

Artisans Quarterly Review

ARTISANS OF THE VALLEY

3/4 of 2012

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OPENING BY THE EDITOR

Well, we're as usual late with getting our newsletter out. The excuse is, as usual, we've been swamped with projects and as much as we enjoy sharing our adventures with everyone at some point we actually have to complete the projects we share!

The prep and participation in [Art All Night](#) kept us occupied this spring, as well as a few displays at [Hopewell Valley Vineyards](#). After spring we shifted out of show mode and back into the grunt work.

Believe it or not, we are still working on restorations from hurricane Irene last summer! As the homes are rebuilt we've pulled the furniture out of storage and completed the restoration work. Our storage unit still remains packed, so there's tons of restoration work to come.

The first of the 375 year old oak slabs have been turned into furniture, and we're poised to show off some really cool stuff in the coming year. Our inventory includes several unique one-of-a-kind tree slices! We've been working with [Willard Brother's Lumber](#) to mill an assortment of local trees. Next summer we'll have an interesting array available.

What else? - Oh we've had the first metal mold made for our concrete furniture projects. This will produce a unique curved dovetail bench. Hopefully this is the first of many to come! We'll be starting some casting with this mold this fall, and moving into the spring we have several designs we're hoping to execute.

As we stretch our diversity we can now show you a Creative Yard Nooks project, if you want a cool seating area our materials combination including the option for some unique reclaimed wood can provide something just plain different.

From we have to ask "What's Turning?"

WHAT'S TURNING?

Tools, these are things we simply can never have too many of. As woodworkers we have been collecting tools our whole lives. We can open a catalog and find a way to upgrade, improve, or add to our arsenal of equipment expending thousands of dollars in just a few minutes.

We've had some projects come into the shop, and a few that have backed up in the queue that require our main lathe to receive a few upgrades and some much

needed maintenance. So we've already picked up a whole new One-Way chuck system, upgraded our tailstock, are reassembling our outrigger, and we've ordered a bowl coring rig. This should bring our 35 year-old Delta online for some great creative projects.

Mike is thrilled and has already started picking through piles of firewood looking for those perfect saves and rare finds. It didn't take him long to save a chunk of spalted maple, turning it into a live edge rice bowl with built-in chopstick rest for two ebony tip bubinga chopsticks. The bowl is sealed in [West System Epoxy](#) and is ready for use. It can be washed with water and dish soap without picking up a flavor. A set of bowls like this would kickoff a dinner party conversation perfectly. Get your orders for the holidays in today. This is a unique turning, one of many one-of-a-kind's to come!



THE ART ALL NIGHT EXPERIENCE

Artisans of the Valley joined the [2012 Art All Night](#) extravaganza in full force! We brought in five pieces and helped transform the otherwise offline Roebling Market Wireworks building in Trenton, NJ into an all out all night cultural frenzy.

When there's a blast furnace in play the evening is gonna be pretty hot. Molten iron and flames right out on the sidewalk in the middle of Trenton is just not something you see every day. A full story of orange flames in an urban backdrop often means serious trouble; on this night it means the fires of creation are burning like the Beacons of Gondor!

AbOmInOg Intl. Arts Collective cast dated limited edition casting medallions live at the event. Eric couldn't resist picking one up. What an interestingly unique item to add to his eclectic collection of objects!

This year's Art All Night-Trenton marks the second historic collaboration between these two dynamic forces as they once again bring the mesmerizing art of a live iron pour to inner-city Trenton.

The creative entwinement of the arts, and a truckload of sweat from the Artworks team, built this event into a yearly icon of culture. Over 16,000 people attended, a new record! For 2013 we're hoping to call on the furniture and fashion communities to up the ante even further!



OUR PART IN ART ALL NIGHT

Artisans came out for Art All Night 2012 with five pieces. We figured this was a good cross section to introduce our work to the Artworks community.

