May - June 1997 Newsletter

WOODWORKERS' ASSOCIATION OF NEW SOUTH WALES

Incorporated

From the Chair

Jim is busy tripping about overseas at the moment so I get to play acting Chair.

There are a number of points worth raising while I have the chance.

Firstly, I think it is worth reminding you that this newsletter is reader written. Thus, if you want it to be interesting enough to bother reading you have a responsibility to contribute something to it. Every one of us, almost certainly, has some bit of experience, knowledge or expertise that other members can benefit from. If you don't wish to write about it, please contact me or any committee member or the editor and tell us what you'd like to say.

Secondly, and along the same lines, we are gearing up for the exhibition at the Furniture Industry Association of Australia (FIAA) show at the Sydney Showground. By the time you read this it will probably be too late for any last minute surges of enthusiasm, but if it goes as we hope there will be similar opportunities in future years. In fact, there is the possibility over the next few years to work with the FIAA to build our exhibition into a significant event at this show.

This could be particularly relevant in the absence of any further major exhibitions such as the recent State Library Shows.

Once again, however, this will only come true if you help make it come true. We need to imagine what we can achieve, not this year or even next, but over a period of five or ten years. If we build it in terms of quality, the publicity and public expectation could produce a fantastic result. We could have, every year, the best wood work exhibition in the country, with major prizes on offer as well. It's worth a thought.

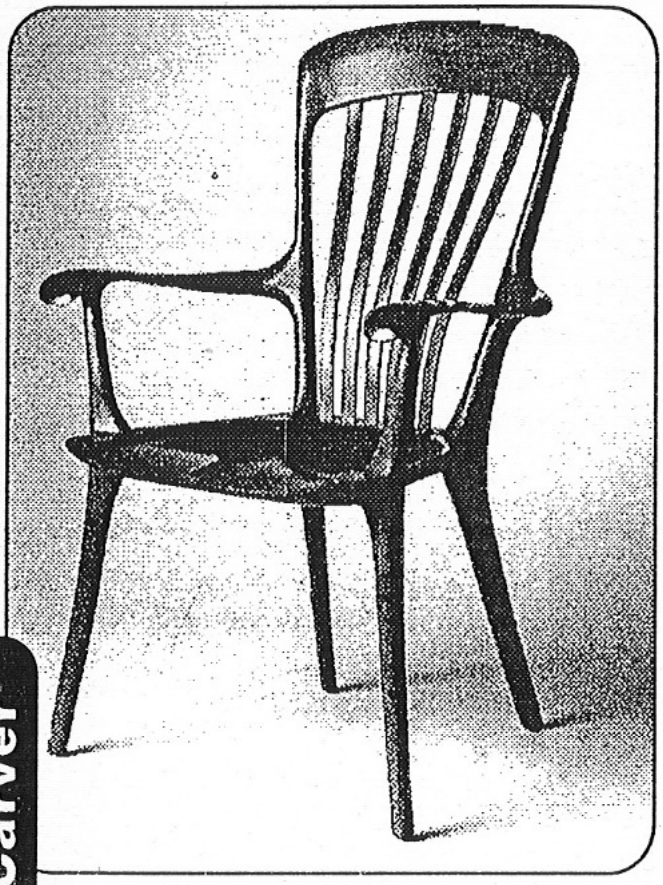
We have been trying to make the adjudication procedure for Exhibiting Membership more user friendly, and our latest ideas are explored in this newsletter.

Finally there are still membership fees outstanding. If you haven't paid your fees yet. please do. If you can't remember give Michael McGrath a call and he'll let you know.

Hope to see you at the FIAA show.

Bob Howard

Cover Carver



River Red Gum 1996
Bob Howard

This particular chair represents a quantum leap in the development of this design. I say that because the public response to it was quantitatively and qualitatively different to the response to any previous chair. In part I think this was due to the the magnificence of the River Red Gum - its fabulous colour and figure - and in part because, as Peter Van Herk explained at the previous meeting, the weight and strength of the wood allowed me to reduce the proportions of the seat, legs and arms resulting in a dramatic increase in the chair's elegance.

The chair sold for $4750.00 in the first half hour of the 1996 Craft Show. It won the Best Exhibit prize in the Special Exhibit at the same show and shared the Peoples Choice prize.

Australia Council for the Arts

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OUR NEXT MEETING

Guest Speaker: **Bob Howard**
Topic: **The Evolution of a Chair Design**

I belong to that minority of woodworkers who actually enjoy making things more than once. In the privacy of my own mind I think that wooden objects need to be made more than once, because it is almost impossible to get them right first go. Of course that is only a problem if it bothers you that they aren't right. Obviously it bothers me.

I have been fiddling with my basic chair design since 1989 and spent some of that time going backwards but most of it, hopefully, going forwards.

In this talk I will cover basic chair design: structure, ergonomics etc. as well as my particular design. I have developed a special leg joint which works for compound angles. It has evolved from Sam Malouf's joint, which only really works for square joints or those with only one angle other than 90 degrees. I think my joint is stronger and simpler.

