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55 YEARS OF WOODWORKING AND DESIGN LECTURE FINDING AID & TRANSCRIPT

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Video Description

From 2012 Press Release: During his 55 year career as a woodworker, McLauchlan has designed and built more than three hundred and fifty pieces of art furniture, sculpture and staircases. *Jay McLauchlan: 55 Years of Woodworking and Design* highlights the art and creativity behind his craftsmanship.

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Born in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1932, Jay McLauchlan grew up in southeastern Massachusetts. In 1951, after working in the rigging-repair department of a mid-West blast furnace plant, McLauchlan was drafted into the Army Infantry. Following basic training he went to Officer

Candidate School and served in the 101st Airborne Division. After being discharged in 1954, he attended Oakland Junior College in Oakland, California, followed by the University of California at Berkeley. When Jay graduated from Berkeley it was with a major in Physiological Psychology and a minor in Design and Sculpture.

In 1959, McLauchlan moved from the West Coast to Concord, New Hampshire, and at the urging of David Campbell became involved in the League of New Hampshire Craftsmen. Organized in 1932, the League was dedicated to giving craftsmen an outlet for their work and to educating the public about the beauty and value of both traditional and contemporary crafts. Campbell had been founder of the New Hampshire League, served as president of the American Crafts Council (who operated the well known cooperative America House in New York City) and was one of the leading figures behind the revival of the arts and crafts movement in this country during the postwar period. In Concord, Jay McLauchlan was fortunate to know Alejandro de la Cruz, a true master of traditional joinery. Under de la Cruz's guidance, Jay honed his skills as his design talents continued to grow. By the early 1960s, Jay's work was appearing in exhibitions throughout the region including at the Currier Art Gallery, The Society of Arts and Crafts, the Decordova Museum, the Hopkins Arts Center at Dartmouth College and the Museum of Contemporary Crafts in New York. Commissions were also secured with increasing frequency.

In 1962, Jay McLauchlan moved to Gloucester, taking up work space at Beacon Marine Basin. He quickly assumed an active role in the local arts community, becoming a founding member of the Local Colors Gallery and serving on the Gloucester Cultural Council for seven years. In 1995, Jay along with Dick Higgins and Ted Hoague successfully restored the ten Ionic columns outside Gloucester's historic American Legion Building. The trio also completed important stabilization work on the Fitz Henry Lane House overlooking Gloucester Harbor. In recent years, Jay has been actively involved in Maritime Gloucester and supervised reconstruction of the organization's marine railways, the oldest continually operated facility of its kind in this country.

Transcript

00:04

Thank you all for coming today. Sorry about the confusion down in the lobby. My name is Courtney Richardson. I'm Director of Education and Public Programs here at the Cape Ann Museum. As most of you know, hopefully, January is membership month. Our museum members help support the museum and the care of the collection. They also get information

about programs that advance and reminders to make reservations. So if you aren't a member, please consider grabbing one of these on your way out.

I just quickly want to call your attention to some of our future programs. Members also receive the winter calendar and spring and summer and fall. So we're almost done with January. We have a couple more programs over the next two weekends. Actually, starting this afternoon we have Robert Booth coming in to talk about his new book, *Death of an Empire, the Rise and Murderous Fall of Salem, America's Richest City*. Salem is not Gloucester, nor is it Cape Ann, so we've asked him to make a Gloucester connection for us. So his talk is titled, *The Empire and the Seaport, Salem and Gloucester, Trading Overseas in the Early Republic*. That's at 3:00 today. Next weekend, our docents are presenting winter shorts, which are mini tours that they design about their favorite parts of our collection. So at 10:30 we have *Dragon Boats, Porcelains, and Stowaways, Treasures from China*. At 11:15, *Then and Now, a Survey of the Collection from Historic to Contemporary*. At 12:00, *Design in House, Virginia Lee Burton and Folly Cove Designers*, At 1:30, *Father and Daughter, Captain Elias Davis and Daughter Mary, An Examination of Their Belongings*. At 2:15, *Into the Woods, A Walk Through Decades of Woodworking on Cape Ann*. At 3:00, *Why Dogtown Belonged to Marsden Hartley*. Hartley was passionate and possessed by Dogtown, come hear about when and why. And then the last tour is *Keeping Up With the Jones, of Art, Anna Hyatt Huntington's Joan of Arc in Gloucester and Beyond*. And then next Saturday [?] *Where the New Gold Rush [?] Eastern Woodlands Native Americans*.

