Inlay strips such as those illustrated here are made of natural hardwoods and artificially stained wood. We use dyed veneers to produce wood colors not seen in nature: i.e. blue, orange, red, yellow.

Inlay strips (fillets or bandings as they are often called in the literature) are classified as simple and complex. The standard measurement in Europe is 1 meter long and in the U.S., 1 yard. In Europe the standard inlay strip is 0.6 mm thick, however in the U.S., cabinetmakers seem to prefer the thickness of 0.8mm or 1/32 of an inch. There are advantages to both.

Strips come in various widths. The price is dependant on a variety of factors inlcuding, width, thickness, complexity, and type of wood used. The process of making inlay strips is complex and time consuming as much of the work is acomplished by hand. Final cutting, done by either the guillotine process or by resawing is done by machine to ensure uniform size.When working with or handling inlay strips, one must always bear in mind that the strips are end sawn and therefore are fragile.

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A Step-by-Step Guide to Applying and Finishing Imported Wood Inlay

Inlay Product World

To begin, you should assemble the following tools which will need at various stages of implementation.:

razor knife

small router such as a dremel

finger router

yellow wood or veneer glue

Step 1. On the flat surface to which the inlay is to be applied, carefully draw the borders using a sharp pencil. Do not apply heavy pressure. You also might use the inlay strip as a guide.

Step 2. With a straight edge as a guide, cut along both sides of the borders using a razor knife. This will provide a clean edge for the inlay groove. Go slowly and carefully. Make sure that the guide is fastened securely and does not move while the cutting is taking place. Cut approximately 1/32 or more deep.

Step 3. Using a small router or Dremel tool with a small, well- sharpened router cutter , cut a groove the size of the strip to be inlayed. This may require more than one pass but should be carefully done. The razor cut edges should assist in providing a clean edge, particularly on cross grain cuts. For frames, it is also possible to use a shaper or router table as well. Some craftsmen also use a saw kerf. The corners should be cut with a chisel to 45 deg.

Step 4. Once the slot is cut, assemble the strips and cut them to length with the razor knife or chisel. The corners are cut at a 45 degree angle. Consider making a jig as seen below for this as you will be making many cuts of this type.

Depending on the length of the borders used, and the complexity of the pattern, it may not be possible match the last joint. However it will be possible to match most corners. Corner square or rhomboid inlays you can purchase from us can also be used to great effect.

It is possible to inlay simple strips into short radius curves by first soaking them in water and bending them over a hot form (approximately 200 degrees). For slots over 1/32" wide, several strips should be used. Curved inlays are available by special order from Inlay Product World in minimum quantities of 100 strips in the 0.6 mm thickness.

Step 5. Apply a thin layer of glue to the inlay strip and press into the slot. Before the glue dries (when it is in its gummy state) carefully remove any excess, since finish will not adhere properly to glue. If the border is higher than the surrounding area, it can be reduced in height by using a metal scraper or by sanding.

It is recommended that staining of the surrounding piece, if desired, be accomplished prior to the installation of the inlay strip to avoid contamination. If necessary coat the inlays with a clear finish before inserting if you need to stain after the inlays are in place.

Final protection (clear coat) can be applied as usual with whatever the craftsman desires, i.e. laquer, or any of the polyurethane finishes.

Many interesting effects can be produced using inlay strips. For a more detailed account of the entire history and process of making and applying strips and marquetry as well as some writing on restoration of antiques, we recommend the excellent book "Marquetry" by Pierre Ramond published by the Taunton Press in Newtown, CT. Although this book is currently in the $75 range it makes excellent reading.

Another beautifully illustrated book containing more contemporary designs and techniques is "The Art of Inlay" by Larry Robinson published by Miller Freeman Books, San Francisco, CA.

EXPERIMENT FIRST with scrap lumber. Although the process is not very complex, it is exacting to get a clean and sharp inlay presentation. Be particularly careful when routing the grooves, as you want them to be a good fit for the inlay strips.

If you have a tip or want us to illustrate a project you have enhanced with our inlay, please write or e-mail us. The best tips and projects will be posted to our web site at http://www.inlays.com.

The process of making inlay borders and decorative marquetry is complex. Fortunately for the craftsman, many inlay designs are being produced which can be easily applied to almost any project. For further information on our inlay strips or decorative marquetry, visit our website at http://www.inlays.com or contact us at the address on the back of this brochure.