

**THE WINSTON CHURCHILL
MEMORIAL TRUST OF
AUSTRALIA**

REPORT BY - TONY KENWAY 1998 CHURCHILL FELLOW

**PROJECT - TO STUDY THE DESIGN, MANUFACTURE MARKETING
AND EXPORT OF QUALITY CONTEMPORARY FURNITURE**

JAPAN, FRANCE, SPAIN, ITALY, UNITED KINGDOM and USA.

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INTRODUCTION

A Winston Churchill Fellowship granted in 1998 gave me the opportunity to further my knowledge pertinent to the designing, making and exporting of quality contemporary furniture. My itinerary included Japan, France, Spain, Italy, UK and USA.

I visited numerous workshops, furniture schools and museums, attended International Furniture Fairs in Milan and New York, studied under carvers Ben Harmes and Ray Garzales in Dorset, England, and at the Royal Collection Workshops in London. I also evaluated export markets for Quality Australian furniture by visiting suitable galleries and showrooms in Tokyo, Milan, London, New York and San Francisco.

The following people were instrumental in my Fellowship:

- Sachico Tamai Australian Embassy, Tokyo
- Mr Yoshitada Yammaguchi Furniture writer and agent Tokyo
- David Wheeler Royal Collection London
- Don Fortesque Prof. Furniture California College of Arts and Crafts, San Francisco and Churchill Fellow
- Geoff Hannah and Justin Crisp- Churchill Fellows- who's encouragement has been invaluable.

PROGRAMME

JAPAN	<p>Tokyo</p> <p>Mr Yoshitada Yamaguchi Furniture writer and Koubou Kagu Gallery Co-ordinator / Gallery manager</p> <p>Mitsukoshi Dept. Store</p> <p>Matsuya Dept Store</p> <p>Kagura Furniture Station</p> <p>Idee Furniture Co.</p> <p>B.C.I. Furniture Co.</p> <p>Inoui Tool Shop Traditional Japanese tools</p> <p>Mr Masoyuki Morito Craftsman</p> <p>Mr Masuyama Hiroshi Windsor style chair maker</p>
	<p>Sizuoka Mr Himi Product Designer</p> <p>Mr Eiji Mitsui Craftsman</p>
	<p>Nara</p> <p>Mr Ryohei Miyamoto Guide and craftsman</p> <p>Prof. Masoto Fujisaki Prof. of 'Urushi' Lacquer</p>
	<p>Fukui</p> <p>Kasuki Kengiro Tansu or Sea Chest craftsman</p>
	<p>Takaoa</p> <p>Takaoka National College University and workshop facilities</p> <p>Mr Kenju Komatsu, Assoc. Prof. furniture Dept.</p>
	<p>Inami</p> <p>Mr Kenzu Ishihata Traditional carving town and workshop visits</p>
	<p>Inokora</p> <p>World Heritage village visit</p>
	<p>Takayama</p> <p>Oak Village Contemporary Furniture Co.</p>

			Factory kilns and showroom
		Shinrin Takumi Julku	Furniture school
		Mr Masahiko Nakanish	Designer craftsman
FRANCE	Paris	Louvre	Traditional French furniture
		Palace of Versailles	
		Muse D'Orsay	Art Nourveau &Belgian Furniture
		Notre Dame Cathedral	
		Bastille	Furniture Design / Showrooms
SPAIN	Barcelona	Sagrada Familia	Unfinished major work of Antonio Gaudi
		Casa Battlo	Gaudi designed house
		Guell Park and Museum	Furniture designs by Gaudi
		Casa Mila	Salvador Dali Exhibition
ITALY	Milan	Milan Furniture Fair	
		Triennale, Phillip Stark, A. Castiglioni	Lectures
		Castello Sforzeco	Furniture collection and Michaelangelo sculptures

