

Design Resource

Wood Carving of Saharanpur

The Art of Wooden Crafts

by

Sakshi Gambhir

IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:

<http://www.dsource.in/resource/wood-carving-saharanpur>



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<http://www.dsource.in/resource/wood-carving-saharanpur/introduction>

Introduction

Popularly known as the 'sheesham wood village', Saharanpur is home to some of India's finest wood carvers. The city is internationally famous for this craft and its artisans who have been creating magic with the material for years. They 'breathe life into dead trees' is how they like to put it. The intricate and fine workmanship is what makes these products unique. The vine-leaf patterns are a specialty of this region. Geometric and figurative carving is also done along with absolutely gorgeous brass inlay work. Other materials like wrought iron, ceramic and glass are being combined with wood to give a new dimension to the craft and 'contemporize' the traditional products.



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Place

Saharanpur lies in the state of Uttar Pradesh. It got its name by the name of Sufi saint 'Shah HarunChisti' in 13th century. Surrounded by fertile agricultural region famous for plentiful yields in grains and fruits, the city is now one of the most flourishing ones in the state. The thick forests all around provide ample of wood needed for the woodcraft industry that contributes largely to the Indian export.

Saharanpur, unlike other developing cities of India, still has that old world charm about it. Lanes cluttered with electric-wired-poles, animals sleeping in the middle of the streets, namaaz being read out loud in the mosques, halwai making sweets by the road side, people smoking hookah and peddle rickshaw pullers are a regular sight. As one walks deeper into the 'Lakkad bazaar' (wood market) and the areas closeby, SaraiMardan Ali and Khajoor-talato be precise, one can see artisans going about their daily business of making magic with wood.



Right outside Saharanpur railway station.

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On the way to the wood market.



On the way to the wood market.

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On the way to the wood market.



The wood market popularly known as 'Lakkad bazaar'.

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On the way to the wood market.



A mosque on the way to the wood market.



The mohalla where all the wood carving craftsmen live and work.

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Colored confetti.



Halwai making sweets by the roadside.



The mohalla where all the wood carving craftsmen live and work.

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A wood workshop or 'karkhana'.



A wood workshop or 'karkhana'.



Interior of a wood slicing workshop.



The entrance of any workshop is where the karigars remove their slippers.

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People

People in Saharanpur have, for always, been working with wood. More than four lac people are directly or indirectly involved in the craft and still thrive on daily wages. Ninety percent of the artisans here are Muslims and their patterns are greatly influenced by Kashmiri designs. These 'karigars' are experts in 'jaali' orlatticework. For years, their expertise and specialized skills have been passed down from generations.



A wood carving craftsman.



A muslim man by the roadside.

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A muslim man by the roadside.



A kid by the roadside.



A wood carving craftsman.



Narrow lanes of the mohalla.

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A man smoking hookah while carving.



Hookah.



Mohammad Asad showing around the place.



A muslim man at what he does best - carving.

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Kids in the locality.



Narrow lanes of the mohalla.

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Process

A wide range of wood types is used to make products - sheesham for small items, teakwood for furniture and mango for antique items. All of them go through the same basic steps - slicing, carving, inlaying, sanding, polishing and assembling. Craftsmen specialize in one (or more) of these processes and perform just that every day. So each product is actually handcrafted by not one karigar but many.



