

Working with Tru-Stone

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A.K.A "R and B Crafts"



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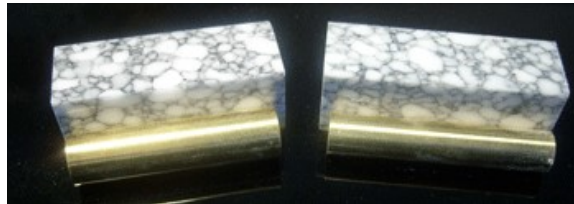
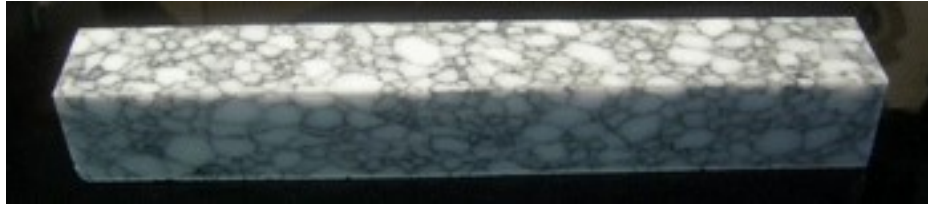
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WORKING WITH TRU-STONE – R and B Crafts

1. CUTTING THE BLANK TO SIZE

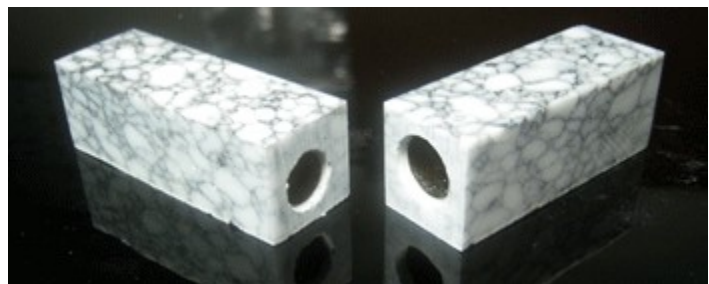
Once I've selected the blank and kit I want to use, I start by cutting the blank to the proper length(s). I use a small band saw and cut each section about 1/8"-1/4" longer than the tube. I then true up the end of each blank on a disc sander taking off just a small amount of material.



2. DRILLING THE BLANK FOR TUBES

I use standard bits for drilling. Most of my brad point bits have been resharpened into regular points and I find they have less blowouts when exiting the blank than the brad points do. If you are using brad point bits I would recommend drilling short of the end and cutting just enough off to reveal the hole. Be sure not to cut the blank too short.

While drilling, the blank can heat up fast so it's good to take short cuts and clear out the shavings frequently. If the blank becomes too hot while drilling I either let it cool off for a few minutes or add water. Typically, with a sharp drill bit I only have to do this to the hardest of blanks. Then, I glue in the tubes. I use two-part epoxy but whatever you typically use for other materials should work just as well. Once the glue has dried, I mill the ends and get ready for turning.



3. TURNING THE PEN

Once the pen is on the mandrel I use a large gouge to turn the blank down to its final shape. I have had very good results with the large gouge. From my experience, the soft and medium hardness blanks cut very clean and have a low likelihood of chip-out. For the blanks that fall in the hard category, patience and sharp tools are the key.

For the harder blanks it can be very helpful to either cut or sand the corners of the blank before turning. It will save time, and cause less wear on your turning tools. Once the final shape is achieved, I finish off with a skew to smooth out any gouge lines and make sanding a bit faster.

*As an alternative here, the Woodchuck Pen Pro works exceptionally well in turning all hardnesses of blanks. It also can be used from beginning to end, roughing the blank all the way to final shaping while maintaining a sharp edge much longer than ordinary tools.



4. FINISHING

With turning complete, I move on to the sanding. I typically start with about a 240 grit sand paper and then go to 320 and then 400. With each grit I sand with the lathe on and then along the length of the pen with the lathe turned off. Once 400 grit is complete, I move to the micromesh. For the micromesh sanding I have found that wet-sanding is the way to go. Micromesh sanding without water can cause heat to build up quickly and if overheated the micromesh can get burn marks in it and wear out very quickly. Wet-sanding nearly eliminates the heat buildup and dust produced during the process. When doing the wet-sanding it is a good idea to cover up the lathe bed so that it doesn't get wet and rust.

I keep either a bucket or bowl of water next to the lathe and dip the micromesh in it before sanding. Starting with 1500 I sand and cross-sand through 12000 keeping the various grades of micromesh wet throughout the process. I polish with a scratch remover/plastic polish. For an extra shine, polishing on a buffing wheel can produce some great results.



5. FINAL ASSEMBLY

Assembly of the finished pen is pretty typical. The only note on assembly is that the harder the blank is, the less flex it has when the parts are pressed into the tubes. Take extra care when pressing tight fitting parts into the tubes. Over expansion of the tube could cause the pen to crack. From my experience, this is really only problematic on the hardest of blanks, but worth noting. To avoid this if you know you are working with an extremely hard or brittle blank is to either drill the hole for your tubes slightly oversized to allow for expansion or make sure the parts are not too tight by sanding off a small amount of the part to be pressed into the tube.

