

Anniversary Profiles Helga Winter, Member #270



What motivated you to join the fledgling AAW?

I became a woodturner while living in Nashville in 1984. Somehow I heard about the 1985 symposium and exhibition "Woodturning: Vision and Concept" at Arrowmont and took part in the symposium and must have been notified about the forming of AAW in spring of 1986. It was wonderful to be part of a grass roots happening and I was eager to become a member. In 1987 I was instrumental in creating the Tennessee Association of Woodturners.

Who or what was your greatest teacher?

Listening and working was and is my greatest teacher.

What was your happiest turning moment?

Turning my first bowl created an incredible bodily sensation; like everything was lining up perfectly and started my whole body humming. I still do that when I have had a break from turning and start up again.

What is your favorite wood and why?

My favorite wood is green madrone because it is unstable and unpredictable. I also like the fact that it is whitish in color and I can paint it with a variety of media.

What do you see as the biggest change in the field?

What I am aware of is that the focus on women



In the thirty weeks leading up to AAW's 30th Anniversary Symposium in Atlanta, we will be sharing the stories of members who joined in 1986 and are still members today. We hope you enjoy their memories and insights!



About Helga Winter

An AAW member since 1986, Helga Winter was born in Germany and came to America as a young woman to study Education. She received her undergraduate degree at the University of Texas in Austin in 1978 and her graduate degree at Vanderbilt Peabody College in Nashville, TN in 1982.

Helga apprenticed herself with fine furniture maker and wood carver Paul Pitts in 1982 and studied with woodturners Rude Osolnik and David Ellsworth in 1984.

After she moved to Port Townsend, WA in 1987 her turned vessels became her canvas. Helga discovered madrone as a turning wood and was the first wood turner to explore its "orneryness" and utilize the instability of the wood to her advantage. She turned the roots, trunks, as well as the branches and began embellishing the surfaces with

woodturners has become stronger because of women woodturners already active in the field.

If you couldn't be a woodturner, what would you do instead?

I would (and do) paint and make sculptural paintings from discarded books.

Do you still keep *American Woodturner* back issues? Where do you keep them?

Yes, and I keep them in my finishing studio.



Helga Winter with her 'home-made lathe' in her studio in 1987.



Her second or third bowl, in 1984

dyes and wax resist.

She took copious notes of her painting techniques on the wooden vessels and discovered that putting her ideas and experimentations on paper opened up greater possibilities.

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See more of Helga Winter's work [here](#), and [here](#).

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