

Eastern Oklahoma
Woodcarvers Association

Manual for Judging

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This manual was originally compiled and published by Bill Payne in 1997 as a guide for judges training for the Eastern Oklahoma Woodcarvers Association (EOWA). The manual has been updated by Rusty Johnson and Bob Block to reflect changes over the past 13 years.

This manual is a guide for quantifying the judging process at the EOWA carving competitions. The EOWA uses teams of three trained judges (one team per category) to decide winners of the various categories. The team members use score cards to evaluate the criteria of three areas – carving skill, artistry and finish – and assign total points on a scale of 1 to 50 to each of the judged pieces. These points then determine, for awarding of ribbons, the order of finish in the categories.

The standards set forth in this manual may also help carvers evaluate their own carvings, either for self-criticism or for self-evaluation for entry for judging. By being self-critical, a carver may be more able to visualize strengths or weaknesses of their own work.

In the end though, it is not what others think of a carving that really matters but how the artists themselves feel about their own work. But still, winning a ribbon is nice validation of effort.

EOWA Judging Manual

Some Thoughts On Judging

Excerpted from Chip Chats article by Desiree Hajny

To be asked to judge any competition is a big honor as well as a responsibility. Most shows have standards that are expected to be upheld. An effective judge must be prepared and not afraid to ask for clarification if needed. The judge must become familiar with the categories and what is allowed in each one. There have been several instances when I've been asked to decide if a particular piece belongs in a category. I'm not sure this is a fair chore to ask a person who is to judge. Perhaps the show committee could better handle this when they are accepting entries.

To do an effective job the judge must implement his or her knowledge of the elements of art: line, shape, value, color, texture, space and movement. The next chore is to determine how the participant has used these to produce a good and original design. Harmonious flow to catch the viewer's eye and enough variety to hold interest are also important.

There are many questions to ask for each piece of artwork and each deserves to be answered.

Is there a dominant theme or is the artwork just a stop moment? Sometimes a sculpture is just a copy of something or a study. In a theme there is a message that captures the viewer's attention.

Is there too much detail or is it too simplistic? Art that seems to overwhelm the viewer is probably too busy or too detailed. Simplification is

difficult to decide on and sometimes it loses its strength in its final presentation.

Looking directly at the piece, is the technique applied appropriate for the subject matter and is it finely executed or sloppy? Does the technique employed enhance the piece or detract from it? For example, does leaving an angry grizzly bear rough in texture hit on the personality of the bear better than a finely sanded finish would?

When you back up and study the piece, what kind of impact does it make? Do you find yourself intrigued by the sculpture or is it easily looked over? How does the impact compare to other pieces in the category? Are the viewers drawn to the artwork or do they focus on another?

It is important to know that a judge isn't an authority on all areas. When I judge, there are categories I'm not as familiar with as others. For example, one piece may be more technically correct but another more artistically pleasing and original, and this is probably the one that I'll choose. Other judges may choose to go with a piece more technically constructed. It is the preference of the judge.

Take the competitions for what they are – one, two or three different persons' opinions. The true judging comes from the viewing public and their responses to your work.

Classes of Competition

In order to equalize the competition EOWA has two classes: Advanced and Novice.

A novice is a carver who has not received a first place award in any major woodcarving show.

Categories

EOWA has many categories in its show. These categories are defined herein. If no definition is included then standard woodcarving practice applies. In questions of applicability, the show judge chair will be the final authority.

Numbering Entries

A number tag is provided for each entry to be attached to the piece. Each carver is assigned a number which will be displayed on the tag. Carvers names are to be covered before submission. If the piece is the original design of the carver then the letter "O" should be included on the tag. The judges then will know that the piece is original and not a copied piece or pattern. Judges use this designation for consideration as perhaps "extra credit" in case of very close competition.

Restricted Entries

It may be desirable to limit the number of categories a single carver may enter. This number should probably not exceed 25 percent of the total number of categories, i.e. 40 categories, 10 entries. Limitation of entries assures that only the best quality carvings are entered in the category.

Carvings that have won first place ribbons in previous EOWA shows are not eligible to be entered again.

Judging Procedure

Qualification of judges:

1. Completed judges training

2. Completed annual refresher training

The judging time is announced and the carvings are brought to the judging area 30 minutes prior. Judging chair will check the pieces for appropriate category assignment.

Judges report to the judging area ten minutes prior to judging and remain in the area in the event that tiebreakers are necessary.

An assignment sheet will provide three judges for each category. No one will judge their own carving.

No one except judges will be allowed in the judging area while judging is taking place.

There will be areas/tables assigned for each category. An administrative table will be provided for tabulation and distribution of awards.

Score sheets will be provided for each category. Judges will enter their own number on the score sheet in the appropriate area (upper right corner). The score sheets provide for scoring each category entry on a scale of 1 to 50 points. Points are awarded for three disciplines:

Carving Skill (25 points maximum). The measure of how well a piece is carved and the degree of difficulty

Artistry (15 points maximum). The measure of how well the piece appeals by its overall charm, delicacy or uniqueness.

Finish (10 points maximum). The measure of how well the piece is finished.

(Scoring sheet example next page.)

The judging chair and category judges examine the entries and determine whether or not all entries are correct. In case of incorrect entries the carver will be notified and the correct category suggested. In the event there is only one entry in the category, it will not be judged and the single

Category		Realistic Animals, Natural Finish			Judge # 12
		Carving Skill	Artistry	Finish	
	Poor	1-5	1-3	1-2	Poor
	Fair	6-10	4-6	3-4	Fair
	Good	11-15	7-9	5-6	Good
	Excellent	16-20	10-12	7-8	Excellent
	Outstanding	21-25	13-15	9-10	Outstanding
#	Title	Carving Skill (Max. 25)	Artistry (Max. 15)	Finish (Max. 10)	Total (Max 50)
22	donkey	14	9	8	31
14	ducky	16	10	7	33
31 ⁰	doggie	10	12	6	28
36 ⁰	horsey	21	14	10	45
12	piggy	14	16	8	38

Example Score Sheet.

The sheet provides for scores for each of three categories – Carving Skill, Artistry, and Finish.

In this example note that judge #12 scores the “horsey” first, the “piggy” second, the “duckie” third and the “donkey” would receive honorable mention being within three points of the third place. The numbers in the first column are the competitor numbers of the exhibitors. The horsey must be pretty good to receive 45 out of 50 possible points.

The carvers of the doggie and the horsey have used the “O” for “original” with their exhibitor numbers. This shows that the carvers’ designs are original and not from a pattern or another carver’s design or rough-out. They have made the carvings from their own ideas and if they are good then they should get favorable points. From this score card, it appears that the horse turned out better than the dog.

piece will be moved to the MISCELLANEOUS category.

The judges working as a committee will determine the top six pieces to judge in the category in the event that there are more than six entries. The committee has the discretion to judge more than six pieces if agreement cannot be determined for the top six.

The pieces to be judged are entered on each judging sheet in the same sequence. Final judging is done individually without consultation. Each piece is judged and the scores recorded in the appropriate sections. The total across is entered in the final column, not to exceed the maximum 50 points. After each judge has completed scoring the category they may compare scores. This will assure that judges have entered the scores in the correct order.

Final scores are compared for each carving. If there is more than 10 points difference in the total for any one carving, the high and low judge, working with the third judge, discuss the difference, pointing out good and bad elements. The high and low can then adjust their scores if agreed. If not, the judging chair may accept the score cards without change. This is to be considered a learning experience, not a critique.

When judging of the category is finished the score sheets are turned in to be tabulated and recorded. If there are ties they must be resolved by the re-judging of the tied pieces only, starting with a fresh score sheet. Once complete the category is cleared with all score sheets filed and retained for statistical study.

After all categories are judged a list of the winners will be provided to the judging chair. First place winners will be photographed.

Awards

Ribbons or medallions will be awarded for first (blue), second (red) and third (white) places in all classes. Honorable mention (green) may be awarded if a carving has scored within three points of the third place.

Exhibitors Choice

All first place winners are eligible for the Exhibitors Choice award. All the exhibitors are allowed one vote each for their choice. In the event of a tie, the show chair will cast the deciding vote. A black ribbon or medallion will be awarded.

Peoples Choice

Peoples Choice is determined by the visitors to the show. Voting takes place from the end of the judging until 2:00 p.m. the next day. Each

exhibitor is allowed one entry, to be displayed on their table. Visitors are allowed one vote. Entries can not have won either Exhibitors Choice or Peoples Choice in prior EOWA shows.

What a Judge Looks For**1. Carving Skill (25 points)**

- Clean tool cuts, no ragged edges
- No saw cuts
- Sharp tools, no tearing, especially in cross-grain
- If sanded, no sand paper scratches
- Tool work compliments design
- One piece construction or assembled (one piece is more difficult)
- Wood hardness (walnut more difficult to carve than basswood increases degree of difficulty)

2. Artistry (15 points)

- Originality and quality of design
- Proportions appropriate to style
- Realistic style the proportions should be accurate
- Caricature shows an exaggerated proportion
- Stylized proportions must “feel” right

3. Finish (10 points)

- Clean, smooth finish with no runs, no drips, no errors
- Appropriate for category requirements
- Grain, color and texture show for natural finish category requirements
- Painted finish smooth and clean, no missed areas
- Colors mixed well and appropriate
- No glue marks or loose joins
- No dust, cobwebs, dog fur, etc.

Category Definitions

Realistic Categories: by definition a realistic piece of art is exactly that – an artists attempt to simulate reality. If any part of the work is stylized, i.e. surface, detail, proportions, then the piece cannot be realistic. This is sometimes a gray area for judges, especially if the artist thinks his piece should be judged as realistic and the proportions are wrong or the surface is smooth when in reality it is furry or feathered. A realistic carving can be either painted or natural and still be considered realistic if all other criteria are present.

