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AMERICAN WOODTURNER

Journal of the American Association of Woodturners

August 2025 vol 40, no 4 • woodturner.org

THE WORKADAY
CAREER OF
**BRAD
ADAMS**

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FOR AAW BOARD
CANDIDATES
(PAGE 6)

**A TRADITION
OF MENTORSHIP**

.....
**MASUR BIRCH BOX
WITH PEWTER ACCENTS**

Instant Gallery Awards

Saint Paul Symposium 2025

Photos by Andi Wolfe.

Each year at the AAW International Woodturning Symposium, the Professional Outreach Program (POP) celebrates accomplishment in woodturning by awarding select works on display in the instant gallery, where all attendees can show their work. Following are the works chosen for this special recognition from this year's AAW Symposium in Saint Paul, Minnesota. ■

For more on the POP, visit tiny.cc/AAWPOP.

EXCELLENCE AWARDS



Ron Siebers, Wisconsin

*Bowl + Platter, 2025, Padauk, walnut, cherry, epoxy resin, plate:
3/4" x 7 1/2" (19mm x 19cm); bowl: 2" x 6 1/2" (5cm x 17cm)*

**Alain Maillard,
Chamborigaud,
France**

*Eureka n°37, 2025,
French pistachio
(turned, carved,
steam-bent),
12 1/2" x 5"
(32cm x 13cm)*



Donna Stewart, Manitoba, Canada

*Handled Oak Bowl, 2024, Burr oak (fumed with
ammonia), tung oil finish, 4" x 14" (10cm x 36cm)*



**Elizabeth Weber,
Washington State**

Verdure, 2025, Maple,
milk paint, acrylic paint,
5" × 10½" × 9¾"
(13cm × 27cm × 25cm)

Ian Ethell, Leicester U.K.

Steampunk Box, 2020, Outer box: Sycamore (pyro-carved and textured), India ink, acrylic paint, acrylic lacquer; inner box: Yew, wax finish, 4⅞" × 2⅞" (11cm × 6cm)

YOUTH AWARDS

**Karlyn Theobald,
Wyoming**

East & West,
2025, Paper, walnut,
polyurethane, 5½" × 5½"
(14cm × 14cm)



Silas C. Nielsen, Utah

Spinning Top, 2025, Maple
(colored and textured), liming
wax, 2¾" × 1½" (7cm × 4cm)

COLLEGIAN AWARDS



**Ellis Lieberman, Oregon
State University, College
of Forestry**

Cup, 2025, Maple, wax finish,
2¾" × 3¼" (7cm × 8cm)

Mission: Strengthen and empower the global woodturning community

Vision: A world where woodturning is valued, inspirational, and accessible to all

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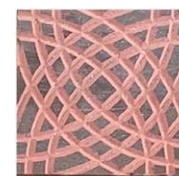
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The AAW strives to cultivate an organization
built on mentorship, encouragement,
tolerance, and mutual respect, thereby
engendering a welcoming environment for
all. To read AAW's full Diversity Statement,
visit tiny.cc/AAWDiversity*

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



One of my favorite things about this journal is the sharing that happens from you, the readership. Often this takes the form of the Members' Gallery or the helpful tips and tricks. At any time, you can share with your fellow AAW members what's going on in your shop and you can learn what others are doing, too. Feel free to make article submissions or queries unsolicited.

If the printed journal is not your speed, then consider the online AAW moderated forum, where you can post pictures and engage in meaningful conversation or just get your questions answered. It is a truly valuable part of the AAW community.



—Joshua Friend

From the President



Saint Paul Symposium

With deep gratitude, I reflect on the recently completed AAW International Woodturning Symposium in Saint

Paul. Thanks to the outstanding efforts of everyone involved, we once again enjoyed an unforgettable experience.

The AAW Symposium epitomizes our shared value of Community by creating a space where our thriving community can gather to celebrate, share, learn, and grow together. The demonstrations, galleries, and exhibitions reflect the diversity of abilities, talents, and interests that make the AAW Community exciting and vibrant.

Ticketed attendance was strong. A great lineup of over twenty domestic and international demonstrators offered ideas and inspiration for all interests. We continued our innovative streaming of twenty demonstrations to a significant virtual audience.

Thursday's program opened with Tom and Kate Silva sharing their inspiring father/daughter bond through their shared passion for woodturning.

A major highlight was the presentation of special awards. Michael Hosaluk received the Professional Outreach Program (POP) Merit Award in recognition of his lifetime of artistic excellence and the profound impact of his inspiring work. The AAW Board of Directors also awarded Honorary Lifetime Membership to Richard Raffan for his extraordinary contributions to the AAW and to the advancement of woodturning.

Congratulations to our Chapter Award winners! The Delaware First State Woodturners received the Chapter Communications Excellence Award. I encourage you to visit their website, firststatewoodturners.org. The San Diego Woodturners were honored with the Chapter Community Impact Award for their inspiring Turn-Around-for-Veterans program, which supports returning and disabled veterans through the healing art of woodturning. Look for more inspiration from the impact of these chapters' efforts in our upcoming October *American Woodturner*.

Thanks to an enhanced local publicity campaign funded by the City of Saint Paul Cultural Star Grant, we welcomed over 1300 local attendees who visited the instant gallery, exhibitions, tradeshow, youth turning, and pen-making areas. The youth turning program was especially strong, attracting over fifty young people—five of whom went home with their own lathe and tools. In total, attendees and visitors made around 220 pens.

Enthusiastic and generous bidders made both the live and silent auctions a success. We celebrate the artistry of all who submitted their work and thank them for their generosity. Our members will benefit greatly from programming and operations supported by the shared proceeds of the auctions.

While we celebrated our vibrant community, we also mourned the loss of several cherished members, including AAW member #1, David Ellsworth, as well as Nick Agar and Avelino Samuel. Their passing was acknowledged during our Saturday evening program, along with tributes to other valued members we've lost.

We also marked transitions in leadership. We bid farewell and extend our gratitude to Jennifer Newberg for her years of leadership and service. Many of you had the chance to meet and welcome our new Executive Director, Gretchen Wilbrandt. We also thank Alexa Manning, who concluded her time with us in June after skillfully leading our marketing and communications efforts. We wish her all the best in her next chapter and look forward to seeing her as a woodturner in Raleigh.

The Symposium thrives because of our dedicated volunteers and participants. My heartfelt thank you to all. The many yellow-shirted volunteers were everywhere helping in countless ways. Our host, the Minnesota Woodturners Association, did a fantastic job. We also deeply appreciate the continued support of our many vendors.

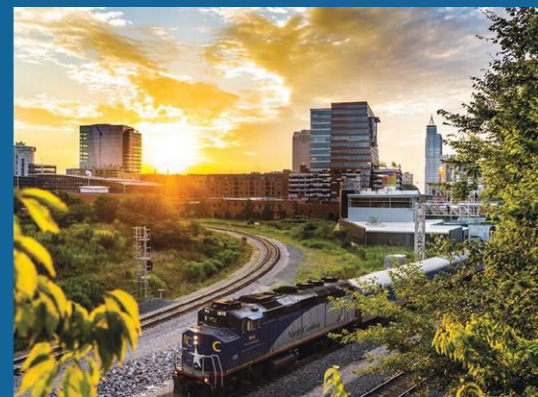
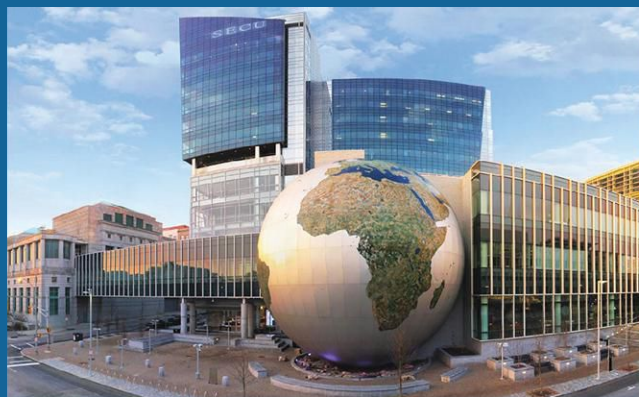
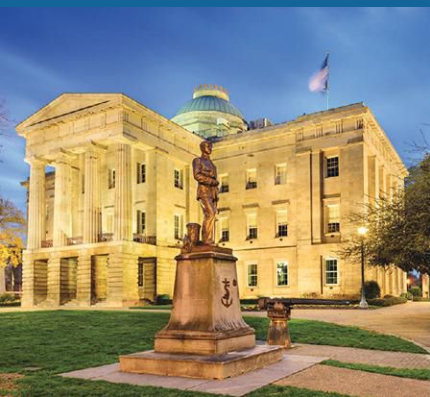
As we look ahead to next year's AAW International Symposium in Raleigh, North Carolina, we're excited to continue offering a rich and inspiring lineup of activities, demonstrations, auctions, exhibits, panels, and more. Our domestic and international demonstrators are among the best in the world, offering unique insights and skills in a total package that you won't find anywhere else. We hope you'll join us June 4–7, 2026, in Raleigh for another extraordinary event.

