

Bevel Cut Article Sand Shading and Sand Castles

Andrew Davis, February, 2017

Sand shading and marquetry seem to go together. Shaded fans were a common decorative motif in Federal (or Neoclassical) furniture of the late 18th century. They were often inlaid into the corners of table tops and drawer fronts. The basic idea of sand shading is that the veneer being worked on is lightly scorched or browned. The amount of heat applied, and the area of veneer shaded gives the final effect. If you sand shade the petals of a flower or parts of a Sheraton oval, a depth or 3-D effect suddenly appears in the picture as the elements take on more character.

Sand shading directions on-line suggest: To sand shade, take a flat-bottomed pan and fill to about one inch deep with clean sharp edged silver sand. A source of heat is needed – an electric hotplate being most convenient. The sand will need to be heated until it feels hot at a range of 6" – but trial and error will tell you. The only other requirement is a long pair of tweezers. The blog of one artist suggests that the temperature should be around 600 degrees F at the bottom of the sand heap and each piece is exposed for a few seconds only. He also opines that sand shading is boring and a little dangerous and recommends very long tweezers.

Four different techniques are described on the Marquetry Society website.

- 1) Dip a leaf of veneer into the sand, and then cut the required piece of that leaf. You can see how a piece will look before having to take any action with the knife.
2. Using a spoon, pour hot sand onto the appropriate area and then pour the sand back into the container; repeat until the desired effect is obtained.
- 3) Mask off the rest of the veneer with some scrap and repeat option (b), pouring hot sand onto the required part. This will produce a much sharper area of shading.
- 4) Cut the piece to be shaded to exact size and dip into the hot sand. Trial and error on sand temperature, depth of the dip, and time until desired results are achieved. This is the most common method.

I thought this woodworking technique would be an excellent use for all the sand I drag home from old silver beach on Cape Cod, but further investigation suggests that someone else who tried this said it ruined his pan and creating some bad smells and uneven effects to boot. But if you find very fine sand, which some beaches are known for, that might work after all.

Music video on sand shading with a different kind of spoon method. Sand shading marquetry a piece at a time using a spoon and 650 degree sand. Also gives you a solid feel for the tedium.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Za36fqJqYAI>