

Woodworking internships in Sweden

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Kasamark/Umeå

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Slöjd med *s u r o l l e*

My internship with *Jögge Sundqvist* aka *s u r o l l e*

During my internship with Jögge Sundqvist I've learned a lot about *slöjd*, a traditional way to work with materials, in this case wood.

I have been able to experience the process of turning wood into an unique piece by listening to the material and using mostly tools and practices designed many centuries ago.

The first thing I learned was to split wood. For that we used tools such as sledgehammer, wedge, froe and a wooden mallet. Splitting is a very good way to divide wood into many pieces, because you split the wood according to the fibers and there will be less waste of material.

In slöjd it is very important to know the material that you use. Especially in Jögge's work, I have learned that picking your materials carefully, and thinking of the qualities of the specific piece of wood is very useful when starting your project. Sometimes you can even get inspired by the shape or the qualities of the wood.

When working with slöjd, you will probably get to know the "shaving horse".

Shaving horse is a very traditional woodworking tool and is sort of a combination of a clamp and a bench. With shaving horse, you sit on it and put the piece you're working on in between the clamps, which you keep tight with your legs. Then you can use a draw knife etc. to work on your piece. You can also use it for bigger pieces such as broom sticks.

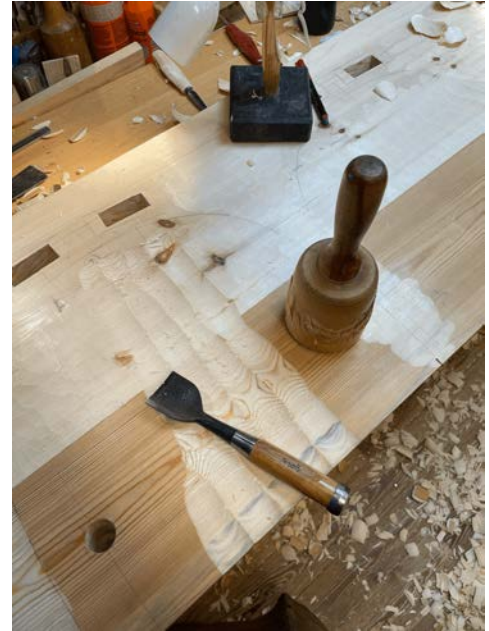


For making rough blanks of butter knives, we used green wood (= fresh and still moist wood) that was shaped with an axe, shaving horse and a drawknife.

For me, the most useful skills I have learned here have probably been learning how to hand saw properly and how to use different planes, chisels and gouges. None of those tools were completely new to me, but I have learned better methods of using them in a way that I am able to control the handprint that I am leaving on the wood.

If you learn to use these tools properly, you can become very efficient and skilled with them. For me it has still been about finding good ergonomics and power for handworking. In order to actually guide the tool, you have to learn how to not only work with your hands, but with your body too, with legs, the core, your back. When you learn to use your whole body, you are able to put more power into working with the tool, but also be very much in control.

I know that I still have some work to do in order to get to the point that whenever I grab a tool, I know how to use the whole potential of it. And when working with slöjd it is good to know your limits and skills. Then you can compare in your head that what kind of ways and tools can you use and what would work the best. Sometimes it is better to use some machines, but especially with Jögge's work, we have been mostly using hand tools. In slöjd it is ideal to control and guide the wood to shape into something, but while doing it, actually listen to the material speak to you so you can do it in a best way possible.



We have mostly been working on this custom ordered bench, which seats three and a half people. The design is very organic and we have been using lots of gouges and planes. It is very important to work with sharp tools which is why I have also practised to sharpen different knives, gouges and chisels. Jögge doesn't use any sanding paper so the quality of work must be of a high standard. Still he likes to think that there is certain qualities to wood that you can't completely fade.



During my internship I have gotten quite handy with the Japanese saw. I am still pretty slow but precise. With a good saw you can make even difficult saw-cuts. In the picture I am sawing a tenon for the back of the bench.

