



(Japanese) Clouds

Origins:

I think these clouds are a perfect example of woodcarving: the style, design and form fit gouges so well. But what really blows me away is that what I am doing here owes everything to original carvings created in AD 1053!

At that time Japan already had a sophisticated tradition of carving that went on for some centuries after. In 1053, master carver, Jōchō, had finished creating a whole series of bodhisattva figures seated or standing on clouds in the Byōdō-in temple, Kyoto, Japan (in what is now called the [Phoenix Hall](#)).

Jōchō is without doubt one of the greatest woodcarvers that ever lived. It's a great privilege to sample just a little of his work. The originals are fully 3 dimensional; here we just play in high relief.



The way of the clouds is a brilliant, very adaptable design; I used it in my 'Lark Ascending' music stand, which you can see on my own website [here](#), and a grave marker, which you can see [here](#).

Wood:

The original cloud carvings are in a dark wood and I think look lovely. So don't think you have to bleach: Cherry or Mahogany would give you lovely clouds. And if you do want white clouds, start with a whiter wood: Limewood, Basswood, Sycamore, Maple for example, and you'll find the bleaching more successful.

Liming wax:

fills the grain (pores) of open-grained woods: Oak, Mahogany etc. It won't give any effect on hard, close grained woods like Cherry or Maple.

The Book:

is actually a catalogue for a 1982 exhibition of the same name at the Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth and at the Japan House Gallery, New York. There are many other books out there!

The Great Age of Japanese Buddhist Sculpture AD 600-1300

Nishikawa Kyotaro and Emily J. Sano

Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth.

Library of Congress Catalogue Card Number:82-82805

ISBNs: Cloth 0-912804-07-6; Paper: 0-912804-08-4

Tools:

This carving uses simple, quite common carving tools. These were very useful though many others would substitute:

- Gouge #3, 6, 9 x 1/4, 1/2, 3/4in. (6, 14, 20mm)
- Gouge #4, 7 x 3/4in. (20mm)
- Gouge #5 x 5/8in. (16mm)
- Gouge #10 x 3/8, 1/2in. (10, 14mm)
- Shortbent Gouge #3 x 1/4, 3/8, 1/2in. (6, 10, 14mm)
- Shortbent Gouge #6 x 5/8in. (16mm)
- Shortbent Gouge #7 x 1/2in. (14mm)
- 60° V tool x, 3/8in. (10mm)
- Skew chisel x, 3/8in. (10mm)

Other tools:

Carving knife, calipers; triangular punch; carving gloves (see WW.tv).

Dimensions:

Thickness of wood 1.5in. 40mm.

Maximum width:

- Big cloud: 18in (260mm)
- Left cloud: 9.5in (240mm)
- Right cloud: 9in (225mm)

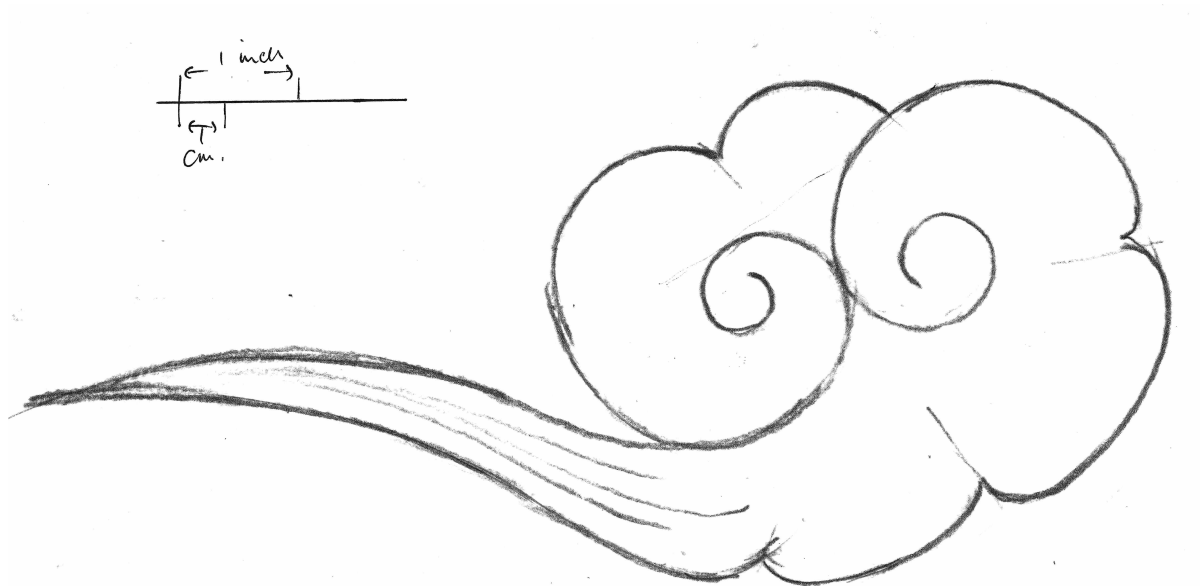
Adjust the size to the wood you have.