- 1) We included one of our signature [New Wave Gothic Tables](#) in quarter sawn white oak. Available by commission.
- 2) Our African bubinga slab over marbled concrete dining table. (Currently available for sale at \$9,500)
- 3) Eric's master's papers, an illuminated manuscript by [Rosemary Buczek](#) on hand-made goat skin parchment by [Pergamena](#). The frame is in our New Wave Gothic style. Available by commission.
- 4) A cedar slab over marbled concrete pedestal gaming table. The game board in Swiss pear, leopardwood, and ebony. (Currently available for sale at \$1,949)
- 5) A white pine parrot by [Bob Eigenrach](#), chainsaw carving with hand detail colored to the natural tones of the bird. Available by commission.

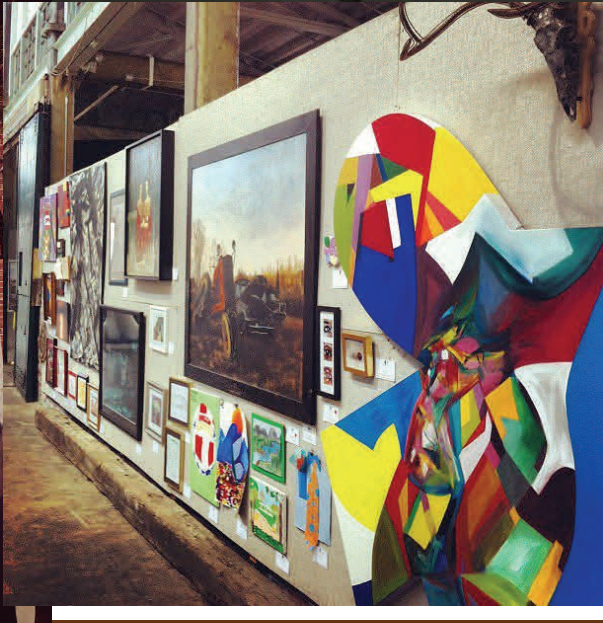


We took note that there were not too many furniture makers at this year's event. Our plan for 2013 is to spread the word to our colleagues and increase the density of wood within this gallery.

This is a great venue, and draws an amazing and eclectic crowd. The more artists we can attract, the greater the positive impact this event will have on the art community.



ART ALL NIGHT
SOME OF THE ARTWORK



CROWDED AROUND ART AT NIGHT



CREATIVE YARD NOOKS



Here's a 2012 original Michael Pietras project! Pulling away even further from our traditional line this project incorporates a repurposed railroad tie, custom cast concrete, reclaimed douglas fir beams, and a 3/4" slab of glass.

The combination creates a permanent and elegant seating arrangement for a small corner of a garden patio. The seats are soaked in Waterlox marine grade tung oil, the railroad tie is obviously treated, and the concrete and glass are weather proof. With a very sparse use of material, this is a minimalistic approach.

The seat bases were cast in simple custom made wood molds in fiberglass reinforced concrete. They are joined to the wood with mortis and tenon joints and construction adhesive. The concrete is dyed, a permanent color through the entire depth of the casting.

The seats are not stained, they are actually burned to create the contrast in grain. This process creates color resistant to sunlight. Where stain may slowly bleach, charring creates a carbon surface that actually hardens the wood.

The glass shelf floats, it is not secured in the groove in any fashion other than gravity against the slight angle of the cut. This process allows natural expansion and contraction to take place without risking damage to the glass.



THE ARTS AND FASHION INSTITUTE

Artisans of the Valley would like to introduce you to... "a new breed of art school... the finest experts & celebrity guest instructors take you to unimagined heights of creativity! YOU design your curriculum... as unique as you are! Rare specializations inspire even working professionals."

And their mission? "to empower & enrich the art experience of every individual; to raise their standards & their sights."

Creators Pamela Ptak and Scott Hanna offer an alternative to traditional education, which I believe, quite frankly, is obsolete. The expense and bulk of college provides a means to the end of getting a degree, however it often does not teach how to navigate life.