Human Figure, Realistic

The human figure, whole, bust or torso carved in the round with all natural features and accurate proportions with special attention to realism. Any size, nude or draped. Finished appropriate to category criteria. Two or more related figures entered as “group.”

Animal Figure, Realistic

Animal figure carved in the round, any size, with normal proportions and detail with special attention to realism. No stylization of features, proportions or surfaces. Finished appropriate to category criteria. Two or more related figures entered in “group.”

Marine Life Figure, Realistic

Fish reptile or amphibian carved in the round with normal proportions and detail with special attention to realism. No stylization of features, proportions or surfaces. Finished appropriate to category criteria. Two or more related figures entered as “group.”

Birds, Realistic

Bird carved in the round, any size with normal proportions and detail with special attention to realism. No stylization of features, proportions or surfaces. Finished appropriate to category criteria. Two or more related figures entered as “group.”

Group Carving, Realistic

This category is intended to provide for competition between scenes composed of two or more realistic figures, different species to portray a special situation. Merit will be given to a group carved from one block of wood as opposed to assembled. Any finishes allowed. Relief carvings are excluded from this category.

Caricature Categories: In caricature carvings proportions and/or other features are distorted or exaggerated for effect.

Human Figure, Caricature

The human figure, whole, bust or torso carved in the round with comic features and/or exaggerated proportions to dramatize a peculiarity or characteristic. Any size, any finish. Two or more related figures entered as “group.” Clowns are included in this category.

Animal, Wildlife, Marine or Bird, Caricature

Any animal figure, carved in the round with comic features and exaggerated proportions to dramatize a peculiarity or characteristic. Any size, any finish. Two or more related figures entered as “group.”

Group Carving, Caricature

This category is intended to provide for competition between scenes composed of two or more caricature figures, different species to portray a special situation. Merit will be given to a group carved from one block of wood as opposed to assembled. Any finishes allowed. Relief carvings are excluded from this category.

Artistic or Stylized: Figures carved in the round but with detail, feature or proportion simplified, smoothed, or distorted for drama or emphasis. Finishes are natural or stained wood with grain showing.

Human Figure, Artistic or Stylized

The human figure carved in the round, torso, bust or full, any style, any size. Details simplified, altered, distorted or smoothed for effect. All forms of finish are allowed provided the wood grain remains visible. Entries may include more than one figure.

Animal, Marine Life or Bird Figure, Artistic or Stylized

An animal, marine or bird figure carved in the round, full or bust, any style, any size. Details simplified, altered, distorted or smoothed for effect. All forms of finish are allowed provided the wood grain remains visible. Entries may include more than one figure.

Group, Artistic or Stylized

Figures carved in the round, any style, any size. Details simplified, altered, distorted or smoothed for effect. All forms of finish are allowed provided the wood grain remains visible. Any combination of figures may be used. Merit will be given to a group carved from one block of wood as opposed to assembled.

Abstract

Free form carving utilizing shapes, negative space and wood grain for artistic effect. Any shape not identified as human or animal. Finish is natural and wood grain must show.

Whittled or Traditional

Carvings that are created with one tool or blade (no power tools) and are generally held by hand during carving. Carvings are created from a single piece of wood with no assembly. Included are chains, ball-in-cage, knots, traditional folk patterns, etc. The category is designed to provide competition for “whittlers.” All forms of finish are allowed provided the wood grain remains visible. Surface finish may be omitted entirely.

Decorative Functional

Carvings which decorate functional objects or are ornamental such as love spoons, bottle stoppers, salt & pepper shakers, neckerchief slides, bookends, carved bowls. All forms of finish are allowed.

Relief Carving

High or low relief, all forms of finishes. Frames made by the artist are preferred. Pierced relief entered as High Relief. High relief is defined as any part of the relief is intentionally carved in such a manner as to be separated from the background and no part of the carving shall be undercut. Intaglio or chip carving are excluded.

Chip Carving

Chip carving is essentially geometric and based on triangular and lens shaped cuts. It is a form of surface decoration generally arranged in patterns. Chip carving cuts should be clean and sharp and without corner splinters. Any finish allowed. Gouge Chip Carving is done with small gouges as opposed to knives. Subjects are pictorial rather than geometric.

Carousel or Mythical Figures

Carvings of non-existent or mythological creatures such as dragons, unicorns, mermaids or characters in the carousel style such as horses, rabbits, frogs, etc. All forms of finishes allowed.

Carved Footwear

This category includes carvings from any type of wood which depict footwear of any type. Any finish allowed. Laces or decorations of another media are permitted.

Walking Sticks or Canes

Walking sticks or canes may be cut from one limb or assembled from multiple pieces. They must contain a degree of carving on the handle and or up and down the length of the piece. Special consideration will be given to the use of natural shapes in the wood. Any finish may be used. Friendship canes carved by more than one carver are not allowed.

Miniature

Carving of any subject, realistic, caricature or stylized, including base, not to exceed 2" x 2" x 2".

Religious

Any religious subject, any finish. (Excludes entries in Holiday category.)

Holiday

Carving of any holiday specific subject (Christmas, Valentines Day, Halloween, etc.), any finish.

Driftwood, Log or Bark Carving

Category includes carvings made from driftwood or weathered wood. Special consideration given to carvings that utilize natural grain or uniqueness of the wood. Un-carved pieces or arrangements may not be entered.

Intarsia

Making of a decoration or pictorial mosaic using variety of woods to create tone or depth. Natural finish or painted.

Pyrography

Wood that has been burned to create a scene or picture. Any finish but wood-burning should not be covered by paint

Instructor Assisted/Seminar Carving

Carvings created with extensive help from an instructor, i.e. using an instructors blank and/or carving on the piece by the instructor. If more than 50 percent of the carving was done by the instructor the the piece should not be considered carved by the student.

Judging Carving Skill – 25 Points

Carving Skill – 25 points

This one of the three judging categories makes up 50% of the total score, and must be considered carefully. Here are some tips to help make our judging more accurate.

The originality "O": To qualify as an "O"riginal piece, the carving must be an original idea and design. Many carvings are inspired by a picture, a painting, another statue, etc. That does not negate the "O." Carvings from rough-outs, band-sawed blanks taken from a published pattern, class projects (where several people end up with a similar carving partially carved by an instructor), or similar pieces cannot be original.

The design: Although design and presentation are part of another category (artistry) consider the design as it relates to the challenges for carving the piece. Simply ask, "How difficult was this to carve and was it successful?" Some hints to help answer that question are: Did this start as a band-sawed piece, or was the carving started from a plain piece of wood or a log; did it require considerable advanced planning and careful wood removal just to get to the design? Is this a simple figure, or a complicated pose showing action? Is the anatomy and/or proportion accurate? Or, is the anatomy and/or proportion successfully exaggerated or changed to create impact, as in a caricature or artistic/stylized piece?

Think about the carving process: type of wood (is it easy or difficult to work?), detail when appropriate, motion when appropriate, etc.

Stand back! We commonly see our judges on their knees, looking at a carving up close and personal. That's good – but remember to take a

second look from afar: does this piece look right and convey a thought or idea?

What if you don't carve this type of carving? Study! Talk to someone during meetings or even prior to judging who does carve in the category to which you've been assigned. Remember, judging is part of the joy of learning more about woodcarving, either to improve your own skills or to improve your knowledge and appreciation of the art form.

Use the points: You have 25 points to award if the piece is perfectly carved. If you find flaws (areas of the carving that could have been carved better), subtract from the 25 starting point.

After you have arrived at a score, stop and reconsider, and add back points if the carving's overall appeal is favorable.

Do not confuse carving skill with artistry. You will have another 15 points to consider in the artistry category. In some judging categories, you can also consider use of the wood (driftwood or bark carvings); or use of grain (does it add or subtract from appeal – was the grain considered in planning the carving); and other factors. Bottom line – for carving skill, look at difficulty (compared to other pieces in the judging category) and outcome.

– Bob Block



With a lot of undercutting and delicate wood removal, this stylized animal carving should receive a good score on carving skill. It is an original design and shows the grain of the butternut nicely. Had it been carved from walnut, a much harder wood, it might be awarded an even higher score.

Judging Artistry – 15 Points

Artistry (15 points) is a measure of how well a piece appeals by its overall charm, delicacy and uniqueness – a fresh approach – not a copy of someone else's creativity.

You walk into a gallery of paintings, four walls filled with art but one piece jumps out at you and you gravitate towards it. What is it about that work that compels you to study it more than the others? Is it color? Is it composition? Is it subject? Is it style? Is it uniqueness? All of those elements can combine to make a strong impression.

This is true for all art, including woodcarving. How many times have you seen the caricature cowboy, standing with his hands at his sides, looking straight ahead? It may be well-carved and nicely finished, but does that make it good art? Not until the carver makes it his/her own by imbuing movement, expression, character or uniqueness does it separate itself from the rest. This is the artistry of the piece. I also like to think of it as "attitude." The carving makes you want to turn it around, study the pose, the gesture, the facial expression. It makes you want to say "I wish I had done that."

Don't be swayed by the size of the piece. Size doesn't matter, it's character that matters. In my opinion it is more difficult to carve the expression right on a small piece than a large one. A slight slip in eye position on a small scale can be disaster, but a small slip on eye position on a large piece may not even be noticed.

Reward bravery that works. Often in judging it is easy to give points for the unusual subject, the radical pose, the novel idea. But the carving still has to work, it has to feel right, not just different. It might be a radical idea to carve a beautiful, smooth face into a gnarled cypress knee but does that make it good? Why would a pretty face be in a chunk of old driftwood? It would have to work within the composition of the wood, blended in with swirling grain, hair flowing into and out of knots and roots. Unless it works within the context of the total carving it fails the bravery test.

You have to know the rules before you can break the rules.