ENGLAND	London	Royal Collection Workshops Morbourough House	Visits to Furniture, framing and Armoury workshops
		Victoria and Albert Museum	
		Windsor Castle	
		Various furniture showrooms and galleries including; David Linley Furniture, Liberties and Harrods.	
		Interview with <i>LIVING ETC</i> Furniture Magazine	
	Dorset	Gonzales and Harmes	Studied carving and Gold Gilding techniques
		John Makepiece Parnham House & Hook Park	School and gallery. Woodlot
	Wiltshire	David Calwell 'Tranon Furniture'	Steam bending
		Matthew Bert Chartwell House	Craftsman Visit
	USA	New York	International Furniture Fair
Leo Kaplan Modern Gallery			
John Elder Gallery			
Barry Fieldman Gallery			Art Deco Collection
Pritam and Eames Gallery			
Cooper Hewitt Museum			
Museum of Modern Art			
San Francisco		Don Fortesque California College of Arts and Crafts	
		San Francisco Design Centre, Idea House	
		Garry Knox Bennett	Workshop visit

Turcera Gallery

Art Carpenter

Craftsman

Michael Cooper

Sculptor

Mendocino

Highlight Gallery

William Zimmer Gallery

Fort Bragg

James Krenov

School of the Redwoods.

MAIN BODY

JAPAN

TOKYO

I was greatly aided in Japan by Mr Yositada Yamaguchi, a furniture journalist whom I met at a Sydney exhibition. My itinerary was worked out in detail with the aid of Mrs Sachio Tamai and Mr Yamaguchi at the Australian Embassy, in Tokyo.

Mr Yamaguchi and I set off to visit many furniture companies, showrooms and craftsmen in the Tokyo area, including *Inoui* a traditional Japanese tool shop, where we were greeted by the master who explained some of the finer points of tool design and making.

We visited several furniture companies that had their own showrooms. At *Kagura Furniture Company* I found some very well made cabinets and carved chairs with fantastic joinery. However, I thought the tables were over simplified and lacked consideration for timber warpage e.g. 70x70 legs simply attached to slab tops.

At *Idee* I found ultra modern, brightly coloured furniture and kitchen cabinetry made as single wall units out of stainless steel and Japanese oak, selling for around A\$34 000 per unit. At *B C I Furniture Company* Mr Suzuki employs various designers to design furniture to be made in Indonesia out of Teak. He also had some Japanese Oak-‘Nara’-slabs for table tops selling for around A\$3-5000 which proved to me the high value placed on large slabs in Japan.

The large department stores *Mitsukoshi* and *Matsuya* were impressive, the finest work I saw was the traditional Kimino Cabinet range made from Paulownia or ‘Kiri’. These were superbly made and finished only in a natural wax. A feature was the handmade hardware and secret compartments, selling for up to A\$93 000 each.

I noticed all the furniture including imports were somewhat lower in height than in Australia. Table tops were around 700(H) seats 400(H) and coffee tables, called ‘Zataku’ around 325(H). It was obvious that the highest quality work was greatly respected and was priced accordingly.

At *Matsuya* Department Store an area was set aside for exhibitions where furniture craftsmen can hold “one man shows” for a week or two. There is a long waiting list for exhibitors and as yet no foreigner has held a show there. The managers are very cautious and are concerned about after sales service, language barriers, etc. and therefore hesitate to invite non Japanese to exhibit. I suspect that with persistence, quality work would be accepted.

SIZUOKA

I travelled south to Sizuoka and was met by Mr Himi who took me to an established traditional furniture factory employing 10 people. All work was in solid timber and well made. We also met craftsman Eiji Mitsui and Yujiro Sugiyama.

That evening I was joined by 6 craftsmen from the area for a pre-arranged dinner and slide show where I gave a slide talk and also saw slides of their work.

NARA

In Nara I was met by Mr Ryohei Miyamoto, we visited Horyuji and Todaigi historic timber temples of the old capital. I began to appreciate the knowledge of timber and construction methods needed to build such structures from large Cypress trees. Interestingly, the timber from a tree found on a northern slope was used on the northern side of the temple, so that it was subject to similar conditions.

I also met Mr Makato Fujisaki, a retired professor of 'Urushi Lacquercraft' from Kyoto University of Fine Arts and discussed the qualities and difficulties of Urushi, including health risks.

FUKUI

In Fukui I was met by Mr Kasuki Kengiro, a traditional sea chest or 'Funa-dansu' maker with a well equipped workshop employing 3 people. All pieces have a sequence of locks leading to hidden compartments, they were very well made from Key-ya-ki, a prized Japanese timber and polished traditionally with Urushi. The demand and prices received for this traditional work in Japan is very good.