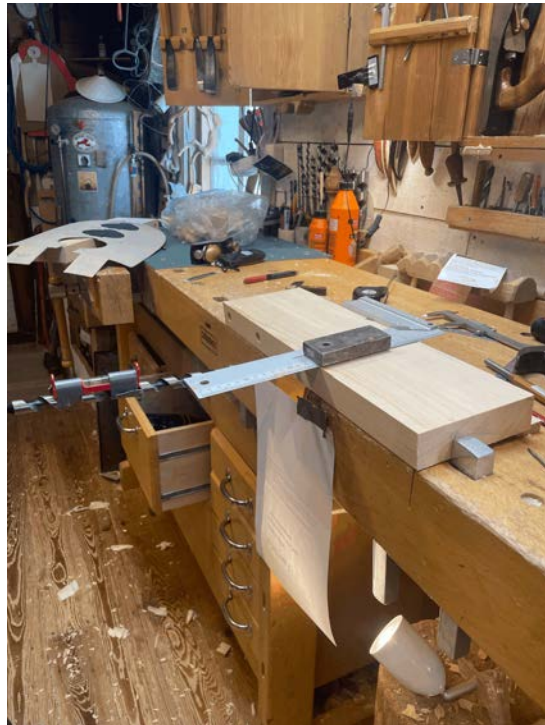


It has been very intriguing to learn how to make different kinds of tenons, pins and wedges. They have to be perfect in order to work properly and support the structure. Again the importance of good materials comes up. For example it is easier to make pins when the wood isn't curving that much or it doesn't have knots. We used this technique where we use a very dry piece of wood as a tenon so that when we put it in its place, it will swell up later. That way the tenon holds very strong.





Sometimes you have to find some interesting solutions. Especially when working with very organic shapes and materials.



Currently we are finishing the bench. For the past couple of days we have been focusing on painting. You can see the wood coming alive in a very different way when it's painted. s u r o l l e 's unique style continues till the last parts of the process.

For the surface treatment we used oil paints and linseed oil, sometimes a tiny drop of turpentine for trickier areas. While working with slöjd I learned that quite many people like to use oil colours for surface treatments. Maybe it's about the colours which can quite often be very bright when it comes to traditional crafts, but with oil colours you also get a really well coverage and protection for the surface.

We painted the bench when most of it was already put together. That's because most of the joinery we did, was supposed to be put together with a great force and banging, so we didn't want to ruin the painting. When painting with oil it is good to know what kind of a colour do you want to have. Oil colours take quite a long time to dry completely, maybe even a week. When painting, you should pay attention for the coverage and be aware that you work quickly enough with proper tools.

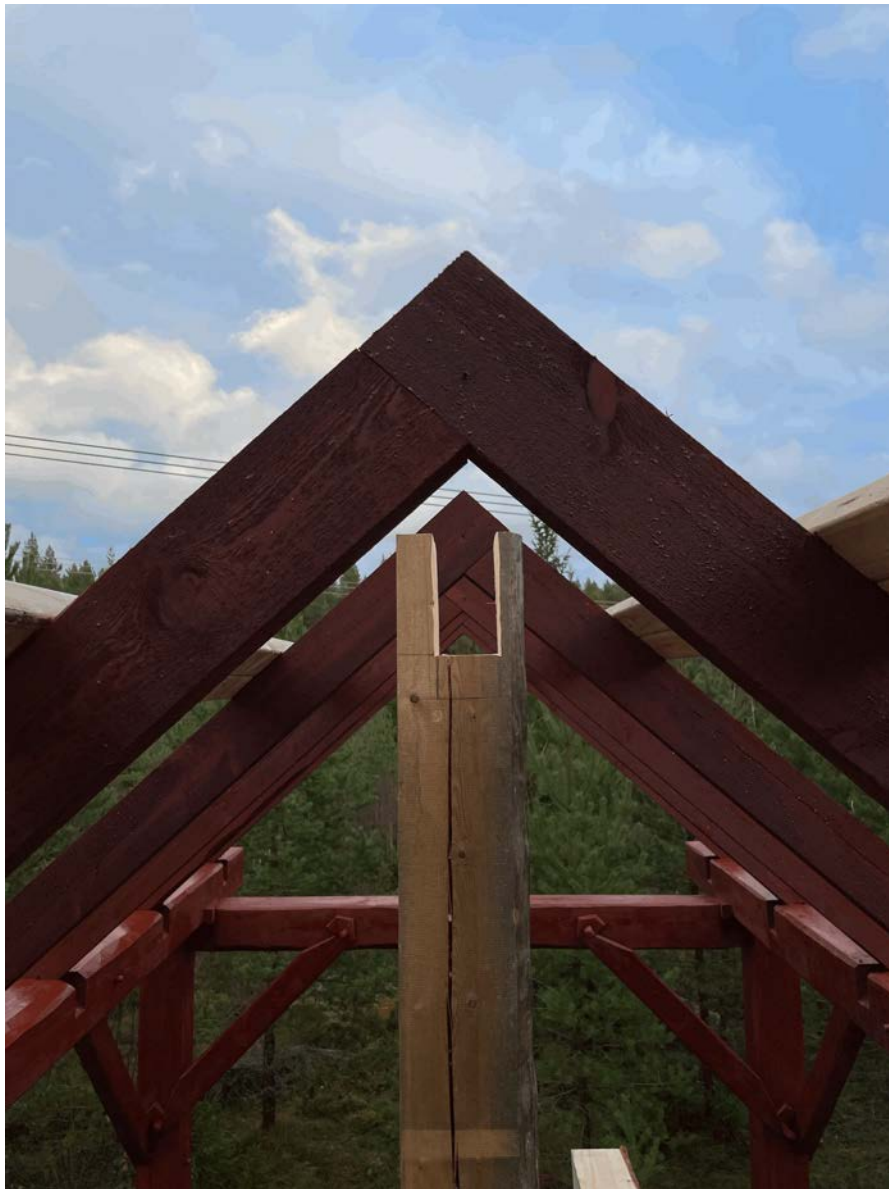


It has been very interesting to learn about Jögge's beliefs in slöjd. His style of working is something I admire a lot. It comes from decades of experience but also from the passion for slöjd. Working in more traditional ways has been something I've wanted to get into for a while. This has been a very good kick start for that.