Stylized and caricature carvings need to adhere to certain laws of physiology to work. You can make an ear big and floppy but it still needs to look like it belongs, it needs to fit within the anatomy. Long graceful sweeps of arms and legs usually don't work if laws of proportion are violated, i.e. the forearm is twice as long as the upper arm. If you look at a stylized carving and have the feeling that something is not right, it usually has to do with proportion. When something is wrong and you can't say exactly what it is, look at proportions. Even when the size of hands are exaggerated in a caricature carving, the proportions of the fingers from joint to joint are still maintained.

The human form is a very difficult subject to carve and an easy one to judge because it is so familiar. If it is carved with one element wrong it is easy to spot. The average judge doesn't know how many toes a squirrel has but they sure do know how many toes a human has and which one is the biggest.

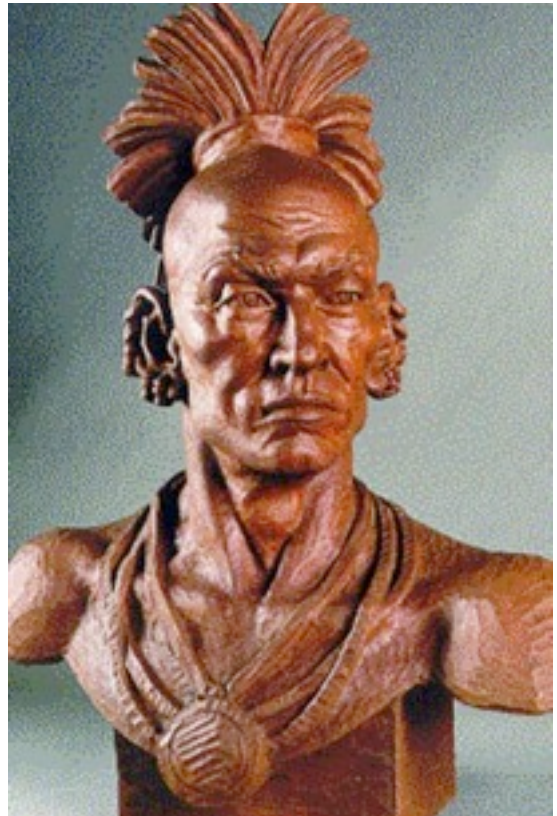
What about detail? Does detail add to the artistry of the carving? Does it become a distraction? Do you say "wow, look at the detail" and forget to look at the composition? Does it add to or take away from the attitude? Would the carving still work without the dedication to detail or is it still as compelling with just the suggestion of it?

Look at carvings with a critical eye and find the ones that speak to you. Then ask yourself "why?" Is it attitude, composition, pose, subject, quality of the carving, difficulty of the carving, uniqueness of carving? Reward the carver for attitude, bravery, feelings. Reward beauty where it is supposed to be and ugly when ugly counts. Reward proportion, but reward disproportion that works. Reward the carving that feels right. Reward the carving that you wish you had done.

– Rusty Johnson



Both of these carved portraits show character, style and attitude. The composition of the cowboy and horse tell you of their relationship with one glance. The Indian at the right tells you immediately that you had better be serious with him. Both carvings are best of show winners from the International Woodcarver Congress; left, 2002 by Fred Cogelow and right, 1998 by David Seagraves.



Judging Realistic Bird Carving

One of the toughest categories to judge is **Realistic Birds**, usually because we feel intimidated by the intricate work that goes into creating a beautiful carving. What makes the best bird carving? The one that most closely represents the actual species and has action and natural artistry, including realistic and appropriate habitat. Feel free to refer to reference books for accuracy.

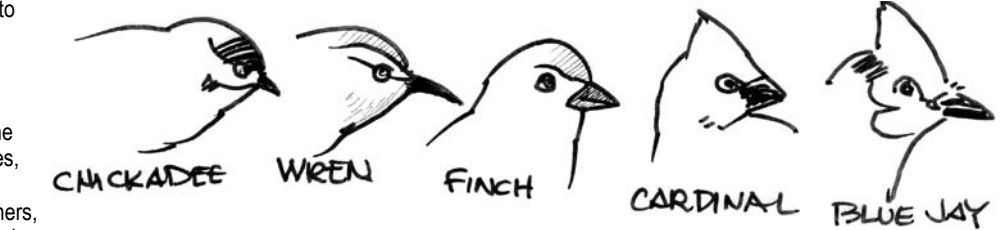
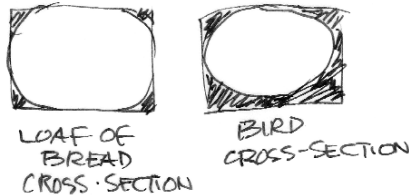
Here are some of the basics to look for to start:

1. Look at the beak. Bird beaks differ depending on whether they are seed-eaters, insect-eaters or birds of prey. The seed-eaters (cardinals, sparrows, finches, jays, etc.) have thick beaks for cracking open seeds. The insect-eaters (fly-catchers, wrens, etc.) have thin pointed beaks. Birds of prey (owls, hawks and eagles) have the curved pointed scythe-like beaks for ripping open their prey. Here are a few examples at right.

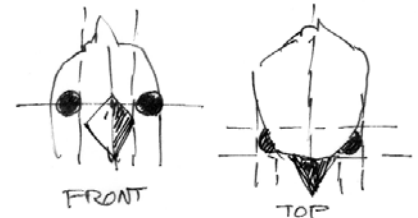
2. A perching bird will try to keep its body horizontal by bending its knees.

3. Always look closely at the wing joints and feathers. Sloppy work guarantees that you will see glue marks.

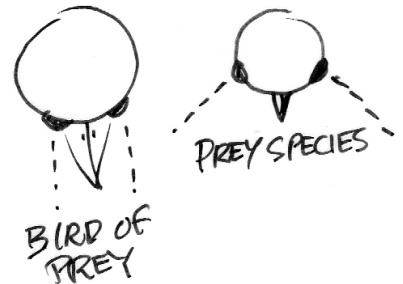
4. Look at the general shape of the body of the bird. What shape is a cross-section of the body? Is it shaped like a loaf of bread or a brick, or is it an aerodynamic oval. A carver who is in a hurry will not take the time to round the body.



5. Check out the eyes very carefully. Looking straight on they should line up evenly. Look at them from above. Again they should line up. Look to see if both eyes are recessed into the head the same depth.



6. Birds of prey have binocular vision. Their eyes are mounted on the front of the head, facing forward. Prey species will have eyes more on the side so they can look in more directions at once.



Carving Skill

A bird carved with its wings spread or in a flying position surely is more difficult to carve and should be awarded more points than one in a sitting position, other considerations being equal.

There should be NO visible glue joints for head or wing attachment to the body. There should be no abnormal interruption of the feather pattern. Give extra consideration for well done feather insert work.

Basic songbird anatomy calls for correct proportions of the given species for points awarded for carving skill. To utilize cast pewter legs and feet, which are available for most species, the bird must be carved at full scale. Note that the hind toes are always on the inside.

Head and Mandible

The most common novice flaw is to carve the bill to meet the head. Except on a couple of species the bill does not flare outward at the head. The head shape contours to meet the bill. Another common error is to carve the crown too narrow (see figure at right).

Ducks have a deep eye channel that tapers from the mandible at the front to the rear. The eyes are set in a vertical position, not slanted to look slightly upward. Because ducks are monocular and because of the deep eye channel they can see well all around. See figure at right.

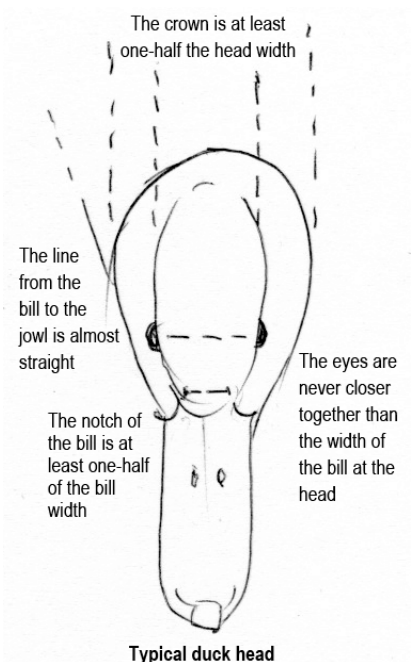
Basic songbird anatomy is shown on the next page. Again the correct proportions of the given species are essential for points awarded for carving skill.

Feathers

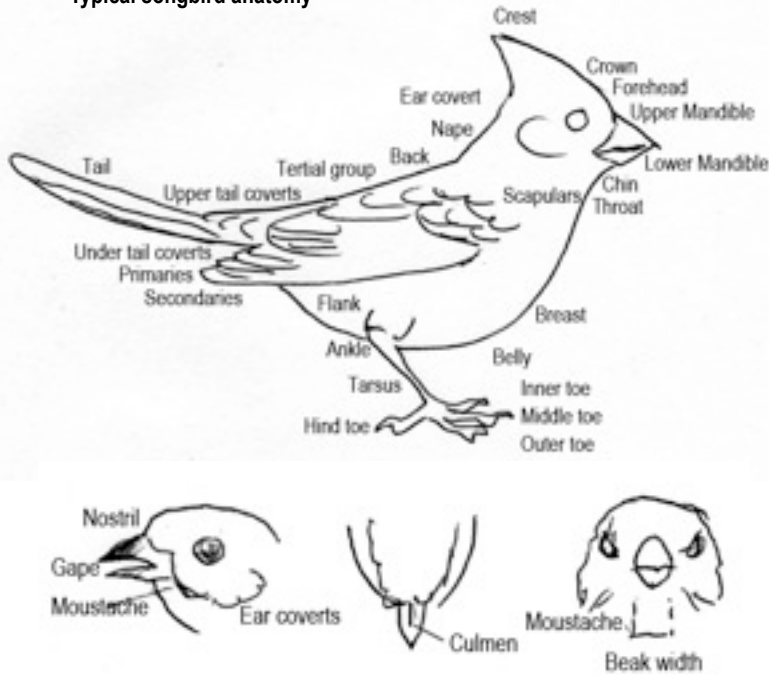
Feathers are overlapping from the front mandible to the tail and are

also overlapped from the bottom up on duck side pockets to provide water proofing.