TAKAOKA

From Fukui I traveled up the west coast to the culturally rich area around Kanazawa. I was met at Takaoka National College by Kenji Komatsu, Associate Professor of Department of Industrial Arts. The department was extremely well equipped with the latest tools and machinery from around the world. Kenji is well versed in traditional Japanese techniques and has also studied in Sweden and USA. He is now writing a book on traditional Japanese tools and techniques, and is a key organiser for a biennial sculptor exhibition in Inami, where artists from over the globe are invited to take part in this two week, hands on event.

INAMI

From the coast I headed up into the mountains to Inami, a 1200 year old sculptor's town with 200 wood artisans out of a population of 30 000. This is an obvious tourist attraction and carvers can be seen working in shop fronts in the towns main streets. I visited several workshops in the area looking at the use of 'Kuss' or Camphor Laurel for their traditional lintel carvings.

TAKAYAMA

En-route from Inami to Takayama I visited the world heritage villages of Inkora and Onimach. I also visited *Oak Village*, a well known cooperative set up by Mr Inamoto, a retired nuclear physicist, to build quality contemporary furniture in an ideal setting. Now *Oak Village* employs 20-30 people. It is very well established and has a showroom, polishing rooms, saw mill, kilns furniture and carpentry workshops. The items were well made from Oak and Walnut and the most expensive pieces were traditionally polished with Urushi.

Whilst in the area I visited *ShriniTakumi Juku*, a private furniture school founded by Osami Shoji. An idealistic school where students work to produce furniture to help pay for their fees whilst learning. The students and teachers were very enthusiastic and loved what they were achieving. I was impressed with this method of learning fine woodwork whilst still involved with production in the 'real world'. Students were also involved with propagating and planting native species as part of their training.

Finally I visited Takayama, also known as little Kyoto, a Samarai town built by craftsmen, now a popular tourist destination. I was met by Mr Nakanish a furniture designer maker with a factory employing 8 people. He uses mainly walnut from Hokaido a relatively cheap cabinet timber in Japan and comes in large slabs. The factory was like many I saw in Japan well equipped with a veneer press, overhead routers and re-saws. All machinery is Japanese made and timbers I saw being used by craftsmen were from Japan or China.

OVERVIEW

By this time I was rather exhausted from moving around so quickly. The Japanese were extremely friendly and helpful. Getting around was easy on trains and what little Japanese I spoke was helpful.

Many craftsmen in Japan are influenced by the work of William Morris and James Krenov which is apparent in their designs. However, the craftsmen certainly add a touch of Japan to these design styles. Fine workmanship and attention to detail is a part of Japanese culture and is expected as a standard.

The Japanese have a natural affinity with fine woodwork and the opportunity exists for Australia to make an impact in this area. Our timbers are very different to theirs and would be well received, particularly large slabs of red hardwood and our cabinet species.

The best outlets for marketing I saw, for quality production furniture, was the large department stores like Mitsukoshi and Matsuya. To ensure success, a concentrated effort by F.I.A.A. or a similar body would be needed to set up a relationship and a continual supply of furniture with guaranteed quality and after sales service. For the craftsmen wishing to export *Koubou Kagu* gallery in Shinjuku, Tokyo is worth a try.

I found the Japanese very cautious business people who don't make on the spot decisions, however, once committed they are very honourable, which I'm sure has something to do with their international success. The craftsmen I met were very similar to craftsmen throughout Australia. The exchange of more information between our countries would be beneficial. To this end I will be assisting Mr Yamaguchi with a group of craftsmen touring Australia in 1999.

FRANCE

PARIS

As a contemporary designer with a traditional background it was a must to visit the major museums in the area. The *Louvre* was inspirational, particularly the chambers of Napoleon III.

Muse` D'Orsay has a good collection of Art Nouveau, Charles Renee McKintosh and Thonet furniture which gave me a clearer perspective on the evolution of design.

At *Versailles*, the Hall of Mirrors and the Apartments of Louis 15th and Marianne Antionette were worth a visit. I was enriched by the quality and greatness of the work I had seen.

In town *Bastelle* and *St Antoine* were the best furniture outlets. Many buyers from Europe, Japan, South America etc buy very exclusive furniture here. Styles from Regency to ultra modern can be seen in very well presented showrooms. The quality of the workmanship and materials was reasonable but the finishes, however, were immaculate.