So now on to the reason we're all here. Today, I'm very honored to be introducing a dear friend, Jay McLaughlan. Jay is a man of many talents with a deep love for our community. As you can see, the community loves him too. He will be sharing with us his history, but I wanted to give you a few highlights. He grew up near the water, spending a lot of time on and around boats. He was inspired by the Studio Movement, as you can tell. He has a degree in Physiological Psychology, and a minor in Design and Sculpture. He built his own house with his wife Sarah and a large crew of his friends, some who are here today. He's a phenomenal sailor. He's a great storyteller, and his laugh is extremely contagious, so be careful. He has completely transformed this gallery with his sculpture, his art furniture and his staircases. I would have loved to have seen one installed somewhere; but next time. Make sure you come back over the next week or two when the plastic chairs will be gone. And I don't know I thought 50 people would be here but I think we probably have more like 75 so it will be empty and you'll be able to enjoy all of this beautiful work in one place one last time before the exhibition closes. Please join me in welcoming Jay McLaughlan.

Jay 04:11

Thank you Courtney very much. And I want to thank all of the people who made this show possible. Rhonda and Martha Oakes were wonderful people to work with. Fred Buck did the photographs, the enlargements, and I couldn't have done it without him. Everybody has just been terrific here. And it was pretty courageous of them, I think, to have a contemporary furniture show in an art museum. And so I'm just delighted.

I'm going to talk a little bit about my background and how I got into woodworking and then I'll talk about some technical aspects of what you see in the furniture that's here, and then finish up with some design principles of how, of how the, the actual shapes get involved, especially as it relates to commissions. Now as far as background is concerned, right after World War Two, my mother and stepfather lived on a boat. They didn't have a house and it was an old wooden boat and needed an awful lot of repair. And so we hung around boat yards a lot and I was exposed to some really fine craftsmen that repaired wooden vessels. Also, when I was at school, I had a very good; they had a wonderful woodworking department. They called it "Sloyd" in those days, and it, the teacher was quite marvelous. And I so I started really started woodworking at age 13. And when I went to, I was in the army for three years. And then when I went to college on the GI Bill, I went to Berkeley in California. And as Courtney said, I studied Physiological Psychology, which doesn't have a damn thing to do with furniture except maybe, maybe how comfortable the seat of a chair is. But I didn't want to go on to graduate work in that field, which you have to do to get anywhere, and I became very interested in sculpture and took courses with Richard O'Hanlon, who was head of the Sculpture Department at Berkeley. And I learned also I learned a lot about design principles while in the Sculpture Department. Towards the end of my college, I became aware of the people that were prominent in the so called "studio movement" in America. And I'm sure you all know what exactly what that means. But basically, it's when furniture, pottery, glassblowing, metalwork was suddenly recognized as an art form. It was elevated to appreciation of an art form to a certain degree. And there were people here in this country who were pretty well known and these names will ring a bell to you, Wart Esherick, Sam Maloof, Art Carpenter. I love the people, when people's names have something to do with what they end up doing. Art Carpenter, wonderful furniture maker. And of course Nakashima and who did I, Jake May. And Walker Weed. These people, in the in the 50's and early 60's, were at the lead of the Furniture Studio Movement. And of course, I went to visit all of them. And I asked, I remember when I visited Nakashima, I asked him for a job, could I move big planks of wood around for you or do something to help? And he said, "I don't think so. You'd be here about six months and learn everything I could show you and then you'd take off on your own." Well, that's true. But he said, "No, I've got six very fine Old World craftsman out back doing the all the work that I need. Thank you very much." But he was encouraging and everyone was nice. And so what I did find was a connection with the

