



# WOOD FORUM

Newsletter of the Sonoma County Woodworkers Association

[www.sonomawoodworkers.com](http://www.sonomawoodworkers.com)

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August 2011

## July Meeting: Artistry in Wood Opening Event - Judging



***Best in Show:***

**Thomas Starbuck Stockton  
"Poppy Cabinet"**

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From the Chairman

## August Meeting Notice

**Who: Exhibiting Artists**

**Where: Sonoma County Museum  
7th Street  
Santa Rosa**

**When: August 2nd, 7:00PM**

The August meeting will be held on Tuesday, August 2nd in the Artistry in Wood exhibit hall at the Sonoma County Museum, starting at 7 PM. Award certificates will be presented at this meeting and show participants will discuss their entries. The meeting will be an open forum where you may ask questions of the members during their presentations. All members with work in this year's show are encouraged to attend and talk about their entered work. Michael Wallace will serve as moderator.

## July Meeting Report

Our July meeting was centered around our annual Artistry in Wood Show, the 23rd at the Sonoma County Museum. It began shortly after 7:00PM. Bill Taft, after greeting the assembled members, announced the next meeting, which will be on August 2 at 7:00 PM. at the Sonoma County Museum. That is the meeting at which makers of the pieces will discuss their processes and answer questions pertaining to their work. Bill made the membership mindful of the People's Choice ballot box, and to use numbers, since there were no signs on the pieces to indicate titles or makers. Bill then handed the meeting over to Michael Wallace, this year's Artistry in Wood show chair. Michael began by thanking Eric Stanley, the museum's History Curator and Exhibits Manager for his assistance with the show, Bill Taft for his general help, Art Hofmann, Mike Burwen, Bob Nelson, Theo Mueter, Dennis Lashar, Butch Johnson, Bob Moyer, and Larry Stroud for their help as well. He thanked the Heimbachs as well. Jim, besides being a fine chair maker, produces great cookies, which were disappearing rapidly.

Michael went on to thank our judges, Brian Newell, the accomplished furniture maker from Fort Bragg, John Lavine, former editor of Woodwork and furniture maker, and Julian Shaw, the 'English Turner' from Sebastopol, an excellent wood turner and educator. At this point the membership was encouraged to go upstairs, which they did en masse, reassembling in the gallery that overlooks the main downstairs's space.

Brian Newell began right off by announcing the **Best of Show**

winner, a wenge hall table inlaid with a series of abalone shell poppies. *Poppy Table's* maker is Tom Starbuck Stockton,



for whom there was generous applause. Proportions, materials, craftsmanship, everything was just right. Julian Shaw called it: "a beautiful piece, a standout. When you first approach the piece, you see a very narrow

edge, but then there is a little bevel beneath the curved edge which adds strength to the top, so the piece has structural integrity and delicacy as well. Doors are often left hanging, but these doors seem to want to close on their own. Good use of magnets in this context. Beautifully executed piece." Tom said he likes magnets for holding doors closed since they don't lose adjustment. A discussion concerning hinges ensued, with differing opinions and suggestions: larger vs. smaller, black, patina-ed, invisible, offset, shop made, concealed – but any cavil was outweighed by the judges liking for this piece. John Lavine found the feet really sweet, and Brian Newell was happy that Tom wasn't afraid of some curves. This brought smiles and laughter since Brian is an acknowledged master of compound curves.

The judges stated that they liked four of the furniture pieces in the show, and accordingly drew our attention to the carved and colored *Chest on Stand* by Michael Cullen, to which they awarded

**Best Furniture.** John Lavine loved the carving and color and material, the paint combined with the natural wood interior. The judges liked the pattern that looks like it has forms close to being regular, but are still irregular. They found it a strong piece overall. This piece elicited a discussion among the judges about patterns, and how to



make them stay interesting. Brian Newell liked the texture of the piece, that the gouge marks made you want to touch it. Rick Redus admired the way the pattern wrapped around the edges of the chest. Julian Shaw would have preferred it in the art category. Julian liked the magical world revealed in this Chinese cracked-ice pattern. He admired the boldness to use paint on wood. Brian Newell found it also to be a straightforwardly useful

storage piece, which complemented its whimsy.

