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SPRING 2008 NEWSLETTER

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The Cumberland Furniture Guild's Spring Meeting

will be on Saturday, May 10th, 2008 from 2 p.m. until 5 p.m. at Matthew Teague's Shop in Nashville, Tennessee. Many of you saw the article Matthew wrote about putting this shop together in a recent issue of *Fine Woodworking Magazine*. Matthew is a furniture maker and writer living in the Inglewood area of Nashville. After six years as an editor at *Fine Woodworking Magazine*, Matthew ventured off on his own to build furniture and write about furniture making. His first book, "Projects for Your Shop," is available from Taunton Press. He has had numerous articles published in *Fine Woodworking* and other prominent publications. Matthew has also been active on our Guild Board and is currently a nominee for Guild Secretary.

— See Page 3 for directions. —

THE MAIN EVENT at this meeting will be a demonstration by Alf Sharp and Jim Horne of *how to build a shipping crate for your work*. Since our current exhibition will be travelling the state for over a year, we will need to build reusable crates to allow for the easy and safe transport and storage of our pieces. Both Alf and Jim have had to do this extensively in the context of their own work, and they will show us tricks about what to do, as well as what to avoid. One rumor has it that after they build the crate Jim will get in it and Alf will saw it in half.

Additionally we will be holding elections for various Board Positions.

Those nominated as of now include: Alf Sharp for President; Scott Thompson for Vice President; DiAnne Patrick for Vice President of Programming; Roger Gramm for Treasurer; Matthew Teague for Secretary; Peggy Joseph for Advisor; and Worth Squire for Editor. Nominations will be accepted up until the vote is taken.

Letter From The President

By Alf Sharp

I've only got some rambling ruminations to offer this time. Between final exam time at O'More, Furniture Society issues without an executive director, and trying to complete my entry for our upcoming exhibit while maintaining some semblance of gainful productivity, there hasn't been much time for contemplation and composing.

For years I've nursed a theory about the ebb and flow of design aesthetics through the historical periods. I can't exactly claim original inspiration here, I'm sure, but I've encountered very little similar discussions. This means, I guess, that either my idea is so obvious that it deserves no serious scholarly attention, or that it's so intellectually suspect that no self-respecting scholar would propose it. Whatever, I've never been one to be dissuaded by either the obvious or by ridicule, so I'd like to propose the idea to you, and get your reaction.

Decorative design trends seem always to have gone through several typical stages of development. First, introduction of the concept, often to some resistance, then gradual adoption by the general public. Then, as the concept becomes commonplace and oft copied, people grow weary of it, and a new aesthetic begins to assert itself. There's certainly nothing innovative about these observations. What strikes me is that there's actually a simple, repetitive uber-pattern to these shifts, that's much like a sine wave, or the swings of a pendulum. I propose that the two poles of this cycle can best be described by two basic characteristics of the human spirit: Emotionalism and Rationalism.

Rationalism in the decorative arts reveals itself as an enthusiasm for pure geometrical forms, mathematical certainties, and fairly restrained and rigid design conventions. It tends to manifest itself when communities at large are prosperous and in relative harmony. Whenever rationalism gains sway, there tends to be a great resurgence in interest in the designs of antiquity, and especially the architectural forms of Greece and Rome.

Emotionalism, in my scheme, includes the meta-physical, or religious urge; hence Gothicism might be the first major example in our Western experience – a rejection, albeit enforced, of empiricism and of worldly pleasures and concerns. Later, emotionalism would come to include the drive for self-expression and individualism, and a rejection of conventions and accepted aesthetic norms. Culture-at-large during these periods tend to be in turmoil. It's difficult to say whether the emphasis on non-rational thinking is a response to such uncertainty, or the cause of it. With the exception of the Middle Ages, during such times personal pleasures often were eagerly pursued. (Come to think

of it, hedonism was never more extreme than that practiced by the Catholic popes during medieval times – they just didn't let anyone else in on the fun.)

How do I see this scheme playing out down through the centuries? Well, I've already mentioned the Gothic period as the first great thrall of emotionalism in modern history. The heavenward thrust of the arches and spires and even the (seemingly at the time) irrational application of buttresses to the outside of cathedrals clearly illustrate the metaphysical tenor of the style.

The Renaissance is the obvious rationalist reaction. Palladio's embrace of classical architecture, and the rising fascination with mythology (a real thumb-in-the-eye to dominant Catholicism) is apparently the first time designers reached back into antiquity to underscore their appeal to the mind. Leonardo initiates modern science, no small thing.

Baroque design, and continuing all the way through the Rococo, was a return to the exuberance, ostentation, and excess that tends to characterize emotionalism. Interestingly, one of Chippendale's design schemes was the Gothic.



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The next design period was called the Neoclassical. Need I say more?

