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[RokJok](#)
Member

Registered:
09/11/05
Posts: 2247
Loc: Rainy side of
the Cascade Mtns

 **Boxmaking books: reviews of many volumes**
#3122634 - 06/25/07 01:58 PM

 Edit  Reply  Quote

Below are some quick impressions of some box making books I currently have checked out of my local library.

=====
Doug Stowe books:

I like these two books for their focus on the mechanics of making boxes. IMHO they do a decent job of exposing the technique options to accomplish a given result. If I had to pick a nit of shortcoming, it would be that the box styling in these books is fairly pedestrian compared to the range covered by some of the other books reviewed. However, the purpose of these is not to be pretty picture books kept on the coffee table. Rather they are structured to be reference books to keep handy in the shop for quick access & problem-solving sessions.

Taunton's complete illustrated guide to box making

A relatively comprehensive book for a beginner on the craft of boxmaking. Works up from materials used, tools and stock prep through joints, steps of construction, styles, to a quick coverage of inlay/veneer/carving and lathe or bent boxes. I would recommend this as a "first to get" book if you are just starting out on boxmaking.

Creating beautiful boxes with inlay techniques

Informative on how to make your own inlay banding. Not a lot of variety in the styling of the boxes themselves -- they are basically all rectilinear. Good instructions on the "how to" techniques of making the boxes themselves and making the inlay channels.

=====
Tony Lydgate books:

I tend to get Tony Lydgate's books confused with each other. That is due to the similarity of format and content (and sometimes duplication of artists and boxes) within them. On average I like his books more for inspiration than for instruction. His interest focuses on the artistic range and design variety possibilities of boxes, while mostly ignoring how those designs get executed. Nonetheless, the level of design and execution illustrated in his books is very high. As inspiration and imagination-ticklers for boxmaking I rank his books near the top, behind only the "400 Boxes" and "Celebrating Boxes" books.

Tony Lydgate's books typically show a photo of each completed box and an exploded line-art view of the components. They do not say how to make the joinery shown in the exploded views. Thus his books, especially the three "The Art Of Making..." books, assume a fair degree of craftsmanship and competence on the part of the reader. These books are much more about what to make than how to make it.

Po Shun Leong : art boxes

In this book Tony investigates the complex and often obtusely convoluted art pieces of Po Shun Leong. While they are boxes in the sense that they have drawers and doors, the emphasis is distinctly on the visually busy playfulness more than the practical storage aspects. IMHO this is a good coffee table book. However, the similarity of Leong's boxes to each other makes the book

rather quickly grow self-redundant, in spite of the richness of variety that can be gotten through inspection of Leong's pieces if you are willing to exert the effort. I am somewhat torn on Leong's pieces. There is lots there that I really like, but those aspects are not self-evident. IMHO you have to work to "get it" with his pieces. I guess I rank Leong's boxes with the paintings of Kandinsky and the music of Sun Ra or some of Coltrane -- I admire the technical expertise necessary to execute something that complex, but I'm a little baffled with the result of all that effort. Nonetheless, I find this richly photographed book has plenty of inspiration between the covers, if I just dig deep enough to find it.

The art of making elegant wood boxes

The boxes in the main section of this book are Tony's own designs. Again, a book where you get a photo of the finished box and an exploded drawing of the components. There is a small Gallery section at the end with a fair diversity of styles from different artists, including Tony himself.

The following three books are so similar to each other that each of them gets the same review from me: "A collection of very nice boxes from a wide variety of artists in a diverse range of styles." Since no one artist or style gets too many pages, these books work well as an introduction to the how wide the boundaries of boxmaking can be. IMHO these three are coffee table books, not shop references. I like all three of these books, but they are so similar to each other that none of them really stands out in my mind, even as I am looking at any one of them.

The art of making elegant jewelry boxes : design & techniques

The art of making small wood boxes

Award-winning wood boxes : design & technique

=====

Peter Lloyd books:

Celebrating Boxes by Peter Lloyd & Andrew Crawford

This is "boxes as art" at its finest. This book is a gallery collection of boxes from a broad selection of artists. This collection highlights works of artists from around the world moreso than the usual parochial emphasis on boxmakers from the USA. The sheer breadth of design range and decorative techniques in this book blows me away. This is the book to reach for whenever you suffer a case of boxmaker's block and need to tickle your imagination into motion.