Thank you once again to all who contributed to this year's Symposium. Your passion, generosity, and spirit of community make these events truly special.



KC Kendall

President, AAW Board of Directors



2026 AAW International Woodturning Symposium

Join Us in Raleigh, North Carolina

June 4-7, 2026

AAW | AMERICAN ASSOCIATION
OF WOODTURNERS

AAWSYMPOSIUM.ORG

2026 Board Candidates

The Nominating Committee is pleased to present the following six candidates, who are running for the AAW Board of Directors, with terms beginning January 2026. A nine-member Board volunteers its time and energy to represent the membership in moving the AAW forward. Board members may serve two consecutive three-year terms.

You may vote for up to three candidates. **Voting is by electronic ballot only**, available on the AAW website at tiny.cc/BoardVote (case sensitive). Your vote must be cast between August 1, 2025, and midnight CDT August 31, 2025.

In keeping with AAW bylaws, the two candidates receiving the most votes will be elected to serve three years. The third Board member will be appointed by a two-thirds majority vote of the Board of Directors. The ability to appoint one Board member helps to ensure a healthy diversity of talent, so that all areas of expertise remain fulfilled.

We encourage you to participate in the voting process and hope you will help make this election turnout significant.

—Linda Britt, Chair, Nominating Committee

KC Kendall, Ohio



I am running for a second three-year term on the AAW Board of Directors, hoping to continue as part of a great leadership team. As a member of the Board, I am privileged to

meet and work with amazing, dedicated, and talented people. Serving on the Board is my way to give back to a community that has made a huge difference in my life.

In 2007, I joined the Ohio Valley Woodturners Guild, holding various leadership positions and leading a major project to open a fully equipped turning center

where members enjoy open shop time and classes from other members and visiting professionals.

During my first term, I led the Demonstrator Selection Committee. We improved our process for selecting demonstrators, integrating it more effectively with both our email communications to members and the publication schedule for *American Woodturner*. Our team presented strong lineups of turners with diverse projects and outstanding skills for each of the past several AAW Symposia.

When asked to renew the Fundraising Program in 2022, I spoke to many strong supporters and contributors to the AAW, learning much about what the AAW meant to them and why they have contributed

to the AAW. Contributions to the AAW are growing.

In 2024, I led the Strategic Planning team under which the Board and staff produced new and energizing Vision and Mission statements and a set of Values to guide us in the coming years.

As president of the Board in 2025, I was part of the team recruiting our new Executive Director. Working closely with the Executive Director, the Board approved a healthcare benefit for our staff and has begun implementing elements of our Strategic Plan.

I respectfully ask for your vote and the opportunity to serve the AAW for another three years.

Keith Baizer, Missouri



Connection is why we are here. To me, the AAW is about my connection to a craft that is a part of who I am and a connection to the people who share this passion for the

friendship, learning, and expression brought about from what we do to a piece of wood twirling on a lathe.

During my forty years as owner and “Mayor of Creativity” of Artmart, a large art-supply, picture-framing, and gift store in St. Louis, I went to work every day to inspire creativity. We accomplished this by following our guiding principle, “We Care and Give Back.” By caring and giving back to the people we work with, the customers we serve, and the community that supports us, we are able to have a large and positive impact.

We are all creative and there is no wrong in creativity. Every artist’s journey is unique. As a new AAW Board member, I will listen and identify opportunities to enhance and ensure the organization’s long-term success. Most important in my role as a Board member is to make sure that all AAW members know they have opportunities to grow, learn, and connect with the AAW in ways that improve their journey as a woodturner.

Larry Curry, Oregon



My name is Larry Curry, and I am currently president of the Willamette Valley Woodturners in Salem, Oregon. I have been a woodturner for about twenty-five years. I have been a

volunteer videographer at all of the Oregon Woodturning Symposiums (OWS) and will be serving on the board for the OWS in 2025.

I attended the AAW Symposium in Portland in 2024 as well as the 2025 event in Saint Paul.

Our club has a very good mentoring program, and we encourage young people to participate. We provide one-on-one mentoring for all members who want it. Our current membership includes people aged 14 to 93.

I spent over fifty years in the corporate working world. The last thirty-five-and-a-half years, I owned and operated my own Executive Business Management consulting business. I also served six years on the board of directors of Oliver Wight Americas, Inc., and on the board of the APICS for two years. I also managed negotiations of alliances with partner companies, including Microsoft. I worked with companies as small as twenty-nine employees

and larger clients like Caterpillar, Boeing, and Army Material Command.

I have been a member of the AAW for many years and would be honored to serve on its Board of Directors. I believe that my corporate experience would allow me to add value to the Board, and my management skills could be used to support all of the AAW endeavors. Being retired and a widower, I have lots of time and would happily use it in support of the AAW. I truly believe that there are no downsides to woodturning, except possibly acquiring many tools. It provides older folks an opportunity to relax and be creative and helps young people focus on something positive.

VOTE NOW!
tiny.cc/BoardVote
 August 1 – 31!

HOW TO VOTE

Vote online during the month of August by visiting tiny.cc/BoardVote or scanning the QR code with your mobile device.



Louis Currier, Florida



Hello, I am Lou Currier, President of the Peace River Woodturners in Punta Gorda, Florida. Since 2015, I have been self-taught in woodturning and have organized PRW training and mentor programs.

I have over thirty years in law enforcement, twenty-three years in the Air Force, and ten years as a police academy coordinator. I bring a wealth of leadership, discipline, and organizational management skills. My extensive volunteer work, including roles as local SEIU 1984 Board member and chapter president, HOA president for ten years, PRW president, SWFL Wood Art Exposition board

president, Florida Woodturning Symposium board member, and former youth hockey coach, demonstrates my commitment to community service and leadership.

My passion for woodturning and dedication to sharing knowledge make me an asset to the AAW Board. My leadership style emphasizes collaboration, mentorship, and community engagement. I believe in leading by example and fostering an environment where everyone feels valued and empowered to contribute. My experience in organizing training programs and coaching highlights my commitment to developing others and promoting teamwork. I am adept at managing diverse groups and ensuring that everyone's voice is heard, which is crucial for effective leadership on

the AAW Board. Additionally, I possess strong event organization skills, financial experience in understanding and making budgets, and the ability to interact with people to expose the art of woodturning.

My experience working with other charitable organizations demonstrates my ability to collaborate and contribute to the community. My diverse background in law enforcement, military service, volunteerism, and woodturning, combined with my leadership and organizational skills, make me an excellent candidate for the AAW Board of Directors. My commitment to community service, passion for woodturning, and collaborative leadership style will undoubtedly contribute to the growth and success of the AAW, and I would appreciate your vote.

Ron Day, North Dakota



It has been a privilege serving on the AAW Board of Directors for the past two years. I am looking forward to working on the AAW strategic planning process over the next year, which will be the

final year of my first term on the AAW Board. That being said, I am running for a second term.

While on the AAW Board, I have served as the Chair of the Youth Committee. With the dedication and commitment of

individuals on the Youth Committee, we were successful in rebuilding the AAW Symposium Youth Turning Program coming out of the Covid pandemic. The Youth Committee is now exploring innovative programs and opportunities to get youth involved in woodturning beyond the Annual Symposium. Building a strong youth program is very much aligned with the AAW strategic plan.

I was recently appointed to chair the Symposium Demonstrator Selection Committee. This is exciting for me, as it allows me to use the skills and networks that I've built while coordinating the Dakota

Woodturners Annual Hands-On Symposium.

I would be honored to serve a second term on the AAW Board of Directors. If elected, I will continue to look for opportunities to build on the existing chapter-to-chapter relationships and to advocate for a strong chapter voice in the future of the AAW as the Board continues the strategic planning process.

I have learned so much over the past two years and have made many new friends in the woodturning world; I thank you for that opportunity. It would be a great honor to serve a second term on the AAW Board, and I would greatly appreciate your support.

Sally Burnett, England



I have been a member of the AAW since 2012 and have been involved as a volunteer, an exhibitor, and most recently as a member of the Board. I am currently Chair of Turners

Without Borders and a member of the POP and Demonstrator Committees. The AAW continues to be the largest and most influential woodturning organization in the world, and it is a privilege to work with so many dedicated staff, volunteers, and members. As

an overseas member, I have been working to increase the global reach of the AAW through closer links with other national woodturning organizations, which provide an exciting opportunity to increase membership, to share knowledge and experience, and to grow our community. I would consider it a privilege to serve again on the Board and continue to promote the AAW worldwide.

My working life has revolved around the world of craft and the world of sailing. Both have provided an income, taught me a wide range of skills, and provided an incredibly supportive community. Twenty-five years as a partner in a ceramic design company,

eight years as Secretary General of the International Optimist Dinghy Class, a global not-for-profit sailing organization, and, more recently, ten years building a business as a maker in wood, enable me to bring diverse creative and management skills and not-for-profit experience to the AAW Board.

I am excited to see the AAW continue to grow while implementing the Strategic Plan. I am motivated by the possibility of continued service to the Board, increasing engagement and forging partnerships with other like-minded organizations both in the U.S. and further afield, all with the goal of broadening the reach of our organization and fulfilling its mission.

