

A few words before you start woodcarving

If you look at a catalogue of wood carving chisels you will find that there are literally 100's to choose from. Most manufacturers offer a 'Beginners Set'. This is well meaning and these sets are a fair compromise BUT the usual advice from established carvers is to proceed slowly and only purchase when you can see the need. As a member of the Guild you are in a particularly fortunate position as we have a very comprehensive set of chisels and they are available for your use, under supervision if you are a beginner. So you can experiment.

The next piece of advice is to buy quality. Savings can be made by buying secondhand gear which is also from a known maker.

There are books in the Guild library which show you the two basic methods of holding a chisel when carving by hand. It is also useful if you can exchange hand positions so that if you are normally a 'right handed' carver you can, when required, allow the left hand to supply the force. IF your chisels are sharp you will be surprised at the ease with which 'roughing out' can be done without needing to use a mallet or power tool.

The other main area of concern to the beginner is which wood to use. Australian hardwoods (particularly eucalypts) with their often beautiful colour and interesting grain patterns are not recommended at this stage. The softer woods like pine can be bland and have no intrinsic patterning. Depending on the subject this may even be an advantage as dominant growth rings may do just that – 'dominate'. The woods traditionally used by professionals such as Lime, Huon Pine and White Beech are expensive, but the same advice with purchasing chisels applies. Grinling Gibbons did not choose to use Lime because it was expensive, but because it is the best. You should do the same. You are after all doing this for pleasure aren't you. Again the Guild has good carving wood available for sale to members and the SIG has its own store of suitable wood (some is free) which you can access. Each SIG is allotted \$150 from general Guild funds to support its activities. The Carving SIG has used some of this money to provide small quantities of quality wood.

There is sometimes a reluctance to become involved with woodcarving due to a mistaken idea that you are expected to be 'creative' and come up with original designs. The opposite is true. Most carving is done from existing designs. As you become more experienced you may want to experiment but most professional carvers work on commissions where they are paid for their carving skill using a design that is supplied.

Instruction and advice is always available at the monthly SIG meetings and from time to time short courses will be held.