Victorian eclecticism followed the Neoclassical. Was there ever a more exuberant, uncontrolled, dare I say irrational, explosion of conflicting motifs and concepts? Again, there was a Gothic Revival during this period. "Romantic" (as an appellation) literature, music, and painting defined this period.

As the 19th Century matured, an interesting thing started to happen. Emotionalist and Rationalist movements began to coexist and compete for the public's attention. For example, the Arts and Crafts style was rational in its precepts, but emotional in its nostalgia for the pre-industrial. Shaker design was likewise restrained and oh-so-sensible, but inspired by transcendentalist theology. In the midst of these, Art Nouveau arose, as eloquent a proponent of the subconscious and irrational as one can imagine. The Biedermeier style caught hold in the early 19th Century, and remained popular into the 20th Century.

It clearly sought to bring sophisticated neoclassical design to the masses, but as the century progressed, became quite exuberant itself, yet all the while maintaining the clean and upright stature that was the legacy of the neoclassic. Truly the 19th Century. can be described as a period of intense turbulence and unrestraint, and sets the stage for one of the most constrained and minimalist reactions ever seen – the Bauhaus.

During the Bauhaus stranglehold, another interesting manifestation arose – Art Deco. While still clearly possessed of classical



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Cool Tool Re-do Refurbished Greenlee Chisel

By Scott Thompson

Over the past year, I have reviewed several inexpensive and effective tools for furniture makers in small shops. For this issue of our newsletter, I thought I would change direction a little and reflect on one of my favorite tools - an old Greenlee chisel.

Most of us have certain tools that mean more to us than others. We enjoy using them not only because they help get the project accomplished, but also because they bring something to the process itself. For example, I have several tools that belonged to my grandfather, after whom I am named. I know that he used them when he was alive, and often I remember him when I use them. Since he cannot be with me in my shop, they (somehow) bring back some part of him to my workday.

When a good friend of mine gave me this Greenlee chisel, it had no handle and appeared to have already served a hard and useful life in someone else's shop. It cleaned up well, however, and, after a good bit of time with the water stones and honing strop, it is the sharpest chisel in my shop. I turned a dogwood handle that fits both my hand and the tool's socket. In a tangible way, this chisel exemplifies what I strive to make everyday - furniture that is effective, useful, and beautiful.

I believe that there are certain parts of the process that separate our work in small shops from the work done in factories and assembly lines - and it is not just the skill of the hands involved in the making. Taking the time to pay attention to small and significant details of our work and to enjoying the process of making furniture is what sets us apart.

I appreciate this chisel whether I am working on custom cabinets or making a piece of fine furniture. And, although all of our pieces have "tool marks" on them, in a more subtle way, I would like to believe that the "maker's mark" is evident as well - which tool we chose to use and how much we enjoyed using it. -*Scott*

Guild Exhibition Photo shoots

Saturday - May 17th, 2008, the Guild will have John Lucas, a professional photographer who has shot many pieces of furniture, on hand in Nashville to shoot digital images of your furniture. The cost will be approximately \$25.00 per half hour. If you have several pieces to shoot (or a difficult piece to shoot), then you may sign up for a one hour slot (for approximately \$50.00). This is a tremendous deal for this level of photography. Please take advantage of this! We need a minimum number of people to sign up in order to make the trip to Nashville worth John's time. We are also planning a second shoot on Saturday, June 7th, 2008.

To reserve a spot please email or call Scott Thompson at marrowbonestudios@earthlink.net or (615) 876-2724 and request a morning or afternoon time slot on one of these dates. You should expect to leave with a CD in hand that has images of your piece(s) ready to submit to the jury! ♦



Directions to the meeting

Matthew Teague's Shop is at 3613 Brush Hill Court, in the Inglewood section of Nashville. The Shop number is (615) 258-3633.

If you're driving from the East: Take I-40 to Exit 215-B and merge onto Briley Parkway/TN-155 North toward Opryland. Take exit 14-B for Gallatin Road South. Go about ¾ mile and turn left at Riverwood Drive. Go 1 mile to the end of Riverwood Drive, then take a left on Brush Hill Road. At the top of the hill take a right on Brush Hill Court. The house is 3613 Brush Hill Court, a 50s Ranch at then end of the street. Park in the driveway if possible or on Brush Hill Court. (See note at end about parking.)

If you're driving from the West: From I-40 East, take exit 208-B and merge onto I-65 North toward Louisville. Go two miles and take exit 86-A to merge onto I-24 W/I-65 N toward Clarksville/Louisville. Continue to follow I-65 N. Take exit 90A-B to merge onto Briley Pkwy/TN-155 East. Proceed 2.1 miles and then take Exit 14-B and merge onto Gallatin Rd. South. Go about ¾ mile and turn left at Riverwood Drive. Go 1 mile to the end of Riverwood Drive, then take a left on Brush Hill Road. At top of hill take a right on Brush Hill Court. The house is 3613 Brush Hill Court, a 50s Ranch at then end of the street. Park in the driveway if possible or on Brush Hill Court.