Slicing



Carving



Inlaying



Polishing



Assembling

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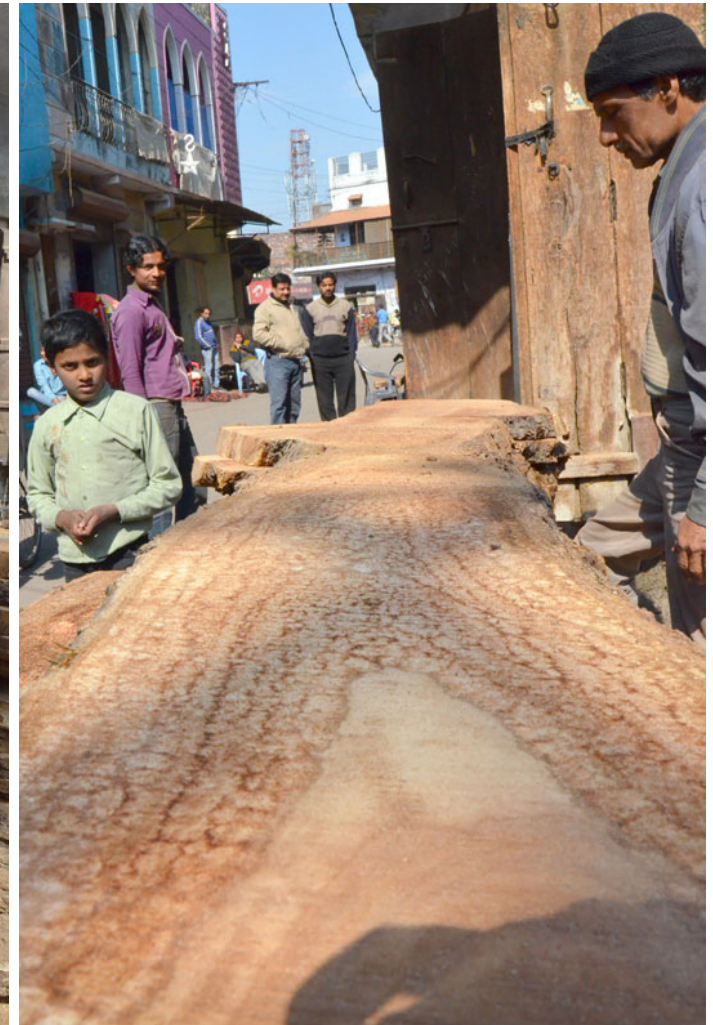
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Slicing

The first step is to cut the logs of wood into flat slabs. This is called 'lakdicheerna' and is done using an electric saw. Usually two men hold the wood firmly to cut it precisely. These pieces are marked with pencil and cut in different shapes and sizes according to the desired product, then are worked upon by the carving artisans.



Sliced flat slabs of wood.



Sliced flat slabs of wood.

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Asad marking the wood slabs for cutting shapes.



Asad marking the wood slabs for cutting shapes.



The electric slicing-machine setup.



The electric slicing-machine setup.

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Cutting tools.



Slab being cut into smaller pieces.

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Slab being cut into smaller pieces.



Slab being cut into smaller pieces.

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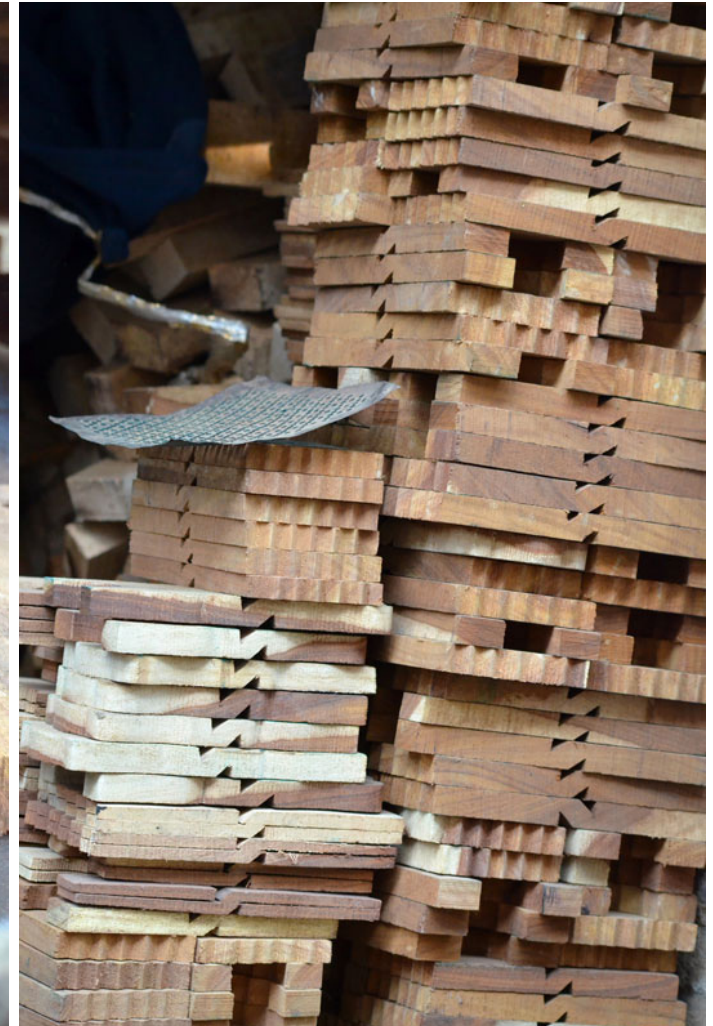
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Slab being cut into smaller pieces.



