

ZIMMEREI HUG

Back to tradition *with* innovation

Producing traditional carpentry joints in an economically competitive way

At Zimmerei Hug, major changes are underway. The next generation is motivated and ready to go, and thanks to the new partnership with Hundegger of Hawangen/DE, the carpentry company from the Black Forest is changing over from manual joinery to a machine solution – a big step which, looking back, Zimmerei Hug would take again any time.

✂️ & 📷 Raphael Kerschbaumer

The carpentry company Zimmerei Hug, which is based in Oberried near Freiburg/DE, looks back on a long history. At the beginning of next year, junior boss Dominik Hug will become the fourth generation to take the helm of the timber construction company, which was established in 1903. “We are a regional company. Almost all of our construction sites are located in the neighboring towns and in the city of Freiburg,” Hug tells us. Up until now, most of the construction projects were single-family homes. In recent years, though, business has changed and renovation and special construction projects have become increasingly important. “As a business which still joins every piece of wood by hand, we could no longer compete with the up-and-coming prefabricated house manufacturers. Although the renovation business was going well thanks to our proximity to Freiburg, we slowly reached a point where we had to change and invest in order to be ready for the future and competitive,” the master carpenter and certified restorer explains.

No suitable machine in the portfolio (yet)

“For us, the purchase of a joinery machine was a big step. Soon after we had seen some references from nearby companies, we decided that we wanted to go down this path together with Hundegger,” Hug says about the initial considerations. The company got into contact with Robert Lejeune from Hundegger, who began to work with the Hug family to develop a suitable plan for the company from the Black Forest.

“In terms of both the required performance and the investment, a Robot-Solo would have been the perfect machine for Hug’s require-

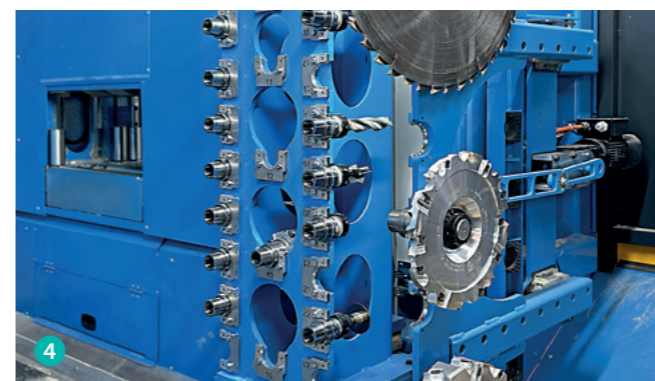
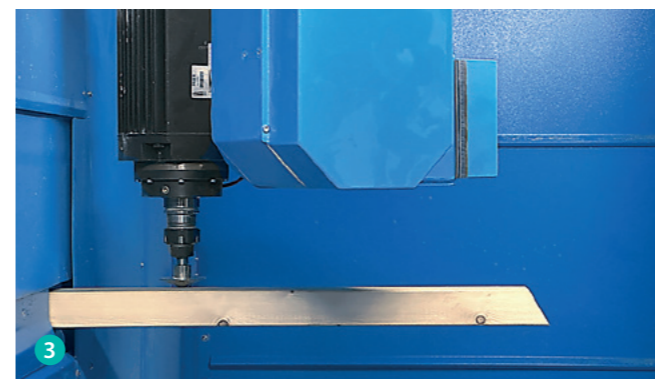
ments,” Lejeune explains. The only problem: The machine was simply too big for Hug’s existing hall and purchasing it would have involved complex and expensive construction work. “We were convinced by the machine and wanted to buy it. We were prepared to do the necessary construction work and make adjustments inside the hall. But then, a very exciting option presented itself to us during discussions with Hundegger,” Hug tells us.

Close collaboration as development partners

“At the time when the Hug family wanted to invest in the Robot-Solo, we were already working on the successor model, the Robot-Compact 650. Its prototype was later presented to the public for the first time at the 2023 edition of the Ligna fair. During the first meetings with Hug, however, it only existed in the form of a CAD drawing,” Lejeune recalls. Regular close contact between the machine manufacturer and the customer resulted in a development partnership which turned out to be the optimal solution for both sides.