Making heirloom boxes

More of a "how to" book, this one starts with a short tools and basic techniques section. The bulk of the book is dedicated to milling & assembly steps to make a variety of boxes. The steps needed to make each box are shown in an exploded drawing of the components followed by a mix of photos and line drawings. The interesting (confusing? amusing?) thing about this book is that the boxes are categorized together based on what type of hinge is used to attach the lid.

=====

Miscellaneous boxmaking books:

400 wood boxes : the fine art of containment & concealment by Veronika Alice Gunther

This smaller (8"x8") book contains the broadest illustration of boxes of all the books here. However, its breadth seems only a bit wider than the more easily found "Celebrating Boxes" book by Lloyd & Crawford. For design students, I would recommend this book with the same enthusiasm I do the "1000 Chairs" book. Each of them shows succinctly how widely divergent and different pieces sharing the same name can be. But to really dig into this one cover-to-cover, you've got to be a dedicated boxaholic.

Box-making basics : design, technique, projects by David M. Freedman

Although the black & white photos and line drawings used in this book lack the sheer decorative impact of the coffee table gallery books above, this is one of my favorite "how to" books in the boxmaker's pantheon. As an introductory primer into the boxmaking craft, I rank this one at the top. If you are just starting to investigate boxmaking and want to get only one book on the craft of making boxes (vs the art of designing boxes), IMHO this is the book.

The best of wood boxes by R. Adam Blake

This is another gallery book showing the works of a variety of artists. I would put its breadth of design variety on par with "Celebrating Boxes" from Lloyd & Crawford. As in the other gallery books, there are some amazing examples of very high design and craftsmanship in this volume. However, it is even less educational on construction technique than the Lydgate books. Each box is shown in a photo, then in a line drawing of the assembled box (basically a duplication of the photo) with the outer dimensions penciled in. Included on the drawing page is a brief bio of the artist, a minimal materials list, and perhaps a quick statement on the project design. While not particularly helpful on how to make a box, this volume serves its purpose as a decent coffee

table book. But I don't think it is the best of that category. There are other books in this review that don't waste page space on redundant black & white line drawings that don't contribute to the decorative value on the pages, which is this book's raison d'etre.

Making small wooden boxes by James A. Jacobson

Printed in 1986, this 20-year-old book shows its age. The box designs are seriously dated, as are the black & white photos and line art drawings. If we keep its era in mind, I think it has value as a progenitor of the other books reviewed here. It shows how much both the art of boxmaking and the art of printing boxmaking books have evolved. It lacks the breadth of design daring shown in the gallery books. It also lacks the depth or comprehensive illustration of construction techniques shown in the "how to" books. But I would still grab a copy if I came across it cheap at a garage sale.

Marvelous wooden boxes you can make by Jeff Greef

A good "how to" book on boxmaking. Each design is shown in black & white photos: a completed piece and a few technique photos among the text for how to make the particular piece. Even though there aren't a lot of pictures for each box, the ones included show their particular technique clearly. This is IMHO one of the better construction manuals for boxmaking on the market.

Turned boxes : 50 designs by Chris Stott

I don't lathe turn wood (yet) so the designs throughout the main section of this book looked pretty similar to me. Each turned box is shown in a color photo, followed by a line drawing of the piece with significant dimensions penciled in. At the back of the book is a small gallery of pieces from other artists. I am somewhat ambivalent about this volume, likely largely due to my ignorance of the turning techniques needed to make these pieces, but also brought on by what I perceive as an uncertainty in the book on its own purpose. The color photos are well enough done to classify this as a coffee table book. But the lack of design diversity and the inclusion of the dimensioned line drawings keep it from fulfilling that role. However, I suspect the sparseness of construction instruction would keep this from being a "how to" book, at least for a neophyte like myself.

Wood magazine : making great boxes from the staff of Better Homes & Gardens Wood Magazine

I like this book and recommend it as a construction manual for the shop library of a boxmaker. The photos and line drawings throughout the book are in color and show clearly the techniques illustrated. As a "how to" book this one is one of my favorites of the bunch. However, the arrangement of the content is a little confusing. It starts with veneering, marquetry, and inlay, which are pretty complex & demanding techniques. It then wanders through a section of bandsawn boxes. The bulk of the book (about a third of the book) is dedicated to construction of rectilinear boxes with various joinery and decorative techniques covered in the process. It wraps up with a bit on making boxes from moulding and patterns to use in the construction of the boxes in the book. Nonetheless, as I noted earlier, this one comes with my recommendation due to the clarity of its instruction.