Stacked slabs of wood for carving.

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Carving

Carving is done either completely by hand or in combination with an electric saw. The saw is usually employed to make geometric patterns in wooden boxes. The whole operation is started by drawing the pattern intended to be carved on a piece of paper and pasting it over the surface. Holes are drilled to precisely (and quickly) carve out the negative spaces.

Carving completely by hand makes for a very fascinating sight. Though the instruments used are extremely simple (saw, plane, fine-grained hard stone, chisels etc.), the carvers use them aptly to produce some astonishing results with minute details, keeping the intricacies and subtle light and shade effects, every desired curve, expression and texture. Young kids help their fathers in carving, as this is the most time taking process out of them all. Sometimes, this is also to bring in more money.



Design drawn on paper and stuck on wood for carving.

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Design drawn on paper and stuck on wood for carving.



A craftsman at the electric saw.

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Holes being drilled for carving out the negative spaces.



Holes being drilled for carving out the negative spaces.

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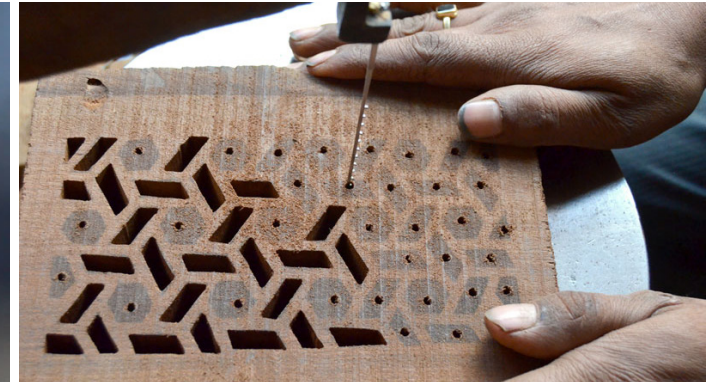
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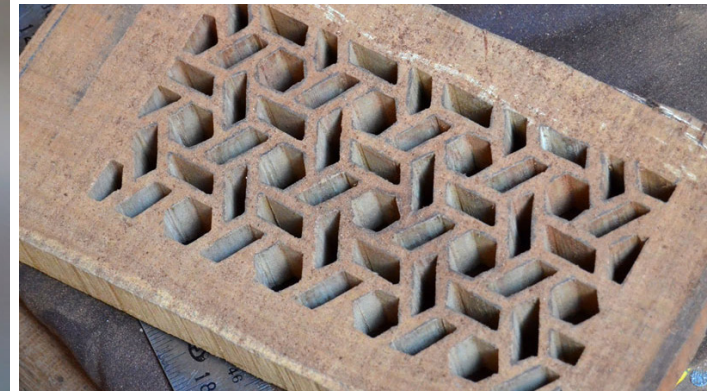
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Holes as seen from the back of the piece.



Geometric pattern being made.



A completely carved piece.



Carved slabs of wood.