SPAIN

BARCELONA

The fluid designs of Gaudi have always inspired me. The unfinished *Sagrada Familia* is fantastic, I was taken by the plaster models that were made for the builders to copy as no drawing could adequately show the designers intent.

Casa Batllo is a house designed by Gaudi and features a facade that is almost surreal, with bulbous walls slumping over the next to create a feeling of movement.

At *Guelle Park* is a museum with a collection of Gaudis furniture designs. 'Gordy' is the term I would use for some of the pieces there. He took the materials' capabilities to the limit to achieve the shapes he was after. The test of time and timber movement proved some flaws in his approach and I concluded that Gaudis forte` was not in furniture design.

Barcelona with the works of Gaudi, Picasso and Dali is an inspirational place for sure. These artists from Spain were ahead of their time and rejected by some, but have certainly left their mark.

ITALY

MILAN

Milan, for me, lived up to its reputation as the design capital of the world. I was there for the International Furniture Fair, which is a major event for the city creating a festive atmosphere. The event is huge and takes a week to have a good look around. Exhibitors from all over the globe attend and buyers are there each year to select new and exciting designs.

I was very impressed with the presentation of the stands at this show - semi transparent screens, music, glass boxes housing special or new designs, hung or tilted furniture, colour, water and unusual floor coverings were all used to create special effect.

This year the organisers, 'Cosmit', introduced a new pavilion called 'Satellite'. This was sponsored by the organisers to attract new and young designers to exhibit, keeping the show fresh and vibrant.

'Satellite' was open to the public till 9pm daily and had some special events on each day. I found this part of the fair the most interesting and I'm sure all the visitors and talent scouts from large furniture manufacturers made a point to visit as well.

For Australian designers and makers wishing to exhibit in Milan, I would recommend this pavilion. To make an impact, it would be wise to group together, seek government assistance, get help from locals or Australians living in Milan and design a stand that was unique. Quality of work is a must and should be presented with style in a friendly and relaxed atmosphere.

UNITED KINGDOM

LONDON

ROYAL COLLECTION WORKSHOP

After the difficulties associated with different languages etc, I found London a pleasant change.

At Morbourn House I was welcomed by David Wheeler, foreman of the Royal Collection Workshops. This was the first workshop I've been where the craftsmen wear suit and tie to work.

The workshops were just back to normal after the extensive amount of work done on the restoration of Windsor Castle.

I spent several days observing the restoration of pieces from the collection including three huge lights in the form of lotus leaves to be housed in Buckingham Palace, display cabinets for the jewellery collection and the restoration of large gilded picture frames which were cleaned meticulously with cotton buds and repaired to exact detail. Each area of work had specialists who were highly skilled in their field.

The Royal Collection Workshops, though not my exact area of study, was beneficial for me to witness craftsmanship at such a high level. Work was carried out with little attention to time spent. The focus was clearly restoration of works of art from past centuries so that future generations can enjoy. I also noted that pieces from the 12th century, for example, were sometimes made using parts from earlier works made 3-400 years previously, as is still the case today. Traditional materials and techniques are still used. The body of knowledge held in these workshops is great and for someone specialising in this area of restoration, a period working here would be extremely beneficial.

Also in London I visited the Victoria and Albert Museum. I found the furniture collection very comprehensive and took many photos of favourite pieces.

WINSOR CASTLE

David took me to Windsor for an indepth guided tour around the castle giving me an insight into the size of the restoration project. Craftsmen from over the UK were called to hone their traditional skills All work was carried out to meticulous detail. The *Octagon Room* is modern timber masterpiece, its neo gothic arches sawn from solid oak are architecturally and technically magnificent. It was obvious that the craftsmen felt privileged to be involved with something as grand as this for the Queen and country. I'm sure this was a key factor to the project finishing on time and within budget.

LONDON OUTLETS

I was keen to see the current furniture trends in London so I visited several well known outlets and galleries including:- *Conrans, Pervis & Pervis, Harods, Haus, David Linley, Maples, Liberties and Heals*. In general the work on sale in London was similar to that which would be found in Sydney. *Haus* has some classic pieces and represents Ron Arid and some Italian designers, but surprisingly I found no gallery in London representing designer craftsmen doing one off pieces.