=====

"For true creativity, we have to think beyond our tools." - *MsNomer*


"if someone asked me to build that, I would kick them in the jimmys for trying to ruin my reputation. " - *Goatman* -

Post Extras:   

[rickeygw](#)
member

Registered:
11/29/06
Posts: 1452
Loc: Raymore, MO

 **Re: Boxmaking books: reviews of many volumes**

 [Re: [RokJok](#)]
#3122652 - 06/25/07 02:06 PM

 Edit  Reply  Quote

Nice review. I own both of the Stowe books and the Freeman book after also checking them out from the library as well as a few others. Felt like learning the basic elements of box construction would then lead me into the next phase of developing my own designs based on the use of various moldings, inlay and joinery as well as creative use of the exotics. To see some really nice speciality boxes (fishing lure) look at Dave Hoovers website. Interesting niche market he has created for himself. Also, a real nice guy!

Post Extras:   

[Todd G](#)
Member

 **Re: Boxmaking books: reviews of many volumes**

 [Re: [RokJok](#)]

 Edit  Reply  Quote

Registered:
08/17/04
Posts: 1136
Loc: Columbus, Ohio



#3122658 - 06/25/07 02:10 PM

Great review and write-up! I definitely agree on the Wood Magazine book. I am a complete beginner at making boxes and picked the Wood Mag book after flipping through it. (didn't hurt that it was discounted 😊). I have already made one box (the heart shaped bandsaw box) and have plans for more.

Todd

Post Extras:   

[Andyman](#)
Witty Title Goes
Here

 **Re: Boxmaking books: reviews of many volumes**
 [Re: [RokJok](#)]
#3122731 - 06/25/07 02:46 PM

 Edit  Reply  Quote

Registered:
05/23/07
Posts: 3492
Loc: CNY,USA

Thanks for the post! Informed, first-hand reviews and comparisons are always appreciated (by me, at least...)

I somehow managed to find the only boxmaking book you DIDN'T review at my library a while ago. I'll give a short description of that one.



Box by Box, by Jim Stack

It's set up mostly as a technique book, giving step-by-step instructions starting with the easiest projects and working up through more complicated/advanced ones. Some plain rectilinear, some bandsawn curves, some unique 3D polygons, etc. The author suggests that making boxes is an excellent way to practice and advance your woodworking skills, and I can't disagree (though I have limited experience with boxes specifically). Several of the projects looked interesting to me, and many would be great for gifts. But after looking through the library's copy a few times, I didn't feel the need to go out and buy my own. I'd probably check it out again if I wanted to make some boxes. However, after this thread, I might look for the FWW or Wood box-books instead.

Thanks again, and hope this helps,
Andy

Post Extras:   

[StuieP](#)
Member

 **Re: Boxmaking books: reviews of many volumes**
 [Re: [RokJok](#)]
#3123111 - 06/25/07 07:14 PM

 Edit  Reply  Quote



Registered:
11/16/05
Posts: 168
Loc: Maryland

Your effort in giving us this information is really valuable and appreciated. Thanks!

"Good, Fast, Cheap: Pick any two"

Post Extras:   

[Screen](#)
Member

 **Re: Boxmaking books: reviews of many volumes**
 [Re: [StuieP](#)]
#3124336 - 06/26/07 12:42 PM



 Edit  Reply  Quote

Registered:
02/15/06
Posts: 850

Great reviews!

Post Extras:   

[RokJok](#)
Member

 **Re: Boxmaking books: reviews of many volumes**
 [Re: [Andyman](#)]
#3124809 - 06/26/07 06:00 PM



 Edit  Reply  Quote

Registered:
09/11/05
Posts: 2247
Loc: Rainy side of
the Cascade Mtns

Andyman, thanks for covering the "Box By Box" volume for us. Much appreciated!