I will then describe how my design has evolved and why as well as a lot of other stuff along the way. I intend to have my latest chair at the meeting along with a few older versions to demonstrate the differences.

Monday, June 2nd

from 7 pm

Powerhouse Museum

500 Harris Street, Ultimo
(entry via Macarthur Street)

Light refreshments will be available for a token $3 fee from 7pm for a 7.30 start.

Limited parking may be available on site - reserve a space by phoning Jim Davey on (02) 9545 1633 by midday on the day.

Look forward to seeing you there.

Visitors and friends are always welcome.

FUTURE ASSOCIATION MEETING DATES

AUGUST 4th
OCTOBER 13th
DECEMBER 1st

NEXT NEWSLETTER DEADLINE
Fiday June 27th

CORRESPONDENCE

Please address all membership applications and renewals to the **Treasurer.**
Please address all other newsletters and contributions for this newsletter to the **Editor.**
Please address all other correspondence regarding the Woodworkers' Association of N.S.W. to the **Secretary.**

Change of Address ?

Was this newsletter correctly addressed to you? If your name or address is incorrect, please drop a line to the editor so that our records can be updated for next time.

COMMITTEE OF THE WOODWORKERS' ASSOCIATION OF NSW Inc.

Chair:	**Jim Davey** PO Box 412 Gymea 2227	bh tel: (02) 9545 1633 ah tel: (02) 9548 2684
Vice Chair:	**Bob Howard** 9 Beaconsfield Lane Alexandria 2015	bh tel: (02) 9319 5666
Secretary:	**Karen Miles** PO Box W77 Warringah Mall 2100	voicemail: (02) 9640 7848
Treasurer:	**Margaret Kearns** PO Box 1308 Potts Point 2011	ah tel: (02) 9356 4296
Editor:	**Michael McGrath** PO Box W106 Warringah Mall 2100	tel: (02) 9949 5717 fax: (02) 9907 0212 e-mail: mcgrath@enternet.com.au
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General Assistance:	**Fred Blake** **Phil Boddington** **John Brassell** **Jon Gasparini** **David Muston** **Andy Stewart**	bh tel: (02) 9231 5259 tel: (02) 9968 1948 tel: (045) 76 1535 tel: (047) 57 1915 ah tel: (02) 9949 6384 ah tel: (02) 9449 7150

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

Minutes of General Meeting and AGM April, 1997

Jim Davey welcomes new members.
Apologies: John Brassel and Jon Gasparini

AGM
The following positions were nominated and filled on the night:

Chair: Bob Howard nominated Jim Davey
proposed by Richard Vaughan, seconded Fred Blake

Vice Chair: Jim Davey nominated Bob Howard
proposed by Dave Allen, seconded Fred Blake

Secretary: Jim Davey nominated Karen Miles
proposed Phil Boddington, seconded Chas Thomas

Treasurer: Jim Davey nominated Margaret Kearns
proposed by Dan Taylor, seconded by Paul Floyd

Editor: Con Downey stood down,
Jim Davey nominated Michael McGrath
proposed Con Downey, seconded Chas Thomas

Nominees for the five positions for general assistance on the committee were:
Fred Blake Phillip Lake Phil Boddington
Andy Stewart John Brassell Jon Gaspirini

It was proposed and carried that a voting slip for these positions would be included in the next newsletter.

* Financial report - a loss a $350.00 was recorded but we are looking at cutting down on printing costs.
* The AGM minutes of 1996 were passed at the June 1996 meeting.
* Minutes of the February meeting were proposed as accepted by Phil Boddingotn and seconded by Richard Vaughan.
* If there are any ideas for articles or advertisers for the newsletter please contact Michael.
* The Working with Wood Show . . . Once again we need volunteers and pieces - as Jim says, " It's lots of fun."
* FIAA Exhibition - will be held in late May. We have received the space and have accepted an area of 55m² but may receive another 35m². At present we have 8 members interested. All members with work to sell will be considered. There will be a standard of workmanship required but not as high as exhibiting standard. Bob Howard thought it was important to establish another way of exhibiting in lieu of the larger exhibitions occurring. It is important to consider for the future of the association.

Regarding exhibits for the FIAA, some questions were posed:

Q- How new does the piece need to be?
A- It should be in mint condition no matter what age.
Q- Is it just furniture?
A- No, it could be sculpture or carving as well.

Bob Howard felt that, as the costs were little to the association, it's crucial that we start to appear somewhere.

We need the names of those interested very quickly.
The dates of the exhibition are 22 -25 May, 1997.

Recent Events
* Bega - excellent standard, good to see members work recieve awards and prizes.
* Kiama - mostly turning, and a lower standard.
* Newtown - small exhibition of six Canberra students, good standard.