This is not to say you won't know how to cross a street after four years of college, but what's apparent to me as an artist is that graduates have absolutely no idea how to build a career in the art world. Talent and skills in your field is only a part of the package required for success. Packaging and branding yourself as an artist is crucial. Presenting that package is essential. All of this is useless without networking and collaboration.

Listening to Scott Hanna's presentation at their recent open house he reiterated the exponential gains achieved when his efforts as an inker were coordinated with those who worked in color, in storyline, in marketing, and in editorial. He believes, as we do, that improvement occurs when you leverage resources around you, and return the favor to those who prove themselves in enhancing the art community.

AFI mailing address:

595 Summit Lane, Riegelsville, Pennsylvania 18077

(610) 346-6071

ptakhanna@aol.com

www.ARTSandFASHIONINSTITUTE.com



SANDS OF LIGHT—RANDY MARDRUS

Randy Mardrus, owner of Permanent Reflections, has made appearances in Artisans' Quarterly Review a few times. Normally we do the writing and give a profile of his art. This round, we'll let the video do the work.

Eric and Randy met through the commission for the Rocky Mountain elk scene that anchors Eric's wildlife theme bar - this was back in the Y2K era. The two began to realize they were up against each other in terms of the level of artistry that the home bar could reach. The creativity grew and the joint effort quickly turned from a project into a long term friendship.

Randy's video profile provides a concise insight into the creative mind. He offers reflections on himself and how he began his journey from a teenage rebel to a professional artist. His work decorates the homes of royalty around the world, mega yachts, exclusive hotels, exotic car dealers, the US Senate building. The work speaks for itself; in this video the artist gets a chance to share an introspective.

Enjoy! ... Nicely done Randy!

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NYHqs7QS_Sg&feature=youtu.be

<http://www.permanentreflections.com>

a Blackout Productions / Marcus Ryan Thompson production

http://www.artisansofthevalley.com/docs/Artisans_Quarterly_Review_Vol2_Issue2_2009.pdf



Those of you familiar w/ Eric's game room bar have seen the centerpiece glass carving. The bar was designed and built by Eric & Stanley Saperstein. The glass carving is by Randy Mardrus, and the stained glass frame was done by Robert Saperstein. The custom solid brass bar top was done by Trenton Sheet Metal.

RESTORATIONS A MUSIC BOX AND DECANTER

Two unique boxes, each with amazing hand details. To the left is a unique music box that required a bit of finish restoration, and setting the hinges for the lid. We cleaned and restored the woodwork, touched up the black trim, repaired the veneer and applied a few fresh coats of shellac. The musical mechanisms were all in great shape, only the exterior required attention.

The decanter box below required an assortment of veneer repair and replacement. We also managed to touchup the missing clovers with a secret mix that creates a brass patch. We cleaned the whole piece, secured several loose brass moldings, and fixed the bottom panel. Finishing with a fresh coat of shellac and the piece warmed right up.



BUTTERFLY TALES

Just a preview of what's to come. We are working on a lot of very unique slabs and each will feature a series of unique functional and ornamental butterflies. Shown here are walnut on walnut butterflies in the block front chest featured in our last issue. Followed by oak butterflies in one of the 375 year old oak slabs we've been working on.

This article is really just a teaser, what's to come is an eclectic array of creative ways to turn cracks and defects into artistic presentations. We're embracing the grain and natural beauty of wood; for these projects we are striving to use unique and in some cases wood that would be generally rejected.



THE FIRST 375 YEAR OLD SLAB PROJECT COMPLETED

Last year we mentioned eight slabs of 375 year old oak, all milled from the same tree. We've been discussing projects with the client who owns them and the first (Slab C) has evolved from lumber into a finished table.

A simple design, four colonial turned legs and a single drawer on full extension bearing slides. The base is just slightly out of square to provide a proper footprint for the shape of the slab. The base is bolted in place through slots to allow for movement of the slab without cracking.

A series of oak butterflies are strategically placed to secure an assortment of cracks in the piece. We inset butterflies on both surfaces of the slab to ensure stability. On this project we decided to go with oak butterflies as we did not want a stark contrast in material.