Post Extras:   

[Uncleair](#)
Honored Veteran

 **Re: Boxmaking books: reviews of many volumes**
 [Re: [RokJok](#)]
#3124814 - 06/26/07 06:09 PM

 Edit  Reply  Quote

Registered:

09/17/04
Posts: 4787
Loc: Western Slope
of Colorado

Very informative post. Thank You.

TOM



Pine is fine.

Deja Moo: The feeling that you've heard this bull before.

Post Extras:   

[2beast](#)
Member

Registered:
01/26/05
Posts: 5266
Loc: Central III

 **Re: Boxmaking books: reviews of many volumes**
 [Re: [RokJok](#)]
#3127058 - 06/27/07 10:36 PM

 Edit  Reply  Quote

Thanks for the reviews.

I am looking for a couple new books 😊



Greg

[Danchris Nursery](#)

Post Extras:   

[michaelb](#)
Creative Member

Registered:
06/02/03
Posts: 1899

 **Re: Boxmaking books: reviews of many volumes**
 [Re: [2beast](#)]
#3215290 - 08/23/07 09:11 AM

 Edit  Reply  Quote

bump



-Michael



Post Extras:   

[timgren](#)
Master Member

Registered:
12/27/04
Posts: 5351
Loc: Wentzville MO

 **Re: Boxmaking books: reviews of many volumes**
 [Re: [RokJok](#)]
#3215496 - 08/23/07 10:27 AM

 Edit  Reply  Quote

400 wood boxes : the fine art of containment & concealment by Veronika Alice Gunther

😊 One of my favorite coffee-table books. Very inspiring, with a wonderfully written introduction. Highly recommended.



California Proposition 65:

My words, opinions, and suggestions have been proven to cause anxiety and/or emotional distress to readers residing in the State of California.

Post Extras:   

[John92024](#)
Member

Registered:
08/19/07
Posts: 9
Loc: S. Calif

 **Re: Boxmaking books: reviews of many volumes**
 [Re: [michaelb](#)]
#3217053 - 08/24/07 11:44 AM

 Edit  Reply  Quote

Thanks for the great reviews, and I agree with you on the Box-making basics : design, technique, projects by David M. Freedman book, I have it and it is great.

One other book worth considering if someone likes using their bandsaw is: Building Beautiful Boxes with Your Bandsaw by Lois Keener Ventura. This is not only a "how to" book on the art of bandsawing freeform boxes but also includes templates for all of the projects contained in the book. All of the photos are in full color and do a nice job of showing the procedures involved from gluing up the initial stock all the way through to the finished box.

One last thought for anyone interested in picking up any of the books mentioned in this thread. I've found that if you go to Amazon and plug in the title and then click on the "Used" link that comes up in the description of the book, you'll find it for a couple of dollars. That link takes you to various book sellers that not only sell used books, but also sell overruns, shelf scuffs, minor damage, etc. You can pretty much tell what you're getting by the description. As an example, the bandsaw book I mentioned above lists for \$23 and I got it for \$3.50...the back cover has a small crease on it, boy, that really looks bad on the bench!

Good woodworking,
John

Post Extras:   

[Pomelle Sapele](#)

Member

Registered:
10/17/01
Posts: 1056

 **Re: Boxmaking books: reviews of many volumes**

 [Re: [RokJok](#)]

#3217211 - 08/24/07 01:06 PM

 Edit  Reply  Quote

Good reviews! My favorites are [Andrew Crawford's](#)



Keeping the Bubba in Bubinga

Post Extras:   

[RokJok](#)

Member

Registered:
09/11/05
Posts: 2247
Loc: Rainy side of
the Cascade Mtns

 **Re: Boxmaking books: reviews of many volumes**

 [Re: [RokJok](#)]

#3556363 - 03/03/08 02:33 PM

 Edit  Reply  Quote

Here's my review of a boxmaking book I ordered to fill out an Amazon order to reach the free shipping limit.

Making Wooden Boxes with Dale Power

62 pages, 8.5"x11", paperback, Schiffer Publishing
[publisher's page for this book](#)

Short story short: Don't bother getting this one. There are much better books on the market for the same or less money.

Short story long: This book is definitely a "how to" manual more than an artistic inspiration book. It is printed on heavy paper, with all the photos being full-color with the color being visually rich and saturated. There are no line drawings. The book is captioned photographs illustrating how to make bandsawn and rectilinear boxes, with a small gallery section of uninspired pieces at the back of the book.

