



By Moreno Borriero

I WAS recently honoured to be invited to the 2017 South African Fly Fishing and Fly-tying Expo which took place on 24th and 25th June at Toadbury Hall. My special thanks go to Gordon van der Spuy and the wonderful hospitality he organised for Marc Petitjean and I. I must also take this opportunity to thank the amazing people who hosted us and took us fishing in some wonderful locations, namely Jay Smit, Ian Cox, Andrew Fowler, Dries Ellis, the friendly Natal Fly Fishers Club members, Stuart Smith and his lovely family, Roy Lubbe and the great people from the Jacaranda Fly Fishing Club and last but not least Garth Wellman and Armand Flies who guided Marc and I for yellows.

I must also mention that I found some very talented flyfishers and craftsmen in South Africa. I saw some beautiful works of art including handmade fly-boxes, landing nets and bamboo rods, and met some very talented fly-tyers, sculptors and painters. I am extremely impressed by what I found to be a world class flyfishing community!

Before leaving for SA, I conferred with my good friend and refined rodmaker Stephen Boshoff because I had no idea what kind of rods would work for the South African flyfishers, and he gave me some excellent advice. He knows that most of my rods are flamed with what I call “tortoiseshell flaming”, so he suggested that I bring some of those over.

Regarding the actions, I based everything on my experiences as a rodmaker and guide. I like rods with a fast, crisp action to meet the needs of the modern flyfisher who is basically used to this kind of action. This action works well with accurate and delicate presentations with the dry fly.

I was a little pushed for time as Gordon confirmed my invitation only a couple of months before the show and I decided to bring five rods over. I had other orders to fulfil too, so I got busy and made five tortoiseshell flamed rods in about six weeks. That was rather risky because each rod has about 100 hours work in it, excluding drying times.

I worked in a mad rush and I didn't notice that one of the rods had a ferrule problem which I had to sort out once I returned to Italy. I am pleased to say that the rod is now back in SA with its proud new owner!

I was a little worried about how my

rods would be received, but I got good feedback from everyone — both for the aesthetics and their action.

I have since been asked to share my process with other rodmakers, so here I am. I wish to point out that I did not invent this flaming system. I was first introduced to it by my good friend Giovanni Nese who is an excellent and very inspired Italian rodmaker.

In 2007 the Italian Bamboo Rodmakers Association decided to develop a light, fast action rod for the Italian style of casting which involves light lines, short rods and fast actions. We involved the inventor of the style, Roberto Pragliola, who gave us his expert advice. The IBRA members presented about 30 different rods with different tapers and lengths and the rod that most suited Roberto's style of casting was flamed with the tortoiseshell flaming method.

This kind of flaming has become very popular in Italy and abroad and many Italian rodmakers now make rods flamed in this way. I make both blonde and tortoiseshell flamed rods, but after my first experiments with this rather tedious process I had sworn not to make any more tortoiseshell flamed rods. However, the market which makes the rules has forced me to continue making them and today eight rods out of ten that I make are tortoiseshell.

A while back I asked Giovanni Nese how he came up with this wonderful idea, and he mentioned that he had first seen it done by JK Wheeldon in the early '90s. He called it “pencil tiger flaming”. T&T also made rods with this flaming technique, for example the T&T 25th anniversary model 7' 6" #3 two-piece two tips and the T&T 1989 20th anniversary model 8' #5 three-piece

two tips. Master Japanese rodmaker Ishida Hideto also made tiger flamed rods like his Kagerow series in the mid-2000s

#### THE TECHNIQUE

As mentioned, the technique is rather tedious and time consuming. The flaming takes place on the level strips after node pressing. The enamel is kept on the rod and removed either before or during the final planing. This depends on the rodmaker's personal choice.

#### THE TOOLS

- A heat gun that can reach a temperature of at least 600°C. Usually 1 500-2 000 watt heat guns will reach this temperature.
- A fishtail nozzle.
- Gloves because the bamboo strips get very hot.
- Some cotton thread. Some rodmakers use the string used to bind roasts while others use crochet thread in cotton or linen. The latter tends to be more resistant to burning while the former costs less.
- A binder if you have one.
- A face mask as the fumes may irritate your nose.

