



## New Masters of the Wooden Box: Expanding the Boundaries of Box Making (New Masters Series)

*By Oscar P. Fitzgerald*

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Features 34 contemporary masters of the wooden box. Each artist's profile includes photographs of their work and a short essay focusing on design ideas and objectives. Includes jewelry boxes, desk boxes, reliquaries, keepsake boxes and more.

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### **Editorial Review**

#### Review

Tom McKenna's post last week about the box exhibit at the Messler gallery in Maine made me wish I could dart up the coast for a visit. I won't get that chance anytime soon and, truth be told, Rockport is a little bit out of the way for most folks. If, like me, you found yourself wanting to see more of the boxes, but with no chance to visit Maine anytime soon, don't worry. As one commenter to Tom's post pointed out, there's a new book based on the pieces in the exhibition and the artists who created them. *New Masters of the Wooden Box* is very thoughtfully done. Author and furniture historian Oscar P. Fitzgerald devotes a half dozen pages or so to each artist, offering a thorough and lively discussion of their backgrounds, inspirations and techniques. Each is illustrated with beautifully lit and detailed photos of the artist's work. It's not just the next best thing to the exhibit - it's a great find all on its own.

Peter Korn's forward to this book says, "Boxes have a pedigree as ancient as civilization itself...The boxes in this book are not defined by intended use...Where earlier boxes were made to serve, these are made as vehicles of self-expression." These boxes are artworks, depicting everything from coffer and credenzas to a 20" seesaw box, where removing a lid sets the sculpture in motion. Some are dynamic, with mechanisms for locomotion to open, while many have concealed compartments or celebrate the beauty of multiple wood species. The book goes into the history of the maker as well as the product, along with its meaning to the artist and a collected sampling of his works. For example, Andy Buck describes "thinking with his hands," Kip Kristensen discusses how to come up with ideas, and Ray Jones tells how problem solving and engineering a box design leads to more and more designs evolving one from another. Many of these art boxes are turned or carved, with added materials of gems, glass or wire. Many of them celebrate pure wood grain, letting the forms serve as a canvas for nature's spectacle. Jeff and Katrina Seaton accomplished art with three unadorned, bandsawn, nesting elliptical boxes cut from a single block of rosewood. The accomplishment is as remarkable as the finished products. Thirty master craftsmen are represented here, with excellent photography and insightful text. This is a 'meaty' book, meant to be read thoroughly. The range of creativity included is stunning. Highly recommended.

The simple wooden box has been an attraction and a challenge for many woodworkers and this Fox Chapel book is a collection of some of the more imaginative box designs, it's a fun read. This is a great book that takes the simple cube of a box to newly explored heights. The author and two jurors have compiled a collection of wooden containers from 34 innovative artists that may blow your mind. Pandora might have used some of these designs. First is the premise that a box need not be a cube or square. Emi Ozawa turns a wheel like object into an artful container. Robert Ingham turns laminates into a contemporary piece of art. Louise Hibbert makes a purse from English sycamore. Thirty-one additional artists from around the world show their talents in this beautifully illustrated portfolio. Boxes may contain almost anything and are usually made to do so .or not as this magnificent collection illustrates. The imagination is a wonderful thing.

Pandora couldn't resist opening a box, and readers won't be able to fight the temptation to turn the pages of *New Masters of the Wooden Box* (Fox Chapel Publishing, available October 2009). Inside they'll find 34 innovative artists who are crafting remarkable boxes that throw function to the wind, and beg to be admired, touched, marvelled upon and ultimately, opened. The box has an age-old past, as ancient as civilization itself, when containers did just that - contain things - like spices, bibles, candles, sewing needles and snuff. Contemporary boxes are fundamentally different. They are no longer defined by their use, but made as a form of self expression and creative exploration. The whimsical, sculptural and conceptual boxes featured in

New Masters of the Wooden Box have been selected for a touring museum exhibit sponsored by the Center for Furniture Craftsmanship in Rockport, Maine. This book is a must-have for woodworkers and art lovers alike.

NEW MASTERS OF THE WOODEN BOX, by Oscar P. Fitzgerald, features the work of 34 artists who share their workshop techniques, training and early experiences with box making. Featured artists include Bonnie Bishoff, J.M. Syron, Michael Cullen, Michael Hosaluk, Robert Ingham, Kim Kelzer, Po Shun Leong, Tom Loeser, Craig Nutt, Tommy Simpson and Philip Weber. Fitzgerald, a furniture historian and decorative arts consultant, provides a retrospective of boxes and their uses in the introduction. He then profiles the box makers, who share their techniques, inventive talents and the inspiration that fuels their distinctive designs. The book was published with the exhibition, "Boxes and Their Makers," held this fall at the Messler Gallery of the Center for Furniture Craftsmanship in Rockport, Maine.

