

how they did it



Turn oak into lace

BY JONATHAN BINZEN

Whether making vessels (see the back cover), or disks like this one, Pascal Oudet works with green wood cut fresh from the log. He buys two to four logs per year, going into the forest during felling or to the log yard to hand select them. Two species of European oak (*Quercus petraea* and *Quercus robur*) have just the attributes he wants—distinct separation between spring and summer growth, and wide, strong medullary rays. Once he begins a disk, to keep it from warping on the lathe and becoming impossible to turn, Oudet works until it is finished—no stopping for meals—which can mean 10 or 11 hours of turning. Afterward he lets the piece dry and deform for several days. Then he sandblasts it, a painstaking process that can take three or four times as long as the turning.

FLATTEN THE FACE



From log to lathe. After chainsawing a thick disk from the log, Oudet turns a tenon to fit his chuck, then turns the outside face flat.



TURN THIN, THEN SANDBLAST



Calipers are critical. As he turns away all but the outside 2mm of the workpiece, Oudet proceeds very slowly, stopping the lathe frequently to check the thickness. Turning away all the waste gradually keeps the piece as stable as possible.



No going back. Oudet aims for a very clean surface. Once an area is turned to the thickness he wants, he never goes back. Backlighting helps him assess the thickness.



It's a blast. After air-drying for several days, the disk goes into the sandblaster. It can take three days or more of sandblasting to achieve the transparency Oudet is after.