The showroom of *David Linley* was impressive, he has a staff of 60 or so and caters for the very wealthy in England. An ex student of *Parnham* and a royal who has a good eye, his designs are classical and the inlay work and general craftsmanship was superb. I was a little surprised to learn that his rather costly pieces were made from veneered craftwood and some finishes were nitrocellulose lacquers simply 'off the gun'. However, some of the finer pieces were french polished.

Prices, for example, ranged between 12 000 to 30 000 pounds, for inlayed fold up tables. His business offers a complete service including beautifully presented drawings, promotional books etc. This together with David's well connected family and a Kings Road shop front, has made a very vibrant business with an apparent good future.

Two major furniture galleries in the UK worth a visit are;- *Artsex* in Burmingham and *Artisana* in Liverpool, recommended by Betty Norbury who has written several books on craftsmen in the UK.

GONZALES & HARMES (Woodcarving workshop)

It was refreshing to stop and put on the work clothes for a while after moving around so quickly.

The workshop is situated in Wadeford, a quaint little village in Dorset. Ray and Ben have been in business together for 10 years or so. They now employ 4 carvers on a 'piece work' basis. Projects include:- larger than life lion carvings for Windsor Castle and contemporary carving on John Makepiece furniture.

Ray's son was also involved in the business with his own casting room making resin castings from some of the carvings in the workshop. The project on hand was a series of traditional carved and gilded mirror frames for a palace in Kuwait.

I was keen to witness the workshop processes and quickly got involved with designing and making the mirror frames. After the initial settling in I spent much of the time involved in a multitude of jobs including use of arbitec, dremel, copy routers, gesso, oil and water gilding, traditional carving and I witnessed casting in plaster and resin.

This time was technically very rewarding. I could move around the workshop freely and became involved in the work that was unfamiliar to me. The workshop had a professional approach and many techniques have been evolved here to save time. I was continuously learning new and more efficient methods, particularly in carving and shaping wood quickly.

The workshop had a friendly relaxed atmosphere. The workers kept their own hours as they were only paid for work done. This seemed to eliminate much of the stress involved with normal employer employee relationships.

PARNHAM HOUSE

Parnham House and the furniture of John Makepiece was very inspirational for me to see. Originally set up as a school and gallery to display contemporary works of art in wood in an old traditional manor, proving that the two can complement each other very well.

I was shown through the school by David Buss, one of the teachers and ex student of Parnham. I had a good look at work in progress, met students and gave several talks to 1st and 2nd year students on my furniture business and the 'scene' in Australia. Students were very keen to hear how one survives in the real world.

The coarse director is Gordon Duggan, a Canadian designer who taught and worked at the Domus Academy in Milan. I found him to be very intellectual in his approach. He teaches the 'language of design' and pushes students to use cognitive processes to focus and come up with design to convey a 'message'. Students are continually challenged and inspired by guest speakers from Europe.

Under Gordon's leadership the coarse now includes:-

- Design theory and philosophy
- Business studies
- Computer skills
- Environmental considerations.

Approximately 50% of time is spent in the workshop understanding the materials and techniques. As Gordon said "We are about teaching design entrepreneurs of the future more than the craftsman".

The workshop of John Makepiece, which is separate from the school, was particularly beneficial for me. I was shown around by the foreman and discussed

techniques that are used there. They push the materials to their limit. John Makepiece does the initial sketches and works with a model maker in 1:10 scale, the rest is up to the craftsmen in the workshop. Materials like cast aluminium, craftwood, epoxy and colour are all used to full effect. John is the administrator and chairperson of Parnham Trust.

There is a gallery and restaurant in the manor and his private residence upstairs is open to the public on Sundays. Occasionally, a invitational dinner is arranged for special guests and old clients.

All these factors have helped his designs to sell well at prices that represent art value.

HOOK PARK WOODLOT

David Buss from Parnham kindly took me on a day trip to Hook Park (part of the Parnham trust since the 1500's). A tree farm, Hook Park is now 360 acres of woodland with two large workshops and accommodation buildings. The structures are built using where possible, saplings and materials from the park. The plan for Hook Park is to create a self sufficient sustainable school and workshop in the centre of the woodland.

