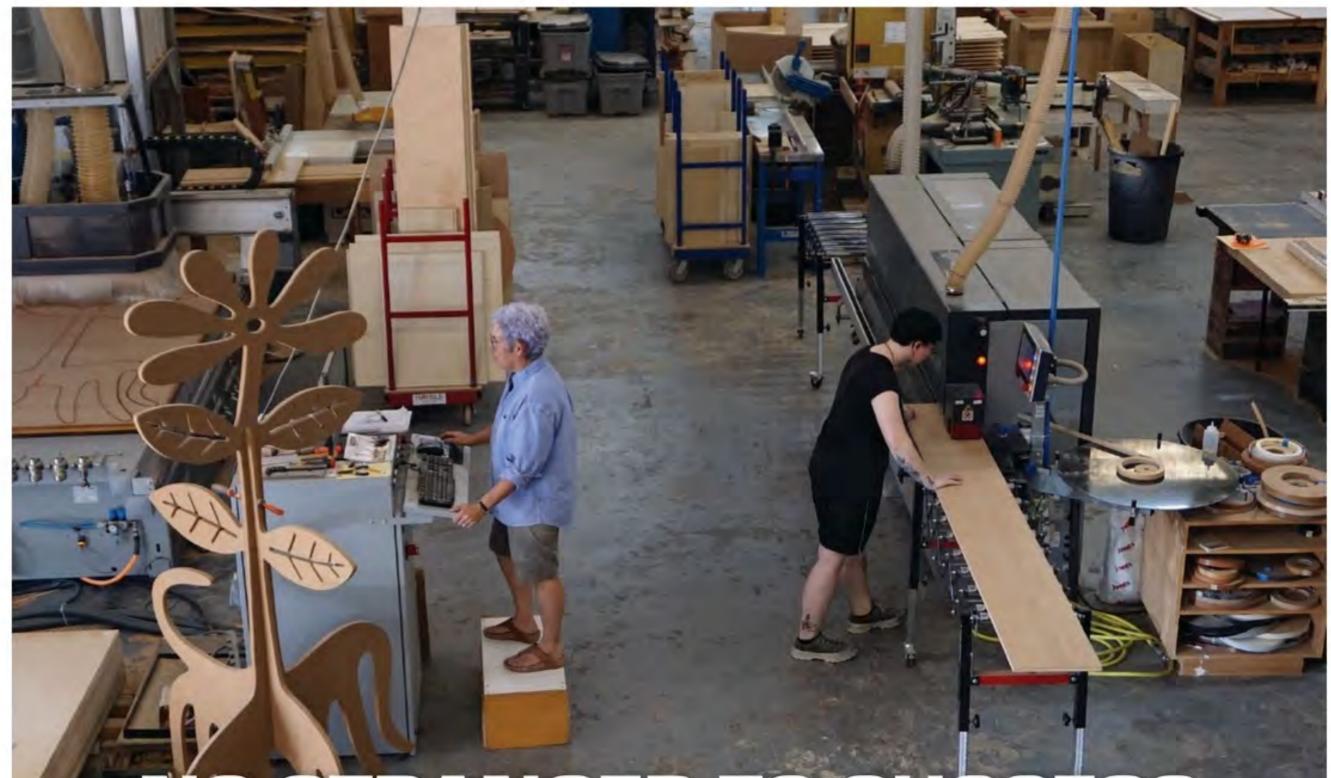
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NO STRANGER TO SUCCESS

Lois Snyder guides Periwinklers to national acclaim in a trail-blazing career

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Table of Contents



Features

- 22 SANDING SOLUTIONS: Whether it's the shape, pad, speed, power source or pattern, there's a lot to keep up with when it comes to hand-held sanding options.
- **34 NO STRANGER TO SUCCESS:** Lois Snyder guides Periwinklers to national acclaim in a trail-blazing career.
- **46 DIAMONDS AND FANCY COATS:** CNC tooling gets dressed up with abrasives, protective coatings and more.

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FINDING THE SWEET SPOT: Outsourcing can help a shop continue to grow and serve its customer base, even in these challenging times.

News Desk

- 8 Architectural program requires hands-on learning.
- 12 International Society of Furniture Designers holds second juried competition.
- 10 Next IBS will be an in-person event.
- 16 WOOD MARKETS: Get ash while it's hot.

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NOVEMBER 2021 WWW.WOODSHOPNEWS.COM 3

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34 WWW.WOODSHOPNEWS.COM NOVEMBER 2021

NO STRANGER TO SUCCESS

Lois Snyder guides Periwinklers to national acclaim in a trail-blazing career

By Jennifer Hicks

Periwinklers, a cabinet and architectural millwork shop with nine employees in Tarpon Springs, Fla., has been quite busy with commercial work lately. And that's fine with the co-owner, Lois Snyder.