Colen ClentonTool Raffle
Colen will supply some of his high quality measuring and setting out tools for a fundraising raffle to be held in conjunction with the Working With Wood Show.
* **1st Prize:** 4" and 8" set squares, mitre square, dovetail square, cutting gauge with brass face and screw mortise gauge.
* **2nd Prize:** 6" square, small mitre square, dovetail square, brass faced cutting gauge.
*3rd Prize: 4" square, brass faced cutting gauge.
These may include presentation cases. Colen asked the general meeting for their thoughts on providing tools in boxes.

A reminder that subs are due and there will be no further newsletters to members with outstanding dues.
Thanks to Con for his input as editor and for providing the catering.
A reminder that volunteers are needed for cleaning up at the end of the evening.
Thanks to Richard Vaughan and Capricorn Books for the Door Prizes.
A vote was held on pre-selling raffle tickets and was carried. The fundraisi;ng will be for a scanner and new software for the computer.
Current financial balance is $4,700.00

Minutes courtesy of Karen Miles

Karen has a copy of the Business Report. If any member would like to have a look please contact hee on the number on page 2.

ASSET REGISTER

Karen Miles is compiling a register of assets belonging to the Association and their whereabouts.

WHERE IS THAT TAPE RECORDER?
Are YOU aware of any other Association property which may have been missed? If you can assist, please contact Karen as detailed on page 2.

ARCHIVES

The archives of the Woodworkers' Association of NSW are kept by the State Library of New South Wales in Macquarie Street, Sydney.
Their reference is : Serials L9 (O/N 679797)

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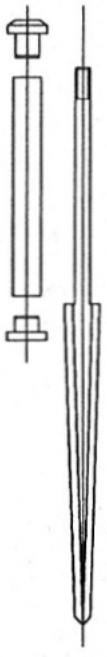

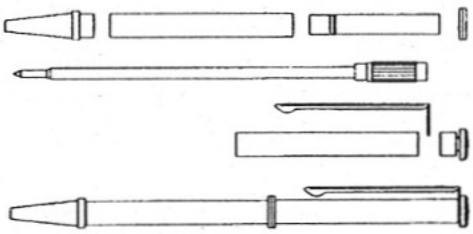

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MAIL ORDER ACCEPTED

NEWSLETTERS
RECEIVED RECENTLY

-- Australian Association of Musical Instriment Makers
-- Bayside Woodturners & Woodcrafters Club Inc.
-- Berwick District Woodworkers Club Inc.
-- Craft Australia
-- Central Coast Woodturners Co-operative
-- Centre for Contemporary Craft
-- Forest Hill Woodturners Inc.
-- Forest Protection Society Ltd.
-- The Furniture History Society (Australasia)
-- Goulburn Region Woodworkers Inc.
-- Handtool Preservation Association of Australia Inc.
-- Illawarra Woodworkers Group Inc.
-- Interior Designex, Melbourne
-- Mid North Coast Woodworkers Inc.
-- Northern Rivers Woodcraft Group Cooperative Ltd.
-- Queenscliff and District Woodworkers
-- Sydney Woodturners Guild
-- The Marquetry Guild NSW Inc.
-- The Sydney Woodcarving Group Inc.
-- The Traditional Tools Group Inc.
-- Victorian Cabinet Manufacturing Industry Association Inc.
-- Victorian Woodworkers Association Inc.
-- Warragul Woodworkers' Club
-- Woodcraft Guild of the ACT Inc
-- Woodgroup S.A. Inc.
--The Woodturners Associationg of WA Inc.--
Woodturners Bendigo Inc.
-- Woodturners of the Goulburn Valley Inc.
--Woodturners of Portland
-- The Woodturners Society of Queensland Inc.
The Yarra Turners

Thank you to those editors and secretaries who regularly send along a copy of their newsletters for our shared enjoyment. Don't forget, these newsletters from other groups are there to peruse and borrow at our meetings.

We would like to exchange newsletters with ALL woodie groups. Are you aware of other woodie groups who regularly produce a newsletter? Please supply name and address details to the editor.

WELCOME

The Association warmly welcomes the following new associate members:
Essential Elements

ADJUDICATION: THE LATEST WORD

Proposals for a new method

It has fallen to me to rewrite the adjudication guidelines. We have talked about this at some length in our committee meetings and informal discussions. It is always going to be a difficult matter, involving as it must the risk of failure. However, there are definite things we can do to reduce this risk and make the whole process much more user friendly.

The key, as I see it, is to create a clear adjudication process. In the past applicants were left pretty much on their own to make the necessary arrangements, gather their courage and front the panel under their own steam, often without a clear understanding of what was required or what the chances of success were.

In place of this, I propose the following five step process for discussion and welcome your feedback.

1. We create a separate adjudication committee, made up as follows;

a) a minimum core committee of three people, one of whom is elected chair. The chair may be an ordinary member since the key requirement of this position is organisational ability rather than woodworking expertise.

b) a further three people, at least, be co-opted by this committee to adjudicate on any particular occasion. The key requirement here is expertise in the field concerned in that particular event. For example, different people would be required to adjudicate wood turning, carving, musical instrument making. If the field is pretty exotic and we can't rustle up three experts we do the best we can.