The woodlot is now made up of mostly young trees. The original oak and birch was clear felled by the Forestry Commission. Replanting was done after the 2nd world war in European beech and conifers like Norway spruce and Douglas fir, for the purpose of making gun stocks and mining props. This has been found to be a mistake as these timbers often don't do well and are no longer in demand. The timber from these introduced fast growers appears to be inferior. They have also found that the tree's dislike for an area often only appears down the track after initial fast growing.

This policy has changed and the experts are now recommending oaks, birch and other indigenous broadleaves as the preferred species. Quality registered seed is now available from selected stands.

After visiting Hook Park and learning about its history I could not help but draw parallels with Australia's forest policy, particularly the mistakes made with the introduction of unsuitable species in areas where the more valuable natives are a better option all round

STEAM BENDING (David Calwell).

I took the opportunity to visit several furniture makers in the area south of London including David Calwell of *Tranan Furniture*. David is a well known designer with examples of his simple steam bent chairs in the V & A in London. David and his partner employ 6-7 in an old factory out of town.

Young ash thinnings are bought from woodlots around the area, they are milled, steamed, bent and kiln dried ready for use for furniture making within two weeks. Interestingly, fast growing young trees are preferred for steam bending.

UK OVERVIEW

The designer makers in the UK are going through a good phase. Many are expanding in step with the economy. The younger generation are often the buyers of contemporary furniture and this market appears to be increasing.

Many designer makers and smaller manufacturers hold 'open days' in their showrooms and workshops. Much of their business is generated this way.

I was surprised by the lack of a good gallery in London representing the many fine designer makers in the area.

Finally, the general appreciation and demand for quality in the UK seems to be well matured. This has led to success for many designer makers.

U S A

NEW YORK

THE INTERNATIONAL CONTEMPORARY FURNITURE FAIR

The ICFF is a much smaller more intimate fair compared to Milan. It is very much like a good trade show in Australia but has a more international focus. Many design schools had examples of student work on display. There were a few designer makers from over the US but not the big names. Like Milan, this show is more about contracts than making direct sales.

For Australian manufacturers wanting to enter the US market this could be a good starting point. There is, however, larger domestic furniture shows in the US for example, 'High Point' and 'Philadelphia'

For the designer makers wishing to export, SOFA, (sculptural objects of functional art), in Chicago and New York attracts collectors from over the US.

I.C.F.F. New York - Kagan's timeless designs

GALLERIES AND OUTLETS IN NEW YORK

After meeting many designers at the ICFE, I had a good idea on which galleries were worth a visit.

Leo Kaplan Modern on 5th Ave has a great collection of wood and metal art furniture. The works here were very whimsical and designed with the focus on colour, texture and form, rather than craftsmanship and functionality. This work seemed to be the trend with collectors in New York and was attracting the best prices.

Also in town, I visited many galleries and showrooms in the Soho and Chelsea areas. The furniture shops had a good variety of furniture but mostly American, made from cherry.

The market in New York is somewhat different to middle America. New Yorkers are on the move and have different requirements. Successful designs here are multi functional and compact. Environmental impact is also an important consideration and for many customers the bottom line. I noticed here that the furniture was rather 'crafty' with a handmade look, solid timber and oil finishes were popular. This good quality manufactured furniture has helped set a price point in the market place from which 'studio furniture' makers could base their prices.

LONG ISLAND

PRITAM & EAMES GALLERY

This is a well established gallery with works from some of the finest craftsmen in the USA. Well known makers were selling pieces for very good prices ,for example I saw bronze 'limited edition' coffee tables by Judy McKee for US \$28 000 and Kristine Madsen's cabinet on a stand for US \$25 000. Notably there wasn't any pieces from outside the US. The gallery has a long waiting list of potential suppliers. Space here is in high demand.

SAN FRANCISCO

I was greeted in San Francisco by Don Fortesque, an Australian designer who is now head of the furniture department at the California College of Arts and Crafts. Don was in the final stages of organising a Furniture Society of America conference to be held at the C.C.A.C. We went to several exhibitions in the bay area and I had a good look at the furniture at the college.

In town was a collection of showrooms housed in the *San Francisco Design Centre*. This is a centre designed to attract interior designers and architects to view furnishings and to bring clients with them to help select a variety of works under one roof.