08:43

new museum in New York City, which was headed up the American Craftsmans Council, headed up by David Campbell and I got an introduction to him, met him. He said go to New Hampshire to Concord and get involved with the Society of Arts and Crafts in Concord, which I did. And I got a job there. And luckily, one of the great joiners, master joinery people in the, ever; Alejandro de la Cruz was working there. And he took me under his wing and he showed me how to design joinery and you think well, a standard dovetail joint is this, and standard mortise and tenon joint, but that's not true. The key to fine joinery is to have each component balanced in such a way that neither is stronger than the other. So a machine made dovetails often are all in a row and they're all similar. They're all the same size. Properly made dovetails the posts are much smaller than the receiver part. And that's what Alejandro could, take a bureau and he could take a machine made drawer and break it like this. And he would whittle out a handmade dovetail drawer in very few minutes. And then nobody could, just put it together without any glue and nobody could break it. I mean he was he was that good. So I was very fortunate to mix the design information from O'Hanlon with the technical joinery part from Alejandro. The other interesting thing was my mother's family was very artistic. She, her sister, Adele had an antique store and an interior decorating business in New York. My Uncle Louie was an architect. Eugene was a publisher, Reynal and Hitchcock, and my aunt Jeanne was well known mosaicist. Jeanne Reynal was highly respected and she was just an absolute delight to visit. And we, she knew everybody in Greenwich Village; great, great friend of Arshile Gorky and Louise Nevelson. She, she knew all the people in the, in the New York art world. Now I'll never forget one time my mother and I were visiting and the phone rang. And it was Louise Nevelson and she said, "Come on over, Duchamp's coming for drinks." So we got, we went over. He lived pretty nearby. And we went over there and into Nevelson's dingy apartment, and she was just getting ready for a show, the Young Shadow Show. And everything was painted black. The walls were completely black. And all these sculptures and boxes were all over the place, everything black, you couldn't see anything. She even served Black Label Scotch. Duchamp was there in a black suit. Every, everybody was, practically everybody was dressed in black. It was just talking heads, was all you could see. In fact, my aunt was married to Tommy Sills, a black gentleman, black artist, and you couldn't see him at all. No, Ralph Ellison would have loved it. So it was very heady knowing that whole thing, that whole association. And so I've got to say that that was part of my influence. Luckily, I had that background.

And the, the other thing I wanted to say was the sequence of how to get started in, in getting how do you, a young, unknown, designer/craftsman get started? Well, you make pieces and you put them in shows. You keep making things, put them in shows; keep doing it. And then finally, people have enough to look at, and they say, "Okay, we'll give you some commissions". And I was very fortunate in, in New Hampshire to get a bunch of really nice commissions. And

that's how I, that's how I got started. One of the most interesting ones was the McNulty House. And I don't know how many of you know about this. But Tom McNulty and Mary made a concrete and glass house in 1964 in Lincoln. And it was completely curved, except for the window walls and where the doors to the outside and the window were; the walls were concrete, very interesting and curved like this. And the whole point was that as you walked through the house, instead of just seeing a rectilinear room the walls slipped back and forth in your vision. And it was just a very fluid environment and really interesting. So they needed a lot of furniture that fit these walls, and I was with the Wheaton [?] Gallery on Newbury Street at the time. So I had a connection with the McNulty's and they commissioned me to do a whole lot of furniture that was laminated to fit the walls. Now, after that job, which was considerable, I had, I had enough money to go to Europe. And I was, at that time I was with Cate Cooper Morison, Sam Morison's youngest daughter, and we went to Portugal. And we were expected to be there for a six weeks trip to Portugal and Spain. Well, we got to Albufeira and they were building a great new resort hotel was Sol e Mar. And we went in, the bar was finished and we went in, but they were still building it. And we went in there to have a drink. And there were these two British architects complaining that they couldn't find a figurehead for the nightclub. The nightclub was U Pescadore, the fisherman. And so I said, I listened to a little bit and I went over and introduced myself. I said, like, "I'll build you a figurehead". And, oh, sure, chap comes into a bar and says I can build you a figurehead. But I said, "Alright, give me two days. I'll be back here at 5:30, two days from now, and I'll make a presentation". So I scrounged some clay, roofing clay and fashioned to quarter size model of the fisherman looking out to sea, like this to see where the birds were and where to go to the nets. And I drew a bowsprit, a stem with a bowsprit and said, "Now, fix this all up for you and build this eight foot figurehead out of mahogany", and gave a ridiculously high price. And by God they went for it.

