

# BAY AREA WOODWORKERS ASSOCIATION

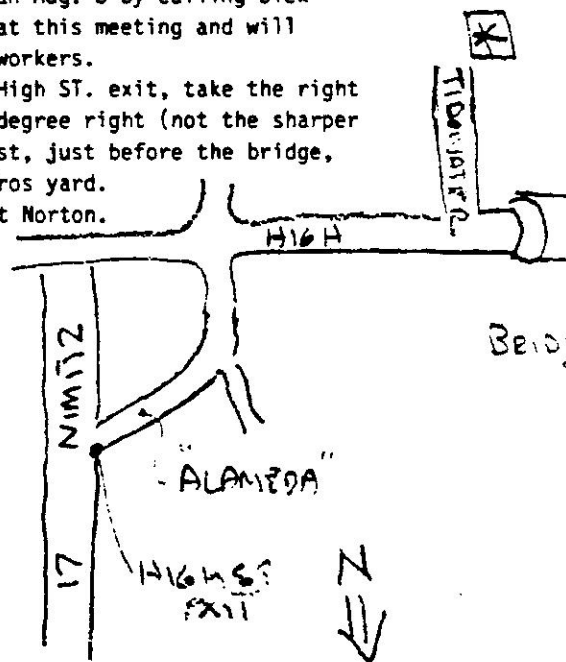
August, 1985 - Issue 7, Vol. 4 PO Box 421195 San Francisco, CA 94142

## Third Thursday Preview

The August meeting will be held at White Bros. Lumber Co. at 4801 Tidewater in Oakland. It will be a steak and beer Bar B Q with presentations by representatives from Norton abrasives and Watco finishing products. It will be August 15 at 6:30 PM (NOTE EARLY TIME) and is limited to present members (show your card) and new members who pay their dues at the door. Members planning to attend must RSVP no later than Aug. 8 by calling Dick Taylor at 846-3647. White Bros. will discount material bought at this meeting and will provide an introduction of the services they offer to us woodworkers.

To get to White Bros. yard, take the Nimitz (Hiway 17) to the High St. exit, take the right hand exit labeled Alameda, down to the stop light. Take the 90 degree right (not the sharper one with no stop sign) which will put you on High St. going west, just before the bridge, turn left onto Tidewater and drive 1/2 mile or so to the White Bros yard.

The Watco speaker will be Joe Aboud. Larry Magas will represent Norton.



### Upcoming BAWA featured presentation:

Sept. 19 general meeting, Art Carpenter of the Baulines Guild will address the meeting. If you have anything you'd specifically like him to talk about, he's open to suggestions. See the Chairman.

Oct. 17 meeting, Bob Kroll of Kroll Upholstery in SF will talk to us about the ins and outs of upholstery.

The July BAWA meeting was hosted by Gary Carter at his Rose/Carter shop in San Francisco. We had 47 members and Guests. Treasurer Frank Wallis reported our account is a healthy \$950 plus some checks to be deposited. At the request of chairman Don DuPont it was MSP to allow the expenditure of up to \$450 to purchase a daisy wheel typewriter to continue the standard of excellence of our newsletter. Chairman Dupont appointed a committee to develop a master roster to be sent to architects, interior designers, and high economic areas to advertise the skills of our members. A second committee was appointed to study the feasibility of BAWA sponsoring a show.

BAWA's second summer picnic was announced, date to be set at the Aug 15 meeting.

Rosters of members and their specialties were made available thanks to past chair Dick Taylor. Member Peter Good gave the membership an overview of the selling, designing, building, and finishing and installation of very beautiful and unique hand made doors. He began by giving us a slide show of European doors, England, France, Spain, Germany to whet our appetites. Then for desert he showed slides of his work. He then fielded questions with his usual humor mixed liberally with usable information.

John GS presented his and Carolyn's version of a french gossip chair. They discussed the development of the seat design and upholstery. The finish used is Kenvar laquer.

From the chair.....

The August general meeting promises to be quite an affair. Many thanks to White Brothers for hosting our gathering and for providing the goodies. Since I will be thinking of you all from the beaches of Martha's Vinyard, Dick Taylor has kindly agreed to run the meeting.

The July General meeting saw the formation of two committees, a BAWA Promotional Committee to promote the membership and woodworking in general, and a Show Committee, to look into the feasibility of putting on a exhibit of BAWA members' work. I believe BAWA can play a crucial role in both these areas, which are important to the survival of our craft and to the survival of members as business people. If you have anything to contribute to either or both of these committees, or wish to get involved, please contact Tim Kennedy at 415-364-5658 for the Promotional Committee, and Scott Page at 415-655-9595 for the Show Committee.