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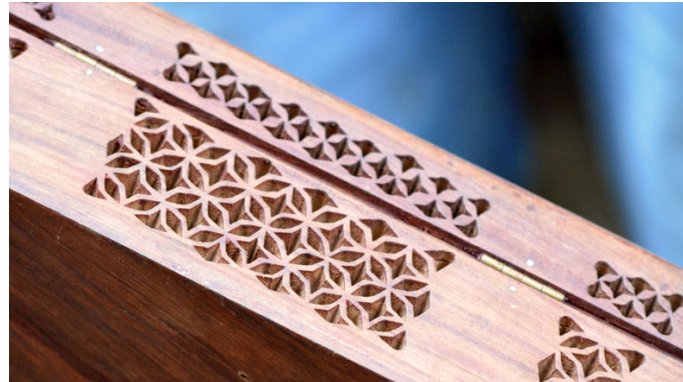
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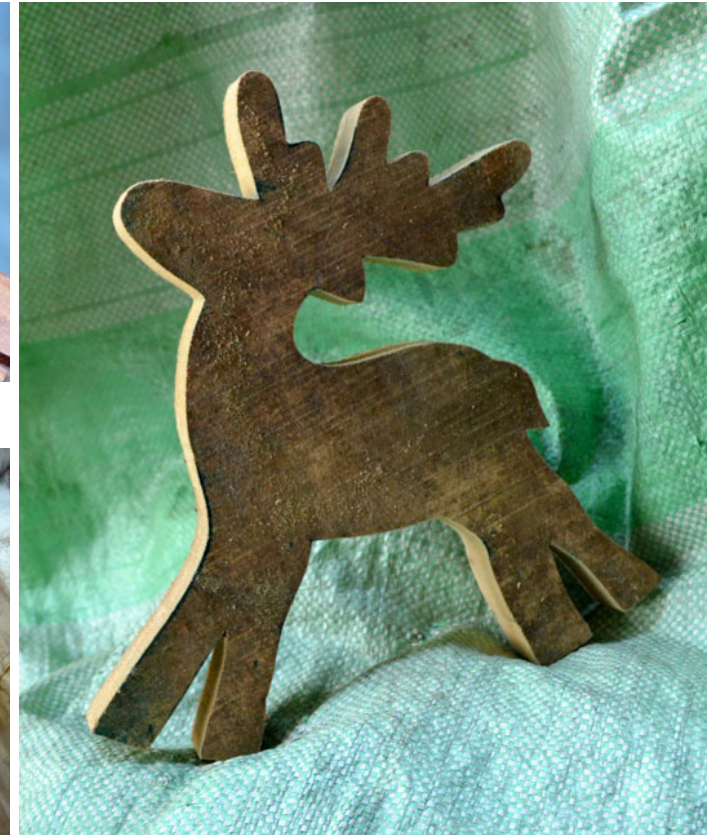
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A ready wooden box.



Deer for children's toys.



Deer for children's toys.



Tools for hand carving.

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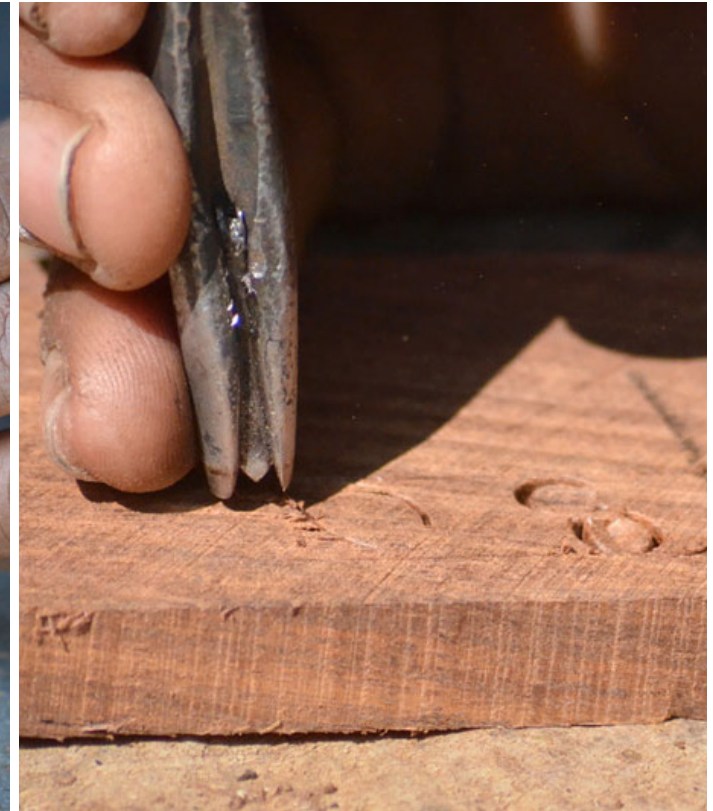
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The pattern being engraved.