16:20

And so I got the job. And it meant, set finding, renting a place, setting up a little studio, using the fishermen down the docks for models. And after this was all in, when we installed it, it was like these, these processions from church where they carrying the thing, these fishermen proudly carrying this, this figurehead up to the nightclub. And then one thing led to another and I got a number of different commissions there. And I ended up staying in, in Europe for two years; not six weeks, but two years. And during that time, it was just absolutely fast as 1965-66. And during that time, I got in deep into Morocco. And I saw people still using an up and down two-man pit saw to take logs and make planks out of them. I saw potters using a kick wheel with a stone for a pillow block and making these gorgeous pots with the most primitive equipment. The weaving, it was just so marvelous to see that, go back in time and see the beautiful, beautiful things that even young kids were doing this stuff. It was just a great

experience. And all through my travels in Europe, looking at museums, art, architecture, and just soaking it in like a like a sponge. And so that's part of the background. And I, as I said, ended up with an ability to assimilate, to work as on a client based relationship for the different work that I do.

And I'm going to talk a little bit now about the technical part. The piece of sculpture in the library, which is way back in that corner and the picture, and the photograph of the rosewood sculpture, in that corner are good examples of how we can take a log or a large plank of material, cut it up, and then reassemble it with the wonderful glues that we have. Reassemble it into a blocked, blocky piece of sculpture, and then carve it and shape it and finish it up and make it work. Now one of the things that I think is extremely important is to have the, I like to have the joinery such that it you look at it and it doesn't look like a whole bunch of different pieces of wood. One of the tricks that you use in this case is that if you take a plank of mahogany like this, and you want to add over here and subtract here, make the cut and then you flip it over and you glue it and the grain matches absolutely perfectly. That's just a quick example of why those pieces look like a unified whole, although they're very dis-separate. Another example of that is when doing a staircase rail if you want a laminated piece, to look like it's one piece and not just a whole bunch of different laminates, index the plank before you cut it, then rip it up and then reassemble it in the curved portion that you want, with the sequence that the index gives you. And then it comes out and people are surprised; "Oh, that one looks like one piece of wood. Did you steam bend it?" No, it's laminated. But it's done in that way, so it really works. Now if you pick up blocks like this, with just a little bit of compression in them, they hold together. If you release the compression it all falls apart. The, the staircases that you see that are the posts, for instance, the Prouty staircase over there is a good example.

21:05

And a couple of others here, well, I'm not gonna find it. By taking a threaded rod in the stair, in the case of the staircase, as heavy as one inch threaded rod and putting it through the treads and through the risers, you create an incredibly strong structure; it's just amazingly strong. Now, the same principle works in a bookcase like this. Inside here are two threaded rods and bolts stuck together and so it makes it and as soon as it's tight, right, it becomes extremely strong. Another example is that table right there. That's the same same structural thing. And this piece, it has no horizontal components to it. It's all vertical. And inside here are the threaded rods that hold it together. And that's another, it's a trick; it's just a technical thing that makes it, makes it work very well. When this is a model of a commission, and it's useful to make them, not only to get to show the client, what it's going to look like, what the desk is going to look like, but also it's an education for me to find out what you have to do to laminate it. And this was kind of fun. The person that this was for was a lawyer, an attorney in Washington DC,

