



MÉTAMORPHOSE
DIDIER GUENARD

Catalogue

Didier Guenard, couturier du tonneau

My Life Story, by Didier Guenard

I was born in Le Creusot in 1965. Following an unruly childhood and a troubled adolescence I was attracted to woodworking, and enrolled in the Lycée Bonaparte in Autun, earning my diploma there in 1981. During those years I got to know the special world of restoring period furniture, which shook up the ideas about production I'd been taught in school. I spent the next 20 years as a furniture restorer, learning about the ingenuity, sensitivity and beauty of our ancestors' work, and bringing the objects they made back to life. The secret world of the restorer encompasses many skills: those of the surgeon, who performs grafts to replace damaged areas and adds new veneer 'skins', the hairdresser, who exercises his knowledge of chemistry to revitalize colors; the locksmith, who restores worn-out locks...it's a profession that requires an unusual bag of tricks as well as knowledge and patience, and includes stripping, sanding, ginning, polishing and varnishing wood, and an endless amount of rubbing. It's also frequently unacknowledged: since its goal is to blend the restoration work with the original piece, the restorer's work is doubly invisible.

I took an evening ceramics class at the School of Fine Arts in Chalon-sur-Saône in 1982, and a drawing class in 1988, which increased my skill in making quick sketches. In 1990 I put on my first outdoor exhibition, presenting a few paintings, some figurative wooden sculptures, and a miniature walnut wardrobe, a masterpiece that combined all my areas of expertise.

Miniature walnut wardrobe with bow-fronted façade and "cocked hat" cornice

Handmade locks, turned and forged metalwork (including screws). The only things I didn't make are the two keys, which came from small 18th-century boxes



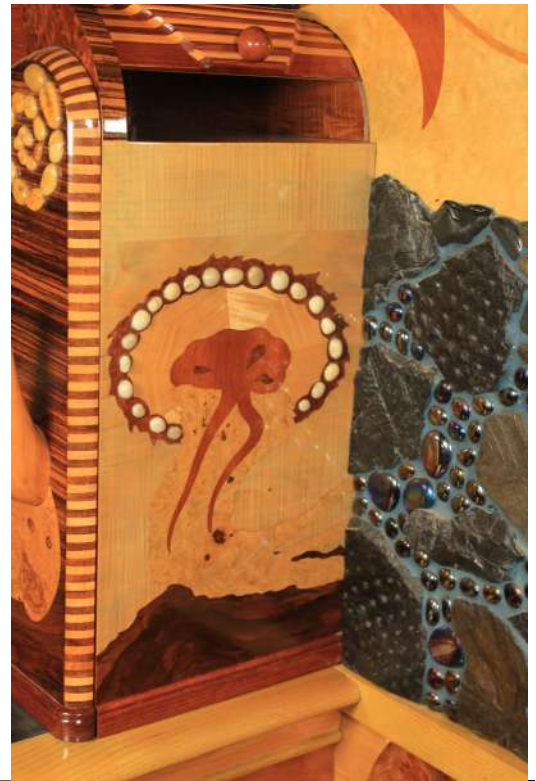


I got married the year of my first exhibition, and in 1992 we bought an old stone house in ruins. I spent the next three years restoring it for our growing family.

*The next creative project I tackled was the “**Diaposaurus**”. Begun in late 1996, it took more than 1000 hours to complete. Starting in 1998 I presented it in a variety of venues such as the Château de Pommard. In the summer of 2003 it was exhibited in Dompierre-les-Ormes at the European Gallery of the Forest and Wood, where it was viewed by more than 15,000 enthusiastic visitors.*



*I finished the “**Diaposaurus**”, the creative equivalent of walking the Way of Saint James, in 1998. This multipurpose cabinet of curiosities recounts the legend of the Burgundian dragon known as La Vouivre. Made with fossils I found as a child in the vineyards of the Chalon winegrowing region, and wood I acquired here and there as an adult, this complex and refined piece transcends life on earth. It includes 16 varieties of local and exotic wood, forged steel rods with several different patinas, resin and fiberglass light fixtures, and many fossils, pebbles, sand and glass marbles that make up the cornucopia mosaic.*



*The different woods used in this piece were turned and sculpted and include marquetry. It includes six drawers, including a cylindrical one with a sprung ejection mechanism that can be used to store a bottle, and another with a retractable curtain closing. Pushing the button made of boxwood burl makes the midnight blue writing table advance, revealing a half-cylindrical penholder. Opening the door with the horn handle reveals partitions and two small drawers with varnished interiors. It goes without saying that the piece also contains a **secret space**....whose location must remain a secret!*



After completing the “Diaposaurus” I took a recreational break and delved into a more art brut approach, using old acacia wood fence posts. After reworking them with a drawer-knife, I combined the posts with old slate pool tables and old metal to create a prehistoric effect reminiscent of the “Rahan” comic books I used to enjoy.