On the top level was '*Idea house*', an area set aside to house a selection of pieces from the showrooms in the design centre. This is put together by a well known interior designer and is a great way to view pieces in a natural house setting. I was very impressed with this approach and found it a great way to market many items that compliment each other.

Whilst in the area I took the opportunity to visit several craftsmen in their workshops. I traveled up the coast visiting Garry Bennet, Art Carpenter and Michael Cooper all of whom are well established. It was very interesting for me to meet and talk with them and from their experiences. We exchanged information and I found them particularly interested in Australia.

FORT BRAGG

SCHOOL OF THE REDWOODS

Here I was welcomed by James Krenov, founder of the school, now in his 70's and still making superb cabinets and teaching part time. The school is at the forefront of craftsman schools in the US. Students from the US and overseas came to do 1-2 year courses in the fine art of cabinet making.

U S A OVERVIEW

The size of the market in the US for 'studio' furniture seems to be as large as the rest of the world put together. I noticed a price difference between east and west coast. New York certainly attracted the highest prices I saw.

There is a strong network of craftsmen initiated by Fine Woodworking Magazine. The Furniture Society of U.S.A. is now the body that keeps them all communicating and organises a major conference yearly.

Design schools seem to be focusing less on craftsmanship and more on innovative design. There also appears to be opportunity in the US to link designer craftsman and manufacturer together. This is probably due to the sheer size of the market.

Gallery directors and craftsmen I met all had a high regard for Australian craftsmanship and the innovative work coming from here, particularly that which has been exhibited at 'SOFA' in recent years and has done very well.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The fellowship gave me a broad insight into successful design styles and trends, the state of the markets in the countries I visited and the particular needs of those countries. Personally, I picked up many design ideas and techniques that I will incorporate into my work.

EXPORT MARKETS

For the craftsman designer or manufacturer wishing to export, Japan and USA are definitely worth considering.

The Japanese have a very high regard for quality and are collectors of fine things. The relatively close proximity to Australia is important and the links between our countries are strong. Quality is essential and should be presented well. In business they are very honorable and must be treated likewise.

In Tokyo the large department stores are where people expect to find quality. An Australian area set aside at one of these stores, promoting our unique timbers and quality craftsmanship, is worth pursuing.

The notable design trends were Scandinavian or north European - simple uncluttered design with emphasis on natural timber. Traditional Japanese furniture is still popular, catering for the older or more traditional Japanese. This was some of the finest furniture I saw and was priced accordingly.

In the USA the current state of the economy offers very real export opportunities for Australian furniture craftsmen and manufacturers. Unlike the Japanese I found the Americans willing to make quick business decisions. They are also good collectors and love uniqueness, particularly if there is a 'story' attached. In many respects Australia is like a mini America and the quality of work in Australia compares very well to that which I saw in the US. There are many craftsman making 'studio furniture'. Australian craftsmen need to show uniqueness to make an impact.

I noticed most galleries were interested in 'Art' furniture rather than well crafted pieces. This was particularly apparent in New York. Judging by the prices I saw, the purist craftsmen were finding it more difficult than the more 'whimsical' conceptual artists in furniture. On the other hand young designers were sort after by furniture manufacturers to create quality new production furniture.

In Seattle, a model gallery exists where craftsmen have set up a co-operative to collectively sell their work. Now called *North West Fine Woodworking*, this gallery turns over around US \$2 million per year, employs a full time manager and charges an unusually low commission of 25%-30%. Craftsmen are very supportive of this co-op and often prefer to sell through the gallery than take on commissions. This is the type of innovative idea needed in Australia to showcase our many talented craftsmen under the one roof.

In Europe and the UK my impression generally, was that it would be more difficult for Australian furniture to be accepted.

The Milan Furniture Fair is the most internationally visited fair of it's kind and most countries are represented. The new satellite pavilion would be the ideal venue for Australia to have a collection of work represented. This is an opportunity to reach the world market relatively easily.

IMPROVEMENTS IN AUSTRALIA

As Australia is a small player internationally, we need to collectively work toward a goal to be more successful exporters. We possess a great depth of talent as manufacturers and designers and our timbers, both hardwood and softwood are unique. This together with our current exchange rate offers some definite advantages.