Next, the judges drew our attention to a gourd piece, one of two entries by Ralph Carlson. This piece featured a gourd on a stand with carved feet that complemented the natural curved stem, and two small drawers.

This gourd piece satisfied a need, Julian told us, that as a long time woodworker he felt for something a bit different. Movement is one factor, not just in terms of grain patterns, but form itself. There is a degree of integration between a natural form and the little extra touch, the feet, the handles that add some aliveness which wasn't already there. The interaction of humanity with a natural form has a



quality that he really respects, an ability to add movement to a piece that then actually percolates outwards. The judges gave it an **Award of Excellence**. Move around it you can sense how the craftsman has managed to integrate a piece of his own personality into the piece. Brian Newell was torn between this piece and its companion piece in the niche in the room next door, which he found in some ways more subtle. Brian was so enthralled that he vowed (perhaps not in total seriousness) to start working with gourds himself immediately. Ralph said that Food for Thought holds an auction called Calabash! every year to benefit Sonoma County AIDS food project, and that prompted his efforts. Gourds are about 1/4" thick and the resulting objects are fairly robust. Gourds are dispensed to artists and works are created throughout the year. Ralph's two items will be up for auction in the Fall at an event at the Food Bank in Forestville.

John Lavine then took the lead and divulged the thinking of the judges in relation to another

piece of art work. John indicated that this category was difficult to make decisions about. They did though find a work by Scott Clarke worthy of an **Award of Excellence**, a small wall plaque with a pyrography image of a Mountain Goat on a piece of birch with natural edge birch bark. Scott had two pieces in the show, John liked this one: "For me, what constitutes art



in the world of woodworking is problematic, but this one was nicely handled all the way through, sweet and perfectly harmonious."

The **Best Turning** was discussed by Julian Shaw, who found Hugh Buttram's Ginko Jar, a delight to hold, a very simple form, exquisitely carved, the choice of wood beautiful. (Apparently these pieces according to Hugh, are so attractive that people walk away from the show with the item stuck in their pocket.) Hugh explained that the wood was madrone burl from Mendocino County. He pointed out that there are rare earth magnets in the inside of the lid so that the pattern lines up correctly. Beginning with the example of Hugh's jar, Julian went on



to make a speculative leap as to what makes us all spend so much time trying for perfection in line and form, a matter that has concerned him for some time. Recently, in speaking with a woodworker from Sacramento, he found one path to an answer, namely that this deep rooted desire has its roots in a moral impulse, and that the process, the very striving for perfection ultimately makes moral changes in those who practice their art. Finally, Julian said that if there had been a category for carving, he would have preferred assigning this piece into it, since he found that judging a plain unadorned turning to be quite another thing altogether.

*Double Tansu* by Art Hofmann, found general admiration among the judges; the craftsmanship excellent, the wood selection as well. Judges gave it an **Award of Excellence**. They liked the diminishing size of drawers that included hardware, too, its nice balance, pleasing stature and presence. In looking at it, the judges asked themselves what they would have done to push the form beyond its limits. John Lavine suggested that maybe the base might have been a bit wider, the waist a bit less so, and the top, too a bit less than the waist,

