

Danish Modern Bird Handout

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Birds of a Feather Woodturning YouTube video: <https://youtu.be/SvYfkx8ByHQ>



Introduction

Noted Danish designer, Kristian Vedel, designed a group of birds in 1959 as an expression of three generations of a family – children, parents, and grandparents. Each bird’s head can be tilted to express happiness, sadness, curiosity, and alertness. The bodies can also be turned upside down to exemplify different body types.

Wood

I use air dried spindle stock I have on hand but if that is not handy, you can always glue up kiln dried lumber. I really like oak, but walnut for a darker bird might look good as well. For the pupils Wenge, ebony or walnut is good. A white wood like holly or maple is good for the eyeball.

Chubby	Body blank 3.5” cube Finished 2.25 high 3.5” diam	Head blank 1.625” square x 4 1/4” Finished 1.5” diam. 1.625” long beak	Eye 1/2” diam and 3/8” long. Sm neck 7/8”, Lrg neck 1 1/8”
Tall	Body blank 2.75” square x 3.5” Finished” tall 2.5 or 3” diam	Head blank 1.625” square x 4 1/4” Finished 1.5” diam. 1.625” long beak	Eye 1/2” Sm neck 7/8”, Lrg neck 1 1/8”
Small About 75% of tall	Body blank 1 7/8” sq x 3 Finished 1 3/4” square x 2 1/4” tall	Head blank 1 3/8” square x 4” Finished 1 5/16” diam. 1.5” long beak= total 2 13/16”	Eye 3/8” Sm neck 3/4”, Lrg neck 1”
Eye blank	Dark wood 5/8” sq. Light wood 1 1/4”x 6” long	Finished diam 1/2” Turn down to 3/8” for small birds	Trim sides to approximately 3/4” square around the center.

Tools

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Four jaw chuck with jaws capable of holding the blanks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3/8” or 1/2” spindle gouge, Skew, Spindle roughing gouge
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1/2” round nose scraper or cove tool, Thin parting tool 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jacobs chuck with 3/8” and 1/2” twist bits
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Live center with a wood or nylon “soft touch” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Friction chuck that will support the large end.

Steps

The Eyes

Making the dowel plugs for the eyes is the hardest part of this project and I think it is the key to the uniqueness of these birds. I don't think paint, map pins or Forstner bit drilled holes have the same character.

Eye Option 1: Best way is to use a 1/2" plug cutter for the side grain dark plugs. Drill hole on side grain maple or holly to accept the plugs. Add glue and tap in. Use 1/2" plug cutter to cut eyes with the center being where the white and dark wood touch. Use a 3/8" plug cutter for option 1.

Eye Option 2: Make a dowel set for the eyes long enough to make several sets of eyes since you can't stop with making just one of these. Unfortunately the end grain will absorb finish so you don't get as good a contrast as the first approach. A six inch dowel should easily provide enough eye plugs for a half a dozen or more of these birds.

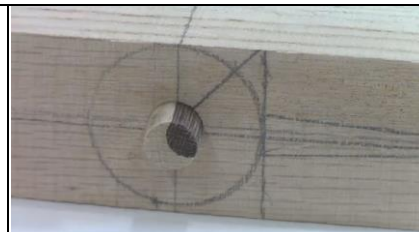
Prepare eyes by turning a 1/2" dowel of dark wood like wenge or ebony or perhaps walnut. Be careful not to split the wood with centers. Drill a 1/2" hole centered in the white wood and glue in the 1/2" dark dowel. Reverse and drill from other end for dowels longer than the drill bit. Pen jaws do well for this. Mark centers on edge of dark dowel nearest center. Trim waste on dark side to match light side (~3/8" less saw blade kerf or about 5/16" when cutting on BS), resulting in a rectangle about 1 1/4".

Turn at high speed between centers since will be cutting air on two sides. Protect ends from splitting by using a washer or small thin slice of wood with a hole so you can center with hole made by spring punch or an awl. Center is the edge of the black.

You can take a portion of your finished 1/2" eye dowel and turn it down to 3/8" for the smaller birds.

The Head

Mark off enough room for tenon. Mark drill hole for eyes in center of what will be the head. Drill 1/2" hole at least 3/8" deep for eyes in head blank. Orient the eye plugs with dark side toward the beak at about 45 degree angle before gluing. Tap in with mallet. When glue is dry, rough between centers, adding a tenon on head side with beak toward TS.



Mount in scroll chuck and turn head. It is critical the head be perfectly round so it will swivel in the cove. Sand and part off. Flush cut saw works well for final part. Sand away any nub left from parting off.

The Body

Think about how you might reverse chuck the bird bodies to concave both ends. **Small birds** I turn BC with tenon on small end. Put in chuck with large end toward TS and shape body and concave for the head. Test fit. Part off concaving in with thin parting tool and then use coffee scoop donut chuck to finish concaving the small end.

Large birds I turn between centers and add a tenon to each end. Chuck fat end and concave the small end to fit the head while leaving tenon. Trial fit. I then reverse



chuck and shape top of body. The widest body diameter is located from the top down about 38-40% of body length. Concave and trial fit. I use a vacuum chuck for the large bird as a friction chuck. Support the other end with a live center with a “soft touch” rounded to fit in the concave on the small end. Shape the small end and sand.

Chubby Alternative for ones where the fat body can be held in power grip jaws. Turn between centers and add tenon for small end. Chuck and shape fat end including concavity for the head. Trial fit. Wrap fat body with tape and mount in large chuck jaws like power grip and finish small end.

Finish

Use a finish of your choice. Try to keep the eyeball white knowing that end grain will absorb a lot of finish.