

Artists take wood to creative extremes at the New Hope Arts Center's annual "Works in Wood" exhibit.

LIFE

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Infinite variety

By GWEN SHRIFT
STAFF WRITER

From the silkiest grain to the toughest bark, wood lends itself to a range of visual effects both monumental and delicate. The New Hope Arts Center's annual "Works in Wood" exhibit illustrates what artists make of these extremes, as well as the nuances between the poles.

If you go

"Works in Wood" is on view through Dec. 8 at the New Hope Arts Center, 2 Stockton Ave.

Gallery hours are noon to 5 p.m. Friday through Sunday.

Information: 215-862-9606; newhopearts.org.

Birdie Miller contributed the most-imposing piece in the exhibit — a dining table in reverse book-matched walnut planks. Miller's relevant, organic composition retains the knotholes and crevices on the tabletop, which is made of two roughly Y-shaped planks joined and set on



Dining table, walnut and tree branches, by Birdie Miller

smoothed, pegged tree branches.

Among the neater techniques on view belongs to Geoffrey Noden's folded plank coffee table, in which he joins boards at a 90-degree angle without sacrificing the flow of the grain. The joints of contrasting wood are a pleasing puzzle; you can't see how they are holding anything together, yet clearly they do.

One of the younger woodworkers, Owen Moon, devised "Table Two," a walnut board balanced between contrasting supports, a narrow sleeve of concrete on the one side and an airy modern metal leg on the other.

These large and heavy pieces contrast with a field of delicate compositions ruled by Michael Kehs, whose three works are small masterpieces of the carver's art.

Kehs is fascinated by living forms, especially bats, lizards and, as shown in one stunning work, extinct sea creatures.

The artist's "Thunder Moon 2" is quite unlike any table yet seen, composed as it is of baroque quilted maple inset with tiny black bats and a gleaming copper lunar disc. The effect is of a night sky overlaid with translucent clouds, mysterious and fluttering with movement.



"Thunder Moon 2," quilted maple, marado, red oak and copper, by Michael Kehs

Kehs also offers a relief sculpture, "Heat of the Sunset," depicting southwestern vessels surrounded by a frame across which small lizards scurry.

"Trilobite Traces" goes in other directions, deep into time and the sea, and into the surface of a small, blue-green orb covered with the graceful, incised forms of antediluvian creatures — a marvel of technique, composition and insight.

Small scale defines the work of Miriam Carpenter, whose oak feathers seem to be carved with a chisel the size of an embroidery needle; and Konrad M. Richter's "Parasphere," which packs a world of minute wooden shapes into an orb the size of a softball, pinwheels at the poles and contrasting squares at the equator.



"Parasphere," holly and Philippine mahogany, by Konrad M. Richter

Andy DiPietro, whose turned vessels are perennial at this exhibit, brings a painterly quality to "Blue Planet," emphasizing the resemblance of wood grain to the currents and cloud streams of planet Earth.

Closer to ground surface, Bryan Richardson rims an applewood plate with sticks of yew, a smooth and rustic, rhythmic composition. Sinikka Laukkanen called upon a tree of mystical significance for her sculpture "Oak Man," though the material is basswood wrought into draping leaves and a stern face under a coronet of acorns.

"Works in Wood" is rooted in furniture, exhibiting fine designs, as well as pieces that could re-christen the show "Whimsies in Wood."

Among the former is Breahn Riley's golden bird's-eye maple jewelry hutch, a subtle construction that sets a small chest with doors on a table with drawers. The scale is refreshingly intimate, down to the gleaming black knobs on the doors and the ranks of tiny pegs for storing necklaces inside.

Who are you calling old? It's only a state of mind

— MYTHS OF — AGING

Sarah H. Kagan
PhD, RN



"I'm too old for that."

How many times do you think or hear this from others? We've all got ideas about what is appropriate as we get older. Everything from what to wear to health care seems fair game for the "I'm too old" judgment.

But stop before you think "I'm too old." Definitely stop before you say it. Lots of research tells us thinking "too old" and definitely talking about yourself as old is a bad idea. Believing you are too old for something actually may risk your health and your ability to do the things you want to do.

