

# The technical process of preparing panels for sacral abstraction



For the purpose of making panels, I use two kinds of wood - basswood and hardwood such as oak wood or ash wood. Basswood comes from a forest. In forests, trees compete against each other. That causes a quick growth of linden, because of which tree trunks are straight and almost devoid of knots.

Hardwood used for preparing traverses, which are forced into a linden panel with the use of dovetail joint, is selected and cut out from particular parts of the wood. It is important because the grain of the wood has to be perpendicular to the linden panel, what I will explain further.

In lumbermill, boards of diverse thickness are cut out from basswood chosen by me. They are seasoned by me for 5 - 7 years (fig. 1). During that period, the wood dries naturally. Its elasticity, structure and fleshiness are preserved. Therefore, the wood is not overdried and too dead, does not have microcracks or other imperfections that are typical of wood, which is dried in drier.

Wood cracks during seasoning. These cracks are ultimate (fig. 2). Later, the wood still expands or shrinks because of air humidity and temperature but it cannot crack anymore.



fig. 1



fig. 2



fig.

Elements needed for making a panel are selected from uncontaminated parts of the board that have neither knots nor cracks and will not have any. Heartwood also should be left aside because of its poor quality.

The board is cut such that the length of its parts is approximately the same as the length of the panel (fig. 3).



fig. 4

After cutting and initial planing of boards, they have to be glued (fig. 4). We should glue flat surfaces together. Although this kind of joint is a little weaker than joint of serrated surfaces, it is more resistant to cracking (caused by tension induced by rabbit-skin glue) on the surface of the panel.

Order of the boards is intentional as well. Their grain should be ordered alternately (il. 5) so that natural distortions cancel out (il. 6) and the panel remains flat.



fig. 5



fig.6

After glueing (fig. 7), I cut panels in such a way that they have needed dimensions and I plane them again.



fig. 7



fig. 8

After cutting and planing panels, I polish them (fig. 8).

Afterwards, I mill rabbets for traverses (fig. 9) that keep a panel straight. Otherwise, a painting could crack. Wood always remains amenable to humidity and temperature, which cause unwanted distortions. However, selecting the right wood and making good traverses extend the period in which the surface remains flat.

Rabbets should be wedge-shaped. Traverses has to be wedge-shaped as well. It enables to force traverses into the panel that they are fixed well. But the panel still can slide along traverses, while it naturally expands or shrinks. Sometimes you can hear it - the sound like in a forest during springtime when trees soak with water. If we force a traverse too tightly, stick or affix it, the result is opposite - tensions may cause incurvation or even cracking of the panel.



fig. 9



fig. 10

The traverse is made of part of hardwood, which is completely devoid of defects (fig. 10). It is cut out such that its grain is perpendicular to the grain of the basswood panel (fig. 10a). That causes the best rigidity of the traverse (fig.11 and 11a).

