

Norwegian Cultural Skills Program

Unit 11: Ornamental Woodcarving Norwegian Relief Style

Level 1: The Basics

Level 2: Flatskurd

Level 3: Carving the Acanthus



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RELIEF CARVING

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INTRODUCTION

History

Ornamental woodcarving dates back over 4,000 years to when early Egyptians are known to have been practicing this type of art form. Many of the objects carved were functional household articles such as chair legs carved in the shape of cat's paws. Floral relief carvings of the lotus and papyrus plant were used to adorn Nile River ships.

Another example of early carvings were the 8th and 9th-century Vikings who carved mythological figures such as dragons and serpents on their ships, churches (*stavekirker*) and other items such as beer bowls (*ølkanner*).

Other objects known for their carved ornamentation were architectural such as the Corinthian capitals used by the ancient Greeks to decorate the tops of structural columns which supported their buildings.

Here, the acanthus-leaf motive is introduced for the first time. A native of the Mediterranean region, the acanthus vine began its long-standing use as a theme used in many forms of decoration, even today. One historical anecdote states that before the huge columns were set into place, they lay on the ground for a period of time. These vines would grow up and wind themselves around and around the columns. Intrigued by what they saw, the craftsmen began using the acanthus leaf as part of the stone design itself.

The acanthus-leaf style began a strong upsurge in popularity in the Renaissance period throughout continental Europe. It eventually worked its way to Norway where the first-known carvings of this style can be seen in Oslo's Domkirke. These were believed to be carved in about 1699.

From there the style branched out to the valleys of Norway, particularly Gudbrandsdalen, where it took a strong foothold and has become a national identity of folk craft throughout Norway even today.

Goals of the Program

To familiarize yourself with traditional Norwegian woodcarving and teach you the basics in:

low-relief (*flatskurd*)

high-relief (*acanthus*)

Note: An accompanying instructional video is available for purchase from the Sons of Norway's Heritage Books. This video (VHS) shows you the basic steps needed to successfully complete these two projects. To order contact: Heritage Books, 502 Water St., Decorah, IA 52101; or call toll-free, 1-888-838-BOOK (2665). The video may also be borrowed from the Sons of Norway Library. Call 1-800-945-8851 to reserve a date. You may also attend a class or draw on past knowledge to complete the guidelines.

Uses of Woodcarvings

Your woodcarvings can be used to decorate both functional and non-functional items.

LEVEL I: THE BASICS

1. Write a short report (300–500 words) on Norwegian woodcarving. Use more than one source.

Hint: Your report should include types of tools, wood, gluing, etc.

2. Select a piece of even-grained wood, approximately 6" x 6" x 3/4". Trace the pattern of carving NR 1 onto it. By following the directional arrows on the pattern 1A (see p. 4), try to carve this detail as cleanly as possible.

Most of the first project can be carved using just the #3-25mm and #5-16mm chisels. Each segment is to be as uniformly carved as possible. Same depth, same proportions. The walls of each segment are to be as flat as possible. This can be a little tricky because of the wood grain to contend with.

You can start each segment of the carving by running the V-parting tool down the middle to about the center point. Then use your #3 and #5 to continue on from there.

Overall depth should be about 1/4"–3/8".

The purpose of this exercise is to train you to carve with the grain so that the chisels sheer smoothly through the wood. As you carve more and more, your hand-eye coordination will become keener resulting in much cleaner carvings.

Good luck and don't be afraid to try this one several times.

3. Pick one optional activity (see p. 4).
4. Select and obtain a good set of carving tools.
5. Send in a Final Report (use the appended report form) along with proof of optional activities.

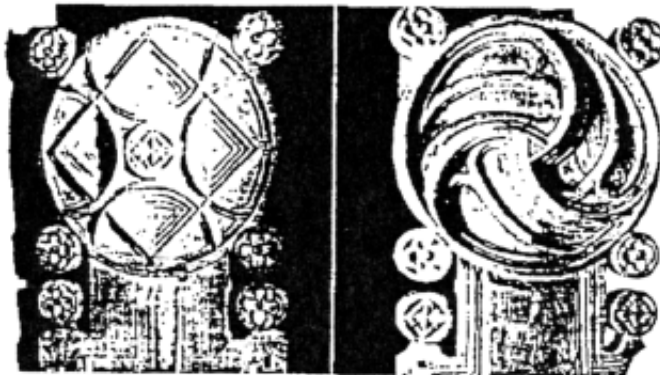
LEVEL 2: FLATSKURD

1. Select a good piece of wood for your first project. (Refer, if you wish, to the Rist Holt/Olsen video for advice and design.)
2. Properly transfer the line-drawing to the carving surface.
3. Properly outline and rough-out the carving.
4. Finish carving your project, demonstrating correct techniques. Keep in mind to pay attention to the flow of the lines, proportion and detail (refer to video).
5. Pick one optional activity (see p. 4).
6. Send in a Final Report (use the appended report form) on your required and optional activities, including a sharp photo of your completed project.