"Right now, I basically work with three main contractors and that's it," says Snyder. "I have a lot of little projects, but I'm really getting away from residential because it's more competitive. If I'm working directly with a residential client, then I'm not getting paid as the designer or the engineer, so there's a lot more details that go into it. When I have a commercial contract, I know exactly what we're doing and it's just very orderly."

Periwinklers is a partnership with Snyder and her husband, Matthew Searle. But Snyder is the driving force, a veteran shop owner with an impressive resume.

A CREATIVE MIND

Snyder grew up in Rye, N.Y. and Stamford, Conn., and proudly refers to her younger self as a tomboy.





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sign, with a boyfriend.

"We broke up shortly after but remained business partners for around 10 years. Red Hook was the 'bad lands' by the way. My first shop, I started in an abandoned building, so we got a hose for water from our neighbor and an extension cord."

"I started drafting when I was in junior high school, but when I was younger even, I would build forts with my brother," she says. 'I did sports, so I was very physical, and cabinetmaking is very physical, and eventually it all tied together."

She worked numerous odd jobs as a teen, including refinishing boats. She wanted to take shop in high school but says it wasn't encouraged, so ended up in drafting classes with aspirations of becoming an architect. Snyder attended the State University of New York at New Paltz and became the first graduate of its BFA wood design program in 1983.

"I was in the art program, and they had a woodshop. I didn't know you could major in furniture making. It sounds crazy, but I didn't know. I got into the woodshop and that's where I stayed," she says.

After graduation, Snyder moved to Brooklyn's Red Hook neighborhood and started her first woodworking business, Benedict Snyder De-



Snyder married Rob Hyslop and moved to Norwalk, Conn. They were building an addition to their home when Hyslop suddenly became ill and passed away.

"We had planned to move to Tarpon Springs because we loved windsurfing and there was a beautiful spot here to do it. He died before we could do that, and I ended up finishing the house myself and moving here alone about 22 years ago. I'm still very close to his daughter who is doing drawing/design work for me on Mosaic software."

THE NEXT CHAPTER

She opened her first shop in Florida, Fine Art Wood Works, in 2002 from a two-car garage.

"I used my last student loan money to buy a table saw, band saw and jointer, and then I had basic hand tools and all that," says Snyder. "I've



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always been good at getting work for some reason, just a little bit at a time, so I'd just work in my garage and if I had any finishing work to do, I used my living room and just pushed everything out of the way."

Fine Art was eventually moved to a commercial space and had a strong 10-year run. Periwinklers came about after Snyder and Searle met in 2016. They quickly decided to start a new woodworking business and the name was an easy choice.

"Matthew suggested 'Periwinkles' because it's my favorite color. The reason why it's not Periwinkles is because that was taken. Some guys have a little trouble wearing the periwinkle shirt color, but I think they look great in them," says Snyder, often adorned in periwinkle clothing accessorized with periwinkle toenail polish and a few violet-hued streaks in her hair. The company's work van is periwinkle, and the couple named their 60' sailboat Periwinkle.

In 2017, while attending the AWFS in Las Vegas, they got married. They've since moved into a 6,000-sq.-ft. shop, anchored by a Felder CNC and edge bander.

"The shop is nice," says Snyder. "Could we use 10,000 square feet? Sure. It looked really big before we filled it with tools. I bought the CNC and edge bander. Then I had to buy a new compressor, air dryer, and dust collection system. I had to run sub panels for electric and an air harness all the way around shop, so that was huge."

NOTABLE PROJECTS

About 80 percent of the current jobs are commercial, including the sales office for the Ritz Carlton condos in South Tampa, Paradeco Coffee Roasters in St. Petersburg, and the Italian restaurant, Olvia, in Tampa.

"I would say most of our work is South Tampa or St. Petersburg, not more than 40 to 50 miles from the shop. I would work further out – we recently completed a project in the Florida Keys – but this area keeps us busy."

The shop recently won a Wood Diamond Award from the Cabinet Makers Association for its work on the Grand Central Brewhouse in St. Petersburg, an elaborate multi-story pub. The job spanned several months and incorporated intricate woodwork and metalwork throughout the bar areas, walls, ceilings and more.

A current job calls for a curved wall in the master bedroom of a Tampa home that Snyder says is one of the fanciest she's ever seen.