AAW Annual Financial Statement for 2024

Dear AAW Members,

The AAW ended 2024 with positive financial results stemming from the hard work of our staff, volunteers, committees, and the rest of the AAW family. Among our many sources of revenue, a few stand out in support of our mission: positive results from the Portland Symposium, the successful auction of the Bill Luce collaborations last fall, as well as grants and your valued contributions.

We just finished the AAW's 39th Annual Woodturning Symposium in the city of our headquarters, Saint Paul, Minnesota. It is truly a family reunion for over 1000 attendees. The AAW was awarded a grant to support the 2025 Symposium and Gallery from the Saint Paul Cultural Star program. The grant enabled us to keep the Gallery of Wood Art open throughout the event, increasing public outreach and boosting the Symposium's visibility in the broader community.

In addition to our financial summary shown here, the AAW Board has approved publishing our audited financial statements on our website, at <http://bit.ly/3ZD0EZ6>. We believe that open communication and accountability are essential to maintaining the trust of our members, partners, and the broader woodturning community.

—Chuck Lobaito, AAW Treasurer

SUPPORT AND REVENUES

Membership Dues.....	\$792,644
Symposium	\$764,562
Publications and Products ...	\$254,255
Contributions.....	\$112,343
Other	\$26,771
Investment Income	\$169,773

Total Support and Revenues..... \$2,120,348

EXPENSES

Program Services:

Symposium	\$589,921
Publications and Products	\$493,768
Gallery and Exhibition.....	\$65,218
Scholarships	\$17,500
Professional Outreach Program...	\$47,003
Other Programs	\$116,105

Total Program Services..... \$1,329,515

Support Services:

Management and General ...	\$407,763
Member Development.....	\$256,828

Total Support Services...\$664,591

Total Expenses.....	\$1,994,106
Change in Net Assets	\$126,242
Net Assets, Beginning of Year, as Restated.....	\$1,699,257
NET ASSETS, End of Year....	\$1,825,499

ASSETS

Current Assets:

Cash.....	\$444,056
Accounts Receivable.....	\$100,575
Inventories	\$34,071
Prepaid Expenses	\$104,342

Total Current Assets.....\$683,044

ASSETS CONTINUED

Investments \$1,449,920

Art Collection:

Kaplan Art Collection	\$235,000
AAW Collection.....	\$213,690
Total Art Collection	\$448,690

Property and Equipment:

Computer Software/Website ...	\$79,999
Furniture and Equipment	\$202,855
Less Accumulated Depreciation	-281,719
Net Property and Equipment ...	\$1,135

Total Assets.....\$2,582,789

LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

Current Liabilities:

Accounts Payable	\$80,324
Accrued Expenses	\$62,996
Deferred Revenue - Membership Dues.....	\$399,574
Deferred Revenue - Symposium	\$78,084

Total Current Liabilities.. \$620,978

Deferred Revenue - Membership Dues \$136,312

Net Assets:

Net Assets without Donor Restrictions.....	\$1,347,156
Net Assets with Donor Restrictions.....	\$478,343

Total Net Assets \$1,825,499

Total Liabilities and Net Assets \$2,582,789

John Kelsey Receives Furniture Society Award



The Furniture Society (furnsoc.org) has named John Kelsey as a 2024/2025 *Award of Distinction* honoree for his long-standing contributions to the advancement of the art of furniture making.

A distinguished career

John Kelsey has spent more than fifty years writing, editing, and publishing magazines and books about woodworking, woodturning, and furniture design. After a stint as a newspaper reporter and editor in the late 1960s and early 1970s, he enrolled in the School for American Craftsmen at Rochester Institute of Technology and set out to become a professional furniture maker. His plans were derailed when he was recruited in 1976 to become the editor-in-chief of a new magazine called *Fine Woodworking*. At that time, there was little woodworking information available, and the woodworking arts were being rediscovered and reinvented by a new generation.

John's vision, as editor, was instrumental in finding talented artists and artisans and providing a forum for them to share their knowledge. The early *Fine Woodworking*, under John's direction, was a delightfully eclectic mix of the practical, the artistic, the philosophical, and the offbeat. "In the beginning, everything we wrote about was new; we could open windows for woodworkers everywhere," Kelsey recalls. "We were riding a cultural moment: there was huge interest in crafts."

Kelsey went on to publish many books on wood, turning, and design at Taunton Press and launched *Threads* magazine before leaving in 1992 to found his own book publishing business, Cambium Press, which specialized

in books on woodworking, turning, and design. He segued into freelance writing and editing and published additional books for Fox Chapel Publishing.

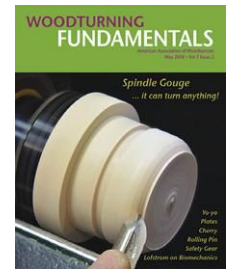
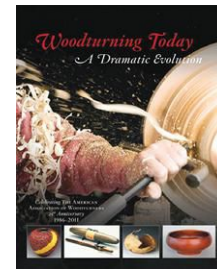
John was instrumental in editing the AAW's 25th anniversary book, *Woodturning Today: A Dramatic Evolution*, published in 2012. And later he was appreciated by AAW members when in 2018 and 2019 he took the helm of *Woodturning Fundamentals* to bring it up to the professional standard of the AAW's flagship journal, *American Woodturner*. Twelve issues and 600 pages, this was John's last magazine publishing project.

A student of form

John Kelsey is an accomplished and prolific woodturner and was influenced by Steven Hogbin. He is methodical in his studies and analysis of classical forms and continues to experiment with shapes and

silhouettes. He also makes innovative use of hidden magnets in his turned boxes and sculptures.

John lives near Lancaster, Pennsylvania, and runs a weekly "Woodturner's Coffee Hour" Zoom meeting for the Lancaster Area Woodturners. Participation is open to members and non-members alike, and more information and video downloads of previous meetings can be found at lancasterareawoodturners.org. John also has his own YouTube channel, @JohnKelseyArtisan, featuring videos of his woodturning ideas, projects, and insights.

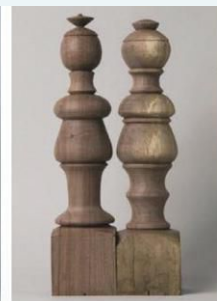


Publishing for the AAW.



Box with magnetic lid

Playing with form



Odd Couples, 12" to 14" (30cm to 36cm) tall, 3" to 3½" (8cm to 9cm) diameter, Douglas fir, black walnut.

John Kelsey collection

Rest In Peace, Member No. 1 David Ellsworth (1944-2025)

David Ellsworth died June 16, 2025. With his passing, we lost a pioneering woodturner, an innovative tool maker, a gifted and dedicated teacher, an extraordinary representative, spokesperson, advocate, and ambassador for woodturning—and the founding president of the AAW. To put it succinctly: We lost Member No. 1.

History

Born June 25, 1944, David first encountered a lathe in eighth-grade shop class, where he turned a laminated platter for his mother—which he had in his possession for the rest of his life. In college and graduate school, he experimented with many craft media before embracing wood as his medium and the lathe as his primary tool.

By 1978, David had perfected tools and techniques for hollow-form turning that resulted in eggshell-thin walls turned through a small opening. The results were sensational and propelled his career as a leading artist in wood, eventually represented by sixteen galleries across the country and having works in the permanent collections of more than forty major museums.

David founded the Ellsworth School of Woodturning in 1990 and became one of the most respected, sought-after, and beloved demonstrators and teachers of woodturning. In 2008, he was named a “Master of the Medium” by the James Renwick Alliance, and in 2021, he was named a “Visionary” by the Smithsonian Institution—the top award a craftsman can receive in America.



David poses during one of the last classes he taught, January 2025, wearing his turned Member #1 wooden hat.

Photo: Craig Edelbrock

Envisioning the AAW

From the AAW’s beginnings in 1986, David envisioned an organization that would be welcoming, mutually supportive, democratic, and a dynamically evolving community. Today, with more than 350 local chapters, the AAW stands as a testament to his vision and leadership.

Over the last thirty-nine years, David embodied the spirit of woodturning and wove it into the culture of the AAW. The spirit of woodturning is a spirit of:

- Openness and generosity
- Support and encouragement of others
- Teaching and lifelong learning
- Community, sharing, and caring
- Volunteerism and service to others

Rest In Peace, Member No. 1. We will keep your legacy and the spirit of woodturning alive for generations to come. ■

—AAW Contributing Staff

Original membership ledger

MEMBER SHIP #	NAME	AMOUNT	DATE REC'D
000014	DAVID ELLSWORTH	21.85	2/21/86

David Ellsworth, member No. 1.



c. 1983

David attended every AAW Annual Woodturning Symposium except for this year's event in Saint Paul, Minnesota.

Photo: Andi Wolfe

MORE TO COME...

A more complete tribute to David Ellsworth will appear in the October issue of *American Woodturner*. In the meantime, please visit ellsworthlegacy.org where you can post your condolences, remembrances, and tributes for David Ellsworth.