2. Those interested in knowing about the adjudication process should register their names with the core committee.

3. When they have enough names, or wish to coax some people into applying for exhibiting membership the core committee arranges an orientation meeting for a suitable date. The purpose of this meeting is to thoroughly explain (and were possible illustrate with examples) the process and indicate what is required. The idea is that once this meeting is over, anyone attending should have a very clear idea of what they need to do to become a exhibiting member.

4. If anyone indicates a specific desire to become an exhibiting member, the core committee arranges for them to establish a mentor partnership with an existing exhibiting member. Obviously this needs to be by mutual agreement with the people involved being compatible.

5. When they believe the time is right, the formal application for adjudication is lodged. The core committee then take over again and arrange for the judging stage.

It should be obvious from this that a great deal of the mystery and fear of the process will be removed, along with much of the risk of failure.

I would point out though that because the standards of this association are so high, failure is no dishonour. It is all relative!

Is it a failure, really, to come last in an Olympic final? In one sense, yes, but it is certainly no dishonour to be only the eighth or tenth fastest in world. We need to keep this in perspective.

It is also important that the standards of the association be kept high so that it really means something to be accepted as an exhibiting member.

When it comes to adjudication, there are two major aspects that must be considered: workmanship and design. A few words on each of these might be in order.

Workmanship

This is the big one, and the cause of most failures. Fortunately, it is a relatively black and white issue, and not subject to the vagaries of opinion. Having said that, however, candidates will always, fall on a scale between clear cut acceptance and clear cut failure, which means that there will always be some borderline cases. These are the tough ones and they can probably go either way depending on the night and the makeup of the committee. Unfortunately there is no way around that.

The one really important point to make here is that if you apply for adjudication, your responsibility to yourself is to submit your best work. You will be judged on what you submit, not on what you "know " you can really do or even on what the committee might know you can do. If you can really do it, then submit that and not some lesser work, In particular do not submit visible mistakes, If they are visible to you, they will be visible to the committee. This is relative of course, what one person calls a mistake another won't worry about. The mentor program will help even that one out.

Design

This is the tricky one. How do you judge design without running the risk of becoming dangerously narrow minded? How do we guard against prejudice? We do not want to entrench any particular point of view (ie. modern versus traditional, minimalist versus decorative etc.) but we cannot be without any design standard.

I do not believe there is any simple answer to this. All we can do is make certain that the best possible people are on the adjudication committee, and trust that a sufficient design sensibility/sensitivity is represented in them. It comes down to their judgment.

If our association is healthy that will be sufficient. If our association is not healthy it won't really matter.

The overall hope of this process is that instead of having to do it all yourself, you can be helped through it. Once you express your intent you become part of a procedure that carries you along, making it as easy for you as possible.

If you have any comments to make about these ideas, please let me know. In particular I have not addressed the special difficulties faced by those members outside Sydney. Any feedback is welcome.

Bob Howard

Diary

MAY

22 - 25 Australian International Furniture Exhibition
Furnishing Industry Association of Australia (NSW)
(22-23 trade only, 24-25 open to public)
Sydney Showground
Driver Avenue, Paddington Sydney NSW
Enquiries : (02) 9580 8922

23 Melbourne Tool Sale
Glenferrie Primary School
80 Manningtree Road, Hawthorne
Enquiries: Laurie (03) 9573 3550 Rod (03) 9523 7178

23 - 25 Brisbane Timber and Working With Wood Show
RNA Showgrounds, Brisbane QLD
Enquiries : Patrick O'Reilly (02) 9712 5623

24 - 25 Orbost Timber World 97
by Lions Club Orbost
Newmerella Recreation Reserve
Princes Highway, 5km west of Orbost VIC
Enquiries : Peter Griebenow (03) 5154 2211

24 - June 1 National Woodturning Exhibition
by Forest Hill Woodturners Inc.
Nunawading Arts Centre
Whitehorse Road, Nunawading VIC
Enquiries : Keith Rogers (03) 9878 9646

JUNE

2 WOODWORKERS' ASSOCIATION MEETING

7 - 8 3RD ANNUAL EXHIBITION
by Narooma District Woodcrafting Association
Tilba Tilba Community Hall
Tilba Tilba NSW
Enquiries : Hal Chitty (044) 76 7715

15 - 29 "Devil's Own Wood"Exhibition
Urrbrae House, South Australia
Enquiries: Doug Bell (08) 8383 6385

JULY

1 - 3 Townsville Show
Exhibition Demos & Sales
by Townsville Area Woodturners Association Inc.
Townsville QLD
Enquiries : Kerry Cameron (077) 80 4662

12 - 14 Newcastle Woodcraft Expo
by Woodturners of the Hunter Co-operative Inc.
Elders Wool Store
Hannell Street, Wickham NSW
Enquiries : Keith Boaz (049) 46 7509

