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Winter 2008 Newsletter

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Entry Forms for our 2008-9 Touring Exhibition are available at www.cumberlandfurnitureguild.org



WINTER 2008 NEWSLETTER

The Cumberland Furniture Guild's Winter Meeting

will be on Saturday, March 8, 2008 from 2 p.m. until 5 p.m. at Craig Nutt's Shop

in Kingston Springs, Tennessee. Craig will do his very entertaining song and dance routine, complete with top hat and tails, about insurance for craftspeople. *(See Story on Page 4)*

Craig says if the weather is even a little dicey the highway 70 route is better, Scott T. likes it better anyhow:

DIRECTIONS VIA Highway 70: Get on US 70 West (Charlotte Pike) from I-40 at Charlotte Pike, Old Hickory, Bellevue, or McCrory Lane (Pegram) exits. In all cases you will turn right at bottom of exit ramp and continue until you intersect US 70-then turn left on US 70.

Continue past Pegram. Warning: Just past the turn for Ashland City on the left, there is a turn for Kingston Springs via Kingston Springs Road to the right at a traffic light and rail crossing. ***DO NOT TURN HERE!!*** This is the most frequent wrong turn!

Continue west on US 70 toward Dickson. You will pass two canoe rental companies and then cross the Harpeth River.

Continue approximately 3 miles until you see a sign for Kingston Springs. **Turn Left onto Kingston Springs Road**-this is a very hard left turn. (Hwy. 70 market and towing is just past the intersection on the left). **Continue 8/10 mile-just past Pine Valley Road** (on left). The driveway is the **second drive on the left past Pine Valley Road**. The number 1305 is on the mailbox, but there is no business sign on the street. It is a gravel drive with chain link fence on the right side. The studio is the first building on the left.

Directions Via I-40: From I-40 20 miles west of Nashville take exit #188 - Kingston Springs. At the end of the exit ramp turn to the North (right if you were headed west, left if you were headed east). Proceed a couple of blocks to a 3 way stop by the Sonic. Turn left onto Kingston Springs Road. Past the Elementary School and a log cabin company you will come to the village of Kingston Springs. Kingston Springs Road will become Main Street and will make a hard right by a church. Proceed approx. 2 blocks to 3 way stop (City Hall on right, Whistle Stop Café on left). Turn left on West Kingston Springs Road. After creek bear right at another three-way intersection. The road will cross above the railroad tracks and wind its way uphill - many hairpin curves! 1305 Kingston Springs Road is the first driveway on the right after Pine Bluff Road at top of hill. The number is on the mailbox. The studio is about 400 feet down the drive. It is a large building sided in brown metal and stained wood, with a green roof. Our home is beyond the studio, past the gate.

The phone # at Craig's studio is (615) 952-4308.

Letter From The President

By Alf Sharp

I was asked recently to write an essay for the O'More College journal on how furniture interacts with the senses; I thought I'd share it with you. But before I do, **I want to urge everyone in our guild to submit at least one piece of work to our upcoming exhibit jury**, even if you're convinced you don't have a chance to be accepted. There's a mind-set and process associated with submitting to jury that, just like any other process, needs to be learned, practiced, and honed to perfection. You've got to start somewhere.

One of the things I regret about my early career is that I put off submitting to the jury process for many years. I look back now and realize that, even though I surely would have received my share of the dreaded rejection letters, I also would likely have gotten a few pieces into the seminal Taunton Press Design Books, and perhaps some early important exhibits. Such exposure introduces one into the greater network of makers and designers, where you can receive constructive criticism, encouragement, and the inevitable refinement of your work. It also opens up a wider audience. Magazines might solicit articles from you. Etc, etc...

Also, our guild is arranging for a top-notch professional photographer to be available this spring to help any who need it to obtain the first step in the process – quality images of your work.

Make plans to bring something. Rarely will you have an opportunity to get great photos of your work at such reasonable cost. Submit a piece (or two) to the jury, and you might even be pleasantly surprised to receive an invitation to participate in the exhibit.

Now the essay:

In a Different Sense

Of course there are the obvious five senses, and furniture appeals to at least two of them (sight and touch), but I'd rather talk about another sense – the sense of well-being. Well-selected furniture can be essential to satisfying that sense. Our emotional and intellectual responses to the constructed environments in which we spend most of our time are perhaps as dependant on the furnishings contained within as they are on the architecture of the space itself. Depending on its design, sitting in a chair can make us drowsy or alert, on-edge or at-ease, welcome or anxious to leave.

