



## A Marquetry Odyssey: Historical Objects and Personal Work, Silas Kopf

By Silas Kopf

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A combined cabinet-maker's monograph and history of marquetry, it features more than 300 color plates over 230 pages. This volume offers an approachable introduction to the art of marquetry through the writings and work of scholar and artisan, Silas Kopf. This richly illustrated presentation of the art of marquetry is placed in context by one of its most ardent and talented proponents: Silas Kopf. A distinguished cabinetmaker for more than thirty years, Kopf identifies the origins and influences of numerous decorative arts and architectural movements that have impacted his own work, from objects created in ancient Egypt, and during the Italian Renaissance to inspiration he has drawn from seventeenth century British and Dutch furniture makers in addition to the work of Art Nouveau artists like Louis Majorelle. Kopf is a lifelong observer of objects of marquetry starting with his apprenticeship with artist Wendell Castle and later as a student of the Ecole Boulle in Paris where he learned the traditional art of marquetry and absorbed the work he saw in the museum collections. All of these influences are present in this piece-by-piece narration of Kopf's own development as an artisan, designer and scholar, writes Glenn Adamson, Head of Graduate Studies and Deputy Head of Research, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, who contributes the foreword. The final product is a volume filled with historical examples of marquetry next to Kopf's own work that provides deep insight into this artform.

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## **A Marquetry Odyssey: Historical Objects and Personal Work, Silas Kopf By Silas Kopf Bibliography**

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

A Marquetry Odyssey by Silas Kopf Steve Latta

It is always a pleasure to read a work written by an author who has clear mastery of his subject matter. Such is the case with *A Marquetry Odyssey* written by Silas Kopf. In his introduction, Kopf states that his goal as a furniture maker has always been to make "beautiful" and "interesting" objects. This book is full of such works both by Kopf and the many experts from the past who influenced both the development of the craft and the author's personal odyssey towards mastering his form and finding his voice as an artist. In his book, Kopf introduces such masters as Emile Galle, Jean-Henri Riesner, and David Roentgen who each added their unique signature to the practice of marquetry. Kopf explores the work of Andre-Charles Boulle, renowned for his incorporation of precious materials such as brass, pewter and tortoiseshell into his elaborate designs. In this technique, contrasting materials are cut in stack form with the pieces redistributed to form the final image. In works such as *Boulle Cabinets with Daffodils* (1992) Kopf illustrates his own mastery of this technique. While studying in Paris under the watchful eye of Pierre Ramond, Kopf learned the "piece by piece" method for cutting marquetry that allows multiple images to be made from a single "stack", layers of veneer sandwiched together. In his piece *Formication*, (1991) 108 identical ants, cut in nine stacks of twelve images each, parade in opposite directions across the eight panels of the case. Kopf is known for his trompe-l'oeil, or "trick of the eye", work. His travels through Italy studying early Italian Intarsia provide an understanding as to why Kopf became so enamored with this style. The Gubbio studiolo, a small, odd-shaped room, which is now part of the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, is a wonderful example of this fanciful work. Kopf's piece, *Phone Cabinet I*, (1989) shows his comfort with the style and his characteristic wit. Readers should be aware that this is not a "how-to" book. Although there are technical explanations throughout the text and an extensive appendix at the end explaining the various methods, knowledge of the craft as a whole as opposed to instruction is the purpose of his writing. Kopf's instructional dvd, *The Master Techniques Of Marquetry*, released in 2004, serves as a much better resource for those interested in learning the craft. Kopf's work has always had an inviting, comfortable feel despite the technical difficulty required in its execution. Not surprising, the same can be said for his book. It is a fulfilling visual and educational experience delivered in a friendly, conversational manner. Additionally, the scope and depth of Kopf's work presented in these pages is overwhelming. As a fellow craftsman, I am grateful for what he has accomplished to date and anxious to see his future endeavors. --Fine Woodworking Magazine, October 2008

In the more than 30 years that the Massachusetts woodworker Silas Kopf has been making furniture including *Music Cabinet*, 1990, he has established himself as a recognized master of marquetry, the art of taking diverse species of wood and piecing them together to form patterns and images. Distinguishing the technique from inlay, which it often resembles in the result, Kopf explains, "In marquetry a veneered sheet is pieced together like a jigsaw puzzle, including the background of the picture or design. The whole is then overlaid onto a thicker backing." In this thoroughly engaging book, Kopf traces his evolution as a craftsman within a broad survey of his discipline from ancient Egypt to the present. He discusses and includes illustrations of Italian Renaissance intarsia work, French examples, among them the 17th-century work of André-Charles Boulle and Art Nouveau gems by Emile Gallé and Louis Majorelle, and noteworthy pieces from Germany, England, Holland, Austria and the United States.

As a college student in the 1970s majoring in architecture, Kopf was drawn to woodworking, and an important early influence from the growing field of American studio furniture was Wendell Castle (see page

58), with whom he apprenticed for two years. Once marquetry had captured Kopf's interest, a vital step in his growth was a stint at the Boulle school in Paris, where he mastered the techniques that form the basis of his modus operandi to this day. It was also in Europe that he encountered in museums the masterpieces of marquetry that proved to be inspirational for his own work. He was particularly attracted to trompe l'oeil and portraiture--both of which he has used (sometimes to comic effects), depictions of nature, such as Hadley Chest with Tulips, 1988, and abstract patterns. Challenged by the "artistic limitations" of marquetry--specifically, wood's limited color range--Kopf approaches his designs as a painter would a canvas, always eager to display the uniqueness of wood.

Though there is a risk for a contemporary maker in presenting one's works alongside past masterpieces, Kopf's hold their own, perhaps because of their intellectual aspect. " The fact that Kopf has written a history of his discipline is a sign of the fundamentally self-reflective nature of Kopf's practice," Glenn Adamson writes in the introduction. " It is an attitude that is consistent with his pieces of furniture, which are meditation on the relation between maker, object, and image." This book is of great value not least for its rare glimpse inside a furniture maker's head as Kopf narrates his odyssey piece by piece. And, as with " any piece of marquetry," Adamson writes, " the whole is more than the sum of its parts." --American Craft Magazine, October 2008

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#### **Albert Collins:**

Why? Because this A Marquetry Odyssey: Historical Objects and Personal Work, Silas Kopf is an unordinary book that the inside of the book waiting for you to snap the idea but latter it will surprise you with the secret that inside. Reading this book alongside it was fantastic author who write the book in such amazing way makes the content inside easier to understand, entertaining means but still convey the meaning totally. So , it is good for you because of not hesitating having this nowadays or you going to regret it. This excellent book will give you a lot of benefits than the other book include such as help improving your ability and your critical thinking approach. So , still want to hold up having that book? If I had been you I will go to the guide store hurriedly.

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