who helped companies recover from a government lawsuit, anti-trust lawsuit, and the client would come in and say, “Well, we're in trouble”. He'd say, “Yes, you're in a great deal of trouble. But I can help you out here, what we'll do is we'll take your company apart, and we'll reassemble it in such a way that it is compatible with everything that the government needs to comply with, with the law. But it's going to cost you a great deal of money.” So when I when I took this in to get the job, I said, “ Bob, we're going to take three big planks of an oak and put them together and then, but we're going to bend it in such a way and we're going to laminate it all apart. And it'll be symbolic of exactly what you do. And it's going to cost you a great deal of money.” But luckily, he went for it. And here, speaking of getting work, here's another example of making a helpful, to make a drawing, a rendering of the piece that you're going to do so that the people can actually appreciate a complicated sculptural form. And I often work in clay first, do a clay form. Then build a piece, glue it together and then subtract from it. So that's the pretty much what I have about some of the some of the little technical things that you have here. Now I want to talk about design principles.

24:52

When I, unification of components, Nakashima was master at understanding the soul of a piece of wood. He could absolutely just have this spiritual appreciation this, he captured this wonderful quality of what the tree meant. He was a master at that. But you look at his pieces and the bases don't relate to the top. He didn't care. All he cared about was the presentation, a beautiful presentation of the top of the table. And the structural part was just fine. But the design didn't matter to him. But I mean, it didn't echo the top. This table, there are a lot of people here, so you can't see it, but after the talk you can see this was for the New England Telephone Company, for the director of the New England Telephone Company. And I was inspired by the man on the cover of the telephone book and many years ago that had the coil of wire around his shoulder. But also the electrons moving around. But my point here is that the base absolutely echoes the top of the table. And that is a point here. That's what I mean about unification of design: to try to have each component, each piece related in a sculptural way. And the way the components of this chair, for example, flows into one another, that's the again attempt for unification. And also the interaction of a tabletop with the base: as you move around it, those lines move around and the way that they do can be more or less pleasing. So that's another introduction to it. Resolve dynamic. This Z table here is a perfect example of that. I'm trying to put as much dynamic into it as possible. But then it has to be resolved; it has to have a resolution. It can't just be just be way out. It has to have some kind of a balance to it all. And that is, is where you have some fun with it. This, this strange thing I call a Quoz. “Quoz” is a state of confusion. The word means a state of confusion. And this I made a long time ago, 1959. And it was a commission for the local pediatric clinic and that they wanted a box where the

mother could plunk the baby while she was signing out at the payment counter and get through the paperwork. And so I made this piece and it took it in and was very proud of you know, and they said, "Oh no, oh no, no, we can't have that. It's too graphic". Because I had made a sexual embrace and some anatomic components to it. And so that was part of my salon des refuses. I've had it since 1959. Another one is that rosewood library stepladder which is up high on the pedestal. And my mother commissioned that, she wanted a library stepladder. And I said, "You want a drawing first?" "Oh, no, no, I trust you." And so I delivered that and she looked at it and she said, "You take that right back to Gloucester, you horror." And I said, "What's wrong?" She said, "You want me dead, don't you? You made a damn guillotine." Of course, she was French, you know, and she would think of that. I never thought of it as a guillotine. So I made her that. I made her the other one, further over.