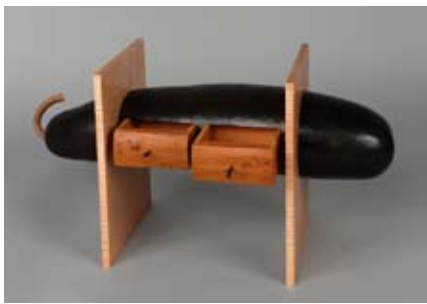
so that some movement might have been brought into the overall design, and the resultant piece a bit less tight in its up-and-down structure. Newell: "Japanese tansu are sometimes a bit more playful, this one is a bit too perfect". Art after thanking





his mentor, Larry Stroud, agreed with the judges that the piece is rather prim and proper. John Lavine asked “if a California woodworker looks at the Japanese aesthetic does he stay true to the original?” Or push it further and make it something extra, which is what he would encourage. They all liked the colors and the wood combination. Art explained that the pulls are from Israel, done by a metalsmith, Avigal David. Because the top and bottom pieces come apart, they will need to be attached with brass plates once the chest is in its final site, Art said. Rick Redus asked about the dovetail drawers; it reminded him of a Chippendale-style tansu, since real tansu do not have dovetailed drawers. The Japanese nail their drawers together. Tansu are used for all purposes in Japan: high end tansu are made for the emperor, the wood of choice being zelkova, an Asian elm, which is an exquisite cabinet wood. Brian Newell related a story of very perfect wood at one of his dealers in Tokyo, which will ultimately go to the emperor if it finds no buyer and the dealer has no heirs. In Japan, fine wood is held in high esteem.

After turning the corner into the west gallery, judges discussed Ralph Carlson’s other gourd piece, which received the **Best**



**Art Award.** Judges found themselves trundling between the two gourd pieces. As much as they loved the whimsy of the other piece, they really liked this one. The piece provoked an extensive discussion among the judges, often along the

lines of, if only the maker had done thus and so...vicarious wishes. Comments: pulls are perfect and good wood choice for the drawers. The only change John would have wished is that the ‘legs’ in their squareness might have had some thing to offset their simplicity. Brian thought the contrast perfect, however. Ralph was encouraged to keep at it: other gourd art that John Lavine had seen for instance, didn’t approach this level.

Another **Award of Excellence:** the *Texas Statehood* table made of horn woven leather and, yes, even a bit wood, by Joe Amaral was next up. Two judges really liked it a lot, every bit of came together they felt, and was quite composed throughout. A unique piece that is what it is. Brian found it perfect in terms of craftsmanship and unity, though it is not at all to his taste, since it contains



very little wood and sports a gold star. Julian said that he had a hard time getting his head around at all, largely because of what it said or seemed to say. Judges were not sure if the piece was meant literally or was to be taken in a satiric vein. A lengthy discussion ensued on various planes encompassing philosophy, politics, aesthetics and morality. John for instance agreed with Julian in terms of disliking what the table ‘stood for’ but admired totally the thoroughness and execution of the concept, the way it pushed its basic idea to the n<sup>th</sup> degree, and that all of it worked so well together to that end. Phil Barlow asked if the judges’ angle might be that it was so terrible that it must be fantastic. The conclusion was that it was a very red, white and blue American gesture, very loud, and very Texasan. Brian said that he had seen a lot of junky art that criticized the country. This table, however, was so well done, that it simply was not in that category. It was asked if this table was kitsch, but John Lavine quickly and accurately set us to rights on that one: kitsch is a matter of taste. (Your neighbor’s front lawn plastic garden dwarf may be kitsch to you, but art to him.) John Lavine says he had to separate himself from his own taste and what he finds interesting. Over the years he has had to look at a lots of furniture from other parts of the country, i.e., Wyoming, some of which used horn and rawhide, that was just not good at all. A tricky issue. Someone asked how the flowers of splayed horn were made: apparently if it is heated it works like plastic. Brian said, this thing is made from dead cows, and it looks as if the flowers and horns might cut you, it has all these elements and a slightly menacing aspect. Brian was complimented on his ability to step back from his own concepts of beauty and felt it important as a first time judge to see things for what they really are and for what the maker hoped to convey. John Lavine’s comments: the piece burst the bounds of category and defied reason; the sweep of the curve of the animal horn is a natural shape, but here they are inverted, and the maker piled on a lot of elements, but they all hung together and it was completely well constructed, and very well thought out. Phil Barlow asked if the intent of the judges this evening seemed to explore and enjoy the use of their materials, and got an affirmative answer. John Lavine: it takes courage to push out there. For Brian, the moment of pushing out there is the point of working. Julian Shaw seemed to represent another pole, one that is decidedly not post-modern in tone: namely that because we can do something, doesn’t mean that we should. The gesture of this piece, he felt, hit him in the gut: it was not something he was simply going

to cotton up to in any way, shape or form. "What we do does has consequences in the outside world, and at some point we have to ask, is this the right thing to do?"