“The Eclipse Collection”, 1999

My next collection anticipated the total eclipse of the sun in 1999. These pieces include thick steel rims from old wagon wheels that were worn by being driven over paving stones. The soldered arcs act as both a design element and form the structure that supports the repurposed stone and wooden components, which are made of old wine barrels.





“The Charolaise”, sitting room table/game table



*I built a workshop extension onto my home and became an official furniture maker in 2001. During the same period I took part in the “**Trophées du Net 2001**”, organized by PME 71 and the Journal de Saône-et-Loire. I also built the “**La Vache à roulette**” (“**The Cow on Wheels**”), a trolley used for ceremonial serving of bread and cheese at the Hostellerie Bourguignonne owned by Didier Denis in Verdun-Sur-Le-Doubs*



*The year my workshop opened I also took part in a symposium organized by the Conseil Général de Saône-et-Loire at the European Gallery of the Forest and Wood in Dompierre-les-Ormes, and sculpted the “**Fœtus vegetal**” from a block of limestone that I worked directly in the block. The following year I sculpted “**Le cri de l’Orme**” from a piece of elm 2.2 meters high.*



Many people have ordered farm tables from me. They're made from re-machined wood from the wine industry; the seats and backs of the chairs that go with them are fashioned from old Burgundian barrels. Curved steel semi-circles are soldered together and reused in the architecture of these pieces, giving new life to ancient wagon wheel rims.

“The art of revealing a straight line within a curve rather than creating curves from straight lines”

“the metamorphosis of the barrel”

“birth”

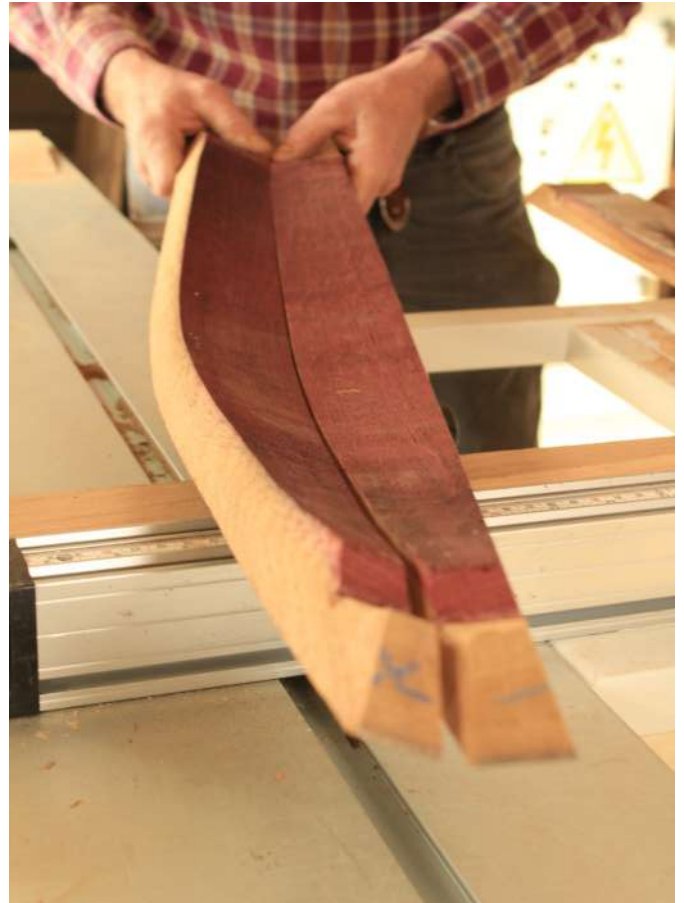


An oak barrel is made up of a certain number of wooden staves. The sum of their angles comes to 360° , which means they form a circle. If the angle is increased inside the barrel, less staves are needed to reach 360° ; the diameter decreases and the shape becomes like an elongated rugby ball. If the angle is inverted the shape is like a tam-tam, and the inside of the barrel becomes the outside. After roughing out the wood with a mechanical saw comes the truing up, which creates perfectly flat surfaces. They are then adjusted into a coherent whole in order to clamp them during gluing and forced bending.