The first thing I noted is that the photo captions are not numbered. Thus there is confusion on what sequence to follow as you view the pictures. The sequence seems to change from page-to-page, being "left column first, then right column" on some pages while other pages seem to go "top to bottom and (roughly) left to right". IMHO this failure to number the captions is a serious and unforgivable error in a book that uses captioned photos exclusively.

The author does a good job keeping his fingers and hands out of the way in the photos. This allows the reader a very clear view of the wood-to-machine interface where the action is taking place. The photographer has also done a good job of composing the pictures so that the reader's view isn't obstructed.

However, the pictures look like they are either slightly out of focus or that the field of focus isn't quite where you expect it. I have a tough time deciphering what is being done in many of the shots. This may be caused by, or exacerbated by, the next fault I note with the photos.

The wood used in the pictures seems to be quite plain maple or soft pine (hem-fir in Vancouver, WA where the author lives.... which is local to me) such as you would find at Home Depot. The maple in the out-of-focus pictures washes to a mostly-white color field that doesn't have enough grain contrast in it to delineate or differentiate the shapes of the boxes being made. This may be what makes it hard to "see" what is going on in the photos. Even the shots with pine wood, with its light-dark contrast of early and late growth wood, seems washed out enough in the pictures to not distinctly show the shapes of the pieces. I don't know whether to blame the photographer (Jeffrey B Snyder) for shooting slightly out of focus or the editor for soft-focusing the pictures in the printing process.

This choice of woods for use in the book, both of which are pretty much at the bottom of the price scale, gives the reader the impression that the author, editor, publisher, and photographer didn't care enough about the reader to get wood with rich enough figure (or to set up the shots with appropriate lighting) to better illustrate the box shapes. Thus the reader is left struggling to compensate for what I perceive as an up-front cheapness on the part of the production personnel.

I also take issue with the level of craftsmanship (or lack thereof) promoted by the author. He appears to be willing to accept blown out chunks of wood from the edges of joints, sawtooth marks, untrimmed feathering from saw or router, and through-routed dados (which he then filled with a plug of glaringly mismatched grain wood) on his boxes. The overall level of tightness in the joinery looks to be a bit sloppy and loose to my eye. One caption reads, "Once properly adjusted, this is the way your joints should fit." However, the photo shows a box joint with visible gaps around the fingers of the joint.

Another insult came in the finishing section of the book, where red mahogany stain was used "to give this pure white holly wood more interest". A better craftsman would have simply chosen a more appropriately colored wood initially to make his piece, rather than wasting the value of the holly's white color by burying it under stain.

I expect an author to present his very best work and methods to his reading public. I sincerely hope this book and its failings does not represent the best that Mr Power has to offer.

Part of the problem may be that Schiffer Publishing's woodworking books (a small part of their catalog) seem to focus pretty strongly on carving books. Perhaps their carving books are better than this boxmaking book. Given my disappointment at this book, I intend to never buy any of them and so will never know.

Post Extras:   

Ridgecrest

2008 WN NCAA
Tourney Winner

Registered:
12/08/05
Posts: 180
Loc: Pittsburgh, PA

 **Re: Boxmaking books: reviews of many volumes**

 [Re: [RokJok](#)]

#3556387 - 03/03/08 02:50 PM

 Edit  Reply  Quote

RokJok,

Thanks so much for your reviews. I wish I would have had your review back in January where I bought 4 books on box making. Three of them are on your list. I will save your review for future reference. Thanks again.

City of Champions and the Pirates.

Post Extras:   

RokJok

Member

Registered:
09/11/05
Posts: 2247
Loc: Rainy side of
the Cascade Mtns

 **Re: Boxmaking books: reviews of many volumes**

 [Re: [Pomelle Sapele](#)]

#3582014 - 03/17/08 01:11 PM

 Edit  Reply  Quote

Since Pomelle Sapele linked in a picture of the following book, I checked it out of my local library and am adding a review of it.

The Book of Boxes by [Andrew Crawford](#)

This "how to make it" book contains boxes equal in quality to those found in the "Celebrating Boxes" book I reviewed in my first posting, which is to say very high quality.