While the open discussion was left hanging, it was taken up volubly and enthusiastically among the members, who had to be called to attention for the judges' next selection, a turning close to the entry way of the show.



Julian Shaw took the floor: "there are many turnings in the show, one stood out, very beautiful in itself, very simple. It is very difficult to get such a really nice smooth curve, slight curvature, technically flawless, sharp features, the flow

is lovely". The only surprise for him was that it had no foot, which was intentional and different. John Lavine: just enough detail, very well done, a very pleasing thing, finish just right, too. Kalia Kliban's is the maker of the Spinning Bowl in walnut, which was given an **Award of Excellence**.

The other turning that was designated for an **Award of Excellence** was Chuck Quibell's bowl in lodgepole pine. Julian Shaw found much to like about the piece: "beautifully done, lovely form felt very good in the hands". He did criticize a few



of its elements, a curve that possibly should have been a little shallower, possibly flawed by overzealous sanding, and/or undercutting might have been left undone. John Lavine liked the bowl's simplicity, its

lightness, and praised the choice of this wood as an object for a serious turner. All judges agreed that this simple, humble, lightweight object proved that a fine bowl does not have to be made of rare pink ivory wood or African blackwood.

At this point we were urged to go back to the balcony gallery for a final selection of the evening.

An **Award of Excellence** in the art category, a carved piece called Coral Reef, one of four pieces submitted by Dave Struthers. All of these pieces were made of small but exquisite scrap pieces. John Lavine: "We all have scrap pieces around our shops, collecting dust. Sometimes we try doing something with them, and it fails. These pieces are different in that the maker



found the right form, made the right intervention to realize the potential of the special piece of wood." Julian Shaw too found that this was a very good use of very lovely piece of Australian corkwood burl. Dave told us that all his pieces are made from scrap. He begins with an idea, but that the idea changes as he moves forward. Starting with coarse sandpaper, after the initial cutting and carving, Dave works his way up to very fine 800 grit paper by hand.

Dave van Harn was the winner of the **Best Amateur**, as selected by our Guild, for his *Oasis* turning, which featured a dark rim and



a died quilted maple burl interior. Larry Stroud, Guild Director, pointed out that this turning had a nice finish and a quilted maple interior. The piece has the appearance of a little pool in the center

of a dark border.

After Michael again thanked the judges for their insightful and expert comments, and a fine and lively discussion, the formal part of the judges discussion ended. Members were encouraged to vote for their favorites for the People's Choice Award, which amounts to \$150. Many members stayed for some time, as did the judges before the evening drew to a close at about 9PM.

## Artistry in Wood 2011

Pickup for items for the Artistry in Wood show is September 26th 9:00AM to 5:00PM.

If you are unable to make this date/time, please arrange for someone else to pick up your piece and notify Michael Wallace at: [mjmw Wallace@gmail.com](mailto:mjmw Wallace@gmail.com) or 707-824-1013

Also, remind your friends, family and neighbors that the Artistry in Wood Show is open from Tuesday through Sunday from 11 - 5PM. Admission is \$5 for adults, \$2 for seniors.

## Calendar

Here is the calendar for the next few months:

September (9/13) - Loy Martin, Cotati Clubhouse

October (10/4) - Panel on marketing, nominees for office

November (11/1) - Guild presentation, elections

## From the Chairman

This past month has been a busy period for those of us involved with this year's Artistry in Wood Show. On behalf of all of our members and especially all of the members displaying their work in the Show, I want to offer a special thanks to Michael Wallace for all of his work in presenting this year's Show. He had a team of helpers and they deserve our thanks too. I also want to thank the three judges for their comments, their insight and for their selection of the award winning entries. Finally, I want to thank all of the members that entered work in this year's Show. I am always impressed by the fine work produced by our members. This year you have continued in that tradition, thank you.