Machining the resulting angles



SAWING TO WIDTH WITH AN AUGMENTED



SAWING TO LENGTH WITH AN INVERTED





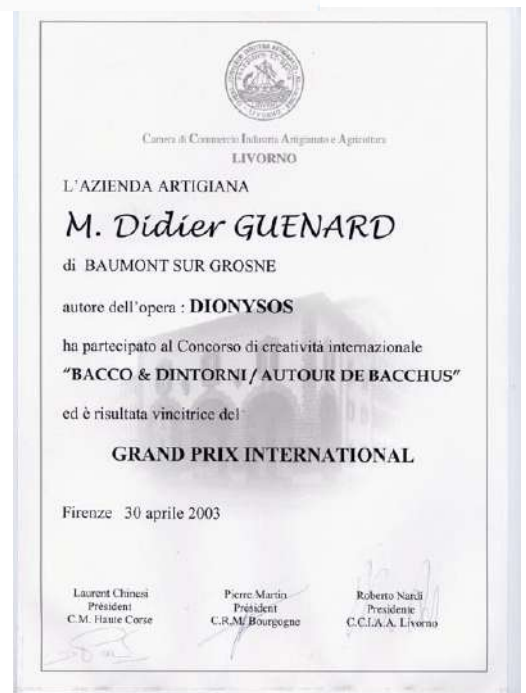
The staves are often re-machined and glued in a series of steps as they take on other shapes. Next comes the moment of assembling the different elements. This is the most difficult and tricky stage, when two 'beings' are invisibly linked together.



In 2003 I had the opportunity to try my hand at interior design when the beer cave “La Billebaude” in the town of Givry asked me to create their décor. This is the only time I’ve designed a public space.



At the same time I entered “Dionysos” in the European Bacchus competition, and won the “Grand International Creativity Prize 2002/2003” in Florence. This armchair brings together African, Greek, Celtic and Roman influences in a timeless way....





I'm an artisan who experiments with new ways of making furniture as I become familiar with new techniques, adapt myself to them, and develop my work one step at a time ...



These transcendent curves lend themselves to pieces influenced by the medieval era, African design, other places and periods.



Africa, Greece, and Burgundy: the cradle of humankind, the first vowel and first letter of the alphabet, the origins of the barrel, the spiral staircase that resembles a Burgundian snail...I began to invent a new language with my hands.



*I made the “**Barrel and Chariot Wheel Collection**” between 2002 and 2005 as I dreamed of the days when steel-rimmed wagon wheels rolled on cobblestones as they transported barrels to wine cellars...*



*I stopped building furniture in 2006, when I became a teacher in the woodworking section of the ESAT in Crissey. There I learned to manage production and accompany students while **continuing my creative work** on a part-time basis. I alternated between the school, fallow periods, restoration work, and building extensions on our home.*



*I made this “**Reception desk**” for my eldest daughter’s Bed and Breakfast in 2013. The façade of the L-shaped desk is the counter; it is ideal for welcoming clients and placing a computer. The piece is entirely made of repurposed solid oak, originally used in wine vats, and barrel staves. The staves were re-machined and glued together to create new shapes that were then assembled with other shapes, resulting in an architectural construction that features a variety of rounded forms.*

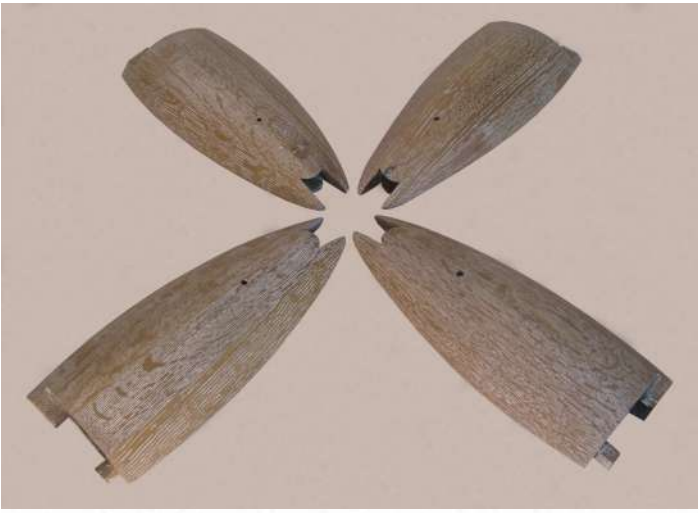


The rounded forms and horizontal surfaces are joined by invisible dovetail joints, the most complex and least apparent technique for assembling wooden furniture.