In Memoriam, Avelino Samuel (1956-2025)

Avelino Samuel was born on the island of St. John, U.S. Virgin Islands, where he grew up and spent most of his life. I first met Avelino at the 2000 AAW Woodturning Symposium in Charlotte, North Carolina, when he attended my session on hollow-form turning. We became friends almost immediately, sharing some similarities such as being born and growing up on an island (mine was Barbados), small village life, tackle and spear fishing, finishing up our college careers in the U.S., and our passion for anything wood.

Avelino earned a B.Sc. in industrial arts from North Carolina A&T University, and an M.Sc. in industrial education from Eastern Michigan University. He was introduced to the lathe as part of his curriculum in college, after which he returned to the island, where he taught industrial arts for twenty-two years while developing his career as a craft artist.

At the 2000 AAW Symposium, Avelino brought some of his own wood vessels for the instant gallery. However, he said that after attending the various demonstrations and seeing the quality of work produced by the professionals, he wanted to learn how to make hollow vessels. Armed with the knowledge attained, he focused on the art of hollow-form turning, even designing and making his own tools. His progression was rapid. He became a master in the art of classic, hollow-form vessels known for their spiral carvings and texturing, some with exquisite finials. He made many appearances teaching and demonstrating this art form at various woodturners' clubs, and folk and art schools nationally and internationally, earning him wide acclaim.

Avelino's works are featured in private and public collections, most notably the Renwick Gallery of the Smithsonian



American Art Museum in Washington, D.C. In addition to appearances at some demos, he and I collaborated on *Shaping the Vessel*, an exhibit curated by Charles Farrar for the Harvey B. Gantt Center for African-American Arts and Culture in North Carolina, July 2016.

Avelino was a teacher, mentor, and friend who inspired many, but most of all, he was an unbelievably genuine person who willingly shared his knowledge and love of woodturning. His passing in June of this year has left a void in the many lives he touched, but his legacy will live on. ■

—John Mascoll, Florida

In Memoriam: Nick Agar (1966-2025)



When I was asked to write an in memoriam piece about Nick Agar, my first thought was that I was not the most qualified person to write about him.

There were many people closer to him than I was. However, my friend Pamela Aveling (one of those people) assured me that as one of the many people in the turning community who knew and loved Nick, I was well suited for the job.

I knew him as a fellow demonstrator—someone I would always look forward to seeing and catching up with at various symposia around the world. While we didn't speak often, each time I saw Nick, we just picked up where we left off. He was someone I considered part of my woodturning family.

Walking into Nick's Brooklet, Georgia, studio, offered a little peek into his creative brain—walls covered in vintage axes, Viking memorabilia, a huge library, and many other things he found inspiring. Nick Agar has an extensive list of professional accolades and accomplishments. Many of these are detailed in an article profiling him in the April 2018 *American Woodturner* (vol 33, no 2). I imagine you could circle the earth many times if you could string together all of the traveling Nick did in his lifetime, sharing his passion for woodturning with so many.

The thing that stood out about Nick, aside from his amazing technical proficiency, boundless creativity, and wicked sense of humor, was how you felt when you were with him. In Pamela's words, he didn't just come through the door, he burst into the room. He had seemingly

endless amounts of energy and enthusiasm. Most of all, he had incredible levels of patience and empathy for others. When you spoke with Nick, whether over a beer after a long day of teaching and demonstrating, or about a turned wood form in a critique, or an idea for a new tool, you knew he was listening wholeheartedly and intently. No matter how tired he was, he always found the energy to bring an entire room to laughter or speak to anyone who approached. I believe that I can speak on behalf of the entire woodturning family when I say that Nick Agar will be greatly missed. ■

—Ashley Harwood, South Carolina



SkillsUSA Utah 4th Annual High School Woodturning Contest

Photos by Karl Hansen.



SkillsUSA Utah 2025 Woodturning Contestants.

1st Place and Rookies Rule Award

*Red Zebra Platter, by
Logan Moon, Tooele
High School, Josh
Warren (teacher)*



Twenty-two high school woodturners, representing thirteen schools and ten districts gathered at Salt Lake Community College on March 28, 2025, to compete in the 4th annual SkillsUSA Utah Woodturning Competition. The number of contestants and quality of work has significantly increased since 2022 when the competition was initiated.

SkillsUSA is a national student leadership organization—similar in concept to Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) and Future Farmers of America (FFA). SkillsUSA, however, is focused to help students gain leadership and workplace skills in technical fields. Competing in the state contest requires significant preparation beyond making a turned project. Contestants were judged in five categories—project design, project quality, job interview, portfolio notebook, and written test. The quality of the work submitted was excellent and represented substantial creativity and initiative. Each of the three contest winners submitted excellent work and performed well in all five judging categories. In addition to awarding 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place winners, this year an additional recognition titled “Rookies Rule” was given for the three best projects made by students who were competing in the competition for the first time.

The 2025 SkillsUSA Utah Woodturning competition was supported by Craft Supplies USA (Provo), Rockler Woodworking (Taylorsville), and Woodcraft (Sandy) with contest judges and prizes for each contestant. Several volunteers, including members of the Timp Woodturners Club, donated time to serve as judges, photographers, and assistants to make the competition successful.



2nd Place

Nesting Bowls, by
Lincoln Zacharias,
Tooele High School,
Josh Warren (teacher)

3rd Place and Rookies Rule Award

A Squirrel's Dream,
Mac Smith, Brighton
High School, Paul
Otterstrom (teacher)



Rookies Rule Award

Luke's Lightsaber, by Luke Veenendaal,
Tooele High School, Josh Warren (teacher)

It should be noted that SkillsUSA is a national student leadership organization which has nearly 400,000 members and sponsors over 100 different competitions. Since all fifty states have a SkillsUSA director and annual competition, there is tremendous potential to introduce youth to woodturning through the SkillsUSA organization. Currently, only Utah holds a state level woodturning competition and there is no

woodturning competition at the annual SkillsUSA National Leadership and Skills Conference. Hopefully within the next few years, SkillsUSA woodturning competitions will be held in several states and eventually at the national level.

If you are interested in organizing a SkillsUSA woodturning competition in your state, please contact Kip Christensen at kc@learningturning.com, or David Fellows at fellowsdw@gmail.com. ■

HELPFUL LINKS

- SkillsUSA: skillsusa.org
- SkillsUSA State Association Directors: skillsusa.org/who-we-are/leaders-and-partners/association-directors
- SkillsUSA List of Competitions: skillsusa.egnyte.com/dl/B7UvDZ4E9e

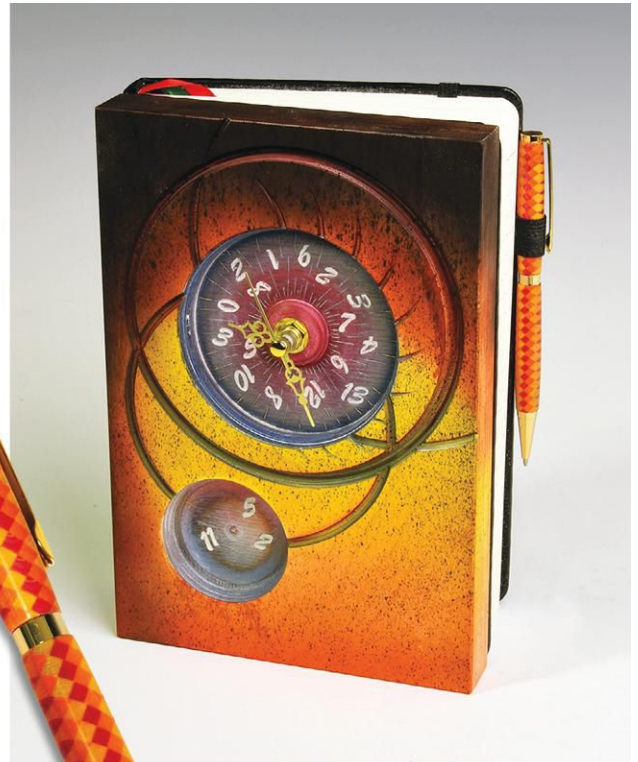
Segmented Woodturners Chapter Challenge: Pens

It is uncommon to see pens created by members of the Segmented Woodturners, an online chapter of the AAW, so we decided to make pens our spring 2025 chapter challenge. The members rose to the challenge and created the wide range of innovative designs, seen here.

The goal of the periodic chapter challenge is to make an item that is out of our comfort zone, try a new technique, and most important have some fun. The photos of each entry are then posted in the chapter photo gallery so members can ask questions about the techniques used and hopefully become inspired to try something similar. Pushing ourselves and sharing what we make is a great way to improve not only our skills but those of our woodturning friends.

If you'd like to learn more about segmenting and/or join us for our next chapter challenge, visit segmentedwoodturners.org.

—Al Miotke, President, Segmented Woodturners



Steve Bonny, *A Book Holds What Time Lets Go*, Book cover: Baltic birch, spirit stains, liming wax; Pen (twice-cut lamination): dyed stabilized poplar, cyanoacrylate (CA) finish, Slimline pen kit

This project combines the Segmented Woodturners Chapter pen challenge with a Corridor Woodturners turned book cover challenge. The book cover was inspired by a Nick Agar/David Springett project.