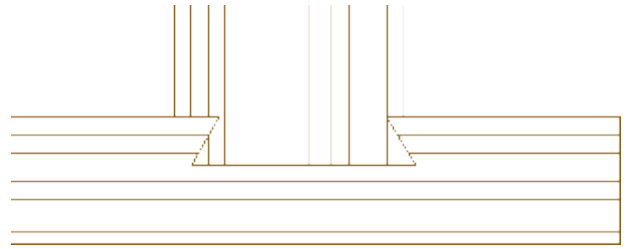


fig.10a



fig. 11

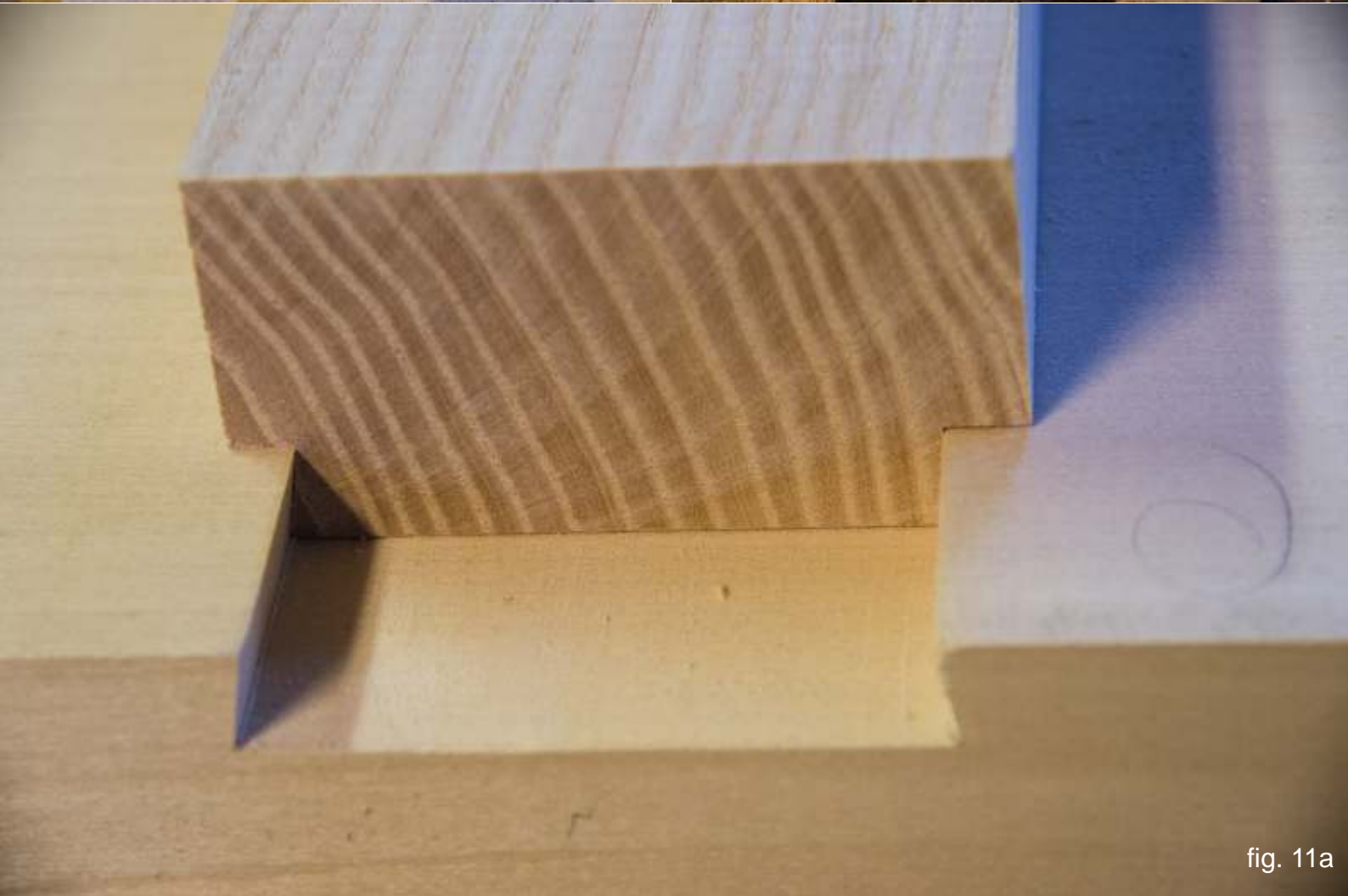


fig. 11a



fig. 12

Panels prepared this way are ready to become painting support for neosacral art. Format of a panel is very important, so the selection of it is the first and responsible step towards creating artwork. The format determines the composition, which is crucial for conveying a needed sacral impression. Painting support is always a part of an artwork, with which together can be called „art”.

The panels are carved (fig. 12). A relief can be simple or intricate. Sometimes it is just a flat shallow surface like in Byzantine icons.

Later, panels are coated with a hot mixture of rabbit-skin glue and water. The warmer glue is, the deeper wood is penetrated. However, overheated glue loses its quality. After being coated, panels have to completely get dry (fig. 13).



fig. 13



fig. 14

Next, the carved panel should be plastered with a textile. We can use linen, cotton or other natural fabric. However, I prefer densely woven gauze. It prevents a painting from cracking (fig. 14). Cracking appears naturally over time. It is impossible to avoid it if we use wood. Plastering a panel with gauze protects the painting.

After glueing the gauze using rabbit-skin glue (fig. 15) prepared in particular proportion, the panel has to get dry (fig. 16).

If the technical process is hurried, it may cause spoiling of the glue. The glue is organic, so the panel must dry well - otherwise, all the work would be wasted. The panel has to get dry at each stage of work.



fig. 15



fig. 16



Afterwards, the panel is ready for applying many thin layers of glue gesso (in Eastern Europe known as "levkas", in Western Europe known as "Italian gesso"). Traditionally painters apply twelve layers but I usually apply seven. Too many layers would cover nuances of a relief.

Fig. 17 shows applying the first layer of glue gesso. The first layer has to be applied very carefully because it has to permeate the structure of the gauze.

When the panel is dry, I sand its surface. Then I take traverses out of the panel for final processing. I cut, polish, stain and wax them. I must not do that while the panel is drying because then it would distort. Wrong proportions of the glue can damage the whole panel as well.

fig. 17





fig. 18

The panel is plastered with the gauze on the back or the gauze is cut on the edge of the panel. It depends on esthetic necessity. It is better to leave the gauze on the back (fig. 18). It helps in keeping edges of the panel smooth and protects against damage. Panels should not be put on an uneven, hard floor and should not be hit.

In traditional painting, glue gesso is only a ground. However, in my sacral abstractions, it is an important element, which I often do not cover because of its mellowness, natural self-sufficient visual being and quality of making an artwork organic. Nevertheless, it is not very resistant to smutting and hits.



Sacral Abstraction 25072019  
(an example of a correct finish of the front and the back of the artwork)