



# American Marquetarian, Inc.

A not-for-profit society dedicated to the advancement of marquetry

October 20, 2005

To Whom It May Concern:

I have been asked to write this letter on behalf of Mr. Valeriy Shelikhov, a practitioner of Marquetry Art from Russia. I believe my position in this field makes me eminently qualified to judge the quality of Mr. Shelikhov's work.

I am the National President of the American Marquetry Society and write a column for our quarterly magazine. We have chapters in every corner of the United States. Our stated goal is to enhance the art of marquetry through meetings, classes, shows and any other way we can raise the profile of a craft that many people believe is a dying art form, having reached a peak of excellence in Europe during the 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. (I personally don't believe marquetry is a dying art, I think too many artists are intimidated by it, but shouldn't be).

I have been doing "marquetry" for fifteen years. I have presided over numerous exhibits and occasionally teach classes and seminars on the different aspects of marquetry, whether it is furniture embellishment, "parquetry" (geometric patterns), inlaid wood pictures or any other instance where the use of veneer (thin slices of wood) is desirable.

Last year I was one of eight people who attended the Smithsonian Institute's Marquetry Preservation course taught by Don Williams, the current head of the Smithsonian's Furniture Preservation Dept. In that class I became familiar with the style of the legendary Marquetiers like Andre-Charles Boulle and David Roentgen. I like to think my creations are as good as anything being made today and I am well known in the circles of marquetry and veneer work but I was truly humbled by the accomplishments these people created in the days before power tools, artificial light or even sandpaper. Mr. Shelikhov is the only modern Marqueter I know of whose work is equal to that of these great masters in terms of style, quality and sheer artistic merit. I understand that one of his pieces is displayed in Buckingham Palace. This is additional evidence that his work is comparable to that of the masters of the 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The word "Marquetry" is loosely translated from the French, meaning "painting with wood." (The oldest examples were actually found in the tomb of King Tut.) A marqueter chooses wood, brass, tortoiseshell, mother-of-pearl or any other medium the same way an

oil painter would choose a paint. With marquetry however, we have to focus on the color as well as the grain pattern and orientation, keeping in mind that wood does fade and change color over time and will be affected by whatever varnish is applied. This is why it is impossible to take a good photograph of a piece a marquetry. The wood used creates a depth that a camera cannot convey. When you see a picture or piece of furniture embellished with marquetry you immediately move your eyes or walk around the piece, being guided by the infinite directions depth and grain take you.

To simplify things, marquetry can be done in two different ways: The stack-cut method or the window method. With stack-cutting several layers of veneer (with different species, colors and grain patterns) are cut simultaneously with a fret saw and the pieces are then interposed to create the desired contrast. The window method creates a “window” or hole, slotted to fit a particular piece. Furniture made from solid lumber, or a giant “wooden map” requires this technique simply because the piece is too big to fit inside the frame of a fret saw. I like to combine both techniques and then “inlay” a piece into an existing background.

It seems clear to me that the work of Mr. Shelikhov is done in the “frisage” style and he is doing furniture embellishment in the style of Andre-Charles Boulle. His work follows in the tradition taught at the Ecole Boulle in Paris. The “frisage” style is a special marquetry technique. Small flakes of precious woods are cut diagonally and positioned so the veins are reversed on different panels and with geometric patterns creating interesting optical effects.

Mr. Shelikhov’s work is truly outstanding. I have had the opportunity to see some of his work at the Russian Museum here in Minneapolis. I believe he can take any picture or photograph and transform it into a work of marquetry. It is also unusual in that he designs and builds the furniture he embellishes.

In a picture of one of his pieces I saw that he had used probably fifty different species of wood, bordered with Tulipwood (a Brazilian Rosewood that is as hard as cement, extremely difficult to cut), and he used “sand-shading” extensively (“sand-shading” is a process of scorching and blackening a small piece of wood by dipping it in hot sand). His pieces are truly creations of superb fine art. They also exhibit a tremendous talent in the technical aspects of this art. Mr. Shelikhov is proficient in certain difficult techniques which are seldom if ever seen in the work of our contemporaries.