Dennis Streng, *Periwinkle Pen*, Maple, yellowheart, bloodwood, black veneer



Doug Drury, *Double Celtic Knot Pen*, Padauk, green Dymondwood, maple, walnut

Steve Bonny,
Pentastrophe,
Bloodwood, maple,
mahogany, lacquer
Inspired by the work
of Jerry Bennett.

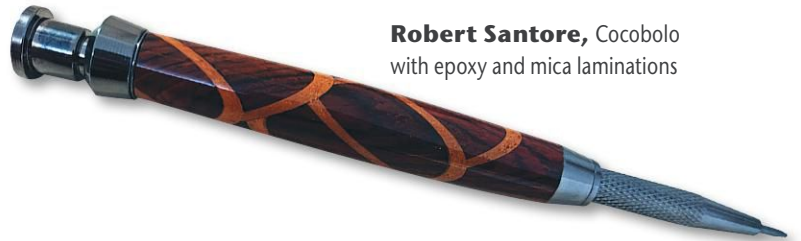


Mike Selser, *Spiral Pen,* Maple, American sycamore, jatoba

Charles Gabriel,
Yellowheart, Peruvian walnut,
black veneer, CA finish



Robert Santore, Cocobolo
with epoxy and mica laminations



Al Miotke, *Scalloped Pen,* Maple,
bubinga, black veneer



Russ Braun, Wenge, maple



Doug Drury, Maple, red oak, dyed birch veneer

Book Review: *New Complete Guide to Band Saws, Revised and Expanded Edition*, by Mark Duginske, Fox Chapel Publishing, 2025, 200 pages, paperback

Mark Duginske's *New Complete Guide to Band Saws, Revised and Expanded Edition* serves as a patient, thorough, and clear guide to this most versatile of machines in any woodworker's shop. I was aware of Duginske's name from way back, but had never actually relied on one of his books before. Even without the earlier editions for comparison, this presents as a definitive reference and resource.

Duginske starts from the beginning, and leaves no stone unturned, and no term unclear. I am no bandsaw expert, but I did come to this with a working familiarity of the bandsaw, and I still appreciated the clarification of certain details in the structure and function of

the bandsaw. The book is very clearly organized, and builds on basic concepts as it explores various topics relevant to choosing, adjusting, and using a bandsaw. Illustrations and photos appropriately reinforce the text. I could easily see having this in hand while going through the various steps of tuning up my saw.

Of particular note is the detailed discussion of blades and blade tension. Lots of this info is available elsewhere, but not in such a comprehensive, clear, organized, and useful fashion. Duginske takes the reader through the information, forces, and calculations that determine proper blade choice and tension, and while some of the formulas were over my head, the

conclusions were crystal clear.

Duginske is authoritative without being pedantic. Rather than relying on generally received wisdom, he subjects everything to cold, hard analysis in the service of improving the woodworker's experience. He notes that "Study and common sense are always better than snake oil." And he has his bonafides in place, as the patent holder on Cool Blocks and other bandsaw enhancements. Duginske clearly knows bandsaws, and he shares this knowledge in an accessible and useful way with this book. ■

—Steve Forrest, California



Overbrook Students Join Tennessee Association of Woodturners for Wig Stand Project

Photos by Meagan Harkin.

When Overbrook Catholic School (OCS) of Nashville, Tennessee, alumna Michael Ann Zinser, '84, heard about the Tennessee Association of Woodturners' (TAW) wig stand project, she knew Overbrook students would joyfully share their time and talents. TAW is dedicated to advancing the craft of woodturning through education, information, and turning opportunities. One of these philanthropic endeavors is creating wig stands for cancer patients. The group began setting a standard for wig stand

design, recruiting chapters to undertake the project, and working with Hood Distributing for discounted wood. A subset of TAW, Women in Turning focuses on wig stands with personality to best honor the cancer patients receiving them. The stand design includes a place at the bottom for bobby pins, a watch, or earrings. Of these stands, 160 were produced in the Nashville area, with 56 on loan to OCS and St. Cecilia Academy students for the decorating process.

Chris Price is a former board member of the Middle Tennessee chapter and local liaison for Women in Turning. TAW coordinated the project to donate to Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt. To best honor these young spirits, TAW unanimously decided that the wig stands needed to be adorned by children themselves, which is where OCS stepped in to help.

Art teacher DeAnn McDowell had her fifth- and sixth-grade students paint

original designs on the stands. After several classes, DeAnn and Michael Ann returned the finished stands to TAW for a final coat of sealant.

"They loved working on it," DeAnn says. "They were excited to think about what messages they could write on them. They were very in tune with how it would feel not to have hair and to have a wig." "It's important for our students to understand that they can meaningfully honor their community no matter their age," Principal Sister Marie Blanchette, O.P., says. "You can see a light bulb turn on in their heads when they realize that service to the community is meant to align with their gifts and talents."

DeAnn talked at length with students about making their designs beautiful and positive for someone going through a hard time. "The students were very receptive to that," she says, mentioning how they desired to personally give them to the patients and repeatedly asked when they would be delivered. ■



Sixth graders with their wig stands painted for cancer patients at Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt.

Calendar of Events

Send event info to editor@woodturner.org. October issue deadline: August 15.

Ireland

October 18, 19, 2025, Irish Woodturners Guild (IWG) Seminar, Tullamore Court Hotel, Tullamore, County Offaly. Featured demonstrators to include Art Liestman (Canada), Ronald Kanne (Netherlands), Pierre Cornelis (France), and Seamus Cassidy (Ireland). For more, visit iwg.ie.

South Africa

October 3-6, 2025, The Association of Woodturners of South Africa's annual symposium, Northlink College, Cape Town. Featured demonstrator to be announced. For more, visit awsa.org.za

Colorado

September 19–21, 2025, Rocky Mountain Woodturning Symposium, The Ranch Events Complex, Loveland. Demonstrators to include Cindy Drozda, Rabea Gebler, Nathalie Groeneweg, Ashley Harwood, Kristin LeVier, Merryll Saylan, Janine Wang, Andi Wolfe, Sally Ault, Emily Ford, Jolie Karno, Heather Marusiak, Tib Shaw, Margaret Stiles, and Katie Stofel. Event to feature forty-five demos, a hands-on turning area, tradeshow, and instant gallery. For more, visit: rmwoodturningsymposium.com.

Illinois

CANCELLATION NOTICE: The Segmented Woodturners Symposium, which was scheduled for September 26–28, 2025, has been cancelled due to closure of the venue, Crowne Plaza Hotel, Northbrook. For more, visit segmentedwoodturners.org.

Minnesota

Multiple 2025 exhibitions, AAW's Gallery of Wood Art, Landmark Center, Saint Paul:

- August 10–November 30, 2025: *Beginnings* (AAW's 2025 member exhibition)
- Ongoing: *Touch This!*; *Around the Hus—Turning in Scandinavian Domestic Life*; *She's Tops! Selections from the Linda Ferber Collection*; vintage and historic lathes and turned items

For more, visit galleryofwoodart.org or email Tib Shaw at tib@woodturner.org.

Montana

October 3–5, 2025, Yellowstone Woodturners Symposium, Roaring 20s Club House, Billings. Featured demonstrator/instructor will be Laurent Niclot. For more, visit the Yellowstone Wood Turners Facebook page or email Sam Angelo (samandcheryle@gmail.com) or Roger Kesler (rogerkesler@msn.com).

New York

September 13, 14, 2025, The Long Island Woodworkers 27th Annual Woodworking Show, Cradle of Aviation Museum, Garden City, Long Island. Featuring demonstrations in woodturning, scrolling, woodcarving, and cabinet/furniture making. Renowned furniture maker Chuck Bender to offer free seminars throughout both days. Hundreds of judged projects will be on display in many different categories. Toy shop with free gifts for kids. Entrance to the Museum that commemorates Long Island's part in the history of aviation gives free access to the woodworking show. For more, visit liwoodworkers.org or email showchair@liwoodworkers.org.

North Carolina

November 7-9, 2025, North Carolina Woodturning Symposium, Greensboro Coliseum Special Events Center, Greensboro. Biennial event featuring a vendor tradeshow,

instant gallery, and rotations from world-renowned and local turners. For details, visit ncwts.com.

Ohio

October 10-12, 2025, Turning 2025, Ohio Valley Woodturners Guild's 13th biennial Woodturning Symposium, Higher Ground Conference Center, West Harrison, Indiana (near Cincinnati, Ohio). Featured demonstrators to include Pat Carroll, Andy Cole, Elizabeth Weber, and Rebecca DeGroot, plus other regional demonstrators. The pastoral setting has onsite lodging, dormitories, and a dining hall. Event to feature demonstration stations, instant gallery, vendors, and a live auction. For more, visit ovwg.org.