The root of the word for furniture in at least four of the major European languages is *mobil* – mobility or moveableness. This is not because most pieces of furniture can be fairly easily moved across the room. Rather this: the ancient custom of royalty (generally the only folks who owned furniture well into the Renaissance) was to travel regularly from castle to castle, so as to keep an eye on the realm, and quell any nascent discontent. The whole court would pack up and move as often as once a month – the king, dukes and earls, with wives and mistresses, knights and servants. Most of the furniture they owned would travel with them. This was partly a matter of convenience – better to have a chest that held your clothes and household items that could just be picked up and carried along, than having to pack and unpack and pack and... But there was much more to it, methinks.

That ineffable sense of *Home* was also carried with those familiar and cherished pieces of furniture. Castles were just cold stone buildings, but what made each new venue feel like home was

continuity in the contents of the rooms. The king's tangible sign of his authority was his throne, which was also brought along.

Is it all that different today? Families pass pieces of furniture down through generations much more commonly than they do houses. Our nostalgic attachment to these items can be quite deep. Grandmother's rocking chair must remain the focal point of a family room, often to the dismay of the interior designer who has a very well thought-out and coherent theme in mind, and it doesn't include the rocker. Guess who usually wins.

Another function that furniture has filled since forever is to declare the wealth, prominence, and good taste of its owner. Despite the higher admonitions of theologians and psychologists, much of our daily sense of well-being comes from being able to reflect upon the tangible fruits of our own prosperity, and, yes, to sense the covetous gazes of our friends and acquaintances. Hardly a noble thought, but a reality nevertheless. The custom furnituremaker well knows that there must be bragging points fashioned into his or her work for the customer to take pride in, and show off.

Thus we confront the hard-to-define sense of *quality*, (and its step-sister *value*), subjective terms to be sure, but crucial to the sense of well-being. If you doubt this, just recall how agitated you felt the last time you purchased something that didn't turn out to be the quality you expected. (That agitation tends to increase proportionally to the cost of the item, doesn't it?) What the aforementioned bragging points might entail varies from client to client, so the astute designer will try to determine what denotes quality for each individual client.

Even the current enthusiasm for *edginess* in design, at first blush appearing to be aimed at creating discomfort, can be understood in terms of a sense of well-being. Its devotees like to see themselves as denizens of the cutting edge, the in-the-know tastemakers who have caught on to the latest thing before everyone else is comfortable with it. This can be a powerful intellectual and emotional stimulant. Yet most of the rest of us are still nevertheless bored by the utterly hackneyed and overdone. We all want some challenge and surprise in the decorative element of our surroundings. Count Basie described the best jazz as being about a 50-50 mix of the expected and



unexpected. If too much of the music sounds just like everything else we've heard for a long time, we grow bored. On the other hand, if too much of the music is wildly experimental and avant-garde, most people are discomfited.

The power of this need for a sense of well-being in our surroundings can be seen in how few people choose to live as ascetics. Most of the things we surround ourselves with are absolutely unessential to our survival, and yet are fairly crucial to our enjoyment of life. *-Alf*

Cool Tool Review

Roarocket Hand Vacuum Clamping System

By Scott Thompson

Last year I received a commission to make a piece of furniture with four serpentine drawer fronts. I recall having some vague idea of how curved drawer fronts might be constructed - a solid core with shop made mahogany veneer on the face and back. After constructing the core and resawing the veneer, I was ready to glue everything together, but was still unsure of the best (and most practical) clamping method. A few years ago, I had used a friend's vacuum clamping system to laminate a curved table apron out of ash. It



was a great experience, but the press was too expensive to justify for a one-man shop like mine.

For those of you unfamiliar with the technology, here is a basic description: At sea level the atmosphere exerts more than ton of pressure per square foot on you at all times. The science explaining why we are not crushed to death is complex, related to air density and our own density. It is the same science that explains why our ears pop as we gain altitude, or why a baseball flies farther at higher elevations. I will leave those explanations to the scientists. Suffice it to say that when you insert pieces of wood, cauls, and adhesive into a sealed bag and pump out most of the air, whatever is in the bag is pressed together with an amazing amount of force.

Fortunately for all of us, you do not have to have a degree in physics or a winning lottery ticket to use the atmosphere as a clamping aid. While looking around for a good but inexpensive vacuum press, I stumbled onto a kit put together by

ROAROCKET, a do-it-yourself skateboard company. Since my serpentine drawers were about the size of a large skateboard, I thought that their kit might just fit the bill. It exceeded my every expectation - except for the cost, which was less than I had thought possible.