Some of the 30 box-makers whose work is featured in this book are already well known to woodworkers all over the world; others are less famous. But all are prolific artists whose unique designs, innovation and meticulous craftsmanship place them at the very forefront of their field. The author, Oscar P Fitzgerald, is an academic - a furniture historian and decorative arts consultant who lectures in the Master's Program at the Smithsonian Institution/Corcoran School. One of his books, *Four Centuries of American Furniture* is regarded as the standard reference on the subject. In this book, Fitzgerald uses box making as the common element to link his subjects together, but he does not restrict himself to discussing only the boxes that they make. He explores their other work, just as he explores the origins of their interest in woodworking, the way in which their work has evolved, and the directions in which they appear to be heading. The extraordinary variety of designs and the exquisite craftsmanship demonstrated in the work shown in this book's superb photographs makes it difficult to select examples for this review. There are so many stunning pieces that only a random selection can be justified. The complex Treasure Chest by Robert Ingham, Principal of John Makepeace's School for Craftsmen in Wood (UK), is outstanding. Made from Macassar Ebony, Swiss Pear, American Black Walnut, Ripple Sycamore and Abalone Shell, it is an example of the ordered design that Ingham calls 'wood engineering'. A different kind of order affects the work of English artist, Louise Hibbert. The strange insect shapes within which she creates her sculpted boxes derive from an intense interest in biology. Born in Japan and now resident in the US, Emi Ozawa makes boxes which she says are really toys for grown-ups. Painstakingly crafted, they embody an element of whimsy. Hans Wiessflog's visits to Australia have left an indelible impression on the local woodturning community. The examples of his work shown in this book include, of course, his famous ball boxes and aptly demonstrate his oft quoted theme: Small and Fine. There seems to be nothing in the background of Po Shun Leong that might explain the origins of his extraordinary boxes. Born in Northampton, England in 1941, he graduated from a Quaker high school before studying architecture. He worked in this profession in Mexico for 16 years then moved to the US in 1981, having also become an accomplished furniture maker. It was only when he settled in California that he began to make boxes. Sometimes constructed from a dozen or more species of wood cut into perhaps hundreds of shapes and sizes, they often have multiple compartments. The overall result is spectacular, the oddly discordant components always adding up to a visually and emotionally satisfying whole. These are some of the other artists whose work is displayed and discussed: Bonnie Bishoff & JM Syron, Andy Buck, Kip Christensen, Michael Cullen, Jenna Goldberg, Michael Hosaluk, Kim Keizer, Yuji Kubo, Steven Kennard, Michael Mode, Andrew Potocnik, Richard Raffan, Jeff & Katrina Seaton, Bonnie Klein & Jacques Vesaery and Philip Weber. This is an inspiring book that is sure to appeal, not only to those who either make or wish to make boxes, but also to anyone who enjoys seeing and learning about the very finest work of the world's great wood artists.

1 review total If you've ever thought, "If you've seen one box, you've seen them all", then think again! This book takes boxes to a whole new level. On one hand you have some extraordinary pieces of art in for the

form of boxes (and more) and on the other hand it begins by taking you on a journey of man's evolution and the search for enlightenment. It is said that what makes us human is the ability to envision the possibilities. The craftsmen behind the boxes in this book have indeed envisioned and created "out of the box" possibilities. Now don't think that it is just our modern man who has developed the artist flare for creating non-box boxes. Some of the pieces shown in this book are from 1400-1500 BC! This book is not just about the boxes. In the first section of the book, the author walks us through our history, showing us how we used boxes, depending on the needs and beliefs of the day as well as tools and resources that were available at the time. The rest of the book is dedicated to particular artists, giving us a look at their creative works and a look behind the products and the artists themselves. If you are interested in stretching your mind and your woodworking "out of the box" then this book is for you. Not only are the boxes themselves inspiring but the information provided is also filled with tidbits of ideas. Some of the work will make you go, "Huh? How did they do that?" And some will get you saying, "Huh? How did they come up with that idea?" And some will just have you saying, "Huh?" Regardless of your initial response you will definitely be intrigued and inspired, and perhaps you will find yourself heading out to the shop in search of that enlightenment to create a box that is outside the box!

Now, don't get hung up on the traditional image of a box: you know, five sides and a lid. The 34 craftsmen and women featured in *New Masters of the Wooden Box* sure aren't limited to a "boxy" box. Take Saskatchewan native Michael Hosaluk's shrimp-like boxes made from Australian jara and Canadian maple (above, left). They are more works of art than containers. In fact, most of the boxes in this book are on the fanciful/artistic side of things, as opposed to the practical/craftsman side. But these artsy boxes are introductions to other stunning works, such as Hosaluk's Yellow Cactus Chair and Scribble, a maple bowl decorated with acrylic paint. These both show a level of creativity and construction beyond usual project plans. And why not travel to the outer reaches of woodworking? There's probably some inspiration out there that you can bring back.