Don Dupont

The August Executive Committee Meeting will be held at Chairman Don Dupont's home at 3337 Mildred Lane, Lafayette, CA 94549, 415-283-0765 on Thursday August 29, at 7:30 P.M. Please note that this is two weeks after the August general meeting.

#### SECOND ANNUAL BAWA SUMMER (?) PICNIC SCHEDULED

The Second Annual BAWA Summer Picnic has been scheduled through the efforts of member Bob Newhall, able organizer of the First Annual BAWA Picnic. It will be held at Cordonices Park in Berkeley, on Sunday October 6, 1985 (thank goodness for long Bay Area summers!), the earliest available date that could be scheduled. Those who attended the last BAWA picnic will remember the lovely setting of oaks and redwoods, the music, and the good time had by all. The picnic is open to members and guests. BAWA will provide the charcoal and paper plates, members provide the rest. Watch for a map in the September Newsletter.

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BAWA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND PARTICIPATING MEMBERS

1985 - 1986

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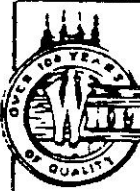
Gary Carter  
1174 Howard St  
San Francisco, CA 94103  
621 - 3054 (work)  
388 - 3626 (home)

MINUTES \*\*\* EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

A BAWA phone answer service was discussed. When the proposed specialty roster is distributed, a need for the service would develop. At present, published phone numbers of the executive board is deemed sufficient.

The Show Committee have scheduled a meeting with Stuart Welsh to enlist his expertise in setting up a show. Points to be considered - group show, other guilds, juried show, theme, quality, place. Possible alternatives could be display(s) in a mall or negotiated floor space in established outlets, i.e. Fine Woodworking in Sausalito. Future meetings should allow for reports and open discussion.

Respectfully submitted  
Harry Feucht, Secretary



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# A careful juggling of the abstract and real-life function

By John Chase  
Examiner design writer

**O**NCE, IT WAS easy to tell art and furniture apart. Art was what you hung on the wall, and a chair was what you sat in. Or, as the well-known Los Angeles artist Billy Al Bengston said, "Furniture is what you back into when you're looking at a painting."

Today, you are likely to find yourself backing into the art on the walls while you study the coffee table or the sofa. Furniture designed by artists with the same seriousness of purpose they have traditionally applied to other media, has been rediscovered by the press and public. It is being legitimized by the art world in gallery and museum shows such as the current exhibit at the Triton Museum in Santa Clara. (See the accompanying story for details.)

There is an important difference between a piece of furniture made by a craftsman and one made by an artist. "The craftsman is involved with craft, with the joining of the wood and using the grain of the wood, while the artist is also concerned with these things, but subordinates them to a concept," explained San Francisco-born Denise Domergue, author of the Abrams book "Artists Design Furniture."

You may suspect this is a plot by cynical designers to foist bizarre and uncomfortable furniture on a gullible public. Worse, it may mean the well-worn lounge in the TV room will be replaced by some high-priced contraption so inhospitable that it requires a chiropractor be in attendance at all times.

Don't worry. The fashion is to use whatever pieces strike your fancy, in whatever combination of old and new you like.

As collectibles, artists' furniture compares favorably in price with antiques and antique reproductions, ranging from \$100 to the \$30,000-plus range. Much of the best-selling work costs from \$1,200 to \$2,500. While the price will never be competitive with mass-produced pieces, it does stack up quite favorably against carefully detailed

handmade furniture designed by craftsmen.

And because the renewal of interest in furniture by artists is a relatively recent phenomenon — most of it has been pro-

duced since 1980 — now is a good time to begin collecting.

Mass-production and cost considerations have combined to nearly eliminate high-quality design and workmanship in the applied arts — arts which also have functional uses, such as architecture and furniture design. The best applied arts have become luxury items, purchased by much the same limited audience that buys painting or sculpture.

Further, they are a respite from the past 20 years of blank, sleek, utilitarian design.

Just as the asthmatic reaches for the oxygen mask, the sensitive inhabitant of today's often-arid art environment reaches out for a little deliverance, a moment of aesthetic engagement, of fantasy. Buying a bookcase that only holds four books (such as Trent Whittington's design in plywood, maple veneer and plastic laminate, on exhibit at the Triton Museum show) is simply one example that this deliverance from banality takes.

Artists have been interested in furniture as art form before. In 1923, the sculptor Constantin Brancusi was carving large hunks of wood into rugged furniture for his studio. Salvador Dali built a memorable sofa in the shape of Mae West's lips in 1936.

But this is the first time artists have made so much furniture and won some degree of consumer acceptance for it. Witness the establishment of stores devoted largely or wholly to art furniture, among them Limn in San Francisco and the Functional Art Store in Los Angeles.