18 - 20 Sydney Timber and Working With Wood Show
RAS Showground
Driver Avenue, Moore Park NSW
Enquiries : Patrick O'Reilly (02) 9712 5623

29 - 31 Charters Towers Show Exhibition Demos & Sales
Townsville Area Woodturners Association Inc.
Charters Towers QLD
Enquiries : Kerry Cameron (077) 80 4662

29 - September 7 Living With Wood 97
by Victorian Woodworkers Association Inc.
Meat Market Craft Centre
7 Blackwood Street, North Melbourne VIC
Enquiries : Jane La Scala (03) 9497 1916

AUGUST

4 WOODWORKERS' ASSOCIATION MEETING

4 - 10 Ararat Woodwork Exhibition
by Ararat & District Woodies Club
Ararat Town Hall, Ararat VIC
Enquiries : (ah) (03) 5352 1012

8 - 10 1997 W.A. Wood Show
by Fine Woodwork Association of W.A.
and True Blue Exhibitions
Claremont Show Grounds WA
Enquiries : (09) 389 5979

31 Demonstration Day
by St Arnaud Woodworkers Club Inc.
RSL Hall, Raglan Street, St Arnaud VIC
Enquiries : (03) 5495 1476

SEPTEMBER

International Antique and
Collectable Tool Auction
Hand Tool Preservation Association Inc.
Melbourne, Victoria
Enquires: Jim Gladstone (03) 9543 8705

12 -14 Exhibition of Fine Woodcraft
by Illawarra Woodworkers Group Inc.
Corrimal Uniting Church Hall
Russell Street, Corrimal NSW
Enquiries : Bill Hopton (042) 718182
email: hopton@wollongong.starway.net.au

20 -21 Demonstrations & Sales of Woodwork
by Illawarra Woodworkers Group Inc.
In conjunctioin with "FLORAWARRA"
In the Wollongong Botanical Gardens, NSW
Enquiries : Bill Hopton (042) 718182
email: hopton@wollongong.starway.net.au

Diary

25 - 28 Woodwork Exhibition
by Maryborough & District Woodworkers Group Inc.
Maryborough Town Hall
Maryborough VIC
Enquiries : Val Cain (03) 5460 5220

OCTOBER

3 - 8 Newcastle Mattara Festival
with demonstrations and sales
by Woodturners of the Hunter Co-operative
Honeysuckle Centre, Newcastle NSW
Enquiries : (049) 43 1249

13 WOODWORKERS' ASSOCIATION MEETING

17 - 19 Melbourne Timber and Working with Wood Show
by Riddell Exhibition Promotions
Melbourne Exhibition Centre
Southbank, Melbourne VIC

1 - 2 Annual Exhibition
by Woodcraftsmans Guild of Queensland Inc.
Mt Coot-tha Botanical Gardens
Brisbane QLD
Enquiries : (07) 3269 4628

21 - 30 Victorian Woodwork Exhibition
by Victorian Woodworkers Association Inc.
Manningham Artspace
Doncaster Road, Doncaster VIC
Enquiries : Ben Raslam (03) 9499 3519

29 - 30 Victorian Woodwork Festival
by Victorian Woodworkers Association Inc.
Manningham City Council Grounds
Doncaster VIC
Enquiries : Ben Raslam (03) 9499 3519

DECEMBER

1 WOODWORKERS' ASSOCIATION MEETING

Is YOUR event listed here?

It will be FOR FREE if you just drop a line to the Editor - see address on page 2 of this newsletter.

If ANY reader could please let the editor know about OTHER woodie happenings in other parts of this great country, please share it with our readers.

Market Place

Sales Opportunity
at
Cumberland State Forest

The CSF have invited our members to supply items on consignment for the gallery section within their information centre.
Open to all members, this is a great opporunity to take advantage of this new outlet.
Contact Jim Davey for details.

RECORD COMPASS PLANE

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Contact Mark Mogridge (02) 9542 3243 (b/h)

Two New Solar Kilns

Rose Gum Timbers, drawing on six years of experience in solar kilning of furniture timbers, are now marketing two solar kiln systems.

The S2 Solar Kiln

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The S1 Portable Solar Kiln

This system was developed for the operations without access to forklifts. Modules of 2.5m can be joined in pairs to dry timber up to 5m in length This portable kiln sells for $2,000 for a singel module and $3,500 for a double module.

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Australia's Special Hardwoods

according to Peter van Herk

At our last meeting, in April, Peter van Herk, an exhibiting member since 1989, paid us a visit from his home in Gloucester in order to share his increasingly extensive knowledge and enthusiasm for Australian hardwoods.

