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AMERICAN WOODTURNER

Journal of the American Association of Woodturners
October 2016 vol 31, no 5 • woodturner.org

STIR UP A VORTEX BOWL

BASKET ILLUSION DEMYSTIFIED

THE UNMISTAKABLE IMPACT OF ALBERT LECOFF

SHAPING THE VESSEL: MASCOLL + SAMUEL

Rebecca DeGroot Texas

My creative and supportive family encouraged my love of art from when I was very young, but my passion for woodworking was ignited while I attended Kendall College of Art and Design in Grand Rapids, Michigan. For the past two years, I have devoted most of my time and energy to a career in visual arts education, but I try to make time to work and play in my shop on a regular basis.

My work has evolved over the past several years, yet it often focuses on creating a relationship between domestic objects and animalistic traits. Every new idea presents an opportunity to further develop the personality and character of future creations. I enjoy bringing life to a variety of art forms through line, form, stance, wood selection, finishes, and other artistic decisions. I love what I do, and I hope I will always be able to share my passion and excitement through my art. ■

Strain, 2016, Ebonized walnut, 9" × 8½" × 6½" (23cm × 22cm × 17cm)

Emerge, 2012, Walnut, cherry, 7" × 11" (18cm × 28cm)

Stance, 2012, Walnut, cherry, oak, 15¾" × 9½" × 9¼" (40cm × 24cm × 23cm)

Photo: Matt Gubancsik

Reach, 2016, Maple, walnut, 9½" × 5" × 10" (24cm × 13cm × 25cm)

Farewell, 2014, Walnut, purpleheart, maple, 7½" × 12" × 10½" (19cm × 30cm × 27cm)

Photo: Matt Gubancsik

Poise, 2013, Walnut, spalted maple, 29½" × 48" × 25" (75cm × 122cm × 64cm)

Photo: Matt Gubancsik

AAW | AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF WOODTURNERS

Dedicated to providing education, information, and organization to those interested in woodturning

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Cover – Hal Metlitzky, *Grand Safari Sunset,* 2014, approximately 8,000 pieces of wood: Yellowheart, chakte viga, satine, holly, hard maple, tulipwood, East Indian rosewood, kingwood, Gabon ebony, dyed birch, 8½" × 16½" (22cm × 42cm) Collection of Robert Bohlen and Lillian Montalto Bohlen

Back Cover – Bruce Trojan, *Badda Bubinga,* 2016, Figured bubinga, ebony, holly, wenge, spalted maple, maple, brass, gold leaf, 3" × 35" × 14" (8cm × 89cm × 36cm)

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For tips on article submission and photography requirements, visit tiny.cc/AWsubmissions*.

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ADVERTISERS

A NOTE ABOUT SAFETY

An accident at the lathe can happen with blinding suddenness; respiratory and other problems can build over years.

Take appropriate precautions when you turn. Safety guidelines are published online at tiny.cc/turnsafe*. Following them will help you continue to enjoy woodturning.

*Web address is case sensitive.

Editor's Note

Earlier this year, we were pleased to feature several examples of an embellishment technique generally known as basket illusion (April 2016 issue of *AW*, inside front cover spread). Would you like to learn how it's done? Expert Harvey Meyer describes the process in an in-depth article in this issue, page 36.

Terry Martin brings us a long-overdue profile of a key figure in the history and development of our craft—Albert LeCoff (page 48). If you have come to the woodturning scene only recently, you may not have learned about how the current stage was set. Albert was an integral factor and remains a dedicated promoter, teacher, and enthusiast. After reading Terry's article, consider visiting The Center for Art in Wood in Philadelphia to experience Albert's vision come to life.

I hope you enjoy this issue of *American Woodturner* and, as always, welcome your feedback. You can email me at editor@woodturner.org.

—Joshua Friend

From the President

Try out the "gizmos"

I just bought a new truck and hope to get all the "gizmos" figured out before I trade it in; I doubt I will. I'll admit it—I'm older and if you look between my ears, you'll notice I'm not "state of the art."

When I promote membership in the AAW, I'm quick to direct people to our website to experience all the new offerings available. Look up other clubs and visit them when on the road. Get contact information for other turners you met years ago. Click on the forum and ask for help with a problem, or maybe give someone else advice. If your spouse is not looking, see what's for sale; we all need one more tool. Look at *Woodturning FUNdamentals*, or take the link to information on sharpening, even if you're an experienced turner. I'll bet you'll pick up some great ideas. Don't forget this site gives you access to every *American Woodturner* published over the past thirty years. And soon we will make the experience of searching and finding exactly what you are looking for much easier.

Recently, we've focused on adding to our video library. Our video links page, AAW VideoSource, allows direct access to many AAW turning videos and others available on YouTube. You can be sure when we route you to a video, it has been vetted for safety and, in the near future, for quality. Most of our website enhancements are the result of the work of many volunteers who provide their skill to make your membership so valuable. I can't thank them enough.

I've only touched upon benefits available on our website. Click on woodturner.org, explore, and have fun. You might be thinking all you need is the headache of learning about another website. Try it, play with it for an hour, click on everything—you can't make a mistake. If it's your first time on the site, you will be amazed. If you haven't visited it for a while, you'll be impressed. What's more exciting, our VISION 2020 initiatives will continue improving the site in the future, posting more information, and making it even easier to learn and interact with other members.

Opportunity and value

Many of you attended the AAW International Symposium in Atlanta this year, and a highlight was the extensive vendor area. Whether you made it to the Symposium or not, click on Woodturning Marketspace from the AAW website. If you need a tool or supplies, this is the place to go. Through VISION 2020, we are exploring ways to provide members with access to future Symposium demonstrations, especially for those who could not attend. As an aside, most of the photos you see on the website were taken by Andi Wolfe. I think it's great to be able to tie a face to a name; thanks, Andi.

Local chapters can use our website as part of their meeting program. Pick a video and critique it. Go to the membership directory, key in a professional member's name, and discuss the pieces in his or her gallery. Some even have links to videos. For example, Tim Yoder has a video that's "out of this world." Chapter leaders, if you use our site at a meeting, I'll bet your members will go home and sign up or renew with the AAW.

I'm convinced that membership in the AAW is the best buy in woodturning. I'm also convinced many members don't fully use all of AAW's "gizmos." Get comfortable using our site, and I'll bet you'll be our best promoter. The AAW is a big spread-out family, both nationally and abroad. Making improvements and providing educational opportunities for all members is our goal, no matter where they live, whether or not they attend Symposia, whether they are professionals or have just begun woodturning. With your help, this goal will be achieved.

By the way, an AAW membership is a great gift for any turner who is not a current member. It truly is a gift that keeps on giving. Finally, for you older members like me, if you're seen using a computer, people might think you are younger and smarter than you really are! I like to believe it works for me.

Looking forward,

Greg Schramek

Photo: Andi Wolfe

COME LEARN. LEAVE INSPIRED.

ATTEND AMAZING DEMOS AND PANEL DISCUSSIONS. MEET CAPTIVATING PEOPLE. SEE INCREDIBLE WORK.

• SPECIAL INTEREST NIGHT, JUNE 22

The action begins on Thursday evening, June 22, with sessions for focused disciplines, including Ornamental Turners, Principally Pens, and Segmented Woodturners. Small group meetings, such as Women in Turning, woodturning teachers, and young turners, will take place along with forums on other relevant woodturning subjects.

★ RICHARD RAFFAN: "A LIFE OF TURNING AND TEACHING"

Also on Thursday night, internationally esteemed woodturner, author, and instructor Richard Raffan will reflect on his path in life and in turning. Raffan holds a rare position among contemporary woodturners by maintaining the values of turning as a trade by producing high-quality functional work. In 2012, he received the AAW's Professional Outreach Program (POP) Merit Award for his extensive contributions to the turning field and as an acknowledgment that traditional turning should continue to be recognized and respected by the contemporary turning world.

• ROTATIONS AND EVENTS, JUNE 23-25

The agenda continues Friday - Sunday, June 23-25, with a super selection of demonstrations and panel discussions that will appeal to a wide variety of skill levels—bowls, boxes, vessels, hollow forms, spheres, spindle turning, multiaxis turning, segmented turning, natural edge turning, ornament, jewelry, finishing techniques, surface design, texture and embellishment, and more. World-class demonstrators, including Dixie Biggs, Trent Bosch, Jimmy Clewes, Kurt Hertzog, Michael Hosaluk, Rudolph Lopez, Glenn Lucas, Andrew Potocnik, Tania Radda, Richard Raffan, Mark Sanger, Merryll Saylan, Betty Scarpino, Al Stirt, Derek Weidman, John Wessels, and more (to be announced).

2017 SYMPOSIUM - KANSAS CITY, MO

AAW AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF WOODTURNERS

Kansas City, Missouri, is often recognized for its barbecue, jazz, and baseball. And in 2017, it'll also be known for woodturning!

AAW'S 31ST ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM JUNE 22-25, 2017

Kansas City Convention Center
301 W 13th St
Kansas City, MO 64105

Affordable Host Hotel:
Kansas City Marriott
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Kansas City, MO 64105

LEARN MORE AT tiny.cc/AAW2017KC

TRADE SHOW DEMONSTRATIONS
SOCIAL EVENTS CHARITABLE WORK AUCTIONS
PANEL DISCUSSIONS EXHIBITIONS

GUIDE TO MEMBER SERVICES & PUBLICATIONS

AAW's Vision 2020 strategy is focused on enriching your overall woodturning experience. Our goal is to help you and other AAW members accomplish your current ambitions, recognize opportunities, and pursue your aspirations – whatever your skill level or area of interest. Part of our strategy includes expanding and enhancing our educational tools and resources. Below is a guide to AAW's portfolio of publications and services, and descriptions of some of the new resources that will be introduced in the coming months through Vision 2020.

PUBLICATIONS INCLUDED WITH MEMBERSHIP

American Woodturner journal, six issues annually include feature articles, projects, photos, tips, techniques, and news. Online videos complement selected journal articles (tiny.cc/AWJournal).

- Access to online archive of past issues dating back to 1986 (tiny.cc/AWArchive) with a searchable online index (tiny.cc/AWIndex).
- AAW App, a downloadable tool used to read the journal on devices, including iPads and Android tablets. Download from the App Store or Play Store for your device.

Woodturning FUNdamentals, six digital issues annually include projects, techniques, tips, videos, and information to build essential woodturning skills, plus online archive of past issues (tiny.cc/WTFUNdamentals).

Coming soon!

AAW Content Source: An online tool that offers easy access to articles from AAW's 30-year publication library. Searchable by author, topic area, and skill level.

AAW Directory of Learning Opportunities: This web-based index includes regional symposia, professional workshops, and other resources available for woodturning education.

AAW Personal Learning Path: An online tool to help build a plan for learning desired skills and techniques.

Refer a friend for a FREE TEST DRIVE!

Nonmembers can sign up for a free Guest membership at tiny.cc/AAWGuest and experience a selection of AAW's digital member resources for a full 60-days. Guests can explore what we have to offer, kick our tires, and consider becoming a full-fledged AAW member to benefit from our complete portfolio of member publications and services.

Woodturning Foundations

NEW - The Nitty Gritty of Sanding: A collection of tips and techniques for sanding excellence (tiny.cc/NittyGritty).

Got Wood? Now What? Useful material to help you effectively cut and store wood for woodturning (tiny.cc/GotWood).

Safety Guidebook for Woodturners: Overview of safety procedures to make your turning experience as satisfying as possible (tiny.cc/SafetyGuide).

Safety for Woodturners: Important information to help you build strong woodturning skills safely (tiny.cc/WTSafety).

Turners Are TOPS: Practical project information to help you make a variety of spinning tops (tiny.cc/TurnersAreTops).

Sharpening Woodturning Tools: Useful articles on sharpening tools for woodturning and related online video (tiny.cc/DVDSharpening).

Setting Up Your Woodturning Workstation: Handy information to help you set up a safe and functional workshop (tiny.cc/Setup).

Mentoring Resources

Teacher's Resource and Project Guide: Handbook to help educators develop programs to teach woodturning skills. Includes important safety guidelines, best practices, lesson plan tips, and projects (tiny.cc/MentorTeach).

Pen Manufacture Enterprise: Guide for teachers that offers students a pen-manufacturing experience (tiny.cc/MentorTeach).

Let's Go for a Spin: Lesson plan series for instructors to provide beginning and advanced students with a well-rounded set of turning skills (tiny.cc/MentorTeach).

Planning and Presenting a Successful Demonstration: A training manual and online video series to help experienced woodturners build or improve demonstration skills (tiny.cc/MentorTeach).

Teaching Woodturning Basics: Reference guide to help intermediate and advanced turners learn to teach others (tiny.cc/MentorTeach).

SERVICES INCLUDED WITH MEMBERSHIP

NEW - AAW Video Source: An online tool that offers access to useful woodturning videos pre-screened by the AAW for quality content and safety. Searchable by topic area and keywords. Users are invited to recommend videos for inclusion (tiny.cc/AAWVideoSource).

AAW Connects: A web-based tool to search the globe for AAW chapters and woodturning symposia, demonstrations, exhibitions, events, organizations, and schools (tiny.cc/AAWConnects).

AAW's Woodturning Marketspace: An online hub that enables AAW members to click through to sponsor websites to learn about woodturning products and services, and obtain exclusive deals (tiny.cc/Marketspace).

Directories: Online directories offer contact information for members (tiny.cc/AAWMembers), local chapters, demonstrators, and other woodturning resources (tiny.cc/AAWDirectories).

AAW's Woodturning Calendar: Schedule of upcoming chapter and demonstrator events, exhibitions, classes, symposia, and more (tiny.cc/WTCalendar).

Video Library: AAW's expanding online video collection helps to make the learning process more engaging. Pre-screened by the AAW for quality content and safety (tiny.cc/AAWVideo).

AAW Forum: A member-moderated online community ideal for sharing work and ideas, obtaining feedback, and connecting with other woodturning enthusiasts (tiny.cc/AAWForum).

Prizes: Monthly member drawings for sponsored prizes, including woodturning supplies, DVDs, classes, and more, plus annual lathe drawings (tiny.cc/WTDrawings).

EOG program: Members and chapters may apply for AAW's Educational Opportunity Grants, which offer funding to selected applicants for woodturning education projects (tiny.cc/GrantEOG).

POP fellowships: Members may apply for Professional Outreach Program (POP) fellowship grants, which offer funding to selected applicants for research and projects that encourage creative growth and innovation in turned wood art (tiny.cc/GrantPOP).

Exhibition opportunities and calls for entry: AAW members may apply and enter work for member exhibitions at the Annual International Symposium, the Gallery of Wood Art in Saint Paul, and other venues (tiny.cc/CallsforEntry).

AAW Specialty Programming

AAW's Young/Student Turners and Turning to the Future: Programming, information, and resources especially for teachers and students ages 10 to 25 (tiny.cc/Students).

AAW's Woodturning Beyond Barriers: A program that offers techniques and adaptations to help people with disabilities and other obstacles turn safely (tiny.cc/WBB).

Turners Without Borders: An AAW committee that delivers woodturning information and outreach services to the global woodturning world (tiny.cc/TWBorders).

Professional Outreach Program (POP): An AAW committee that fosters and promotes high standards of professionalism in woodturning through a variety of activities (tiny.cc/POPProgram).

Women in Turning (WIT): An AAW committee that brings together women who share a passion for woodturning to help further their skills and increase their participation in the field (tiny.cc/WomenWT).

CHAPTER RESOURCES AND SERVICES

The AAW offers a variety of resources and services to help chapters be successful.

Officer Information Kit: A digital toolbox, which includes job descriptions, operational information, tips, and best practices to equip officers for their roles (tiny.cc/ChapterOfficers).

Chapter Bulletin: A monthly update offering announcements, board news, new educational resources and information, to help chapters communicate more effectively with club members about the AAW (tiny.cc/ChapterOfficers).

Best Practices Library: An online collection of model programs shared by successful AAW chapters on topics such as demonstrations, scheduling, mentoring, meeting protocols, youth education, financial guidance, charitable initiatives, and more (tiny.cc/AAWBestPractice).

Grants and Scholarships: Chapters can apply for Educational Opportunity Grants (EOGs) to help fund educational projects and annual chapter scholarships for members to attend woodturning schools, such as Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts and John C. Campbell Folk School (tiny.cc/GrantEOG).

Insurance: AAW offers two affordable general liability insurance options designed especially for U.S. chapters. As is typical of any insurance policy, there may be restrictions on chapter eligibility and coverage (tiny.cc/InsChapters).

Coming soon!

AAW Demonstrator Scheduling Tool: A searchable online databank to help chapters easily identify and schedule demonstrators for chapter events. Includes demonstrator contact information, schedule, fees, and project types, as well as sample demonstrator contracts.

Member Recruitment: AAW will support and assist chapters in developing increased membership through direct referral, as well as coordinate with suppliers, woodturning schools, arts and crafts centers to identify new sources of membership.

AAW IS EAGER TO SUPPORT YOU.

Your interest in woodturning and membership in the AAW are key elements in promoting woodturning worldwide. The AAW board and staff are grateful for your continued commitment to preserving this wonderful art and craft for future generations and look forward to supporting you in your woodturning endeavors. If you have questions or thoughts to share, please contact us at 651-484-9094, toll-free 877-595-9094, or by email at memberservices@woodturner.org.

2016 AAW Symposium Youth Lathe Winners

The 2016 Youth Turning Program at the AAW's Annual International Symposium in Atlanta was located on the tradeshow floor for the first time in its twelve-year history. Although there were a few minor logistical challenges that will be addressed in future years, the new location was well received, as it provided improved visibility of this important program.

The Youth Program started as part of AAW's Symposium in 2005, thanks to the leadership of John Hill, who at that time was chair of AAW's Chapters and Membership committee. AAW members recognized the need for a program that would help generate future generations of woodturners. Since the program's inception, almost 600 youth members have participated in classes taught by experienced instructors. The program also awards the equipment used in the classes each year to participants through a drawing. In the twelve years the program has been in effect, almost 300 lathes—with tools, chucks, and safety gear—have been awarded to youth participants. Winners of this year's twenty-five lathe packages are as follows:

A woodturning instructor assists a youth during one of the classes in the Youth Turning Program at the 2016 AAW International Symposium in Atlanta.

Photo: Andi Wolfe

Sabrina Borden
Torrey Cookman
Anabelle Daigle
Elizabeth Denton
Blain Dewing
Olivia Drees
William Fisher
Nycole Gioia-Custer
Skylar Godfrey
Nathan Hampton
Krystal Ingram
Michael Jensen
Tyler Kelley
Annabella Lobaito
Bobby Oklapek
Jackson Olsen
Alex Ross
Hannah Shikle
Jack Simmons and Jonathon Kiener*
Jared & Tessa Stanton*
Samantha Tibbs
Gabriel Tuten
Jeffrey Wilcox
Stryder Wilson
RJ Woodruff

*Both won a package but are sharing one.

