

CRAFTSMANSHIP



FOSTERING A NEW AND COMPETITIVE
APPROACH TO CRAFTS AND SEMI-INDUSTRIAL
HIGH ADDED-VALUE SECTORS

The art of Marquetry

FRANCE



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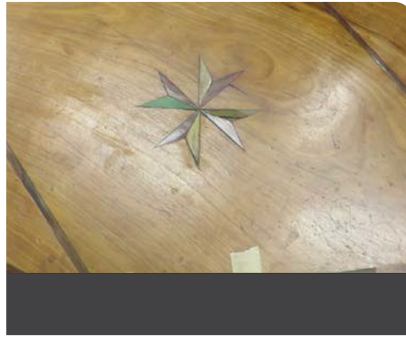
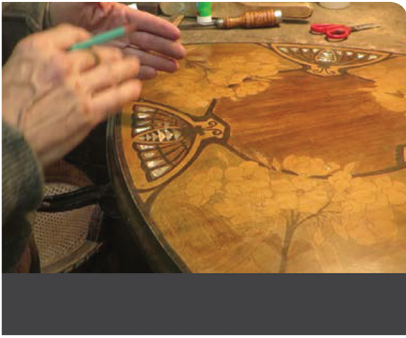
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THE ART OF MARQUETRY

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THE ART OF MARQUETRY

A SHORT HISTORY...

MARQUETRY

Marquetry dates back to 300 BC.

The decorative principle first appeared in the form of inlay, then as veneer, using cutting and juxtaposition techniques.

Technique

This presentation is in two stages:

first, some general information about marquetry, second, the different steps for making a marquetry table “piece by piece”.



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GENERAL INFORMATION

Marquetry is a decoration produced by juxtaposing previously cut veneers.

Very diverse materials can be used:

MATERIALS

- 1 Many species of wood
- 2 Metals
 - copper
 - brass
 - pewter
 - silver
- 3 Materials of animal origin
 - tortoiseshell
 - horn
 - ivory
 - bone
 - pearl
 - shagreen (fish skin)
- 4 Stone and marble
- 5 Straw

TOOLS

For craftspeople, the saw is the most commonly used cutting tool, including:

- 1 bocfils (small U-shaped saws)
- 2 marquetry sawbenches
- 3 reciprocating power saws

In industry, laser cutting is developing as a technique.

CUTTING TECHNIQUES

Saw cutting is carried out through different methods, depending on the materials and pattern:

- 1 so-called “piece by piece” cutting, each piece cut separately (like a puzzle)
- 2 overlay cutting or the “Bouille” technique, the decoration and background are cut simultaneously in two contrasting veneers, thereby obtaining both a negative and a positive marquetry
- 3 inlay | cavities are excavated in a solid or veneered background for the cut decorative pieces
- 4 conical sawing, superimposed cutting by tilting the blade



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VENEER

The veneer is manufactured using two methods:

- 1 Sawn veneer: traditional technique
Produces a sheet 10 to 15/10ths of a millimetre thick.
This process is expensive but creates the finest veneers, especially in hardwoods.
- 2 Sliced veneer: modern technique developed in the late 19th century
Produces a shaving 4 to 10/10ths of a millimetre thick.

This veneer is easier to work, but loses some of its colour due to the steaming carried out before slicing. Moreover, the knife cracks the veneer in its thickness, which makes it lose its depth.

RESTORING A MARQUETRY PANEL

The work is divided into several stages:

1

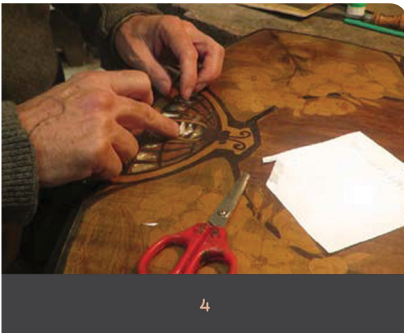
Taking an impression:

First, the design of the piece to be restored is transferred to tracing paper using pencil. Then the pattern tracing is refined. **1 2 3 4**

2

The choice of materials:

The choice of the wood and other materials is paramount. The quality of the marquetry is essentially based on the judicious use of the aesthetic richness and diversity of wood. Wood is selected according to colour, veining, texture, depth, and brightness. The materials are untreated, and you have to imagine their appearance once varnished.



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3

Cutting 5 6 7 8

Cuts are made at several thicknesses, either on the sawbench or using a power saw. The pieces to be veneered, once cut, are placed in the pattern positions.

If several pieces are alike, they will first be numbered on the sketch.