Peter spoke a little about his beginnings, first as a Ranger with the National Parks and Wildlife Service then, following a hobby interest in making furniture, soon found himself as a full-time backyard designer-maker. The move into Australian hardwoods was economically driven. As he was 'too poor' to buy the more traditional cedar and rosewood he bought a pack of tallowwood from Fennings Timbers. After doing some designs he gained funding from the Timber Advisory Council to research design and jointing technology, for the use of Australian hardwoods in furniture, which led to a successful exhibition. Although such a use of these timbers (and the spending of TAC money) was at first considered folly, Peter notes that attitudes about the use of native timbers in furniture have been changing - slowly at first but now more rapidly - during the eight years since he started. In that time he has picked up a couple of Industry Innovation and Design Awards.

As part of a venture to market quality furniture to Japan he encountered serious problems in reliably sourcing high grade, seasoned, Australian timbers. This led him to investigate a number of kiln systems, finally purchasing a CALM solar assisted, easy to use, kiln and soon after, two Ringfab, solar assisted kilns. These have annual throughput of up to about 300m³ of timber with only 2.5% degrade (compared to a normal 30%). His aim is to provide an industry source of high quality Australian timbers.

With respect to design, could there be such a thing as an Australian design identity? We recognise, for example, Japanese, Scandinavian and Shaker styles, but Australian design largely reflects that of the West with influences from other cultures. Peter feels it is the uniqueness and variety of Australian hardwoods which could be developed to create a design identity.

Peter then compared the characteristics of Australian hardwoods and the more traditional furniture timbers (*Table 1*) which shows that our hardwoods are significantly denser, harder, stronger before deforming, more elastic, more resistant to crushing and can withstand more impact. This means that we are dealing with a material which is different to the traditional material and which, therefore, has to be handled and utilised differently. Although some of the qualities of these hardwoods may represent advantages (beauty, strength, hardness) which can be exploited to widen our design options, it is what are perceived as disadvantages which must be addressed and overcome in order to fully realise the advantages. With the help of input from the audience Peter dealt with a range of these disadvantages and showed not only how to overcome them but in some cases how to turn them to advantage.

Moisture content: This is particularly important due to the high shrinkage which accompanies drying (although it was suggested that in fact over a period the hardwoods were more dimensionally stable than softwoods due to their lower permeability to water). Peter recommends buying a moisture meter (eg from Carbatec) to check the moisture content when buying timber and to ensure that it is less than 12% before use. He actually prefers 10% to allow for changes either way depending on the final location of the finished piece, but this is hard to achieve in most workshops without a dehumidified storage area. The best advice for minimising shrinkage problems is to think the process through both in design and during construction.

Hardness: This, in conjunction with wavy grain and the occasionally high silica content of some timber species, can make them difficult to work and be hard on tools. These difficulties can be partly overcome, for example, by using machines rather than hand tools, by using tungsten carbide tipped bits and blades, by putting steeper angles on blades and by relying on more extensive sanding to finish.

Chemical extractives: Where present, these can affect gluing and finishing. There was some discussion about the most suitable glues for the hardwoods: Peter recommends epoxy glue for everything (and not PVA glue as this is more likely to come apart with movement of the timber). There is something in blackbutt which react with resorcinol; polyurethane glues absorb water to set then expand; prior to use some glues absorb water (resulting in subsequent failure) unless stored in dry conditions; he recommends gluing straight off the jointer to avoid extractives rising to the surface. There was clearly a need for more information, some of which was provided anecdotally during discussion. There is some research into glues going on in Queensland to identify the most suitable glues - hopefully one day we will know which glue can be used for which species.

Weight: Many hardwoods are heavy - this can be overcome by using thinner or finer sections, the compensating strength of the timber means load bearing requirements in the piece are not compromised. In any case, cross-grain joints should be kept small in order to avoid potential problems caused by the relatively high shrinkage of many of the hardwoods. He exemplified the importance of joints with two of his fine chairs which

Table 1: Comparative charactaristics between Australian hardwoods and traditional furniture timbers.

SPECIES	DENSITY (kg/m3)	MODULUS OF RUPTURE (MPa)	MODULUS OF ELASTICITY (CPa)	MAX. CRUSH STRENGTH (MPa)	IMPACT (Izod Value)	HARDNESS (Janka)
Blue Gum *Euc. saligna*	850	180	18	68	18	9
Brush Box *Trist. conferta*	900	123	15	68	18	9.5
Jarrah *Euc. marginata*	820	112	13	61	10	8.5
Spotted Gum *Euc. maculata*	950	150	23	75	24	11
Red Mahogany *Euc resinifera*	950	140	18	70	15	12
AVERAGE	894	141	17.4	70	16.4	10
AUSTRALIAN HARDWOOD IS	**59%** Denser	**53%** Stronger before deforming	**51%** More elastic	**41%** More resistant to crushing	**89%** Withstands more impact	**139%** Harder
AVERAGE	564	92	11.5	49	8.7	4.2
Tas, Oak *Euc. delegatensis*	620	110	15	60	18	4.9
Teak *Tect. grandis*	640	106	10	60	18	4.9
Red Cedar *Toona australis*	420	65	9.4	36	5.5	2.3
Pine *Pinus radiata*	500	81	10	42	6.9	3.3
Blackwood *Ac. melanoxylon*	640	99	13	48	13	5.9

Australian Design Hardwoods

Australia's traditional furniture timbers

he had brought along and described the fully housed dovetail joints which provide an interlock joint (resembling Sam Malouf's knuckle joint) resulting in high strength and little movement. His spotted gum chair has resisted some pretty severe testing and in spite of its light appearance is rated for heavy domestic use. Only spotted gum (which is considered the strongest commercially available timber in the world) could be used like this and so represents a unique Australian identity in its design/material combination.

