

Exhibition highlights woodworking talent

Kāpiti plays host to woodworkers and their art

Leanne Warr

A pepper mill inspired by an 18th century submarine and a ring cabinet were just some of the items on display at the Art of Wood exhibition.

Kāpiti resident Ian Barbour took third prize in the Wall Art category for his piece, Legacy, an heirloom ring cabinet holding the wedding rings of his ancestors.

In accepting his award, Ian says what inspired him was his interests in woodworking and genealogy, as well as his passion in my family.

He made a frame emulating a ring, where he could place the rings, along with photos of his ancestors.

The piece also comes with a companion booklet, also made out of wood, with pages containing stories about each ring.

Ian joined the Kāpiti Woodworkers Guild three years ago and says he gets to mix with some very talented people.

He says the guild is a vibrant club with around 50 members who have a "lot of potential".

It was the first time Kāpiti was hosting the exhibition, which included work from clubs all around the country under the banner of the National Association of Woodworkers.

Association president Trefor Roberts spoke of his passion for the art.

"If I think my drug and addiction is woodturning and if I can share that with everybody else, it's not such a big drug."

Trefor says the idea for an exhibition started about five years ago during Covid, as there were none in the country.

He got together with a couple of others and they came up with a format and managed to get several pieces in the event.

Pieces were judged by "internationally-renowned" woodworkers

While some of the work was for sale, the rest "have a different journey", Trefor says.

"They have a personal journey and they have a personal meaning to people."

Jim Lowe received a "highly-commended" in hollow forms for his ginger jar with Koi icons.

In talking about the piece, Jim says normally a woodturner would do a form and then paint and decorate it.

"This one, I wanted to start from the decoration and work backwards."

He says he had the idea to do it with a fine leaf copper.

It took him four attempts before he got it right.

Jim enjoys creating pieces for the competition "because it makes me try harder".

He was asked how many hours it took him to do the piece and he advised to never count the hours.

"Because then you'll never put a price on it."

Mark Wilkins from Wellington placed third in the box category with a keepsake box.

He says the box was "orientally inspired" after the death of a relative, who was Malaysian.

He had made a box as a memento for the family and when he was thinking about ideas for the competition, his wife suggested he make a second box.

Mark also won third prize in domestic for his pepper mill.

He says in previous competitions, he didn't put a lot of effort in but this year he decided he would put more time in.

In looking for inspiration, he thought of steampunk and when he went looking for images on the Internet, a picture of an 18th century submarine came up.

Mark notes it was a real submarine and explained that in 1740, during the blockade of the Hudson River, the Americans wanted to try and sink the British flagship.

"So one bright spark came up with the idea of building a submarine and sweeping under the flagship, drilling a hole and attaching an explosive with a timer on it to the flagship and then make a hasty retreat."

He says he tried to make it as authentic



Ian Barbour with his entry in the Wall Art category called 'Legacy', an heirloom ring cabinet.

as possible, but there were quite a few variations.

The original submarine was made of oak and iron and he tried to copy that as much as he could.

Creating the stand also had its challenges as it involved steam bending.

Third place in the ornamental category went to Jim Lowe for his bowl titled Serengeti Sunset.

Jim says it took him about three weeks to make the piece, which was made from Swamp Kauri and used resin, with some of the designs painted using a stencil.

He says he wanted to make a statement that there is no reason why things people use every day shouldn't be beautiful.

"Or the other way around, that beautiful things we make shouldn't be used on an everyday basis."

Although he would draw the line at the bowl being used as a salad bowl.

Peter Penhall won second and third in plain bowls, as well as highly commended.

A newcomer to the competition, he says he saw the amazing work being produced and decided he couldn't compete.

But after seeing the plain bowls and platters category, and with a bit of encouragement, he got involved.

"It's a real boost when what you enjoy doing so much gets acknowledged."

The best item by a new woodcrafter went to Derek Gower for his jewellery drawers.

He says his wife pointed out an image to him and he decided to make it.

"It was my first experience of steam bending," noting that it was a lot more complicated than he expected.

There were other artistic pieces, from a fascinator to sculptures making commentary on the state of the world.



Ian's sculpture titled 'Ehrenarch's Path' was a commentary on trying to fix a troubled world.

Mark Wilkins was inspired by an 18th Century submarine to make this pepper mill.