Generous supporters

This highly successful program would not be possible without the generosity of the vendors who provide equipment and supplies for the classes. The following vendors have supported the program from the beginning:

- JET/Powermatic (mini lathes and stands)
- Crown Hand Tools (tool sets)
- Teknatool International (chucks and safety drives)
- Woodcraft Supply (faceshields)

In addition, the following vendors/people contributed to the 2016 program:

- Easy Wood Tools (tool sets)
- Hunter Tool Systems (garden trowel project supplies)
- Robust Tools (tool rests, drive centers)
- Hardwood Inc. (turning blanks)
- Rockler (ice cream scoop project kits)
- Vince's WoodNWonders (abrasives)

Finally, individual volunteers put in many hours of their personal time in various capacities to make this program work. They are Jeff Brockett, Rex Burningham, Kip Christensen, Nick Cook, Steve Cook, John Ellis, Larry and Judy Miller, and Jim Rodgers. ■

—Larry Miller, Youth Program Chair/Coordinator

POP ARTIST SHOWCASE OPPORTUNITY

Deadline for Applications: December 1

Each year the Professional Outreach Program (POP) showcases two wood artists at the AAW's Annual International Symposium. They are either experienced artists who have made significant contributions to the woodturning field but have not received appropriate recognition or emerging artists who have the potential for making significant contributions to the field. The two selected artists each give two demonstrations and receive free Symposium registration plus a small honorarium. Their work is displayed prominently in the Instant Gallery. The 2016 artists were Helga Winter and Jérôme Blanc.

Artist applications are invited for the 2017 AAW Symposium in Kansas City, Missouri. Applications will be juried by the POP committee. The deadline is December 1, 2016, and the application can be found at tiny.cc/Calls. ■

Call for Entries: 2017 POP Exhibition
The Sphere — Second Round

The theme for the 2017 Professional Outreach Program (POP) exhibition is *The Sphere — Second Round* (the sphere was also the very successful 2008 theme). There are a limited number of juried spots available for this annual international exhibition and auction.

Entries will be accepted online from November 1, 2016, to January 1, 2017. All applicants will receive email notification by January 15, 2017. The application fee is $30 for up to three entries. Works will be selected based on aesthetic appeal, originality, execution, and relationship to theme.

POP exhibitions feature small-scale works, and for 2017 the finished piece, as displayed, must fit into a 6" (15cm) cube. Please review the full guidelines on the AAW Calls for Entry webpage before planning your project. Visit tiny.cc/Calls.

Questions? Contact Tib Shaw at tib@woodturner.org.

Call for Entries: 2017 Member Exhibition—*Waves of Grain*

Waves of Grain is the theme for the 2017 AAW member exhibition, which will premiere at the AAW Symposium in Kansas City, Missouri. Although the title theme was selected to honor the rich agricultural history of the region, it was also chosen to provide a catalyst for other interpretations. From ancient grain goddesses to the amber waves of wood grain, it is a theme rich in possibilities.

All AAW members are eligible and encouraged to apply: We are looking for both traditional and innovative work. Entries will be evaluated in the following areas: overall appeal, technical execution, originality, and relationship to theme. Each piece will be considered individually and by how well it fits with the overall composition of the exhibition.

Two artist awards will be given during the 2017 AAW International Symposium: a Masters' Choice Award of $300 and a People's Choice Award of $200.

Entry dates and fees

Entries will be accepted online from November 1, 2016, through February 1, 2017. All applicants will receive email notification by March 31, 2016. The entry fee of $30 covers up to three submissions.

Guidelines

Work must be made at least in part on the lathe and have been created between February 1, 2015, and January 31, 2017. A statement (100 words maximum) of how your piece fits the exhibition theme is required. Please review the full guidelines at tiny.cc/Calls before planning your project.

Questions? Email tib@woodturner.org.

Prize Drawing for AAW Members

One of the many benefits of membership in the AAW is our monthly prize and year-end grand prize drawings. Thank you to the vendors who donated this year's prizes, which include tuition scholarships, $100 certificates, sanding supplies, DVDs, chucks, grinding jigs, symposium registration, and lathes! Contact Linda Ferber if you would like to contribute a prize, linda@woodturner.org.

When you patronize our vendors, please thank them for their support of the AAW. To see a listing of each month's prizes and winners, as well as hyperlinks to the vendors' websites, visit tiny.cc/AAWDrawings.

At the end of 2016, we will draw another name from our membership roster to give away a Powermatic 3520B lathe. That winner will name a local chapter to win either a JET 1642 or five JET mini-lathes. The Powermatic and JET lathes are donated by Powermatic/JET. Included is free shipping in the continental USA, or up to a $500 allowance for international winners.

2016 Donors

(Others may be added during the year.)
Backgate Industries
David Ellsworth
Easy Wood Tools
Hunter Tool Systems
John C. Campbell Folk School
JET/Powermatic
Mike Mahoney
North Woods LLC
Tennessee Assn of Woodturners
Thompson Lathe Tools
Totally Turning Symposium
Trent Bosch

CALL FOR STUDENT SUBMISSIONS
2017 Turning to the Future Competition

Matthew Shiplett *(left)*, a participant in the Turning to the Future program for 2015 and 2016, won a RIKON 70-220 lathe, donated by RIKON Power Tools, at AAW's 2016 Symposium in Atlanta. Pictured with Matthew is woodturning instructor Carmine Prioli of the Chapel Hill Woodturners.

The AAW is pleased to announce the third-annual Turning to the Future competition, an opportunity for woodturning students and schools to show off their best work. The exhibition will be held in conjunction with FreshWood, one of North America's largest student furniture-making and woodworking competitions.

The competition is intended to encourage and support students in reaching for and attaining the highest levels of skill in the use of the lathe. The contest is open to students in North America, and there is no entry fee.

Prizes include $500 first-place and $100 second-place awards in each division and category, and two lathes for the Best in Show piece in each division.

There are two divisions, High School and Post-Secondary, with three categories each: Functional, Small Turnings, and Open. Five finalists in each division category will be chosen to have their work displayed at the 2017 Association of Woodworking & Furnishings Suppliers (AWFS®) Fair in Las Vegas, Nevada. Work will be evaluated on craftsmanship, aesthetic appeal, creativity and/or utility, and process documentation. Application period opens March 1, 2017. Deadline for submissions is May 1, 2017.

If you know a student woodturner, encourage him or her to apply! Submission details can be found at tiny.cc/Calls.

In Memoriam: Allan Batty, 1939–2016

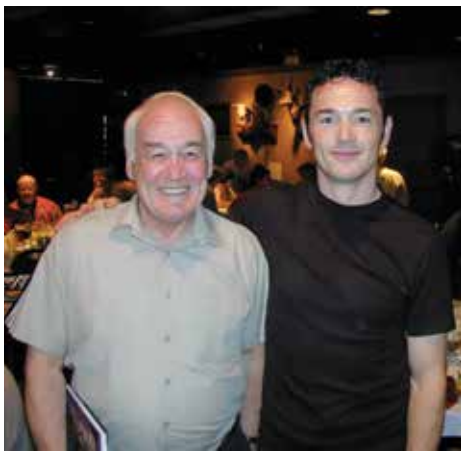
In July, the woodturning world lost a great ambassador, teacher, historian, and master craftsman, Allan Batty.

In the early 1990s, Dale Nish was in search of the finest woodturners in the world to teach at the Utah Woodturning Symposium. This naturally led him to Northern England, which boasts a long, rich history in woodturning and a still-thriving trade. Dale was introduced to many great craftsmen in the U.K., among them Allan Batty, who had lived in Yorkshire as a young man and fell into the woodturning trade through generations of family ties.

Allan showed Dale many techniques that Dale had read about and even seen, but never with the skill that Allan exhibited. Allan performed those techniques effortlessly and quickly became a favorite at the Utah Symposium and other regional events, as well as at the AAW. Allan not only showed his tools and techniques, but also explained how and why they were used historically. His legacy of sharing and skill will live on amongst those who were fortunate enough to absorb a few of the techniques he spent his lifetime honing.

Allan is survived by his two daughters, Angela and Lorraine, and his son Stuart, who apprenticed under his father's tutelage.

—Mike Mahoney



Allan Batty *(left)* and his son, Stuart, 2004.

Photo: Andi Wolfe

2017 AFTAB Collaboration Event

AFTAB (the French Association for Woodturned Art) is organizing its third-annual collaboration event, "Art and Material," which will be held June 12–17, 2017, in Aiguines, South of France. Over the course of five days, fifty craftspeople and artists, including international invitees, will work together without limits.

This event will take place at the Escoulen School of Woodturning, located above the beautiful lake of Sainte Croix. A wide selection of materials will be represented, including wood, glass, metal, paper, ceramic, painting, lacquer, and more.

This type of event has been happening for a long time in several countries and is a great opportunity to discover other materials and have an unforgettable creative experience. The spirit of the event will last long after the end. You can get an idea of this creative spirit from our film of the 2015 collaboration event, *L'Art et la Matière,* on YouTube. Visit tiny.cc/AFTABVideo.

All pieces made during the week will be auctioned at the end of the event. In past events, close to 200 pieces have been sold. More information and a registration form can be found on our website, aftab-asso.fr.

—Alain Mailland

Past participants Valentine Herrenschmidt and Valerie Lavaure with their creation, a basket with letters.

Julie Gonce and Fabien Godefrin, *Raflons la Lumière (Let's Steal the Light),* 2015, Grape branches, glass

Book Review: *Spalted Wood: The History, Science, and Art of a Unique Material,*

by Sara C. Robinson, Hans Michaelsen, Julia C. Robinson, Schiffer Publishing, 2016, 288 pages

The number of woodturners who have not had at least a passing dalliance with spalted wood is likely to be few; for many of us, it is an affair that never wanes. Sara Robinson has taken her passion a step further by combining art, woodturning, and a career as a professor and researcher at Oregon State University—all entangled with mycological threads under the theme of spalted wood. Dr. Robinson demonstrates spalting in woodturning venues (including a recent AAW Symposium) and has written on the topic for *American Woodturner* (vol 25, no 6 and vol 26, no 4). Based on her expertise, the research conducted in her OSU lab, and the deep knowledge of European craftsmanship brought by co-author Hans Michaelsen, Robinson brings us an authoritative coffee-table book synthesizing much of what is known on the topic.

Encyclopedic in scope, the content of *Spalted Wood* reflects Robinson's multi-layered fascination with the topic. The book discusses Robinson's research into the biology of spalting and outlines several approaches for do-it-yourself enthusiasts (forget the beer, leaves, and garbage bag approach—Robinson's recipes are more controlled and offer a more predictable and usable outcome). The book also includes a history of research into spalting, a pursuit frequently motivated by the search for pigments to dye wood. The book includes extensive material on the use of spalted wood in furniture, cabinetry, jewelry, and other forms of decorative woodworking, with roots traced back to objects created in fifteenth-century European monasteries. This historic material, while not specific to turning, is accompanied by thorough and fascinating pictorial documentation illustrating the intricacies and subtleties of inlay and marquetry using spalted wood. Those who work to satisfy posterity will be encouraged by how well the colors, intricate lines, and shading of spalted material have endured the centuries.

No discussion of spalted wood is complete without covering the use of the material in woodturning. The text of *Spalted Wood* focuses on the contributions of studio artists Melvin and Mark Lindquist and David Ellsworth. Images of the work of many additional turners are included to hint at the range of turned art that has taken advantage of spalted material.

Robinson's research arcs toward making the process of intentionally spalting timber predictable, controllable, and viable on both a commercial and crafter scale. *Spalted Wood* offers the turner a source of inspiration and, for those who like to tinker, some avenues for experimenting with producing one's own unique turning material. ■

—Don McIvor

Pedaling in Honduras

David Heim

Last May, Scott Lewis's pedal-powered lathe was the centerpiece of an innovative collaboration between AAW's Turners Without Borders (TWB) and a nonprofit known as GreenWood. The organizations used the lathe to help artisans in Honduras learn how to turn hardwood mallets.

As noted in the *sidebar*, Lewis's lathe was used in a teaching project in the Dominican Republic. That project led TWB to begin the partnership with GreenWood, which has been helping artisans in Honduras since 1993 to make furniture for local markets and export graded hardwood lumber.

GreenWood and TWB (helped by a generous donation from Dale Larson, a member of AAW's Board of Advisors) shared the expenses. The AAW also found the ideal volunteer to help Lewis: Manuel ("Manu") Suarez, a retired pharmacist who has traveled to Honduras frequently on behalf of a nonprofit that provides healthcare and educational services. Scott Landis, the head of GreenWood, says, "Manu may be the most sociable person I have ever met." Suarez, who came to the U.S. from Spain in 1989, handled the translating, while Lewis did the training at the lathe.

Lewis and Suarez spent a few days in the town of La Ceiba, working with GreenWood staff to assemble the lathe and truck it nine hours away, to the village of Las Champas. There, they spent five days teaching about a dozen artisans the basics of woodturning and experimenting with local hardwoods to see which ones might be suitable for mallets.

The students at Las Champas all had some woodworking experience. "The main difficulty was to give all the students time at the lathe," says Suarez. Those waiting their turn became critical observers, speaking up if the person at the lathe wasn't moving his body with the tool, or if the toolrest was too far from the work.

"We met the local doctor, who asked if his teenage daughter could see the lathe," Suarez says. "The next morning she came, observed the class, and suddenly she was seated at the lathe, pedaling fast. That's how she won the right to try to turn."

After Las Champas, they spent two days teaching in El Carbón, a community of indigenous Pech Indians. The Pech have been making Appalachian-style furniture for the past twenty years, thanks in part to instruction from furniture makers Brian Boggs and Curtis Buchanan, who serve as mentors to GreenWood.

Lewis says of the trip, "The most rewarding thing was to do some successful turning. That's what makes me happy." For his part, Suarez says, "The experience has been very positive. The students were eager to learn, thankful for our efforts to help them, and delighted with Scotty's lathe." GreenWood's Scott Landis says, "We accomplished most of what we intended. The students were attentive and involved, and we identified some real talent."

The collaboration between TWB and GreenWood will continue. The two groups have already begun discussing how TWB can help in six months to a year, when mallet production is fully up and running. ■

All photos by Manuel Suarez.

David Heim, a frequent contributor to AW, *helped set up the project with GreenWood. He can be reached at davidheim1@comcast.net.*

JOURNAL ARCHIVE CONNECTION


PORTABLE, HUMAN-POWERED LATHE BRINGS WOODTURNING TO THE DOMINICAN

For more on the story of Scott Lewis's pedal-powered lathe, see Scott's August 2015 *AW* article, "Portable, Human-Powered Lathe Brings Woodturning to the Dominican" (vol 30, no 4, page 36). AAW members can access all past journal articles online at woodturner.org.


Scott Lewis (in plaid shirt) at the lathe with the GreenWood artisans in Las Champas, Honduras.


A selection of the bowls, rolling pins, and mallets turned by the students in Las Champas.

Tips

My journey to LEDs

When I first started turning back in the 1970s, I had an old fluorescent shoplight over my lathe. It worked, but the light was barely adequate, the ballasts constantly went bad, and sometimes you got a strobe effect while turning. I started using a series of 100-watt incandescent bulbs—a definite improvement, but the bulbs got very hot and the light was yellowish. Then fluorescent bulbs were improved; they now use fewer watts, are cooler, and, if you choose daylight bulbs, offer a more natural tone.

My latest discovery is LED, or light-emitting diode, shoplights, some of which are linkable to create a series of fixtures. They come in different lumen strengths, last a long time, run cool, and are reasonably priced. I have found these lights to be exceptional, with good color tone.

A long time ago, someone said to me, "If you can't see, you can't turn." These lights won't make you a better turner, but they will help you to see what you are doing.

—Bob Rosand, Pennsylvania

Drilling accurate holes

It can be difficult to drill accurately positioned, centered holes at the lathe because the drill bit can "wander." While no technique will work all the time, I find that using a center drill to start the hole gives me the greatest accuracy and best chance for success. Center drills are commonly used by machinists to create an accurate starting point when drilling metal. When used in wood, their stiffness prevents flexing; they are especially useful when drilling small-diameter or longer-length holes.

Center drills, not to be confused with countersinks, are available singularly or in sets (*Photo 1*). They are available from most machinist and metalworking tool suppliers.

Choose a center drill diameter the same or slightly larger than the diameter of the drill bit you intend to use to complete the hole. Start the hole with the center drill, going deep enough to capture the flutes of the drill bit (*Photo 2*). Switch over to the fluted drill bit to complete the hole (*Photo 3*). Since I tend to do production runs, I use two drill chucks and simply swap chucks for each step.

An additional use: Since they have a 60° angle, center drills can be used to create a hole to position the point of a standard 60° cone center.

—John Tarpley, Tennessee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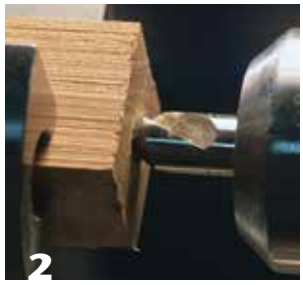
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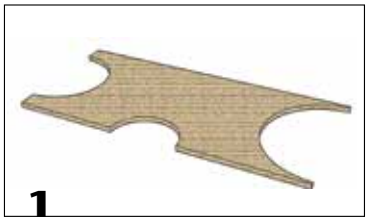
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Simple thickness gauge

I have been using this foolproof jig for determining the bottom thickness of bowls during turning. The gauge is just a thin piece of plywood with semi-circular cutouts matched to the diameters of my various chuck jaws. These cutouts allow the gauge to be positioned right at the base of a bowl while in the chuck (*Photo 1).*

To measure the bottom thickness of a bowl, hold the gauge against the base of the bowl (with the lathe off) and take a measurement from the rim to the gauge (*Photo 2*). Then hold the gauge across the rim of the bowl and measure to the bottom of the interior of the bowl (*Photo 3*). Simple subtraction gives me the thickness of the bowl at that point in turning.

—Bob Gaynes, Pennsylvania

Share your turning ideas!

If we publish your tip, we'll pay you $35. Email your tips along with relevant photos or illustrations to editor@woodturner.org.

—Joshua Friend, Editor

Calendar of Events

December issue deadline: October 15

Send information to editor@woodturner.org. For a more complete listing, see the AAW's Woodturning Calendar online at tiny.cc/AAWCalendar.

Georgia

September 15–17, 2017, Turning Southern Style Symposium, hosted by the Georgia Association of Woodturners, Dalton Convention Center, Dalton. Event to include top-notch demonstrators, a large group of vendors, and a great facility. More details to follow.

October 1–31, 2016, Lowcountry Turners Group Exhibit, Goodyear Cottage, Jekyll Island Arts Association, Jekyll Island. Members of Lowcountry Turners will exhibit forty of their best pieces, including a club collaborative. All works are for sale. For more, visit lowcountryturners.com.

Idaho

February 25, 26, 2017, Idaho Artistry in Wood Show, Wyndham Garden Boise Airport Hotel, Boise. Competitors from all skill levels submit their wood carving, turning, scroll work, fine woodworking, gourd art, and pyrography for public display and judging. Demonstrations, vendors, raffles, auction, and banquet. For full information, entry forms, and discount admission coupons, visit idahoartistryinwood.com. For specific questions, contact Doug Rose at (208) 856-8856 or roseboise@yahoo.com.

Massachusetts

October 22, 23, 2016, 2nd-annual "Turning Wood: The Art of the Woodturner," The Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University, Boston. Juried show featuring selections of three local chapters, The Association of Revolutionary Turners, The Central New England Woodturners, and the Massachusetts South Shore Woodturners. For more, visit arboretum.harvard.edu.

