

Lifestyles

HOME AND GARDEN

In pursuit of fine design

Artists, shoppers connect at the San Francisco Fine Craft Show

By PJ Bremier
IJ correspondent

SAUSALITO RESIDENT Chris Hardman likes to think outside the box. The founder and artistic director of Antenna Theater offers his audiences innovative productions such as 45-minute complicated walk-through mazes that clearly aren't typical performances.

When it comes to making furniture, though, he likes to think inside the "box." The idea for his line of furniture, called Slotology, evolved from years of making slotted pieces for theatrical sets that need to be assembled quickly and easily.

"I've perfected this slot technology and decided to have some fun with it by creating pieces that were about the pieces themselves," he says. "People have always seen

IF YOU GO

What: San Francisco Fine Craft Show

Where: The Herb and Festival Pavilions at Fort Mason Center in San Francisco

When: 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Friday and Aug. 12, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Aug. 13

Tickets: \$10, \$16 for two-day pass; American Craft Council members and children under 12 admitted free; paid valet parking is available

Information: 300-836-3470 or visit www.craftcouncil.org/sf

— See full schedule on page B5

these objects as part of the show but not as slotted furniture standing alone in their own right."

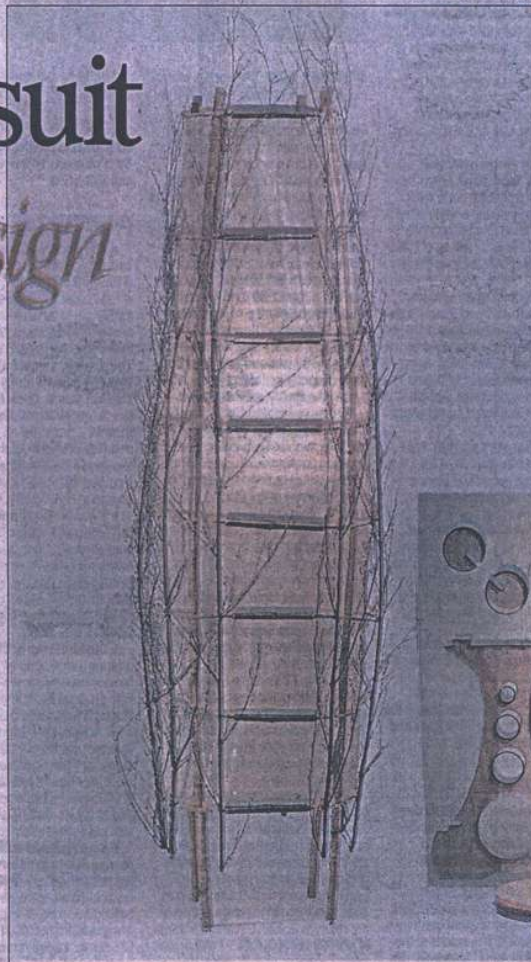
Infused with a nautical flair and inspired by a sense of modernism and cubism along with the aesthetic of the theater, his interlocking furniture emerges as several pieces from a single piece of 4-by-4 plywood that is later varnished. His six-piece Swirling Table

(\$825) is topped with plexiglass and, when viewed from above, offers a sense of movement as the crescent moon shapes appear to revolve. Each piece of Slotology furniture is designed to be paired with the 4-by-4 frame from which it came. Sold as a pair, the swirling table and frame costs \$1,650.

"When you mount the frame on the wall, the negative spaces make a conceptual design in a bas relief," he says. "So you have a performance between the two- and three-dimensional pieces."

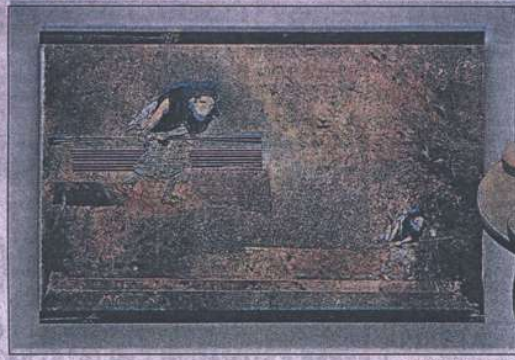
This artistic interpretation of functional objects is what will drive design-savvy shoppers to the 31st annual San Francisco Fine Craft Show, from Friday to Aug. 13 at Fort Mason. Produced by the American Craft Council, it's the largest juried craft show in the West.