While on the show topic, our August 2nd meeting is at the Museum and is the best opportunity for you to see the Show and to talk with other members about their work. On "judging night" all of the comments were on the award winning entries. During the August meeting there will be an open forum and anyone can comment on any of the work displayed. It is a great opportunity to learn what others are doing. The awards will also be distributed.

While having dinner with the judges, one of the topics of discussion was education, more specifically education in woodworking. It turns out that all three of the judges are or have been involved in teaching woodworking. One of the comments was that "everyone seems to be teaching now". As I see it, this is good as it offers more opportunity for the "masters" to pass on their knowledge. However, there is the concern that the opportunity for training and education in woodworking is rapidly diminishing. The reason for my bringing this up is; should we do something about it? We have a great pool of talent in the association. I believe that we should be using it to foster the art of woodworking through education.

In last month's Forum I included a paragraph praising the work of the students in the Palomar Community College Cabinet and Furniture Technology Program that was displayed at the San Diego County Fair. This program offers the San Diego area public a wonderful opportunity to hone their woodworking skills in a fully equipped shop with expert help available. Can we, the SCWA members, start something like that here?

Many of us attended the memorial tribute to and celebration of the life of John de Marchi on July 17th. I learned a lot more about John from those that knew him better than I. From the memorial card: "John lived his life with long established principles which drew so many good people to be his friends". John was a good friend to all of us. We will miss him.

*Bill Taft*

Credits:

Editing: Michael Wallace Photos: Larry Stroud, Michael Wallace

# WOOD FORUM

Newsletter of the Sonoma County Woodworkers Association

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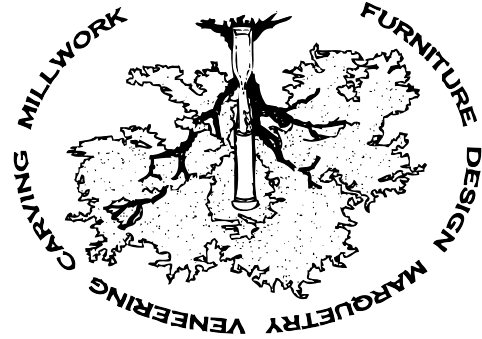
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**Join Us!** The Sonoma County Woodworkers Association is a 31-year old association of over one hundred professional and amateur woodworkers who meet monthly at members' shops to share experiences, ideas, techniques, and mutual enjoyment for creating with wood. Membership entitles you to attend monthly meetings, receive Wood Forum, our monthly newsletter, attend our annual show, and apply for seminars and demonstrations. Annual dues, payable at the beginning of each calendar year, are \$25. New members joining after September 30 may, for \$35, have their membership extend through December 31 of the following year. Please consider joining the SCWA and meeting people who, like yourself, are interested in the art and business of fine woodworking. Send dues to:

**PO Box 4176, Santa Rosa, CA 95402 Santa Rosa, CA 95402**

*Wood Forum* is the monthly newsletter of the Sonoma County Woodworkers Association. Please feel free to submit articles, notices, photographs, announcements, and comments for inclusion in the publication. Advertisements are accepted with a per-entry cost of \$5 per column inch. All submissions for the April issue must be received by August 15, 2011. You may submit your entries to the editor listed below.

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# WOOD FORUM

## MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Yes, I would like to join the SCWA and meet other people who are interested in the craft, the art, and the business of fine woodworking. Here is my application. I have enclosed a check for the annual dues of \$25 that covers my subscription to Wood Forum and entitles me to attend the monthly meetings.

Send check and completed application to: Sonoma County Woodworkers Association  
PO Box 4176, Santa Rosa, CA 95402

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