The pattern being engraved.



Slices of wood to be carved upon.

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Carving begins.



A kid learning carving from his father.



A kid learning carving from his father.



The pattern being carved.

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A kid learning carving from his father.



Carved pieces to be further worked upon to add texture.



'Chilayi' or textural carving in progress.



'Chilayi' or textural carving in progress.

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'Chilayi' or textural carving in progress.



'Chilayi' or textural carving in progress.



'Chilayi' or textural carving in progress.

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The stone on which many craftsmen put their slab to work upon.



'Chilayi' or textural carving in progress.



'Chilayi' or textural carving in progress.



'Chilayi' or textural carving in progress.

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'Chilayi' or textural carving in progress.



A ready panel.



Sofa sets being carved.



Wood shavings.

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Inlaying

Brass is extensively used for inlaying floral, geometric and typographic patterns into wood. This is done by cutting strips of metal and then die-pressing them to get the desired shape. These pieces are then sold by weight to the carvers who make grooves for them before hand. They beat these into the wood; stick them with wood adhesive and finally nailed for durability. The waste strips are recycled into fresh metal and used again. Sometimes bone and plastic are also used for inlay work.

Apart from embedding brass into wood, the karigars of Saharanpur have started combining wrought iron with wood. This is either to lend strength to the structure of the product (like chairs, tables, beds etc.) or pure aesthetic value (like in vases, lanterns, candle holders etc.). In either case, the craftsmen do win brownie points for design innovation!



Metal strips being cut.



The collection of die, each one numbered for future reference.

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A die pressing expert.



A die pressing expert.



Die pressing machine.



Die pressing machine.

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Metal scrap.



Metal scrap.



Inlay sample designs.



Containers for storage.

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Machine to weigh the pieces to be sold.



Adhesive.



Tiny flowers of brass.



A door with brass overlay.

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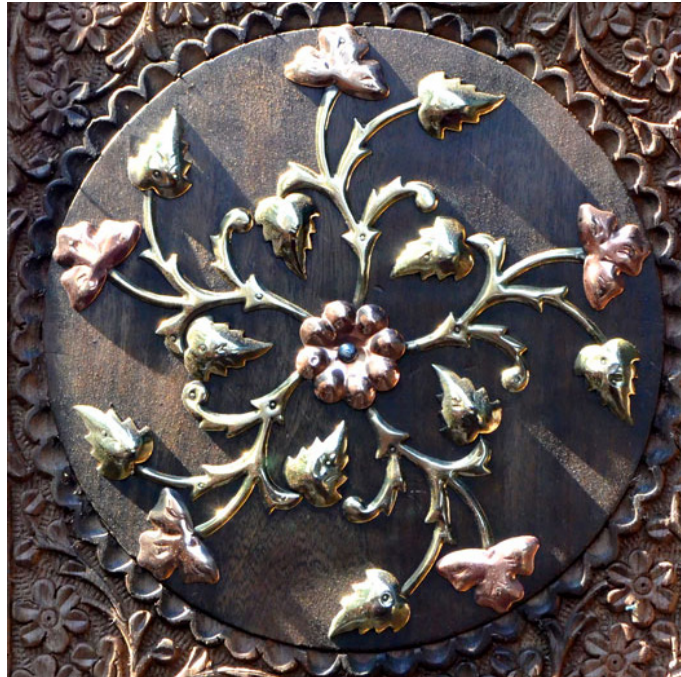
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Brass overlaid on wood.