LEVEL 3: CARVING THE ACANTHUS

Now that you have completed the basic level of Norwegian woodcarving, it is time to move to the next step which is the full-relief acanthus.

1. Prepare and rough out your carving blank as you learned in the first project.
2. Finish your carving. Refer to the above-mentioned video, as needed.
3. Pick one optional activity (see p. 4).
4. Send in a Final Report (use the appended report form) on your required and optional activities, including photos of your second project with a written report of your chosen option.

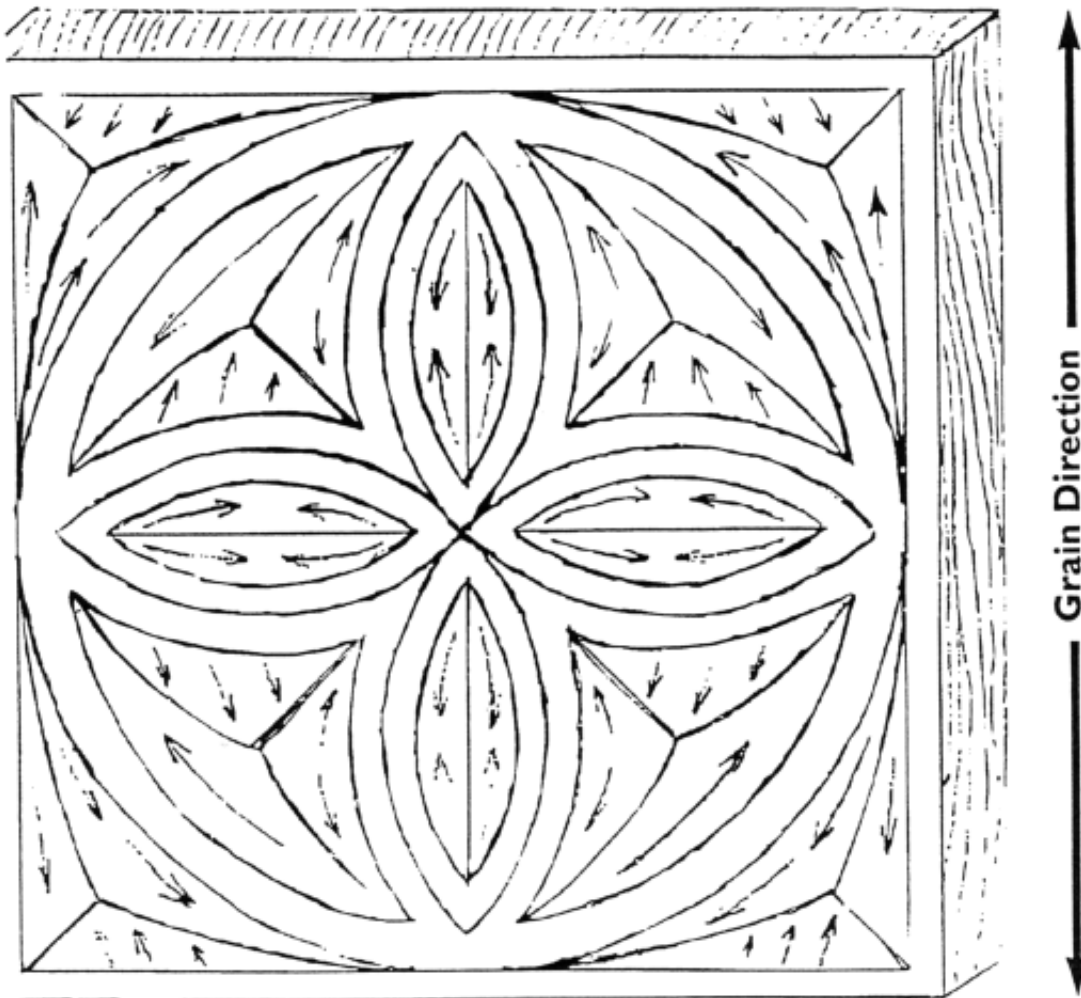


Relief carving from Mære Church, North Trøndelag

OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR ALL LEVELS

1. Visit a carving show or club in your area and find examples of acanthus-leaf woodcarvings, preferably Norwegian style. Take photos or obtain pictures and write a 250-word report on your observations.
2. Arrange and organize a carving exhibit in your lodge. All styles of carving to be shown, including native North American.
3. Select from the book list and read and then write a 500-word report on traditional Norwegian woodcarving.
4. Visit a tool store in your area and list all available tools associated with woodcarving. Give a brief description of them and their uses.
5. Visit a lumberyard in your area and list all the species of wood available. Purchase five different kinds and carve the same ornament (of your choice) on each. Write a brief report on each one's carving characteristics.