October 27–30, 2016, 5th Segmenting Symposium, Boston Marriott Quincy, Quincy. Demonstrators to include John Beaver, Bob Benke, Jerry Bennett, Bruce Berger, Andy Chen, Robin Costelle, Jim Rodgers, Malcolm Tibbetts, and others. Instant gallery, banquet, raffle, turning exchange, vendor area, and activities for partners. For more, visit segmentedwoodturners.org.

Minnesota

Ongoing exhibit: *Touch This!* At the AAW's Gallery of Wood Art, Saint Paul. Featuring fascinating facts about wood and woodturning, as well as pieces you can touch. For more, visit galleryofwoodart.org.

Montana

October 8, 9, 2016, Yellowstone Woodturners Symposium, Roaring 20's Auto Club, Billings. Featured demonstrator/instructor will be Keith Gotschall, demonstrating off-center platters, hollow forms, lidded boxes, and winged boxes. For more, visit yellowstoneturners.org or call Ron Velin at 406-679-0902.

North Carolina

July 16, 2016–January 16, 2017, *Shaping the Vessel: Mascoll + Samuel,* The Harvey B. Gantt Center for African-American Arts + Culture, Charlotte. An exhibition of turned work by John Mascoll and Avelino Samuel. For more, visit ganttcenter.org.

Tennessee

January 27, 28, 2017, Tennessee Association of Woodturners' 29th Annual Woodturning Symposium, Marriott Hotel, Franklin. Demonstrators to include Nick Agar, Cynthia Carden Gibson, Stephen Hatcher, and Frank Penta. Tradeshow, instant gallery, banquet, and auction. For more, visit tnwoodturners.org. For vendor booth information, contact voldad18@comcast.net.

Virginia

September 6–October 16, 2016, Member Exhibition of the Tidewater Turners of Virginia, d'Art Center, Norfolk Arts District, Norfolk. For more, email webmaster@tidewaterturners.net.

November 5, 6, 2016, Virginia Woodturning Symposium, presented by the Virginia Woodturners (a group of ten Virginia clubs), EXPOland, Fishersville. Featuring international and regional demonstrators. For more, visit virginiawoodturners.com.

CraftSchools.us Launches Podcast Series

Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts is excited to announce the launch of "Make/Time," a podcast series created by CraftSchools.us. The podcast is a project of "The Craft School Experience," an initiative that promotes the value of immersive, residential craft schools across the country.

CraftSchools.us is a consortium of five U.S. craft schools promoting the craft-school experience. Members of the consortium include Arrowmont, Haystack Mountain School of Crafts, Penland School of Crafts, Peters Valley School of Craft, and Pilchuck Glass School.

"Make/Time" podcast

The "Make/Time" podcast explores fine craft, inspiration, and the creative process through interviews with established craft artists. The first three interviews feature artists from varying disciplines and experiences: Tom Joyce, a sculptor and MacArthur Fellow; Tim McCreight, a jeweler, writer, and publisher; and Sonya Clark, an artist and head of the Craft and Material Studies Program at Virginia Commonwealth University. The podcasts are available now at craftschools.us/podcast.

"Arrowmont is pleased to help sponsor these podcasts, which explore the work and thought of important artists," says Bill May, Arrowmont's executive director. "All of those interviewed have unique perspectives on the value of working creatively with materials to explore concerns both personal and public."

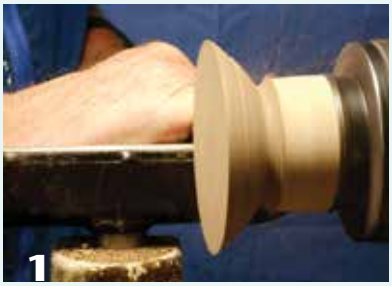
The series is hosted by Stuart Kestenbaum, former director of Haystack Mountain School of Crafts. He is an honorary fellow of the American Craft Council and currently the Poet Laureate of the State of Maine. "Having conversations with leading and emerging craft artists gives me the opportunity to dig deeply behind the scenes," says Kestenbaum. "Every episode gives us a special look at the person behind the work, their ideas, and the inspiration that helps them achieve excellence in this field."

—Laura Tuttle, Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts

TURN A Ring Holder

Bob Rosand

Form the profile



With the bowl blank glued to a wasteblock, shape the outside profile using a small bowl gouge.

JOURNAL ARCHIVE CONNECTION

For another variation on the ring holder design, see Bob Rosand's prior article, "Ring Holder: an elegant gift that's easy to turn" (*AW* vol 15, no 3, page 20). AAW members can access all past journal articles online at woodturner.org.

Over the years, I have turned and sold many ring holders. My usual design is really just a variation on a weed pot that has what I call a "flame" coming out of the top. (*See Journal Archive Connection.*) The flame holds the rings. The variation shown in this article is essentially a shallow bowl with an island in the center. The flame is inserted into a hole in that island and holds rings. The bowl area around the flame can also hold rings or loose change.

This project is a good skill-builder. Ring holders are relatively easy to make, and you can use small scraps of wood from your shop. Plus, they are popular sellers.

Materials

To make this version of a ring holder, you will need either a four-jaw chuck or a faceplate with a wasteblock attached to it. For the bowl section, start with a piece of wood about 3¾" (10cm) square and about 1" (25mm) thick. You will also need spindle material for the flame, about 1" square by 6" (15cm) long. Generally, I like to use contrasting woods such as walnut and oak, or walnut and cherry. Scraps of laminated, colored wood also work well for the flame.

Turn the bowl section

To make the bowl section, you will need a small bowl gouge, round-nose scraper, and parting tool. You will also need a 3⁄16" (5mm) drill bit and drill chuck that you can mount in the tailstock. The wasteblock is either held in the four-jaw chuck or fastened to a faceplate with screws, and the bowl blank is glued to that, with the grain running perpendicular to the ways of the lathe. I use thick cyanoacrylate (CA) glue and accelerator to attach the blank. The wasteblock keeps the turning stock and your tools away from the jaws of your chuck and gives you more room to work.

Turn the bowl stock to about 3½" (9cm) diameter with your bowl gouge and begin to form the outside of the bowl (*Photo 1*). I prefer a shallow bowl profile, as I just think it looks better aesthetically.

As you form the bowl, you will be turning against endgrain twice with each rotation (due to the grain orientation) and may get some tearout. To lessen this effect, make sure your gouge is sharp. You can also apply either a little sanding ▸

Hollow and drill

Turn away the inside of the bowl, leaving a raised island in the center. Drill a hole centered in the island that will later accept a tenon turned at the base of the flame.

Friction Fit

To turn a proper base on a small bowl like the one in the ring holder project, you can reverse-mount the bowl by friction-fitting it into a recess turned in a softwood wasteblock. Even a good friction fit is not as secure as a mechanical holding method, so be sure to use sharp tools and take light cuts. The use of a faceshield is recommended during this process.

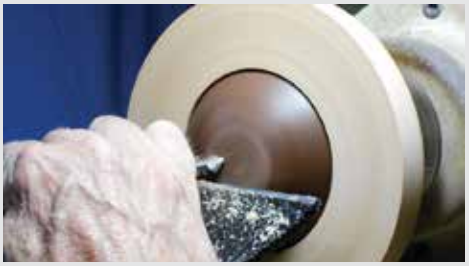
How it's done

Mount a softwood wasteblock on the lathe and true up its outer edge and face. Use calipers to gauge the diameter of the rim of your bowl, and transfer that diameter onto the wasteblock.

1. *Excavate some of the wasteblock inside your marked diameter to allow space for the island inside the bowl.*

2. *A shopmade "friction fit" tool (simply a square nose scraper with a notch ground in the side) helps to cut a square rabbet and allows for gentle cutting inward and to the left for widening the turned recess a little at a time. The bowl should fit snugly into the recess, so it may be necessary to "sneak up" on just the right fit.*

3. *Turn the lathe off while testing the fit. It must be snug or the bowl will fly off the lathe. If the fit is only slightly loose, a piece of paper towel may take up the slack. A light spray of water may also swell the fibers of the wood, making for a better fit.*



4. *The bowl is in and snug, and you are ready to turn the base slightly concave. To remove the bowl from the wasteblock, turn it over and tap the wasteblock on the bed of the lathe.*

sealer or spray lacquer on the problem areas and then take a final light cut or two. Done correctly, this will significantly improve the quality of the cut. The sanding sealer or lacquer wets the surface of the wood and makes it more pliable, like turning green (unseasoned) wood.

Once the exterior of the bowl is completed and the top of the bowl is turned true, use the bowl gouge to begin hollowing the interior (*Photo 2*). When you have excavated most of the interior, switch over to the round-nose scraper to final-shape the bowl's curve (*Photo 3*). The round-nose scraper will allow you to leave a raised island in the center that will later receive the flame piece. I like to lower the island about ¼" (6mm) below the bowl's rim, so the flame will not stand too high when installed. Now drill a 3⁄16" hole in the island about ¼" deep (*Photo 4*). Sand the bowl section of the ring holder to about 600 grit, and part the turning from the lathe.

Turn the base

Once the bowl is parted from the lathe, reverse-mount it so you can turn a base, or foot. There are several options for doing this. One, you can simply sand the bottom flat with a belt sander, then hand sand to about 600 grit. This is not a very precise option, but it would work. You could also friction-fit the piece in a wasteblock made of a softwood like pine. If done properly, this will allow you to

turn the bottom slightly concave prior to sanding (*Photo 5*), so the ring holder will sit properly without wobbling. (*See Friction Fit sidebar for more on this option.*) The third option is my preferred method: using a vacuum chuck, as shown in *Photo 6*. A vacuum chuck will effectively hold the piece, allowing you to turn the bottom of the ring holder concave. Sand the base to 600 grit.

Turn the flame

Mount your wood blank for the flame in a set of pin, or spigot, jaws in your chuck. These jaws are very useful for turning small things such as knobs and finials and are generally useful if you turn on a small scale.

With the tailstock brought up for support, use a roughing gouge to turn the stock to a cylinder. Shape the flame portion with a roughing gouge and small detail gouge (*Photo 7*), then turn what will become the base of the flame. I like to make the base a beaded section that will cover the top of the island (*Photo 8*). Use a small parting tool to form a 3⁄16" tenon. Sand to 600 grit, part from the lathe, and glue the flame into the bowl section of the ring holder, as shown in *Photo 9*.

Apply the finish of your choice. I prefer either an oil finish or spray lacquer. ■

Bob Rosand lives in Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania, and can be reached via email at Bobrosand@gmail.com.

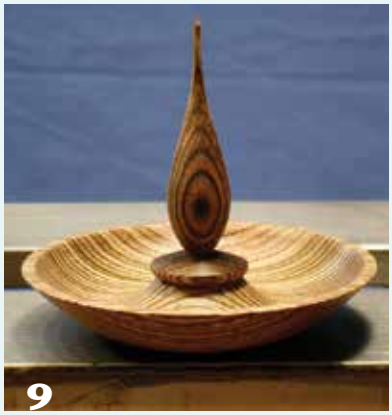
Turn the base

Two methods of reverse-mounting the bowl for turning the base: friction-fit the bowl into a recess in a scrap of softwood (*see sidebar*) or use a vacuum chuck. In either case, use sharp tools and take light cuts to form a slightly concave base.

Turn the flame

Mount the flame stock in a set of pin jaws and turn a flame shape on which rings can be stored. Turn a tenon at the base of the flame to fit the hole you had drilled inside the bowl section.

Assemble the parts



Glue the flame's tenon into the hole in the bowl, and you are ready for finishing.

Dye and Liming Wax Finish

Betty J. Scarpino

Ash bowl, 8" (20cm) diameter, before and after application of dye and liming wax.

The grain patterns of ash are often quite striking, but its color tends to be drab. Dye and liming wax can make this plain wood come to life, and because ash is a ring-porous wood, it is an ideal choice for this technique. The lead photos show an ash bowl before and after its grain pattern was enhanced with dye and liming wax. I always use dry wood.

Wood selection

Wood is a complex substance and is difficult to classify or describe in general terms; the distribution of pores in various species is an excellent example. There are ring-porous, diffuse-porous, and semi-ring-porous woods. In ring-porous woods, such as ash, the pores are significantly larger in the early-growth part of an annual ring. In diffuse-porous woods, such as maple, the pores are relatively evenly sized throughout the entire growth ring. Semi-ring-porous woods, such as walnut, contain pores that are somewhat larger in early wood than in the later, summer-growth portion of an annual ring. Compare an endgrain view of ash with that of walnut and you will be able to see the difference (*Photos 1, 2, respectively*). This technical information aside, to achieve the most dramatic results with liming wax, select a ring-porous wood. Ash is my favorite, but other species will work: oak, elm, honey locust, or Osage orange.

Endgrain comparison

Ring-porous woods such as ash *(left)* are a good choice for a dye and liming wax finish. The effect is more dramatic than it would be in other woods such as walnut *(right)*, whose pores are closer in size throughout the growth ring.

Materials

Liming wax is readily available from a variety of sources, but it is not the only substance that can be used to fill pores. I have tried with varying success liquid acrylic paint, tile grout, and gold metallic powder. Liming wax is white, but it can be dyed using powdered pigment.

Some sort of dye is often used, but it's not necessary to color the wood. For instance, instead of dyeing the wood a darker color and filling the pores with white liming wax, a light-colored wood could simply be spray-finished, and then dark filler applied, which will make the grain pattern stand out. Or the wood could be bleached and colored liming wax applied. The combinations and possibilities are endless.

The third ingredient is some sort of finish to seal the wood. I have had the most success with Deft semigloss spray lacquer in a rattle can. Depending on the dye you select, it may be possible to use a wipe-on finish or oil to seal the wood. Whatever finish you use, though, it's important to make sure the pores do not become filled.

Procedure

To illustrate the process, I turned a bowl out of dry ash and sanded its surface to 320 grit. Dyeing wood will make sanding scratches and torn grain highly visible, so be sure to sand carefully.

After sanding, I apply Behlen-brand Solar-Lux™ blood-red dye (*Photo 3*). It is alcohol-based and does not raise the grain. Wear nitrile gloves—this dye

Dye, lacquer, liming wax

3

Saturate the wood with dye. Wear nitrile gloves. After the dye is dry, you may need to use 0000-steel wool to smooth the surface before spraying with finish.

4

The bowl with three light coats of spray lacquer.

5

Apply liming wax liberally, then wipe off with a paper towel. The wax will remain in the open pores, accentuating the grain. After wiping off the excess wax with a paper towel, a "foggy" layer will remain but can be removed with 0000-steel wool.

lasts under fingernails for days. Pretty much any other dye will work also.

I let the dye dry thoroughly and then spray two generous coats of lacquer (*Photo 4*). It's important to use enough finish, but don't over-saturate the wood; not enough finish won't seal the wood and too much finish will close the pores. The object is to seal the wood, but not completely fill the pores.

At this point you may want to use 0000-steel wool to smooth the surface. Again, this is a case where too much can be detrimental. Don't vigorously rub, as you might remove too much of the finish. If too much finish has been removed, however, simply spray on more.

After the finish is cured, apply liming wax to the entire bowl, gently rubbing it into the pores (*Photo 5*). I wear nitrile gloves because liming wax is a petroleum product. Wipe off the excess using a paper towel. There will be a light coat of wax remaining, which will look foggy. To remove this wax, use 0000-steel wool to gently rub the surface. Beware—buffing with a buffing wheel is too aggressive and may remove all the finish and dye.

I don't spray additional coats of lacquer, but after the wax has dried, which takes several days, an additional coat can be sprayed. Others have reported good results.

If you have inadvertently closed a few pores from finish dripping, use a fine needle to poke holes through the finish to open the pores. This will allow the liming wax to enter. In fact, if you wanted to experiment, you could create your own patterns with a needle, spray a finish, and apply liming wax, reminiscent of tattooing.

Durability

This finishing technique is not intended for anything other than decoration. Lacquer will not hold up to getting wet; even water spots will mar the surface. In addition, if the surface gets dinged or scratched, it's a bit tricky to repair. Small repairs can successfully be made, though, with patience. Nonetheless, with care, this bowl will be beautiful for many years. ■

Betty J. Scarpino lives, works, turns, carves, and writes in Indianapolis. For more, visit bettyscarpino.com.

Ash eggs, natural color wood, spray finish, pores filled with white liming wax.
Photo: Judy Ditmer

Outrageous Egg, 2014, Ash, walnut, dye, liming wax, bleach, 22" × 45" × 3" (56cm × 114cm × 8cm)
Photo: Wilbur Montgomery

PLAY WITH CLAY

TURN A COLORFUL SPINNING -TOP-

Walt Wager

Spinning tops made of polymer clay are not just pretty to look at, they are also fun to play with. This article explains the steps in working with polymer clay and turning it into a top at the lathe. Add a platform to spin it on and you have a toy that would be at home on any executive's desk.

Form a clay disk

Polymer clay (polyvinyl chloride) comes in several different brands, all with their own characteristics. Information about these characteristics can be found on the Internet, so I will stick with my basic recommendation, which is to use Premo! clay by Sculpey®. I like this brand because it turns nicely.

The goal is to produce a disk of clay to use as the body of your top *(Photo 1)*. The stem is made of wood.

Polymer clay is stiff coming out of the package and has to be conditioned. This means it has to be squeezed, rolled, and manipulated until it is soft enough to mold. Different clays require more or less conditioning. I use a pasta machine made for clay crafters. Starting at the thickest setting, run the clay through the pasta machine a number of times until it is soft *(Photo 2)*. If you don't have a pasta machine, you can use a rolling pin and work the clay on a flat surface or just work it in your hands until it is soft and pliable.

The goal: a clay turning blank

1 With polymer clay, you can combine colors and patterns to create interesting turning blanks.

Condition the clay

2 Here, a pasta machine is used to work the new clay into a more pliable state. You can also do this with a rolling pin or by hand.

Shape the clay into ½"- (13mm-) thick disks. To do this, I use a homemade disk press made from an old vitamin bottle. Cut out the bottom, drill a hole in the top, and turn a plunger to fit inside. When you make the plunger, leave a slight protrusion on the bottom to indent and identify the center of the clay disk *(Photos 3, 4)*. This will be helpful later in drilling a hole through the disk for mounting on the lathe.

Another device I use in this process is an extruder. Putting conditioned clay through an extruder allows you to create different shapes and strings of clay that will result in a variety of designs in your blank *(Photo 5)*.

Pack the conditioned clay firmly into the disk press, adding different colors or patterns according to your preference. Pushing the plunger expells the soft clay disk *(Photos 6, 7)*.

Bake the disk

Baking the clay will harden it, and this is a necessary step prior to turning it on the lathe. I use a toaster oven and bake several disks at a time *(Photo 8)*. Different brands of clay require different baking temperatures, and the thickness of the disk determines the amount of ▸

Homemade disk press


3


4

A disk press can be made easily using an empty vitamin container. Turn a plunger to help eject the formed clay disk.

Form a patterned clay disk


5


6

(5-6) An extruder is useful for creating strips of clay that can add interest to your color pattern.


7

A pressed clay disk being ejected by the wooden plunger.

Bake the clay


8

Bake the clay disks to harden them prior to turning. Toaster oven thermostats are notoriously inaccurate, so I use an external oven thermometer to monitor the temperature.