29:25

So that's again, that other piece is part of my salon de refuses. You don't win them all. So but she did. She was wonderful. And she commissioned a lot of furniture. And I wish I inherited when she died. But I just say that that's part of the design considerations that comes into client based. In other words, I try to very much, to understand and get to know, the person who's commissioning a piece of work, and to find some details that relate; that I can put into the piece that I do. Now, here's a, an example. This, and I worked down on an in Georgia and Florida for a while. And on Amelia Island, it was quite wild, at the end of it; it was quite wild. This is the northern most barrier island in Florida. And it was and so I got to know these people. And what do you like about living here? "Well, we love the live oak trees, the movement of the live oak trees are just wonderful. And we even get deer coming around here all the time browsing, and we look out here on the inland waterway or walk over to the ocean. And we see dolphins frequently and the birds are amazing." The wonderful statue out here in the new park, sculpture park, is an example of the mating dances of the birds. And even the wrens, terns, right, not wrens, terns, have an amazing courtship dance. And so these were things that they appreciated and I got to know. They wanted to associate a screen divider between the living room and the dining, the dining room, and which were on different levels. So I thought Shoji screen, but also incorporate these things that they appreciate about where they live. And so I made this for them with the deer browsing and the live oak trees, and the dolphin forms and the waves, and the dance of the, the courtship dance of the terns, which is an example of how we can incorporate precisely something that they truly appreciate. And something that they just will enjoy for as long as possible. Compatibility with the architecture and the other furniture. In California, you could get away with anything. The people's interior furnishings, and were just as wonderfully eclectic and wonderfully flexible. Traditionally in Massachusetts, there's a great appreciation of period furniture. And I've always thought that my work, as

modern as I can and imaginative as I can make it, I want it to be compatible with any kind of furniture that's in their house. And that brings in a question, the question of quality of design. And a perfect example is that walnut bench that's under the window, was in a room with very beautiful, traditional furniture, and it has, forgive me for sort of crowing a little bit about it, but it has as much dignity as I could put into it, just the way Hepplewhite or Sheraton or, or any of the great furniture designers had a real sense of architectural dignity. So I think that that's, that's part of it. And the of course the architecture has to be, has to have that same influence.

33:48

This was an interesting, an example of architectural compatibility. This was an interesting staircase project, again, down on Amelia Island. And the problem here, the challenge here was that the landing went into a cantilevered balcony. So how do you make that strong without having posts? You don't want a post, would really disturb that design. And so the trick was to take cantilever out to the, to the landing inside of the balcony cantilevers, and luckily I got in on the construction early enough to be able to physically do that. But that's it, and so it's not just the visual, it's also a lot of these considerations have to be taken into, you know, to do it that way. So I just want to say that in my career, I've had an awful lot of fun with this with this, this entire process. I've been extremely lucky. I don't think of it as, I've never really thought of it as, as work unless you're making 150 pickets. Those are work. That's work. But, but basically, it's just been a wonderful fun, and a wonderful connection with the people that I've worked for. And that's one of the things that has delighted me about this exhibit. It's a reunion with a lot of the people. There's people here today, that a lot of people that I haven't seen for a long time, and just have had been able to have a reunion with them, and bringing it all together. And so it's been a wonderful experience. And now I'd like to open it up for questions. If anybody has some questions, I'll try to answer them.

36:10

Yes, Ben.

36:18

Discuss the aspect of art and craft and how they meet and what your standards are?

Jay36:20

Where the art comes into it. I think that really started back in with Louis Sullivan said, "Form follows, usually follows function". There was an extension of that said let's go beyond that. Let's have some fun with design; let's have some fun with pieces and make them as wild if you will, as possible as the function will permit. And the people that early on, I think it stemmed from

Art Nouveau that people like Gaudi and Macintosh and various, especially Gaudi, liberated the forms in such a way that, that they really became art. And so that was the start of the Studio Movement. And as far as I'm concerned, personally, I never thought of myself as more than an artisan. Sculpture, pure sculpture is one thing, but the furniture part I think of as artisanship. But the recognition of wonderful pottery, standing alone by itself is, even though it's a piece of, it's that object, absolutely can be considered art. And I think, I hope that answers your question.

Yes, Jeffrey.

Jeffrey

Can you tell us something about these two pieces?