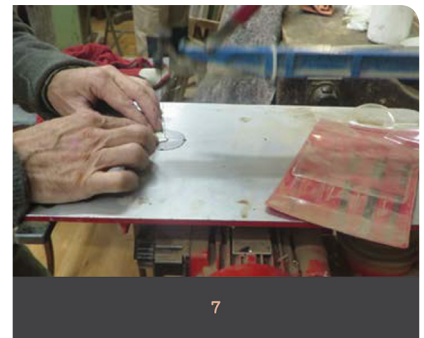
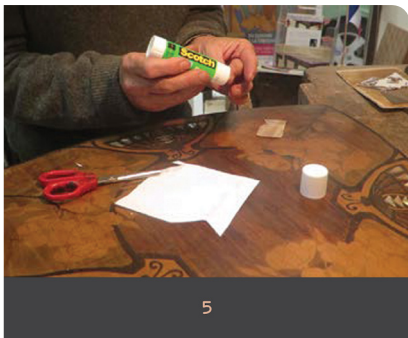
Cutting precision is essential: the line thickness, lost on each piece, will be essential how it fits together, hence the importance of a fine line.

1

If the pieces are too “fat”, the marquetry can not be mounted.

2

If they are too “thin”, there will be an unsightly join between the pieces.



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4

Shading

To bring some depth to the pattern, some parts can be shaded.

Fine sand is heated in a vessel at 250-300 ° C and the veneer pieces are immersed to achieve brown shading. It must be proportionate according to the thickness and hardness of the veneer to achieve good results. Chisel engraving is also used to give some shaping; in this case, the engraver works just before the varnishing.

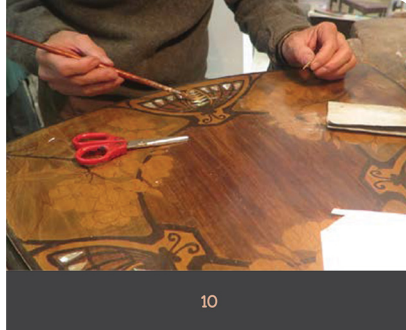
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Mounting 9 10

The assembly of the various pieces is similar to the mounting of a puzzle. When all the pieces are assembled, the marquetry is ready to be glued.



9



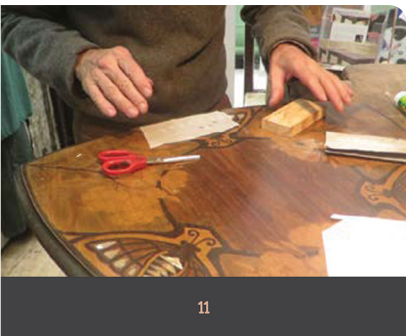
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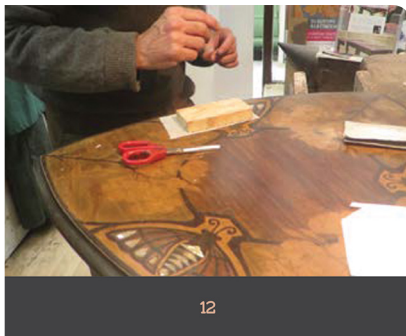
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Veneering 11 12 13

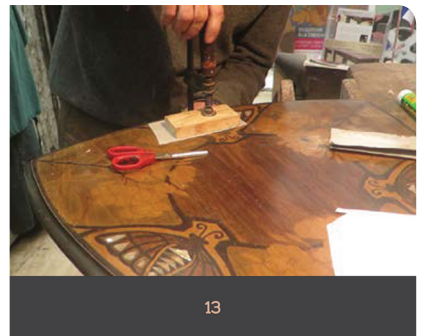
Veneering consists of gluing the marquetry onto the panel to be restored. Kraft paper is placed on the surface, stretched by a block. The entirety is placed in the press. After drying, the kraft paper is removed.



11



12



13

7

Finish

First, the surface is smoothed with a scraper if the veneers are of different thicknesses sand to the block with sandpaper, finishing with a very fine grain to achieve a good polish. Then, the wood pores are sealed in order to obtain a glazed surface. This is done either with a sealant for modern finishes, by pumice filling for wax or French polishing. Filling with pumice powder has the dual advantage of blocking the pores of the wood and perfecting the polish.

Finally, a finish is applied, namely:

1 wax

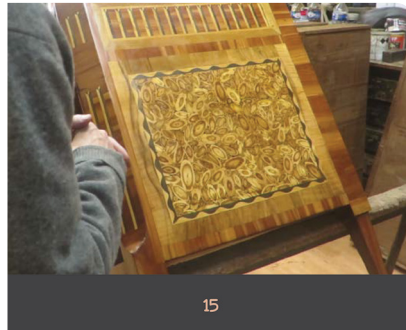
The wax gives a slightly satin finish while warming the tone of the wood, but this finish is fragile.

2 shellac French polish

French polishing is a traditional process, long and delicate to carry out. Shellac brings out a slight warm transparency that reveals the brightness of the wood. It is a natural resin, coloured to varied extents, which is spread in tiny layers with a cloth pad.

3 modern varnish

Cellulose, glycerophthalic or polyurethane varnishes give a plastic appearance, sometimes close a car body varnish.



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