

4. The Interaction Interviews

Visiting the 6 selected makers, being their apprentice for one to two weeks and sharing with them the vision of the project and the nature and commitment they have to their work, was a two-way sharing experience between the author and makers. Having no previous experience of working alongside makers in different disciplines prior to the project, and having the observation skills of a professional maker himself, the author absorbed practical, physical, visual and other information during these apprenticeships. With the focused approach of the formal interviews and the collection of visual reference material, an in-depth understanding of each maker, and how they might influence the demonstration artefacts, was developed. Learning so many new making skills in a short space of time opened up unforeseen creative potential for the author. This quote from the author's audio diary expresses these feelings while apprentice to Ása Hatún in the Faroe Islands.

“Working with Ása Hatún, she has been quite an inspiration when I start to add up everything she is telling me, she just does not stop telling me new things I have never heard of before, to do with wool, felting, knitting, weaving, needlework, embroidery. Her commitment has always been pedagogical but really it's much broader than that. She travels widely and studies quite hard her felting craft...”³⁰

As well as being inspired about how wool could be integrated into the design of the project table and chairs the author was also inspired to make experimental felt artefacts such as the 14th century Viking traders helmet (fig. 9, page 40).

The majority of what the makers discussed with the author during his apprenticeship to them was supported by observation of the makers' physical gestures and actions. The artifacts and tools made and used by the makers, their working environment and reference images/artifacts provided by the makers and museums also supported what was discussed. The experience

³⁰ *Interaction diary Ása 30.6.03, track 11*, Interaction Audio Diary 2003, T. Hawson, 2005, (Audio CD).

of observing the different makers' working methods, physically and visually demonstrated to the author how to make like them with the same hand and body movements, rhythms and mental approach. This knowledge of how to make within different disciplines gave the author sympathy with the different makers' ways of working and how their making methods could be used to design and make the demonstration table and chairs.

The information absorbed by the author during his apprenticeship to the makers cannot effectively be described in word. Words are felt to be inadequate at describing the intimacies of physical and visual observation experienced by the author. To best present these experiences as references for the project, edited video recordings, artifacts, and audio diary recordings are provided. These visual, audio and physical records represent the reference points for learning, as experienced by an apprentice.

The formats used for recording and presenting images, audio and video are described in Appendix 7 media formats (page 217).

For the continuity of presentation the reader is reminded to view the multimedia reference material when they are instructed to do so in the text.

4.1. Edited Video Recordings: Interaction Interviews with Makers

The dialogue in these presentations is only the background and basic introduction to the visual media. During the editing process attention was given to not change the meaning of what the makers said, but to condense the interviews. The following points should be considered when viewing these presentations:

- The facts to be found are visual. The shape, form, rhythm and proportions of the maker's work, the approach to the work and other unspoken unwritten information are the points of reference that are most relevant between the makers and the author.
- Each interview has been conducted and presented in the same way as described in appendix 6 (page 207).
- These presentations of the interviews represent the experience of the author working as apprentice/assistant to the interviewed makers.
- The visual media within these presentations provide references of the makers' influence on the design of the project's demonstration artefacts.
- The presentations represent evidence of the author's observation of the working methods of the makers interviewed.

Considering the above points the reader should now view the interaction interview presentation DVD discs labelled:

Multimedia Disc 1

Contents:

- Birger Andersen, Shipwright, Denmark, Interaction Interview, May 2003.
- Ása Hatún, Wool Worker, Faroe Islands, Interaction Interview, June 2003.
- Fjolinir B. Hlynsson, Sculptor, Iceland, Interaction Interview, July 2003.

Multimedia Disc 2

Contents:

- Thórhildir Thorgeirsdóttir, Goldsmith, Iceland, Interaction Interview, July 2003.
- Geir Oddgeirsson, Cabinetmaker, Iceland, Interaction Interview, July 2003
- Gretar Mar Thorvaldsson, Pattern Maker, Iceland, Interaction Interview, July 2003.

A list with reference information for the images used in the generic title sequence and slide shows for each maker is provided in Appendix 8 (page 218). Transcriptions of the interviews are provided on the multimedia disc 2 Interaction Interview presentation (DVD) as DVD-ROM Microsoft Windows Word files.

