

Collaboration One

Three makers combine to create a piece whose form and contents represents the pinnacle of their work. Story by Linda Nathan.

The cabinet and its lustrous hand tool contents known as *Collaboration One* was one of those things that toolmakers Terry Gordon and Colen Clenton had wanted to do for some time. 'We're really taking it to the top of the tree', said Phoebe Everill, maker of the cabinet and the third collaborator. 'We're saying this is what we're really proud of, it's the complete package'.

Around 12 months prior to its unveiling at Sturt Gallery in Mittagong, the three makers decided to make it happen. 'I'm not sure if this kind of collaboration has ever been

done before in Australia', said Phoebe, 'but both Terry and Colen wanted to make complete high-end sets of their tools from premium timber, and house them in a specially made purpose-built cabinet.

For Terry the collection is a commemoration of his 20 years making hand tools and also the success of the independent but close working relationship that he and Colen Clenton have enjoyed. The first of the newest addition to the HNT Gordon range is also included. The moving fillister is his 50th line of planes and was developed in conjunction with son Nelson whose work formed part of his final competency assessment for his fitter/machinist apprenticeship.

The wood used for the tools made by Terry and Colen is not Macassar ebony (*Diospyros celebica*), but another from the family Ebenaceae. Consecutive boards of black ebony or *Diospyros ferrea*, all from the same tree, were sourced from Theo Catsoulis of Agora Trading in Queensland. Any variance in figure or striping on the tools is due to whether the sections used are quartersawn or backsawn.

Making the two sets of tools from the same matched boards highlights the collectability of these sets. 'All the the tools have the grain running end-to-end through them', Colen said, 'and the front of the gauges are bookmatched to the squares'. Colen's set also includes a 2" 45° marker, and a shorter scratch awl; both new additions to his range. In a nod to another maker who Terry and Colen have worked with, a mallet by Micheal O'Connor is included.

'The cabinet design is inspired by Krenov's work and is also a much more elaborate development of Phoebe's own tool cabinet which has become a trademark of her business as a maker and woodwork teacher. 'Making the cabinet was a huge challenge but I'm really happy with the design', Phoebe said. 'There was a lot of mocking up to get it to look balanced on its base.'

The cabinet is made from Tasmanian sassafras, with blackheart sassafras veneer





used on the doors. The veneer was supplied by Rob Keogh of Britton Timbers, Tasmania and chosen because its stripey tones would provide a visual foil for the ebony tools. The veneer was also selected for its unique figure and the arrow head markings that reflect its purpose as a tool cabinet. Other detailing on the cabinet is in wenge and ebony.

As well as visual balance, a major concern was the weight of the loaded cabinet. 'Physically it was tricky stuff to allow for around 80kg tools and still be able to swing the doors and not have it not fall forward', Phoebe said. This was also a collaborative process. 'Sets of Colen and Terry's tools have been back and forth', laughed Phoebe. 'We also decided to ramp all Terry's tools back at a 7.5° angle (matching the plane bodies) to get the centre of gravity right.'

The top and base separate by means of a specially made ebony allen key and handle. A brass plate with the makers' names, the year of making and title of the piece is fixed to the top of the cabinet base. The drawers contain a provenance statement in the form of a 'book' made by Terry from ebony veneer along with a pen also turned from ebony.

Seeing it all come together was the realisation of a dream for the makers. *Collaboration One* can be seen at Sturt



Above: The makers (left to right) Terry Gordon, Phoebe Everill and Colen Clenton.

Gallery until March 2016 when it travels for viewing to the Lost Trades Fair in Kyneton, Victoria.

The makers are adamant that the cabinet and its contents will not be separated. *Collaboration One* is for sale at \$59,400.

Photos: Terry Muller

For more information about *Collaboration One* email Terry Gordon at planemaker@hntgordon.com.au or Phoebe Everill at phoebe@phoebeeverill.com, or phone Colen Clenton on 0408 338 582.