

DESIGN WOODWORKING WELCOMES CHALLENGES OF HIGH-END VENEER MARKET

Millwork manager Alan Bade uses the Joos to press door stiles and rails with thick veneer faces. The cores themselves were laminated earlier in the press with a lower-grade material.

When Lodi, CA-based Design Woodworking Inc. made *Wood & Wood Product's* WOOD 100 in 2000, co-owners Stefan Sekula and David Worfolk attributed the success to a concerted effort to challenge their employees to increase their skills. "We support their efforts with teaching, tooling and technology," they said. The ultimate goal was company growth — both in size as well as scope.

The plan worked. Since that time, the company has nearly doubled its workforce from 12 to 20, and now operates two divisions under the Design Woodworking name: a 12,000-square-foot cabinetmaking division as well as a 10,000-square-foot millwork and interior door division.

Design Woodworking has also taken on increasingly challenging woodworking projects in the high-end, custom residential interior market. "We do whole house projects," explained Sekula. "We handle all the interior doors and paneling, ceiling treatments, cabinet work, and millwork packages, including cabinet trim, standing and running trim. We also do veneer trim, such as wide baseboards, to match casework panels." The company also produces custom flooring and furniture.

"In a typical year we will do between five and 20 projects; some of the residential projects can last from two to three years," Sekula added. Smaller projects, such as kitchen cabinetry and furniture, are scheduled among the long-term projects.

Veneer Work Brings Big Business

In the cabinetry and millwork operations, Design Woodworking uses a wide range of veneers. "The work we do is high end and primarily custom, and veneer work is a big part of that," Sekula said. Anigre, mahogany and a wide variety of figured and plain domestic hardwoods, such as rift cut white oak, maple and quartered figured cherry have been popular with clients. Softwoods such as hemlock, Port Orford cedar and clear vertical grain fir



The base of this armoire features lacewood veneer with mahogany carved legs. Design Woodworking specializes in custom veneered furniture, cabinetry, millwork and flooring.



are also favored by Northern California clientele.

"We have a Joos press in each of our facilities," said Sekula. "A 4-by-8-foot Joos press has been in the cabinet facility for the past four years and we added a 5-by-10-foot Joos press when the millwork shop opened two years ago. We used to do all the work in one location, but it made sense to separate them," he added.

"Both Joos presses get used for a variety of things. We obviously press veneer with them but we also use them to laminate core stock for interior doors. We do laminated beams and veneered moulding. We also do cabinet components in the Joos presses. Right now, we have a small furniture job that has quarter sawn white oak panels. We are pressing those to go into the solid rails and stiles of the furniture."

The presses' capabilities allow Design Woodworking to do a variety of jobs in short order, which is a bonus for the company. "We find the Joos presses extremely flexible," said Sekula.

The larger Joos press is used to make custom flooring; out-feed tables enable the machine to step press 20- to 25-foot lengths. Although the flooring business constitutes a small percentage of jobs, it enables the company to be a full service millwork shop. "We do custom laminated flooring on a limited basis as well as a hand-selected grade of solid wood flooring as a service to our clients who request it," said Sekula.

One job involved finding wide rift cut white oak in 8- to 12-foot lengths. "We select flooring that is specific to a room size so there won't be any butt joints and the boards are matched from one side of the room to the other. We have done prefinished flooring of 20 to 25 boards to a room, for example, all labeled. Another specific market we have done work for is custom laminated flooring featuring long lengths and wide faces, where we are basically making very high end engineered flooring. We aren't typical floor makers and we don't mass produce — we couldn't afford to do this work more than occasionally — but it is a service to our clients. We make a dramatically different flooring product from what is available."

Sekula said he likes the Joos presses because they are not only flexible, but trouble free. "We condition them monthly, but they are very good machines; the machines give us quick setup. Joos also provides great customer service and technical advice."

SEE THE JOOS PRESSES AT IWF BOOTH #9550