References from the DVD discs that show how the makers have influenced the design of the demonstration artifacts are numerous. One example can be seen in the first nine slides of the slide show on Birger Andersen's DVD,

'upper deck knees' made by the author while apprenticed to Birger Andersson.³¹ The form and the way of making this Viking warship component was used to make the wooden pattern for the aluminum back legs of the demonstration chairs. The tool marks from the spoke shave used to make the wooden chair leg pattern were left visible as they are on the Viking warship component and the finished aluminum casting of the wooden leg pattern retains these tool marks as part of the intended surface finish. The closing scene of Birger Andersen's interaction interview film shows Birger shaping a upper deck knee with an axe, the rhythm and pace in which he works is that which the author adopted to learn how to make a knee like Birger.

³¹ T. Hawson, 'Birger Andersen, Shipwright, Denmark, Interaction Interview, May 2003.' *Slide Show*, slides 1-9, DVD 1, T. Hawson, 2003. (DVD)

4.2. Artefacts

Artifacts made by the author with the assistance of the makers represent the physical nature of his apprenticeship experience with them. Some of the artefacts are experiments in preparation to make the demonstration table and chairs and others were made with no direct intention to influence the table and chairs design. The following eight illustrations, (Figs. 10 to 17), are the artefacts made with the makers during the interaction interviews. Comments are provided as to how these artefacts or their making have influenced the author and/or the table and chair design. These images can also be seen on the multi media disc 3 in the folder titled, Interaction Interview Artefacts.



Fig. 10 Viking ship upper deck knee made by the author under instruction from Birger Andersen at the Roskilde Viking Ship Museum, 2003.

The author made 5 of these Viking ship components (Fig. 10). They influenced most directly the design and making method of the wooden pattern for the chair back leg, which was cast in aluminum.



Fig. 11 Felt seat made by Ása Hatún and the author, in the Faroe Islands, 2003.

The felt seat (Fig. 11) was made as an experiment to see how directly fleece from a sheep could be processed to make a seat for the chair. Part of a sheep's fleece was rapped in a cloth and roughly stitched through to make it a flat shape before putting directly into a washing machine. It was hoped that this simple process would produce a seat pad for the chair, it was, however, too uneven, making repeat production too variable.



Fig. 12 Viking lady's Knife made by the author with Fjólnir Hlynsson, 2003.



Fig. 13 Reindeer horn handled knives, made by author with Fjolinir Hlynsson, 2003.



Fig. 14 Poem Fence, by Fjolinir Hlynsson assisted by author, 2003.

The artefacts made while apprenticed to Fjolinir Hlynsson (Figs. 12, 13, 14) provided an insight into Icelandic culture. The Viking lady's knife (Fig. 12) was made with the tang as the handle, because in early Icelandic history, Fjolinir told the author while making it, a law was passed that ladies could not have knives with handles, because of repeated incidences of lady's using

knives as weapons in passion motivated attacks. While making the reindeer horn handled knives (Fig. 13), the author was told many stories about hunting and the non-indigenous reindeer's impact on the landscape. The Poem Fence (Fig. 14) was a site-specific artwork by Fjolinir Hlynsson. The poem was by a local sheep farmer about two lovers going behind the hill. The Poem Fence was sited in front of this hill. While assisting to make and erect this fence, stories about the lives of people in the area, where this artwork was sited, were told to the author by Fjolinir and his father.



Fig. 15 Silver and bone handled spoon, made by the author while apprentice to Thorhildur Thorgeirsdottir, 2003.

The scratched surface finish of this spoon (Fig. 15) is a method used by Thorhildur and was used to decorate/finish the aluminum inlays in the project demonstration table.

The cast aluminum artefacts (Fig. 16, 17, page 80) were experiments in surface finishing. The transfer of the tool carved faceted surface of the wooden patterns onto the surface of their aluminum castings and the different processes available in the foundry workshop were studied.



Fig. 16 Cast aluminum spoons, made by the author while apprentice to Gretar Mar Thorvaldsson, 2003.



Fig. 17 Wooden pattern and aluminum casts, sculpture made by the author while apprentice to Gretar Mar Thorvaldsson, 2003.

4.3. Audio Diaries

Audio diaries were recorded throughout the interactive interview process by the author. These diaries were kept as a personal record for the author to remind himself at a later date of thoughts, feelings, new ideas and things of interest learnt while carrying out the interviews. During the initial stages of the design process for the table and chairs, the diaries were listened to by the author while sketching and making models, reminding him of his experiences with the makers and strengthening their influence on the designs. These audio diaries are provided on the Interactive Interview Diaries discs 4 and 5, (audio CD). References are made to these diary discs in the text of this thesis.