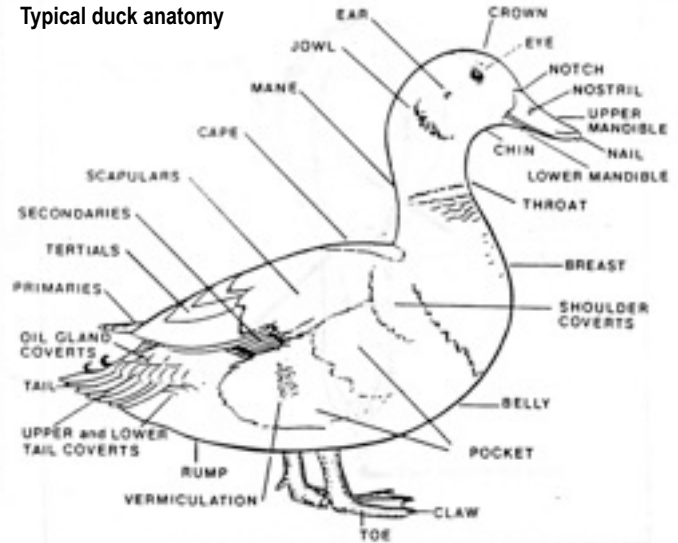
Feathers are rounded on top and cupped out on the bottom. The feather barbs radiate out from the feather shaft and curve toward the feather tip. The barbs should not be a straight line. Splits carved or burned in the feathers add realism. Three types of feather splits are: the open split, a split where the front portion overlaps on top to the rear and a split where the front portion underlaps beneath to the rear. Feathers should not be carved flat like shingle layers but should be rounded and very thin on the trailing edges.



Typical songbird anatomy



Typical duck anatomy



Artistry

The points awarded for artistry (1-15) should consider the originality and gracefulness expressed by the carving. If naturalistic habitat has been carved, or otherwise handmade for the setting or the mounting, it is also an important part of the points awarded. Real driftwood, rocks, sand or leaves used for the mount should contribute little, if any to the point count, even though they may add realism and overall appeal. The mounting should enhance the carving and not be so elaborate that it detracts from the carving.

Finish

Finish is usually judged in two separate categories, a natural burned finish, or a painted finish. Though different, the quality of each is considered equal. Ten points maximum awarded for finish.

All feather work should be finished with a slight sheen which adds a soft realistic appearance. Feathers may be brightly colored, but they are not glossy or shiny. Iridescent colors may at first appear shiny are actually not. Too much iridescence applied in painted finish can result in a harsh appearance. Glossy finish is appropriate for all duck and songbird mandibles, legs and feet. Look for the artistic quality of burned feathers. High count of lines per inch, good depth of color range, closely controlled shading and vermiculation of feathers with a slight overall sheen are prime considerations for evaluation of judging points.

Because of the tremendous variations in color of painted carvings, each judge must rely on his/her own personal knowledge of the appropriate colorations for the species being judged. Look for smooth transitions in blending of colors, the absence of paint blemishes and/or unpainted areas, and a slight overall sheen.

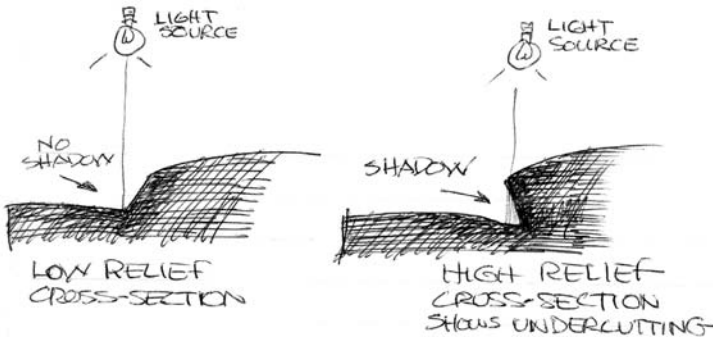


This great horned owl carving by Lindel Porter uses appropriate habitat to achieve a nice composition.

Judging Relief Carving

Introduction

Relief carving is a two dimensional carving performed in both low and high relief. There is a difference of opinion as to what constitutes low relief versus high relief. Our committee's decision is that: If any part of the carving is undercut in such a manner as to separate it from the background, it will be considered high relief. It makes no difference if the carving is 1/16th or 2" deep, as long as there is no undercutting it may still be considered as low relief.



Relief carvings can appear on most any items – chairs, boxes, clocks, etc. Many decorative functional objects may fall into the relief carving category. Relief carving can be done in any of the woods.

Carving Skill (25 points maximum)

When reviewing a relief carving make sure the carver has allowed for a good frame around the piece to complete the piece and prevent a breakdown on the edges.

The carved figures should have no cut marks or scratches on the finished surface. If there are knots in the wood, has the carving utilized its presence? Has the background been carved in a manner that represents

the subject in its entirety? Has the background been cleaned, not leaving scratches or torn areas? The deeper the carving, the more difficult the carving and the more room for error. The same holds true on a large carving – low or high relief. The background texture should be of a nature fitting the overall carving and highlighting key area of the carving.

Artistry (15 points maximum)

Many relief carvings are taken from a photo or a pattern. They can be any subject. The carver should present a border fitting the carving. The background should enhance the final product but not steal or detract from the main subject. If the piece has more than two levels of carving it should be rewarded because of the degree of difficulty, particularly if it is well done. If the piece has lines of a building, train, etc. the carver should have developed and utilized vanishing points to achieve the feeling of depth and space.

Finish (10 points maximum)

Relief carvings, as any other types of carvings, should not have scratches, torn wood, or visible glue anywhere on the piece. If the piece is stained it should be consistent throughout. If painted it should have smooth, clean flowing edges. There should be no runs no matter what type of finish is utilized. Relief carvings may be painted but their charm demands carving skill. If a carver depends on paint to render depth then the piece fails as a carving but may succeed as a painting.



Admire the high relief carving by Fred Gogelow at the left. Notice how he uses perspective and size to give the illusion of depth. The piece is about three inches deep but gives the illusion that you could reach deeply into it. It has no frame as such but the columns act to frame the action.

A nice low relief carving by Bruce Futterer (above) gives no illusion of three dimensions. It is more of a drawing with a knife. There is still an illusion of depth, but a shallow depth achieved with carving skill. Notice the placement of the hands and how they appear to be in front of the rest of the figure, a difficult achievement in a board only an inch thick.

Judging Chip Carving

Chip carving has embraced a multitude of motifs, interpretations and adaptations through the centuries. The reason chip carving is developing so fast presently is it is easy and the simplest form of carving, using patterns as a guide to maintain proportion of design and balance. There are three categories of chip carving cuts and shapes.

Generic: The generic designs are shapes such as diamonds, squares, circles and rectangles. These design types are used and incisely cut into the wood that produces a pleasing and artistic appeal.

Free Form: The free form design takes on subjects like flowers, birds, animals, shoes, etc. This design type is a simple two cut chip that outlines the pattern to develop the shape of the subject with some details to bring out the figure.

Positive Imaging: Is the art of removing wood around the a subject effecting a relief of wood by using a chip carving and relief carving technique to make the design clear. This technique also applies to floral, foliage, vines, fruit, etc. The use of chip and imaging clearly defines the subject and brings out the artistic and pleasing effect to the carving. One of the most difficult tasks when chip carving is to use the chip cutting design in a combined arrangement to prevent the carving from looking dull and flat. This is overcome by varying the pattern and by changing the chip size, shape, or depth. The difficult part is, as the various sizes, shapes and depths change, it is easier to over-cut, lose sharp edges and over-cutting the bottom grooves of the chip.

When judging the carving in its final form, one should look for uniformity of depth, clean cuts, sharp edges and no over-cutting the bottom of the chip groove. There should not be any hanging chads in the bottom of the grooves and no fingernail marks on the flat surface of the carving. Putting a final finish on the project is the choice of the artist.

The following methods are usually found on chip carvings. The natural wood color can be left as a finish, or a clear coat may be applied. Look for over fill in the grooves, or no dry spots or dings on the flat surfaces.

When the carving is stained, the stain should be uniform in color over the top surface with the chip grooves darker in color, no excess stain in the bottom of the grooves, with a uniform top coat on the carving. When the carving is painted, the color should be uniform with no runs or excess paint in the bottom of the grooves or runs on the flat surface. If the chip carving is incisely cut, after painting the total surface, there should be no visible chips in the corners of the cuts and no over-cuts in the paint.

Remember the artist is depending on light and shadows to highlight the carving. To get a feel for this move about and look at the changing shadow effect you see in the chip carving.

—Buyrl Franks

A basswood and walnut urn (right) by Mickey Hudspeth. Especially note that carving on a curved surface requires much planning so that the patterns match properly where they meet. Plate by Wayne Barton (far right) shows equal skill on a flat surface.



Carving Skill (25 points maximum)

Chip carving requires a great deal of practice to develop a pleasing precise carving. Performing this form of carving can be illustrated by reviewing the sketch of the correct cutting angle.

One should review the edges of the pattern to determine if the removed chip has left a very clean and crisp appearance. One should also note if sanding has not broken down the sharp edges. Another point to evaluate is if the burrs have been removed from the bottom of the cuts. Note any damage to the walls of the cut when removing a burr. If glue has been used to replace a piece of wood, the surface should be smooth, free of any glue and minimal sign of repair.

The technique of chip carving is to provide uniformity in the chips removed with clean cuts and sharp edges.