An inlay expert hammering a brass wire into the grooves.



Brass wire being inlaid.



Brass wire being inlaid.

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Brass wire being inlaid.



A wooden box with carving and inlay work.



A wooden box with carving and inlay work.



Wood slabs with brass inlay.

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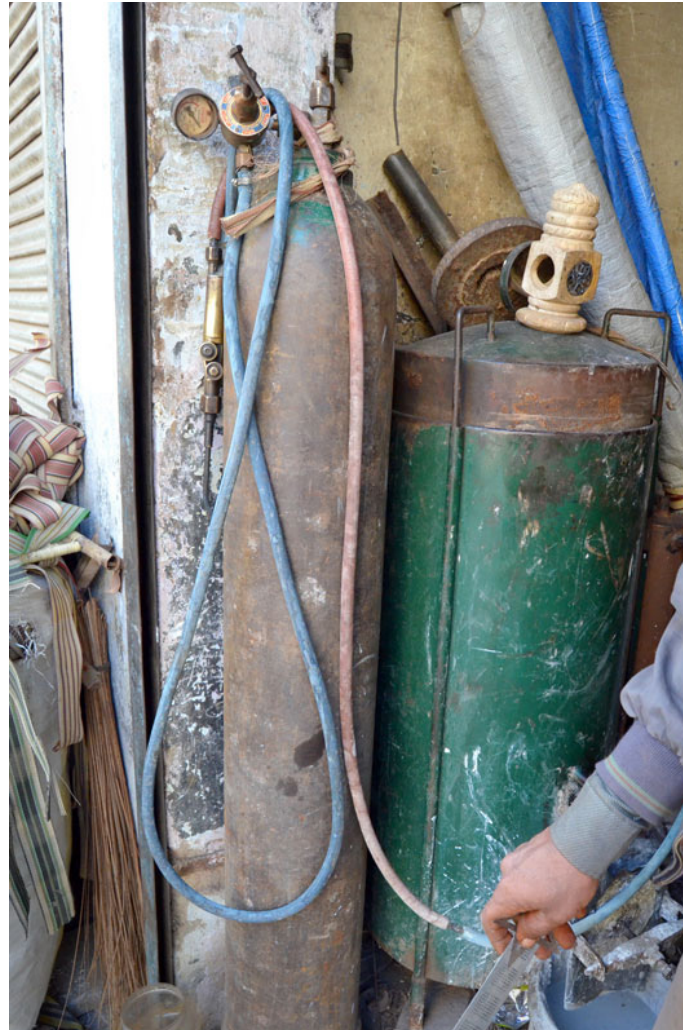
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Gas cylinder to weld the iron.



Wrought iron welding shop.

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Iron welding.



Iron welding.



Welding joints.

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Iron welding.



A lantern with wrought iron detailing.



A wall bracket with wrought iron detailing.



A candle holder with wrought iron detailing.

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Polishing

Sanding and buffing are the dustiest processes out of all. The most astonishing bit is that the workers don't even use any mask or eyeglass. They work all day at the machine to make the piece smooth and shiny. After this the polishing experts come into the picture and rub loads of putty to even out the unfinished edges and cracks. When it dries, the wooden piece is smoothened further with sandpaper and then coated with paint or polish, depending on the desired finish. One of the most promising orders for the painters are the gold intricate furniture pieces that adorn a lot of big homes in the cities. They are big and bring in good business. Liquid, gold, ready-to-use paint is being used instead of powder because that doesn't blacken with time. And it looks prettier. Polish finishes include the regular natural, walnut and rosewood. Maintenance for such pieces is easy: brush it off dry.



Labour sanding the wooden boxes on the machine.



Labour sanding the wooden boxes on the machine.

