

how they did it

Hardware determines the design

BUILDING A CASE FOR ORNATE IRONWORK

BY JONATHAN BINZEN



Hardware is often an afterthought—the last thing a maker attends to when a cabinet is finally assembled. But in the instance of Tomas Braverman's vargueño (see the back cover), a handsome set of traditional hardware inspired the piece and determined the design. After establishing the size of the fall front by laying out the hardware on the floor, Braverman built a dovetailed case for it out of claro walnut. He designed the walnut turnings of the base to have a Moorish feeling that complements the old hardware, arriving at the shapes by first turning samples in pine. Braverman likes to design as he builds, and he didn't lay out the interior until the carcass was assembled. He made the drawers out of Honduras mahogany and veneered their fronts with slices of spalted curly koa from a long-treasured plank. He designed new drawer pulls to match the old hardware and had them cast in bronze. To antique them, he heated them with a torch, applied gun bluing, and polished them with 0000 steel wool and black wax.

Hand-forged hardware. Braverman designed his vargueño by first laying out the hardware on the floor to determine a suitable size for the fall front. He also consulted plans of original vargueños and adapted some of the dimensions and carving and turning details. He bought crushed velvet to serve as the traditional background of the iron hardware.



What about the pulls? There were no drawer pulls in the set of hardware Braverman bought, so he designed his own. He carved and turned a slightly oversize prototype pull in walnut using shapes that echoed the old hardware. Then he sent that to a foundry (JD Manufacturing, Hermosa Beach, Calif., 310-376-1556) to be cast in bronze. The final cost was about \$8 per pull.



