

Centre for Fine Woodworking Newsletter

September 2008

Forthcoming Events at The Centre for Fine Woodworking:

Wood Carving for Furniture Makers with Mike Davies

Saturday 6th & Sunday 7th December \$350

Learn the basic techniques in wood carving and how to accent leg detail, handles, shape and form in your furniture. A two day workshop where you will learn to develop hand-tool dexterity, carve decorative forms to incorporate into your work, and add a creative flair to future projects.

Mike Davies is a carver with 20 years experience, and was trained in the UK specialising in the restoration of carved antiques, undertaking projects for the British National Trust, royalty and private collectors alike. Mike is currently in New Zealand working on a series for television about carving cultures from around the world.

2008 Exhibition: Refinery Artspace, 3 Halifax Street, Nelson 9th December 2008 - 9th January 2009

Our annual exhibition of student work will be on display at Refinery Artspace. If you are in Nelson over this period, do go and have a look at the exhibition which not only will have a display of furniture created here over the last twelve months, but the beautiful clinker/lapstrake dinghy which was built here over the winter - and of course we would expect you to pop your head round the door here at the Centre to say hello.

Veneering with Darryl Kiel 5-16th January 2009 \$1625

Darryl Kiel is one of the pre-eminent developers and explorers of the technology and new techniques of veneering. This is a superb opportunity to learn from the acknowledged expert in this field and add these revolutionising techniques to your range. In this two week course, students will first acquire the skill to transform veneer from its raw state into beautiful, finished panels.

Bending Solid Wood with David Haig 19th - 30th January \$1625

Due to popular demand we are offering this course twice during 2009, both in January and at the end of May, as in previous years we have had to turn people down because the course filled up so quickly. Spend two weeks exploring the techniques and potential of wood bending. Students will be guided by David through the making of a stylish and contemporary seat, utilising and understanding the processes of steam and kerf bending.

Enrolments for 2009

Following the announcement of our 2009 programme it has been very encouraging to have received so many enquiries and enrolments for next year. Our Beginning Cabinet Making course in December is just about full but it will run again in February, May and August of next year. If you are interested in any part of the 2009 programme, even if it is a tentative enquiry at this stage, please let us know by contacting info@cfw.co.nz so that we can pencil you in.

Internship 2008

This week is the start of our ten week Internship Programme. The full-time students will be joined by a young woman who works on the North Island as a technology technician in a polytech, and three local practising furniture makers.

Japan woodworking tour

Larry is about to take off to Japan for a two weeks to make contact with furniture makers, tool and furniture exhibitions and a timber auction. This trip is in preparation for a woodworker's group tour of Japan in 2009. If you are interested in being part of this tour please get in touch with us.

Visiting Japanese furniture maker

Kenji Suda will visit us for about two weeks at the end of March and beginning of April next year. While here, he will hold informal lectures and demonstration on the tuning and use of Japanese planes and instruct those who are interested in the art of urushi: Japanese lacquering.

Dave's trip to USA

I recently returned from 10 weeks away, the last six of which were in the U.S.A. where I taught at two different wood schools, one in Maine, in the far north-east, and one in the heartland of the midwest, just outside Indianapolis.

The Center for Furniture Craftsmanship in Rockport, Maine is now very familiar to me, it's the fourth time I've taught there, and in many ways it gets better and better, partly through familiarity with a very attractive area and friendship with some very good people but also because the school itself has matured and rounded out, both in it's physical layout, but also in the range of work and study opportunities offered.

I was one of two instructors for the final four weeks of the summer 12 week *Intensive* programme, which as its name implies is a course that pushes you through a great deal in a short time. The final four weeks is the opportunity for the 12 students to push beyond the boundaries of conventional solid-wood cabinetry as they are introduced to the fields of veneering, laminating, steam-bending and kerfing. Several of the students took their opportunity and pushed their design and making abilities into very interesting and attractive areas. Of course, the further they want to push the boundaries, the more input is required to keep the projects on track, so including giving demos and lectures on all sorts of topics, I was kept on my toes for the whole time. We had some excellent students though, and the whole class atmosphere was great. A big plus of these wood schools is the opportunity to meet fellow instructors too who teach other courses. While I was there, we had among others, Brian Boggs, the well-known chair-maker from Kentucky, who is a highly creative and entertaining person, and Teri Masachi, the American doyenne of finishing techniques, also very entertaining with a dry, earthy kind of wit.

My fellow instructor for the 12 week programme was Brian Reid, who trained at Parnham college in England for two years under Robert Ingham, who is perhaps the ultimate precision cabinet-maker. Brian's speciality is actually a type of free-form highly decorative and intriguing parquetry which he applies in large panels. As veneering is absolutely not my technical area, and curved work hardly features in Brian's we offered the students a very wide range of possibilities, but individually we got on really well and I thoroughly enjoyed his company.