Artistic Value (15 points maximum)

When one looks at a piece of art, the viewer normally evaluates what is most pleasing about the subject. The same applies to chip carving. Is the subject fitting for the total project, has the artist used creativity and a sound geometric of free flow style in the subject presented? Is the design well balanced and is there a continuity of the total piece, top, sides and back as appropriate.

The intent of a chip carved piece is to use light shadows to compliment the total project, be it a mirror, cutting board or any subject. Visualize what happens to the light and dark areas on the carving when you move it in front of your eyes. A well designed piece will pull the eyes about to find all of the points of interest.

Finish (10 points maximum)

The subject should not have any tool marks or visible scratches on the surface of the project, nor should there be any rounded edges on the incise cuts. If staining has been applied, is it uniform? Stained finishes should be downgraded for having glue spots which prevent an even penetration of the stain.

If a natural top coat is applied make sure there are no visible wrinkles or runs to distract from the final appearance of the project.

The staining and/or top coat should enhance the overall project making it a high quality piece of merchandise that would be welcome in anyone's home.



Judging Realistic Animals and Fish

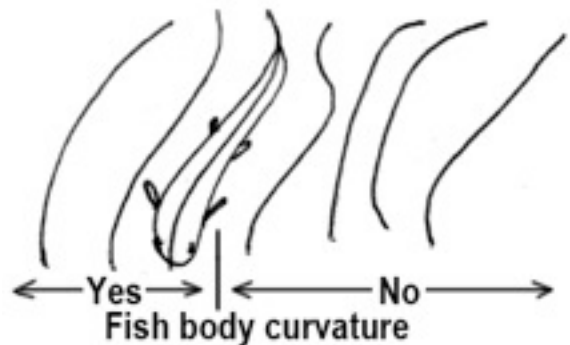
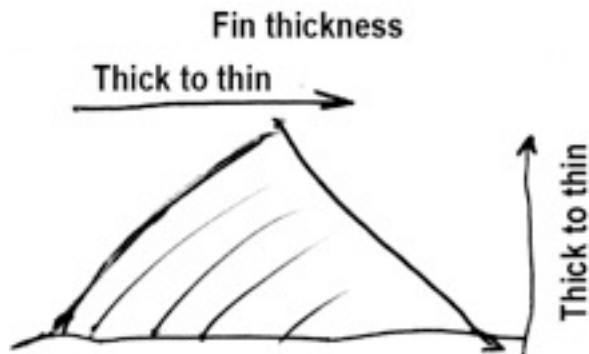
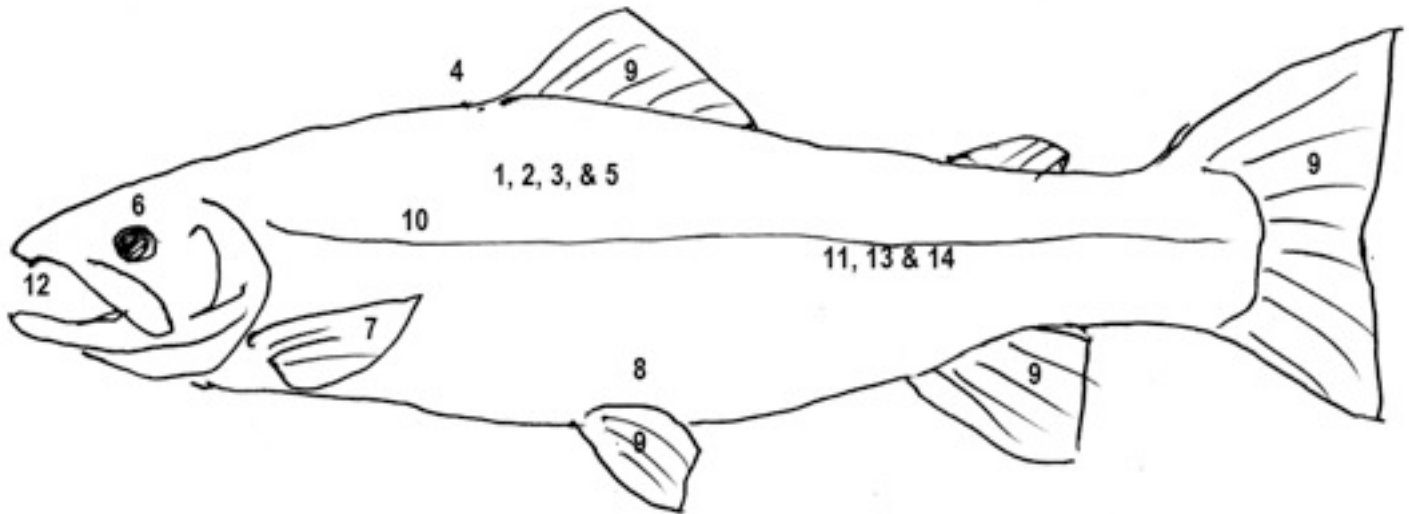
Animals and fish move freely in their environment, every movement is an expression of life. The positions of their bodies on the verge or at the end of a move add to the realism. A tilted head, expressive face, arched back or curved tail give an animal or fish life. Look for the various pushes or pulls in movement. In running animals look for laid back ears and the tail flying. Carvings stiff as a poker with exactly placed feet and eyes straight ahead are uninteresting. Look for the treatment of nostrils, mane and muscle bulges. Pose and proportions should be natural. Surface treatment such as direction and length of hair are important. On fish, scales and how they are applied.

Fish Criteria (see diagram below)

1. Overall likeness to species
2. General conformation
3. Side profile
4. Top profile and symmetry
5. Pose consistent with theme
6. Eye size, placement, etc.
7. Placement and junction of the pectoral fin
8. Attachment of the pelvic fins
9. Shape of all fins and ray structure
10. Lateral line interpretation
11. Scale detail
12. Mouth detail
13. Color
14. Spot pattern and painting details



These two bluegill make a nice composition. The best fish carvings will have very delicate fins, nice scale patterns, rich color and a glossy finish. The habitat will need to fit the fish.



Judging Realistic Animal

What is realism? Realism in carving is an attempt to portray an animal in a realistic situation or pose with no stylization of any kind. All features are accurate, all proportions are accurate, fur and feathers are reproduced in a life-like manner. Remember things like claws, i.e. bears have five while canines and felines have four. Look for the treatment of nostrils, mane, muscles. Fur should flow in the correct directions, especially if the figure is moving, and should be the correct length. Fur is generally shorter on the face and longer on the body. Muscles should reflect the activity, flexed or relaxed, pushing or pulling, depending on the action. Antlers and horns are tough to carve because of curves and wood grain. Make sure they are not too thick for the size of the animal and maintain a certain delicacy. Predator or prey species will determine the eye placement – forward for predators, on the side for prey animals.

Finishes are usually matte or satin. Rarely is a gloss finish appropriate for a realistic carving of terrestrial species. Aquatic species can be glossy if involved in or with water. A carving can be painted, stained or finished as natural wood. If painted, the colors and patterns need to be accurate. The quality and accuracy of the painting should be reflected in the score for finish.

The most interesting carvings are the ones that show movement, either subtle or radical. It is the rare animal that rests, sits or stands in a symmetrical position for any length of time. Thus it is important to see action, movement, turning, stretching.

Carving Skill (25 points maximum)

Proportions must be accurately carved. Positions of the body and

head must reflect nature and be carved appropriately. Limbs should be delicate when appropriate and muscular when appropriate. The large game species (deer, elk, etc.) have fairly thin legs and should be portrayed as such. A common mistake of carvers is to portray them thicker than they are. On the other hand the predators (bears, large cats, etc.) have thick muscular legs to bring down their prey. The exception is wolves who have delicate legs with large paws. Look for ears to be large and delicate in prey species, the better to hear approaching trouble. Reward accuracy, proper proportion, detail, anatomy.

Artistic Value (15 points maximum)

Here is the chance to be imaginative. Anything but a static pose. Twisting, turning, reaching, stretching. Running walking, fishing, jumping. The manner in which the animal or animals are posed can be an artistic event. Reward the inventive but it must be accurate inventiveness. The habitat must be appropriate for the species. The base can be simple but should not detract from the carving. If it is poorly done or overly ornate to distraction then points should be subtracted. Reward the imaginative and daring that works. Penalize poor judgement and execution.

Finish (10 points maximum)

As with any carving the finish can make or break a piece. No-nos such as runs, drips, poor joins, inconsistent painting, inappropriate colors and patterns, all detract from the piece and should be reflected in the score for finish.



The Indian on horseback at left by Bob Robertson is a wonderful example of motion, anatomy, proportion, composition and attention to detail.

The Jim Willis squirrel at right captures the essence of the animal. Anyone who has ever observed a squirrel at work will recognize the pose. The finish is a light stain that allows the grain of the wood to show.



Judging Human and Animal Caricature

Caricature carvings are like cartoons – a humorous passage focusing on a brief moment in time, and like cartoons, not considered as art by some critics. I disagree. Caricature carving requires all the skills of carving a serious subject or “artistic” piece. The carver must be able to convey a story or an idea in the carving by exaggerating or distorting a condition or event. A good caricature carving should amaze and amuse the viewer – amaze with carving skill and amuse with depiction of the situation. The viewer should observe the piece and have a reaction to the scene, situation or character. And, as with all categories, carving skill, originality, novelty, and creativity are to be rewarded.

Action, exaggerated pose and situation are important and – although proportions and expressions may be distorted and exaggerated – human and animal physiology still has to feel right. Bones and joints still have to line up and if a pose has the head in an impossible situation it still has to look like it could happen. And that is the challenge to the carver. Making the viewer believe the event took place.