Mount a stem blank


9


10

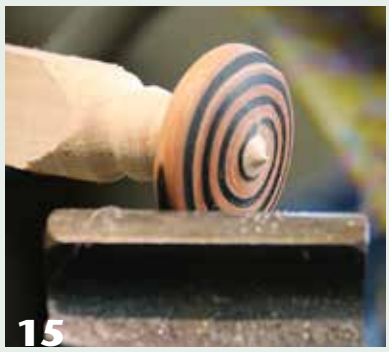
Alternate ways of mounting wood for turning the stem. If you don't have spigot jaws, you can glue the workpiece to a wasteblock using a turned tenon and drilled hole. This blank will also serve as a mandrel for mounting the clay disk.

Turn stem, mount clay disk

Turn the tailstock end of a wood blank down to ⅜" diameter.

Drill a ⅜" hole through the baked clay disk, then mount it on the turned mandrel using thick CA glue.

Turn side and bottom



True the edge and turn the bottom of the top. The wooden shaft serves as both the stem (handle) and the contact point.

Finish-turn top and stem

Use tailstock support while turning the top of the disk and wooden stem. Here, a live center is used with its center point removed; a folded paper towel protects the turned surface.

time it has to bake. I have found that the Premo! clay should bake at 275°F for 30 minutes for each ¼" (6mm) of thickness. My disks are ½" thick, so I bake them for one hour.

A wooden stem

I generally use some type of exotic wood such as ebony, cocobolo, bloodwood, or canarywood for the stems of my tops. The stem blanks are about ⅝" (16mm) square and 5" (13cm) long. Pen blanks work well. Start by securing about an inch of the blank in a chuck with spigot jaws and support the workpiece with the tailstock live center *(Photo 9)*. If you don't have spigot jaws, you can mount the stem blank by gluing a turned tenon into a hole in a wasteblock *(Photo 10)*. Use tailstock support during turning.

Turn a 1" (25mm) section of the stem at the tailstock end to ⅜" (10mm) diameter *(Photo 11)*. Then, separately, drill a ⅜" hole through the clay disk and glue it onto the stem using thick cyanoacrylate (CA) glue *(Photos 12, 13)*.

Turn your top

Using a small spindle gouge, true the outer edge of the top, as shown

in *Photo 14*. I turn a short, shallow curve on the bottom, as a low center of gravity helps the top spin longer *(Photo 15)*.

Sand the clay disk with wet or dry abrasive. Sanding to 600 grit will give you a nice surface.

Before turning the top of the disk and the stem, support the disk in a cup live center with a piece of folded paper towel between the disk and the center *(Photo 16)*.

Turn the stem of the top using a spindle gouge *(Photo 17)*. Sand the top surface of the clay and the wood stem and part off.

If you are going to put a finish on the polymer clay, don't use a spray lacquer. Lacquer will melt into the material and make it sticky. The best finish I have found is Krylon® Low Odor Finish—a water-based acrylic finish that dries to a nice gloss. I put the top upside down in a bottle, spray the bottom, let it dry, and then flip it over and spray the top *(Photo 18)*.

Turn a platform

What really finishes off this project is the platform on which the top will spin. My platforms are about 4" (10cm) in diameter and have a slightly concave surface so the top migrates to the center while it is spinning.

Start with a blank ¾" (19mm) to 1" thick glued to a wasteblock. Turn the top surface of the platform *(Photo 19)*. Then turn it around on a jam chuck to remove the waste-block and finish the bottom *(Photos 20, 21)*.

Put the finish of your choice on the platform and the project is completed. A polymer clay top is a fun gift for both children and adults. Place it on your desk and see if the next visitor can resist trying to spin it. ■

Walt Wager began turning wood in 2002. He is a member of the North Florida Woodturners chapter of AAW and is presently Studio Coordinator for Camelot's Woodworking Studio at King Arthur Tools in Tallahassee. Walt can be reached at waltwager@gmail.com. His website is waltwager.com.

Apply finish

18

The top of a bottle works well as a holding method for finishing the clay top. Lacquer is not recommended, as it will make the clay sticky.

You read the article—now see the video!

This article has an accompanying online video in which Walt Wager further explains and demonstrates this project. To view the video, visit tiny.cc/ClayTops or scan the QR code with your mobile device.

Turn a platform

19

Mount a blank for a spinning platform by gluing it to a wasteblock. Turn the top slightly concave.

20

21

Reverse-mount the platform using a jam chuck. Turn away the wasteblock and form the bottom.

An Elegant COLLARED VESSEL

Andrew Potocnik

During a periodic cleanout of my cluttered workspace, I stumbled upon one of those "treasures" too good to throw away but still waiting for the right moment of inspiration. I have a stash of too many pieces that fall into this category; however, this time the moment was right. The wood was salmon gum, one of about six-hundred-plus species of eucalypts loosely referred to as "gums" that grow in Australia. This tree is native to parts of Western Australia, where it ekes out its survival in one of the harshest environments—dry and devoid of nutrition. Burls of this variety are found only on the odd occasion, so I wanted to create a piece that would celebrate the wood's exceptional color and grain.

Turn and hollow

I mounted a square-ish piece of the burl in a scroll chuck and trimmed it down to roughly the shape I needed, but retaining a fairly thick base to reduce vibration during hollowing. Once the outside profile was established, I refined the surface with a shear scraper (*Photo 1*). Using a small round nose scraper, I hollowed the interior (*Photo 2*), which was then sanded. I was careful while sanding not to touch the mouth of the opening, as this would distort its overall shape.

Fit a collar

For accurate fitting of a collar, I had to neaten and enlarge the vessel's opening slightly and cut a shallow step using a "granny-tooth" scraper. This created a flat, square recess that would accept the collar (*Photo 3*). For the collar, I used a small disk of ancient red gum that had been buried for more than 5,000 years, which turned the wood black. I

Shape and hollow

(1) Form the outside profile of the vessel. Shear scraping with a scraper held at an angle helps refine the surface prior to sanding. Note the pencil marks roughly indicating the width of the vessel's opening.

(2-3) Hollow the vessel. Form a small shoulder, or step, to accept the collar.

attached the disk to a wasteblock carrier with heat-sensitive glue and trued up its outside diameter (*Photo 4*).

I cut a small step in the collar using a parting tool and calipers so it would sit snugly inside the vessel's opening recess. *Photo 5* shows how I rounded and sanded the outer ring and part of the inner surface of the collar. I parted off the collar ring and glued it into the opening of the hollow vessel. The collar was then trimmed and sanded, so all surfaces blended to create an inviting entrance to the vessel (*Photo 6*).

To finish off the body of the vessel, I trimmed the base down to an aesthetically pleasing proportion, then parted it off.

Turn a lid

I decided to make the lid from another piece of ancient red gum, which I glued to a wasteblock and turned to a diameter that would fit over the collar and cover most of the vessel's top plane. I like to leave just a small portion of the vessel's top exposed once the lid is fitted, so it acts as a frame, or border, around the darker lid.

I formed a small tenon on the inside of the lid so it would register and fit just a little loosely inside the opening of the vessel. Then I cut a shallow cove just outside the tenon, so the lid would sit neatly over the collar. I also undercut the underside of the lid so it wouldn't sit too proud of the container once fitted. I also cut a concave surface inside the tenon for added visual appeal (*Photo 7*). Finally, the outer edge of the lid was beveled slightly so it would be at about 90 degrees to its top surface, which slopes down from center to edge. The intent is for the vessel and lid to complement each other and look like a complete unit, rather than a "hat" sitting on top of a container.

To mount and turn the top of the lid, I made a jam chuck from scrap wood mounted in the scroll chuck and formed a recess to accept the lid's tenon. I friction-fit the lid on the scrap (*Photo 8*), then turned the lid to a shallow, sweeping curve and sanded it. I then cut a neat definition line a couple of millimeters inside its perimeter using a V-point scraper (*Photo 9*). With the lid still mounted this way, I drilled a small hole in the center that would be used later for mounting the handle.

Finish the bottom

To complete the base of the vessel, I made another jam chuck and lined the flat outer surface with double-sided carpet tape (*Photo 10*). The jam ▸

Turn and mount the collar

(4-5) Affix and turn the collar material on a wasteblock, forming a rounded ring on the outside and a stepped shoulder on the inside.

(6) Part the collar off and glue in place on the vessel.

Turn the lid

Mount the lid material onto a wasteblock and form the inside of the lid, making a tenon, or stub, that can be used to jam chuck the piece for turning its top.

Form a recess in the wasteblock to accept the lid's tenon with a friction fit. Turn the top of the lid. After sanding, drill a small hole in the center to later accept the handle.

chuck had a tenon, or stub, to accept the opening of the vessel. This isn't the most secure method of holding a fragile form on the lathe, but due to the vessel's small size and taking very gentle cuts with the support of my left hand, I was able to clean up the small stub that was left after I parted the piece off the lathe (*Photo 11*).

Turn and bend the handle

For the handle, I mounted a thin piece of ancient red gum in my scroll chuck and turned it down to a slender, tapered form, supporting the cut with my fingers wrapped under the timber (*Photo 12*). Turned as far as possible, the handle was sanded to its final profile using the "120-grit gouge," then sanded to 320 grit. When I was happy with the form, I cut a couple fine definition lines with a skew chisel to show it was a turned feature before parting it free and hand-sanding the remaining surface.

To create a gentle bend, I used a luthier's bending iron. The process is relatively quick and easy. The wood is soaked in water and then pressed up against the hot iron, being rocked back and forth with subtle pressure applied to both ends (*Photo 13*). As the wood heats up it becomes pliable; however, it's important to keep applying moisture so it won't dry out or burn. Once you've achieved an appropriate curve, simply put it aside to cool and dry, after which a little sanding will be required, as the process will have raised some of the grain. Keep in mind that various species require more heat and time than others before becoming pliable, and some will be more pliable than others, so don't hesitate to experiment to see what suits your projects.

To join the handle and lid I drilled a very small hole in both parts, checking first that I had a nail of similar diameter that would act as a pin. I prefer to separate the two parts to allow for definition, so I often turn a small wooden bead that acts as a spacer between the handle and lid. However, in this case, I opted for a small glass bead that already had a hole drilled through it. All components were finished with polyurethane prior to assembly (*Photo 14*).

Now I need to develop ideas that will make use of all those other scraps, or "treasures," still lying in wait in my stash... ■

Andrew Potocnik has been involved in woodturning since high school. His work is represented in many private and museum collections. He was an International Turning Exchange (ITE) resident in 2004 and writes for other woodworking publications. Andrew's primary interest is in sharing his passion for wood with students in any setting possible.

Turn the vessel's foot


10


11

Form a tenon on a wasteblock to accept the vessel's opening with a friction fit. The mounting is reinforced with double-sided tape, but light cuts and steadying fingers are recommended while cleaning up the foot.

Turn and shape the handle


12


13

Turn a slender, tapered section for the handle. You can put a slight curve in the wood using a luthier's bending iron, keeping the wood wet during this process.

Assemble lid and handle


14

The lid and handle are finished prior to assembly. The shaft of a nail glued into a small hole in the lid serves as a pin to accept the curved handle, with a bead acting as a spacer.

Glued-Up TRAY

Robin Dustin

Gary Kaplan's December 2013 *AW* article, "As the Wood Turns," inspired me to share information about one of my early turning projects: a glued-up tray. This was very early in my turning career, and I didn't have any nice, large pieces of wood to use for a tray. At one point, I was about to put a chunk of hole-riddled butternut into my shop stove, but stopped and thought, "I can't burn this! Butternut is a vulnerable species." So I decided to glue up the wood to create a turning blank.

The glue-up

To prepare the wood for gluing, I ran several (stove-length) pieces through my bandsaw, thickness planer, and jointer. I came up with enough pieces, about 1½" (38mm) thick, to make a 16" (41cm) square, with one piece of Spanish cedar tossed in to add interest. I used black-dyed poplar veneer to accent the glue joints (*Photo 1*).

After running this square through a friend's thickness sander, I made a bandsaw cut diagonally across the square, jointed it, and added a second piece of Spanish cedar, with the black veneer on each side (*Photo 2*).

I was happy with the resulting tray, shown in the *opening image*.

Design variation

To take the design further, I made another tray with two diagonal strips in it. The gluing process was the same as before, except that I made a second diagonal cut, adding a third piece of Spanish cedar. I had no idea how the lines were going to come together but knew the original glued pieces had to stay parallel and in line with each other.

Because I didn't have enough thickness in the blank to turn a tenon, I glued a round wasteblock on the top of the tray and formed a tenon in that (*Photo 3*). With the tray held in a chuck, I was able to turn and finish the bottom with a recessed foot. I remounted the piece on the jaws in expansion mode, turned off the wasteblock, and shaped and finished the top of the tray. I'm happy with how this one came out, too (*Photo 4*).

I'm glad I didn't burn those pieces of butternut! My glued-up trays are still in use today and are always a crowd-pleaser. ■

Robin Dustin earned an MFA in weaving with a minor in metalsmithing. She built her home in New Hampshire while working as a carpenter and eventually "lucked into" woodturning club meetings. She purchased a lathe in 2006 and hasn't stopped spinning wood since. She can be reached at robindust@gmail.com.

The gluing process

1

2

After the initial, parallel glue-up, the blank is cut at an angle and an additional piece glued in.

An alternate design

3

4

This design required two angled cuts after the initial parallel glue-up. A glueblock was used for turning a tenon, so the piece could be held in a scroll chuck.

JOURNAL ARCHIVE CONNECTION

For more detailed information on how to turn a tray, check out Richard Raffan's February 2016 *AW* article, "Turn a Simple Tray" (vol 31, no 1, page 22). In that same issue, Mike Peace offers a way to turn a recess to accept expanding chuck jaws (page 27). AAW members can access all past journal articles online at woodturner.org.

Stir Up a VORTEX BOWL

Steven Mellott

At the 2013 AAW Symposium in Tampa, I had my first look at Hal Metlitzky's unique bowls. They contain numerous vibrant, swirling colors that look like a vortex. As I looked at the bowls, I remember thinking: These look great! How does he make them? I doubt I will ever be able to turn one. I was wrong about that. A few years later, one of our local turners created several pieces like Hal's. That's when I decided to give it a try and turned the bowl shown here. While it is much smaller and contains fewer colors than one of Hal's pieces, I still like the outcome.

The basic technique

I've heard this type of bowl called a vortex bowl, a swirling bowl, and a dizzy bowl. There are at least three different ways to turn one, and each yields a slightly different result. I use the "bowl from a board" technique.

Bowl from a board involves cutting rings with angled sides from a flat board, then stacking the rings to form the turning blank (*Figure 1*). If you synchronize the angles, board thickness, and ring width, you can stack the rings and make a bowl blank with nearly smooth sides.

Design the bowl

When designing the bowl, you must consider its height and width, the

diameter of the rim in relation to the base, and the slope and curvature of the side. Many people think a bowl from a board must have 45° sides, but that's not true. You can use 30°, 45°, 60°, or just about any angle within that range. There is some limit to the amount of wall curvature, but the wall does not have to be straight.

You also need to consider the colors and the swirling pattern you want to achieve, and how to make the rim and base. Do you want them to be the same multicolor as the bowl or a solid color? If you have a solid-color base, do you want the inside bottom to be the solid color or the swirling design?

In this example, I've drawn a bowl 7½" (19cm) wide and 5" (13cm) high with 30° sides. The height includes a ¾" (19mm) solid wood base and a ¼" (6mm) solid color rim. This means the swirling color section must be 4" (10cm) tall. I want my finished sides to be straight and ¼" thick (*Figure 2*).

I use Delta Cad to prepare my designs, but you can use other design programs or draw the features to scale on graph paper.

Size the board

The board width is equal to the widest diameter of the bowl plus about ½" (12mm) for processing. Since the bowl is round, the length is the same as the width. In this example, the board would be 8" × 8" (20cm × 20cm).

The board thickness is directly related to the wall thickness of the final bowl. In my example, I want to have my rings at least ½" wide to provide enough excess to turn the ¼" finished wall thickness. If I had designed the bowl with a curved side, the rings would have to be wider to accommodate that curvature. If the bowl was much larger, I might have chosen wider rings to provide more stability during the actual turning.

I use the angle calculator, called AngleCalc, at scrollmania.com to determine the board thickness. In AngleCalc, enter the side angle and the ring width, and the tool will calculate the board thickness. In my example, the bowl sides are sloped at 30° and my desired ring width is ½". If I enter those values into the angle calculator, it computes the board thickness as 0.87", or ⅞" (22mm). In practice, that's the minimum board thickness (*Figure 3*). To simplify things, I decided to make the board 1" (25mm) thick.

Create a multicolor blank

After sizing the board, cut and glue a number of wood strips together to form a multicolor blank. You will use this blank to create the board from which you will cut the rings. The strips can be any color and any ▸

Design your bowl

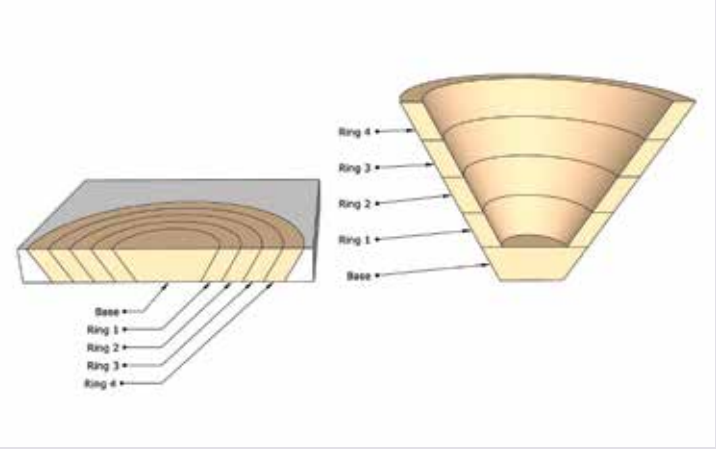


Figure 1. To make a bowl from a board, cut concentric rings with angled sides, then stack the rings to create a blank.

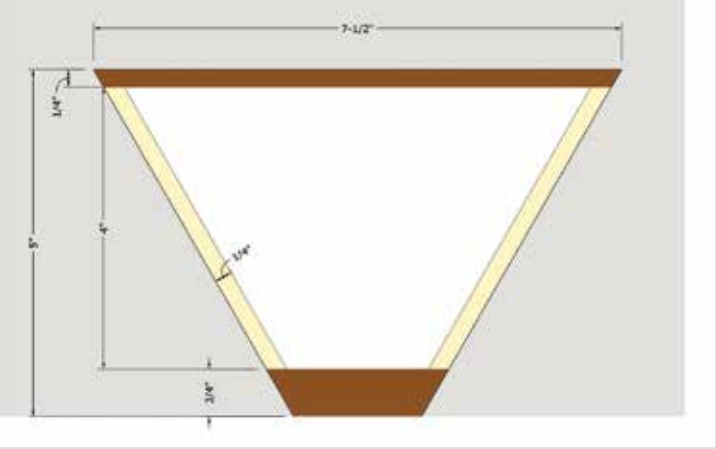


Figure 2. The basic dimensions for this vortex bowl.

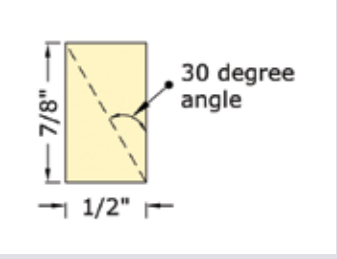


Figure 3. To calculate the minimum board thickness (in this case, ⅞"), you need to know the width of the ring and the design angle.