Since parking is limited people are encouraged to carpool to the meeting if possible. Cumberland Presbyterian Church is just a bit further down Brush Hill Road. If the roadside fills, people can park at the church and carpool or walk to the shop.

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4 each 8/4 x 6" X 102" Teak Boards for sale. \$180.00 each. That is \$19.50 bf plus sales tax, which is what I paid for them. Also some teak shorts and several 8" x 10' spiral pipe for dust collection. Call Roger Gramm (615) 262-6246.

Grizzley Shaper for sale. \$600 Call Roger Gramm (615) 262-6246 for details.

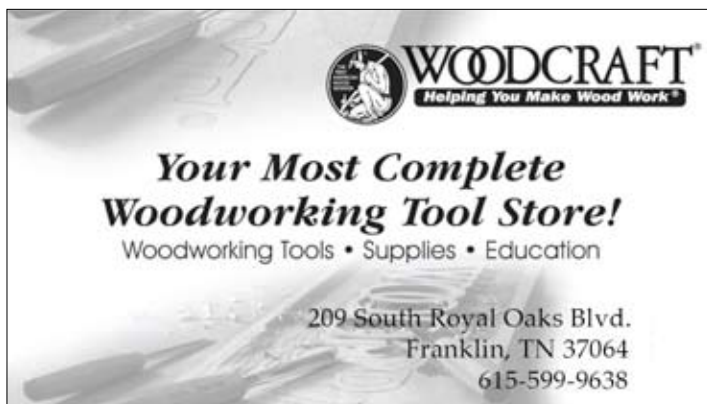


We're In at the KMA!

As we mentioned at our last membership meeting, the Knoxville Museum of Art has agreed to host the Cumberland Furniture Guild's touring exhibition from April through August of 2009. We are still working to pin down the Art Museum at The University of Memphis, and have high hopes that they will host us in between the Tennessee State Museum and the KMA. It would be hard to overstate what a great opportunity this is for the furniture makers in our region. We wanted to take one last opportunity to urge everyone to enter their best work. For a copy of the Call for Entries and entry form go to www.cumberlandfurnitureguild.org. There is a link right on the home page. ♦

dot-com, dot-net, or dot-org?

We are pleased to announce that we have now secured and



linked up all of the above domain name possibilities for the Guild, so www.cumberlandfurnitureguild.com or dot-net will now take you straight to our web site just as well as dot-org has until now. Thanks are due Chris Somerville for all his hard work keeping up the web site. ♦

Meet Our Business Members

Vintage Millworks

By DiAnne Patrick

Vintage Millworks, owned by James and Margaret Dunn, has produced custom architectural millwork for designers, architects and discerning home builders since 1987. The business started in a small warehouse with 3 employees (2 are still with the company). Today, their space has greatly increased and they employ about 30 people. They don't aspire to be the biggest millworks in town, but they do want to be the best. Always working to improve their products and production, they moved into CNC technology 4 years ago.

They also provide a public service by sharing material from their scrap pile with local boy scouts, girl scouts and art programs. ♦

President's Letter (Continued from page 2)

ideals, Art Deco declared that rationalism could have a heart. In many ways, it was the reincarnation of the Biedermeier. Long may they both live.

The post-modern world is where we still live today, artistically speaking. An obvious reaction to the sterility of the International style, the only unifying principle so-far identifiable is the quest for self expression, and the rejection of defined expectations.

Within this intense burst of pent-up creativity one can see a re-exploration of practically every decorative style that has gone before. Most of the previous styles we have discussed have been formally named by later scholars, who had the benefit of time and retrospection to analyze a period and distinguish its defining features. No all-encompassing name has yet been given to our era (except post-modernism). True, there have been petty identifiable sub-periods, such as "California round-over", and "Memphis", but these hardly define the era. Perhaps, because of the diversity of efforts and visions, there never will be an easy moniker for our times.

I'll leave the defining name of our era to the scholars of the future, but I'm willing to place it squarely in the Emotionalist realm, a reaction to the Bauhaus. It will be very interesting to see how the upcoming Rationalist shift will manifest itself. I hope I live that long. -Alf

A Note About Mike Bell

Although we are sad not to have Mike Bell's great column in this issue, we are proud to announce that the reason for his absence from our pages is that he has an article coming out in the current issue of *The Magazine Antiques*. We look forward to his return in our next issue, but we admit to being a little intimidated by such heady competition for columnists! ♦

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Thanks to all of the people who volunteer their time, without whom there would be no Guild and no newsletter.

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