Pennsylvania

September 19–21, 2025, The Mid Atlantic Woodturning Symposium, Lancaster Marriott Hotel and Convention Center, Lancaster. Featured demonstrators to include Hans Weissflog, Jakob Weissflog, Eiko Tanaka, Steve Cook, Jim Williams, Helen Bailey, and Greg Gallegos. For more, visit mawts.com.

Texas

August 22–24, 2025, SWAT (Southwest Association of Turners) annual symposium, Waco Convention Center, Waco. Demonstrators to include Mike Mahoney, Mike Nish, Toni Street, Sally Ault, Lyle Jamieson, Matt Monaco, and Jerry Bennett. Registration includes lunch each day, vendor tradeshow, and instant gallery. For more, visit swaturners.org. ■

From AAW's Permanent Collection



Nick Cook, *Platter*, 2005,
Ash with charred rim, 1¾" × 11"
(4cm × 28cm)

Donated by the artist, 2009

Photo: Tib Shaw/AAW

TIPS

Tips

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

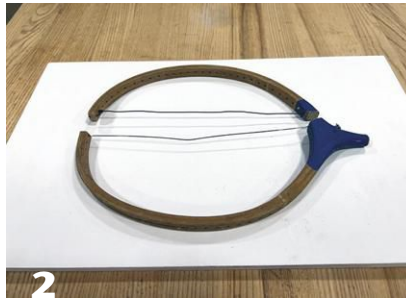
Racket segment holds burn wire

When using a burn wire at the lathe, it is important to hold both ends safely. I came up with a way to mount the wire on a spare badminton or tennis racket, converting the racket into a holding frame (*Photo 1*).

One racket can yield two frames (*Photo 2*). Cut the handle off of the racket and then cut the hoop in half, giving you two half-hoops.

The burn wire is held in place by looping it around one end of the half-hoop, then threading the other end through one of the existing lacing holes and securing it with a small screw. This makes it easy to replace the wire as needed.

—Dustin Davis, Maryland, AAW member since 2009



Threaded knob keeps tool cover in place

When I decided to try negative-rake scrapers, I wanted to protect their edges with a threaded knob that keeps the protective cover in place. I used PVC pipe to fit over the tool and then drilled and tapped it with a #7 drill bit (0.201", or 5mm) and a 1/4"-20 tap. I finished it with some threaded knobs from the scrap bin and a PVC cap with a piece of high density foam floor mat.

—John Kaner, Alaska, AAW member since 2004



Custom Cole-style jaw stoppers

I was working on a platter that had flexed too much while drying and needed to be flattened both inside and out. Alas, I had already removed the tenon. (I badly overestimated how dry the piece was.) I ended up boiling the platter for an hour or two, then clamped it flat for a couple of days. It was then flat enough to at least attempt returning. Re-flattening the bottom of the platter was relatively straightforward. But what to do about the inside, which still had a major convex belly?

I frequently end up with turnings that somehow manage to fit exactly between the settings of the standard rubbery

stops on my Cole-style jaws. This platter was yet another problem child, but I was able to improvise a new set of stoppers.

My first step was to trade out the standard stoppers with larger wooden disks. I cut these from a single blank, with an appropriately sized center hole drilled. I used a dowel as a mandrel, and parted off eight disks. My thought was that these could span the slightly too-large gap and hold the platter.

But the piece was taller than the disks

could cover. So I traded out the standard bolts for longer ones—long enough to get the wooden disks up and over the

edge of the platter. I cut lengths of 1/4" (6mm) tubing to support the disks and cushion the platter (*Photo 1*).

Of course, there was still a problem. The rim of the platter was defined by a small raised bead, and the disks were threatening to break or dent this bead when tightened. My solution was to cut a small flat on each of the disks—*voila!* I was able to center and secure the platter without marring the rim and proceeded to correct the inside surface (*Photo 2*).

You could shape the stoppers for whatever your project requires. Disks were the quickest, easiest fix for my situation. But with a little forethought, you can craft one or more sets of stoppers to handle those pieces that don't quite fit the standard set, and get yourself out of a jam.

—Steve Forrest, California, AAW member since 2012



Downspout guard catches errant sandpaper

Photos by Carl Ford.



When sanding at the lathe by hand, sometimes the sandpaper will slip out of my hand and get sucked through the dust collector chute. I solved this problem by installing a gutter downspout guard in the mouth of my dust collector hood. The downspout guard catches any sandpaper that slips from my hands.

You can purchase a downspout guard at your local big box hardware store or search on the internet for “plastic balloon downspout guard filter strainer.”

—Tom Gorbett, New York, AAW member since 2007

Rule and pencil at the ready

I always need a pencil and rule at my lathe, but they both can easily be buried under wood chips. I solved this problem by mounting the rule permanently to a hardwood block, which I attached to the lathe bed with double-sided tape. The block is angled so that the rule faces 45 degrees up for easy viewing. Having the rule rigidly mounted also facilitates setting caliper measurements. I drilled a $\frac{3}{8}$ " - (9.5mm-) diameter hole into the end to hold a pencil.



—Bill Wells,
Washington
State, AAW
member
since 2012

Be kind to your hands

Be kind to your small finger and thumb joints. Save wear and tear there by using larger muscle groups whenever possible. Often this means using tools when you think them unnecessary such as using needle nose pliers to peel the seal off newly opened bottles instead of gripping them with your fingers and thumb. My favorite tool for opening stuck glue caps is an old two sized nutcracker, works like they were made for that! In everything be

mindful of your grip. Having a death grip on your tools at the lathe means you are doing something wrong. Employ a light grip whenever possible.

I installed longer levers on all the machines in my shop, making it so much easier to bind and release pressure. Drill the hole slightly larger than you need, then wrap the lever with tape and press fit it on. This leaves it removable should you want it off in the future. I also use a piece of an old yoga

mat behind my paper when sanding. I find it eases the amount of pressure I need to grip the sandpaper as well as gives the wood a more even finish. I'm less likely to gouge into the softer fibers than with finger pad pressure alone.

Last of all keep your shop warm and/or wear a hat. A warm body enables circulation to the hands lubricating all those stiff joints big and small. ►

—Larae Palmer, Oregon, AAW member since 2021

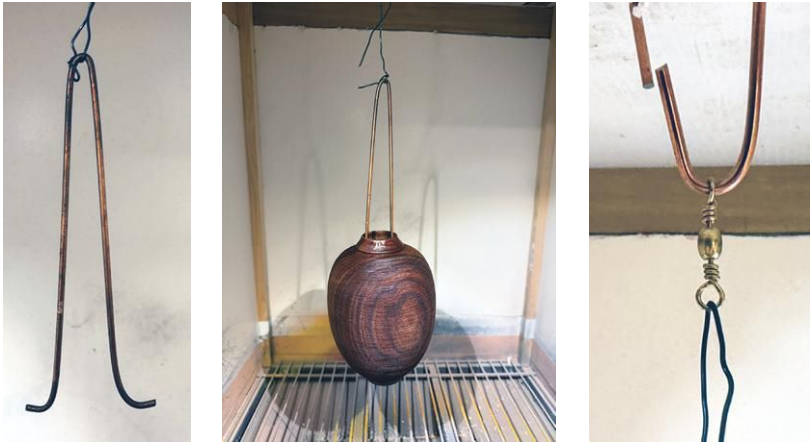


TIPS

Wire hanger holds work while finishing

I like to hang things up while I spray on a clear finish. I use a piece of stiff clothes hanger wire or RG45 gas welding rod. I bend the wire in a tight U shape with feet on the bottom. The feet fit inside of the opening on my hollow form. I also add a fishing line barrel swivel in the line that I use to hang up the bent wire. This allows me to easily swivel the piece with one hand while spraying it with the other hand.

—Carl Ford, New York, AAW member since 2001

**Headlamp shows finishing details**

I wear a headlamp when finishing. The focused light gives me a crystal clear look at the wood as I apply the finish. It's a great way to see all the details, and I can direct the light by simply moving my head. The extra light highlights areas that may need to be touched up. One trick is to aim the light so it shines parallel to the wood. This is called a raking light, and as it glances off the wood it magnifies any problem areas.

—Tim Heil, Minnesota, AAW member since 2001

**Hand grip exercisers**

A few years ago, I realized I needed to improve my hand strength and dexterity if I wanted to be a better turner. Thus, I purchased a set of hand grip exercisers on the web for \$7. I use them in the morning while I am riding my exercise bike. They give my hands a good workout and have improved my turning.

When I was a kid, my uncle had a set of these that you needed to be Superman to use. They were made for weightlifting, etc. The ones I have are good for mere mortals. The resistance is enough, but not too much. Look for "Hand Grips for Strength Training" on the web.

—Carl Ford, New York, AAW member since 2001

**Bolt from roller chair as turning mandrel**

Before you throw out that old swivel desk chair, check to see if the stem on the caster has threads of a 3/8" (9.5mm) bolt.

If it does, remove it from the plastic wheel part and it can be used in a chuck as a bottle stopper mandrel.

To take it a step further, I added a wooden spacer the size of the bottle stopper's mounting point. This acts as a bushing and helps to ensure you cut the bottom of your turned stopper the same size as the metal stopper.

