



*From Sharp & to the Point;  
A Shameless Shill  
for Hock Tools, #4/2017*

## All Around the World, Workshops for Making Wooden Handplanes Are Here to Stay



**This is what making your own tools looks like!**

David Fleming's happy plane making students, l-r: Josh Owens, Christine Lee, DJ Zor, Mo Kirdani with their new handplanes. David teaches a host of workshops at his own shop as well as at The Southwest School of Woodworking.

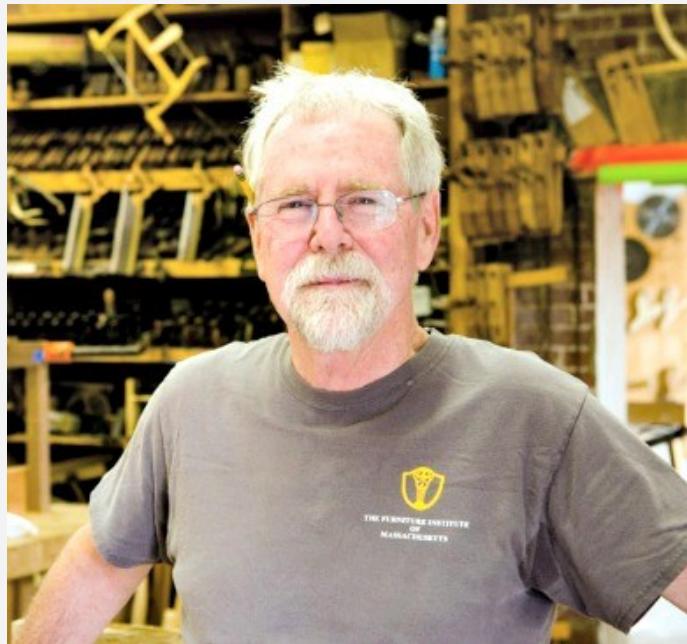
**T**his is our third article about schools that teach you to build your own wooden handplane, and this photograph from David Fleming shows us just what it feels like.

Schools generally do not offer these courses all the time. So, it is good to browse the Internet to check on your favorite school or schools in and around your location. Classes are listed with descriptions, dates, costs, and what you can expect. Woodworkers also vacation by taking such classes in places not so close to home. You might want to think about a bit of woodworking travel!

Also, think about this: woodworkers who make their own handplanes (and other tools) find it extremely satisfying to use them. They feel pride in having built a tool for themselves. They discover that their wooden handplanes are more immediate and to-the-touch than metal planes. Of course metal planes have their many uses, but they are different. Wooden handplanes — especially those molded to your own hands — are unlike generic manufactured metal planes. Your own wooden hand planes help you become facile, both at one with the tool and the work at hand.

— Linda at Hock Tools

## **1. The Furniture Institute of Massachusetts, Beverly, Massachusetts.**



**Master furniture maker Philip Lowe,  
Director of The Furniture Institute  
of Massachusetts.**

Perhaps you know Phil Lowe, who is long considered one of the U.S.'s most distinguished furniture makers and instructors, and whose Furniture Institute of Massachusetts's schedule sometimes includes a workshop on making handplanes. The winter 2017 workshop was taught by Gloucester, Massachusetts cabinetmaker John Cameron, who studied with James Krenov in 1993 and '94.

According to John and FIM, "A hand-made wooden plane is light, responsive and capable of the finest smoothing and shaping. In the Institute's two-day class, students employ basic wood-

working skills to transform a block of hardwood into a sensitive and lasting tool. As planes are completed, students learn or refine their sharpening

and planing techniques, including learning about a plane's overall mechanics, which develops each student's ability to handily troubleshoot and tune up any plane. Basic woodworking skills are practiced within the workshop to help students develop a high degree of accuracy in their own woodworking, making the plane they made at The Furniture Institute of Massachusetts a particularly valued and long-lasting woodworking tool. Students become more knowledgeable about a plane's mechanics, enabling confident troubleshooting and tuning of any plane."



**Using a metal plane to get the wooden hand plane's shape just right at Southwest School of Woodworking.**

ments, as sensitive in the hands of a craftsman as a fine violin is in the hands of a master musician, and I agree with him. You can hold it and use it in ways impossible (or at least awkward and uncomfortable) with a standard metal plane. It responds to changes in pressure as you use it,

**"Transform a block of hardwood into a sensitive and lasting tool..."**



**This Krenov styled wooden hand plane was made at Phil Lowe's Furniture Institute of Massachusetts with instructor John Cameron.**

## **2. Southwest School of Woodworking, Phoenix, AZ.**

The Southwest School of Woodworking was founded in 2013 by furniture-maker Raúl Ramírez. By collaborating with other professional teaching woodworkers, Raúl developed a school that provides a comprehensive woodworking curriculum. David Fleming, who, like John Cameron in Massachusetts, was a James Krenov student, but in 1985 and '86, leaves his own workshop to teach SCFC's wooden handplane workshops. David's course description discusses what he learned from Krenov, "Jim Krenov talked about his wooden planes as instru-

and with your hands wrapped around the body of the tool the process of planing wood becomes more of a sensory experience -- I would go so far as to say a sensual experience. The two-day workshop includes building a classic Krenov-style smoothing plane, fitted with an 0-1 Hock iron, along with a 3 oz. brass adjusting hammer.