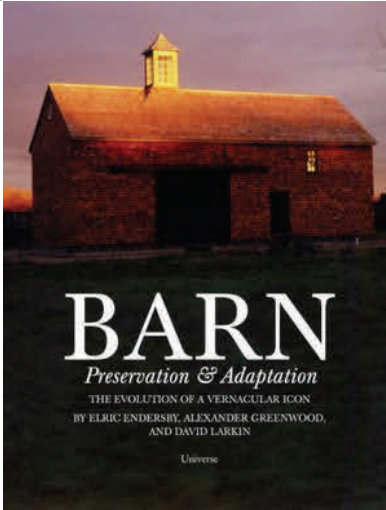
All of these oak slabs have significant deterioration; rotten sections or sponge like material. We have a proven method of stabilizing "punky" wood, but we're choosing not to share it. Some things have to remain secrets of the trade!

The final result is that this slab is a solid surface ready for use and abuse. There is no stain, this is the natural color of the ancient oak.

Stay tuned for upcoming issues, we have seven more projects to complete with the remaining slabs!



THE NEW JERSEY BARN COMPANY



Artisans has an ongoing need for antique materials for our restoration and reproduction projects. Fortunately we have a reservoir of resources available to help meet our requirements. The New Jersey Barn Company of Ringoes, NJ has been moving and rebuilding antique timber frame barns and other historic structures for over thirty years.

Fortunately for us they maintain an extensive inventory of vintage lumber milled from colonial-era forests that no longer exist. The abundant virgin forests of early America yielded timbers of remarkable size and regularity. They provided settlers with sturdy, hand-hewn timbers that simply do not exist today. In our New Jersey region, most early barns were built from white oak, White oak is durable, resistant to weather, and also just happens to be a very popular material for furniture.

What Artisans does for furniture, preservationists and authors Elric Endersby and Alex Greenwood scaled up just a bit! Their primary charter is to preserve (rescue) timber frame barns and buildings. They relocate, preserve, and rebuild these structures for new purposes. To date they have revived 100 threatened barns creating custom homes, dramatic commercial and public spaces, and historical museums.

If you're searching for a unique and environmentally sound way to build; consider contacting the NJ Barn Company for complete design services to assist in all aspects of the building process. Their experience ensures preservation of the historical integrity of these antique structures while realizing the needs of any modern purpose they are chosen to fulfill.

The Charles Fish Barn was built about 1860 on Federal City Rd on a property that now serves as the Mercer County Equestrian Center. Having fallen into disrepair, it was disassembled in 1996 and stored for nearly a decade before being re-erected at the Howell Living History Farm. At 32 feet by 60 feet, and sporting three cupolas, it was a testament to the prosperity of that farm, and of the significance of agriculture at the time in this region.

The frame was raised primarily by hand, with the assistance of two gin poles, block and tackle, a team of oxen, and many volunteers.

Photo by Jack Witherington



So what's the connection? Artisans recently took on a project with Princeton University's Cap and Gown club to restore four oak tables which have served in the main dining hall since 1906. We required some antique oak matching these tables to incorporate into additional frame structures. Since these were visible additions to the tables, we had to match the antique patina.