I believe he has a rare talent. There are perhaps 50 people worldwide who do serious work in marquetry. I have met many of them and am quite familiar with the various styles of work being done today and the quality being produced. Very few if any of them produce work that equals the quality of Mr. Shelikhov’s. While I cannot say that he is the best in the world, I can say with complete certainty that he is among the top 3 or 4 people in the world who are engaged in practicing this art today. Certainly there is no one in North America who is his equal.

I sincerely hope that Mr. Shelikhov will be permitted to remain in the United States. His talent in the art of marquetry exceeds anything else being done in this country, and his presence here will be an encouragement and inspiration to all of us. I have invited Mr. Shelikhov to attend the next meeting of the American Marquetry Society and I know that he could make valuable contributions to the work of the Society if he is permitted to remain in this country.

I would be happy to provide any additional information that may be of assistance in this regard.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dan Bredemeier', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Dan Bredemeier  
President  
American Marquetry Society

**MARQUETRY & INLAY & RESTORATION**

**Tel:** 905-662-1064

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**E-Mail** johnpioneer@skylinc.net



**John K. Sedgwick,**  
636 Tapleystown Road,  
Stoney Creek, Ontario,  
L8J 3K7 Canada.

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September 29, 2005

Ana L. Corson  
Associate Attorney  
333 No. Washington Ave., Suite 328  
Minneapolis, MN 55401  
Tel: 612-373-7003  
Fax: 612-349-2760

Dear Ms Corson,

In response to your E-Mail on Mon, 26 Sep 2005 14:15:12 -0500. Concerning your request for an "Expert Opinion" on the work of Mr. Shelikhov a cabinetmaker and marquetrian. Perhaps I should begin by explaining the term "Marquetry"

The word "Marquetry" as referred to in the English & French speaking world, is a word used to describe a very specific technique of cutting and assembling exotic veneers into a design or pattern and finally gluing the complete assembly onto a surface, such as a cabinet door or table top. Parquetry, the companion technique is used to describe the same process when the design or pattern is made from Geometric shapes. However the rest of the world still uses the more generic term of "Inlay" to describe both Marquetry and Parquetry.

Like many skills "Traditional Marquetry techniques" as practiced circa 1930,s and before were taught by members of craft guilds, along with various other wood working skills such as wood carving, wood turning, and general cabinet making. With the rapid introduction of mechanized equipment, the guild system and the knowledge and skills of its members, began to be phased out. The evolution of production machinery made and continues to enable less skilled people to satisfy the average persons furniture requirements at very affordable prices. In addition life-style and taste has changed, requiring more functional furniture for working families. The Arts & Craft movement typified by such practitioners as Gustaff Stickley, decimated the more esoteric wood working furniture skills and today furniture from their successors such as Ikea is still the most affordable choice of people today.

Those more esoteric wood working furniture skills, which have not been successfully reproduced at "Wall mart prices" have not returned to popularity first because of the number of practitioners available with the necessary skills and second today's labour cost. The only school in the west still left teaching Traditional Marquetry and restoration is in France. However with the fall of the USSR we have learnt that there are still places in Russia, and other eastern block countries where Consumerism and mass production have had a delayed effect on many old world skills.

**Expert**

I should possibly begin offering my opinion of Mr. Shelikhov skill level by qualifying myself as a practitioner of Marquetry for the past 51 years. For many years although I was aware from reading books, and occasional contact, that others were practicing marquetry, I had little contact with them. My wood working skills began at an early age with my father and grandfather and advanced principally by contact with older Mostly European cabinetmakers from who I was able to glean information such as carving from a Swiss carver, French polishing from a Spanish

Cabinetmaker and many Marquetry techniques from a Slovak cabinet maker. In 1982 realizing that these Craftsmen were the last of their kind, I decided to look for other Marquetrians Living in N. America.

I began by contacting the Marquetry Society in the UK a Society begun in 1954 by 6 Retired English Maquetrians and cabinetmakers; I was surprised to find that among their 1,000+ members, that they had members in Canada and that groups had already formed in the USA, Australia, S Africa Holland, Germany and they also had members in Canada.

In 1983 from a group of 8 people the Marquetry Society of Canada was formed. From this core group and many others since I have added to my knowledge of many almost lost techniques of marquetry/parquetry.

I have entered and won awards in the UK where I now compete in the premier class, I have won first prize awards in the USA at MSA competitions and to date the only 3 time best of show winner at the Upper Canada wood working competition. I have contributed to two books By Bill Lincoln, one of the founding members of the Marquetry Society UK and have written countless articles on Marquetry/Parquetry for wood working magazines. I teach Marquetry at specialty wood working tool supplier stores (*Lee Valley Tools*) and give a one-week course annually at the Halliburton School of the arts. Among my Piers I am considered a Marquetry Expert, ultimately perhaps the only qualification of any merit worth noting.

#### **My Opinion of Mr. Shelikhov Skill level**

Mr. Shelikhov is a traditionalist, marquetry done both in this style and quality has, except for a few isolated cases NEVER been done in N.America. It has always been imported from Europe and still is to this day. Principally from Senia in Italy, where it had DE-VOLVED into Mac Marquetry (*My term for Walmart quality marquetry*) verses one of a kind Museum Quality work

Mr. Shelikhov in cutting assembling and applying the marquetry, as well as making the furniture demonstrates not just an extraordinary talent but also an extraordinary skill level; even in past times individual craftsmen in a cabinet shop would have contributed the furniture and Marquetry. That Mr. Shelikhov also made the furniture shown on his website separates and raises his work and skills to a level not "*commercially available*" or equaled in N. America.

There is no one that I know of that is currently doing such work in N America, although a few are capable of it. The closest *commercial enterprise* doing such quality Traditional work is Anita Marquetry in the UK. She uses a computer program to map antique patterns and Laser cuts the individual pieces, finally assembling the pieces with tape. The assembled designs are sold to commercial cabinet shops ready for gluing onto new and reproduction furniture. Although Mr. Shelikhov may at first have difficulty procuring new commissions of his work, there is a fertile ground for his skills and demonstrated ability in restoring the countless pieces of marquetry embellished furniture in disrepair across N. America.

I trust this letter is sufficient to establish Mr. Shelikhovs' skill level and qualify my opinion of his work in the field of Marquetry, should you need further assistance please feel free to contact me

Sincerely



John Sedgwick



T M O R A

## The Museum of Russian Art

Immigration and Naturalization Service  
Washington, D.C.

January 29, 2003

Subject: Valerie Shelikhov

Dear Sir/Madam:

I am writing to provide an endorsement of the unique artistic capabilities of Mr. Valerie Shelikhov who is known to me personally as a master artisan of the historical art of wood marketry.

The Museum of Russian Art has been established to preserve and exhibit unique examples of Russian 20<sup>th</sup> century artifacts to the American public. The focus of our museum exhibitions has been on Russian paintings however we have previously displayed examples of Mr. Shelikhov's original furniture designs within the broad context of Russian art.

Mr. Shelikhov has worked on a variety of projects which demand extensive technical knowledge of the design of original one-of-a-kind wood sculpture as well as the personal skills to implement the artistic vision. I have attended lectures conducted by Mr. Shelikhov in which he has attempted to explain the types of skills required to execute marketry designs. These discussions confirm the extensive training and personal expertise that Mr. Shelikhov brings to the execution of his projects.

This gentleman clearly possesses unique artistic skills and experience of a very high order and I am pleased to affirm his qualifications.