*Shelving under the desk provides storage place for documents. There is also a secret hiding place, a small retractable litter basket, and a **spinning key holder** mounted on ball bearings under the desk area.*



*My first hybrid pieces date from 2014 and include square steel tubes. “**Jeu de mains**” took off in a new direction and allowed me, thanks to the metal I incorporated, to look beyond the architectural possibilities of wood alone.*





My work continues to evolve: I began making more sculptural pieces in 2016, opening the door to fresh possibilities with my first figurative works.



“The Archer” was the first character I made from metamorphosed barrels. This timeless piece, from an undefined continent, is neither masculine nor feminine. Its architecture includes oak and chestnut that were glued together and assembled. The increase curvature of the bow was achieved through making numerous notches (kerfing), to which I then glued an outer layer of veneer in a template





“The Drunken Rowboat”



“The Row-boat of the Rising Sun”

*The “**Philosopher’s Wood**” crystallizes through an interplay of curves that resemble a new alphabet guided by instinct, impulse, intention and vision.*



“Solutré, man and horse”

A representation of the earliest relationship between humans and animals. The Rock of Solutré, located in Burgundy, is a world-renowned prehistoric site



Diogenes and his lantern: Diogenes was an Ancient Greek philosopher who lived in a barrel. He hated humans and gave dogs a bad name, poor things...he was an old fart, in the words of an innocent child who dared speak the truth...



“Harvest”, the eye of Big Brother.

“Woman at her Toilette”, old wood from the Beaujolais region. The wine scaling was preserved with a natural-looking varnish.

“Diogenes and his Lantern”, Carrara marble.



“The Lectern”, made of old barrel staves, and a wall decoration, “The Child in a Mandorla” were inspired by religious themes.

“Like a Bird”



“Swimming”

Let’s take a bird’s eye view!

Aboard a streamlined hull we cross the oceans towards freedom,
A far cry from the earliest humans, who were connected to nature.
They quickly became spiders by learning how to sew and spin.
From the archer’s first bow to sewn boats that were watertight and strong.
Plants turned humans into explorers, tailors of the continents.
Watertight, encircling the barrel men
Sweeping them from the cave to the wine cellar, from the cargo ship to the wagon,
Transported in tapered metal hulls,
Yesterday’s mandorla becoming today’s missile...



“The Juggler” is the last piece in my first series of unique sculptures made up of timeless vibratory curves.



“MISS 2022” 39/18/70 cm

The shapes were created through invisibly glued assemblages worked into curved shapes.

Bleached barrel staves. The lip color was made with red wine scale.



2022 « Raie sur Raie » « Skate on Skate » L94/P83/H131cm



« Raie sur raie » « Skate on skate »

This design shows my ability to use the curved shapes of barrel staves. These curved wood fibers, forged by coopers and aged by the passing years, acquired their colors through contact with red wine.

A combination of wood and metal makes this design possible: hidden inside the hollow body of solid oak, a skeleton of square steel tubing strengthens the pieces and limits the sideways shrinkage of the wood. The framework also enabled me to attach the legs and the tail and to reinforce the fins. It includes a system of springs that creates constant traction, adapting to the wood's reactions to humidity changes and strengthening the delicate structure. The legs are solid: they are filled with a glued assemblage of several kinds of wood. A single unscrewable split peg holds each leg in place in its metal housing.

These surprising barrels result in surprising ergonomics....let yourself be carried away by this sensuous creature of the deep whose tactile and visual contrasts create a unique sensory impression!

Further information:

For a human being 5.9 feet tall, sitting in this chair gives an immediate feeling of dominating the world!

The contrasting finishes were obtained through alternative masking, which resulted in two different surfaces. The matte, non-fibrous elements are like the skate's skin, and the other elements were glazed, polished, and bleached with hydrogen peroxide. The grain was highlighted with Blanc de Meudon, and an ultra-brilliant varnish containing mother of pearl was applied. Between the gills, under the seat, a discreet split peg activates a latch that opens a hatch leading to an empty area that allows one to access part of the inner mechanism, and a bolt that enables the seat and tail to be removed. Simultaneously sliding two lock bolts hidden under the bottom of the point makes the white polished chair back recline. It masks the metal structure of the seat back, the screw that enables the wooden back to be removed from its metal spinal column, the year the piece was built, and my logo, which was hot-stamped into the wood: the words "Metamorphose Didier Guenard" placed on an infinity symbol.