From my observations, an improvement in the co-ordinating of potential exporters is needed. The high quality of work produced here is most important and should be encouraged and monitored before export. We cannot make a successful lasting impact without consistent quality.

Domestic trade shows and exhibitions need to encourage and offer awards to new and innovative designers to show latest work and to network with potential manufacturers and exporters. This needs to be encouraged by an independent government body, keeping the long term objective in view.

In the USA and Italy individuals with talent are quickly picked up by large manufacturers. This is more difficult in Australia but needs to be encouraged.

To promote Australian furniture overseas every effort needs to be made to encourage potential exporters at all levels, particularly quality furniture with uniqueness. A long term approach to Australians position as an exporter of fine unique furniture needs to be taken. Forestry, training, and export policy needs to be clear and flexible enough to allow:-

- small land owners tax incentives to establish indigenous plantations,
- furniture training schools to nurture young talent , and
- established craftsmen to have access to assistance to exhibit overseas.

I see the need for a full time co-ordinator, someone who has a clear overview of the furniture scene here in Australia and also an understanding of world export markets, government assistance etc. This may help suitable people make the first step.

The Furniture Association of Australia and Kaga Australia are doing some necessary work in this area and need to be encouraged.

DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION

Since my return I have been busy catching up on my business affairs. The amount of information gained has been immense, it has taken some time to digest it all and form my conclusions. I have written several articles on my travels for Australian Wood Review magazine, one is a review on the I.C.F.F. in New York and the other is on my impressions of Japan, it's furniture and craftsmen, I will continue to write a series of articles on my findings.

Many craftsmen, both local and interstate, have contacted me to discuss my fellowship and conclusions, particularly with respect to potential export markets and exhibitions.

In 1999 I will be giving a slide talk in Sydney and several local talks including local schools and wood work associations.

I have had some discussions with N.S.W. Forestry and the Sub Tropical Farm Forestry Association on my findings and thoughts on this issue and will continue to do so.

Already I have incorporated some new design ideas and techniques into my work and feel more confident in making these changes.

Furthermore, the valuable connections I have made have opened many doors and I am now eager to build on this network.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- TONY KENWAY Lot 2 Coorabell Road, Coorabell, N.S.W. 2479 Australia.
Phone (02) 6684 7102 Fax (02) 6684 7048.
- OCCUPATION Furniture Designer Craftsman
- FELLOWSHIP To study the design, manufacture, marketing and export of quality contemporary furniture
- JAPAN : Aided by Yoshitada Yamaguchi from Koubou Kagu Gallery - Tokyo.
: Best outlets, large department stores like Matsuya and Mitsukoshi
: Good potential for Australian craftsmen wishing to export
: Craftsmanship, solid timber and natural finishes much appreciated
: Simple uncluttered designs most popular
: Height, size, and cultural requirements in furniture an important consideration for exporters.
- MILAN : Largest international furniture fair in the world
FURNITURE : New satellite pavilion best for Australians wishing to exhibit
FAIR : General presentation very impressive and stylish
: Trend towards simple 'zen' style in contemporary furniture (light coloured veneered timber)
: Latest manufacturing processes influencing design e.g. cast aluminium and 3D laser wood imprinting.
- UNITED : Designer craftsmen well supported
KINGDOM : Lack of major craftsmen gallery in London
: Traditional furniture still valued but a noticeable trend toward contemporary furniture
: Open days most popular way of marketing hand crafted furniture
: Progressive forestry practices ie; private indigenous woodlots supplying craftsmen and small manufactures
: Ash thinnings preferred for steam bent furniture.

- USA. : Aided by Prof. Don Fortesque from California college of Arts and crafts
- :I.C.F.F. in New York much smaller than Milan Fair but most important international fair in the USA
- and : High demand for quality timber furniture with a personal touch 'story' attached
- : A noticeable trend in studio furniture to a more 'whimsical', 'art furniture' approach attracting higher prices
- : Design schools focusing more on innovative design for industry rather than craftsmanship
- : 'SOFA' - *Sculptural Objects and Functional Art* -in Chicago and New York best showcase for Australian craftsmen to enter the US market
- : Good opportunity for export, Australian design and craftsmanship reasonably well known and highly regarded.