<http://www.njbarnco.com/>

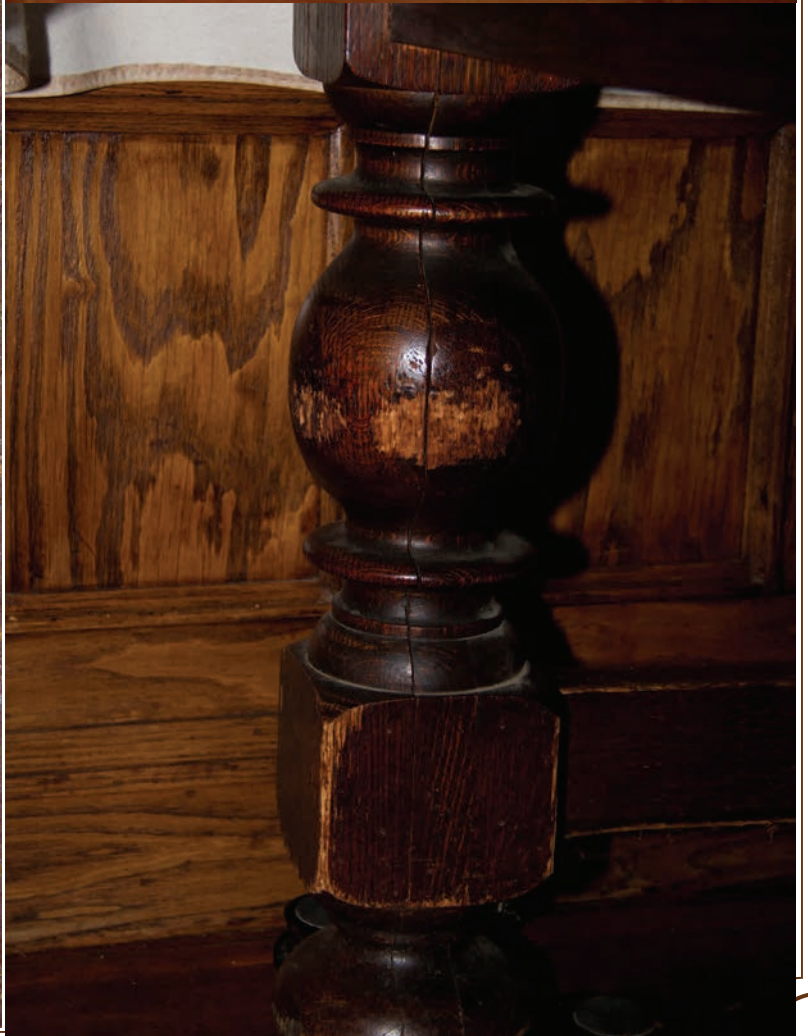


DINING IN WITH PRINCETON'S CAP & GOWN CLUB

One-hundred years of dinner will stress out even these heavy duty six leg solid oak dining tables. What's amazing, even to us, is that another century of service is not an unreasonable expectation.

We will complete a full breakdown of these tables, separating almost every joint and then cleanup and rebuild each component, adding additional structure to restore the integrity of the frames and tabletops.

This is actually not a complex restoration, but one that is very time consuming and requires a lot of clamps. The legs present the most challenging aspect of this project. Each leg (24 in total) split along almost all the original joints. We helped things along and finished the process by driving a froe knife along the joints and cracks.





The original leg blanks were glued up with a hollow core; this made it a bit easier to separate them and provided the opportunity to insert a new solid core.

Check out the top photo, the original penciled in 29 1/2 remained from when the tables were built. This hasn't been seen in 100 years, and given we just sealed it in a solid block it's probably the LAST time it will be ever be seen!

The glue up is tedious, done in stages to ensure as little shift as possible. We even secured the legs with zip ties to prevent movement while the adhesive cured. Keeping track of all the parts is critical, including little chips and random chunks that fall off during the process. Everything was saved and bagged during the breakdown so we could glue it back in place, keeping as much original material as possible.





Even with every possible step taken to ensure alignment of the components, it is inevitable that the reassembled legs will not be perfect. Each piece of wood may age slightly differently, and nothing round remains round over time. In order to restore the esthetics, we mounted each leg on our lathe and returned them.

This process was not easy, it required creatively employing a OneWay jumbo jaws bowl chuck to secure the imperfect large square leg. We then simply aligned the bottom ball on a live tailstock and kept our speeds low. We removed about an 1/8th inch of material from the diameter of each leg. A sacrifice yes, but the return was worth it. This process also removed most of the splintering in the original surface.