In spite of being a "how to" book, I found it to also be a good design book due to the breadth, integration, and strength of Crawford's vision and designs, coupled with his masterful

craftsmanship. While most of the boxes shown are rectilinear, there is enough diversity in how they are decorated or constructed to kick-start the imagination into gear on how the techniques could be applied elsewhere.

As far as the actual making of the boxes shown, I think this volume is an advanced primer that quickly reaches beyond basic boxmaking to teach more esoteric, intricate, and demanding techniques. This book assumes a very high level of skills and competence on the part of the reader.

The first few boxes shown are pretty simple, but the level of complexity and commitment rises in a hurry after those first few are dispensed with. I would not recommend this book as a "first book to buy" to a neophyte boxmaker. There are better basic primers on the shelves to teach the rudiments of the craft, with the Stowe, Freedman, or Wood Magazine books being my primary choices. However, for an intermediate boxmaker looking to stretch his skillset or an advance maker seeking specific instructions on the techniques which Crawford shows in this book, this one deserves a place in your library.

The layout of "The Book of Boxes" is:

1. A very sketchy and quick section on tools, milling & woodworking techniques, wood choices & properties, and design & planning steps. The tools part is almost superfluous, in that a reader capable of woodworking at this level will have long ago learned what this quick tool description conveys. This first section of the book contains text and colored line art illustrations.
2. The main section shows how the author made several styles of boxes. The boxes run roughly in order of simplest in construction to most complex. The description of how to make each box shows how to perform the tougher steps that a reader would least likely figure out without being told. This section, like the rest of the book assumes that the reader is already competent and comfortable in his skills and techniques. It tells you what to do, but not in a step-by-step way. This section has both photos and line art drawings to illustrate the steps and techniques covered.
3. A couple quick sections on decorative techniques (making you own inlay, banding, marquetry, parquetry, Tunbridgeware) and finishing (French polishing, shellac with wax, and oil finish). This is not a terribly comprehensive or in-depth coverage of the fields of veneer work or finishing, but a quick description of how to perform the techniques.
4. A gallery of photos showing very fine boxmaking examples from a number of boxmakers, including the author.

"For true creativity, we have to think beyond our tools." - *MsNomer*

"if someone asked me to build that, I would kick them in the jimmies for trying to ruin my reputation." - *Goatman* -

Post Extras:   

RokJok

Member

Registered:

09/11/05

Posts: 2247

Loc: Rainy side of
the Cascade Mtns

 **Re: Boxmaking books: reviews of many volumes**

 **[Re: RokJok]**

#3881636 - 09/26/08 02:54 AM

 **Edit**  **Reply**  **Quote**

A quick overview article from Doug Stowe of some considerations and choices when designing boxes is contained in Fine Woodworking, issue #197 (March/April 2008), pages 62-67, "Designing Boxes".

The design aspects covered are:

- wood choice color or contrast
- continuous grain resawing
- corner joints
- foot styles
- dividers & trays
- lids
- pulls
- hinges

For each aspect covered, there is a photo showing a few options. There are also three line drawings showing the continuous grain resaw technique, corner joinery, and a lid construction method.

Post Extras:   

[Chris Billman](#)

Member

Registered:
09/10/03
Posts: 4458
Loc: Ypsilanti Twp,
MI

 **Re: Boxmaking books: reviews of many volumes**

 [Re: [RokJok](#)]

#4391380 - 07/12/09 02:44 PM

 Edit  Reply  Quote

bump cause this is a good thread and should hang around longer than a year.

[My super-geeky woodworking website](#) (which has no ads & no sponsors)

<insert witty and/or inspiring message here>

Post Extras:   

[RokJok](#)

Member

Registered:
09/11/05
Posts: 2247
Loc: Rainy side of
the Cascade Mtns

 **Re: Boxmaking books: reviews of many volumes**

 [Re: [RokJok](#)]

#4637491 - 12/16/09 01:54 AM

 Edit  Reply  Quote

Here are reviews of a couple boxmaking books I recently bought. One is an expansion on the coverage of "Box By Box" reviewed by Andyman above. The other is a review of another Doug Stowe book.

Box By Box by Jim Stack for Popular Woodworking

<http://www.amazon.com/Box-Popular-Woodworking-Jim-Stack/dp/1558707743>

As Andyman indicated, this book starts with the simplest version of a box and grows increasingly complex as the chapters progress. There is one project covered in each of the 21 chapters, which is normal format for a small-project-oriented book. At the start of each chapter is a photo of the finished project, an exploded view line drawing, a cut list with dimensions, and a list of the tools expected to be used in completing the project.

