



Classic furniture. Modern production.

Rubens Art Gallery is a premium furniture manufacturer that is passionately attracted to works of art in the style of days gone by. Blum-Novotest is known for innovative high-tech products in the field of Measuring and Testing Technology. It is by coincidence that these two companies that seemingly do not have anything in common are now connected in a close partnership.

Renaissance of the classics

The Rubens Art Gallery manufactures furniture in the style of China's Golden Age with the objective of continuing the tradition of antiquarian-style products. At first, the company only restored the sensitive frames of oil paintings of the 19th and 20th century. Later the company established its own production of high-quality picture frames which were gold-plated and adorned with carvings. With the interior decoration of the "La Fenice" opera house in Venice, Rubens Art Gallery made a name for itself worldwide. Through its excellent work, the company earned an outstanding reputation in the industry. The restored decoration was highly praised and, according to some aficionados, was even better than the original. Rubens Art Gallery reproduces high-quality classic works of art. The replication of such exquisite works is everything but easy. Not only does it require vision, passion and diligence, but also precise measurements at the workpieces in order to achieve uniformly good quality.

Accurate positioning: easier said than done

In order to create truly exceptional products, Rubens Art Gallery spared no expenses for staff, raw materials and machines. Even though wood machining requires far less precision than the machining of metal, one acquired a state-of-the-art 5-axis machining centre to be able to realise even the smallest details in a precise manner. In woodworking, the initial workpiece is specially pretreated before it is fine machined. For this, the workpiece has to be unclamped and clamped again, which created a great problem: So far all machining steps at the Rubens Art Gallery, including transport, fixation and positioning were carried out by hand. The positioning occurred manually with mere visual judgement. Obviously, this took an enormously long time. In the end, the correct position of the workpiece could not always be guaranteed, which adversely affected the precision of the final product, of course. The high-quality materials used by the Rubens Art Gallery are very expensive, therefore, faulty workpieces should absolutely be avoided.

The search for a partner

The complex component positioning was ultimately the reason why production was to be changed to modern industrial machining. In a German magazine, they found what they were looking for and got to know Blum-Novotest and its products. So Siegfried Frost of Rubens Art Gallery turned to the Blum-Novotest GmbH site in Shanghai, China.

Ingo Wirth, General Manager of BLUM China, answered the inquiry of Rubens Art Gallery immediately. First he analysed the causes of the problems Rubens Art Gallery had: "The production requirements of Rubens Art Gallery were essentially not particularly complicated. They wanted to optimise their positioning accuracy and material utilisation when using their 5-axis CNC-machining centre," explains Ingo Wirth. An engineer of BLUM remembers, "From a technical point of view, it does not differ greatly from metal machining. After the analysis, it was clear that the problem could be solved by using our tactile workpiece measuring system on their current 5-axis machining centre." After Siegfried Frost had gained a thorough impression of the offer and presentations of BLUM China in Shanghai, he decided to work with them.

The TC60 of BLUM

The machining centre used at Rubens Art Gallery comes from a well-known German producer of wood-processing machines. According to the technical features of this machine the use of the TC60 radio transmission probe seemed appropriate. The multidirectional, superfast and highly precise system that can measure at incredible 3 m/min facilitates the automatic recognition of position and dimensions of the workpiece in the machining centre. On the inside, the multidirectional touch probe features the latest data transmission technology thus allowing reliable workpiece measurement. It is insensitive to cooling lubricants and chipped-off metal or wood, and can thus also be used under difficult conditions. The TC60 is robust, durable and guarantees high measuring accuracy.

After the installation of the touch probe in the machining centre, it was as if a blind person had suddenly regained vision, to put it in exaggerated terms. Nobody had to tediously assess the accuracy with the naked eye anymore. Due to the precise measurements of the TC60 touch probe, the data could immediately be corrected at the machining centre. The following processing steps did not have to be conducted blind. Productivity and accuracy improved. The error rate dropped and the quality of the products rose significantly. In addition, BLUM installed a laser measuring system for tool monitoring. In combination with the touch probes, the company was ultimately able to increase productivity by 30-40 %.

"With the TC60 touch probe, we can measure inside the machining centre without any trouble. The plant can thus quickly react to process requirements and adapt the machining accordingly. After machining, the system measures the components again and compares the reference data," explains a Rubens Art Gallery machine operator. "With the touch probe, we can measure the basic data and can work much more efficiently and accurately. This procedure is very reliable. We can machine orders more easily and can also manufacture products multiple times."

The best — not just one of the best

With the support of Blum-Novotest measuring technology, the problems Rubens Art Gallery had in chipping could be solved. The TC60 touch probe of BLUM can be described as "excellent", however, the "friendliness and immediate processing of the inquiry also left a lasting impression" with the Rubens Art Gallery. "In all, BLUM China is the best supplier we worked with so far. Not just one of the best – the best." Siegfried Frost was lavish in his praise: "There is no doubt that we will continue working with BLUM. Should we purchase a new machining centre, we will definitely choose the products and solutions of BLUM again. And if BLUM launches new products in future, we will be glad to test them."