Sincerely yours,

Bradford Shinkle, IV  
President

April 23, 2003

Ms. Evelyn Upchurch, Director  
Texas Service Center  
P.O. Box 852211  
Mesquite, Texas 75185-2211

REF: Petition for non-immigrant worker: 0-1 Classification

Dear Ms. Upchurch:

Since 1989 I have been an active collector of Russian 20<sup>th</sup> century art paintings, sculptures and artifacts that I have acquired from a variety of different sources including individual artists, Russian and American dealers, international art auctions and other Russian and American art collectors. My collection includes representative works from such notable Russian artists as Vladimir Stozharov, Aleksei Gritsai, Sergei & Aleksei Tkachev, Geli Korzhev to name but a few. I have personally taken 18 trips to Russia since 1989 for the express purpose of visiting museums, artists and other cultural institutions to expand my knowledge of Russian 20<sup>th</sup> century culture. Portions of my collection have been lent to 12 independent American museums, universities and cultural centers for exhibition purposes for the education and enjoyment of the American public. It is accurate to state that I have a major psychological and financial investment in the broad subject of 20<sup>th</sup> century Russian object d'art and can be considered a knowledgeable authority on the subject.

I am extremely fortunate to own an example of the marquetry work of Valery Shelikhov in my collection. The inlaid table in my collection is representative of Mr. Shelikhov's exceptional artistic skills and I am fully aware of the unique artistic skills required to conceive, design and create this wood sculpture. I consider Valery Shelikhov to be an artist of extraordinary talent and his work easily comparable to that of other leading Russian artistic talents included in my collection.

Marquetry can best be described as the creation of incredibly complex artistic mosaic designs using individually carved pieces of different colored wood instead of ceramic or glass tiles. This art form of artistic wood sculpture as applied to individual, one-of-a-kind pieces of furniture is a uniquely Russian artistic tradition that can be traced back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century and the Russian aristocracy including Tsar Peter the Great. Marquetry

requires profound knowledge of the composition and characteristics of countless types of wood inlay materials as well as the personal talent to render a design into tangible artistic shape on wooden surfaces. Valery Shelikhov is unquestionably an artist who has risen to the top of his field and whose work justifies its inclusion in my collection of Russian art.

The stature of Mr. Shelikhov's art is further confirmed by its inclusion in other internationally recognized art collections of exceptional reputation including that of the British Royal Collection. Compiled thru the centuries by the British monarchy, this collection includes the works of Rembrandt, Duccio, Leonardo Di Vinci among others. To have Mr. Shelikhov's work included among such icons of the art world is certainly an achievement of outstanding artistic recognition.

I can state that the market values of Mr. Shelikhov's marquetry work commands investment grade prices that typically are well into six figure prices and substantially higher than other contemporary marquetry artists. Since every marquetry sculpture is unique it is impossible to establish side by side price comparisons. In my opinion, Mr. Shelikhov's work represents the standard by which other marquetry work should be judged as his work is exceptional and clearly of extraordinary skill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eric Lorentzen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping initial "E".

Eric Lorentzen

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09/05/2000

Moscow

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Mr. Valery V. Shelichov is high-class specialist in furniture making and architectural design. Our company has been dealing with Valery for a long time and he is able to demonstrate his expertise in hand made furniture restoration and to demonstrate his knowledge of the history of art and furniture design. His works are pieces of exclusive design combining restoration and technical skills.

Valery's last works showed an outstanding degree of competence. His home office furniture in Japanese style with engraved decoration for a private gallery was exceptionally fine and our company was lucky to obtain from him a large stained glass window done by hand in a classical English style.

Valery also leads a team of young craftsmen who are interested in exclusive furniture design and architectural interior. Some of his students have gone on to work for professional specialists in different organizations and for private clients.

Valery is a pleasure to deal with and we value him as a maestro for his exclusive furniture design and restoration skills. We are also glad to see his best students carrying on his dedication to the highest standard of art in furniture design and architecture.

Yours sincerely

  
Rod MacLeod



# Office Solutions

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31.07.2001.

Moscow

Hereby we confirm that since 1999 Mr. Valery V. Shelikhov provides services and consultation to "Office Solutions" as a top-class specialist in rarity value furniture restoration and manufacture.

Настоящим подтверждаем, что с 1999 года компания «Офис Солюшнз» пользуется услугами Валерия В. Шелихова - первоклассного специалиста как в производстве так и в реставрации раритетной мебели.

С уважением

  
Том Лукич

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