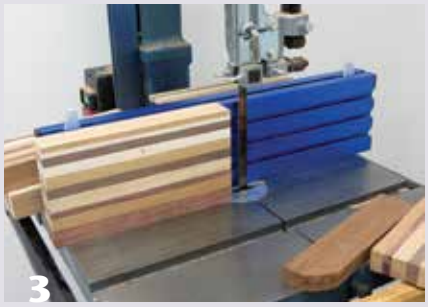
Illustrations by David Heim.

Glue up a blank

Arrange a selection of various wood strips to make the blank that will become the board you use for the rings.

Use plenty of clamps when gluing the strips together. Shown here is the author's clamping jig, which helps keep the pieces from moving during glue-up.

Resaw blank into layers



The jointed and planed blank, ready for resawing into board layers.

Resawn layers, each ¼" thick.

thickness, but your choices will determine the swirling pattern of the vortex. For the bowl shown here, I used cherry, mahogany, oak, maple, walnut, and purpleheart. I tried to make both sides of the blank symmetrical. I'm not sure that's necessary, but it works well for me.

The strips should be as long as two bowl boards plus 2" (5cm) for processing. You are investing a lot of time in making and processing the multicolor blank, so you might as well get two bowls out of it. Make the strips at least 12" (30cm) long, so you can safely run the assembled blank through a jointer and planer. The strips should be as wide as the final board thickness, plus ⅞" for resawing and sanding. In my example, the strips are about 18" (46cm) long and 1⅞" (48mm) wide, with varying thicknesses (*Photo 1*).

When you glue up the strips, use plenty of clamps and sturdy backing boards on both sides of the assembly. Otherwise, the ends and sides of the assembly may curl and separate from the other boards. I glue up half the strips at a time, using a jig I developed to keep the strips aligned (*Photo 2*). Depending on the size of your bowl and the capacity of your bandsaw, it may be wise to glue up half the strips at a time and keep the halves separate for processing, then glue them together to make the complete blank. After the glue is dry, joint and plane the assembly flat and square. Cut it to length.

Create the board

Determine the thickness of the vortex layers you want in your bowl. I used ¼" layers here, but ⅛" (3mm) layers really accentuate the swirling pattern. You may also decide to use layers of different thicknesses to achieve a different type of design.

Determine the number of layers you need to get the desired board thickness. In my example, I needed four ¼" layers to make a 1" board.

Resaw the blank into those thin layers (*Photo 3*). Cut them slightly fat for sanding purposes. This is the reason I glue up the blank in halves: I can resaw a 4" blank but have a difficult time resawing an 8" blank. If you use this approach, you will have to glue the resawn layers together and sand them smooth (*Photo 4*).

Cut each layer into a circle slightly larger than the largest bowl diameter. I use a scroll saw for this task, but you could use a bandsaw instead.

Stack the layers and align them in a twisted fashion so you achieve a swirling pattern with the colored wood (*Photo 5*). Glue and clamp the stack two circles at a time. I use Titebond original wood glue, which has a relatively short open time. When you have glued all the circles, gently sand both sides of the stack to eliminate any distortion created during the glue-up. This is the final board from which you are going to cut the rings.

Cut the rings

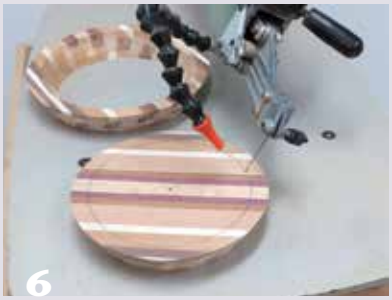
Cut the design angle on the outside of the circle at the rim diameter (30° in this case). Measure the width of the outside ring and make that cut. I cut the rings with a scroll saw, drilling angled pilot holes for inserting the blade, but you can use a bandsaw if you don't mind splitting the rings and gluing them back together (*Photo 6*). Repeat this process until you have cut all the rings.

Arrange layers, glue board

5

Cut the resawn layers into circles slightly larger than the largest ring in your bowl design. Stack and rotate the circles so the wood colors on the edges form the swirl pattern you want. Carefully glue the circles together in this configuration.

Cut angled rings



6

Cut the laminated board into rings, using either a scroll saw, as shown here, or a bandsaw set to cut at the appropriate angle.

Laminate rings into bowl blank

7

The glued-up stack of rings, plus the base and rim, ready to be remounted on the lathe for the final shaping and sanding.

Glue the rings

Mount the bowl's base on the lathe, using a chuck or faceplate. Make sure the base runs round and flat. If necessary, use a bowl gouge to true and flatten it. Glue the first ring to the base. I place a round piece of medium-density fiberboard (MDF) or plywood over the ring, and bring up the tailstock to clamp the assembly. After the glue dries, true and flatten the assembly, then glue and clamp the next ring. As you glue each new ring, position it so the swirling pattern continues. Repeat the procedure for the remaining rings.

After you glue the rings, check the bowl height to see if it looks good. If it looks too high, you can turn off several of the layers from the top.

If you have decided to use a single wood species for the rim, prepare the rim and glue it in place (*Photo 7*). For help with creating this segmented ring, I used the online segment calculator at Woodturner's Resource (woodturnersresource.com).

Turn the bowl

Using a ½" bowl gouge, I start at the rim and work my way slowly down both sides at 1" intervals. I know other turners who complete the inside first and then the outside (or vice versa). I'm not sure one technique is better than the other. I have not had much success using scrapers on this type of project—I get a lot of torn grain.

This project contains several species of very dense, hard wood, so use very sharp tools and sharpen them often. The grain runs in all different directions, so take light cuts. There's no prize for finishing in a short amount of time.

If the shavings get too hot, take a break and let the wood cool off. You may have more than 1,000 glue joints in one of these projects, and heat can degrade a glue joint. You may also wish to provide more stability by using a steady rest while working on the interior or a large live center cone while working on the exterior.

Be sure to wear a full faceshield. If you have a major catch, you can really unleash some small pieces of shrapnel. ■

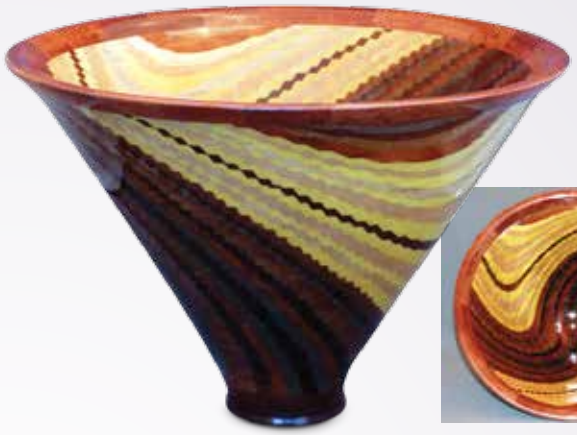
Steve Mellott began turning in 2007. He lives in McDonough, Georgia, with his wife Mary and belongs to four woodturning clubs, for which he has served in several capacities. Most recently, he chaired the 2015 Turning Southern Style Symposium in Dalton, Georgia, and the Tool Room Committee at the 2016 AAW Symposium in Atlanta. He has conducted demonstrations at several local clubs and enjoys trying new and different techniques. He can be reached at srmellott@hotmail.com.

Resources

Following are the resources I used to familiarize myself with the techniques needed to produce a vortex bowl:

- *Dizzy Bowl*, a helpful YouTube video by Dennis Edwards showing an alternative approach (tiny.cc/Dizzy).
- *Wooden Bowls from the Scroll Saw*, by Carole Rothman (Fox Chapel Publishing, 2010), includes a great description of the bowl-from-a-board process.
- "Bowl from a Board" and "Stacked Lamination" tutorials by Tom Lohman (segmentedturning.org).

A DIZZYING *Array...*



Steven Mellott, *Perseverance,* 2016, Bloodwood, yellowheart, padauk, cherry, mahogany, walnut, oak, 7½" × 11" (19cm × 28cm)

Bill Bulloch, *Bird of Prey,* 2014, Redheart, mahogany, wenge, purpleheart, yellowheart, cherry, maple, zebrawood, walnut, bloodwood, 9" × 14" (23cm × 36cm)

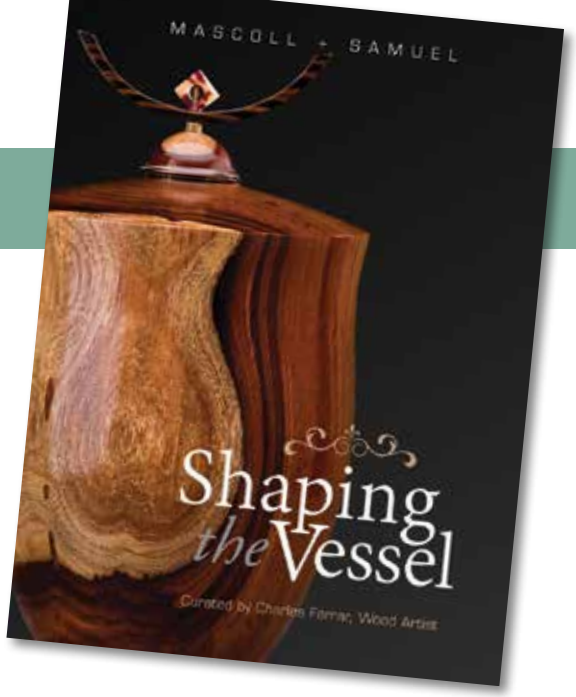
Hal Metlitzky, *Dragon's Breath,* 2014, Satine, holly, yellowheart, dyed birch, resin impregnated with microglitter, 7½" × 12" (19cm × 30cm)

Brent Dalrymple, Untitled, 2015, Hard maple, purpleheart, yellowheart, black-dyed and red-dyed veneers, 3⁹⁄₁₆" × 8⅛" (9cm × 21cm)

Raymond Puffer, *Twister,* 2015, Wenge, purpleheart, yellowheart, maple, canarywood, bloodwood, 10" × 9½" (25cm × 24cm)

Book Review:

Shaping the Vessel: ***Mascoll + Samuel***



Harvey B. Gantt Center for African-American Arts + Culture, 2016, 48 pages

David M. Fry

Fashioning the large lidded urn represents an acid test for turners of hollow vessels. Besides the usual risks of deep extraction through a small, delicate mouth, careful thought must be given to flawless joinery, the size and proportion of the cap and foot relative to the body, and the potential for enhancement or distraction posed by ornamentation.

This summer, the Harvey B. Gantt Center for African-American Arts + Culture in Charlotte, North Carolina, published the catalog and launched the exhibition *Shaping the Vessel*, featuring two masters of the form, John Mascoll and Avelino Samuel. Both events reveal not only the deep aesthetic kinship of these men, but also the bold strokes and nuances that distinguish their work.

Overlapping paths

With just a few years separating them, Mascoll and Samuel were born on Caribbean islands (Barbados and St. John, respectively) and as children became proficient with hand tools under their fathers' tutelage. Mascoll's was a shipwright, and Samuel's a farmer and all-around handyman. Both sons eventually headed off to college on the U.S. mainland and took two degrees each (engineering and physics, Mascoll; industrial arts/education, Samuel). The following decades were given over to careers in construction engineering for Mascoll, who now lives near Tampa, and middle school industrial arts for Samuel, who returned to St. John after finishing his studies.

Mascoll's first exposure to artistic woodturning came around 1990, when he befriended Ed Moulthrop and eventual mentor Nick Cook. Not long after, he met other notables such as Bob Stocksdale, Frank Cummings III, and Melvin Lindquist and spent time in Rude Osolnik's shop. Perhaps more important, he was deeply influenced by hollow-turning specialists David Ellsworth and John Jordan. He soon built his own lathe, and in a few years began winning awards and demonstrating at local turning clubs and the AAW Symposium. Since then, he has cemented his reputation as an in-demand presenter, prolific maker (up ▸


Photo: Ortega Gaines

The Gantt Center installation provides excellent lighting and access to the artwork.

to 200 pieces annually), and perennial favorite for best of show.

Although Samuel didn't plunge into artistic woodturning until ten years after Mascoll did, he had his first exhibition only a year after watching John Jordan, David Ellsworth, Bill Johnson, and Mascoll himself demonstrate at the 2000 AAW Symposium. Like Mascoll, Samuel had the background to take on new shop challenges, like making his own tools and working productively by turning well into the night at home after teaching school classes all day. By 2004, he was demonstrating advanced spiral-vessel techniques at the Orlando Symposium. He also started making the club demo circuit and volunteering as an instructor in the AAW Symposium Youth Turning Program. At one Symposium, two of his young students from St. John sold all their pieces in the Instant Gallery. (See *AW* vol 19, no 4, page 33, available in the journal archives at woodturner.org.)

Avelino Samuel, *Petal Bowl,* Mahogany, 9" × 14¼" (23cm × 36cm)

Strategic placement under the lights yields double exposure of the scalloped pattern.

Photo: Ortega Gaines

Avelino Samuel, Untitled, White prickle, ebony, 13⅜" × 6" (34cm × 16cm)

The charred spiral, beautiful in its own right, sets off the vessel's sumptuous wood color and subtle grain. The native wood remains at the aesthetic core of this turning.

Photo: John Baldwin

Avelino Samuel, Untitled, Mahogany and African blackwood, 18½" × 12" (47cm × 30cm)

Unlike the carving on the white prickle vessel, the imposed surface design, with alternating color and concavity/convexity, takes over here. The crowning jewel is the continued winding on the cap and the repeating coves of neck and finial.

Photo: John Baldwin

Aesthetic divergence

Despite their affinity for large, finialed jars, both men have distinguished their work in readily recognizable ways. Even from the limited photo selection in the catalog, viewers can see that Samuel's interests extend beyond covered urns to scalloped or footed open bowls and spiral shell forms. Indeed, the spiral dominates his lidded vessels as well, with beaded or coved scorched twists alternating with those of polished wood. Winding incisions stun with their precision and flawless resolution at the cap. Emphasis on the natural grain and color of the material—all Caribbean woods—varies, with burned bands sometimes setting off, and at other times, obliterating all native color and grain. Finials of contrasting wood also differ from piece to piece, with many dwindling to the delicately beaded spindles of turned Christmas tree ornaments; the more substantial varieties, however, seem to echo the vigorous spirit of Samuel's artwork best.

Most of Mascoll's vessels shown here are bottles with upswept crests, black collars, and small ebonized bases. The outwardly flaring pedestals lift the radically diminishing underside of the turnings off the table and rein in any physical or visual instability of the pieces. But the separate feet tend to impart a Victorian formality that seems somewhat out of character with the robustness of the overall forms and the highly personalized, soaring finials. Vessel bodies range in shape from hot air balloon to pendulous pear to crisp-shouldered samovar. Catalog readers should keep in mind the scale of Mascoll's larger urns, which sometimes reach 18" (46cm) or more in depth.

Catalog closeup

For those not fortunate enough to visit the exhibition, the catalog offers a

satisfying alternative tour. Two features of the volume immediately strike the viewer: Designer Dimeji Onafuwa's eye-popping cover showcasing Mascoll's *East Indian Rosewood Vessel* with matching sapwood silhouette, and the modest number of pages behind it. Late in the production process, a significant body of work became unavailable for the exhibition, and Gantt staff and consultants had to rewrite and reformat the book. Paring down the images to twenty, however, had its upside, as the commentary and full-page photographs skillfully distill the essence of each man's artwork. Regrettably, no dates are provided in the captions to capture artistic development and continuity.

Kevin Wallace's introductory essay not only illuminates his subjects with choice biographical nuggets, but also places them within the larger history of both woodturning and ethnic identity. He notes that "With the Contemporary Craft Movement, utilitarian forms, in particular the vessel form, replaced the figure" of classical sculpture. But he also acknowledges the close "relationship between the human form and the vessel—how we reference the vessel's lip, neck, shoulders, and foot." This is most apparent in some of Mascoll's dome-capped bottles with sharp shoulders and ceremonial "crowns." With Samuel, the formal frame of reference reaches beyond into the spiral and sectioned geometry of nature.

Here and there in the catalog, the issues of ancestry and racial interactions surface. Prejudice within the majority mainland population was occasionally encountered, but within the woodturning community, both men found guidance and encouragement from makers with different cultural backgrounds. And the influence/shared aesthetic of artists like John Jordan and Cindy Drozda, not to mention pioneers David Ellsworth and William Hunter—attests to an enduring commonality of purpose that transcends racial

John Mascoll, *Flamed Box Elder Vessel,* Box elder, SpectraPly, 16" × 10" (41cm × 25cm)

The finial of this urn deftly plays off the curved shoulders and cap.

Photo: Rudolf Lopez

John Mascoll, *Spalted Tamarind Vessel,* Spalted tamarind, SpectraPly, 19" × 6" (48cm × 15cm)

This vessel does for the urn what Giacometti did for the human form: Replace its generous curves with a stark verticality. As it turns out, the Surrealist Swiss sculptor had a great interest in African art and utilitarian wood objects, including vases.

Photo: Rudolf Lopez

and geographical boundaries. Indeed, Wallace concludes his introduction with the telling words of Mascoll: "'Race has little to do with the work, because woodturning is universal and doesn't come [directly] from any particular culture. Works created on the lathe all reference ancient pottery designs, whether from Africa or Asia, and those works connect us more than they separate us.'" But it's still worth noting, as Guest Curator Charles Farrar reminds us, that the lathe originated in North Africa. We are all fortunate to claim such a seminal invention as a shared heritage. ■

—David M. Fry

*The exhibition runs until January 16, 2017. The catalog (*Shaping the Vessel: Mascoll + Samuel*) is available from the Harvey B. Gantt Center for African-American Arts + Culture. To obtain a copy by mail, contact the Museum Store at (704) 547-3777 or info@ganttcenter.org and leave contact information. Price is $10 (plus sales tax for NC residents), plus $4 shipping and handling inside the U.S. International readers should inquire about postage.*

For more, visit ganttcenter.org.

BASKET ILLUSION
-DEMYSTIFIED-

Harvey Meyer

JOURNAL ARCHIVE CONNECTION


DAVID NITTMANN
Wood guy and artist

For more on David Nittmann, check out Ken Keoughan's 2001 journal article, "David Nittmann: Wood Guy and Artist" (*AW* vol 16, no 2, page 21). David passed away in 2014; a memoriam was published in the October 2014 issue of the journal (vol 29, no 5, page 12). AAW members can access all past journal articles online at woodturner.org.

When I was a fledgling woodturner, I attended a demonstration by David Nittmann, who remains well known for his basket-illusion work. I was fascinated, but since I was so new to turning, I thought basket illusion work was beyond my capabilities and left the demo early.

Several years later, I became more intrigued by David's work and also learned of the work of Jim Adkins, then a relatively unknown basket illusionist. This time, I was hooked. I did more research and learned that the process was actually originated by Lincoln Seitzman, whose work is still on display in museums and galleries. David Nittmann, of course, gets well-deserved credit for popularizing this unique form of embellishment.

I taught myself the process through trial and error. My first piece, a platter, was a disaster, but I was very proud of it. Continuously refining my process and tools, and several platters later, I started to get the hang of it. Eventually, I started applying the basket illusion on hollow vessels, because I enjoy turning hollow forms

Beading tools

Precision beading tools (pictured unhandled) are a worthwhile investment if you plan to do basket-illusion work. Their shape and size ensure consistent bead shapes.

more than anything else. To me, the utmost challenge is to put the basket illusion effect on a hollow vessel—both inside and out. Following is the basic process, which can be applied to many different turned forms.

