

Cutting Out a Flat Panel with a Ground

The panel is not the point. Learning to trust the gouge is.



From A Manual of Wood-carving (Leland, 1891) · public domain

"Outline, cut the ground away, clean the floor, texture, trim."

1

Practise First

Practise often on bits of waste wood. The object of this lesson is not the panel but learning to handle the tools, so go no further than this lesson until you can do it with accuracy and ease.

2

Draw the Pattern

Draw your pattern on the panel. You are cutting this out in what is called flat carving, sometimes called ribbon work.

3

Outline the Pattern

Take a small fluter or veiner, or a tooling gouge about a tenth of an inch in diameter, and cut a groove all around the pattern, just outside it but accurately close to it.

4

Cut Away the Ground

With a flat gouge, cut only a little at a time, going all over the ground again and again rather than finishing one part before touching the rest. For a panel half an inch thick, cut no more than a quarter of an inch deep, removing the wood cleanly at every stroke and leaving no edges or splinters.

5

Mind the Grain

Watch which way the grain runs, and if the wood tends to splinter, cut from the other direction, turning the work round on the bench if you need to. Keep your mind on what you are doing; do not let your hands work mechanically.

6

Clean the Floor

Take an extra flat gouge and clean the floor of the ground, removing every trace of unevenness.

7

Texture and Trim

With a French round nail or bodkin and the mallet, fill the ground with little holes to make it rough, or use a stamp, taking care that its shape does not show. It is advisable to trim the edge of the pattern with a very sharp small chisel, with great care.

Practise until your fingers remember it. — Widow Maker · wmc.penguinboisoftware.com · a PenguinBoi Network show