

Allan Henriksen

On a quiet country road in rural Carlsbad, NM, a 43-year-old Danish pen & furniture maker by the name of Allan Henriksen lives & creates fine art. "We traded a small, cramped living in Copenhagen for this & New Mexico has room to grow. Out here we can see the storms hours before they happen," he smiled. Henriksen's forte is the fine art of pen & pencil making from local & exotic woods & other man-made materials.

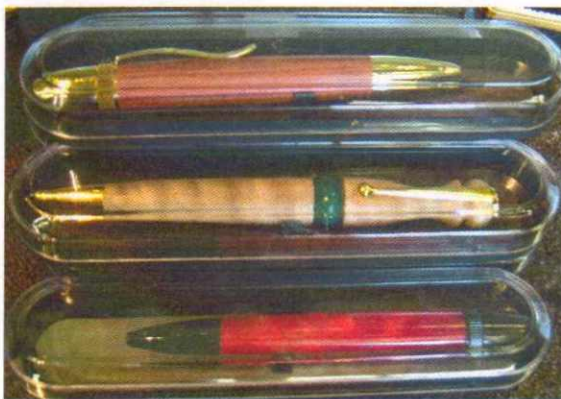
"You know, you can never have too many tools," he said in his Danish-English accent while glancing around his workshop in the garage.

Mesquite, salt cedar, apricot & pecan wood have become favorites & are readily available for his hand-crafted art. Today he has accumulated around 50 different types of wood, he said, including cocobolo & bocote from South America, ebony from Africa, blood wood, purple heart, maple & cedar & one mustn't forget the colorful compressed glued & dyed birch called "dym wood."

Henriksen went one step further in his craft in hopes of satisfying even the most discriminating shopper by obtaining man-made materials such as acrylics, acetates & corian (counter-top material) which all offer a variety of colors & intricate patterns. Even though the man-made materials are more difficult to work with, the results are pleasing, he added.

The art of pen & pencil making begins with "blanks" or chunks of wood cut in pieces with a perpendicular hole cut in the center. A brass tube is inserted in each of the pen barrels with "a lot of super glue" to house the refill, he laughed. "All of my custom made pens are made to use standard refills," he added with pride.

Henriksen has never been satisfied with a straight standard cylinder shape pen & doesn't hesitate admitting he finds them quite "boring". Instead, intricate cuts & designs using cutting knives produce his one-of-a-kind, unique originals.



The use of calipers to measure exactness are just a bit too sophisticated for this Dane; he relies on eye-balling the balance of each barrel. "I like the challenge in figuring out how to do it," smiled Henriksen. "Your imagination is the limit."

The wood chunks are then put on the lathe with bushings between & on each end so as not to cut away any more of the wood than needed for a perfect hardware fit. With his cutting knives in hand, he lets his creativity decide the pattern. Once he has obtained the desired shape & design, the sanding process takes place by using varying sandpaper grits to achieve the smooth finish. This is also done while the lathe is

turning. "Every kind of wood has its own distinct smell," he said. "A good design often comes by accident."

Applying wax in stick form to the sanded barrels, while the lathe is still turning, completes the process. "It melts & penetrates the wood. Then you polish it. Old socks will do, but old T-shirts are better," he laughed. The final step is to choose just

the right hardware to compliment each original finished work of art. He then demonstrated the use of a hand-squeezed clamp to put the barrels & hardware together. He explained the importance of making sure the wood grains flow together when assembled. The finished original then finds a place in one of his many display boxes.