Following an excellent introduction on the history of the box by Fitzgerald (*Four Centuries of American Furniture*) is a gallery of photos of contemporary boxes and other vessels by more than 30 artists from a 2009 exhibition at Maine's Messler Gallery. This is full of ideas for studio artists and advanced hobbyists and should inspire them to see boxes and other containers as works of art, not just as functional objects.

This book follows on from *New Masters of Woodturning* (reviewed AWR#60) in layout and theme but with a different author. Fitzgerald presents 34 wood artists (including AWR contributors Richard Raffan and Andrew Potocnik) who use joinery, turning and carving techniques to make boxes and other objects. Styles are diverse, from sculptural and free-flowing lines, to geometrical, whimsical, and occasionally traditional. Over a third of the artists primarily use turning techniques. Each artist has his or her own chapter with images of their work (non-box work as well) and text by Fitzgerald that aims to give insight into their work practices.

Beautifully illustrated, this volume serves as a catalogue and companion to the *Boxes and Their Makers* exhibition, which opened in the fall of 2009 at the Messler Gallery of the Center for Furniture Craftsmanship in Rockport, Maine. American historian Fitzgerald has gradually focused his career on furniture. He describes the pieces shown in the color photographs, and places them in the context of the artist's intention and other work. Three of the 30 artists represented are teams.

From the Inside Flap

FLAP COPY With a lineage stretching back to the troubles of Pandora, boxes have captivated our curiosity. Who can resist opening a box? No matter how ornate or plain, highly crafted or rustic, ingenious or straightforward, a box is meant to be opened. That's because throughout history, boxes have performed the

function of containment and the sheer variety of human invention they record is simply astounding. In *New Masters of the Wooden Box*, you'll see boxes in an entirely different light as thirty-four contemporary artists put form before function in creating technically challenging and aesthetically stunning works. These boxes are not defined by their intended use-instead, these works of art represent a journey of self-expression that celebrates the joy of craft. To capture what is truly unique about each artist and box, *New Masters of the Wooden Box* presents the artists' personal inspirations, artistic process, and amazing techniques, along with photographs of their captivating work. *New Masters of the Wooden Box* serves as an important document to the practice of craft today. Each box represents an effort to bring a new, meaningful, and creative thought into the world through a language of material, form, and technique. And, as you visit each artist and open every box, you will hear a vibrant point of view as to what it means to be human, to be thinking, and to be creative during these modern times.

From the Back Cover

**Woodworking/Art \$29.95 US Meet Thirty-Four Contemporary Artists Pushing the Boundaries of Box Making** They are woodturners, furniture artists, and elite craftsmen from around the world who share a common vehicle for self-expression: the wooden box. With a lineage as ancient as civilization, the wooden box has evolved over centuries from containers that serve a purpose to a soulful summation of creative exploration. In this groundbreaking book, thirty-four innovative artists-the *New Masters of the Wooden Box*-share their amazing techniques, their inventive talents, and the inspiration that fuels their distinctive designs. You'll see each artist at work-in their studios and workshops-and discover why their stunning work has been selected for a highly-anticipated exhibit sponsored by the Center for Furniture Craftsmanship. To clearly capture the talents of each artist, a gallery of beautiful photographs displaying the spectacular boxes-many of which have never been published-accompanies each profile. *New Masters of the Wooden Box* looks beyond the surface of the finished work and into artistic language of material, technique, and form spoken by each artist.

## **Users Review**

**From reader reviews:**

**Charles Dame:**

What do you in relation to book? It is not important along with you? Or just adding material when you really need something to explain what your own problem? How about your free time? Or are you busy man? If you don't have spare time to complete others business, it is make you feel bored faster. And you have spare time? What did you do? All people has many questions above. The doctor has to answer that question because just their can do in which. It said that about reserve. Book is familiar in each person. Yes, it is suitable. Because start from on guardería until university need this kind of *New Masters of the Wooden Box: Expanding the Boundaries of Box Making* (New Masters Series) to read.

**Rodney Sierra:**

This book untitled *New Masters of the Wooden Box: Expanding the Boundaries of Box Making* (New Masters Series) to be one of several books in which best seller in this year, honestly, that is because when you read this e-book you can get a lot of benefit into it. You will easily to buy this particular book in the book store or you can order it through online. The publisher with this book sells the e-book too. It makes you quicker to read this book, since you can read this book in your Smartphone. So there is no reason to your account to past this publication from your list.

**Margaret Phillips:**

New Masters of the Wooden Box: Expanding the Boundaries of Box Making (New Masters Series) can be one of your beginner books that are good idea. We all recommend that straight away because this reserve has good vocabulary that could increase your knowledge in language, easy to understand, bit entertaining but nevertheless delivering the information. The writer giving his/her effort to set every word into enjoyment arrangement in writing New Masters of the Wooden Box: Expanding the Boundaries of Box Making (New Masters Series) yet doesn't forget the main level, giving the reader the hottest along with based confirm resource information that maybe you can be certainly one of it. This great information can certainly drawn you into brand new stage of crucial pondering.

**Jennifer Buster:**

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