

**BOOK REVIEW: Wood – The World of  
Woodwork and Carving by Bryan sentence,  
Thames & Hudson Ltd, 2003 hardback**

For several decades now, Thames & Hudson has been publishing good quality and very useful books on art and architecture, usually accessibly in paperback format, although perhaps little of direct interest to dealers or collectors of antiques. No change here, I fear. This volume claims to be the first worldwide survey of the 'astonishing' versatility of wood, outlining its many types, their uses and woodworking techniques employed around the globe.

It does so under seven headings, dealing in turn with the raw material, carving and shaping wood, joinery, decorating and finishing, 'wood at work' (its use in building, transport, furnishing and everyday life), 'heart and soul' (its use for personal effects, printing, games and ritual), and the tools used in working it. The book finishes with vices (of the clamping kind) and, apart from a brief glossary of terms, a list of appropriate worldwide museums to visit and a bibliography, there is nothing to draw all the threads together.

The author is a book illustrator and carver who has

worked on other volumes of basketry and textiles in this Thames & Hudson series. His enthusiasm in praise of trees and in celebrating wood is clear and the book fulfills its aim at a superficial, National Geographic sort of level with its worldwide selection of illustrations, but for those interested in identifying woods, there is a handful of examples but no thorough survey, and for those seeking furniture, this is dismissed, along with boxes, chests and chairs, in just six pages. The only British contribution is three modern chairs, although, to be fair, there are a few other pieces in other sections such as coppicing and chip-carving.

I cannot help wondering at whom this book is aimed. With a cover price of £28, 200 pages and 815 illustrations (many too small), it is a colourful coffee table book, fine for a browse or to pluck out a nugget of information, but not, I fear, destined for my bookshelves.

*Christopher Claxton Stevens*