Japanese Clouds, after Jōchō 1:

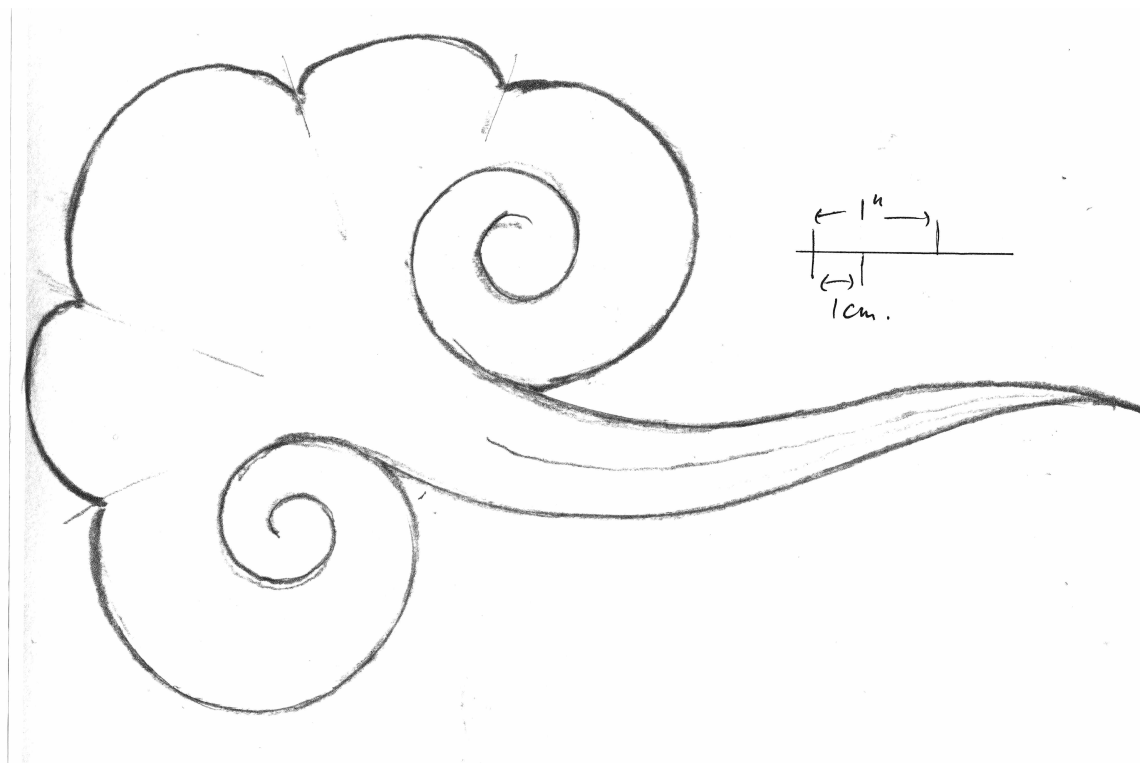
Working Drawings by Chris Pye

I'd encourage you to design and make your own clouds. Cover your wall!

1 Left Cloud:



2 Right Cloud:



3 Main Cloud:

