and surface decoration done with a good understanding of tools and materials. — R.N.

### Alan Wale was not so keen:

At last, a chance to see the work of Constantia! For me, the initial impact was startling. A closer inspection was overwhelming, but the lasting reaction was one of disappointment.

Furniture, we are told, reflects contemporary social conditions. In this respect, I found the pieces true to our age. They were busy, loaded with visual information, shouting for recognition and yet, going nowhere! Yes, perhaps it does reflect our current Western Attitudes, but I, for one, am none too wrapt in our current society.

My disappointment lies in the realisation that the obvious energy and combined talents of the partners could, for me, have been better directed.

## FUTURE MEETINGS

Whip out your calendars, desk diaries and appointment books and mark these dates:

General Meetings: **June 2nd, 1985** to be held at "Metropolis Design Workshops", 28 Lord Street, Botany.

**August 4th**, at No. 1 Bank Street, Pyrmont — your editor's lair.

**October 13th** and  
**December 1st.**

## STATELY REPRODUCTIONS AT GRACE BROS

*A review by Robert Neville of the exhibition of furniture replicas from the stately homes of England and Scotland which closed on April 20th.*

Reproduction furniture today is usually only an impression of the original. Cutting lists and the cost of materials mean most of the choicer period pieces are just not a viable proposition. Until now (?).

Grace Bros announced the arrival, from America, of a collection of faithful replicas of pieces from stately homes in England and Scotland. Among them designs from such as Adams, Chippendale and Hepplewhite.

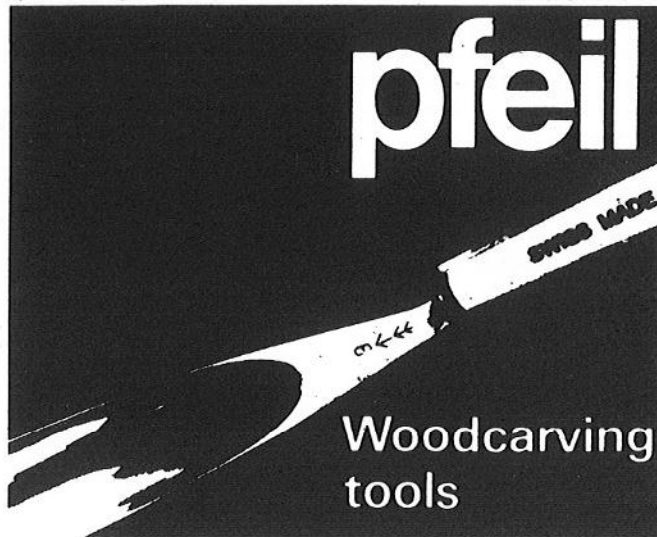
"Exotic veneers were searched for around the globe . . ." the publicity read, each piece having its own certificate and number.

Armed with this information, I alighted on the seventh floor. The first piece in view was a break-front bookcase priced at \$29,000. From a distance, it was fine, but close up, the illusion was shattered. On opening a drawer, expecting to see a fine set of pins, I discovered a messy routed set (some of the other ones were lapped). Most of the construction was veneered plywood, some of it exposed at the edges, with a heavy stain as disguise.

Next came a Brighton Pavilion hall table in lacquer which resembled a bad piece of Korean mass-production work, but, at around \$7,000 you might expect more.

Next to this stood a Regency writing table with ebony stringing which was pointed out to me as "holly" by a sales person. Either way, it looked suspiciously liked poured resin. The locks in this piece were conveniently rounded on the edges for placement in routed slots.

All finishes were sprayed, then cut by hand. (Arked) All this would have been perfectly acceptable on the fourth floor at greatly reduced prices, but when they towered as high as \$29,000, one expects excellence, not a mere reproduction. — R.N.



The woodcarving tools "Pfeil" are products of top quality, achieved and improved by a highly developed manufacturing technique. The assortment available is determined and enlarged, in association with the famous Woodcarving School of Brienz, Switzerland, which uses exclusively the "Pfeil" Woodcarving tools. A Swiss quality product, made of first quality steel alloy, resistant and heat treated. The tools are finely ground and polished on the inside and can therefore be easily re-sharpened. All tools are ready for use and are supplied with lacquered wood handle (octagonal Ashwood).

for SALES, TRIALS and DEMOS:

Michael Gill

1 Bank Street, Pyrmont 2009, Tel. 660 7357

## AUSTRALIAN WOODWORKER HITS THE NEWSAGENTS

The first number of Arthur Burrows' new magazine "The Australian Woodworker" is on the stands for \$2. Thanks, Arthur for the free plug on the "News" pages. Our Opera House Exhibition was given good publicity, as was the Group itself in two generous columns. Arthur's magazine will succeed if he receives the cooperation and assistance of us all. Good, **constructive** criticism and comment is sought.