The theme or subject can be silly, ludicrous, comic, amusing, even a little naughty, but never profane, disgusting, insulting or demeaning. The carvings that succeed best are ones that treat the subject with respect and humor, not ill-will and condescension. The carving of the cowboy who has just been struck by lightning (below, by Lynn Doughty) is a fine example. The carver makes you laugh at the situation while still feeling compassion for the victim. The expression is wonderful. The carving skills to be admired are: detail when needed, capturing an expression, capturing a pose, translating an unbelievable situation into a believable one, and distorting the face or body to evoke an emotion. The *Wait-a-Minute Man*, far right, is finely balanced on one leg for an unusual and dynamic pose. The heroic, square jaw shows strength while the expression shows a vulnerability.

Carving the character from one block of wood also should be rewarded as opposed to the carver who does the same subject but assembles the character from many pieces. This verges on model building as opposed to wood carving. In the event of a tie between two pieces, reward the carver over the constructor. This is sometimes hard to determine as a successful carver should be able to hide joints and sections. Any glued or joined section that shows cracks, joints or glue marks should have points deducted. The scorched cowboy figure was built from many pieces (quite successfully), some not even wood, while the minute man figure is one piece with an added rifle.

Finishes can vary from natural wood to fully painted. But a fully painted piece should still convey the fact that it is a wood carving, not a porcelain figurine. Most caricature carvers show knife cuts and facets in the wood, especially true in the Scandinavian style, but sanding to a smooth finish is also appropriate. As with all



woodcarving categories, whatever finish is used, runs in the paint and poor painting are still bad for the piece. A great carving can be ruined by an average paint job. Points to remember: motion, expression, situation, composition, originality, carving skill, and finish – not much different from all other categories, is it?

– Rusty Johnson

- Study the subject to see what is emphasized
- Exact proportions in a carved figure impress the observer while careful miss-proportions amuse him.
- Animal caricatures may not be necessarily a caricature of an animal but may represent human traits, i.e. an owl with a monocle.
- Human caricature can be a head only, or body only, or both.
- See what the theme is. Buck teeth and unkempt hair indicates a “hick.” Square jaw and hard features show strength. Soft features and receding chin show weakness. Sunken lips and many wrinkles show age.
- Proportions of the figure can emphasize the theme. Tall slender figures can show meanness, whole fat figures are jolly. Older figures become stooped, knees sag, shoulders are bent.
- Stiff figures are uninteresting. Look for leg position, a turn of the head and hand position.

Judges respond to a carving favorably with the following:

1. Originality, novelty, fresh creativeness, a story or a scene
2. Humorous, ludicrous, witty, facetious, comic, laughable, a little naughty or risqué.
3. Quickly seen surprise or situation
4. Good composition, focus and motion and balance.
5. Theme suitable for both men and women

Judges respond to a carving unfavorably with the following

1. Same old thing, stale, dull, copy or near-copy.
2. Repulsive, disgusting, insulting
3. Too much detail for theme distraction
4. Poor composition, off balance, static
5. Offensive, insulting, demeaning



Judging Human Figure Carving – Realistic

Throughout history, the human form has been one of the most prevalent themes in art – in paintings and drawings, and certainly in sculpture – as it is represented in motifs from all cultures. In wood carving, the figure is represented singly or in groups; and in true form, or abstract, or caricature. The EOWA category of full-figure human, in realistic form, is the topic of this discussion.

One of the most difficult carving tasks is modeling the human in full figure. If proportions are not correct, or if the anatomy is misrepresented, the errors are immediately obvious to most observers. Common mistakes are: making the head larger than it should be (in most adults, the head is between 1/6 to 1/8 of the total figure height), making the arms and/or legs too long or too short, or missing the proportion of the torso to the rest of the body. If you're looking for a place to add or subtract a point or two, look at the proportion of the hands and feet relative to the head.

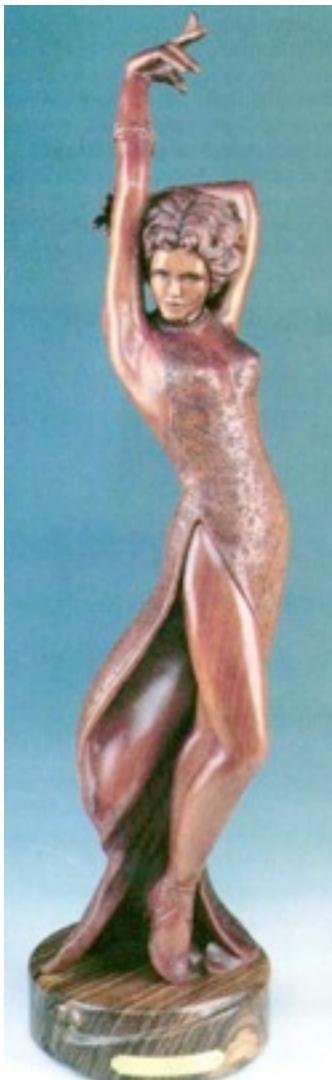
When judging, look first from a distance to see if the general anatomy and proportion "works." The next thing to judge is the pose. Look for action, and determine whether or not a living human could actually maintain balance in the pose presented. If proportion, anatomy, and pose are pleasing, most of the judging for carving skill is completed. Who cares if the fingernails are represented? It is OK to count fingers and toes, but remember the emphasis of the sculpture overall is more important than detail. If detail is well presented in hair, wrinkles, clothing folds, yes – even finger and toenails, extra points can be added in carving skill, but don't let that over-influence your next category of artistry.

Consider giving a few extra points if the hands are modeled rather than stuffed in pockets, and look at the feet, either nude or in shoes – in which case the modeling of the footwear counts (check out the "Cavalier's" boots). In a full figure human, there will obviously be a face, or the category would be changed to artistic and stylized (abstract). However, facial details will probably be less obvious than they would be in a bust, as the area of the face will be small, unless the entire carving is large.

When you look at "Cavalier," by Peter Paces, you see excellent hair and facial detail in a 15" carving. Notice the clothing detail. Other nice parts of this work are the tilt of the head and hat, the clothing detail, and the position of the feet. The work, "Irresistible," by Ronald Bassinger is, to me, amazing. The proportions are perfect, perhaps the right arm is a bit long, but should be, to emphasize the drama of the carving. The hand we can see is magnificent. If the finish on this piece is as good as it appears in the photo, this could be a 50-point award. It is more difficult to see and appreciate the Flamenco Dancer by Fred Zavadil because of shadow in the photo. The clothing is finely crafted, the pose is perfect, and once again the expressive hands demand attention. All three carvings are about 7 heads tall, with accurate anatomy, adding to their allure. They also demonstrate the point that facial detail can be an important part of the full figure. All

photographs are from "Chip Chats." Before judging full figures, check yourself out in a mirror, and pay close attention to the shapes and sizes of your friends. Find a good sculpture book, and become familiar with how the human form has been presented in art over time. And remember, before looking closely at a carving to check out detail and finish, stand back first, looking for overall impact.

– Bob Block



Cavalier by Peter Paces (far left), Irresistible by Ronald Bassinger (center), Flamenco Dancer by Fred Zavadil (left).

Carving Skill (25 points maximum)

The carving should have good balance and be proportioned correctly in its entirety. The flow of the fabric should be in the proper garment setting. The hands and feet should be reviewed for completeness and proper setting for the position of the carving (are the hands in a position that is physiologically accurate). If the head has been rotated into an off center position are the eyes, ears and nose in the correct location? Any accessories attached or added to the carving should be reviewed as part of the overall piece.

Artistry (15 points maximum)

When reviewing a piece from an artistic standpoint one establishes how pleasing and attractively the piece presents itself. Does it attract attention? What is on the piece that focuses the attention to the overall carving? Is there a story present? How well does the carver illustrate the story? The carver should be rewarded for creativity in telling the story, position of the character and use of expression.

Finish (10 points maximum)