Getting started

To illustrate this article, I turned a platter about 9" (23cm) in diameter and ¼" (6mm) thick, then designed a basket-illusion pattern that would fit (*see Designing the Pattern sidebar*). It is also possible to begin with a decorative pattern in mind and turn the piece to accommodate it. My preferred wood for basket-illusion platters is ¾ kiln-dried hard maple; for hollow vessels, I prefer Bradford pear. I begin the turning and beading process on the bottom of the platter first, then the top.

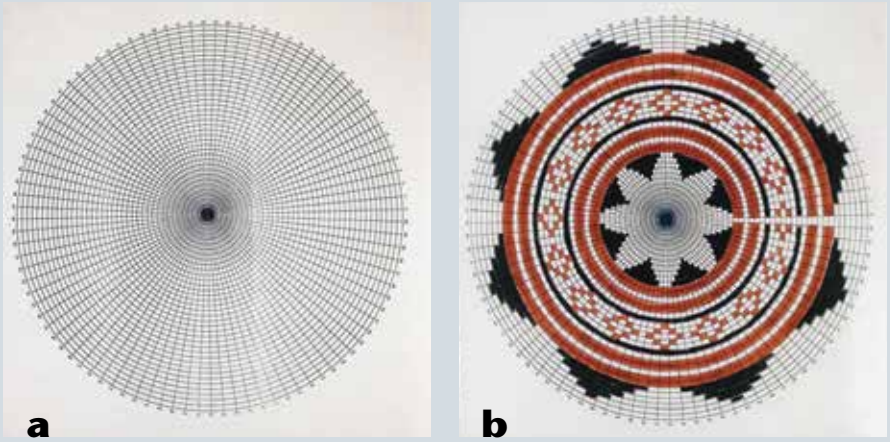
The general idea is to cut beads into the wood's surface and then delineate and color small segments. I do not sand the wood's surface prior to beading, so it is important to get the best possible surface off the tool. Only the very top of each bead will retain the quality of this surface, while the rest of the wood will be eliminated in the beading process.

Designing the Pattern

You can design a pattern before turning the platter, or turn the platter and then design a pattern that suits the finished dimensions. For this article, I chose to turn first, then design.

I use polar graph paper to design patterns for my platters and normal grid-style graph paper for most of the patterns I use on hollow vessels. I print my own blank graph paper using a software program called Graph Paper Maker (blackcatsystems.com). It's available at no cost, but I recommend paying the $20 fee to register your copy, as that allows you to receive free program updates. In the program, select the polar graph paper option and set the number of spokes to 120 and the number of circles to forty. (Ignore the settings for the minor spokes.) The program will generate a PDF file that you can print (*Photo a*). Note that this blank graph paper is used for design purposes only; you will print another indexed circle later that will be used at the lathe.

Experiment on the graph paper until you have a pattern (*Photo b*). I usually design using the same colors that I will use when I dye the platter. For this article, I settled on a pattern that is fairly simple and works with any number of spokes—as long as the total is a multiple of twelve, which is how often my pattern repeats itself. So this pattern would work with 72, 84, 96, 108, 120, etc., spokes. I chose to leave one spoke uncolored.



A blank sheet of polar graph paper printed using the Graph Paper Maker program. The example graph paper shown here has ninety-six spokes, even though the platter I turned calls for 120. Since my pattern repeats every twelve spokes, I could use it on a platter indexed to any multiple of twelve. A larger platter might be indexed to 144 or more spokes, while a smaller platter might be indexed to 96, 108, or 120. This pattern uses thirty-one beads, or rows.

Form beads

When I first started practicing this technique, I used a homemade beading tool. It worked well, but I wanted a tool that made smaller beads and one that could be maintained easily. Now I use the precision beading tools from D-Way Tools (d-waytools.com). For all my basket-illusion platters, I use only two beading tools: a ⅛" (3mm) tool cuts all of the beads except for one, the very outer bead, nearest the rim, which I cut with a 3⁄16" (5mm) tool. I use both tools unhandled. The tools I use remain sharp for a long time, but an occasional touch-up with a diamond hone keeps them in perfect condition (*Photo 1*).

The tool works best in a shear-cutting position, with the flute down on the toolrest and the handle as low as possible. The toolrest should be positioned as close to the work as possible, and the points of the tool must be presented at center height (*Photo 2*).

After shaping the bottom of the platter and preparing a tenon for later use, begin the beading process by scoring the lines that define the width of each bead. Do not actually form ▸

Form beads on bottom

Starting on the bottom of the platter, score and then form beads in one section at a time. With the tool handle down, gently rock the cutting edge left and right until a rounded bead is formed.

Add burn lines

Either stiff sandpaper or a thinned piece of Formica® provides the friction needed to add burn lines in the grooves between beads.

the beads until you finish marking them off. Scoring the beads first will space the beads with precision and allow a nice sharp "V" between them. Beginning at the rim, about 1/16" (2mm) from the edge, score the 3/16" outer bead using the beading tool's points. Then switch to the 1/8" tool, place its left point into the rightmost line scored for the previous bead, and gently swing the tool so as to score the right line of this bead. These are very light scoring marks. Then move the 1/8" tool to repeat the process, continuing scoring lines for about eight beads at a time before going back and actually forming those beads (*Photo 3*).

Beginning with the larger outer bead, place the 3/16" beading tool into the scored marks. Make sure the points of the tool are at center height and begin cutting the bead by gently rocking the tool left and right. This causes the tool to cut with one point, then the other, until the bead is formed.

It is important to stop cutting the bead as soon as the top of the bead becomes round. If you stay on it too long, the top of the bead will get scraped and there may be tearout. If you stop cutting the bead too soon, the top of the bead will be flat and will cause problems later, when burning lines over the beads.

Continue cutting the beads on all of the scored lines, but leave the last set of lines for later so you will have a reference point when you begin scoring the remaining beads. When you are satisfied with the first set of beads, move the tool-rest into position for the next set, scoring and cutting as before. Eventually, you'll run into the tenon area in the center of the platter; go as far as you can (*Photo 4*). Later, you will make the tenon smaller and add more beads.

Burn lines between beads

The next step is to add burn lines in the valleys between the beads. For platters, I use either stiff sandpaper or a thin piece of composite material like Formica®. The first method uses the edge of very stiff sandpaper. It must be paper-backed, not cloth. While the piece is spinning as fast as safely possible, insert the edge of the sandpaper into a valley between beads. Hold it with a bit of pressure and friction will burn a sharp line. With a pair of old scissors, refresh the edge of the abrasive before beginning the next burn.

The second and better method is to burn the lines with Formica strips. Standard Formica is too thick, but sanding it down to about .015" thick using a wide drum sander makes it perfect. As with the sandpaper option, insert the edge of the Formica into a valley with the piece spinning as fast as safely possible. Hold for a second or two, and the friction will result in a sharp black line between beads (*Photo 5*). There is no need to refresh the edge; just keep burning the valleys.

If you accidentally burn any of the beads where they shouldn't be burned, slow the lathe and lightly abrade those areas with a maroon Scotch-Brite™ pad. This will clean up any stray burns without changing the profile of your beads. A word of caution: Both of these burning methods produce a lot of smoke and fumes, so you should wear breathing protection and ventilate the work area.

Work on the top

Once all the valleys are burned on the bottom of the platter, reverse-mount the piece so you can work on the top. I use a four-jaw chuck to hold the tenon I formed earlier. In this orientation, you can turn the top of the

platter, bead the surface, and burn the valleys.

The techniques are the same as those used on the bottom, but there is one major difference: you can't turn the entire top of the platter down to final thickness before beading because doing so would release the internal stresses of the wood and the platter may begin to wobble. If the platter is not running completely true, you can't cut accurate beads. To avoid this scenario, start thinning the platter from the rim to the center, but work in stages. Beginning at the rim, turn the platter down to ¼" thick in a section about 1½" (4cm) wide. Once you are satisfied with the surface quality of this section, score and cut the beads in this area (*Photo 6*).

When scoring the 3/16" outer bead, sight down from above and line up the beading tool so the bead will line up directly opposite the bead on the bottom. Score the 3/16" bead and then score a few ⅛" beads. Return to the outermost 3/16" bead's score marks and form the bead. After that bead is completed, and before moving to the ⅛" beads, the 3/16" bead on the bottom of the platter must be connected to the 3/16" bead on the top side. To do this, I use a round-nose negative-rake scraper to very gently round over the edge of the rim so that the bead on the bottom transitions into the bead on the top. The desired effect is to have a rounded rim that looks like a bead all the way around the piece (*Photo 7*). Abrasives help to blend it all together.

When the outer bead is completed, finish cutting the ⅛" beads in the first stage. If the wood is vibrating or screeching because it is thin, you will get tearout and possible chipping. To avoid this, fold up a paper towel and hold it against the bottom of the platter to dampen the vibration while cutting the beads. Don't press too hard or you might burnish the beads on the bottom with the paper towel. The last set of scored lines should not be beaded at this time so you'll have a reference when starting stage two. ▸

Begin top beads, blend rim bead

Beading begins on the first stage of the top of the platter, leaving the center thickness for support. After thinning the section to about ¼", the beads are scored and then cut with the beading tool. The 3/16" rim bead is rounded over with a negative rake scraper to blend the top and bottom beads together.

Continue top beads

Beading continues in stages on the platter's top, again leaving bulk in the center for support. After completing all the beads, the sharp corners of the small circle left in the center are rounded over with a detail gouge. Burn the valleys on the top of the platter.

Back to the bottom

Reverse-mount the platter, reduce the tenon to about 1" diameter, add more beads, and burn lines in the valleys between those beads.

Being careful to maintain the curvature of the top, turn the next stage down to the same final thickness. Using the last set of scored lines in stage one, continue scoring ⅛" beads (*Photo 8*) until reaching the end of stage two. Continue in this manner until the rest of the top is beaded.

As you approach the center of the platter, continue beading until you have to decide if you can fit one more bead. Generally, if I'm going to be left with a circle in the middle less than ¼" diameter, I won't add the last bead. My goal is to never leave a circle in the center that is smaller than ¼" or larger than ½" (13mm). Regardless of its final size, round over the sharp corner of the little circle that is left in the center. I use a detail gouge for this task (*Photo 9*).

Finally, burn the valleys on the top of the platter, as you did on the bottom.

Reduce the tenon

When the top of the platter is completed, reverse-mount the workpiece to reduce the size of the tenon and add a few more beads and burn lines (*Photo 10*). Generally, I like the bottom of the platter to be beaded almost to the center, leaving about a 1"- to 2"- (25mm- to 5cm-) diameter unbeaded area in the center so I can sign my name.

At this time, the goal is to remove some of the tenon, but not all of it. Leave enough material so you can hold the tenon in a small set of jaws—about 1" diameter. This small tenon will be used to hold the piece in a chuck while you do the indexing necessary for accurately drawing the radial lines.

Draw radial lines

The next step is to apply radial pencil lines that will define the small segments. These lines have to be drawn in precise regular intervals, so the use of an index wheel is necessary. In order to index the platter into the appropriate number of segments, you first have to know what your pattern requires. For the platter shown in this article, I chose a pattern with 120 equal segments, or spokes. There are a number of indexing wheels and other methods available to turners, but no single indexing wheel will suit the needs of the basket illusionist all the time. For that reason, I make my own indexing wheels (*see Indexing sidebar*).

Mount the index wheel over the lathe spindle and hold it in place with a chuck (*Photo 11*). Be sure the chuck is mounted snugly, so the index wheel, chuck, and lathe spindle move in unison. Mount the platter in the chuck, grabbing onto the small tenon that remains on the bottom (*Photo 12*). Place the indexing board on the lathe bed so that the magnets in the bottom of the board are attracted to the lathe bed, and position the vertical upright against the index wheel such that the markings near the outer part of the wheel are lined up with the top of the vertical upright. Align any one of the index lines with the top of the vertical riser (*Photo 13*).

Make sure the pencil point is on dead center height and draw a line on both the top and bottom of the workpiece. Be sure to hold the base of the pencil jig so it glides on the surface of the jig's flat board without

Prepare for indexing

11 The indexing wheel is mounted over the spindle and held firmly in place with the chuck.

12 The platter is held by its now small tenon in preparation for indexing both the top and bottom.

13 The vertical riser of the indexing board is aligned with one of the lines on the indexing wheel. Now you're ready to draw lines.

rocking or tipping. Light pressure is all that's needed to draw the lines. Note that I didn't draw the index lines to the very center of the piece, as the lines would be too close together in that area. Rotate the workpiece (along with the index wheel) until the next line on the index wheel is aligned with the top of the vertical riser. Draw another line on both sides of the platter. Repeat this process until the entire piece is indexed with radial pencil lines (*Photo 14*).

One last turning step is to remove the small tenon. Reverse-mount the platter using a jam chuck and tailstock support and turn away the tenon, except for the small stub under the tailstock's live center *(Photo 15*). With the piece off the lathe, cut away the stub and sand the small area in the center.

Burn radial lines

When the piece is indexed with pencil lines, you can burn in the radial lines using a handheld wood burner. I prefer to sit comfortably with good lighting because this process takes a while. It doesn't matter if you start burning on the top or bottom, but be careful not to smudge the pencil lines as you handle the piece.

Using the pencil lines as a guide, burn lines over the beads. I use a specially made burning pen (Optima #21AEF; carvertools.com) that creates a nice sharp line over the bead with just one touch (*Photo 16*). You can work either upward or downward, carefully following the pencil lines. Try to burn these lines as straight as possible, though they don't have to be perfectly straight. I typically work for about ninety minutes in one sitting, then take a break and come back to it later. Don't rush the process; take the time to align the pen over the index lines every time you're about to touch the pen to the wood.

Herringbone weave on rim

When all the radial lines are burned in, move onto burning the herringbone weave pattern around the rim. This feature adds authenticity, but it does take a lot of practice. As an ▶

Draw the lines

14 Every time you move the indexing wheel to the next line, use the pencil jig to draw a line on both the top and bottom of the platter. After 120 lines are drawn on each side, the platter is completely indexed.

alternative, you could just color the rim bead with one of the colors used in your pattern.

Start by laying out a pencil line (not to be burned in) that splits the rim bead in half (*Photo 17*). Using a medium skew burning pen, burn equally spaced lines about 45 degrees from that centerline on the top half of the rim bead. It is important to burn at the minimum heat level that will leave a sharp dark line with no overburn. Try to space these lines about 3⁄16" apart, but a little closer is okay, too. It doesn't matter in which direction the lines are headed. As you come around to where you started, judge the spacing so the last two lines are not too close or far apart from each other. Then burn the same set of lines on the bottom side of the rim bead. These lines head in the opposite direction and are spaced in the middle of where the top lines intersect the centerline.

The next step is to begin connecting the top and bottom lines. On the top half of the rim bead, extend the lines so they touch the lines burned on the bottom half of the rim (*Photo 18*).

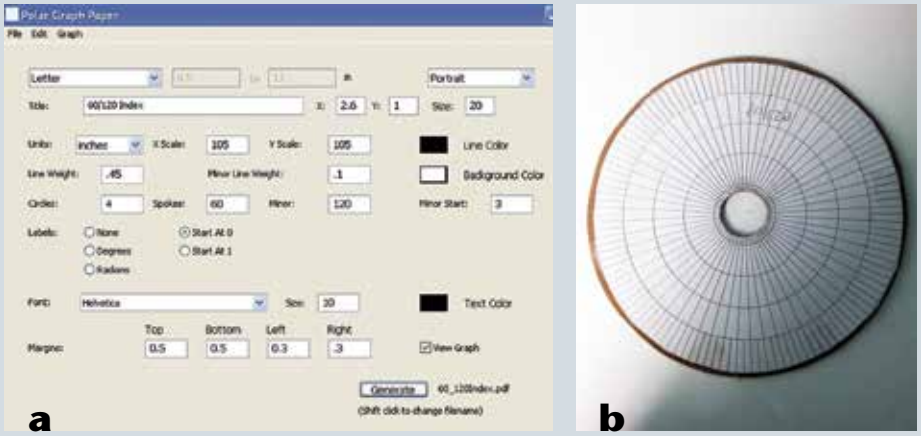
Indexing

Indexing wheel

Cut a piece of 1⁄8" hardboard into a circle about 8" (20cm) diameter and carefully center a hole in it to fit over your lathe spindle. Using the Graph Paper Maker (or similar) program, generate and print the indexed circle that will be adhered to the hardboard. I used the polar graph paper selection, with the parameters set as indicated in *Photo a*. Print the polar graph, cut out the circle, center the cutout over the hardboard disk, and tape it in place. Then carefully cut out the hole in the center of the paper. Now you have an index wheel with sixty and 120 spokes (*Photo b*).

Since I do a lot of basket-illusion work, I have created several two-sided indexing wheels containing the most common numbers of spokes. You could, for example, print out another polar graph with 72 and 144 or 96 and 192 segments and mount it on the opposite side of the hardboard disk.

Print and mount indexing wheel



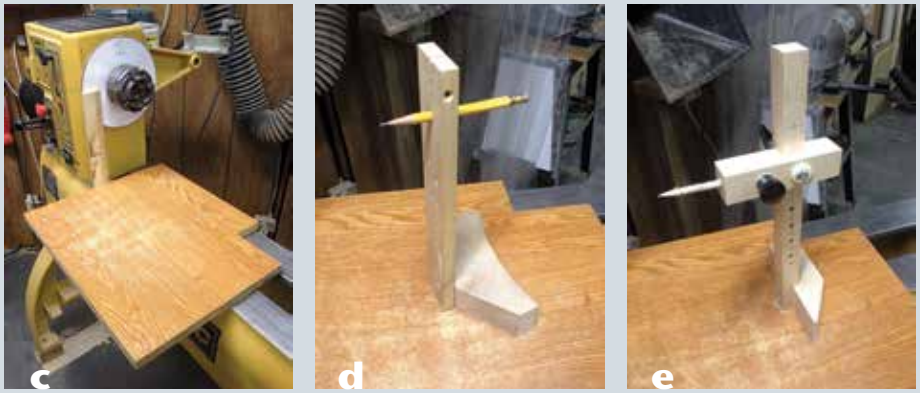
Graph Paper Maker screenshot shows the settings for printing an indexing wheel with 60 and 120 spokes. The printed polar graph is then taped to a hardboard disk and a hole cut out of the center for a completed indexing wheel.

Indexing board and pencil jig

The indexing jig is simply a flat, smooth board attached to the lathe bed with some embedded rare earth magnets. The board is ¾" (19mm) thick and about 18" × 24" (46cm × 61cm). Affixed to one end of the board is a vertical riser that reaches the center height of the lathe—10¼" (26cm) on my Powermatic 3520B (*Photo c*). The top of the riser serves as a reference point for the index lines on the indexing wheel. The smooth board allows me to slide the pencil jig to draw the index lines on the workpiece.

The pencil jig supports the pencil at center height. A simple design includes a small block of wood for the base, with a vertical riser about 12" tall. Drill a hole in the riser that will firmly hold the pencil at the exact center height of the lathe (*Photo d*). Since I frequently demonstrate using various lathes, my pencil jig has holes drilled that will allow me to use it on almost any sized lathe. I now use a more easily adjustable version of the pencil jig (*Photo e*).