—Dustin Davis, Maryland, AAW member since 2009



Sound control with acoustic panels

A strategy to manage noise is important in the design of any shop. Loud noise detracts from the joy of turning, and long-term exposure to loud noise will damage your hearing. In my experience, the greatest problem with managing noise is that sound waves bounce off surfaces and will cause solid walls and floors to vibrate. I have taken a two prong approach in my newest workshop. My dust collection system, vacuum pump, and air compressor are in a room separate from the lathes. The separate room helps, but there needs to be return air to the dust collector and that path for air is also a path for sound.

The second prong is the use of acoustic panels. Acoustic panels work by absorbing sound waves when they hit a surface, preventing them from bouncing back and creating echoes, essentially trapping the sound energy within the panel's porous material and converting it into heat, thus reducing reverberation and improving the overall sound quality in a space. The 2" foam panels stop the bouncing of the sound waves as well as absorbing the noise. It has

made a tremendous difference in sound levels and is less expensive than enclosing the vacuum and compressor with walls.

One could go further and add sound blankets (online search for sound blanket) hung from the ceiling to wall of the largest sources of noise, but I have not felt the need to do this.

Acoustic foam really had an impact on the noise without a great deal of time, effort, or cost.

—Dennis Belcher, North Carolina, AAW member since 2003



2" (5cm) acoustic foam panels deaden sound in my new shop.



Acoustic panels come in a highly compressed bundle that expands five-fold as they are unpacked. They can be attached to walls and ceilings a number of ways. I tried double-sided tape, hot glue, and Command Strips before settling on staples. The staples hold the panels well, are easy to apply, and leave minimal damage if a panel is removed.



A mat under the air compressor diminishes sound transmission to the floor.

Larger, more versatile sanding disks

Woodturners have been using 2" and 3" (5cm and 8cm) sanding disks for a long time. I recently discovered 5" (13cm) sanding disks, and they quickly have become my first choice. A 5" disk has a lot more surface area than a 3" disk, hence they work faster and more efficiently.

The larger 5" disks work great on flat things like plates. They also work great on the outside of bowls and hollow forms. They do not work well on the inside of a bowl. I use a 2" or 3" disk on the inside of bowls.

I find that 5" disks easily handle jobs that 3" disks struggle with. The big wide disk can span gaps and safely hang off the edge of things. You can sand the bark on live-edge bowls or hollow forms with the lathe running without ripping the bark off or rounding it over (*Photo 1*). You can sand the face of off-center plates with the lathe running (*Photo 2*).

I purchase my 5" disks from the same supplier that sells 2" and 3" disks. And since 5" disks have more surface area, they are often more cost-effective. ■

—Carl Ford, New York, AAW member since 2001



SKILL-BUILDING PROJECT

Turned CORN COB HOLDERS

Tim Heil



If you're like me, you have a stash of small wood "cut offs" that are just too nice to throw away. Here's a project idea for some of those pieces of scrap wood. I made corn cob holders, or what I call pinchers, perfect for your next backyard picnic.

The project involves some straightforward skill-building turning, sizing a small tenon to fit a reinforcing ferrule, and installing cut nails as corn grippers. Here is how I made them.

Start with a ferrule

Start with a piece of hardwood at least 1" (25mm) in diameter and 3" (8cm) long. Turn a tang, or small tenon, on one end and then mount the work in a scroll chuck.

Bring up the tailstock for support, and use a parting tool and outside caliper to size a tenon for a ferrule (*Photos 1, 2*). In this case, I used a $\frac{5}{8}$ "- (16mm-) diameter brass gas compression ring as a ferrule. The ferrule prevents the endgrain from splitting, plus it adds visual interest.

Shape the holder

Next, shape the corn cob holder; I used a $\frac{3}{8}$ " (10mm) detail gouge for this task. I think the ideal shape would feel comfortable when pinched and have some wood texture for finger gripping (*Photo 3*).

I formed some gripping grooves with a skew chisel, then used a wire to burn lines in the grooves. When burning the lines, run the lathe in reverse if possible and be sure not to wrap the wire around your fingers (*Photo 4*).

Add nails

Finishing nails are a great way to connect the pinchers to the corn cob. I cut the nails to a length of $\frac{3}{4}$ " (19mm), then drilled three evenly spaced holes $\frac{3}{8}$ " deep in the endgrain of the holder. I drilled by hand and kept the wood in the

MORE ON SHOPMADE FERRULES!

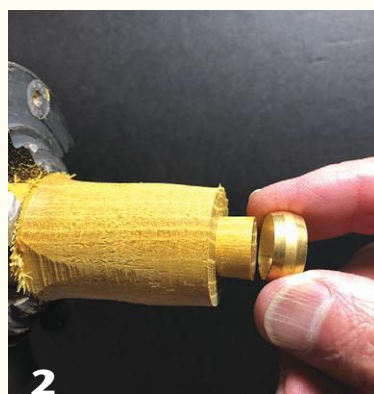
EXPLORE!

Ferrules add both flair and strength. Be sure to check out Tim Heil's April 2011 *AW* article, "Fancy Ferrules from Everyday Objects" (vol 26, no 2, page 28).

Log in at woodturner.org and use the Explore! search tool!



Size tenon for ferrule



After mounting the work in a chuck, turn a small tenon sized to accept a reinforcing ferrule.

Shape corn cob holder



The author uses a spindle gouge to shape the corn cob holder. Stop the lathe and test how the pincher feels between your fingers. Adjust accordingly.

chuck on the lathe for support (Photo 5).

I have used both two-part epoxy and gel cyanoacrylate (CA) glue to hold the nails in place, and both work equally well.

Now is also a good time to glue the ferrule in place. For that, I use E6000 glue because when it dries it remains flexible so when the wood moves from moisture or humidity, the glue moves with it (Photo 6).

Enjoy!

Finally, I sanded the wood to 240 grit abrasive, then applied a water-resistant finish. My favorite is Waterlox high gloss varnish because it wears well and highlights the wood grain.

Keep in mind that a pair of corn cob pinchers don't have to look identical to be successful. Rather, they should look like "family members" but not identical twins. See more examples in Photo 7. I hope this project will build not only your woodturning skills but also some quality backyard family time. ■

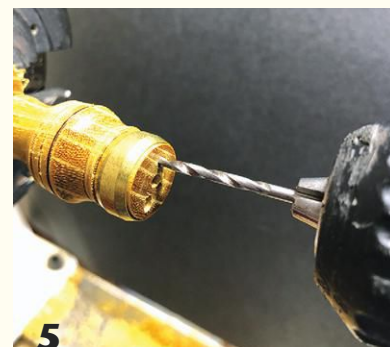
Tim Heil was introduced to woodturning in junior high school woodshop in 1966. He joined the AAW and the Minnesota Woodturners in 2002, and that put his woodturning skills in high gear. His favorite wood is lilac.

Add gripper grooves with burn lines



Use a skew chisel to create grooves that will aid in gripping the holder. The author highlights these grooves by burning lines in them with a burning wire; the groove in the wood is the road for the wire to follow.

Drill for the nails



Three holes are drilled into the endgrain to accept cut nails, which will sink into the ends of the corn cob. The author uses a portable hand drill for accuracy.

Glue in the nails



Glue choices. Gel cyanoacrylate (CA) glue is easy to apply in tight spaces. E6000 glue remains flexible after it has cured, but it is toxic so wear gloves and use an organic vapor mask.

Examples of corn cob holders



Examples from the author's collection of corn pinchers. Creating identical pairs is not necessarily the measure of success.



TURNING SPIRAL ROSETTES

John Sutter

A few years ago, I was searching for a way to embellish the tops of some swivel-lid boxes I made for holiday gifts. What developed was a lathe-based technique to produce what I like to call “spiral rosettes.” As time passed and one project led to another, and another, and another, it occurred to me that perhaps a more appropriate term might be “rabbit hole rosettes”; the

possibilities seemed endless! But I decided on the former label.

The basic idea

This technique is actually quite simple, even though it might not look it. The part to be embellished is mounted off center on a faceplate (*Photo 1*), and a small diamond-point negative-rake scraper is used to make circular grooves in the surface of



the part. The cutting tool is moved progressively along a custom-made toolrest, creating a set of concentric arcs, as shown in the *opening image* of this article.

After one set of grooves is completed, the part gets indexed a predetermined amount around its center point, and then another set of grooves is made. This process is repeated until all the grooving is completed.

The design that is created by the overlapping grooves is determined by a number of factors, including: how much the part is offset, the number of grooves, the distance between the grooves, the depth of the grooves, the number of sets of grooves, and whether paint is used to highlight the grooves (*Photo 2*).