It features examples of fine craftwork in the areas of furniture, jewelry, wearable art, decorative art, basketry, ceramics, leather, metal and wood by more than 260 local (including five from Marin) and visit-



Provided by Joe Schoplin

DELICATE: 'Bamboo Garden' is by Jacqueline Mallegni of Bolinas, one of five Marin artists exhibiting next weekend at the San Francisco Fine Craft Show.



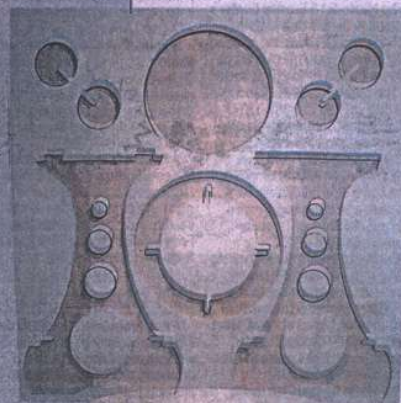
Provided by George Post

INSPIRED: 'Fate and His Twin' (handmade dyed-fiber paper with gold and silver leaf and copper bars) was created by Andrea Tucker-Hody of San Anselmo.



Provided by Joe Schoplin

CALM: 'Sky Barge/Still Lake' is by Jacqueline Mallegni of Bolinas, who is exhibiting at the San Francisco Fine Craft Show.



SLOTTED: Chris Hardman of Sausalito makes wood art without the use of fasteners.

Provided by Cole Marquie

ing artists and an exhibition-only display of work by California College of the Arts alumni up-and-coming craft artists.

A quick cross-section of artful home accessories are represented by items such as the whimsical ceramic kitchenware from Eileen Goldenberg of San Francisco; painted enamel and metal jewelry designed from April Higashi of Berkeley; vibrantly colored, hand-blown glass bowls, vases and sculptural objects from Robbie Tribble of Danville; distinctive wood turnings featuring natural edges and bark embellishments

from Jerry Kermode of Sebastopol; and handcrafted folk instruments in the early American and early European tradition from Ronald Cook of Santa Cruz.

Carmine Branagan, executive director of the ACC, says that this show is where people can find work skillfully made by craftsmen who have a sophisticated understanding of material and design.

It's quite different, she explains, from the concept of the arts and crafts shows so popular during summer

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CRAFT: Handmade pieces enhance home, life

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months. "Those are as much about entertainment — food and music — as it is about work, which is perhaps not as well-crafted or well-designed as this show, which is juried."

Here, she emphasizes, the artists are highly trained. "Some hold MFAs and some have apprenticed with masters here and abroad," she says. "For them, it's a lifelong learning experience. These are people who have dedicated their lives to this pursuit."

That's the case for San Anselmo artist Andrea Tucker-Hody, a 10-year veteran of the San Francisco Fine Craft Show. She'll have about 30 pieces in this year's show, ranging in price from \$125 to \$4,500.

A graduate of the prestigious Pratt Institute, she studied papermaking at the Experimental Institute of Papermaking in San Francisco and at the College of Arts and Crafts in Oakland, was a three-time grant recipient of the California Arts Council and has also taught papermaking.

"Always drawn to the Pacific Rim art, an apprenticeship at a Japanese paper mill gave Tucker-Hody the inspiration for a design motif that she's since incorporated into her work. "In a lot of houses in Japan, large beams run through them," she says. "When I came back here, it came up in my imagery and now I have an organic branch that runs through my work."

In her large handmade paper assemblages that she calls "papestries," Tucker-Hody works with two different types of fiber — the inner bark of the mulberry tree and the stems and leaves of the banana tree.

The process involves 23 steps

("I've counted every single one of them"), among them cooking and hand-beating the pulp, dying the fiber, laying down a luminescent pigment, pouring 5-gallon buckets of up to 12 colors of paint in thin layers, etching metal leaf designs and creating a custom patina on the engineered supporting brackets. Tedious? Not for Tucker-Hody, who says that "paper is just one of those very seductive media."