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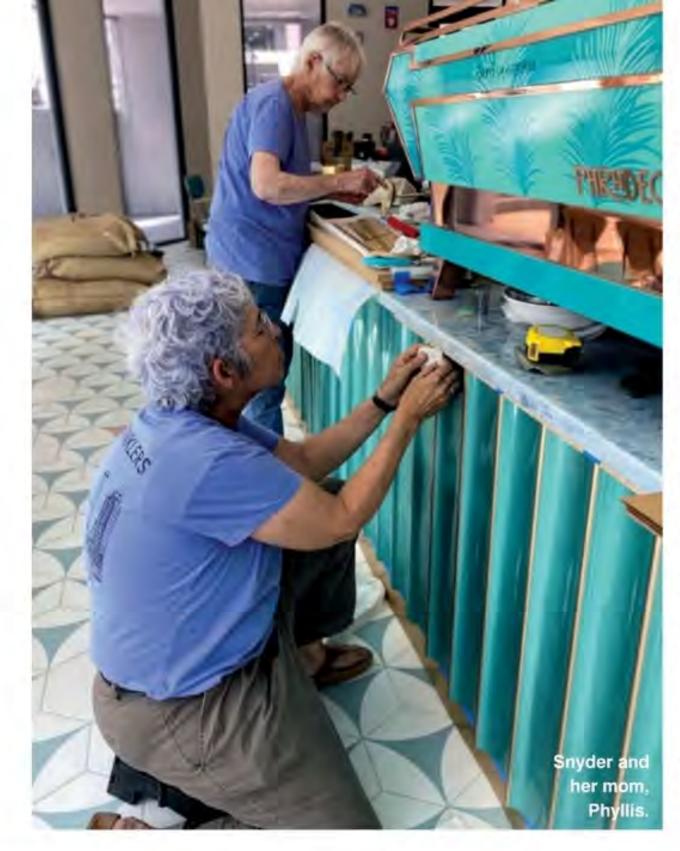
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She enjoys these opportunities to express her creativity.

"I love projects so if something's interesting, I'll do it. One of the things I think was most valuable in my education was studying art in general. I studied sculpture and took jewelry making, ceramics, photography, printmaking, lithography and minored in art history. Things like that make you a whole person. Maybe you can turn on a table saw, but can you understand what people want and make it happen."

PRESSING ON

As a female business leader in a male-dominated field, Snyder says she has faced some issues with gender stereotypes throughout her career. But the good has outweighed the bad.

"It's actually been an advantage to be female from the people that I do business with, particularly when I was younger and did a lot of residential work. I really used to enjoy working with my residential clients, women, and I think they enjoyed working with me because I don't mansplain things to people."

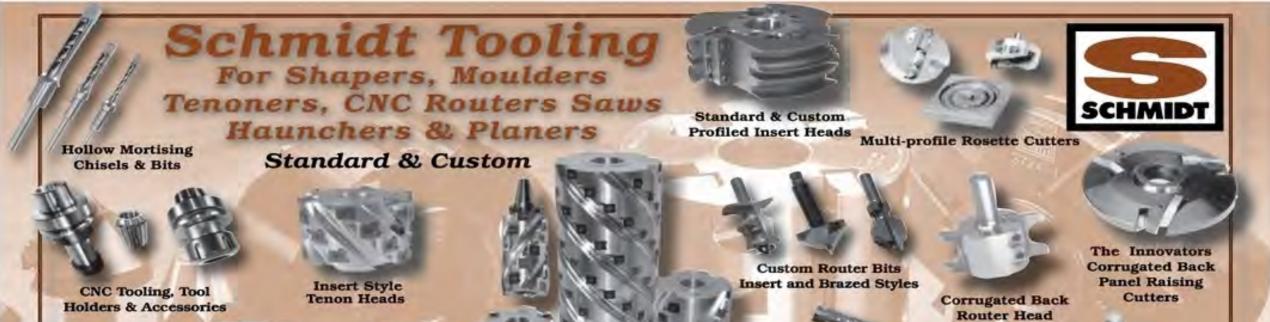
Snyder says she'd love to have more than one woman employee, but hiring anyone has been a challenge lately.

"It's hard for people to know that they want to do this. I can train people, but it may take months for somebody to figure out that this is something that they really want to do."

The future includes continuing to grow the business and more hard work.

"I don't really have a plan," says Snyder. "I'm 62, but people don't see me going out to pasture, I don't think. I know I'm going to work just as hard for another 10 years, at least. I can't stay where we're at. We have to grow right now, so I'm looking to add two to three more employees, and hopefully not more than that."

For more, visit periwinklers.com.



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