Tack så mycket s u r o l l e !

Woodworking with *Ola Ling Slöjd* in Umeå

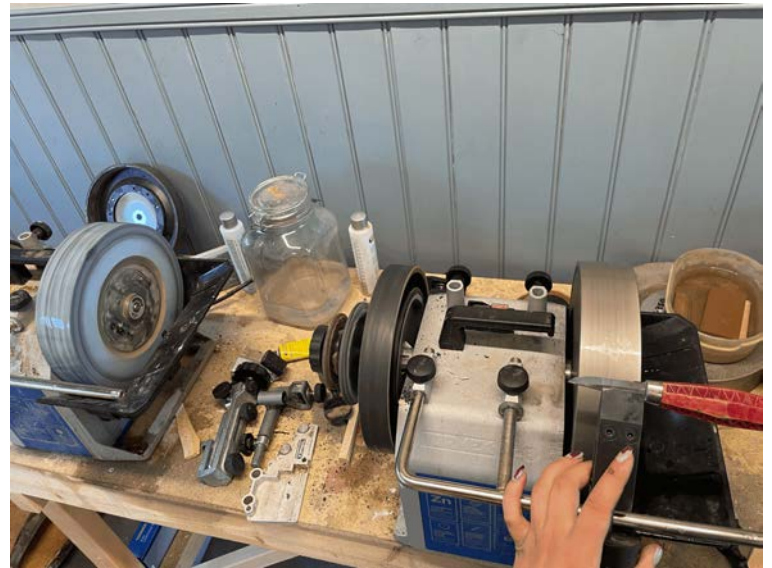




When I started to work with Ola Ling I knew that my internship would be a bit different compared to my previous one. Ola is also a sljöd man, but works on different kinds of projects. He is also a wood turner, teaches a lot and was currently having this outside gym project as well.

We started again with some splitting and prepared lots of material to make wands out of. Carving magic wands with kids at school was our main focus on the first week. It was interesting to see how kids were reacting to wood working and working with knives.

Usually after teaching, we had to sharpen the knives. We talked a lot about different sharpening methods and how to take care of the tools. Most of the time we just had to polish the knives again, but sometimes I also grinded with a diamond and ceramic wheel.



When we had some spare time, I was able to try some turning. It wasn't one of my tasks, but it was a good experience to get to learn from Ola, since turning is one of his main things.



Before the last week, we started to prepare some material for building a roof. Ola has an outside gym project and he had already build a base structure for a paviljong. We were supposed to make some planks with canals for an overlapping traditional roof building. We used handheld milling machines with different router bits and in total made over 120 planks.





Making of a joinery. Most of the joints were tighten with a big pin.

Before putting up the roof, we had to place these big logs that were supposed to make a hanging place for some rings and ropes.

Even though the whole paviljong was a big project, it was cool to see how organic and traditional it still was. We used hand tools and smaller machines a lot since we were working in the middle of a forest.





We had to come up with a system to nail the planks. Important part was to have the canals match each other so that the roof could work properly.





Usually butter knives and spoons were made from split greenwood with an axe, a draw knife, a knife and a spoon knife. No sanding paper was ever used when it came to slöjd.



After my official internship, Ola invited me to join a spoon making course he was having with another slöjder. I had already started to make one spoon with him that I finished at this weekly carving evening in Umeå.

I was able to meet other craftsmen since both Ola and Jörgge connected me with a lot of people. For a while I felt like a part of the slöjd-community in Västerbotten. It was very eye opening to see and hear different stories and many variations of working in the industry. I had great conversations about slöjd and got a lot of knowledge from people who had been in the industry over decades.



Before leaving Sweden I got to travel a bit and met some great people who were also working in the industry. I visited a school called *Sätergläntan*, in Insjön, which is focused on traditional handicrafts. In Öland, I visited a school called *Capellagården*, which also had different kinds of study lines in crafts and gardening, but was more focused machinery work and furniture building. Most of the students lived in dorms near the schools in both places.



My experience at both of my internship places were wonderful. I got to do a lot of different things in the woodworking field and developed new skills. Traditional handicrafts in particular have been an interest of mine for a while. It was nice to see how much the culture still lives in Sweden. All the people around me were very helpful and with their help I got some ideas for my future as well. All in all, I am very grateful for my experience and I think it was a very important step for me.



Tack så mycket Sverige!