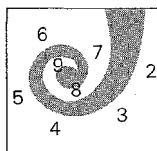


A Carver's Tricks

Three methods from a period-furniture maker

by Eric Schramm

One of the most valuable additions to my collection of carving tools is a set of four round-nose chisels. Originally they were ordinary butt chisels, but I re-ground them to rounded profiles and hollow-ground the bevels to a length of about $\frac{3}{4}$ in., as the factory-ground bevel was too steep for carving. I use these four chisels in place of many gouges having different sweeps and widths. Used with the bevel down, the 1-in. and $\frac{3}{4}$ -in. chisels are excellent tools for wasting wood fast in relief carvings as well as roughing-in a carving in-the-round. Used with the bevel up, all four chisels work well for shaping and smoothing convex surfaces. The $\frac{1}{2}$ -in. and $\frac{3}{4}$ -in. chisels eliminate the need for a large number of gouges when setting-in a line. For example, setting-in a simple scroll can take up to eight different numbered gouges, as shown. But this scroll can be set-in using only one or two round-nose chisels.



To maintain a razor-sharp edge on my carving tools, chisels and plane irons, I made a rotary hone from a disc of $\frac{1}{4}$ -in. plywood covered with $\frac{3}{16}$ -in. thick leather which is cemented in place. I bored a hole in the center of the disc and mounted it on a work arbor (available from Sears or a well-stocked hardware store); with the arbor chucked in my drill press and the leather stropping surface charged with white rouge (available from Sears), I can hone chisels and gouges quickly, without having to interrupt my work by getting out and setting up a lot of sharpening equipment. The drill press should run at its lowest RPM. You can also use tripoli or jeweler's rouge, but neither is as effective as white rouge.

For sanding sculptured furniture parts, I devised a pinwheel sander, which I make up from worn stroke-sander belts that I get free from a local cabinet shop. I cut the belt into 8-in. dia. circles and cut a $\frac{1}{2}$ -in. hole in the center of each. Then, using a paper pat-

tern and scissors, I cut eight evenly spaced slits from the outside toward the center. These stop about $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. from the center hole. Next I fold one corner of each slit over the center and secure the pinwheel on a work arbor, whose

collars hold the folded ends in place. A little piece of double-sided tape on the folded corner will keep the pinwheel together until it's secured on the arbor. Take care that all the folds go in the right direction in relation to rotation. □



For doing the work of many carving gouges—roughing-out relieved areas and smoothing convex surfaces—Schramm made this set of round-nose chisels by re-grinding standard butt chisels. The long hollow-ground bevels are especially well suited for carving.



To make honing quick and tidy, Schramm constructed this rotary strop (above left) from plywood and leather. He mounts it in his drill press and charges the surface with white rouge, a simple arrangement for keeping a razor-edge on all his tools, without the mess made by oilstones. Pinwheel sander (above right), when chucked in lathe or drill press, is good for finishing contoured furniture parts like cabriole legs.

Eric Schramm is a professional cabinet-maker who builds reproduction furniture in Los Gatos, Calif.