Concerning the Directory Advertising in the "Australian Woodworker", Arthur has offered all bona-fide members of Woodworking Groups a 40% discount on the official advertised rate quoted in the magazine. Thanks, Arthur, for this generous concession.

## MIKE STRIKES AGAIN

Mike Retter, a recent addition to our Membership roll, was awarded first prize in the marquetry section at this year's Easter Show. Karim, Mike's son (13), won the children's woodwork section with a marquetry panel of his own. Congratulations, Retters!

Mike Darlow was the judge, and, if it were not for the fact that entries are judged anonymously, things might look a bit sticky . . . two Mikes (both Poms as well), fellow members of our clicky Group . . . I don't believe they're all sleeping together at all!

Well done Mike and Karim.

## ALAN'S MARCH CHAIR

The chair illustrating Alan's "From the Chair" notes in our March newsletter was "Willow No. 1" designed by Charles Rennie Mackintosh and made of ebonised ash-wood. What is not obvious in the illustration is that it is a curved lattice-back chair with an upholstered seat cushion.

Reproductions are being beautifully made at present by CASSINA of Italy.

## ALTRUISTIC NOTICE

John is back selling second-hand tools at Balmain Market — Saturdays — corner Darling and Curtis Sts. But please go after 9.30am so I get first selection. — Richard Vaughan.

## CHAIRS, CHAIRS AND MORE CHAIRS

An exhibition entitled "chairs" (oddly enough) will run from April 27th for four weeks at the Seasons Gallery, 259 Miller Street, North Sydney, Tues-Sat 11-6, 957 2060.

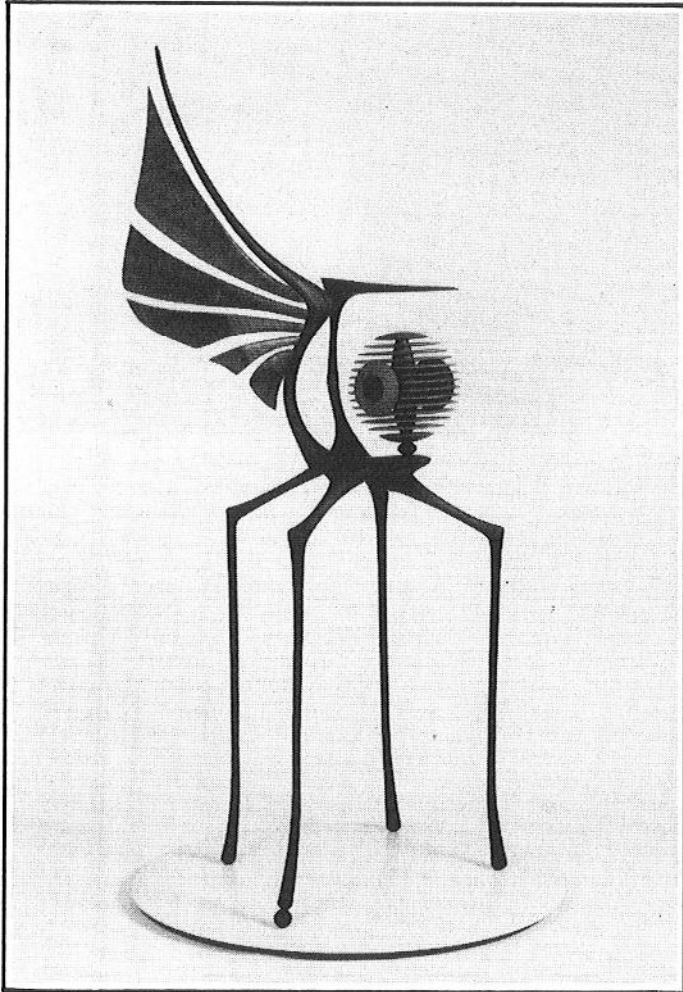
The Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences is also featuring chairs at the Power House, Ultimo, along with the changing permanent collection.

### PAUL FREELAND OPENS at the HOLDSWORTH

In an interview on 2BL, Sunday May 5th, Lucien Joy asked Paul Freeland:

"How do you get your sculptures so fine and slender?"

"Start with a chainsaw, actually . . .", was the answer. Lucien was pretty crazy about Paul's work and did not hesitate in her enthusiastic admiration of his exhibition which kicked off the morning before at the Holdsworth Galleries in Woollahra.