For about seventy-five dollars, I purchased a Roarocket "thin air press" (TAP) kit that came with everything that I needed for vacuum pressing - a heavy duty vacuum bag, a way to seal the bag, breather netting, and a hand vacuum pump. The hand vacuum pump is what keeps the cost down. After the core (with adhesive), veneer, caul, and breather netting are inserted into the bag, the open end of the bag is sealed, and the hand pump is placed on the one-way valve on the top of the bag. It took about three or four minutes of pumping to exhaust most of the air from the bag, which then, according to the company, was applying nearly 3000 pounds of clamping force. I let the whole arrangement sit in the bag overnight, and in the morning I had a beautiful curved drawer front, with evenly and effectively applied veneer.

This kit does have its limitations - mostly in the size of projects that can fit into the bags and in the extra time it takes to pump the air out by hand. You can get a 26" x 28" or a 14" x 47" heavy duty vinyl vacuum bag with the kit. I purchased mine from Lee Valley Tools, and I noticed that Woodcraft sells it as well. The web address for Roarocket is <http://www.roarocket.com/>.

-Happy Clamping! Scott

SWAP & SHOP

Powermatic Model 719T Hollow Chisel Mortiser. Like new condition, never used. Includes mobile base, set of chisels, and manual, \$650. **Delta Model 31-695 6" Belt & 9" Disc Sander.** Excellent condition. Includes stand, mobile base, various grit new belts, and manual, \$175. **Delta Model 22-580 13" 2-Speed Finishing Planer.** Excellent Condition. Includes stand, mobile base, 4" dust collection connector, and manual, \$295. Contact Phil Stoner 615-260-8910 or phil@mightyoakstudio.com

Vintage 12 inch Parks Planer runs strong, needs TLC. \$350. Call Scott Thompson (615) 876-2724

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

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Craig Nutt: Certified Organic

At the Mobile Museum of Art

Running through March 23rd at the Mobile Museum of Art, this career retrospective of Guild member Craig Nutt's work assembles diverse pieces made over the last 30 years, and is a rare chance to see an incredible variety of his work in one place at one time. "Much of my work is rooted in the garden," he says, "and the garden has provided me with a metaphorically rich and evocative vocabulary."

An impeccable craftsman who pursues organic design in its most humble and edible forms, Craig's work is in many prestigious private and museum collections. His Radish Salad Bowl (1998) is a salad bowl on a stand with oversized cayenne peppers as legs, a radish that opens to make two salad bowls, and radish leaves that function as salad servers. The brightly painted piece is in the collection of the Renwick Gallery of the Smithsonian American Art Museum, but some of you may have seen it in the "Art of Tennessee" exhibit at the Frist in 2003. His "Celery Chair with Carrots, Peppers, and Snow Pea" will be in our upcoming exhibition by invitation.

Born in Iowa, Craig is a 1972 graduate of the University of Alabama. He began his career as a woodworker based in Northport, Alabama, where he resided for many years. He currently lives in Kingston Springs, Tennessee, near Nashville.

Craig's meticulous craftsmanship is infused with a sense of freedom and spontaneity drawn from his early work in painting, assemblage and improvised music. He employs a wide variety of wood working techniques including turning, carving, traditional joinery and steam bending as well as oil painting and lacquering techniques. ♦



Shots of the current exhibit at the Mobile Museum of Art, showing "Banana Pepper Cabinet with Asparagus Legs" (left), and his bench entitled "Burning" (above).

Conference, **Furniture '08 - State of the Craft** which will be at Purchase College, in Purchase, N.Y. June 18-21, 2008.

We will also hear nominations for the Guild Board Offices of President, Vice-President, Vice-President of Programming, Secretary, Treasurer, and Advisor. ♦



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Guild Exhibition Photoshoots

By now we hope you have all heard about, and are preparing for, our upcoming touring exhibition. We hope everybody goes the distance to enter. As Alf says in his column in this issue, this is a great opportunity for all of us. Often we are the harshest critics of our own work, but we want to encourage everyone to take the plunge.

Recognizing how vital good photos are to the process, we have arranged for Photographer John Lucas to do two photoshoots for the CFG, the first on Saturday May 17th, and the second on Saturday, June 7th, if necessary. Many of the really good photos you have seen on our web site and in this newsletter were taken by John. These shoots will be by reservation only, and very reasonably priced. More details may be had at our upcoming meeting. ♦

Member News & Announcements

Guild Members Graham Campbell, Tim Hintz, and Kim Winkle, all have chair images accepted into the upcoming book entitled *500 Chairs*, published by Lark Books (<http://www.larkbooks.com>). Guild member Craig Nutt was the juror.