Indexing board and pencil jigs



Indexing board in position and anchored to the lathe bed with several rare earth magnets. The top of the vertical riser aligns with the indexing wheel's spokes at the lathe's center height. The pencil jig slides easily on the board's smooth surface.

Two versions of pencil-holding jigs. At left, a simpler version, and at right, a more deluxe version allowing easy adjustment of pencil height for use on different-sized lathes.

Then, on the bottom half of the rim bead, connect those lines to the lines on the top half of the rim. Erase the center pencil line. You can now see the herringbone pattern beginning to form (*Photo 19*).

Now for the hard part—extending the lines over the side and all the way around the rim bead. This takes several touches for each line and you will have to constantly reposition the platter to find a comfortable approach angle. Start on the top and bring each line around the bead until it goes all the way to the valley where it meets the first ⅛" bead. Then do the same on the bottom of the platter. The final step is to add a small tick mark to provide the illusion of a crease where the weave passes under the opposite side (*Photo 20*).

Color the sections

Gathering up my pattern and India ink marking pens, I sit in a comfortable chair for the most fun—and longest—part of the project. I use Faber Castell's Pitt Artist pens to dye the squares. I prefer India ink to other types of dyes for several reasons: it is permanent and lightfast; it dries very quickly and does not bleed; and it does not penetrate as deeply as other dyes, so some mistakes can be corrected. I use two pens for each color. The "B" (brush tip) pen is used to color most of each square, but it does not allow me to dye all the way down in the valleys between the beads without bumping an adjacent bead. The "S" (superfine) nib allows me to square things up and get ink right down to the valleys without getting ink on adjacent surfaces.

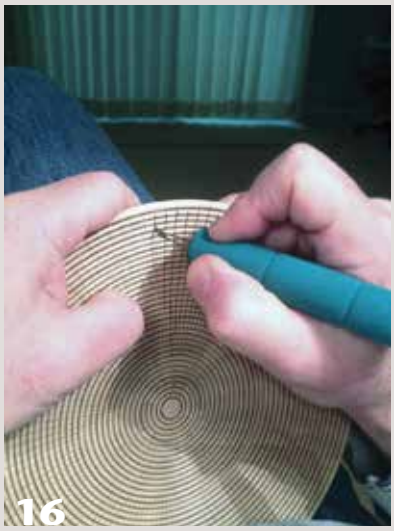
Make certain not to accidentally color a square that shouldn't be colored or to color a square the wrong color. This kind of mistake can usually be corrected, but it is not fun. I use a #11 scalpel to shave away my mistakes, but it's best to not make them in the first place. To avoid this problem, use the "S" tip pen to make a tiny dot on the top of each square that needs to be dyed with that color. If you accidentally put a tiny dot where it doesn't belong, you can easily lift it off with the scalpel.

Following your pattern, put dots on the squares that need to be dyed. Work with one color at a time. In my pattern, I started with black ink, making dots with the "S" nib pen and then coloring in all squares that have a dot (*Photos 21, 22*). No ▸

Remove tenon

Reverse-mount the platter using a jam fit, and turn away as much of the small tenon as possible. Remove the piece from the lathe, cut away the remainder of the tenon with a flush-cut saw, and sand the small center area on the platter's bottom.

Burn the lines



Using a burning pen, move up or down the pencil-drawn index lines to burn a sharp black line over the beads. Careful control of the burner settings will help you avoid overburn.

Herringbone rim

Burn a herringbone pattern on the platter's rim. A temporary pencil line divides the rim in half. Burn lines from the centerline to the top and then from the centerline to the bottom, keeping the spacing equal. Continue the burn lines around the bead on top and bottom. Small tick marks are added to create the illusion of a crease.

dot, no dye. When I finished dyeing everything that needed to be dyed black, I moved to the other color—sanguine—using the same marking/coloring method.

Before moving to the bottom, there's one more thing to do to the top. The very center beads are still natural, with no burn marks or color. I think it looks unfinished this way, so I picked up my burning pen and added some closely spaced burn lines to make those inner beads look woven, too. Now, the top is finished (as shown in the *opening image*, page 36).

Color the bottom of the platter using the same sequence as on the top. After I finish dyeing the pattern, I sign my name in the center of the bottom using a power engraver (*Photo 23*).

Now for the easy part—spraying five coats of a clear acrylic matte finish on both sides of the platter. This topcoat helps to fix the colors in place. Finally, use a few drops of shellac to coat the center area on the bottom where you engraved your name, sealing the pores in that area. I use a cotton swab to apply black shoe polish over my signature to fill and blacken the engraved area, then carefully wipe away the excess.

I hope you will attempt the basket illusion technique yourself. It is not hard, but it is time-consuming and requires a fair amount of patience. Start with an easy pattern and work your way to more complicated ones. Have fun! ■

Harvey Meyer of Dunwoody, Georgia, is a retired telecommunications engineer. After building furniture for many years, he started woodturning in 2000. He enjoys turning just about anything, but his main focus is on hollow forms and the basket-illusion method of embellishment. Harvey enjoys teaching and demonstrating and is an active member of the Georgia Association of Woodturners, Atlanta Woodturners Guild, and the AAW. For more, visit harveymeyer.com.

Add color


21


22

Dye the squares on the platter according to your design. First add a small dot on each square to be dyed. Then color in only those squares, first with a brush-tip pen without reaching the edges, then with a superfine nib to dye all the way down to the valleys and to square off the corners of each dyed area. When you have finished all the squares of one color, move on to the remaining colors, one color at a time.

Colored bottom


23

When the bottom of the platter is completely dyed, add your signature in the center.

Members' Gallery

Bill Montgomery, Arizona

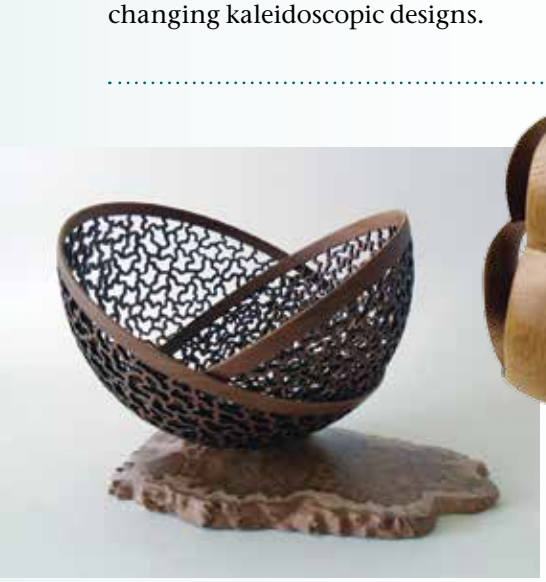
I have been interested in woodturning for some seventy years, having turned my first bowl in junior high school. Initially, many of my turned products were made from logs of differing species, which I accumulated from the Colorado mountains, the Arizona desert, foreign travels, backyards, and friends. But I gradually came to specialize in laminated and segmented bowls, made of various species and colors of milled hardwood and veneer.

Segmented and/or laminated rings, squares, or other polygons can be assembled in any number of ways, each of which results in a different visual effect in the turned object. The geometry of such assemblies, when they are turned, produces ever-changing kaleidoscopic designs.

(Right) Variation on a Theme by Mode, 2013, Yellowheart, wenge, holly, maple, 10" × 10" (25cm × 25cm)

(Above) Squares in the Round, 2011, Zebrawood, tropical walnut, 5" × 13" (13cm × 33cm)

Harlequin Bowl, 2006, Wenge, maple, 4¾" × 15" (12cm × 38cm)



Margaret Garrard, England

I was introduced to woodturning in 1995, and after twenty minutes, I was hooked. I soon had my first lathe. I had a lot to learn, as I had never worked with wood before. I had designed and made lots of sewn and knitted items, also pottery and decorated cakes. So it was no surprise to my husband that I wanted to be as creative in wood. I gave up my accounts job to become a professional woodturner in 2000.

I believe the beauty of woodturning comes from beneath the bark of a tree. Two pieces of work may be the same shape, but because of the timber's grain and texture, each piece is unique. Yet I am often inspired to pierce and paint my work, drawing from the beautiful scenery around me, here in the Yorkshire Dales in the U.K. I am also interested in involuted, or inside out, turning, as the shapes and forms that can be created from four pieces of planed timber bring a different aspect to woodturning. ■

(Clockwise from top left)
Love Is, 2013, Cherry, masur birch, 7" × 9" (18cm × 23cm)

Oak Tree, 2010, English oak, 10" × 6" (25cm × 15cm)

Lasting Love, 2010, Sycamore 5" × 12" (13cm × 30cm)

Elevated Bowl, 2007, Cherry, ebony, 11" × 7" (28cm × 18cm)

From Temple Furnishings to Kitchenware

MARCUS REID GOES SOLO

David M. Fry

Diversification has long enabled the survival and, in many cases, personal fulfillment of countless professional woodturners. Sometimes a chance discovery can launch not only a new line of work, but also a new company. Such was the case with 27-year-old Marcus Reid, a trade shop employee who grasped the market appeal of hand-turned rolling pins after he made one as a birthday gift. It surpassed the commercial varieties "hands down" and won effusive praise from houseguests.

The eventual excursion into kitchenware that launched Hub City Woodcraft in Mt. Pleasant, Utah, last year represented a radical departure for a woodworker whose handiwork adorns the temples and museum of the (Mormon) Church of Latter Day Saints. His ongoing success in such divergent realms undoubtedly contributed to his selection for the Mike Mahoney Emerging Woodturner Scholarship at the 2016 Utah Woodturning Symposium.

School and shop training

Reflecting on his decade-long experience in the craft, Marcus notes, "I started woodworking in high school and upon graduation was fortunate enough to apprentice with master furniture maker Chris Gochnour, who instilled in me a love for hand tools and traditional woodworking. My education continued with Kip Christensen in the Technology and Engineering Education program at Brigham Young University. I eventually got recruited to work in a local commercial shop and a few years later found myself at a company doing a lot of contract work with the LDS Church. Although I hadn't done a lot of turning, I took on an increasing number of lathe jobs when spindles were required, which are common in many LDS designs. I seemed to have a knack for making them. After about a year and a half, I'd become pretty fast. I could turn up to six standard balusters per hour with only a little 220-grit sanding needed at the end."

After years of commercial woodworking, Marcus Reid built a new business and workshop well in advance of his thirtieth birthday.

Process

Now working on his own in a new 800-square-foot workshop, Marcus has found production turning easier to bid than furniture making, whose complexity can lead to lengthy problem-solving hurting the bottom line. Though profitable, repetitive turning can become tedious: "I once turned 1,500 spindles for a job. But I usually get in the groove and take satisfaction in having a skill that few others have." He doesn't use anything but calipers, hand, and eye to duplicate the patterns. The roughing gouge does ninety percent of the cutting because he uses it with an angled planing pass to finish long tapers rather than change over to a skew. The finish

(Left) Like any shrewd merchandiser, Marcus differentiates his wares by function, lineage, or user. He offers the Windsor, French, Pasta, and Child's pins, among others.

(Right) Developing a brand means conjuring a lifestyle valuing traditional fine craft in the gourmet kitchen.

(Above) Hall console tables in African sapele. Made entirely by Marcus, each requires eighty-four spindles and sixteen corner carvings.

(Left) Hall entrance in the Monte L. Bean Life Science Museum at Brigham Young University. Except for the finish and inscription, Marcus produced the entire unit, which is 12' (3.7m) square with 8' (2.4m) fluted columns.

is better than that produced on his former employer's new CNC machine.

Marketing and income

Marcus notes, "Hub City Woodcraft is primarily kitchenware (exclusively kitchenware on my website, hubcitywoodcraft.com), but when I am at craft shows, I also have other spindle-based craft items such as spinning tops, endgrain boxes, baby rattles, earring and ring stands, and pens. I have done a lot of research online for high-end rolling pins and have priced things (retail) according to what it seems the market will bear, competitive with other high-end companies." At this point, about fifteen to twenty percent of total shop income comes from Hub City, which he hopes will ultimately represent a greater proportion of his business: He wants to expand into bowl-making to fill out his kitchenware selection and market it to stores and galleries. And he wouldn't mind developing his own one-off pieces if the production work is paying the mortgage.

Through another startup, Reid's Custom Woodturning, Marcus continues to produce turnings for others while also doing complete furniture/cabinet work as his schedule allows. About forty percent of total revenues accrue from furniture parts and carving, and fifteen percent comes from complete furniture and cabinetry. A specialty wholesale product yields another twenty percent, with architectural work accounting for about five percent.

For production items in both companies, Marcus is aiming at a shop rate of $60/hour, which would support reasonable wholesale prices for retailer markup, especially among the high-end stores he wants to pursue. When selling online or at craft shows, he includes his own retail markup to cover web costs, booth fees, shop downtime, and travel, rather than discount items for direct sale.

First-year performance

With Hub City contributing up to twenty percent of gross sales, Marcus can take satisfaction in his company's debut in a very competitive field, where Etsy, Amazon Handmade, and independent turners, particularly in maple country like Vermont, produce artisanal solid-wood rolling pins. Some of these makers also offer laminated, embossing, and steel center/independent-handle varieties. But Hub City's line of special-purpose and period pins have undeniable drawing power, especially among craft show buyers smitten by the sheen of an elegant, well-finished cylinder of wood. When contract work slows, Marcus can always turn a few more rolling pins with confidence that they will eventually sell. ■

David M. Fry turns wood and writes near Washington, D.C.

THE **UNMISTAKABLE** IMPACT OF

ALBERT LECOFF

Terry Martin

Every day, Albert LeCoff works in his office surrounded by a lifetime of memories.

Photo: John Carlano

When I recently heard a young turner say, "Who is Albert LeCoff?" I was surprised, but then realized it was not her fault because we should all acknowledge Albert more, so I decided to set down my version of his story. I first met Albert in 1995 at a woodturning symposium in France. Over the ensuing years, I have come to know Albert the legend quite well, but I never really felt I knew Albert the person. Finally, twenty years after we first met, I was able to spend four weeks in Philadelphia interviewing him, and he opened his life to me.

This is where I would usually say, "Albert was born in..." But getting to this kind of detail with Albert is a challenge. In *Turning to Art in Wood*, published to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Wood Turning Center (WTC, now called The Center for Art in Wood), Albert wrote, "Interviewers always tell me they have a hard time separating me from the organization my twin brother Alan and I started in 1986." So in Philadelphia, while Albert sat at the center of an array of woodturning memorabilia in his office, I asked him about himself. He frequently deflected my questions with something like, "See that box next to the bowl there..." Eventually, Albert's own story did unfold. But before we go to his personal story, I want to focus your attention with a simple but critical fact: Albert LeCoff invented the woodturning symposium.

ALBERT LECOFF INVENTED THE WOODTURNING SYMPOSIUM.

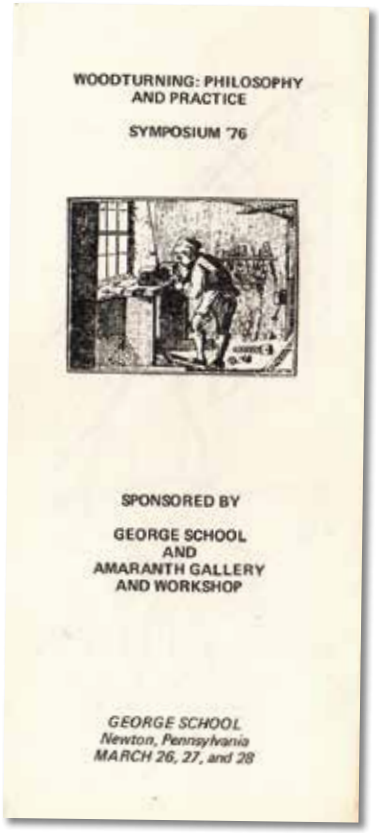
The first woodturning symposia

From 1976 to 1981, with the help of his brother Alan and Palmer Sharpless, Albert ran ten symposia in Philadelphia, and the template has not changed much since then. The seeds that grew into all the turning symposia across the world, from the largest international events to the smallest local gatherings, were planted by Albert in Pennsylvania.

Albert likes to tell everyone that John Kelsey was the one who encouraged him to start the symposia, that Palmer Sharpless organized the shop and the equipment, and that his twin brother Alan looked after the finances and logistics. This is as it should be, but it was Albert's energy that drove everything. Albert describes the humble beginnings of these groundbreaking events: "The early symposiums cost $35 to $40 to attend and eventually it went up to $125. I didn't offer the demonstrators much, and some of them even gave that up because we didn't always raise enough money. The first symposium was called *Woodturning: Philosophy and Practice*. It was a good name because we weren't just talking about the *how*, we also wanted to talk about the *why*."

Back in 1976, the idea that turners would come from all over the United States to openly share ideas was unheard of, and Albert credits Palmer Sharpless for this. Palmer was the woodshop teacher at George School, a venerable Quaker institution that sits in park-like grounds an hour north of Philadelphia, and that was where they held the early symposia. Albert always speaks fondly of Palmer: "He embraced the idea of the symposiums because he really believed in reaching out to everyone. That reinforced my beliefs."

Albert warms to the subject quickly as he explains how the symposia



The first symposium [in 1976] was called *Woodturning: Philosophy and Practice*.

changed the way people saw woodturning: "I remember saying after the first symposium, 'What brings a ninety-year-old potato farmer and an architect, both from Seattle, to George School in Pennsylvania? It's woodturning.' I think the strength of what we were doing was that nobody knew they were breaking rules—they didn't even know there were any rules. The philosophy for the symposiums was simple; I believed there was more than one approach to turning, and I believed in hands-on instruction." Albert continues, "At the beginning, each instructor would give a forty-five-minute presentation to the whole group and then they separated into small groups. We made people stay with their group because some people might only watch Bob Stocksdale, but they might not know about Frank Cummings, for example. I remember a production turner who was watching ▸

The 1993 World Turning Conference, held at the Hagley Museum, quickly evolved into the Windgate International Turning Exchange, one of Albert's proudest achievements to date. Albert's father, Jesse LeCoff (pictured here with Albert), a philatelist, designed the postal cancellation mark used to stamp mail sent from the event.

Frank, saying, 'I wish I had that creativity!' and Frank saying, 'I wish I had your skills!'"

Nowadays, amateur turners regularly produce cutting-edge work that is exhibited beside legendary professionals, but what Albert achieved was unprecedented, and his pride is evident: "The growth was amazing. At the first few, you could clearly see from the work on display who the instructors were, and who the others were, but soon the quality of craftsmanship and design improved to the point where you couldn't tell. A lot of the instructors came back as participants, and I often asked a participant to be an instructor at the following symposium. People really responded and by the ninth one other people were doing symposiums too, like Rude Osolnik in Berea and Dale Nish in Provo."

Walnut candlesticks (tallest one is 24", or 61cm) made by Albert in 1967, when he was a junior at Cheltenham High School. They were stolen and later returned.

Photo: John Carlano

Family

So why did Albert have this vision? Scattered throughout his story we find the answers, the hints of community spirit and the determination to succeed. Of course, it begins with his family. Albert proudly told me about his mother's father: "He was an amazing man. He sold flowers on the streets of Philadelphia and at the end of every day he would give any unsold flowers to hospitals for the patients' rooms. He died four days before I was born, in 1950, and I was named after him because I was the first-born grandson."

