

# Kernov Style Cabinet

James Kernov Inspired generations of woodworkers with his beautiful cabinets and his straightforward philosophy of creativity. He presented his refreshingly fluid ideology of woodwork in four books on the art of cabinet making that vaulted him from a little known craftsman into a sawdust superstar.

James' philosophy was not complicated: do solid, satisfying work and let the wood do the talking. He believed in letting the natural beauty of the wood draw people into the piece and capture their imagination. Like many others I was inspired to build pieces in the "Kernov" style. This includes wanting to build a cabinet the way he would have done it.

When I received some beautifully figured magnolia wood from Jean Becnel I knew that the time to tackle my cabinet had come.

I began by planning out the basic design idea that I wanted and drew it up in SketchUp. After two or three variations I settled on cabinet idea. I then started the actual project by laying out the rough pieces on the lumber to see how I could make the pieces work in harmony (or at least a close imitation of it). Then came the milling.



Magnolia is a fairly soft wood and it jointed and planed out nicely. Note the Spaulding and Post Beetle holes that give it great character.

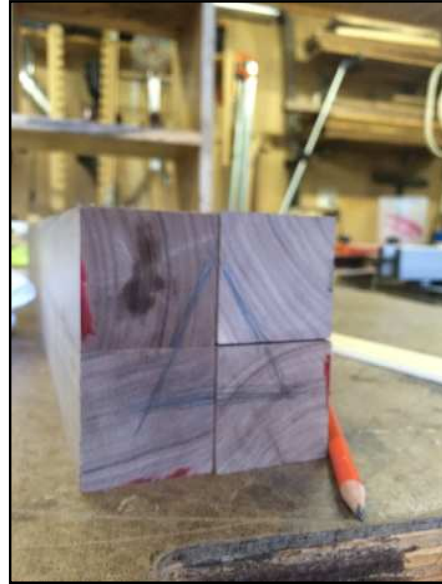


After planning the raw wood out into wide planks I stacked and stickered all of it in my shop to let it acclimate for several weeks.

Next, it was off to the lumber yard to get some Walnut. I repeated the same process of cutting, milling, and stickered with the walnut as I did with the magnolia except with the walnut not everything was milled into boards. In this case I also needed some leg blanks.



Jointing a beam of walnut. It is usually cheaper to joint and cut it yourself, if you can. A happy benefit is you can cut the wood so that the grain runs the way you want in all your pieces.



When cutting out legs it is a good idea to look at the grain and growth rings to get a pleasing look. Notice the cabinet maker's triangle that helps keep the orientation of faces in order the way you want. This works great if you remember to look at it....



I sawed the leg blanks out of the walnut beam. As best I could I oriented the grain to make the grains more uniform across all the legs.



Next, I planed the leg blanks to thickness. I purposefully cut the legs thicker than I needed and then crept up on the final thickness that I wanted.



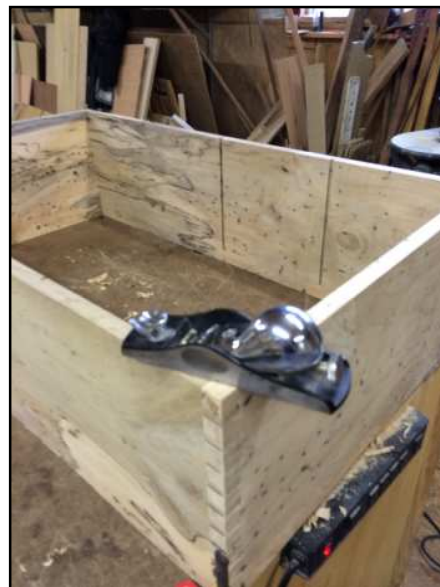
Here are the leg blanks. Notice that there are five blanks here. Ever make a mistake? Well, right, me neither...but, it doesn't hurt to be prepared.



Using a crosscut sled I cut the legs to length. Make sure that all crosscuts are square. A little slip up here and my legs could sit uneven on the floor. Note the mark in chalk on the side face. This is left over from the milling. It was my true face indicator to show the reference face.



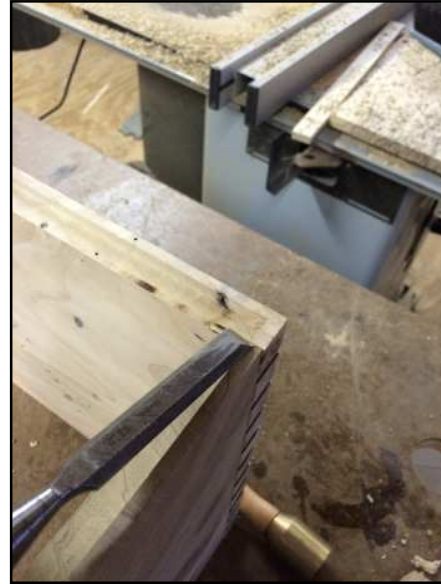
Using a dovetail jig I routed out the joint for the case of the cabinet. The softness and brittleness of the magnolia wood proved to be a challenge since cutting the dovetails tended to cause chip out.



After cutting the joints, I checked for fit. Once I was sure of the fit I cleaned up the corners to insure a very clean edge with a sharp block plane. My alignment was off about a 64th of an inch. The surest and easiest way to bring the case into parallel was to use a plane to square things up.



Since my cabinet will need a back it was time to rout out the rabbet along the back edge for the back panels to fit in to. I used a 1/4 inch rabbet bit in the router. I took special care not to route out the of the stop rabbets on the side panels. The next picture gives you a look at those.



Using a sharp chisel I squared up the rounded ends left by the router in the stop rabbets. Notice the protrusion of the dovetail joints. I will clean those up once I am sure of everything being square and tight.



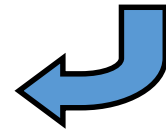
I have to say that the magnolia planes pretty well, but it does tend to powder a little. Here I used a 5 1/2 bench plane to clean up the end grain on the dovetail joints. Note how I am using the end of my bench to support the boards flat while also clamping them firmly in place.



Unfortunately, I forgot to take pictures of most of the next steps in construction— mounting the shelves and divider in dadoes. Fortunately this is not a complicated operation involving only a good router and a clamped straight edge to guide it at 90 degrees. I used a small router plane and a chisel to clean up some of the dadoes as you can see.



**A pretty  
good result**



Here is the cabinet carcass put together. I dadoed the sides and the shelves where the vertical divider would go between the shelves. I then cut tenons on the shelves and divider to match the dadoes with a snug fit and then glued them in the front inch of the dadoes only. This will allow the wood to expand and contract seasonally as humidity increases and decreases. This is always a concern when building with solid wood.

You may notice that I also began applying a polyurethane finish. I only put on a coat or two to seal the wood and give myself a satisfying look at what the final product will be like.

Next I will start on the Japanese influenced walnut stand and the top and bottom panels that are also of walnut. I will then build and fit the panel doors to the case and mount them on knife hinges. Lastly, I will need ship lap the walnut back panels and fit them to the back of the case.

MORE TO COME...