“In Hug, we found a partner with whom we could test our new model extensively until it was ready for series production,” Lejeune explains. “Due to our company structure, our schedule was not that strict, and Hundegger was given the necessary framework to design the machine in a way that it is ready for practical use. Looking back, it was a win-win situation for both partners. We not only received a great and well-developed product from Hundegger, but we were also able to save valuable space in the hall thanks to the new machine,” Hug sums up.

- 1 **Hundegger’s development partner in the Black Forest, Zimmerei Hug:** Junior boss and successor Dominik Hug (right) and Hundegger employee Robert Lejeune with the very first Robot-Compact 650. In operation since the turn of the year, it has changed the traditional carpentry company’s business for the better
- 2 **Compact and economical:** The relatively small Robot-Compact 650 fits into almost any carpentry hall. The 6-axis robot unit ensures a variety in processing, and even the smallest batch sizes can be processed in a profitable way
- 3 **The housing significantly reduces dust and noise pollution in the hall**
- 4 **Whether sawing or milling:** The chips and wood waste remain inside the machine and are removed via a conveyor belt on the floor
- 5 **Ready for every application:** Within just a few seconds, the machine unit automatically adjusts itself depending on the processing to be done. Up to 28 tool spaces leave nothing to be desired



Nomen est omen

Hug can fully exploit the advantages of the new Robot-Compact 650. “At Hundegger, we realized that we need a more compact, much more space-saving machine in our portfolio, because this was where some of our customers were reaching their limits,” Lejeune says, explaining the reasons behind the development of the latest machine in the Hundegger product family. But even though the width of the Robot-Compact 650 has been reduced from 6.18 to 4.65 m, customers do not have to make any compromises when it comes to flexibility. The new joinery machine is equipped with a similarly efficient and powerful six-axis robot arm just like the significantly bigger Robot-Drive, which offers an even higher joinery capacity. Despite its relatively small size, it enables companies to process elements with cross-sections of 60 x 20 mm up to an impressive 650 x 300 mm, thereby fulfilling the requirements of most carpentry companies. “The advantages of six-axis processing have already been demonstrated with the Robot-Drive. Since the element no longer has to be rotated, the side at the front stop always remains the same. This guarantees a particularly high level of precision in milling, drilling, sawing and marking. With the new Robot-Compact 650, you achieve the same high-quality results and the same degree of flexibility as with the Robot-Drive,” Lejeune says about the advantages of the Robot-Compact 650 and summarizes: “It is the ideal machine for timber construction companies that want maximum flexibility, but do not need a machine with a very high throughput. This makes it the perfect choice for small carpentry companies and craft businesses that want to build everything: a roof truss today and a pavilion tomorrow.”

Economically competitive again

“Of course, a machine costs money – but in manual joinery, the cost per element is much higher in the long run,” Hug analyzes. In addition to the successful renovation business, the company is also hoping for more orders from the new construction sector now that there is the possibility of machine joinery. After only six months of use, the variety of projects in particular has increased significantly: “A pavilion, a carport or a garden bench – in the past, those were all orders that we couldn’t accept due to their size alone, and because the costs would have exceeded our customers’ budget. Today, with the Hundegger machine, none of this is a problem anymore,” Hug says happily, and adds: “We are working in a profitable way and we are competitive again on the market. We have also been able to significantly increase the number of projects we have completed. Instead of blunt screw connections, we are again creating slots and tenons and are using dovetails and many other traditional types of joints.”

Rediscovering craftsmanship

“We now use and create systems and connections that we would have never used before due to time, capacity and cost reasons. Now, the only theoretical limit is the CAD program – which I haven’t found yet even after a lot of trying,” the passionate carpenter says with a smile and sums up: “By taking the step towards machine joining, our company is completely repositioning itself and getting ready for the future. In Hundegger, we have found the perfect partner for this major project.” //