Learning about the artistic process and inspiration connects the fine craft buyer with the artist in an organic way. "It's so much more meaningful when you have a relationship with the artist," says Branagan. "It's a much richer experience."

She encourages visitors to learn more about the work by attending a lecture or taking a tour during the show. Conducted by designers and experts, topics include collecting contemporary jewelry, living with craft, insights on ceramics and emerging craft artists, and a tour of the show's award winners led by the awarding judge.

Developing an eye for fine craftwork can lead to smart investments and for collectors, this show is prime hunting grounds. They search for young or new artists whose work they can purchase at a reasonable price now and then wait for it to increase in value down the road. For others, it's a chance to find special pieces for their homes that are unique, artistic and well-made.

"If you look at a glass vase from Crate and Barrel, there's a sameness to it," says Branagan. "You look at it and you pretty much see it, but a handcrafted work has more dimension to it and over time, you discover dif-



Provided by George Post

MANY LAYERS: Andrea Tucker-Hody makes her 'papestries,' including 'Audubon Lyric,' with handmade dyed-fiber paper with gold and silver leaf.

ferent facets to it. The appearance of the hand of the maker is in the work, and there's a longer-lasting relationship with it."

Handmade doesn't necessarily mean you are priced out of the Crate and Barrel category, though. "You can spend \$10 for a wooden spoon that is perfectly balanced and fits in the hand beautifully or you can spend thousands of dollars for something," Branagan adds. "The price range is very wide."

And a handmade piece can enhance not only a home, but a life. That's the philosophy of Bolinas artist Jacqueline Mallegni whose lanterns of stone, wood and traditional Japanese-style handmade paper will be for sale for the third year in a row at the show.

"When it's all said and done, the artwork is what tells us who we are as a culture," she says, adding that surrounding chil-

dren with art in their home is essential to cultivating their appreciation for it. "It's important to buy something from an artist rather than something that is mass-produced," she says, "because these are kids who will be the patrons and supporters of art and culture, keeping it alive for the future."

It was the interplay between light and paper that first got Mallegni hooked on her art. Starting with lampshades that she sold in Point Reyes and later adding bases and selling them as complete lamps, her lighting evolved "into a sculptural form and a far cry from the traditional lampshades," she says. "They

FINE CRAFT SHOW SCHEDULE

Aug. 11

11 a.m. Collecting contemporary jewelry with Mike Holmes, San Francisco gallery curator from Velvet da Vinci
2 p.m. Jewelry lovers' 't'ou, with April Higashi, jeweler and owner of Shibumi Gallery in San Francisco

3 p.m. Awards of excellence presentation with JoAnn Edwards, co-founder and executive director of the San Francisco Museum of Craft + Design

Aug. 12

11 a.m. Living with craft with interior designer and ASID member Katherine Bernitt

2 p.m. Insight on ceramics with Jered Nelson, studio potter and process specialist at Heath Ceramics

Aug. 13

11 a.m. Emerging craft artists — California College of the Arts alumni with American Craft Council education director Lily Kane

2 p.m. Designing with fine craft: focus on color with Harriet Leff, interior designer, ASID member and certified color consultant

turned into mini-installations."

Now it's the interplay between Mallegni and showgoers that is capturing her attention. "This is the best show," she says. "It attracts an audience that has a high level of awareness — architects, designers and gallery owners — besides the people who are doing their own home improvement. And they all come up and ask questions. It's a wonderful exchange." In fact, last year her work was purchased solely by three Southern California gallery owners, which attests to the quality of the work but also exposes her to a new market.

Her Asian-inspired lanterns, which range from \$395 to \$2,500, appeal to her patrons for their

soothing light, intrinsic glow and the contemporary, linear lines that adapt to a variety of styles. "Designers like them because they work well with Asian, Polynesian and Balinese decor," she says. "They also work well with very modern rooms and with African art."

No matter what style a home may be, "surrounding ourselves with things we love makes us feel better in the world," she says. "It takes us to another level of living."

PJ Bremier writes on home, garden, design and entertaining topics every Saturday. She may be contacted at P.O. Box 412, Kentfield 94914 or pj@mindspring.com.