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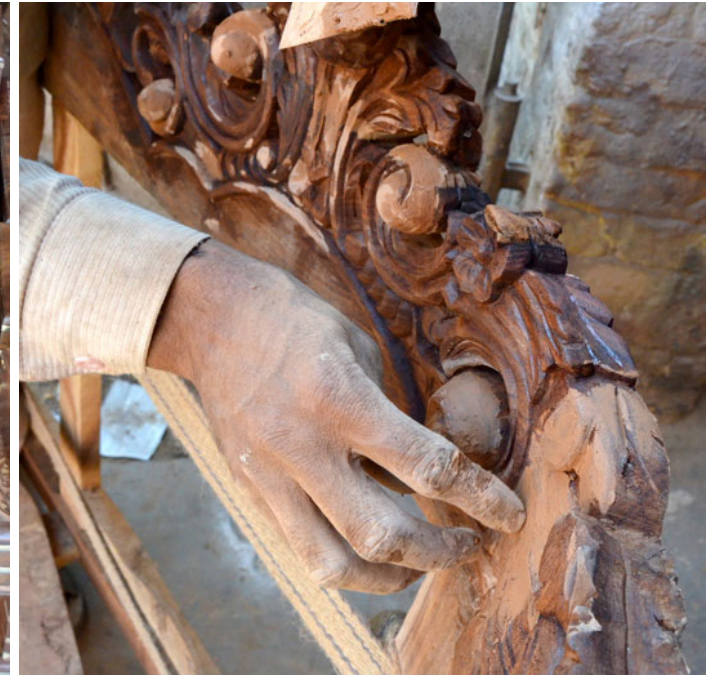
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Wooden boxes after being sanded on the machine.



Putty being filled in cracks by the painter.



Putty being filled in cracks by the painter.



Putty being filled in cracks by the painter.

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<http://www.dsource.in/resource/wood-carving-saharanpur/process/polishing>



Paints.



Painting workshop.

1. Introduction

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4a. Slicing

4b. Carving

4c. Inlaying

4d. **Polishing**

4e. Assembling

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Painting the furniture golden.



Painting the furniture golden.

Design Resource

Wood Carving of Saharanpur

The Art of Wooden Crafts

by

Sakshi Gambhir

IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:

<http://www.dsource.in/resource/wood-carving-saharanpur/process/assembling>

Assembling

Adding rivets, metal hinges or any other interesting element is about giving the product its final touch and assembling several components is just the last task before it is goes into its packaging box. Ready to sell!



Stack of tables to be worked upon.



Tiny flowers of brass.



Brass flowers being nailed.



Wooden boxes being assembled.

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Nailing the golden strips.



Nailing the brass flowers.

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Nailing the brass flowers.



A ready table.

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Flowers painted black.



Black nails.



Black painted metal strips to be nailed on the boxes.



A few ready boxes.

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A ready box with metal corners as its design element.



Boxes ready to be packed.



A craftsman preparing the base of the Taj Mahal souvenir.



The basic structure of the Taj Mahal.

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Taj Mahal in the process of being assembled.



The Taj, assembled.



A craftsman assembling the structure of the Taj and its minarets.

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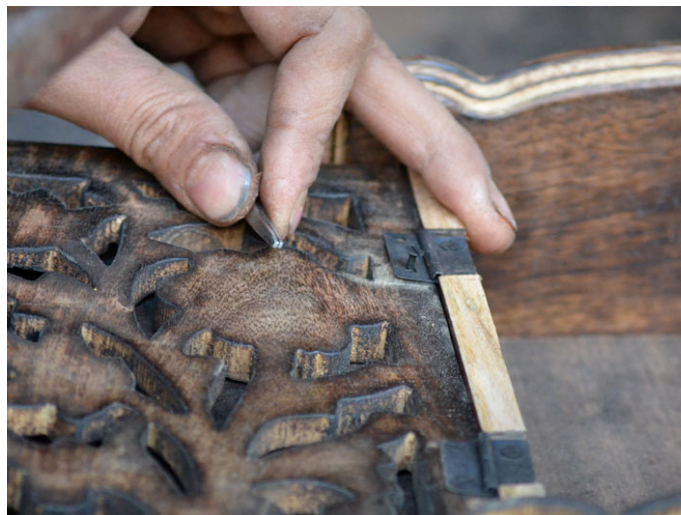
6. Contact Details



A craftsmen nailing the hinges on the wooden boxes.



