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Furniture Restoration, Repair & Refinishing
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Hello,

This letter is in regards to your participation at the MASW Furniture Restoration, Repair and Refinishing class. I am looking forward to teaching for Marc again and I would like to set the format for this class. Just as there is much satisfaction creating a wooden object from scratch, there is just as much satisfaction for taking existing old furniture and bringing it back to life.

Refinishing/restoration can be fairly easy or incredibly complex, so it is important to keep in mind that *every wooden object is unique and so are its problems*. In its simplest form, if the object is in no need of repair of any kind or re-gluing in anyway and is structurally sound, and the coating is the type to dissolve immediately with a furniture stripper or respond to a simple cleaning (restoring), and there is no need to color match the object to any specifications, and the new coating of choice is a rub on and rub off finish or you already know how to brush or spray your coating of choice, things could go rather well. If any or many of the above tasks need to be performed it starts to become challenging to the knowledge and talent of what needs to be accomplished. So I want to share with you years of experience and have some fun doing so.

We want to have a successful class and the choice of your project needs to be assessed for what can actually be accomplished in the time frame we have to accomplish the mission. Since everyone will be working on something different, different problems will need to be addressed. There is also the issue of having enough to keep you busy and the types of supplies you will be using plus having enough space for everyone.

Generally speaking, most professional refinishers will if needed, re-glue the object before refinishing it. This includes the making of new wooden parts. Marc has informed me that his crew will be of some help making parts if necessary. It is not mandatory but a suggestion would be that your project should arrive here structurally sound; meaning that it is glued together and does not need major parts replaced and is ready to strip. This will leave more time for actual refinishing. If your projects are in need of re-gluing and you are not sure what to do please bring them so we can do it here. If it is in need of some woodwork requiring hand tools it would be great if you can bring your hand tools. I have a suggested tool list for you later on in this letter. Tools are not mandatory but if you have an idea what your project might need they would come in handy. Once the object is structurally sound, then refinishing or restoration/refurbishing is the next step in deciding what to do.

Refinishing verses Restoration/Refurbishing.

Refinishing indicates that the coating will be totally removal with light or heavy sanding of raw wood preparing the wood for whatever comes next.

Restoration/Refurbishing indicates the saving of all, most or some of the existing coating, certainly the “patina” color in the wood will be saved. We will analyze each wooden object that comes in and discuss what our options are and what tradeoffs there will be. It might need a simple solvent cleaning and some wax, or a small amount of coating removal and a new application of finish.

If it is determined that the object needs to be stripped we will do so. Keep in mind, due to the chemical nature of coatings, there isn't any one stripper that dissolves every coating. So what material does not strip off it will have to be sanded off. Keep in mind opaque painted objects usually take a lot longer to remove than a transparent coating.

Once the object is stripped it will then be sanded and probably stained. It is here that I hope you will allow yourself a lot of leeway in just how close the color match has to be. We will work together on some color matching concepts but in real life matching colors dead on requires a lot of knowledge and techniques. An example would be having a small dresser or table that has enough damage to the top to warrant stripping the top, but the rest of the piece does not need

stripping. I have met “professional” refinishers who do not have the knowledge or talent to strip only the top and have it match the sides when it is done. They are then forced to strip everything so it matches itself.

Coating application is next. So we will need to discuss what level of protection the object needs and choose the correct finish. Your choices will range from hand rub oils which penetrate into the wood or some sort of film forming coating whether it is transparent or opaque. Coatings are applied with rags, brushes or spraying equipment, including aerosol cans. I will be covering those choices and the use of all of these. In the tool list I will make suggestions for what brushes go best with which coating which you will need to bring with you. Marc has a turbine HVLP for spraying; if you are able to bring your spraying equipment, please do so.

