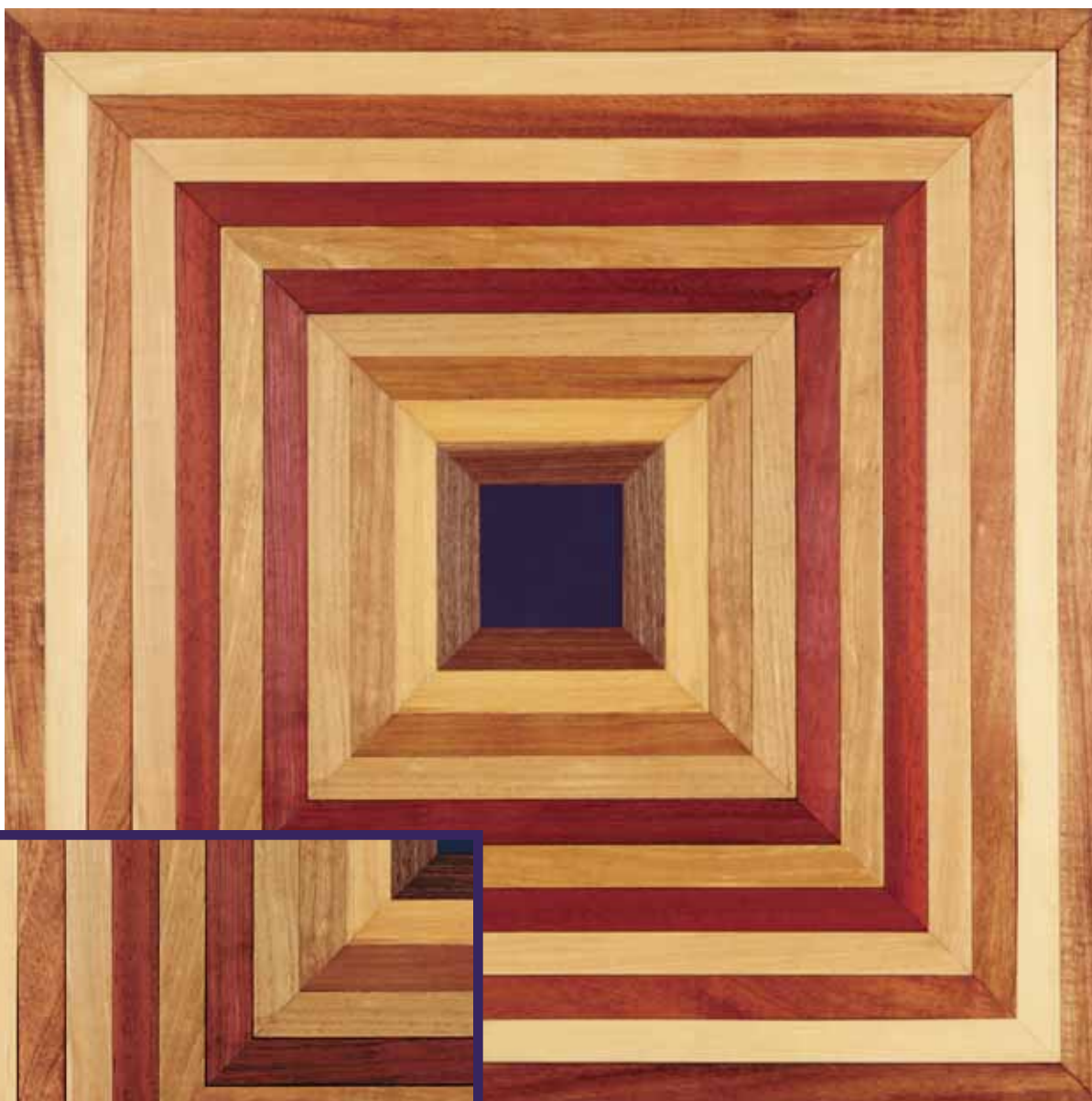


Finishing Unfinished Mouldings

by Marc Lizer, CPF



Finish your own mouldings and you can experience, first hand, the beauty of hardwoods and exotic woods. Shown, from outside to inside, are: Koa, Maple (light), Mahogany, Maple (dark), Padauck, Oak, Purple Heart, Ash, Cherry, Ramin, and Walnut.