Albert's grandfather on his father's side migrated from Kiev. "He was a master coppersmith," says Albert, "and eventually he was in demand all over the U.S. during the prohibition era because he could make stills to brew liquor. He was already retired when I got to know him, but we were close. I remember him looking at my hands and saying they were really good working hands. In fact, they were callused from gymnastics, but he liked the idea that I had hands like his." Albert points to a large flat-headed hammer framed on the wall: "That's one of his tools right there."

Albert's father's career was the classic immigrant story of the hard, grinding climb to success: "He went to Drexel University in Philadelphia, where you could work part-time in your field while you went to school. My father took seventeen years of night school to get his mechanical engineering degree, and he ended up being head of the metallurgy department."

School days

Albert reminisced about his school days and much of what he told me accounts for his still-powerful physique: "All through school, I liked sports. I was really good at wrestling, and I got a varsity letter because I was undefeated." In fifth grade, Albert became interested in woodwork, and he remembers that not many people were using the lathe at his school, but that he enjoyed it: "I glued up wood and made salad bowls for my mother, and I made three candlesticks of different sizes up to almost three feet tall. The teacher put them on display, but then they were stolen. After my father made a big commotion, one day as I left our house I found the candlesticks wrapped in paper with a note that said, 'Here are your candlesticks. Please don't pursue this any further.' I still own them."

Albert's story highlights the sad loss of woodshop classes since those days: "Our generation was fortunate. We had equipment any craftsman would be proud to use. I remember the shop teacher had a pile of how-to books and he asked us to each choose something from a book and make it, but we weren't allowed to exactly copy it—we had to change at least one element." Such early influences can leave a lifelong impression on a young student, and the echoes of this idea reverberate throughout Albert's life.

Albert admits he was not a good all-around student: "All I thought about was how to get to the machinery before the other students, and different routines for gymnastics." Tellingly, a career test indicated Albert should be involved in some activity involving other people, but that was not what his family had in mind: "When I told my parents I wanted to teach industrial arts, they said, 'No, you are going to major in math.'"

In 1968, Albert got a gymnastics scholarship to North East Louisiana State, where things did not go as his parents had hoped: "I did a lot of gymnastics and a lot of partying, but I didn't study and I flunked. I had to face my father and I was really afraid, but it changed our relationship. He said to me, 'We're going to work this out.' Albert took courses at several colleges from 1968 to 1973, including Bucks County Community College, Temple University, and Antioch College, and he performed well at all of them. This contrast with his earlier experiences triggered a lifelong interest in the educational process, and at Antioch his passion for creative innovation was kick-started: "I did a course called Visual Thinking taught by Penny Balch, who was in charge of public sculpture for the city of Philadelphia. One assignment was to create a three-dimensional representation of what you do in a week. I cut up scrap pieces of turned wood into different shapes to represent different activities. So, for example, my mother was in the hospital at that time, and I cut a shape to represent me visiting her every day. I was really proud of this project, but I never thought about this cutting up of turned pieces again until I met Stephen Hogbin." It was during this period of Albert's education that his life started to be influenced more and more by woodturning.

Apprenticeship

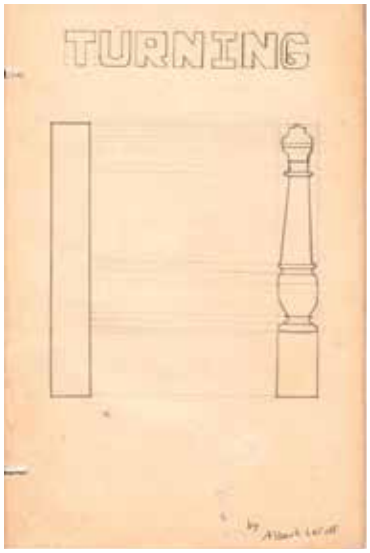
Albert started to dream of something very rare at that time—to do an apprenticeship with a master craftsman. "I wrote all over the world," he explained, "but I couldn't find one." Then he met Manny Erez, an Israeli turner who was working in the U.S. "Manny wanted to go back to Israel and was concerned his clients would need a skilled turner when he was gone," explains Albert. "So he decided to train someone. He came to interview me with my parents, said how much it would cost, then told me that at the end he would give me his complete woodworking shop. At the age of twenty-three, I thought that was pretty incredible. In fact, I hadn't been particularly interested in turning, but I watched him turn a newel post by eye in fifteen minutes, then put it in a basket with a bunch of other posts that were identical. I realized what an art there was to turning like that, so I started learning in earnest."

Albert's experience with Manny reflected how apprentices have learned over the centuries: "I remember turning, and Manny would be sitting at his desk. If I made a mistake, I'd look up at him and he'd shake his head." As always, repetition was the key to acquiring the skills: "Manny got an order for scoop handles and thought it would be a good way for me to learn." Albert reached behind his chair and handed me an old scoop with a turned oak handle. "I found this in an antique shop, and because I turned several thousand of them, I wondered if I had made it."

Albert soon learned that in a trade, everything has to pay for itself, including the apprentice. "Manny waited a long time before he let me turn a baluster," he says. "He always ordered exactly the wood he needed for a production run and if I messed it up, it would cost him. Eventually, he trusted me to do it and later I wrote a book on ▸

"I found this in an antique shop, and because I turned several thousand of them, I wondered if I had made it."

Photo: John Carlano



A unique publication created by Albert as part of his coursework at Antioch College, 1974. This was the start of Albert's 40-plus-year journey to educate people about turning.

it as part of the documentation for my degree. I wanted to show that in production turning, while you have a tool in your hand, you do all that you can with that tool before you put it down." Manny finally returned to Israel and left Albert with his fully equipped shop: "I had his lathe, a table saw, bandsaw, shaper, car... So at twenty-five, I was very fortunate."

During Albert's first symposium, Manny came back for a visit. "He was really ill," Albert explains, "but he couldn't believe that there were so many people interested in turning. He said, 'Tomorrow, I want you to bring my tools.' The next day, everybody watched him in awe, and I still have the piece he turned."

Exhibitions

Before his George School symposia, Albert had already met many of the people now well known in the turning field: "Until our symposiums, the only way these people knew each other was through craft shows around the country. That's how I met some of the turners I invited, like Al Stirt. I first met Mark and Mel Lindquist at a craft show, and I invited both of them. Mel agreed, but Mark said, 'Albert, you can't ask people to put their pieces on paisley tablecloths. You've got to make a gallery with plinths and everything.' He was way ahead of his time."

Albert met David Ellsworth in 1976 because, as he explains, "There was a girl in Denver I was really interested in. I wanted to make her a present, so I tried to find a local turner and use his lathe. Someone suggested David. I went to his place but never turned the present. He was the first person I met who designed his work on the lathe, so I also invited him to Philadelphia. I met Dale Nish through his first book and Frank Cummings through Dona Meilach's book."

Albert's symposia became one of the reasons woodturning was changing, until it was no longer just another declining trade—it was becoming a grassroots movement with its future in the hands of the makers. However, the symposia were mainly preaching to the converted, and Albert knew this was not enough. He wanted to organize exhibitions to inform a new buying public: "I tried to organize shows that reflected what I wanted the field to become—not just bowls, but furniture and sculpture."

Over the course of thirty-seven years, beginning in 1979, when he co-organized *Wood '79*, Albert was a key organizer—and often the only organizer—of 103 exhibitions of turned wood and wood art. The number of exhibitions alone is amazing, but the list of makers who took part is a Who's Who of the contemporary field, both legendary and forgotten names of those who created our extraordinary woodturning family. Also, many of these exhibits toured to multiple venues across the U.S., inspiring new turners and buyers. Most importantly, Albert started to gather credibility for this new field, and every show laid foundations for further growth and understanding. A list of Albert's exhibitions can be found on The Center for Art in Wood's website, centerforartinwood.org.

At the first George School Symposium, March 1976. Manny Erez, Albert's woodturning mentor, shows everyone how a real production turner works. Albert, in the blue plaid shirt, looks on with pride. When Manny lived in London during WWII, he is said to have singlehandedly turned and painted 125,000 shaving-brush handles for the British army.

Photo: John Kelsey

AAW

With his extensive involvement in woodturning, Albert was bound to be part of the early days of the AAW. He explains, "At the 1985 *Vision and Concept* conference at Arrowmont, I was the keynote speaker, and at the end I said, 'Isn't it time for the woodturning field to have its own organization?' Dick Gerard had come to the symposium ready for just that, and he had a survey he wanted everyone to fill out. That's when a group of us decided to meet over the weekend to talk about it. It was the following year, 1986, that the AAW became incorporated, the same year I started the Wood Turning Center."

When I asked Albert about the early relationship between what appeared to be two complementary organizations, he thought very deeply before answering: "Sometimes I am too far from what other people want," he said. "Because I had already been working in the field

of woodturning for ten years, I initially thought the AAW was an extension of what I wanted to do, and I had visions of a physical facility, programming, traveling exhibitions, and a permanent collection. A friend had given me a $5,000 grant to establish the WTC, so at the second meeting of the AAW, I showed my design for a center and presented my idea for a major exhibition. But it was clear the AAW board thought the whole thing was too ambitious. Palmer, who was on the board, said, 'Just let Albert go and do it.' So the AAW gave us a grant to hold the International Turned Objects Show and helped publicize it with calls for entries."

Albert still has deep regrets about this parting of ways, but he remains positive about what each organization has to offer. "The AAW does a great job with the symposium and the journal," he says, "but I believe its exhibitions should reach beyond the AAW. It has been done before—the first International Turned Objects Show (1988) went on from the AAW symposium to tour to ten museums. We all have to reach beyond our own borders to get more exposure." Albert continues to seek ways the two groups can support each other.

International Turning Exchange

When I asked Albert what he is most proud of achieving, he didn't hesitate: "It's the Windgate International Turning Exchange (ITE). It is about people sharing with each other and growing from that experience, and it has also connected communities around the world." Albert explained how this world-famous event came to be: "For our first World Turning Conference in 1993, I brought forty international artists, scholars, curators, and historians to talk about the state of turning. Many of them said to me, 'You've paid me to come so far and talk for forty-five minutes. Can't you utilize me more?' I realized there were plenty of programs in other fields for artists to get together, so why couldn't we do it? We started in 1995 with our first grant from the Windgate Charitable Foundation, and they have funded it ever since."

I asked Albert what role the ITE has played in the transformation of woodturning into wood art, and his answer was very firm: "More so than any other program we do. When I give tours of the Center and its museum collection, more people point to ITE pieces than any others, without knowing that they came out of that program. It's because it gives the artists the opportunity to break away from their usual work. Now we allow anybody working in wood, regardless of their process, to apply, so we get sculptors and furniture makers. In 2015, we had only carvers—no turners at all. For a turner to get in now, they really have to shine. The influence of this program has been amazing and apart from the U.S., the biggest influence has been on the French, then Australia, then England."

Albert the turner

With Albert's many other achievements, it is easy to forget that he was once an aspiring woodturner and that he continued selling his own turnings until 1986, when he formed the WTC. I asked if he regretted stopping: "Not really. I enjoy helping others achieve their goals, and there are more ways of being creative than making wood art." However, every now and then, he can't resist taking up a tool again. I first saw him turn at Emma Lake in 1996, and he told me that was the first time he had turned in years. I next saw him turn a spinning top on a pedal-powered lathe in France at the second *Journee Mondiale* in 2003. Albert told me of another, more recent, occasion: "During the 2013 ITE, I saw the most awful spindle turning and asked, 'Who made this? You really have to learn.' I showed them how to turn a really long spindle with my hand over the wood to stop it from flexing, and it was like I'd never quit. You don't forget."

From his early work, we can see that Albert would have been a very creative turner. He says that Stephen Hogbin affected his own work more than anyone else. "I used Hogbin's lathe to make a pedestal for a *tzedakah* box, a donation box for the poor, in my synagogue. The negative space in the stand represented a person, and as the money went into the box, the figure was filled." ▶

Photo: Stephen Hogbin

A meeting of two countries: in 1978, Albert had the rare privilege of working on Canadian Stephen Hogbin's lathe to produce his inside-out pedestal for a donation box presented to his synagogue. The negative space in the pedestal is meant to represent the human form.

At the early Wood Turning Center when it was located in the LeCoff home, Albert explains objects and gives turning lessons. Albert still enjoys teaching children about the joys of turning.

Looking back

From those early days as a boy filled with boundless energy, and those first unexpectedly influential symposia, Albert's long woodturning journey is like no other. A born risk-taker, he never gives up, even when the odds are stacked against him, and his life mission has benefited us all. He likes to give credit to others, but this is Albert's gift—the ability to see the potential in others' ideas and the dogged determination to bring them to fruition. I asked Albert how he explains this strength. "Well," he said, "I suppose I've got a one-track mind. I really love getting people together. Everyone I have ever worked with deserves thanks, but I owe special thanks to my brother Alan, who has worked with me since the first symposium. But of all the people who have helped me pursue my dreams, Tina is the special one. We married in 1990, four years after Alan and I established the Center, and for more than twenty-five years, she has lovingly supported my mission. You can have all the ideas in the world, but if you don't have people around you to help, your ideas would just die on the vine."

So we have come full circle in the story, and Albert still can't help giving credit to others. I hope readers will now have a deeper understanding of what Albert has done for woodturning, although the full bare-bones list of Albert's achievements alone would be longer than this story. His educational outreaches to thirty schools in Philadelphia; the Center's vast collection of turned wood, both creative and traditional, which every turner should visit; the irreplaceable archive, which is only a shadow of the knowledge Albert holds in his memory... The list goes on. At your next AAW symposium, find Albert where he always is, at the Center's book table, and take the time to talk with him about his achievements. Yes, he will hit on you to become a member, but it's a good cause and helping Albert pursue his mission of promoting wood art is the best way to thank him for all he has done.

Like many who have traveled the unpredictable road of a relationship with Albert, I have benefited deeply from his vision. If I had not been invited to take part in the ITE in 1996, I would not have attended the AAW's 10th-Anniversary Symposium that year in Greensboro, North Carolina, after which I began writing for *American Woodturner*. So this story, written twenty years later, is also my personal thank you to Albert LeCoff. ■

For more, visit centerforartinwood.org.

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Tina and Albert LeCoff: Without their work, our turning world would be very different.

Photo: John Carlano

Albert (far left) proudly shows students and their teachers around his crowning achievement, The Center for Art in Wood, which now stands as a testament to his life's work.

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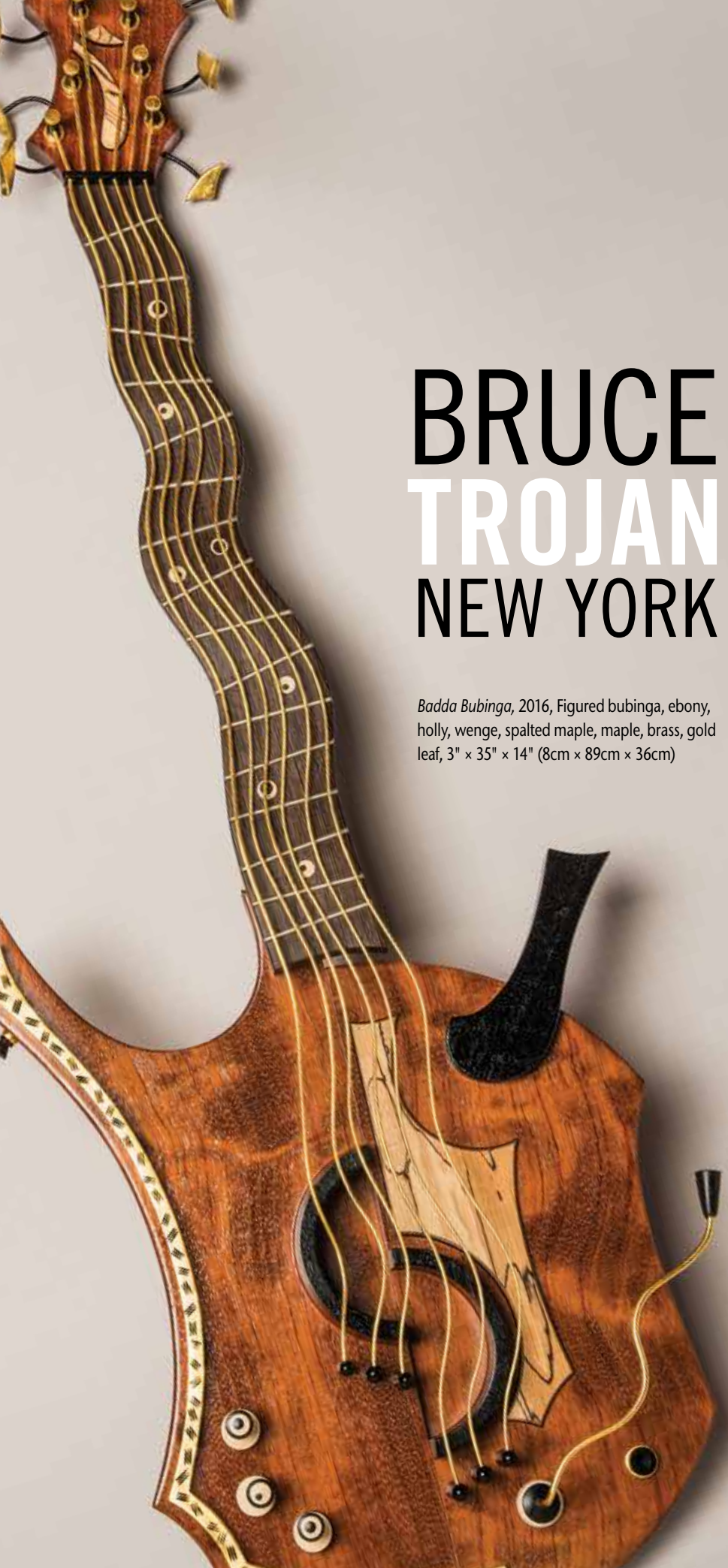

BRUCE TROJAN NEW YORK

Badda Bubinga, 2016, Figured bubinga, ebony, holly, wenge, spalted maple, maple, brass, gold leaf, 3" × 35" × 14" (8cm × 89cm × 36cm)

An exhibit I viewed of Pablo Picasso's guitars inspired *Badda Bubinga* and an earlier work, *If Pablo Knew Jimmy*. The earlier piece reflected Picasso's cubist and deconstructivist principles. With *Badda Bubinga*, I sought to incorporate more of my own musical and artistic perspectives, so the project required extra design time. I thought long and hard about how all the curves—from top to bottom—could complement each other.

There are sixty-five different turned parts in *Badda Bubinga*, including the guitar body, which comprises two separate, bisected 16" (41cm) turnings of different thicknesses. The bottom half of the body is an off-center turning. Many of the other, smaller turnings required hand duplication. The volume and tone controls each comprise five separate turnings. The fret dots are ebony inset into holly and inlaid into the wenge fingerboard. Every ebony dot on the guitar is inlaid off-center, except for one on the end of the whammy bar. I chose to center this one because a whammy bar is what makes the sound go off-center. Wherever ebony meets gold leafing, I created a separate turning to form crisp lines. The neck is shaped on two different planes—side-to-side "S" shapes and "hills and valleys" along the top plane. I hand-bent and gilded the brass strings and whammy bar.

For more, visit brucetrojan.com.