I will demonstrate the use of two excellent tools (glazes and toners) which are extremely valuable to help hone in color to the object and/or create depth to the finish. These tools are usually used just after the first sealer coat or top coat and then buried under the remaining applications of your coating. Toners are defined as adding color into a transparent coating and then apply that coating. Glazing is applying a pigmented stain on top of a previously applied coating on the wood. Dry brush glazing is a very helpful tool. You will want to bring an inexpensive blond china bristle brush for glazing.

Sheen control is an issue so we will discuss these options to make sure the end result of your work has the proper gloss, semi-gloss or matt look you are striving for. Keep in mind, sheen control plays a big part when having to accurately match one color to another. To protect the coating, waxing is usually the last thing to do.

Again, we want to have a successful week so review the tool lists and have some projects that we can discuss a game plan for. It does not have to be an antique, it may be something you have built and want to refinish it. I am looking forward to seeing you and the sharing the rewarding feeling of allowing an existing piece of furniture another life time. I would imagine some of you are flying so you will be limited to the amount of furniture and tools you can bring. Marc has mentioned that in the past he has been able to find some things for you to work on if you cannot bring anything. He has some tools you can borrow as well.

Here is the outline I have planned out for the week for this class. I generally will be lecturing first thing in the morning and then will lecture or demonstrate as necessary as the needs of the student projects occur. In this line of work, every wooden object is unique and so are its problems. The more you understand the problem the more you will understand how to deal with it. Folks who do this for a living learn something new every day of the week.

Outline for the week

1. Lecture: Restore or refinish?
 - a. How to determine what coating is already on the wood
 - b. Solvent testing and solvent cleaning
 - c. French polishing
2. Structural repairs
 - a. Regluing
 - b. Veneer patching
 - c. Spot repair
3. How to determine what coating is already on the wood
4. Chemistry of furniture strippers
 - a. How to use this variety of strippers
5. Sanding procedures
6. Coloring the wood
7. Tools for applying finishes, rags, brushes, spraying equipment
8. Sealing the wood
9. Top coating the wood
10. Rubbing out the finish
11. Finishing the Finish

TOOL AND SUPPLY LIST

Below is a general list of tools and supplies you should consider bringing (if your project needs them). Most of the finishing supplies will be furnished.

If you're driving, please consider bringing as much from this list as possible and sharing with others. Be sure to mark all your tools. To emphasize, there's no need for you to bring all of these tools or to go out and buy new tools unless you will need them for your own work.

Safety and Health

1. Mandatory: Safety goggles, glasses or face mask used when you are stripping or pouring solvents.
2. Mandatory: Gloves used when stripping furniture. Make sure they are chemical resistant to methylene chloride. This is the main ingredient used in most paint strippers.
3. Gloves for when you are staining your project
4. Paper dust masks when sanding.
5. Respirator, if solvents bother you.
6. Apron.

Tools and Supplies

The tools you will need are directly related to the needs of your projects you are bringing. It may also depend on what other tasks you want to learn. This list is simply a list of potential tools that could come in handy while you are here.

Tools

Hammers: Dead blow, veneer, claw

Hand plane: block, smoothing

Small hand saw

Drill and drill bits

Chisels: for repairing

Chisels for scraping old glue out of joints

Scrapers

Sharpening stones

Pliers

Files and rasps

Tape measure

Square

Razor blade or craft knife

Brushes

Not mandatory that you bring them, but here are some suggested brushes for:

Oil base varnish: Blond China bristle or an Oxflo (a combination of china and ox hair)

Brushing lacquer: Blond China bristle or an Oxflo (a combination of china and ox hair)

Shellac and Waterbase: Taklon : Robert Simmons or Loew Cornell are two really good name brands. A one inch or one and a half inch wide brush is all you need. Jeff Jewitt also sells some brushes on this web site at

www.homesteadfinishingproducts.com

Supplies

Sandpaper of various grits: 150, 180, 320, 600

Touch-up supplies, if you have any

Wide mouth jars with lids of various sizes for mixing and storing

Use the email address to contact me. I look forward to seeing you at Marc's.

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