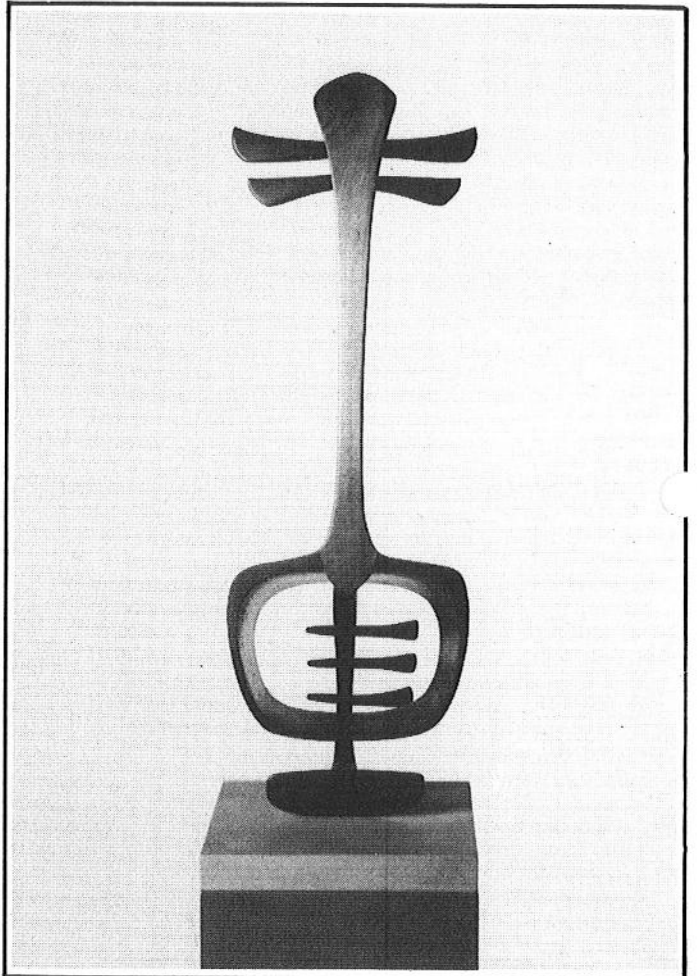


"Flying Chameleon" by Paul Freeland.

Thanks to Paul for saying what a positive influence and help the Woodworkers' Group of NSW had been to him. Paul has had good publicity of late in Harper's Bazaar, Cosmopolitan, Craft ARTs, Woman's Day and the esteemed rag you now hold in your hands.

The first sale was a case of love at first sight — Alan Wale fell for "Samisen" at a committee meeting chez Freeland recently! "Samisen" is based on a Japanese stringed instrument.

The fifteen wood-sculptures on show represent over a year's hard work for Paul — I'm sure I can wish him the best of luck on behalf of all.



"Samisen" by Paul Freeland — the sculpture that tickled Alan

### FEELERS FROM THE USA

Your editor recently received this encouraging note from *Fine Woodworking Magazine*:

"Dear Michael,

Your March newsletter mentions the group's show scheduled for the Opera House. I wonder if you might be able to send me slides of some of the work and a few lines on your group and the show? We try to run photos and comment about shows and this sounds a good candidate. I can't promise we'll be able to run anything, but we'll certainly give it a good look. If you award any prizes, slides of the winners would be nice.

I enjoy the Newsletter. Having lived in London for a couple of years myself, I could just imagine the local coverage of the show at Australia House. Is your guy's name really Ponsonby-Smythe?

Let me know what, if anything, you can send me on your show. If we publish, we pay \$150 per published page, on publication.

Best wishes, Roger Holmes — Associated Editor "

■ Three or four views of our exhibition, including slides might just get us a little exposure in this inspiring publication. What about putting your views down on paper after Woodcraft '85 and pooling our efforts to produce a first-class review?

### CLASSIFIED ADZE

**Bandsaw for sale.** 26 inch Cleveland 3-phase. 3 h.p. new blades, new rubber \$750. Henry, on 666 8627.

### OUR NEXT MEETING

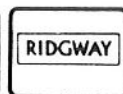
About the next general meeting at the Metropolis Design Workshops, 28 Lord Street, Botany (the workshop of Henry Black, Jamie Kutasi and Jim Littlefield). The premises are in Building No. 119 in Michaelis-Bayley's factory complex. Park in Lord Street and enter by the gate marked by Henry's Orange VW ute. There are no barbecue facilities, so bring lunch with you. See you around 12 noon.

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