Meet my friend Judy. I am not going to tell you how old she is because age is relative. It doesn't matter how old you are — it's how old you THINK you are.

More and more, Judy talks about herself as "old" — "I'm so old" or "I am too old for..."

Fill in the blank and Judy thinks she is too old for it. Judy is worried her age means all sorts of things are not for her. She thinks she shouldn't or can't do so many things. I've lost count of what Judy has crossed off her list.

I am telling you now, Judy's at the wrong end of the stick. In fact, when she talks about herself as old, she may be creating more problems.

Age is a relative idea. Remember when you were in grade school and the kids in middle school seemed so old? When it comes to old age, that relative sense of young and old remains true. What is old in one situation is young in another.

For example, think about how long you can expect to live in different countries. In America, we don't have the longest average life expectancy in the world but we do pretty well. Our life expectancy is now almost 79 years. As a result, what is old in America is sort of young in places like Macau in China where average life expectancy is quite a bit longer at 84.5 years and older than in some Eastern European countries where life expectancy is only 75 years or so.

Myth: We know what old is.

Because your age by birthday doesn't have much to do with your health or well-being, trying to label what is old is not useful. Your health is much more about how your body and mind work and whether you have chronic problems like arthritis or cancer. But still we hear people talk about "old" all the time. People start calling themselves old pretty regularly when they think they've hit middle age. Might be 40, might be 50, but they say it all the same.

The use of the word "old" usually means something other than old. It is code for feelings, worries, fears about who we are and what we can do. Sometimes, it's a joke, too. But I find most people who say they are joking are at least half-serious when they say "too old."

Sometimes, saying "I'm so old" is a way of saying I'm tired, worn out, ready for a break. It's better and more straightforward to admit to being tired or in need of a rest. Old is not tired.

Making old code for tired builds that tiredness into something it is not. There's pressure these days to be busy and productive all the time. We miss the chance to realize the good that comes from taking care of ourselves and finding time for rest and for a change of pace — no matter what our age.

"Guardian Chair," oak, maple, lacewood, purple heart and mahogany, by Charles J. Adams

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Ken Burton devised a clever, deceptively simple cabinet that starts with a tiny triangular box, inverted, fitted with drawers and set upon legs that emerge from a base that echoes the triangular form. After this, any treasures inside would seem anticlimactic.

Useful pieces emerged from the workshop of Kevin Kopil, who constructed a high table and stools with an Asian/postmodern feel, emphasizing the graceful heft of the table legs with interwoven stringers in contrasting wood.

Keith Sandberg devised a witty table that depicts a giant screw ostensibly fastening the top to the base; the artist winks at the viewer, "repairing" a natural crack in the top with a single, elegant butterfly joint.

Elsewhere, William Hoehne and Susan Clark created an artwork in furniture form, stacking fat disks of wood as a base for "Michelin Chair" and upholstering the seat in a fabric printed with circle motifs.

While you could, if sufficiently petite, repose upon "Michelin Chair," you would think twice before settling into Charles J. Adams' "Guardian Chair." The artist's surrealist construction in laminated and inlaid contrasting woods resembles a giant insect with wings, horns, spikes and a scorpion tail.

"Works in Wood" includes a well-populated collection of non-furniture art objects, such as Laura Petrovich-Cheney's evocative geometric paintings in reclaimed wood, Norine Kevolic's airy bamboo and wood plaques and Brian Paul Kolakowski's concise explorations of a squid and a skeletal fish.

Among the more compelling small works are Edward Murphy's compositions in bark, salvaged wood and aluminum. Rarely does texture so effectively dominate artwork.

