

TOOLS 2005 Furniture heroes

The *F&C* competition at Tools 2005 demonstrated great making and innovative design, so who won what and what did they make? Our three judges reveal all...



It is incredible to think this was the ninth year for this competition. I once

worked out how many pieces of furniture have been entered over the years and it's in the region of over 660 pieces – pretty impressive, I think.

There have been some truly memorable and striking pieces – one year we had over one hundred entries! It is testament to the dedication and commitment of the readers, many of who drive long distances to transport the pieces to Exeter, and then repeat the process once the show is over.

During the event, I am usually very busy and not always able to talk to everyone, but it is always good to see familiar faces, as well as meeting new makers/entrants.

The competition takes a lot of organisation, and I certainly couldn't arrange it single-handedly – many people are involved at various stages. In particular, I would like to thank Karen Scott, who, every year takes on the administration of the competition as well as continuing her normal, very busy job.

I would also like to thank the generous companies who offered prizes – Axminster, for the vouchers, and Clifton and BriMarc for their lovely tools. Our very own John Lloyd even offered a one-week course at his workshop.

One person who caused a bit of a stir was Konrad Sauer,

the Canadian plane maker who had a truly glorious display of his planes as well as the A6 that he made especially for *F&C* – see *F&C*109 for our profile on Konrad. This was such a perfect prize, particularly as Konrad started out as a furniture-maker himself.

Last year we were in a different hall which, for me, made a real difference. This was partly because the natural light allowed the furniture to be viewed at its full potential.

As Robert Ingham says, after having judged at nearly all the competitions *F&C* has organised over the years, it is very easy to eulogise about the standard of work. However, numbers were up again to over 60 pieces, which was very encouraging. Entries had dropped over the last two years, particularly in the Amateur category. I do genuinely think that the standard was higher than usual and not just in making terms, but design, too.

It takes a whole day to judge the entries, but it is a very fascinating, enjoyable process, and I am always intrigued by the huge diversity of the work. I know Robert Ingham and Paul Gower enjoy the process, too. This is the second year for Paul, and Robert has been involved in the judging for longer than I have!

Colin Eden-Eadon



Andrew Beaumont's striking Art Deco cabinet had many admirers and won him Gold

GOLD



Despite being her first piece, Ann's table demonstrates flair and excellent making skills

SILVER



Peter Nicholson is entirely self-taught and his oak pedestal desk shows a good understanding of construction and skillful making

BRONZE



Ian Parker's desk exhibits adventurous making as well as an eye for design. Ian won a one-week course with *F&C* author John Lloyd

SPECIAL AWARD

F&C Winners

Amateur
Gold: Andrew Beaumont
Silver: Ann Vanden Branden
Bronze: Peter Nicholson
Special Award
 (Winner of a John Lloyd course): Ian Parker

Student
Gold: Martin Humphreys
Silver: Christian O'Reilly
Bronze: Jonathan Kiff
Special Award: Toby Howes

Professional
Best of Show
 (winner of a Konrad Sauer plane): Peter Rolfe
Gold: Williams and Cleal
Silver: Samali Maja
Bronze: Philip Sewell
Special Award: Brian Jordan



Martin Humphreys' dining table and chairs is a neat design and a very resolved concept

GOLD



Toby Howe's two tables look very striking and involve some complex making

SPECIAL AWARD



Consummate making won first prize for Williams & Cleal

GOLD



SILVER

Samila Maja's CD carousel demonstrates original thinking and skillful making

SPECIAL AWARD

Brian Jordan's chair is an excellent example of contemporary making



Christian O'Rielly's set of three boxes works in every sense and are superbly made

SILVER



BRONZE

Philip Sewell's box show excellent making and lovely detailing



BEST IN SHOW

Peter Rolfe's box is beautifully made and a stunning concept



Jonathan Kiff's dressing table shows intriguing detail and fine craftsmanship

BRONZE





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DEEP IMPACT

I have been involved in judging the *F&C* competition at Axminster since its inception. It is difficult not to come up with a selection of phrases which do not include references to the very high standard and the evident dedication of the entrants, to what must be a challenging undertaking to make a piece and to transport it to the showground on time.