Gluing followed by clamping



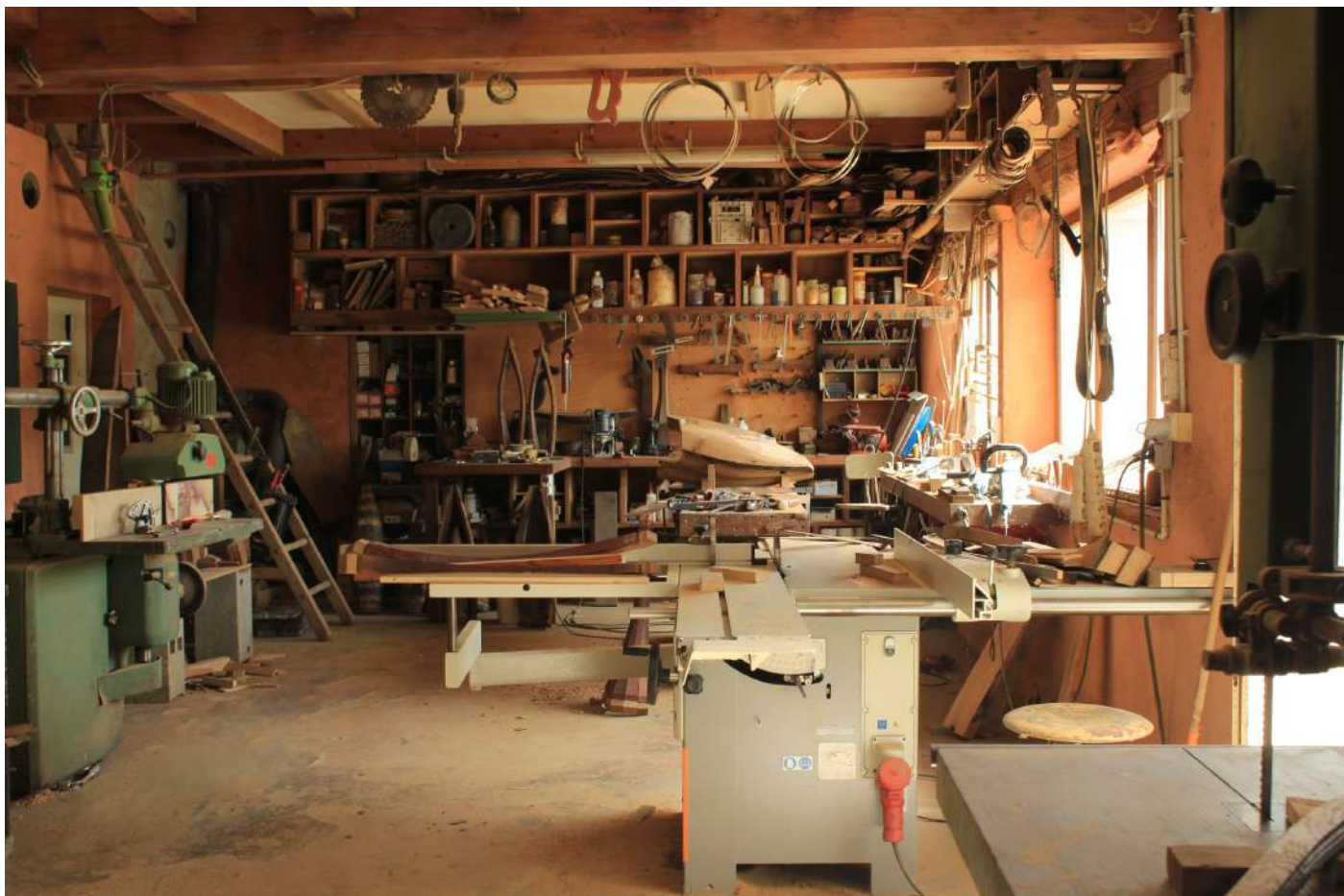




The stages of making the gills under the seat: assembly using mortise and tenon technique, the sculpted gills, and the final result.



Is it alive? It has the curved shapes of a living being with a wet underbelly, its open gills expelling filtered water...



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Like life itself, my pieces are beautiful! Today's networks have brought me visibility that reaches far beyond my own small circle, winning me the clients I deserve!