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"Utilis," bark, aluminum and salvaged wood, by Edward Murphy

"Mahogany Screw Table," Honduras mahogany, walnut sprayed in graphite, ebony, by Keith Sandberg



Apple Platter with Yew stick rim, apple, yew sticks, by Bryan Richardson



"Trilobite Traces," holly, big-leaf maple burl, by Michael Kehs



"Blue Planet," silver maple crotch wood, by Andy DiPietro



"Heat of the Sunset," curly maple, poplar, sycamore, sapele, by Michael Kehs

Aging

Continued from Page D1

If we are speaking about what younger people are doing — especially if it is about computers and technology — old often means "I really don't get that and feel like I am out of touch with people younger than me."

Generations have their identity, I admit. But tools and technologies shouldn't be the domain of one generation or another just because that technology — like the Wii or Twitter — seems to be part of that generation's identity.

If you want to try out using a computer, social media or some other technology made hip by a younger generation, do it. Put your own stamp on it.

When it comes to health, "old" stands in for worries and fears. We worry about being ill and dependent on family and friends or fear having a condition that can't be fixed or might only be fixed at too high a price. Commonly, these worries and fears come from our experiences when we were young watching someone we love deal with the same problem we have now.

But our memories of what happened back in the day miss two big points. First, one person's experience is definitely not everyone's experience. Second, health care is different and better now. A good example is surgery.

Many patients tell me "I'm too old to have surgery." When we start talking, I easily see that they are remembering past experiences with loved ones and don't know that health care has changed.

Surgeons — thanks to the help of anesthetists

— now can operate on people in their 90s and older with tools that help them look into the body rather than opening it.

If your doctor is recommending surgery or another treatment for you, the best thing to do is to make an informed choice, not one based on your birthday.

Myth: Old means that you should not or cannot do certain things.

The example of surgery brings me to say this loud and clear: Your birthday is something you celebrate more and more as you get older. Your birthday does not determine what you can or cannot do.

We've known for a long time that your birthday does not determine what activity is right for you. But most people still believe older people cannot do certain physical activities.

In fact, a study reported a few years ago showed that age doesn't limit what we can do physically. Ten people older than 90 were asked to do high-intensity weight training, something we don't associate with very old folks. Lifting those weights worked like a charm. Everyone who completed the study gained strength, added muscle and walked better. Good stuff, no matter how old you are.

There are great stories about remarkable people who are very old — the college graduate with a great grandchild, the octogenarian marathon runner, the world-traveling couple who have been married for more than 60 years.

We think of these people as one in a million. I think they represent so many people in their later years doing all sorts of things to make for a full life every day.

There is no age limit for activities, health or

relationships. If you want to do something that you think may be affected by your health, check with your doctor or nurse practitioner, and get a plan together. But please don't say, "Well, I'm just too old"

Myth: It helps to know when you are too old.

Wrong! I know what you are thinking — we've all been told "act your age." That's all about behaving right in the right place.

For instance, it's never going to be OK — regardless of your age — to wear super-short shorts to church. Right and polite is ageless; do what feels right for who you are now all the time. You should not discriminate against yourself

on the basis of your age or exclude yourself from something because of the years you have lived. Doing so will only get you in trouble.

That's right — trouble with a capital T. There are several studies showing people who think of and — most importantly — talk about themselves as old are putting themselves at risk. Talking about yourself as old may affect your physical and mental health. You could put your health at risk if you think you are too old to do something. And, if you believe you are too old, activities as simple as walking might become harder for you.

I joke with my patients not to talk about being old until they reach 100. Then

I say I specialize in care of older people but I don't discriminate on the basis of age so I'll still take care of them. While teenagers don't think my joke is funny, their parents and grandparents do. So, go ahead. Joke about your age on your birthday and laugh when you get that funny card announcing your age to the world. But please — as I tell Judy all the time — stop calling yourself old. Go do what you want to do. You're not too old.

Have some thoughts on

this or other aging issues? I'd love to hear from you. Email me at mythsfofaging@gmail.com and follow me on Twitter @SarahHKagan. Until next time, be well and stay active!

Dr. Sarah Kagan is a professor at the University of Pennsylvania School of Nursing where she specializes in geriatric issues and the care of older people. She is a visiting scholar at universities around the world and was awarded the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Fellowship for her work. Her column on aging myths appears in newspapers and on digital sites throughout Calkins Media.

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