

Design Resource

## Inlay Work - Mysore, Karnataka

Wood Craft

by

Prof. Bibhudutta Baral and Sowmya B. N.  
NID Campus, Bengaluru

Source:

<https://www.dsource.in/resource/inlay-work-mysore-karnataka>



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## Introduction

Rosewood, a wood with a strong sweet smell cultivated largely in India, Pakistan, and Madagascar, is regarded highly globally for its remarkable features and utility products craved out of it. Rosewood inlay work is a craft type made of rosewood, which is turned into doors, mirrors, tables, gift boxes, wall panels, dining tables, etc. This form practiced traditionally in Mysore is believed to be once a favorite among the Maharajas who preferred rosewood inlay work for making magnificent ivory motifs. Though practiced in various parts of the world, the Indian version of Rosewood Inlay Work involves decorative works using different shades and tones of the wood, shell, and sometimes flip boards on a wood surface. Tracing back to its history, the craft came to India from Persia in the 18th century and flourished in Srirangapatnam under the reign of Tipu Sultan. Then slowly moving to the west, it made its place in Mysore, subsequently adorning temples, royal homes, and palaces of the time. The work that mainly produces intricate designs on wood carvings depicting God and Goddesses, themes of Ramayana and Mahabharata, Royal processions, tranquil and picturesque landscapes are crafted with beautiful precision using the inlay technique. Here the craftsmen select different colors of wood to highlight the light, dark, and shadow areas like the textures for leaves, the bark of trees, the sky cape, and landscape. There is so much grandeur in these intricate compositions that there is no wonder it captured the interest of the royals and is still a desirable craft.

The south Indian state of Karnataka is well known for its unique handicrafts. The abundance of sandalwood and rosewood are grown in the dense forest of Karnataka inspired a variety of crafts. To preserve, promote, and develop the traditional handicraft, Karnataka State Handicrafts Development Corporation Ltd was established in 1964 by the Government of Karnataka. The tradition of inlay work has been kept alive by passing from one generation to another generation. KSHDC has taken some initiative such as giving opportunities to artisans from different places, training them to create new designs, updating them with new market trends, etc., to keep the legacy of exquisite craft. Cauvery, a brand name started by KSHDCL, markets quality handicrafts through its outlets across the country.

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The Multicraft complex by the Karnataka State Handicraft Development Corporation.



Mr. Putaswamy, the manager at the Multicraft Complex at Karakushala Nagar, Mysore.



Banner of an Inlay woodcraft workshop organized by Karnataka State Handicraft Development Corporation.



Senior artisan Mr. Ramesh explaining his ideas to the camp director Mr. Anand Babu.

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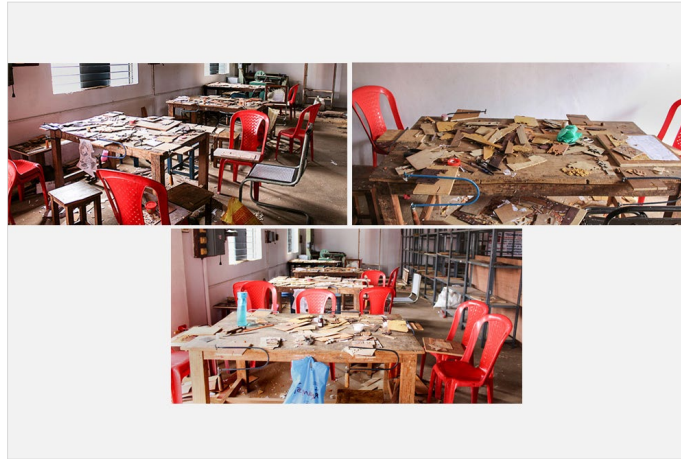
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The workspace of the artisans at the Multicraft complex.



Glimpse showing the team spirit among the artisans working on inlay craft.



Artisans engrossed in the inlay work which needs sheer precision.



The working team at the Multicraft Complex which includes senior artisans, trainers, and trainees.

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## Tools and Raw Materials

The tools and raw materials that are used for Reed Mat Weaving are as follows:

The tools and raw materials that are used for Inlay work are as follows:

- **Rosewood:** It is the basic raw material used for inlay work.
- **Plywood:** It is used as the base frame for the art piece.
- **Wax and Charcoal:** A mixture of wax and charcoal is used to give fine details.
- **Chisels:** Chisels are used to make fine grooves.
- **Hex Saw:** It is used for cutting the wood.