Jay

Oh, these are reminiscent of, they're leaning boards. They reminiscent of the opera star opera ladies who were dressed in very stiff crinoline costumes. And they, between scenes, they'd like to rest someplace and they couldn't sit down. So they made a series, they literally made a wall with a bunch of them. There were little armrests, like this and a little tiny seat on them. And so I just took off on that and made these; made a series of these. This one's adjustable; it has a little, for little people and big people. But it was just, you know, just a little. So that was fun. They're leaning, leaning boards. Yeah. Glad you asked.

Yes. Mary. Yes.

Mary

This lignum vitae, would you talk a little bit about that particular wood, about your wood, and what you favor, and where you get it?

Jay

Okay, in in the early 60s, it wasn't horrible to get rare woods like lignum vitae and rosewood and cocobolo. Then we found that the rain forests were being denuded and then just terrible smuggling, actually smuggling of rare woods. So woodworkers pretty much boycott that kind of material now. But in the 60s, I was able to go down to Brooklyn, to Pierson Hardwood, and they had logs of rosewood, logs of lignum vitae, and ebony, and wonderful, these wonderful, this yard. You just imagined elephants walking around moving these things. And you could go with a chalk line and say I want this cut here and here and here, and then they would cut it and ship it to you. And that lignum vitae, it was used for marine bearings on ships. The shaft of a ship

would be 30 inches in diameter, and sometimes 100 feet long and you have to have pillow blocks supporting that shaft all the way down the tunnel. And they use lignum vitae at it because it was so hard and, and water resistant, and they could put oil races in them. So anyway, that's why they were importing it. And I got a couple of logs from them. And because it grows in a swamp, I thought it was just absolutely perfect to make a fountain out of it. But then I made some tables; I made a couple of tables out of it also. And then the rosewood,

41:15

all of the rosewood that you see here is pre 1965. So I'm very careful about the rain forests. And I love walnut. And then in the in the old days you could get, when you get a chance to take a look at the encyclopedia stand over there and you can see the panel near the door, it's an example of the gorgeous walnut that you could get in the 60s and 70s. Now most of it goes for veneer. The big old trees are less prominent and so it's changed. And now we have to settle for smaller pieces of wood and glue them up. But still this, luckily there's some available, yes.

42:08

Talk a little bit more about how you choose wood. Is it color or grain or strength, for a particular project?

Jay 42:15

You get to know the lumber company well enough so that they can actually; they trust you to go through stacks. And they bring out a stack and then you take it apart. When I say trust, they want to put two back together again so it's safe, and pick out. You're looking for widths, lengths, grain, quarter-sawn, as opposed to plain-sawn and it's great fun. I mean it's just, you can't imagine for a woodworker anything more fun than going picking out wood. And I work with Highland Hardwoods these days in New Hampshire. But I've been to all of the lumber companies in New England and down south when I was working down south. And so you're looking for wood that has not only a beautiful grain to it but has characteristics, the flat surfaces and how you can deal with it. But that's wonderful part of being a woodworker. Yes, sir.

Unknown

Back to your lignum vitae piece here, do you have to use particular tools or techniques to work with such a hard wood?

43:40

Yeah, that's, that's a good question. Elm and lignum vitae are two, and live oak, are two woods that in the cambium layer, they, it's not a straight line. It's interweaves. And you can't plane lignum vitae with a hand plane. You can get close to it but it all roughs up and breaks. And so what you really have to do is, to make a piece out of that, you have to use a great deal of cabinet scraper and sand, sanding and cabinet scraper to get the, it's very hard to work. Yeah, sir.

Unknown

Looking at your leaning boards, I see they're curved, and it's all one piece apparently. So how did you get your curve? All I can think of is using a U shaped drawknife.

Jay 44:42

Okay this, there's a joint here and a joint here. Just this part of this leg comes, comes from this part that's cut away. It's joined together. These elbow pieces are glued up. And then mallet and chisel, I use a mallet and chisel and keep working with a mallet and chisel. That's the same way as that picture of the sculpture in the in the corner. And then finally using sandpaper, and I'm not opposed to use, to using a great big grinder to get the wood away. I'm not a purist that has to go with the mallet and chisel to rough out or to get the texture; the Quoz is textured, and this piece is textured. And that's, so that's all done with a mallet and chisel. But I believe in using a power plane and grinders and so on. I'm no purist about that. Yes, Tom.

