



Shop carves niche with hardware displays

Former hardware marketing executive goes back to the shop to produce presentation displays.

Mary Jo and Marte Yerkins show off some of the sales display products they make in their Cleveland, North Carolina, shop.

When Marte Yerkins was an executive for a major European cabinet hardware brand, he helped popularize modular construction and the 32mm cabinet system. Today, he and his wife, Mary Jo, use that system in the company they created called Casemarte Inc. in Cleveland, North Carolina, to make specialized displays for sales and collections.

A self-taught cabinetmaker, Marte learned the trade working as an installer in Maryland. Then he spent 16 years in marketing for Blum. He established their U.S. marketing department and eventually became marketing manager. Later he worked with Grass. “I spent 19 years in cabinet hardware,” he said.

Along the way, Marte learned he could communicate with hardware cus-

tomers effectively because of his practical shop background. In his current venture making displays he is still helping hardware companies form a bridge to their customers.

“Most of my clients can sell stuff, but they don’t know how to display the product,” he said.

His solution is to create innovative displays that not only showcase products, but are also light, portable, durable, and in some cases work together as part of larger modular displays.

But when he first started making displays, they weren’t sales tools. Taking advantage of the nearby market for automotive enthusiasts that surrounds Charlotte, North Carolina, the home of NASCAR, Marte started making displays for die-cast model car collectors. Then he was called to make museum-quality

display cases to present NASCAR racing suits on mannequins. He’s also made display cabinets to showcase musical instruments such as guitars.

He knew the cabinet hardware companies needed displays for trade shows and showrooms, so he applied some of the same techniques to make those displays. He used his knowledge of the cabinet industry and cabinet hardware to make the displays be more effective than anything previously available.

“I rode along with salesmen for Blum and Grass,” he recalled. “I know what it’s like to carry this stuff around.”

Pretty soon, he realized he had created a real niche of fabricating sales displays.

Today, his customers include most of the major cabinet hardware brands, including Blum, Hafele, Grass, Salice,

Wurth and Richelieu, which is now his biggest customer.

Because he understands the sales process for which his displays are made, Marte knows he is making something more than just a door or drawer mockup. “There has to be attention to detail and perfect function,” he said. “This piece represents the company. It has to make you look good.”

He knows it also has to hold up to abuse. He said he learned that while making trade show displays. Those displays had to last three years of being put up and taken down and moved around the country.

He exclusively uses Garnica plywood, a birch plywood with a poplar core made in Spain. The poplar core makes it much lighter than conventional plywood, but it looks and performs like Baltic birch plywood. He uses only prefinished material. “I don’t want to finish at all,” he said. The light weight is especially important for display cases that must be constantly transported.

He uses all 1mm PVC edgebanding for maximum durability, knowing that his displays will be handled and moved around all the time. He says veneer edges don’t hold up as well under those circumstances.

He also incorporates aluminum extrusions in many of his displays, providing an extra durable framework to hold display parts. He also incorporates handles and modular construction to combine smaller displays into larger units. For example, some displays he made for Richelieu are towers designed to hold six units each. The display units can be switched out or

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These door displays made for Richelieu are modular towers that can each hold up to six displays that can easily be changed out or rearranged in the display.



The Casemarte shop is mostly conventional equipment, such as this Shop Fox sliding table saw.



Casemarte makes museum-quality displays for collections as well as sales displays. These racing suit display cases were made for NASCAR.

moved around to change the display.

He also works with Tresco lighting and has done extensive displays to show off lighting options in dynamic ways.

Marte is dedicated to the 32mm cabinet construction system, and all his displays are made that way. He designs them using Vector Works software, exporting to CutPlus software for cutlists. Construction is all dowels and Conformat screws. An SCMI Startech 23 boring machine takes up a central location in his shop to bore all of the system holes.

“I’m a severe anti-CNC guy,” he says. “With the right setup, we can do it faster than CNC.” And that’s just Marte and his wife Mary Jo doing the work in the 3000-square-foot shop next to their home.

It’s filled with conventional equip-



A fully functional lighting display makes it easy to show hardware options to customers.



Casemarte uses all 32mm construction, so this SCMI Smartech 23 boring machine is central to the shop.

ment, including a Shop Fox sliding table saw, a Holz-Her 1265S vertical panel saw, and a Holz-Her edgebander. There’s some less conventional equipment that you won’t find in most

cabinet shops, such as a Velox 350 SH-E chop saw for cutting aluminum extrusions.

“This is a factory,” says Marte. “It’s not a cabinet shop.”

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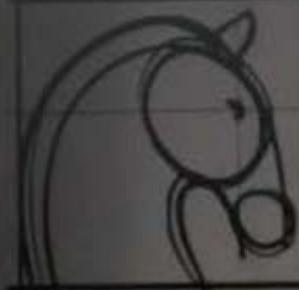
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