The format of Box By Box is captioned photos. The sequence is clearly marked with numerals on each photo and there is no confusion over what caption goes with which photo. Photos are in color, clearly illustrating the technique/step covered, and logically sequenced to walk the reader through the construction of each of the projects.

Interestingly and fortunately IMHO is that the binding of the book is wirebound, sort of like a school notebook. That allows the book to lay flat on a bench/table for reference while working, without the tendency of stitch-bound books to close themselves up at the most inopportune moment. 😊

With each project along the way a new concept or technique is introduced. Here is a quick 'n dirty breakdown of the boxes and techniques for each chapter, which also indicates to some degree the progression of difficulty and complexity through the chapters.

1. rectangular box -- glued butt joints with separate lid
2. rectangular box -- nails added to the joints and a handle on the lid
3. rectangular box -- mortised hinges to make a flip-up lid
4. rectangular box with separate lid -- internal cleats and a divided tray that sits on them, bottom set in dados
5. rectangular box with flip-up lid -- brass pin hinges through the sides and a notched front for handle
6. rectangular box -- raised-panel shaped lid slides in grooves cut into sides
7. rectangular box -- adds feet below body and carving on top of lid, divided tray within
8. rectangular box -- box-joints for case and frame-and-panel construction on the lid
9. imitation safe rectangular box -- crafting tumbler lock device from wood and paint as finish
10. rectangular box -- dovetailed body and coopered lid
11. hexagonal box -- compound-angle cuts for body & lid and splined miter joints
12. twenty-sided icosahedron box -- adds complexity and accuracy for the compound angle cuts
13. oval bandsawn box -- introduces slabbing off lid & bottom and bandsawing out interior cavity, also adds drawer making
14. round bandsawn box -- adds pivot hinge for stacked drawers
15. freeform bandsawn box -- sawing with paper pattern and laminating cutouts into drawers
16. truncated triangle stack of drawers -- multiple & tapered-sided drawers
17. rectangular box -- dovetailed drawers via DT jig and tray lifting mechanism on lid (like fishing tackle box)
18. rectangular display box -- glazed lid and french-fitted interior tray

- 19. lap desk -- dado'ed case construction
- 20. lap desk -- veneering
- 21. silverware chest -- adds inlay to veneer and putting profiled serpentine edges on the top & bottom

I'd add this one to my list of good books for giving to a beginning boxmaker. It's escalating difficulty that starts at super-basic and the clarity of instructive photos make it a volume well worth adding to your library of boxmaking books IMHO.

Simply Beautiful Boxes by Doug Stowe
<http://www.amazon.com/Simply-Beautiful-Boxes-Doug-Stowe/dp/1558705147>

The 15 projects covered by this book fall pretty solidly and consistently in the medium to medium-difficult range. The book assumes that the craftsman has already mastered the basic woodworking skills to machine component parts accurately and precisely and is familiar with the joinery necessary to make a box. The book jumps right into the "how-to" of the more-than-basic techniques the boxmaker will need to complete the projects outlined.

While the boxes seem to maintain a sometimes deceptive simplicity of form, each also has some special technique, shape, or other illustrated attribute that sets it apart.

The format of each chapter starts with a photo of the completed project. This is followed by a line drawing of the completed project with dimensions and sometimes a line drawing of a noteworthy component part, joinery technique used, or cross-section of the project showing the juxtaposition of the parts. This pictorial introduction to each project is followed by a Bill Of Materials with dimensions for each part and a listing of any hardware the project will need.

The rest of the chapter is text describing the making of the box, interspersed with frequent clear photos illustrating the techniques unique or particular to that project. For instance, the box covered in the first chapter has an inlaid lid and most of the photos and text is concerned with teaching how to make your own laminated inlay banding and getting it installed on the lid. The book assumes that you already know how to make (or can guess how to reverse-engineer) the basic rectangular box on which the inlaid lid gets attached.



There are a few side-bars throughout the book that show how to make some of the jigs, sleds, or other tooling to make the parts shown via the method outlined by the author. The parts to make these accessory tools are shown in a separate Bill Of Materials at the front of the chapter in which the sidebar exists.

