

DAN LUNA EXCEPTIONAL WOODWORKING



Feasting their eyes on the sumptuous staircases, paneled libraries, moldings, coffered ceilings, doors, cabinetry, and furniture impeccably crafted and fitted by wood artisan Dan Luna, it rarely occurs to people to wonder: “How did he do that?” Luna, on the other hand, freely admits that even as a teenager, he was “obsessed with woodworking,” lying awake at night as his brain worked through the structural and design challenges of some project. Today, that obsession is of premium value to the architects, homeowners, professional designers and building contractors who collaborate with him to make dreams become fabulously functional realities.

3-D Visualization

Luna, owner of Dan Luna Exceptional Woodworking, has a reputation for figuring out how to produce just about anything out of wood even if it involves the integration of metal, plastic, stone, or glass. Innovative cabinetry comprises much of Luna’s work, such as in the Laguna Beach kitchen pictured above. Working with interior designer Sheldon Harte of Harte Brownlee & Associates Interior Design, Luna created a transitional look using 1.5-inch-thick solid white oak with deeply recessed panels: “These doors were much thicker and heavier than the norm. We had to make unusual provisions to hinge them correctly, using special jigs and mortising the hinges in such a way as to make them

concealed, yet still have the soft-close mechanism. That was a challenge,” Luna says.

Luna thrives on solving interesting design problems. In one project, the home’s flow required a door where the client really didn’t want to see one. Luna’s answer: a stunning sculpted wood art piece doubling as a hidden door, its custom hinge mechanisms and jambs entirely concealed.

All projects engage Luna’s remarkable ability to visualize in 3-D, a gift that enables him to anticipate and resolve glitches before they happen. His old-school approach of relying on hand drawings and the occasional hand-built scale model translates into intensely rich craftsmanship whose quality radiates in traditional and antique reproduction styles. Ironically, Luna’s old world skills equip him as well to deliver extremely high-quality results on contemporary and super-sleek modern projects: “Everything is so exposed in that design style. You really have to know what you’re doing because it is totally unforgiving,” he explains.

On-Site Solutions

Another critical advantage Luna brings to every project, whether it’s a remodel, restoration, or all-new home, is his insistence that the same craftsmen who fabricated the project’s items in his shop do the installation. Intimately familiar with the piece’s design and structure, they can resolve on-site hitches quickly.

“Clients claim I have the best crew around,” says Luna of his 17-member team, led by his nephew, Ben. “All my guys are trained to my standards. They’re courteous, knowledgeable, and very tidy.”

Fearless Design

Luna, an O.C. native whose father was a teacher and master upholsterer, started building wood projects as a young boy. His father passed away when Luna was only 14; fortunately, Luna’s Cypress High woodshop teacher, John Rush, saw something special in him. Rush became his first mentor; by the time Luna was a senior, he was working full-time for Rush, who led him to another mentor, master designer Tres Converse. Shortly before Converse’s death in 1993, Luna founded Dan Luna Exceptional Woodworking; Luna is proud that Rush’s son, Dirk, is one of his employees.

“John Rush and Tres Converse weren’t afraid to build anything,” says Luna. “I guess they passed that on to me.”

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23400 Peralta, Ste. 1, Laguna Hills

949.859.3631

www.DanLunaWoodworking.com