Stack of boxes on which hinges has been nailed.



A craftsmen nailing the hinges on the wooden boxes.



Wooden boxes packed in cartons to be sent for export.

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Products

The 'typical' product range includes decorated furniture (sofa sets, chairs, tables, stools, wall brackets, closets etc.), candle holders, screens, room-dividers, tableware (bowls, trays, cooking spatula etc.), boxes, mirror frames, book-shelves, pen stands and children's toys. Apart from these, the craftsmen are trying out newer products and materials every day to innovate upon the existing product categories.



An all-wood chair.



A chair made of wood and wrought iron.

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A table made of wood and wrought iron.



A table made of wood and wrought iron.



A box-stool made of wood and wrought iron.

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An all-wood table with brass inlay.



A set of three nesting tables with brass inlay.



A wall bracket made of wood and wrought iron.

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An all-wood storage box, intricately carved.



Drawers to keep small things like stationery, jewelry etc.



Drawers to keep small things like stationery, jewelry etc.

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Decorative birds made of wood and brass.



A table clock.



A piggy bank.

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A bottle holder made of wood and wrought iron.



A magazine rack made of wood and wrought iron.



A keychain holder made of wood and wrought iron.



A vase made of wood, ceramic tile and wrought iron.



Room divider made of wood and wrought iron.



Spectacle stand.

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Jharoka.



A lantern made of wood, glass and wrought iron.



Set of lanterns made of wood, glass and wrought iron.

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Candle holder made of wood and glass.



Candle holder made of wood, wrought iron and mirror.



Candle holders made of wood and wrought iron.

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Candle holder made of wood and wrought iron.



Nesting wooden trays.



Nesting wooden bowls.



A fruit bowl made of wood and wrought iron.

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Nesting wooden trays made of wood and wrought iron.



Cooking spatula.

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Painted wooden box.



Sitting stools.

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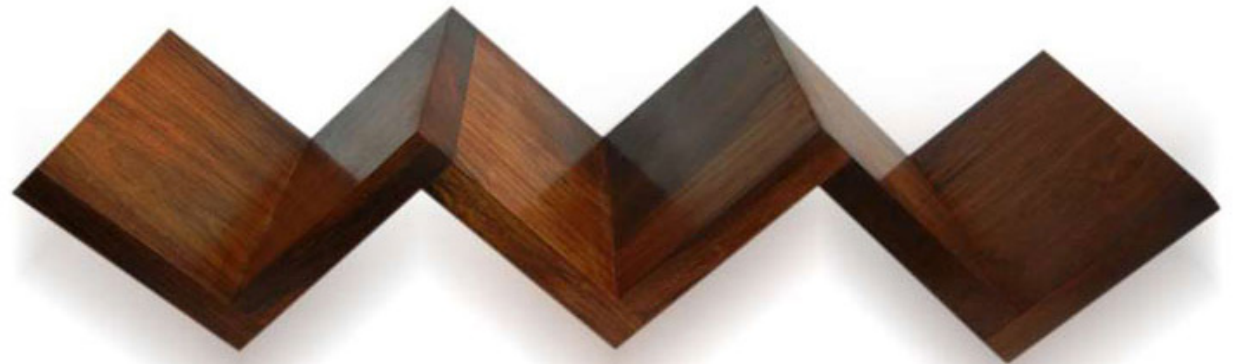


Wall bracket made of wood, wrought iron and ceramic tiles.



An envelope holder.

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A book shelf.

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An all-wood storage box, intricately carved.



A wall mirror made of wood and wrought iron.



Kitchen set to keep sugar, tea and coffee.



Drawers to keep small things like stationery, jewelry etc.

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A rolling massager.



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