Tom 45:50

Much of your work is made of laminated wood, there's been such development of technology in glues, and I wonder if you could talk a little bit about what sort of glues you used to use and what to use now. What you prefer.

Jay

Yeah, I've used everything from hide glue to resorcinol, to West system, lots and lots of Tight Bond. And now they've got wonderful polyurethane glues. You see here Gorilla Glue, don't bother to buy it. Right next to the bottle of \$10 bottle of Gorilla Glue is a \$5 bottle of polyurethane glue, which is the same thing. And the key to the lamination is a fresh surface and anything like teak, you've got to really get the oil out of the teak so you use acetone; get a fresh surface, use acetone. Leach the oil out and then wet it, both sides, and then put the polyurethane glue on both sides. And then you get the glue penetration that you want, and even in an oily wood. So that, as technology advances we're getting more and more into epoxies. And the nice thing about polyurethane glue is you don't have to mix. But I've used, I've

made 40-44 foot timber beams out of laminating up the old Weldwood powdered glue. And when I was on Cumberland Island, we had a couple of pigs, little piglets about 50-60 pounds, and I was mixing up a big vat of glue for laminating these beams. So this is the glue made from hoof and hide, and we're all ready to go. You have to let that sit for about half an hour before you use it. And we're all ready to go. And I think all right, get the glue in here. One of the damn pigs had drunken the whole bucket. I thought, "Oh boy, goodbye, pig".

47:59

Not at all, he didn't even; he thrived. And when he when he got to be 125 pounds, we ate him. But it's funny. The glues are, glues are great.

48:13

Yeah.

48:14

Yes.

Unknown 48:19

Getting to know all these people and how you dovetail your art, your own sense of design these folks. If you're involved in your relationship with these folks, and were you always able to keep your part of the design in there or when it happened. When did that happen that the client would not allow you to keep your own design at all and wanted you to use their design? Would that happen, and if it did would you do the work?

48:50

Oh boy, I, I don't think I overpowered them but I never had, I initially developed that sense of what they wanted sufficiently so that I could combine what they wanted with what I felt was the solution. And I really didn't run into that problem. And when dealing with architects, you do run into that problem. Jeffrey and I had a job where this architect wanted a staircase wall to have a whole lot of channels in the whole wall but there were 14 as it as it went up. There were 14 one-inch grooves in this entire wall for no reason at all. It was just an architect's whim and we tried to fight it but there was no fighting that so I had to incorporate it. So once in a while you do, but basically the key thing is for both parties to have a good time with it. That's the key.

50:01

Yeah. Yeah.

50:04

So we're all set. If there are no more questions, I want to thank you so much for coming. And it's been a great pleasure for me to do this. And again, I thank the museum so much, and thank you all. Good to see you.

Subject List

Sloyd--handicraft-based education, especially woodworking
Studio Movement in America--furniture; pottery; glassblowing; metal work
American Craftsmen's Council
Society of Arts and Crafts
League of New Hampshire Craftsmen

Rare woods

lignum vitae
rosewood
cocoabolo
walnut
elm
live oak

Businesses

Weidman? Gallery
Pierson Hardwood, Brooklyn, NY
Highland Hardwoods, New Hampshire

Artists and Furniture Makers

George Nakashima
Wharton Esherick
Sam Maloof
Arthur Carpenter
Jacob May
Walker Weed
Richard O'Hanlon
David Campbell
Alejandro de la Cruz

Eugene Reynal
Jeanne Reynal
Arshile Gorky
Louise Nevelson
Marcel Duchamps
Thomas Sills
Ralph Ellison
Mary Otis Stephens
Thomas McNulty
Catherine Cooper Morison
Samuel Eliot Morison
Louis Sullivan
Antoni Gaudi
Charles Rennie Macintosh