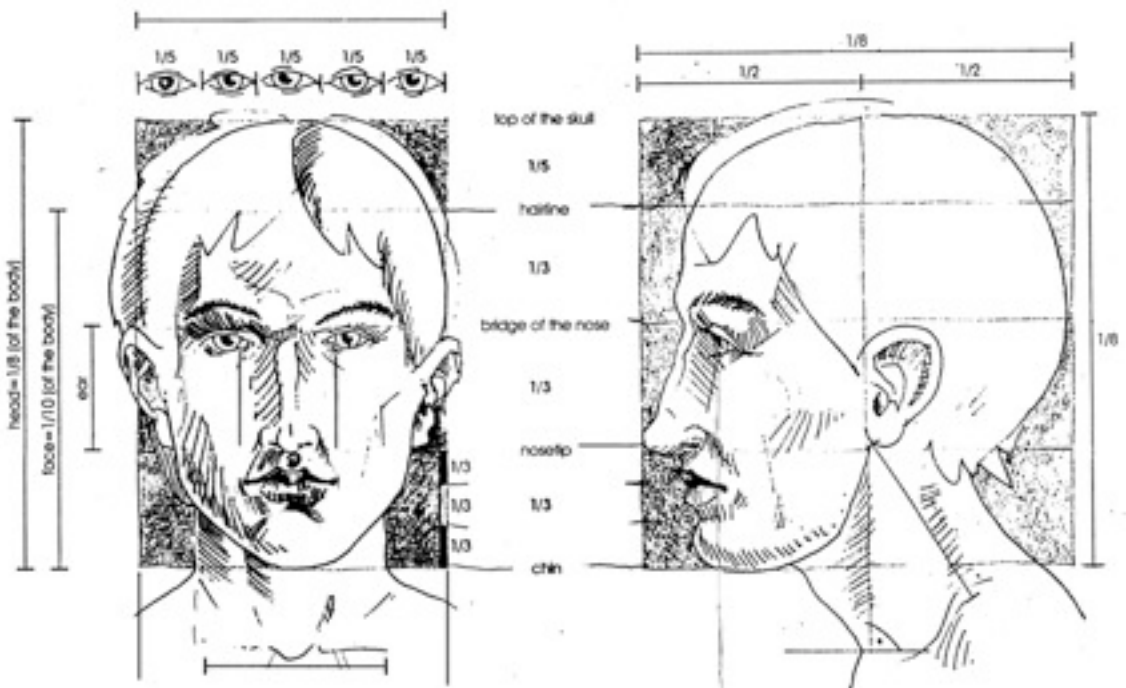
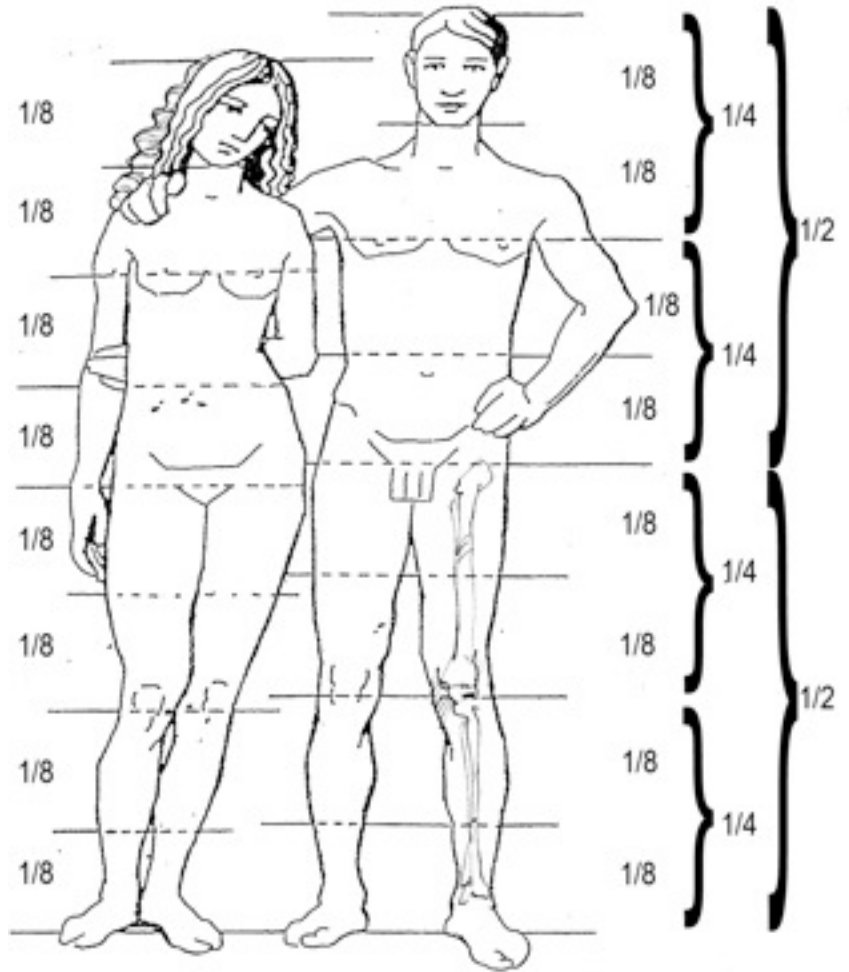
The figure should be free of any scratches tool marks or visible glue joins or repairs. Stains or paint should be evenly applied with no runs or missed spots.

Proportions of the human body

The unit of measurement of the body as used by artists is the human head. Typically the body is 8 heads tall. These proportions will change with race, age, and individual physical differences. For purposes of beauty and elegance, the female may be 9 heads tall. From the chin to the nipples is one head, the nipples to the navel is one head, the navel to the crotch is one head, the crotch to the bottom of the knee is two heads and the bottom of the knee to the floor is two heads.

Proportions of the head.

The width of the head is 5 eye widths (see figure). From the top of the skull to the bottom of the chin is one head. Half way down are the eyes. Half way from the eyes to the chin is the tip of the nose. The mouth is usually located 1/3 of the way from the tip of the nose to the bottom of the chin. The corners of the mouth usually line up with the pupils of the eye. Variations will occur depending on the individual, the age, sex and race of the subject. A side view shows the ear approximately the same height as the nose from bridge to tip. The face (from the hairline to the chin) is 1/10 of the body. The face can be divided into thirds – hairline to tip of nose to chin. The side view of the head shows it is the same width as height from tip of nose to back of skull.



Judging Stylized Carving

Stylize: to represent or design according to a stylized pattern rather than according to nature.

So how do you judge something that is different from what you see and know in nature? First thing you do is look at it from a distance and see if you recognize patterns. Do different shapes within the piece suggest something familiar? If it is painted, do the colors reveal anything about what it is? If it has detail, does the detail suggest reality? If any of these characteristics tell you what it might be then the carver has succeeded in representing something in nature differently from how we see it.

After looking at the piece from a distance, step up close and look at what the artist has done in representing reality. Are forms and colors simplified? Are shapes exaggerated in either color or wood? Does detail or lack of detail help or hinder the carving? Does your mind fill in the blanks where detail is left off? And lastly, does it all work together? Do the lines flow where they should flow, stop where they need to stop?

Observe the pintail duck carving below, a winner at the International Woodcarvers Congress. At first glance you see the pintail duck and you might think it is a realistic piece. Closer look shows that the bird is similar to a real duck except that they don't hold their tails quite like that. The carver has emphasized one distinctive characteristic and stylized it into a beautiful sweeping form very different from nature. The painting of the duck plumage is also very striking. The color shapes represent what we see in nature without being an exact copy. Same with the head and neck. Beautiful representations of reality without being real. Stylization.

Some might say that this is realistic because it has eyes carved in it. I contend that once the carver has stylized any part, it can no longer be realistic. This has long been a bone of contention in the carving world – what is called a “tweener” – between categories. If the carving attempts to retain the proportions and colors of nature it is realistic. Anytime natural proportions are intentionally changed, no matter how much detail is carved in, then it is stylized. An example is the work of Willard Stone. Probably

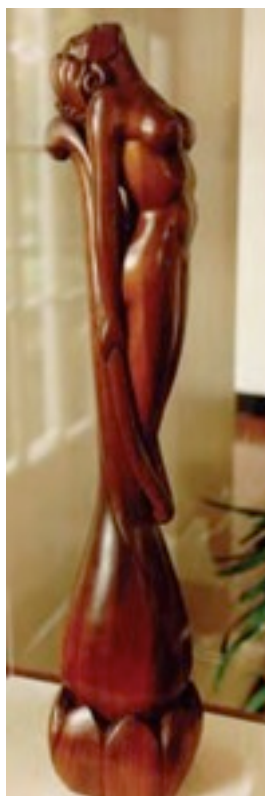
ninety percent of his carvings are stylized and would not fit in the realistic category, although we tend to think of him as a realist. In his *Lady of Spring*, (below center) from the White House collection, Stone incorporates realism and abstraction into the flowing sensuous lines of the female form rising from the organic floral forms representing Spring. First reaction – realistic. Further examination – all very stylized.

Note the bear carving below by Vernon Lunasee. What a charming and appealing bear fetish, a stylized representation of the natural world. Closer observation (although not very visible in this photo) shows carved in nostrils, claws, eyes and a tail. Details from nature on a stylized form. Not realistic, Definitely stylized. What gives this piece its charm? I think the exaggerated roundness of the forms of the legs and back, the appealing look on the face of the animal and the inquisitive pose all work together to invite you to spend time looking at it, turning it around, and wondering what the bear is up to. It is a piece that you want to pick up and touch. A success in anyone's judgement.

– Rusty Johnson

Look for the theme or subject

- Form:** Round, square, octagonal, triangular or variations. Some are more pleasing. Are the forms used appropriate to the subject.
- Texture:** Is the surface texture appropriate to the subject?
- Balance:** Good pieces need to appear balanced and dynamic. Balance is wanted, but not necessarily a mirror image.
- Color:** Grain color; may or may not compliment the piece. Color may be added to emphasize style.
- Proportion:** In a stylized carving, proportion may be exaggerated to emphasize lines or emotion.
- Design:** There has to be good overall design. A well designed hand cannot be effective if it is attached to a poorly designed arm.



Judging Intarsia

Intarsia is the making of a decorative or pictorial mosaic using wood or a variety of woods to create tone and depth. Stains are not needed if woods of varying color are used. Paint or stains can be used instead of different woods to achieve the desired design. Some intarsia pieces will have a frame while others are self-framing. If a frame is used does it enhance the piece or distract, is it appropriate? An intarsia piece sawed from a single piece of wood and then reassembled is not as technically challenging as pieces sawed from different woods and then assembled to make an object. How to tell the difference? Look at the grain of the wood in the pieces. If the grain all runs in the same direction then it is most likely sawed from one piece. If the grains are different then it is the harder to do piece.

Judging Criteria:

- ◆ Depiction of the subject. Is it well done, are the proportions accurate?
- ◆ Use of different woods for color. Or are stains or paint used to enhance the subject?
- ◆ Even fit of pieces. Are there any gaps or loose joints?
- ◆ Use of varying thicknesses of wood to create depth.
- ◆ Number of pieces. The more pieces, the greater the complexity, the harder to fit pieces.
- ◆ Appropriate finish.

The rose at the right by Chuck Mehm was made from several pieces and then assembled. Notice the grain of the flower and see that it runs in different directions. This piece was not painted or stained, it is the natural color of the wood. Also notice the way the pieces fold into each other to create a nice feeling of dimension.



Judging Pyrography

Pyrography is an art form for developing a subject using burning tools to create shapes and tones on wood just as a pencil or pen is used in drawing.

Skill: Since carving skill is not involved in pyrography then burning skill is substituted on the scoring card. The skilled pyrographer is able to create a sense of depth and form just as an artist who uses a pencil for shading or pen and ink crosshatching. Burned lines should be complete, without breaks or interruptions. Attention should be given to the use of different heat settings to create depth, texture and tone. If the burned piece is an in-the-round carving, the judging should be the wood burning, not the carving itself. The burned lines are used to create realistic fur and feathers, just as on a realistic carving.

