

Lisa's pair of brown oak chairs



Insight Chair making

Peter Sefton shows us how his students tackle that most complex of all furniture skills – chair making

Furniture making is an all-encompassing craft that covers a wide range of skills, traditionally set out in different disciplines or trades, namely; cabinetmaking, carving, gilding, veneering, chair making and upholstery. All of these disciplines require their own skills, but one of the most challenging is chair making.

Dealing with all the compound angles and rakes, both in the seat and

back joined by curved and shaped rails, give the furniture maker a few headaches. Two of this year's students at my School made chairs as part of their course, both chairs required prototypes to resolve the constructional issues, but most importantly to ensure the chair was both comfortable, strong and attractive.

Lisa's chair

Lisa made a pair of chairs using the same main framework, but with different treatments of the back support and seat coverings. Brown oak (*Quercus robur*) and sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) were the two timbers used. The seat was laminated plywood and then upholstered. The back legs were compound curves cut in both directions from 75mm thick oak, to give real movement and a large splay on the back frame. The front legs replicated the lower section of the rear legs. The back splats were a large laminated section of book matched ripple sycamore jointed with stainless steel dowels. The accurate drilling and positioning of the dowels was difficult, but gave a great effect. Traditional mortice and tenon joints were used as the main construction, some of which were through-wedged used for both strength and visual interest.

The laminated ripple sycamore backs gives good support



Plywood prototype chair

Right: The finished prototype chair stained and sprayed



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Kevan's chair

Kevan's finished chairs were made from constructional walnut (*Juglans nigra*) veneer to complement his dining table. A series of laminated jigs were produced for the legs and the backrest. The one pictured was a birch (*Betula pendula*) plywood prototype, which was a quick way to produce the mock-up chair to check the overall size and aesthetics. This is a common practice as is using MDF if its strength allows. ■

Peter Sefton

Peter Sefton is a well-known furniture maker who runs courses in fine woodworking, teaching and mentoring students at the Peter Sefton Furniture School. He also owns Wood Workers Workshop and he is a Liveryman of the Worshipful Company of Furniture Makers.
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