Kim also had images accepted into the upcoming special edition of *Fine Woodworking* that will be highlighting contemporary furniture.

Guild President Alf Sharp received the 2008 **Cartouche Award** for Lifetime Achievement from the Society of American Period Furniture Makers (a distinction which deserved a whole article of its own, but got short shrift since we had so much material for this issue). Alf also had work featured in the gallery section of the February '08 issue of *Woodwork Magazine*. ♦

Members' Gallery

David Knudtson - Conference Table



"Here's a conference table I did last summer. It's figured walnut and curly maple veneers, aluminum plate with maple and walnut laminate arched base. 144" X 50".

Meet Our Business Members

HGH Hardware Supply

By DiAnne Patrick

HGH Hardware Supply was started in Birmingham, Alabama in 1963 by Ed Holcomb, a cabinetmaker who was frustrated with trying to find satisfactory cabinet hardware, so he decided to provide other cabinetmakers with a local source for quality hardware. Now there are locations in Atlanta and Nashville as well as Birmingham, but the business is still a family owned operation.

Although HGH has only been in Nashville for two years, they have managed to find a niche in a competitive field. According to manager Greg Hawkins, their specialty is customer service and diversity. Greg claims they sell everything but the wood. Their delivery service is a boon to time-challenged shops. They also employ a finishing specialist who travels with salesmen, trouble-shooting problems for wood finishers. ♦

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No, You're Not Seeing Double, It's a Chest With Two Left Feet

Cabinetmaker John E. Rose Strikes Again

By Mike Bell

A while back I wrote a piece about an 1833 richly-carved secretary made by Tennessee cabinetmaker John Erhart Rose (1767-1860). Rose apprenticed in Philadelphia and brought his high style form of cabinetmaking down the Great Wagon Road to the southern backcountry during the 1820s. That secretary had a document drawer disguised as a book in the interior entitled "John E. Rose's Works," a clever way to get his name on the front of a piece of furniture, in gold print. Of course the secretary surrounding the drawer was an impressive example of his "Works." Most early cabinetmakers just signed a piece on the back of a drawer in pencil, if they signed it at all.

I've just arranged for the Tennessee State Museum to purchase a chest of drawers, also made by Rose, which is a wonderful addition to our furniture collection. He managed to include forty years worth of American furniture design into one piece of furniture.

It is Rose's earliest documented piece, made in a classical or Empire form with an upper projecting drawer, which he inscribed in red graphite on the underside of the top: "Maide [sic] by / John E. Rose / from / Philadelphia / White Settlement / September / 10th / 1824," on the underside of the top. I believe Rose referred to Philadelphia as his place of apprenticeship in this inscription, since his furniture ads and the birth of his daughter place him in Knoxville from 1821 through 1825. The "White Settlement" is probably Rose's reference to White's Fort Settlement, the city's first settlement established by General James White, which was later renamed Knoxville.

The piece is interesting because it combines a number of

furniture styles. Rose placed reeded, cabriole-shaped pilasters with ball and claw feet, Rococo, or Chippendale elements he learned to make in the late 1700s, directly over 1820s classical-styled animal paw feet. The appearance of double feet on each side of the chest's façade is very unusual and possibly unique. The neoclassical, or Federal urn carving on the splashboard is very similar to urns displayed on his secretary, tall clock cases, and sideboards.

He also applied an unusual reeded molding to the top edges and base of the case, which creates herringbone and diamond patterns.

Needless to say, this isn't your usual early 1800s piece of Tennessee furniture, which was typically plain, down to earth, and more affordable for the average farmer. Rose returned to Pennsylvania in 1828, probably to find a more suitable market for his furniture.

But it is fun to watch a craftsman like Rose pull out all the stylistic stops on Tennessee's frontier all those years ago.

I've learned quite a bit about Rose as I'm in the process of writing an article about his life for the May furniture issue of *The Magazine ANTIQUES*.

I wondered why he left Philadelphia and ended up in the South in 1816 at the age of forty-nine, marrying a nineteen-year-old in Abingdon, Virginia. I found an explanation, given in 1882 by a relative: "John was attached or married to a woman, who gave him much trouble by her unfaithful actions. He wrote a mournful song and paid her a last visit, and after singing this song he left and was never heard of more."

Sounds like he could have come to Nashville's music row.

You know, I've

just figured out another reason why I love this chest of drawers – it reminds me of my first cat, Bonja, who had double paws.

Mike Bell is the curator of Furniture and Popular Culture at the Tennessee State Museum in Nashville and we'd really like to see that cat, too!



Chest of Drawers, 1824, by John Erhart Rose. Tennessee State Museum Collection.

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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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