Types of wood planks arranged to make the inlay work.



A printed designed paper was used as a blueprint to carve on the wood.

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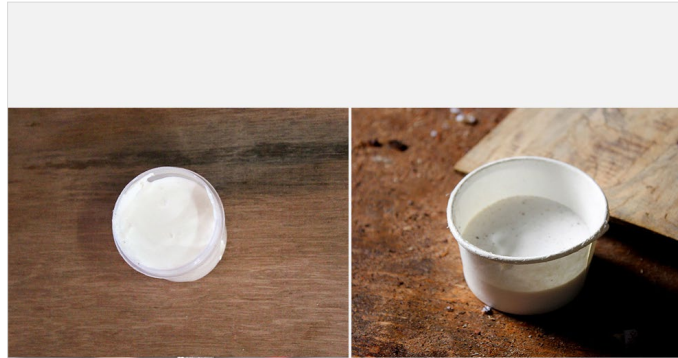
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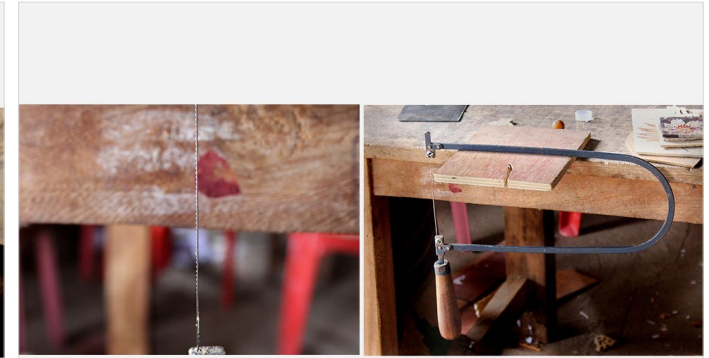
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An adhesive used to stick blueprint paper and carved wood pieces on the wooden board.



A coping saw to cut the wood into a required design.



Wax applied to the blade of the coping saw for achieving friction while trimming the wood pieces.



A piece of steel used to scrape the paper on the wood.



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Cutter used to give depth on the wood set for carving a design.



A handsaw is used to trim the wood as per the intended length.



A scraper was used to scrape the surface of the wood.



A metal filer is used to smoothen the surface of the wood.



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Nails used to be hammered on the wooden board for the wooden pieces to stay fixed tightly.



Hammer used to hit the nail in a required place of the wooden board.



A nail plier is used to remove the nails once the wood pieces are fixed on the wooden board.



Wood filler to fill the holes on the wood board.



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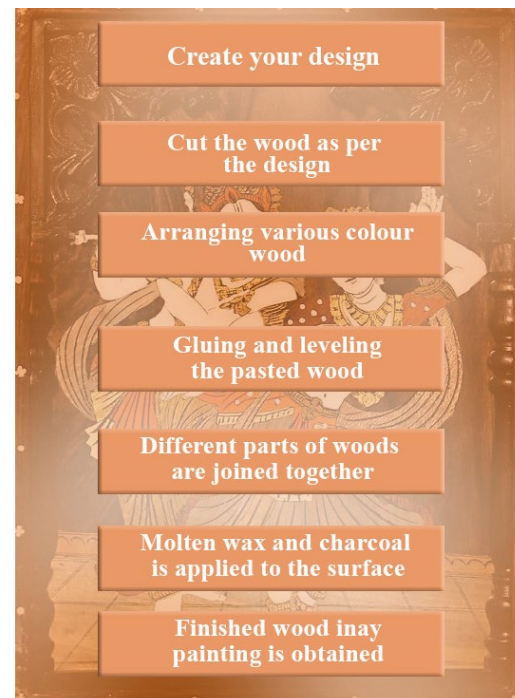
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## Making Process

