

Toolbox Tours de Force

Tool-storage solutions show style, ingenuity

by Vincent Laurence



Convenient access to their tools was a prime design consideration for Herbert Buchalter and his son Sanford of Freeland, Mich. Father and son share a shop and tools. The younger Buchalter, a professional furnituremaker, built the cabinet for his dad, though it's the son who gets the most use of it.

To many woodworkers—even some of the best—a simple, unprepossessing plywood box, biscuit-joined together, is perfectly satisfactory for tool storage and organization. The materials and construction are in keeping with the function of the box—after all they're just tools, right?

Other woodworkers see things differently. To them, the toolbox, though still primarily functional, must also be beautiful, something that affirms why they do what they do, day in and day out. Many of these woodworkers also see their toolboxes

as three-dimensional portfolios on view for prospective clients, testifying to the skill of the maker.

When we asked readers to send us photos of their toolboxes in "Editor's Notebook" (FWW #100), we weren't disappointed. From the more than 30 boxes, chests and wall cabinets readers sent photos of, we selected nine of the finest (including the one on the cover of this issue, which is described on p. 4). □

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This traditional 19th-century-style chest (above) houses over 400 tools, weighs more than 300 lbs. loaded with tools, and took its owner, Tony Konovaloff of Bellingham, Wash., nearly 200 hours to make. Konovaloff, a professional furniture maker, uses hand tools exclusively, so his entire shop is in this chest. The Latin phrase carved into the lower rail of the lid means "Art is long, life is short."

"A place for everything and everything in its place," one of the Shaker creeds, might just as well describe Konovaloff's attitude toward tool storage. Every tool has a specific location that it fits precisely, thus keeping the box neat and the tools accessible (inset).

With the inside of its lid flipped down, Konovaloff's box reveals its collection of saws and extra blades (right).





Photos left and right: Jonathan Binzen

Steve Johnson's mobile tool chest was built to withstand the abuse of bouncing over cracked concrete as it is rolled around a factory (he's a professional tool-and-die maker). Built of solid walnut and designed much like the automotive tool chests he was used to, the drawers on his chest glide on full-extension, 100-lb. slides and are attached to an internal carcase of $\frac{3}{4}$ -in. particleboard. Overall weight for the chest, without any tools in it, is about 215 lbs. (including a 60-lb. granite surface plate mortised into the top). The machinist's-style box on top of the chest doesn't travel with the larger chest, but is a good companion in the shop.



Case for an "artist"—Tired of being told, "Hey buddy, use the freight elevator" every time he ventured into a high-rise apartment building for an installation, cabinetmaker Eric Sheffield traded in his old toolbox for the Gibson guitar case you see here. It holds an incredible number of tools—over 40 lbs. worth—and now, according to Sheffield, he's "accorded the respect a true artist deserves."



Being able to see his tools and get to them easily was a priority for furnituremaker Greg Radley of Ventura, Calif., when he started designing this tool chest. Radley's solution was this chest-on-trestle with a utility cabinet tucked into the trestle below. The trestle and all frame components are solid ash, the panels are solid mahogany veneered with curly European ash and the interior partitions are all mahogany.

Four-part portability—"If I can't move it, I can't have it" is the imperative that guided the design of Harold Purcell's toolbox (right). His solution, a maple base and three stackable, cherry and mahogany boxes, provides Purcell with convenient access to his tools as well as a fair measure of visual and tactile satisfaction.

Tim Kimack's veneered, inlaid and entirely handmade tool chest (below) makes a fine home for his collection of antique and owner-built tools. Kimack, a finish carpenter and furnituremaker in Simi Valley, Calif., put over 400 hours into the chest, calling it "definitely a labor of love."



Two for the road—Like many an idealistic young woodworker, David Sellery of Santa Cruz, Calif., had visions of Krenovian masterpieces dancing in his head when he first started working wood. Years later, he found he had built a few more kitchen cabinets than he'd preferred just to pay the bills. But Sellery made the time to build this pair of carpenter-style toolboxes to remind him of why he first started working with wood. Though almost jewel-like in their detail, they're sturdy, functional and see daily use on the job site with no apparent ill effect.