Artistry points are awarded for the overall quality and feeling of the work. Does the piece evoke a feeling or an emotional response. The greater response, the greater the point value. As well, movement, pose, action and accuracy are rewarded. Composition, as in any work of art or craft, is a key element of design. Where is the eye led and held? Is there a flow to the design or is it static? Is there a dynamic tension created by unbalance, and if so, does it succeed?

Finish. Stains or natural finishes are appropriate for pyrography and the usual rules apply – no runs, no drips, no errors. If paint, color pencils, watercolors or pastels are used the quality of the wood burning should show through.

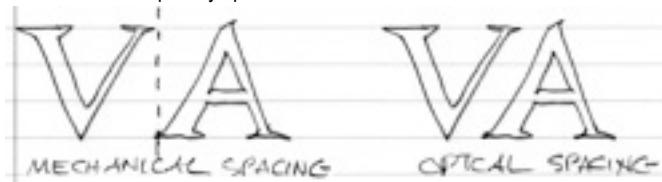
This wood burning by Doris Payne shows nice dimensionality in the technique in the rendering of the heron. The composition draws the eye around the curve of the long neck to the head of the bird. The color is a nice accent to the burning, allowing the burned strokes to show through.



Judging Scroll Saw

On occasion a judge may be called on to judge the Scroll Saw category. The same rules of design and composition apply for the saw as for the carving knife, as do the rules for finish. As usual, the more compelling the work, the higher the artistry points. Here are some of the criteria to look for in a scroll saw piece:

- ◆ Note if the wood grain adds to the project, the same as in intarsia. Give credit if the project is solid wood rather than plywood.
- ◆ Look for smooth edges, no splinters or fuzz.
- ◆ If the project has parts that are symmetrical, they should match. An example is wheel spokes or railings on clocks – they should all be the same size.
- ◆ If there is lettering, all should be uniform and evenly spaced, except in some letter combinations such as a "V" and an "A." Here the letters should be optically spaced.



- ◆ If a drill bit is used to open up an area, the drill hole should be cut away.
- ◆ If the project is assembled, check that all parts fit together with no gaps or bad alignments.
- ◆ If applied, finish should be smooth, even, and have no runs or drips. The finish should not fill in the scroll work.



An example of a scroll sawn cross.

Judging Driftwood or Log Carving

This category emphasizes the character of the wood and how it is utilized in the carving. If the carving feels secondary to the wood then perhaps the carver has successfully melded the media with technique. This is not to say that the character of the carving should be minimized. We are still looking at the quality and art of the carving and how it works or doesn't work with the wood.

Carving skill should be viewed carefully. In a lot of cases the wood will be flakey as with bark, very soft as with cypress or quite brittle with a cedar stump. The skills of the carver are put to a test to accomplish detail in some of these situations. Soft wood does not translate to easy carving. On the contrary, the soft wood requires a deft touch with sharp tools not to tear it. Many times what appears to be an easy carving is in fact quite a challenge.

The real beauty of this category can be found in how the carver uses the wood to enhance the carving and vice-versa. The **artistry** of the work is

in incorporating the natural beauty of the wood and not carving it away. It is also about reflecting the character with the style of the carving. It is about finding what is hidden in the wood and letting it out. An example of this is finding a face in a cypress knee and carving it rather than carving a face onto the surface of the wood with no regard to the natural funkiness of the wood.

As with all categories the same **finish** rules apply: no runs, no drips, no errors. In general, the beauty and uniqueness of the selected wood is emphasized with clear finishes or light stains. The character of the wood is miss-served if paint covers up its natural beauty.

This cypress knee carving shows four faces emerging from the wood, as elements of the wood and not just carvings on the wood. The color finish is transparent to show the character of the cypress. The artist has also carved what appears to be lacing to demonstrate technical skill in maintaining detail in the soft wood of the cypress knee.



Judging Miniature

To fit in the EOWA category of “miniature,” any kind of woodcarving will be accepted if it fits inside a 2-inch cube. The carving could be realistic, a caricature, human, animal, abstract, or anything else that the woodcarver has attempted to render in miniature form. This category can be a challenge for the judge, because of the variety of categories that might be represented, all now in one category based on their miniature size.

This is THE category to judge “up close and personal.” However, the same parameters for a good larger carving apply to the miniatures. Anatomy, proportion, pose, movement, emotion, and artistry are more important in this category to what would be required of larger carvings because the smallest mistake is amplified by the small size. There is little room for proportion mistakes or placement of parts of the face or body.

Carving skill points should be reflected in two major areas: general skill and ability to portray complex features in miniature. The general skills are similar to other categories. In the carving of the cowboy with the beer can (carving by Gary Falin, 2003 winner of miniature category in the CCA annual competition) note that the hands are shown and there is action. The hat actually fits on the head. Facial features are good, including ears – although the carver did cheat by hiding the mouth under the mustache! Certainly the judging areas of **artistry** and **finish** deserve attention as they would in any other categories.

The little doctor (below right), on the other hand, has a good face **carving skill**, but lacks action and detail in the clothing. Portrayal in miniature should be the main point of judging this category.

The cowboy caricature with his hands looped in his belt (2004 blue ribbon winner by Gary Falin) demonstrates terrific detail in the facial expression, the clothing, the belt (**carving skill**), and the positioning and modeling of the boots (**artistry and carving skill**). The cougar on a tree

checking out a very tiny rabbit has pluses and minuses. First, note that the entire carving, except for the added rabbit is from one piece (**carving skill**). Next, note the potential carving problems that had to be handled: the thin tail, the open space between the cougar and the tree, and the facial details on the miniature cat. If there was additional action, perhaps with the cat’s head and neck turned more toward the rabbit, the piece would be better (**artistry**), but the head is turned some away from straight-on, and that should be worth points. There was an attempt to burn in hair, which is good, but the burning lines are generally straight, which is not good. The painting is average (**finish**). Having a base on a miniature carving is a bit unusual, because it takes up valuable space, making the remaining carving even smaller in order to fit into that pesky, small box (**carving skill**)! To emphasize a point, think about the problems a carving in any category presented to the artist as he or she was creating it. Doing a work in miniature presents special problems that require unique solutions so the finished piece is competitive.

Facial expression on this scale is very difficult, a small miss-cut and the expression can quickly change from a smile to a scowl (**carving skill**). Prior to judging a miniature carving, you might try to create a piece of your own, to experience first-hand the unique skills required.

Safety is important here. Wearing a glove, using sharp tools, and working patiently and never when you are tired are VERY important rules. Finally, when judging, ask yourself – does this carving “work,” – can I tell what it is, is it well carved, is it exciting to see this work rendered in such a small space, and am I giving or taking away points based on complexity or simplicity?

– Bob Block



Miniature CCA winners by Gary Falin, left and far left, doctor and cougar by Bob Block, center and right. Note all four pieces are near actual size.

Judging Decorative Functional

Any carving that serves a function or purpose fits this category. The essence of the category is that the form and the function meld. For instance, love spoons with handles that are intricately carved add romance to a utilitarian object. The carving does not necessarily add functionality but beauty and charm. Examples are bottle stoppers, neckerchief slides, carved bowls, salt and pepper shakers, etc. It is not good enough that a person has made a carving and then drilled a hole and inserted a clock face. The better solution is a carving that embraces a clock with arms or scrolls or has elements that show off or interact with the face and numbers. The carving that succeeds is the carving that compliments the function.

This elaborate spoon at right, by Charlie Lieda, with balls-in-cages and chain is a beautiful example of decorative functional.



Judging Canes/Walking Sticks

While judging a cane or staff can seem difficult because of the potential for a wide variety of style and or subjects, i.e. floral motif, animal design, human figures, realistic, mystical, abstract, chip or incised, wood-burned and/or all of the above in any combination. The big difficulty with canes/staffs is that they are mostly very narrow, round and lack the proper amount of wood for truly realistic carvings. Therefore the carver must improvise and adapt the subject to the product. The judge must evaluate the effort of the carver to present the theme on a restricted medium (art again, combined with carving quality).

Carving Skill:

- ◆ How well are the individual objects carved or wood-burned? The presentation should have clean cuts, smooth where it should be, and have a well executed background. If there is a pattern involved then it should be consistent all the way around and from top to bottom. Note: because of the nature of the object, a lot of cane/walking stick carving is some form of the relief style. If objects are executed in high relief or through cut note the cleanness of the underside/inside of the cuts.
- ◆ A cane or staff should have a dedicated area for holding or grasping. A handle should fit the cane both in joinery if added, or suitable if natural – the handle should feel right and be balanced.
- ◆ Note the type of wood. Obviously the harder woods are more difficult and deserve more respect if the carving warrants.

Artistry:

- ◆ With a cane, the handle must flow into the shaft in an artful manner (see dragon cane at right).
- ◆ What is your reaction to the presentation? This first impression has a lot to do with the art value of the presentation.
- ◆ After carefully evaluating the quality of the carving look for a theme or idea of the carving. Does it follow through? Does it make a statement, look nice, etc. Give the artistic execution a value.
- ◆ Most importantly, in the area of art, is the value of originality, if the presenter didn't create the art unaided, its value is diminished.

Finish:

- ◆ Color may be used, and if it is it must fit the carving. Many woods are better left unpainted just as some carving is best left unsanded.
- ◆ The finish should suit the carving and as in any project should be well done.

– Jack Nitz

A variety of canes show different styles in handles below and bottom, and a northwest native American walking stick shows colorful designs with the elegant curved neck of the stylized bird (top right) but very little carving skill exhibited. While the variety is hard to judge, creativity and skill usually win out. If it is a functional cane, how does it fit the hand? If it is a walking stick, how does it balance when you hold it? Ceremonial sticks and canes just need to look good!