Firstly the artisan decides on the design and illustrates it on paper. Many copies of this design are made and kept ready to be used as a tracing material. This design with a number of individual patterns and pieces is then placed over a wooden plank and cut using a coping saw. Here trimming is done around the exteriors of the individual pieces, thus removing the unwanted adjacent areas. The process is followed by the application of glue over the chosen material. Now holding the saw vertically, insertions are made straight up and down. The interiors of the design are also sawed carefully. Once done, the blade is unthreaded to work on the outside line, thus giving more hold to the saw. When all the pieces are cut out rightly and set in order, they are nailed together to have a framework of the original pattern. Then the pattern is glued to the main woodblock, and excess glue is removed from the edges after drying, followed by the application of fillers like dust to fill in the cavities formed during the making process. This step gives a seamless finishing to the product. Glue is also infused into the gaps that have already been filled with dust. Grooves are also made using a chisel to give more detailing, and a mixture of molten wax and charcoal is applied to the surfaces of the workpiece using a brush. As the last step, the product is then scraped with a chisel for a smoother finish, and with this, we get a completed piece of wooden inlay work.

Flow Chart:



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Artisan measuring a blueprint paper copy to fix on the chosen rosewood plank.



An adhesive is applied on the plain side of the designed paper copy.



The designed paper copy being trimmed into a required shape.



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The designed paper is stuck on the wooden plank.



A big piece of design being trimmed by the coping saw.



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Small wooden pieces carrying different designs are being trimmed with the coping saw.



Artisan fixing wood pieces to the wooden plank.



Set of wood pieces that are fixed on different parts of the inlay work.



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Artisan scraping off the paper from the wooden board.



Artisan carving design details on the wood using a cutter.



After the wood pieces are fixed, Artisan proceeds to the application of adhesive over the wooden board.



The wooden board is left to dry.



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Artisans hammering the fixed wooden pieces with nails for strong fixation.



Artisan choosing sharp nails.



The artisan hammering on the rear portion and the sides of the wooden board.



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Artisan marking the wooden plank with a pencil to frame the wooden board.



By using handsaw, artisan trimming the marked edges of the wooden plank.



The trimmed edges are being scraped to get a smooth surface.



The wooden plank is checked for perfection after trimming and scraping.



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An adhesive is applied to the corners of the trimmed wooden frame.



Artisan hammering the nails on all four sides of the frame.





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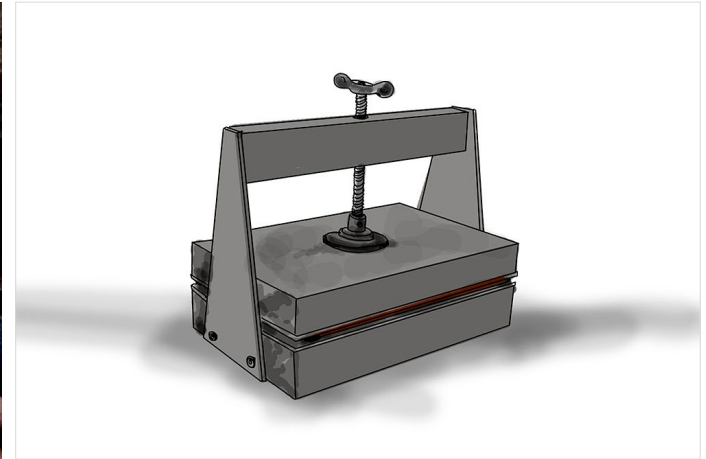
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After the application of adhesive and nailing, the wooden inlay board is left to dry.



The inlay board being pressed for more than a day's time using a pressing machine.



An extra outer layer being scrapped for the smooth surface.



Wood filler being applied on the inlay board to cover the holes.

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A decorative frame being fixed over the scraped wooden frame.



The inlay board being polished with wax to get a glossy finish.



A glimpse of a completed wooden inlay board.



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## Products

Wood inlay works present a unique technique of inserting contrasting wooden pieces into depressions in a base object, often a wood, to make a particular pattern or art that often depicts nature, mythological chapters, deities, human life, etc. At the mentioned Multicraft complex, such wood inlay wall hangings are manufactured and traded especially to cities like Mumbai, Pune, and Aurangabad. The center thus conserves the crafts heritage, along with employment opportunities to many.



An adorable wooden inlay of Lord Ganesh.



A charming portrayal of Lord Subramanian.



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A chapter from Mahabharata being depicted on a wooden inlay work.



An appealing combination of village, nature, and bullock cart on an inlay work.



A leaf with intricate detailing and unique texture on the wooden inlay gives life to it.



A work based on birds and flowers.



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## Contact Details

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