**Student made wooden handplanes at Southwest School of Woodworking.**

There's nothing quite like the feeling you get the moment that first shaving exits the throat of a new plane, made with your own hands."

### **3. Mt. Diablo Unified School District's Adult Education Woodworking Program (MDAE), Pleasant Hill, CA.**

I'm not sure if this is a unique adult education program, but the woodworking program at MDAE is exceptional and far reaching in the San Francisco Bay Area's East Bay. This program takes on much of the promise of private and community school programs in fine woodworking, and reaches rather deeply into its community. A full faculty of woodworkers teach in this program, which includes a Master Series taught by woodworking professional Brian Condran, who in 1995 and '96 also studied with James Krenov. MDAE's Master Series is designed for woodworker seeking to elevate their woodworking skills beyond the hobby level.



**A raft of student made wooden hand planes from Mount Diablo Adult Education Woodworking Program's Master Series course taught by Brian Condran.**

#### 4. Highland Woodworking, Atlanta, GA.

Jim Dillon teaches a bi-monthly intro to hand planes at Highland Woodworking, a famous tool shop & school for woodworkers. He also teaches a one-night workshop where students build the Hock Krenov-style plane kit. It's a quick class, but students get a good idea of the basics, and take home a useful plane a professional helped them build. So, I say it's a win-win.

On February 2, Jim sent me an email saying, "In my bimonthly 'using hand planes' class, I show them all the steps in getting a rusty old flea market Stanley running. Then I take out my Hock plane and show them how you just check the sole for flatness, tap in the iron with a tiny hammer, and start making shavings . . . always a pleasure to lower that intimidation threshold with regards to a hammer-adjusted plane!"



A newly built wooden handplane from one of Jim Dillon's workshops at Highland Woodworking.



Jim Dillon teaching at Highland Woodworking. A white board makes any workshop legit!



Taken from a March 8, 2017 Jim Dillon tweet: *We had a great time at @highlandwood last night thanks to plane kits from @hocktools !*

So, yeah! Lots of fun and a lifetime tool to go along with it.

## **5. Centre for Fine Woodworking, Nelson, New Zealand.**

Now, this could be a vacation! Tucked away in the coastal town of Nelson, New Zealand, the Centre offers a wide selection of courses, including weekend workshops, project-based short courses for beginners and intermediate level, an 8-week beginners Intensive, master classes, guitar making courses, and a full-time furniture makers' program, or programme, depending...

One of the approaches the [Centre](#) takes to hand tool instruction is to demonstrate the difference between a standard plane blade and a Hock blade. Students notice the difference instantly; the extra thickness of the Hock blade gives a depth of control which is hard to achieve with a standard plane blade. The most interesting part of this demonstration is to show students how to look at what a tool offers, and then, if it isn't just so, that this means there are problems to be solved. In this case, Hock blades offer a solution to standard blades.



**Detail from the top of a student-made plane from [The Centre of Fine Woodworking](#). Did I tell you the title of this newsletter includes the words, *shameless shill*?**



**Student-made plane from [The Centre for Fine Woodworking](#). Wouldn't you say that this plane looks proud, ready for work, and happy to be on the bench? Plucky as the Brave Little Toaster!**

According to the Centre's Thorkild Hansen, "A wooden plane offers more stability than a metal plane as the wooden body absorbs the vibration. The pleasure of making your own personalized hand tool is most satisfying - not only can you customize it so it's visually appealing but you can also create something for the exact purpose of use, where a standard plane or spokeshave just doesn't quite do the job. In our plane making classes, students choose what type of plane they want to make - usually a block, smoothing or shooting plane -

although a couple of students have made a radius plane as they were going to be attending one of David Haig's "Curvature" Master Class.

## **6. Etz Ladaat (Tree of Knowledge) School of Fine Woodworking, Hazafon, Israel.**

At Etz Ladaat, head instructor Nathan Van't Hof thinks it important to learn plane making because it gives you freedom and control over your work, which offers self-sufficiency, opens the mind for innovation, and connects you to the craft.

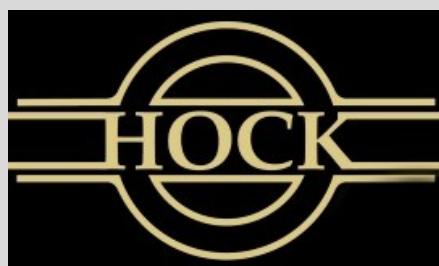


**Student made wooden handplanes at Etz Ladaat. Different shapes and sizes to fit each hand and working style.**



**Nathan Van't Hof instructs students on adjusting the blade in their Krenov styled wooden handplane at Etz Ladaat School of Fine Woodworking.**

Another woodworker inspired by the teachings and writings of James Krenov, Nathan's woodworking and his own teaching follows suit, "we believe that honest, true and individual work, where one can create fine furniture with emphasis on details through a dialogue with oneself, the material, the tools and the right relationship between all those, creates the joy of working with wood. Making tools in general is very important to understand how the tools work, and it allows one to more deeply connect to the work-process. In plane making even more so, because it is a complex tool. Making it fit your own hands and your posture is an amazing learning experience in fine woodworking."



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