

Best Practice #031, President's Challenge Project

Heading: Meetings and Demonstrations

Issued: 2/2005

To challenge our members to try something new and raise their skill levels, the Lehigh Valley Woodturners created a President's Challenge. I solicited ideas on how to conduct the challenge from all AAW chapters using the AAW's mass email system. I received about seventy-five responses. This write up summarizes what we learned.

About 50% of the attendees participated in our first challenge, a turned scoop. Some brought in multiple items. Members said it was a good learning experience and fun to do. There was meaningful discussion on the lessons learned. We did not judge the items. The next challenge will be a tagua nut. I gave detailed, verbal instruction on how to mount the nuts, turn and finish them. Sixteen people took two large tagua nuts that were supplied at no cost. We have to patiently wait two months to see how many get presented.

Summary of Suggestions Received from Other Chapters

- Success: The majority of chapters found them to be successful. A few found interest varied over time.
- Projects per Year: Ranged from monthly, quarterly, occasionally, bi-annual to five times per year.
- Participation: 5% to 65% of membership that regularly attend meetings participated.
- Judged: About 85% of those that had challenges judged the items.
- Prizes: Almost all of the chapters that judged the entries had prizes of some sort: cash (\$50 to \$150), gift certificates, raffle tickets, ribbons, first pick from wood exchange, nice wood, glue, finishes, small tools, brass shavings from key shop, certificate of achievement or tools. There appears to be some risk that cash prizes could result in discontent due to the same people consistently winning.

Examples of suggested projects: Christmas gift/ornament, previous demo item, spinning tops, toy rockets, croquet mallet, segmented bowl, large item, miniature item, shop built jig, 2 x 4, use of color, non-wood item, lidded box, goblet, platter, item turned with skew only, found wood, thin stem goblet, bowl, hollow form, smallest bead, shortest, tallest, multi-media, bottle stoppers, pens, natural edges, largest height-to-width ratio, piece for a small clock, open vessel, salt and pepper shakers, candlesticks, asymmetrical piece, footed piece, remove wood to leave a void, organic, green wood allowed to warp, sculptural, very thin, spalted wood, Halloween theme, carving on turning, square bowls, spindle turning, thread chasing, vases, crotch turning, oblique grain orientation, wall hanging, something not what it seems, bouquet of flowers, textured surface, item that fits Styrofoam cup or given size cube, spirals or twists, Easter egg, something from plywood, a pair of anything, Frisbee, yo-yo, chop sticks, foot roller, something eccentric, a base for something, something from a given block of wood, Prestini bowl, fantasy item, weed pot, pyrographic flowers on a turning, miniature hat, wooden tool, rolling pin, kitchen utensil, sphere, nested bowls, gavel, banksias pod, ball and cup, partially finished turning to trade for further finishing, bird house, honey dipper, flower holder, item with handle, 'a piece of food', mushroom and paperweight.

Submitted by: George Geissler, Lehigh Valley Woodturners, Pennsylvania

timber1@enter.net