There are many articles covering the use of “out of the box” mouldings in frame design (the type of designing the majority of us do). There are others covering modifications of mouldings (gilding, washing, distressing). Then, there is a whole other technique that deals with using raw wood, or unfinished moulding, with elaborate processes that might seem time consuming for the novice. However, it is rewarding work with a simple foundation that you can master in time.

These unfinished hardwoods should be a line of mould-



Woods sanded and ready for oil



The oil will change the appearance of the woods



Applying the oil



Oil has been applied. Let it sink and soak in the wood.

ings you display on your wall that will be easy for you to finish. They should be profitable to sell. And they will be just the design your customer is looking for. Carrying these mouldings will also further distinguish you as a custom framer—one that can provide work and materials not commonly available at a “big box” frame shop.

The basic process is simple, but subject to a lot of finessing and exploration over time. A testament to the simplicity will be the brevity of these instructions. The finessing I will show over the course of several articles on the subject.

Note: Always be sure to read all labels and safety precautions since directions and procedures may vary from product to product.

To Begin:

Cutting

Cut and join the unfinished moulding as you would any other length of wood moulding. If you use a chopper, make the “bites” as small as possible (like you should on a regular moulding). And on a saw, pass the blade through as fast as possible without “bogging” it down. You do not want to burn the wood (again, the same as with any regular moulding).

Joining

If you use a vise and nails, you may want to pre-drill the nail holes to prevent splitting the wood (as you would on any finished hardwood frame). A little soap on the nail or screw can also make it slip in with greater ease. If you use

Unfinished Mouldings

an underpinner, make sure you are using the nails made for hardwoods. Be cautious with the glue and avoid getting it on the face of the frame. You could clean it from the face of the frame later, but why make extra work for yourself?

Sanding

Before you can begin sanding, you have to make a decision. If you use a wax-based putty (the stuff that never really dries), then apply any putty *after* the finish coat has been applied. If you use a wood putty that hardens, you may want to apply it before the finish. (This way it will stick to the wood surfaces better.) And it can be sanded smooth and flush when you sand the whole frame.

Sand until desired smoothness is gained. Finer is not always better. If you sand too fine and you want to use a deep penetrating stain or oil, it will not penetrate as well. Usually, 320 or 400 is enough. Once the frame is sanded and the dust removed (a tack cloth or air hose will do fine), you are ready to apply a basic finish.

Finishing

Brush on oil. Let sit, and wipe off. That's it. Let dry and you have a frame ready to fit.

Additional Details

Now the questions: What oil do I use? What wood do I use and where do I purchase it? How much extra time will this take? And most importantly, how much do I charge for this?

Linseed Oil

Linseed oil is the best known, and maybe the earliest oil, used in wood finishing. When applied in thin layers, it absorbs oxygen, dries, and forms a light protective film. This oxidization, or more correctly polymerization, is generally much too slow for this type of finishing. Additionally, the raw linseed oil never completely dries; it remains tacky, attracting dust and dirt.

Boiled Linseed Oil

Modern technology has produced boiled linseed oil, which dries much faster, and meets modern needs better. Boiled linseed oil finishes produce a decent looking, lasting finish that is easy to maintain and repair. But it still does have its drawbacks considering that there are better, more improved finishing oils available.

Two types of oils that have proven themselves to be stronger, more durable, and more practical in relation to drying times are tung oils and penetrating oils (more commonly known as Danish oils).

Tung Oil

Tung oil is extracted from the nuts of the tung tree. The tree originated in Asia, but is now grown in the southern United States. The oil is available in two basic forms: pure tung oil and thinned tung oil; however, for frame finishing purposes you need only concern yourself with thinned tung oil. It is different from the pure in that it has been thinned and drying agents have been added. In general, it is easier to use and actually can cost less. It is easy to apply, dries faster than boiled linseed oil, and more importantly, the film it produces is tougher (although it lacks luster).