Another area in which Australian identity is becoming recognised is in the use of feature grade hardwoods. In Victoria the Timber Promotion Council has just held a design competition for feature grade hardwoods; Queensland is holding one in the near future. Wentworth Furniture in Victoria is in the process of sending two container loads per month of hardwood furniture to the US - the timber company which supplies them is actually looking for lower grade (feature grade) timber, a real turnaround in attitude for the Australian furniture industry. (The wholesaler, nevertheless, is still demanding only clear grade timber.) Peter is now finding his customers prefer either feature grade timber or completed furniture with some gum veins etc.

Peter is opening up a showroom at the end of the month (11 Cecil Street, Paddington - only 60m²) to showcase Australian hardwoods, especially feature grades, sourced from eight sawmills from Tasmania to Queensland. He is hoping to interest architects, interior designers and wholesalers. At the moment he is not able to provide small quantities direct but is arranging for this with Anagote Timbers. As this is relatively expensive, Peter proposed that groups of woodworkers from the Association might combine to purchase timber in volumes that attract better rates from suppliers.

He is gearing up to supply large amounts, particularly on a regular basis but finds that the sawmillers (who provide him with his timber green) are reluctant to install their own kilns without first getting firm regular orders. He is also promoting secondary species whose value is not yet recognised and which currently sold, say, for construction. Eventually he envisages that sawmills will be putting this aside in order to realise the higher commercial value. Available species now include Tasmanian oak, blackwood, myrtle, blue gum, brush box, spotted gum, red mahogany, blackbutt, rose gum and ironbarks. Secondary species will be added later for sale into niche markets.

In spite of difficulties in the past he appears optimistic about the future. The furniture industry is gradually becoming more interested in the Australian hardwoods - this will be helped both by imaginative design input and increased utilisation by designer makers as well as by increased availability and consistency of quality of the hardwoods.

Report by Andy Stewart

"TRUTH OR TRAP"

The Contemporary Craft Movement's Pursuit of Art Ideals

This article is the final instalment of Bob Howard's summary of Grace Cochrane's talk at our December meeting.

In the March/April edition Bob concluded with the statement by Pru La Motte that art is not a truth:

"Art is what you say it is and that changes".

Where does this leave us?

I think this leaves us with the realisation that some of the things we thought were truths or ideals are actually constructed truths. Almost everything we believe or do, is the result of the way society has, over time, constructed conventions or 'truths' to suit the purpose of a particular group.

I think it means that everyone working in the arts is a product of a history of attitudes about what art is and what artists are: how values are placed on works produced in different media, what values are placed on skills, processes and attitudes to materials, what language is used and what art does, or should do.

It is convention, not truth, that now defines a category of activity or product as the 'fine arts', based around certain practices like painting. sculpture (and architecture).

Convention also places greater value on the fine arts than on, for example: pots, jewellery, furniture, costume and textiles, which are now distinguished as crafts, or "craft".

Whether or not fine artists, craftspeople and designers know the history of these attitudes, or whether or not they think it is important, they are still both consciously and unconsciously a product of that conditioning.

I think that what a work means is the result of several intersecting histories. There is, of course, the specific history of each maker that is brought to the meaning of their work, with all the complexities of attitudes and prejudices, experiences and skill, class, race, gender, age, place, time, education and opportunity. Then there are the parallel experiences of the audience or client, who will bring completely different attitudes and prejudices, experiences and skills and circumstances to a meaning of what has been made.

That each work carries with it the history of the materials with which it was made, including 'art' media like paint, ink, paper, stone. bronze and video, as well as 'craft' media like wood, clay, fibre, glass, leather and metal. Huon pine means something different from bamboo. Gold means something different from uranium. A table has a different functional history from that of a chair. These histories bring completely unconcious perceptions of meaning with them about those kinds of objects and material. One cannot use these media and forms, or attempt to challenge or subvert them without ackowledging their cultural associations. Finally, every object changes its meaning through the changing public and domestic contexts in which it is placed.