#### THE METHOD

After planing your levels, you will need to bind them with the thread in the classical criss-cross way. The wrappings can be wide or narrow according to your taste.

Set your heat gun to the maximum temperature setting, and arm yourself with patience as it may take up to one hour per section.

Start at one end and rotate the blanks quite quickly over the hot air. You will notice that it eventually dark-



# creating ART

## Tortoiseshell flaming a cane rod

ens. You can decide how dark you want to make it depending on your preference. As it darkens, slowly move the blank forwards continuously turning and flaming.

Try not to burn the thread as it will unwind. Should this happen, you have two options — stop and add some more thread where it is missing (usually only one wrapping unwinds) or you can ignore it and continue flaming.

The nodes will tend to come out

again with the heat and this can cut the thread, but if you are careful that will not happen.

The nodes may need to be pressed again. Make yourself a little wooden jig with a 60° angle in it to gently press the nodes down again in your vice after the flaming.

The rod will not look very nice in the beginning, but once you have removed the enamel, the beautiful tortoiseshell design will come out. The

varnishing will enhance it and in the end it will look fantastic.

Please note that this process tends to dry out the bamboo fibres quite a lot, so before you start with the final planing it is a good idea to let the strips rest for about a day so that they absorb some relative humidity.

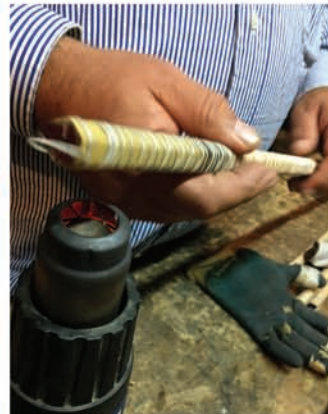
It may take a couple of rods before you master the technique but it's really not difficult, and if you persevere you'll have a really special rod.



The temperature Moreno uses to flame rods.



The unflamed blank and the beginning of the flaming process.



The colour starting to appear.



The flamed part starting to get darker.



Flaming continues.



Flaming view from the butt end.





Work continues.



View from a different angle.



A close up to show the difference between the unflamed and flamed part.



Flamed part getting longer.



Any decent thickness cotton thread is good for flaming. Do not use nylon!



The finished product.



Before, after and the finished product.



Moreno Borriero was born and bred in Johannesburg. He started fishing at a young age with his father, but it was bait fishing to begin with. Eventually they started buying flyfishing equipment but had no idea how to proceed. In 1980 Moreno left South Africa and settled in Pisa, Italy where he attended university. One of his varsity friends mentioned that he flyfished and Moreno was surprised to learn that they have trout in Italy and that they are native. This young man, Piero Cristaudo, taught Moreno everything about flyfishing including the ethics which are still part of his flyfishing philosophy. "Yes, philosophy is a big word," he says, "but that's the way I feel about this fantastic world that I have the honour of belonging to."

In 2005 Moreno came across the Italian Bamboo Rodmakers' Association. He attended the first class they held in 2006 and "the last stage of flyfishing dementia was implanted into

my brain — the art of bamboo rodmaking".

Moreno has been a fishing guide in Tuscany since 2002 and guides on the rivers close to his home, including the Lima Stream which is a wonderful freestone stream that comes down the Apennines. He is also involved in the management of this stream which includes reintroducing the Mediterranean trout. He also guides on the Serchio Stream and in the wonderful Tiber Tailwaters where you'll find the southernmost population of grayling.

MORE INFORMATION CAN BE FOUND ON THESE WEBSITES:

[classicflyrodforum.com/forum/viewtopic.php?f=64&t=49949](http://classicflyrodforum.com/forum/viewtopic.php?f=64&t=49949)

[www.rodmakers.eu/BJ05ENG/index.html](http://www.rodmakers.eu/BJ05ENG/index.html)

[classicflyrodforum.com/forum/viewtopic.php?f=64&t=51287&start=20](http://classicflyrodforum.com/forum/viewtopic.php?f=64&t=51287&start=20)

[classicflyrodforum.com/forum/viewtopic.php?f=64&t=64205&start=20](http://classicflyrodforum.com/forum/viewtopic.php?f=64&t=64205&start=20)