Penetrating Oil Finishes

Penetrating oil finishes are manufactured products that harden the wood, as well as imparting an oil finish. These finishes may contain tung oil or boiled linseed oil, but manufacturers are reluctant to reveal exact contents or formulas. Some of the names you will see are Watco Danish Oil, Minwax Antique Oil, Deft Danish Oil finish, and Veratahne penetrating oil finish. A penetrating oil finish is easy to apply with a brush or rag, dries hard quickly, and provides protection as good as tung oil.■

See page 44 for information about suppliers of unfinished wood.

This is the first article in a series about finishing processes. Upcoming features will cover basic staining and finishing, basic dyes and finishing, and other uses of unfinished wood.

Unfinished Mouldings

| | Azuellas Woods, Inc. 312 Rosemont NE Albuquerque, NM 87102 800-522-1976 | Foster Planing Mill 1258 W. 58th St. Los Angeles, CA 90037 323-759-9156 | Picture Woods, Ltd. 5060 Chaparral Ct. Boulder, CO 80301 800-321-6522 | Vermont Hardwoods 25 Town Farm Rd. Chester, VT 05143 888-442-7396 | Xylo Moulding 2000 Louisville Rd. Savannah, GA 31412 800-627-5040 | Milton W. Bosley & Co. P.O. Box 576 Glen Burnie, MD 21060 800-638-5010 |
|--------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Woods | Ash, Basswood, Bubinga, Cherry, Cordia, Honduras Mahogany, Philippine Mahogany, Maple, BirdsEye Maple, Oak, Padauk, Poplar, Purple Heart, Rosewood, Teak, Walnut, Wenge | Ash, Basswood, Cherry, Honduras Mahogany, Koa (SA)*, Maple, Oak, Padauk, Poplar (D)*, Purple Heart, Ramin, Walnut | Ash, Butternut, Cherry, Maple, Soft Maple (custom order), Oak, Poplar (custom order), Walnut | Ash, Basswood, Cherry, Honduras Mahogany, Maple, Red Oak, Walnut | Amara, Ash, Basswood, Cherry, Honduras Mahogany, Honey Locust, Louro Faia, (TBD)*, Maple, Birdseye Maple, Fiddleback Maple, Oak, Partridge Wood, Pecan, Poplar, Purple Heart, Red Cedar, Rosewood, Teak (Asian), Teak (Surinam), Tigerwood (TBD)*, Urana (TBD)*, Walnut, Wormy Chesnut (SA)* | Ash, Basswood, Cherry, Honduras Mahogany, Maple (soft and hard), Oak (red and white), Poplar, Spanish Cedar, Pine (many varieties), Walnut |
| Length | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Chop | Yes | No | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Joined | Yes | No | No | No | No | Yes |
| Only unfinished, or able to finish? | Able to Finish | Only Unfinished | Able to Finish. | Able to Finish | Able to Finish | Able to Finish |
| Metal inlays? | Yes | No | No | No | No | No |
| Min order? | Yes, 6 ft. | No | No | No | Yes, 25 ft. | set up fee if < 50 ft. |
| Min custom order? | 6 ft | 300 ft | 100 ft | 20 ft | varies | none |
| # of profiles | 45 | 150-200 | 60 | 25 | 300 | approx. 500 |
| # of woods offered | 17 | 11 | 8 | 7 | 20 | 12 |
| All woods in all profiles? | † | Exotics only in contemporary profiles | 95% | 80% | 50% | Yes |
| Corner samples? | Yes | 2 ft lengths | Yes | Yes | Yes | No |
| Order wood to specific lengths | Yes | Yes, additional 20% | Yes, at chop price | No | † | † |
| Volume discount? | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Credit card? | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |

*SA-subject to availability

*TBD-to be discontinued

*D-discontinued

† Information unavailable at press time.

For a complete list of all suppliers of unfinished wood mouldings, consult the PFM Annual Directory issue.