

## wood

*Mexico's great masters use a variety of woodworking techniques to produce religious artifacts, furniture, musical instruments, bowls, boxes, toys, and other products.*

### ***lacquer work***

One of the most involved processes in woodworking is lacquer work or *maqué*: the process of covering wood with multiple layers of shellac. The shellac consists of a mixture of lime powders, pigments, and a substance made with, among other things, grease extracted from insects and *chía* oil.

*Chía* oil helps prevent lacquer from cracking and makes it resistant to wear. The preparation process entails gathering seeds, cleaning and roasting them in a *comal* (a flat metal or clay dish), and later grinding them in a hand mill. Water is added to release the oil, and the mixture is kneaded into a soft paste. The paste is then put into a press to extract the oil.

Each layer of lacquer is polished immediately to make it shine. In this way, an evenly colored surface becomes an integral part of the piece. The dried and polished *maqué* is then carved with picks and knives and the carved sections filled with *maqué* of contrasting colors.

Major lacquer-producing centers include Pátzcuaro and Uruapan in Michoacán; Olinalá and Temalacatzingo in Guerrero; and Chiapa de Corzo in Chiapas.

### ***inlay***

Used for ornamental purposes, inlay consists of hollowing out a design on the surface of a wooden piece and filling the holes with small pieces of bone, ivory, or shell. Mahogany and oak are among the most widely used woods for this technique, which reached its zenith during the 19th century.

### ***marquetry***

When inlay is done entirely with different types of wood, the work is known as marquetry. Here, small pieces of wood are cut to fit a pattern on the surface to be inlaid. Later, the edges are burned to create shadowing. Once the inlay is completed, the piece is planed to a smooth surface and then varnished.

### ***estofado***

Used to decorate carved religious images and altars, *estofado* involves applying gold leaf to the garments of angels, archangels, and saints. The gold leaf is then covered with oil paint. When dried, the paint is scraped with a pick to allow the gold underneath to show through, thus creating the appearance of brocade.