NR 1A



PARTIAL SOURCE LIST

<u>AUTHOR</u>	<u>TITLE</u>
Amrud, Johan	<i>Treskjæring</i> Universitetsforlaget (now available in English)
Magerøy, Ellen Marie	<i>Norsk treskurd</i> Det Norske Samlaget 1983; ISBN 82 521 2341 4
Hauglid, Roar	<i>Akantus I and II</i> Dreyers Forlag; distributed by Riksantikvariatet
Gjerdi, Trond	<i>Møbler i Norge</i> Aschehoug and Co., Oslo; ISBN 82 03 08610 1
Anker, Peter	<i>Kister og skrin</i> C. Hvitfeldt Forlag, Oslo; ISBN 82 7003 019 8
Hasluck, Paul	<i>Manual of Traditional Woodcarving</i> Dover Publications
Rist Holt, Erik & Olsen, Mark	<i>Ornamental Woodcarving, Volume I</i> Video
Eggen, Lars	<i>Mønstre for treskjæring</i> Cappelen Forlag
Johnson, James	<i>Woodcarving Techniques & Projects</i> Sunset Publications
Amrud, Johan	<i>Ornamental Woodcarving</i> Heart Prairie Press, PO Box 332, White Water WI 53190

Some of these books are available from:

Heritage Books
502 W. Water St.
Decorah IA 52101
Toll free: 1-888-838-BOOK (2665)

SONS OF NORWAY

Norwegian Cultural Skills Program

Specialist	Person who wishes to go in depth in one area, e.g. Hardanger embroidery or genealogy, etc.
Generalist	Person who decides to sample several skills and qualify for the basic level in each, for example: stamp collecting, crafts, and Norwegian foods.
Mentor	Person who is skilled in activities offered in the Norwegian Cultural Skills Program can do a different challenge: mentor others who need formal or informal instruction. The mentor is an extremely important person in passing on the Norwegian heritage to others.
Master of Cultural Skills	Persons who have completed at least three levels of three different skills, or nine individual basic activities.

1. TRADITION NORWEGIAN COOKING

- Level 1 Your Favorites
- Level 2 Baked Goods and Desserts
- Level 3 Meat or Fish Dishes

2. READING NORWEGIAN AND NORWEGIAN-AMERICAN AUTHORS

- Level 1 Your Favorites
- Level 2 Fiction
- Level 3 Nonfiction

3. COLLECTING NORWEGIAN AND NORTH AMERICAN STAMPS

- Level 1 Collect General Norwegian and North American Stamps
- Level 2 Specialize Your Stamp Collection
- Level 3 Complete a Collection of a Ten-Year Period

4. NORWEGIAN ROSEMALING

- Level 1 Basic Strokes, Flower Form and Scroll
- Level 2 Completed Design
- Level 3 Create an Original Design

5. GENEALOGY—FAMILY HISTORY

- Level 1 Complete people 1-7 on a four-generation ancestor chart, etc.
- Level 2 Complete four more people on the ancestor, family group chart and document
- Level 3 Complete all information for 15 people on the charts—document and write an essay

6. HAND-KNITTING

- Level 1 The Basics
- Level 2 Knit with Two Colors
- Level 3 Create a two or multicolored sweater (based on Norwegian designs)

7. NORWEGIAN LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

- Level 1 The Basics of Norwegian Language
- Level 2 A Sampling of Norwegian Culture
- Level 3 A topic from Norwegian Language or Norwegian Culture

8. HARDANGER EMBROIDERY

- Level 1 The Basics
- Level 2 Complete a Larger Item
- Level 3 Using Your Skills in Creative Ways

9. FIGURE CARVING

- Level 1 The Basics
- Level 2 Complete a Detailed Carving
- Level 3 Complete an Original Carving

10. WEAVING

Track I

- Level 1 The Basics—Make a Sampler
- Level 2 Inkle or Card Weaving or Rigid heddle—Complete a Project
- Level 3 Create an Original Design

Track II—Floor or Table Loom Weaving

- Level 1 Produce a Sampler
- Level 2 Make a Finished Project
- Level 3 Create an Original Design

11. ORNAMENTAL WOODCARVING

- Level 1 The Basics
- Level 2 Flatskurd
- Level 3 Carve the Acanthus

12. CHIP CARVING

- Level 1 The Basics
- Level 2 Carve Borders
- Level 3 Carve Rosettes

13. FOLK DANCING

- Level 1 Easy Dances
- Level 2 Intermediate Dances
- Level 3 Advanced Dances

14. MUSIC AND MUSICIANS OF NORWAY

- Level 1 Folk Music: Roots of Norwegian Music
- Level 2 The 19th Century: Edvard Grieg & Contemporaries
- Level 3 The 20th Century: Composers, Performers, Conductors

MENTOR

Many people are already skilled in the activities offered in the Norwegian Cultural Skills Program. To those, a different challenge is available: Become a mentor. A mentor is a person who becomes a formal or informal teacher, leading other individuals along the generalist or specialist tracts. The mentor is an extremely important person as he/she plays a key role in passing on the Norwegian heritage to others.