In my opinion, this is a good book for intermediate boxmakers who have already gone through the learning curve of making basic boxes, practicing the craft as taught in other introductory books outlined above. This volume then serves to introduce and teach some of the next level of eye-candy and intriguing techniques to enhance their boxmaking craft.

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Very informative and helpful. Thanks for taking the time

Doug

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Here is a review of another recent addition to my library of boxmaking books.

"New Masters of the Wooden Box: Expanding the Boundaries of Box-Making"
 by Oscar P. Fitzgerald

Publisher: Fox Chapel Publishing (October 1, 2009)
 Paperback: 208 pages
 Language: English

ISBN-10: 1565233921

ISBN-13: 978-1565233928

Dimensions: 10.9 x 8.4 x 0.5 inches

<http://www.amazon.com/New-Masters-Wooden-Box-Boundaries/dp/1565233921>

Short review:

I recommend "New Masters of the Wooden Box" highly!! It is a lushly photographed, inspirational box-making coffee table picture book with as much artistic and imaginative range as "400 Boxes: The Fine Art of Containment & Concealment" in a larger format, albeit with fewer artists and boxes shown. The major downside to me is the amount of page space New Masters dedicates to text about the artist's history or inspirations. I consider New Masters a picture book displaying stunning artworks, so I think anything on the page that isn't a picture is detracting from the book. Nonetheless, I find New Masters to be a valuable addition to my library of boxmaking books.

One note on "New Masters" as compared to (or in conjunction with) "400 Boxes" -- many of the same artists and even some of the same boxes show up in both books. If we consider that both books cover a rather specialized subject (contemporary art boxes made from wood), it's not surprising that both authors would occasionally have to draw from the same pool of talent and workpieces to fill their pages.

Long review:

New Masters is essentially a catalog to accompany a show that opened in Sept 2009 at the Messler Gallery of the Center for Furniture Craftsmanship (CFC) in Maine and touring the USA thereafter.

The introduction of the book is 18 pages covering the history of boxes from ancient Egypt up to contemporary times and from cultures all over the world. The photos of historical boxes in the introduction are on par with the excellent photos shown throughout the rest of the book. Given that the subject of historical boxes and their uses could cover a great many volumes on its own, the introduction here is necessarily rather generic and abrupt in dealing with boxes in each historical age. However, it is wide-ranging enough and diverse enough in introducing containers I don't typically think about that I found myself eager to get to the next era covered to see what tidbits of info I would get on its uses of boxes.

The last part of the introduction was three-and-a-half pages of summation on the artists in the book and often a hint about specific work(s) from that artist. I think this is mostly a verbose waste of page space. I don't care what percentage of artists covered in the book are women or couples or any other grouping by type. I also don't want the author to coyly hint at the workpieces contained in the later parts of the book. My attitude on this part of the introduction was, "Skip all the blathering about, **JUST SHOW ME THE BOXES!!!!**"



The main body of the book covers the 30 artists alphabetically by their last name, with each artist getting a chapter to him- or her-self. The first page of each chapter is a full-page photo of a typical box -- or two or three or so -- by the artist. There is also at the front of the chapter a portrait of the artist, typically shown at work or in their studio. That is followed by six pages of extremely well-photographed less-than-full-page pictures of the artist's work interspersed with text on the artist's history and/or inspirations for their style. One of the things I like about New Masters over 400 Boxes is that in 400 Boxes the quality of photos varied somewhat, with some of the photos rather out-of-focus or having odd coloration. All of the photos in New Masters are very well done and consistent in presenting the boxes and other works in a very good light.

That "other works" brings me to a minor nit I would pick with the editors of New Masters -- not all the works shown are boxes, even if they are stunningly imaginative and extremely well-crafted. In a boxmaking book I expect to see boxes, not the occasional table, chair, tool, or non-container art piece which is included in the pages of New Masters. I can forgive the inclusion of the bowls and basket-like objects included, since as containers they are cousins of solid-sided boxes and, in the hands of the very clever artists shown, can strongly blur the delineations on what should strictly be called a box.

At the rear of the book is a brief bibliography and an index listing alphabetically each box by title and each artist by last name.

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Great summaries that will really help people decide which publications will help them the most.
Thanks.

<http://uniqueboxart.com>

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