

how they did it

Embellishing the bandsawn box

BY JONATHAN BINZEN

Michael Cullen loves the spontaneity of building bandsawn boxes (see the back cover), and in most cases he also proceeds without a plan when he embellishes them. After cutting out the box freehand on the bandsaw, he sometimes refines it with a disk sander. Then he commences carving, mostly using gouges. He aims for a loose, unregulated appearance, and works by eye, embracing the slight waver in the lines and the non-uniform spacing. He likes the look of painted boxes, and most often builds with basswood and finishes with milk paint. But on occasion, he'll make a box of hardwood and use a natural finish.

TWO LAYERS OF TEXTURE

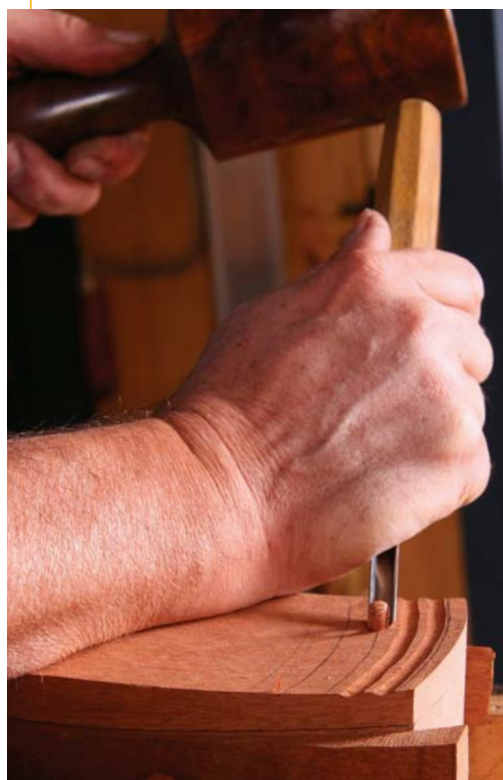
Double-gouged surface. For this cherry box, Cullen first used a shallow gouge (above) to create an all-over pattern of shallow scoops. Then with a veining gouge and a twisting action, he covered the box with hundreds of tiny dimples (right).



CARVINGS ON A CURVED LID



Fair, then groove. To create a pattern like the one on the lid of the box below, Cullen first fairs the bandsawn top face of the dished lid with a very shallow gouge (above). He then adds grooves across the grain, carving quickly and following rough pencil lines (left). Dispensing with perfect regularity and symmetry, Cullen achieves instead an effect as personal as handwriting. The cutoffs produced while bandsawing the outside of the box to shape provide perfect cauls to hold the box in the vise.



Milk paint makes a bold statement. Cullen often applies several colors in layers. Once the upper coat dries, he abrades the surface with sandpaper, bringing the undercoat into view on the high spots. Then he adds light coats of shellac and wax.