EXAMPLE 1

Meet John. He has spent a lifetime doing beautiful wood carving. He decides to become a mentor in his lodge by teaching relief carving. When he has taught a minimum of five people the basics of relief carving and they complete level one* of that activity, John applies for the specialist pin (he intends to continue teaching relief carving). He receives the specialist pin and three bars: Mentor, Relief Carving and level one. When at least three of his students have qualified for level two*, John receives his level two bar. If John can assist at least one* student all the way to the top, John is awarded the level three bar. See illustration.

*Note that these people must send in their reports to the Norwegian Cultural Skills Program.

EXAMPLE 2

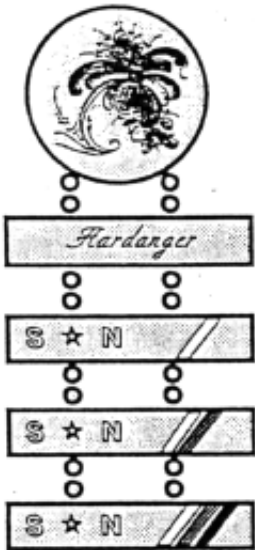
Irene is cultural director of her lodge. She decides to get a number of cultural skills activities going. She starts a crafts club. She encourages the group to try knitting, *Hardanger* embroidery and *rosemaling*. Irene's strongest suit is *rosemaling*, but she knows enough about *Hardanger* embroidery and knitting to instruct her fellow members in the basics. Irene is on her way to becoming a mentor on the generalist track. When at least five of her fellow club members qualify for part one of *Hardanger* embroidery, Irene receives the generalist pin with two bars: Mentor and *Hardanger*. When five more of the participants qualify for part one of Knitting, Irene receives one bar: Knitting, and when yet five others qualify for part one of *Rosemaling*, Irene receives another bar: *Rosemaling*. See illustration.

NORWEGIAN CULTURAL SKILLS PROGRAM PINS

REVISED POLICY (MAY 1999)

SPECIALIST*

The specialist pin is earned by people who wish to go into some depth in one area, e.g. *Hardanger* Embroidery. The pin was designed by Marilyn Olin, a Vesterheim Gold Medalist in *Rosemaling*.



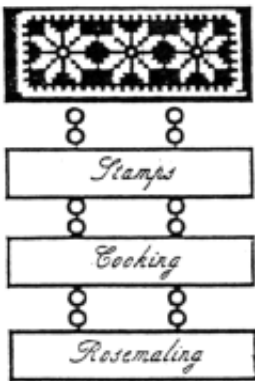
EXAMPLE

Kari decides, after completing the first part of *HARDANGER*, that this is a craft she really enjoys. She requests the specialist pin and receives the pin with two bars attached, one *Hardanger* and one designated for level one (one white stripe). She continues with level two of the requirements, and when these are completed, she is awarded the second level bar (one white and one red stripe). Upon completing the last level of the guidelines for *Hardanger*, she receives the level three bar with one white, one red and one blue stripe. See illustration.

GENERALIST

The generalist pin is awarded to any person who decides to sample several skills and qualify for the basic level (e.g. in stamp collecting, genealogy and a number of crafts), or any one part of the following units: Traditional Norwegian Foods, Reading Norwegian and Norwegian-North American Authors, Norwegian Language and Culture.

The design of the pin is based on the Selbu rose, chosen to honor the founding fathers of Sons of Norway who hailed from the Selbu community. It was designed by Krista Lauritzen and Liv Dahl.



EXAMPLE

Let's say that Norman has completed the first level of *COLLECTING NORWEGIAN AND NORTH AMERICAN STAMPS*. He receives the generalist pin and a bar marked *Stamps*. He now wants to try *TRADITIONAL NORWEGIAN COOKING*. Being a fisherman and hunter, he chooses part three, *Fish and Meat*. Upon completion of the guidelines, he is awarded the bar marked *Cooking*. Now he decides to try his hand at *rosemaling*. He signs up for a beginning course and completes level one, thereby having earned the bar *Rosemaling*. See illustration.

*Please note: Only one specialist pin is given per participant. Bars will be awarded to be affixed to the original pin. Thus one pin may reflect one or several activities.