[for example: Brian O'Doherty discusses the ways in which art galleries take work from the contexts of their production and ascribe new meanings for them by the way they are exhibited inside the "white cube" of a neutral gallery space. Brian O'Doherty, Within the White Cube, the Lapus Press, San Francisco 1996. Michael Carter also talks about the imposed narratives in some galleries, where we are forced by the geography of the place (entrances, exits, one-way traffic, ramps etc.) to follow a sequence of events, a chronology of art/craft history that has been decided for us. Michael Carter op cit (1990) 171-76]

In other words, while the practices of art, craft, design and industry overlap, each area has generally had different purposes, audiences, markets, languages, histories and production processes. Most craftspeople know, more than anyone, the traditional uses, beliefs and rituals associated with the forms or images they use and the materials they work with. They generally understand not just the technology of what they use but also know the ways in which these technologies have changed society along the way.

It is now clear that if people combine areas of practice - glass and sculpture, ceramics and painting, woodwork and sculpture - they have to understand how each area works and what it means, now. Chechoslovakian glass artist Dana Zámecniková insisted at an Ausglass conference in 1991, "if you want to make glass sculpture you must study glass and sculpture. The work must then be considered in terms of both areas at that time."

The separation of 'imagination' and 'ideas' in the making of a work, from attitudes about skills and materials in the processes of its production, occurred most recently when artists wanted to isolate themselves from what they saw as the crassness of the middle-class marketplace - and identify themselves as individuals. I think these attitudes should not be exclusive oppositions. It is not an issue of either imagination or skills, intellectual or practical, self or society. Both aspects are to a greater or lesser extent present in all cultural activities whether painting, sculpture, potting, weaving or furniture making.

Skills, processes and understanding of materials have never been enough on their own. Nor have ideas and imagination without practical resolution, or a market place for that matter.

The histories of functions of wearing, decorating, ornamenting, performing ritual, containing, covering and so on are just as valid as those of decorating walls and filling corners of rooms. Art is not the only thing to aspire to, even if it is the only one to be reinforced. Critics, historians and educators have a responsibility to be experienced in and informed of the widest histories and values that lie behind all contemporary practices, they need an approach of material culture, or cultural history.

As for practitioners, I think the pursuit of art ideals must be

critically considered alongside, not only current art value and practices, but also those of design, architecture, industry and a changing society, as well as the traditions and changing ideals of the crafts themselves. I believe that many contemporary crafts practitioners need to assess whose values and ideals they are really pursuing as well as how much they may have lost by ignoring or denying important aspects of their own traditions.

Peter Timms was interviewed on Arts National along with other writers, critics and publishers in the arts. He concluded by saying something along the lines of: "Our view of art changes, but at any time we must accept that there is both good and bad art. The issue is to have a position about it, and to say why you hold that position. More importantly, be prepared to be contradicted or even to be wrong". I think that applies to makers as well. If you think you are making art, you cannot expect everyone to agree with you about its meaning or its value. If you are designing useful or decorative objects you are more likely to bear an audience or a market in mind in the development of your ideas. Both positions are equally valid. One thing is not automatically the other. Art does not always come with an appreciative market. That might not mean the market is mistaken. The artist might be.

Timms also said that we expect to have to work hard to understand such things as economics, philosophy or science and that we should also be prepared to work to understand creative works in whatever form. I also think that applies to makers. One of the hardest things when you are working in isolation is to be self critical. It is even harder to be critical to (or of) your peers.

It is my view that the unconscious masterpieces made by instinctive, innovative, wild leaps of genius etc.. are often not so much unconcious masterpieces made with wild leaps of genius at all. Instead the are usually great works made by people who have a wide and very informed knowledge of materials, skills, tools and histories of the forms they are working with, that they can call on, perhaps unconsciously, and by people who are also working self critically within a very informed understanding of contemporary society.

I think the pursuit of art ideals is both truth (it was liberating in its challenges) and a trap (it has been terribly limiting in its denial of other values). The success of any work depends on the understanding each craftsperson has about their relationship to all the areas they are working in and on the way they resolve that understanding in their work.

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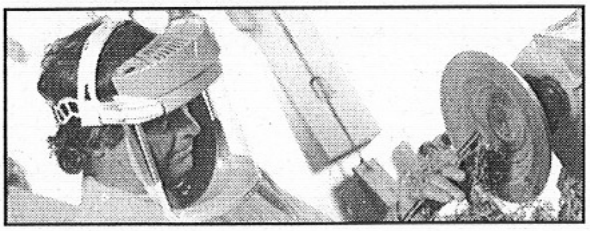

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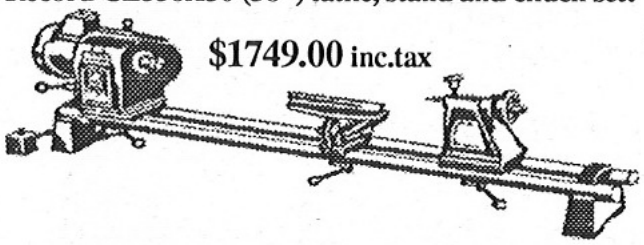

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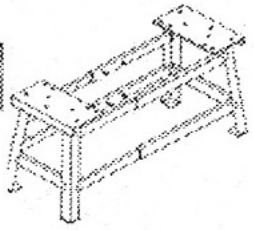

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