Dry wood does not turn well; years of embedded grime quickly turns razor edges into snubs of dull steel. Sharp tools are an absolute, as always with turning, but in this case constant (did we say CONSTANT?!) touchups on the edges were required to maintain progress. Changing socks full of splinters and dust became a habit a few times a day, no shavings in this pile SPLINTERS!



To recap so far we broke the tables down, removed the old finish, and reglued and returned the legs. Next we rebuild any damaged mortis and tenon joints and replaced all the dowels as required. This would normally be enough, but given the requirement that these aged oak tables be strong enough to be on the move, we elected to install a few upgrades.

The first trick to adding strength to any square is to add a triangle. We cut eight blocks for each table and permanently secured them in place. This ensured the corner joints will never separate again.

We also added a center truss system which in conjunction with the corner blocks, provided the perfect strategic location to drill through and mount the tops using hidden lag bolts. We also doubled the thickness of the end and center aprons, providing a mounting point for the new upper center beam and bolstering the lift points to move the tables.

The bottom joint work was reinforced with decorative corner brackets and some hidden strap work under the stretchers. To preserve the look of the pieces, we couldn't be as bold with our approach in these locations but still wanted to maintain our plan for overkill.

All of this drastically increased the strength of the table bases and secured the tops in a manner that would allow lifting without compromising room for seasonal movement.

What did all of this do the value of the tables? This is a situation where that is irrelevant. Our client contracted us to ensure that these heirlooms are functional for another century; the improvements make this possible. The value in this case is longevity; and that we've succeeded in increasing!

Curious how these turn out - we'll show you in our next issue.



ARTISANS OF THE VALLEY

HAND CRAFTED CUSTOM WOODWORKING



[Artisans of the Valley](#) offers museum quality period reproductions, original designs by commission, and antique restoration/conservation services, hand carving, modern furniture refinishing, onsite furniture repair, hand made walking sticks, and educational programs. Our website is now over 250 pages, including galleries, feature articles, and educational sections, company background, and our new adventure album section. We extend an open invitation to explore our site, and contact us directly with any inquiries or questions you may have.

Eric M. Saperstein is Master of Artisans, Owner, Webmaster, Editor, Bookkeeper, Buyer, Office Manager, Legal Pit-bull, and he's in charge of vacuuming the shop: eric@artisansofthevalley.com

Stanley D. Saperstein, Master Craftsmen, Author, & Historian founded Artisans of the Valley in 1973. Stanley offers historic presentations, impressions, and various lecture series ranging from Civil and Revolutionary War, American Folk Art, and Interactive Role Play of Characters ... sometimes trying to reenact American Chopper episodes in the shop: woodcarver@artisansofthevalley.com



HISTORIC WOOD PROJECTS

As you know we've been scavenging. One of our recent expeditions granted a bounty of some interesting scraps of 100+ year old douglas fir salvaged from around the ██████████ complexes. (Sorry, can't reveal the source yet!) We're currently working to get additional supplies of this unique old growth lumber for a variety of artistic projects; a collaborative artistic project is emerging soon. Shown below are some samples, pens hand turned by Marc Dowdell and wine stoppers turned by Eric Saperstein.



2012 4TH QTR THE WORLD ENDS!

The Finish Line - All Four 106 Year Old Oak Dining Tables Completed
 Restoration of a WWII Era Statue - We left the bullet holes as they were!
 Will We Finally Finishing the Redwood Slab Table? Now a commissioned piece!
 More things that spun - We'll Probably play with the lathe a bit more.
 Lots of restoration work in progress!
 Custom Made Spear Guns, Yeah Mike is involved in this ... obviously!
 West Systems & Waterlox; We'll talk about this a bit more later.
 What else did we find in Princeton?



Our studio hours are by appointment. Please call ahead!

Office Address: 60 Bakun Way Ewing, NJ 08638

Shop Address: 103 Corrine Drive Pennington, NJ 08534

Office: 609-637-0450 Shop: 609-737-7170 Fax: 609-637-0452 Cell: 609-658-2955

Email: woodworkers@artisansofthevalley.com

www.artisansofthevalley.com