The first time I was invited to judge, I remarked to myself that, although there were a large number of entries, the general standard was not very high. The fact that the entrants made every effort to be at the venue must have had an impact on the standard over the years as they could see what they were competing against. It is very easy to say that last year's standard was the highest ever, as the experience of judging is very recent and the comparison with previous years' entries is a memory.

Suffice to say, that the impact of seeing the new entries stimulates the judges' eyes to be even more perceptive, and, as a result, more critical. I must also make the observation that the continuing improvement in standards must have some reflection of the stimulation that is provided by the magazine that organises the competition.

The Student category always exhibits some innovative

work, and this year was no exception. I was, however, slightly disappointed to see that some colleges had not taken part – my guess is that the logistics of transporting work to the venue may be a problem.

The Amateur category contained fewer pieces compared to 2004, however the work was of the highest standard. The range of influences presented in the designs, once again reflects the taste of the makers, ranging from period to modern, and the interpretation and application of the work on show did justice to the individuals. The standard of craftsmanship was extremely high and was certainly a major factor in the piece that was awarded Gold, which took five years to make!

There were not as many pieces in the Professional category, and my guess is that many makers find it difficult to enter due to their business commitments. The piece that won the Best of Show did, however, come from a professional maker and it was a tour de force of design, innovation of construction and a very high standard of craftsmanship.

I am sure that the competition has done a lot to stimulate other makers across the three categories and I hope that there will be many new entrants in the future.

Robert Ingham



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IN THEIR SHOES

When asked by the Editor to share my thoughts about the competition, I put myself in the shoes of the entrant and thought long and hard about the questions I would like answered. What do I need to do to win next time, and what are the main criteria by which the judges are making their assessments?

There may be some people who have not won this year who feel a little deflated, perhaps even annoyed. You might be asking "how can a piece that is very simple to make possibly be considered more worthy of a prize over a piece that would test even the most accomplished maker?" There is, of course, no simple formula. For me, there are three main considerations:

- **Function** – will the piece fulfil its required task, and does it demonstrate innovative thinking?
- **Form** – is it cohesive and does it demonstrate innovative thinking?
- **Execution** – is it well made? For me, this does not mean traditional techniques, but rather an understanding of construction dos and don'ts in the context of the materials being utilised – e.g. balancing veneers, structural integrity, and degree of effort put into finishing.

This latter aspect is particularly important. A poorly finished piece sends a message about the level of commitment of the maker; when it's not quite up to scratch then it's a bit like receiving a CV from a job applicant with illegible handwriting.

The degree of expectation as to how each of these requirements is fulfilled must be assessed in relation to the category of entrant. In the Amateur category, quality of making and function are the main considerations, whereas in the Student category, design aesthetics and brief fulfilment – e.g. batch product versus one-offs – must play a greater part. However, in the Professional category, all of

these aspects should be fully considered. It's easy to write platitudes about the winning entries – the superb making of Martin Humphreys, Williams and Cleal and the intelligent solution of Peter Rolfe. I was particularly impressed with the quality of work from David Savage's students; the finishing was outstanding. It is, however, more difficult, but in a sense more valuable, to analyse the pieces that didn't make it onto the rostrum.

Among many of the entrants who apparently received no recognition, there were some very good pieces which missed by a whisker. Flawless making and finishing let down by insensitive use of contrasting materials or perhaps misjudged proportions.

I have deliberately avoided making comments here about individual pieces because I don't feel that I, or we, as judges have sufficient information to place each piece in context. To do so I would need to know what the brief for the project was, what facilities are available to the maker and what design/making training has been received.

This year I would like to see more explanatory notes submitted with the submissions.

Ultimately, it is you as the designer/maker that should be the most critical judge of your own work.

In 15 years I have yet to make a piece I am totally satisfied with, but it is the pursuit of continual improvement that drives me forward.

Paul Gower



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5 John Lloyd on his stand

6 Robert Ingham, Paul Gower and The Ed!

7 Konrad Sauer's superb array of planes

1 Peter and Konrad Sauer, the maker of his prize

2 Peter Nicholson accepting his prize

3 Justin Williams accepting his £1000 Axminster voucher

4 Robin Lee of Veritas presenting Toby Howe with his prize



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