Marc Adam's School of Woodworking in Indianapolis had a very different flavour, and catered for a slightly different approach. Marc Adams had approached me early this year to see if I could schedule a one week course, and he was flexible enough to fit me in at the end of my 4 weeks in Maine. (Actually my wife Clare and I had a week's holiday in between, exploring the wilds of inland Maine, a vast forested wilderness full of lakes and fast flowing rivers, and climbed Mt Katahdin, which though not high is a fine spectacular prominence and also happens to be the final 5 miles of the 2600 mile long Appalachian Trail.)

Anyway, Marc Adam's school in many ways reflects quintessential middle America; the courses offered are rarely more than a week long, which suits the short holiday breaks most Americans are used to; the intensity is very high, starting before

8.00am and finishing around 6.30 pm; and there is a great canteen lunch provided for everyone in the middle of the day, with even a soft-serve ice-cream machine! I decided that it should just be possible with the long hours and the good technician support to be able to get a class to make my curved stool project in the given time, and by dint of keeping to a very tight schedule we did manage it, but it took a lot of organisation and preparation beforehand (and, I'll have to admit, a fair number of sleepless hours worrying about whether it would work.)

Anyway, it did, and everyone was happy, and I've been invited back too, (which is the real litmus test!) One of the instructors there at the same time was a guy called David Marks who had put out a 90

episode TV show on woodworking a few years back and was a highly engaging laid-back but extremely effective Californian, who now specialises in very decorative techniques using patination processes on gold, silver and copper leaf laid on turned wood vessels. The field of applied decoration is now huge in the States, as woodworkers vie to create ever more spectacular effects to enhance and differentiate their work. The other instructor, Gregg Johnson, who had been Wendell Castle's finisher, was also giving a course on finishing techniques, but more conventional ones than David Mark's. We had a couple of very entertaining nights out sampling the food offered in the vast and endless belt of brand-new and very opulent strip-malls that surround Indianapolis.



From there, we flew to L.A. where recent clients laid on a very special grand finale to the last two days of our U.S. trip. Firstly, we had a full tour of the iconic American Arts and Crafts architect's, the Greene and Greene brothers, famous 'Gamble' house in Pasadena. It was built in 1907 to a level of woodworking excellence and finesse that would not disgrace a Japanese temple(of which it actually has certain echoes). The entire package of house and furnishings were all designed by the Greene brothers who engaged a firm of cabinetmakers who fully understood what was asked of them and produced a house-lot of furniture and fittings of exquisite detail and craftsmanship, nothing was skimped anywhere. Yet it was of a scale and intimacy that made it eminently liveable, and several members and generations of

the Gamble family lived there very happily for many years. Realising what a treasure they owned, they finally gave it over to the State as a museum in the 1970's.



Our final day (we flew out late) was a visit to Sam Maloof, who is probably now America's most famous and well loved woodworker, now 93 years old,. He lives in a kind of compound in Alta Loma which includes his current house, as well as the house that he built first which is now a museum (which was moved and re-assembled on it's current site when a Freeway was routed right through his old place ten years ago,) his workshop, a huge new art gallery, shop, offices and last but not least, several huge sheds housing his \$10 million dollar collection of lumber. For a woodworker, Sam Maloof deals in big money numbers, and enjoys that fact. He gets \$30,000 to \$50,000 per rocking chair, and half that for his low-arm dining chairs. If you want to buy one at auction you pay even more!

He had recently had surgery so was looking a bit frail, and when we arrived at 9.30.am had a doctor's appointment at 10.15, so we feared we would only have a very brief time with him. However, he came back from his appointment full of beans, and accepted our offer of taking him to lunch, and we also had the pleasure of his second wife Beverley's company, plus two of his assistants, superb craftsmen in their own right. He was very sharp and full of good stories, and wanted to show us round everything, including all his current work projects, art collection and wood store.

The clients of mine who had arranged the whole day then suggested that they should go back to their home and bring the rocking chair I'd built them for Sam to sit in and appraise! Sam was very happy with this idea, and I have to confess to feeling pretty nervous. Anyway, he did sit in it, said it didn't quite fit his back, (but then he's gotten a little bent with age!) and suggested I could make the rockers a bit longer, but apart from that looked at it with a lot of interest and warmth (and so did his assistants) and reckoned "it's a very nice chair" and that I should double the price!

It was really sad to say goodbye, he is a rare person of great warmth and our visit to him was highly memorable, could not have been a better way to round of what proved to be one of the best trips we've had to the U.S., which though it gets a bad press in many areas is still one of the most fascinating, energising and diverse places you could possibly hope to visit.