Furniture art is created on exactly the same terms and for exactly the same reasons as other works of art. Furniture is simply the artist's chosen medium, instead of, say, film or sculpture. Art furniture pieces are intended to be appreciated on the basis of color, pattern, form and other abstract physical characteristics and formal relationships. At the same time, they are functional, or at least imply that they could be functional. The tension generated by this inherently dual nature of artists' furniture is part of its fascination.

This combination creates a fertile playground for sty invention and reinterpretation of conventional attitudes. Bruce Tomb's cooktop table, another one of the pieces in the Triton show, looks like some kind of alchemist's instrument, but is actually a functioning appliance that makes you realize that a stove doesn't always have to look like the boxy object sitting in your kitchen.

Even the most minimal artists' furniture resonates with

CONT'D

# Yes, but is it furniture?

the memory of other examples of its type. Phillip Agee's target chair, emblazoned with a bull's-eye and made of molded plywood (also displayed at the Triton), evokes other chairs of molded plywood, such as the famous series by Charles Eames.

This juggling of formal abstraction and function requires skill. If the artist strays too far from any discernible relationship to furniture, his work belongs to some other category of three-dimensional art, such as sculpture. If it conforms too closely to conventional furniture, it is in danger of becoming *just* furniture.

Artists' furniture has the same capacity for pretension as do other kinds of applied art, such as "wearable art," which have recently been granted the status and recognition long enjoyed by fine art. Artists who paint on found-object furniture — San Franciscan Nikki Schraeger is one example — sometimes end up glorifying undeserving subjects, instead of transforming them into art.

At its worst, furniture by artists can become furniture by celebrities who happen to be artists, in the same way "designer" candies by such celebrities as Bill Blass came to be. When a well-known artist such as Larry Bell copies art deco furniture, he gets credit for making art in a way he never would if he were an obscure interior designer.

Pure art status is desirable to furniture makers, architects and clothing designers alike, since it imposes the

minimum number of functional and cultural restraints and allows the maximum amount of individual self-expression.

But this kind of freedom can also be a license for self-indulgence. Unless the artist has something to say, it makes about as much sense for him to make furniture as it does for an accountant to take up watch repair or an ad copywriter to take up poodle-grooming. Furniture-making and design has its own long and distinguished history, a tradition of craftsmanship and a respect for utility. It is a worthwhile activity in its own right.

The least successful artists' furniture are pieces which manage to weasel out of being either art or furniture, and patronize both. If an artist is criticized for producing a chair that is too uncomfortable to sit on, he may blithely claim that comfort is not a meaningful criterion for judgment, because he is doing *art*. Conversely, an artist called to task because his work lacks artistic qualities may claim that conventional rules for determining artistic merit simply do not apply because it is a special brand of art-as-furniture.

Despite the possibility of preciousness, artists' furniture is a fertile genre. To the artist, it is an opportunity to work in a thought-provoking medium. To consumers who want to enliven their surroundings, and to art collectors, it provides an opportunity to enrich their environments and their lives.

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## BAWA DATA

The Bay Area Woodworkers' Association is an organization of woodworkers who have banded together to promote woodworking in both technical and aesthetic directions. This newsletter is a monthly publication intended to serve as a communications vehicle and a source directory for the membership of this Association.

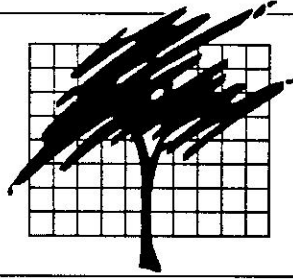
**Membership dues** are \$30/year, for which any member may participate fully in the Association, in accordance with the guidelines set forth in the By-Laws. This includes voting power on any issue brought before the membership for a vote, notification of the monthly shop talks and demonstrations put on by the Association, receipt of this newsletter each month, and privilege of participation in any special discount programs sponsored by local businesses in conjunction with this Association.

**Checks for membership dues** may be made out to the Bay Area Woodworkers' Association and sent to P.O. Box 421195, San Francisco, CA 94142. Membership cards will be issued to all members in good standing.

**Copies of the By-Laws** are available at all monthly meetings, or can be requested by mail.

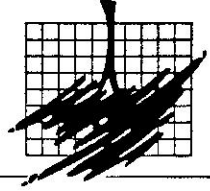
**The monthly shop talks and demonstrations** are held on the third Thursday of each month at 7:30 p.m., at a location announced both in the newsletter and at the previous meeting.

**The monthly executive committee meetings** are held on the fourth Thursday of every month, and are open to any interested members. To arrange attendance, contact any member of the executive committee by telephone or the address given above.



# BAY AREA WOODWORKERS ASSOCIATION

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