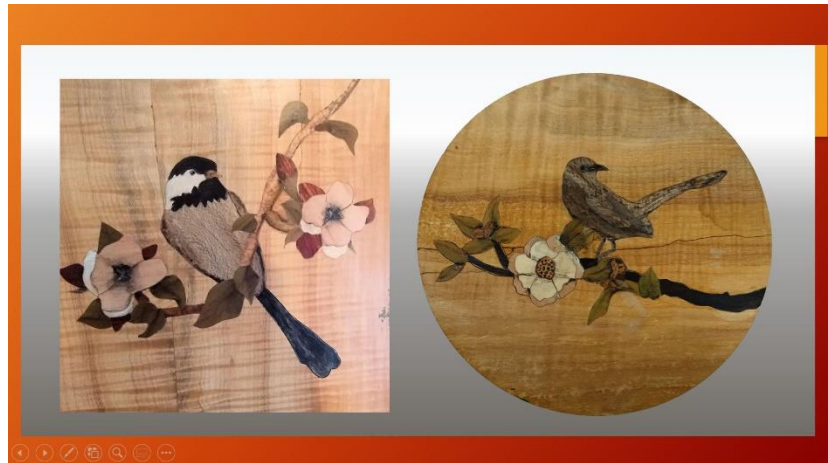


How to Make Picture Inlays

Making picture inlays are a form of marquetry but using much thicker wood: 1/8" vs 1/32" or thinner. This document is a step-by-step instruction on how to make and finish inlays that can be inserted in any flat surface, a turned plate or platter, the top or front of a jewelry box, a tabletop, etc.



Step 1: Find an appropriate picture. Any picture can be used but the simpler the better. In this example we will be using a picture of a blue heron, shown here:

Step 2: Determine the kinds, color, and wood grain needed for the picture. In this example we will be using different sections of gray spalted wood for the front wing feathers and body. For the back wing feathers, in shadow, we will use different sections of a dark brown wood with strong grain. The legs and beak will be made from Osage Orange. The crest will be ebony and the reeds from green poplar.



Note: In marquetry the different 1/32" wood veneers are all stacked together and cut at the same time. Here however we will be cutting wood that is 1/8" thick. The advantage is you will not sand through the picture as can happen with 1/32" veneer. However, with thicker wood layers, we can generally cut a maximum stack of 3-4 layers. If a picture (such as a flower needs 4 different grain directions for petals, 3 different wood directional layers for leaf plus the flower center) you might need a stack of 6-10 layers. Not practical. This means that we often need to build and cut multiple components of 3-4 layers, assemble each component, then stack

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these components to make an assembled component. By repeating this process, you never have to cut more than 2-4 layers in any stack.

Step 3: Determine elements of the picture that can be cut and assembled as a component with just a few layers in a stack. In our example the inlay will be built in steps as follows:

Component 1: Edge feathers of the front wing - using 2 different section of gray spalted sycamore.

Component 2: Edge feathers of the back wing - using 2 sections of dark brown wood with lots of grain.

Component 3: Interior feathers of the front wing - using 2 different sections of lighter sycamore.

Component 4: Body, top of back wing and head-neck using a light gray section of sycamore for the body, a piece of medium gray spalted maple for the top of the back wing and a light section of spalted maple for the head and neck.

Component 5: Reeds and cattails – using green poplar and white box elder.

Assembled Component 6: Front wing = Component 1 & 3

Assembled Component 7: Body = Assembled Component 5 + Component 2 + Component 4

Assembled Component 8: Full Heron = Assembled Component 6 + legs + beak + crest

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Step 4: Glue up component stacks with paper between each layer of wood. After cutting the paper makes splitting the layers of wood extremely easy (just twist or use a thin bladed knife. When building the stack, consider wood type, color, grain and grain direction when gluing up the stack. Step 5: Make multiple copies of the picture (and keep one in reserve if you need more)



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Step 6: Using one of the copies, cut out the area that will become a component. Glue it to the stack you created. When dry, identify interior cuts of components. Because we want the picture to fit perfectly into the background, we must assemble the picture leaving all edges that will touch the background uncut, and only cut interior edges. In our example component 1 is shown here. Note the cut lines extend into the area that will become background.

Step 7: Use a #1 or #2 blade in a scroll saw, with the cut angle set to 90 degrees. Cut out the component sections, split the stack and assemble the component interchanging pieces from the stack so the grain and color vary (shown here)



Use masking tape to keep all pieces in place, the flood



the assembly with CA glue. When dry, sand both sides of the component (hint: use a strip of masking tape to hold the component when sanding on a belt sander). Sanding will show color and patterns as shown in this copy of component 1.

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Step 8: Build assembled components. Doing so may require adding filler layers so the piece is stable when cutting or if one piece must go on top of another piece. In this example we stack component 1 and 3 together, using the picture to register placement of each element. In the example below, the black arrows are the registration points used for building the stack. The result is Assembled Component 6. The background cut (cut later) is, marked in black.



Step 9: Once all components are assembled and the picture is ready to be cut into the background, position, and glue the assembly to the background, separated by a paper layer. Register and glue a copy of the picture onto the assembly. Drill a very small holes somewhere in the edge of the picture to insert the scroll saw blade, as needed. Cut out the picture, assemble, glue and sand.

Step 10: Enhance the picture. There are several options that can be used by themselves or in combination:

- Use very thin acrylic paint to add color and depth.

- Use wood burning to add detail and/or depth.

- Use carving to define shapes, detail and depth.

Step 11: Install it in the surface of your box, tabletop or platter as you would any other decorative wood section. Sand and finish normally.

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The result: similar but not exact.