Holding the parts on the lathe

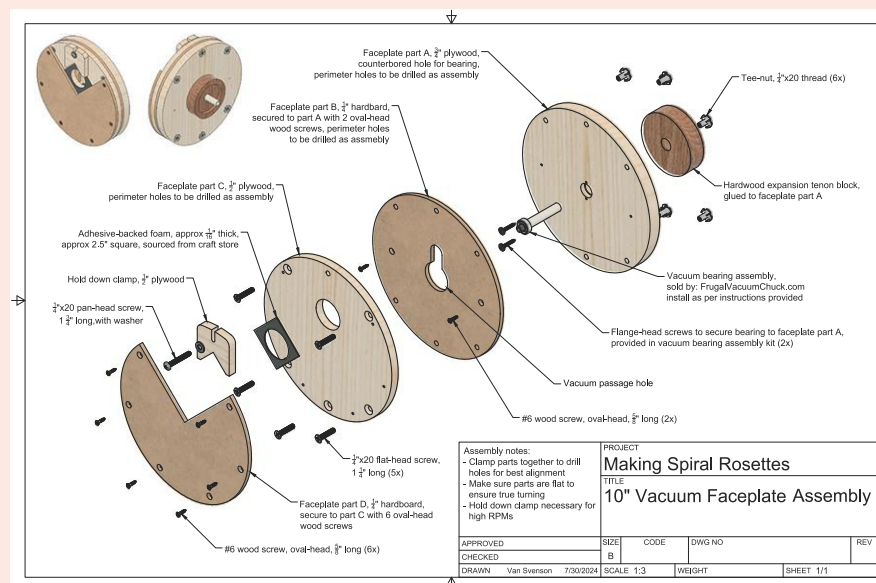
As you have noticed, the embellished parts can vary greatly in size—from 2½"- (6cm-) square swivel box tops to standard handheld mirrors to 16"- (41cm-) diameter wall mirrors (*Photos 3-5*). I started by building a faceplate that held the parts with a vacuum chuck and sliding clamp. When I decided to move on and make larger items, I determined that the quickest, easiest, and most secure way to hold the parts was to use a bolt through a hole in the center of the part. This not only proved a secure way to attach the parts to the faceplate, but served as a center "shaft" for indexing the parts. The center hole also created the necessity and opportunity for a design feature such as a knob or dot of a contrasting color.

Faceplates

I used three different faceplates in the making of the projects shown in this article. Because of the forces created in offset turning, it is *critical* to use a method of attaching the faceplate to the lathe that is strong enough. The three faceplates described here each use different methods of attachment that are appropriate for their use. Note that the offset faceplate and the standard faceplate are constructed in two layers. The plywood layer provides strength, and the solid stock layer laminated to the plywood provides a surface that can be dressed off to be perfectly flat. This is important since a slight variation in flatness of

Free Download of Parts Drawings!

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Technical Drawings: Van Svenson

the faceplate or part can greatly affect the width of the grooves.

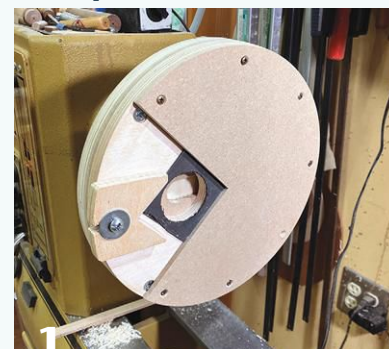
10" vacuum faceplate

The 10"- (25cm-) diameter vacuum faceplate (reference drawing 1 from the online download, see sidebar above) was used for grooving the swivel top boxes. A hardwood expansion tenon was used for this faceplate because I feel that is stronger than a compression tenon. The assembly is held together with screws and T-nuts so that it can be altered for other sized parts or projects if desired (*Photo 6*). With this setup, the 90-degree corner of the positioning jig is located at the center of rotation.

20" offset faceplate

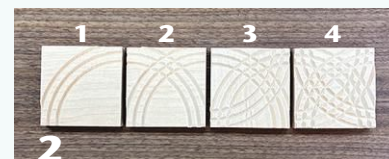
I made the 20" (51cm) offset faceplate (reference drawings 2a and 2b), which is the maximum size for my lathe, with a 2" (5cm) offset. With this faceplate, I am able to make parts up to 16" in diameter. When doing offset turning on faceplates this size, it is imperative that a metal faceplate be used to mount it to the lathe. ►

Off-center vacuum faceplate



The author's 10" off-center vacuum chuck made for holding squares and rounds.

Sequence of grooving



Four sets of grooves.

On this assembly, I attached the metal lathe faceplate to an 8"- (20cm-) diameter plywood disk with machine screws and T-nuts that were glued and then screwed to the 20" plywood disk. After the faceplate was dressed off, the center point was located, and perpendicular lines could be carefully laid out per reference drawing 2b. After the layout

was completed, a ¼"- (6mm-) diameter center hole was drilled (while in the lathe) to allow parts to be turned on center if desired (*Photos 7, 8*).

20" on-center faceplate

The 20"-diameter faceplate (no drawing required) is used only for turning items that are mounted on

center. It eliminates damaging the surface of the off-center faceplate when touching through while turning the outside or inside diameters (on rings) and can be drilled for screw mounting if desired. This faceplate uses a compression tenon because it can be accurately realigned in the chuck. It also has a ¼"-diameter T-nut in the center hole (drilled while in the lathe) for attaching parts (*Photos 9, 10*).

A Note About T-Nuts

To mount a T-nut, the ¼" hole must be opened up with a ⅝"- (8mm-) diameter drill deep enough to accommodate the barrel of the T-nut. A ⅞"- (22mm-) diameter or 1"- (25mm-) diameter Forstner-style bit can be used to counterbore the hole if flush-mounting is desired. Having a ¼"-diameter bolt screwed into the T-nut when it is driven into place ensures the hole and T-nut will be accurately aligned.



Custom toolrest

The construction of the toolrest is pretty straightforward, but the layout and drilling of the holes for the pins must be done very accurately (reference drawings 3a and 3b). The ⅝" pin spacing only leaves ½" (0.8mm) clearance between the pins and the cutting tool. During turning, the



Various sizes and shapes

The technique can be used on items of various sizes and shapes, though different style and size faceplates may be necessary.

Photos: Bill Karow

Back of a vacuum chuck



The back of the author's off-center vacuum faceplate. Note the vacuum hose.

Off-center chuck



A 20" off-center faceplate with adjustable counterweights on the back.

cutting tool should be held firmly against the two outside pins (away from the center of the lathe). Dowel pins can be purchased from online sellers (*Photo 11*).

Cutting tool assembly and sharpening

The cutting tool itself is made from a 4mm × 4mm high-speed tool bit I purchased online. I made the handle from a ¼" × 6" (15cm) pipe nipple (local hardware store) using the threaded ends cut off. The pipe is drilled and tapped for a 1/4-20 × ⅜" hex head set screw, which holds the cutting tool in place (*Photo 12*).

The cutting tool is sharpened into a 90-degree diamond-point negative-rake scraper, with the bottom angle ground at 65 degrees and the top angle 25 degrees. Once the tool has been ground to spec, it can be resharpened with a very light touch on the 65-degree faces. I quickly resharpened after every set of grooves. The 25-degree faces seldom need grinding, only when they are almost ground away (*Photos 13-15*).

Elements of a clean cut

There are a number of factors that can reduce tearout and promote clean cuts:

- Sharpening the cutting tool with a negative-rake grind is most important. Keep it sharp.
- Lathe speed: the faster the better. I generally use about 1500 rpm for parts held on the 10" faceplate and 750 rpm when working on the 20" offset faceplate.

- Light cuts. Use a *slow* plunging motion.
- Wood selection. Using dense straight-grained wood produces the best results. Swirly grain and/or wood with varied

colors can be a visual deterrent from the look of the finished product.

- Sanding sealer. Use it to "stabilize" the surface before grooving. ▶



On-center faceplate

A standard, or on-center, chuck.

Custom toolrest

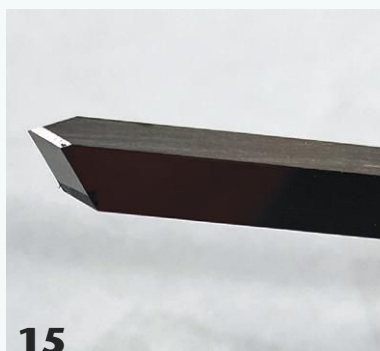


The author's custom toolrest with carefully spaced pins to guide each plunge cut.

Diamond-point negative-rake scraper



The author's cutting tool of choice.



Tool sharpening

Once the tool has been ground to spec, it can be resharpened with a very light touch on the 65-degree faces.

MAKE A MIRROR FRAME

Following are the steps to make and embellish a grooved mirror frame.

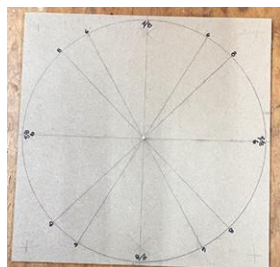
STEP 1

Mount band-sawn disk on a standard faceplate using a 1/4" bolt and washer. True up the outside diameter.



STEP 2

Mark indexing lines. The photos show a simple jig that makes marking indexing lines fast and accurate on any part up to 20" in diameter. The numbers indicate the number of divisions per rotation.



STEP 3

Balance the faceplate/part assembly. The part is now bolted to the *offset* faceplate with indexing line aligned to the highlighted center line.



STEP 4



Flip the assembly over and position it with the two balancing bolts resting on riser blocks.

STEP 5



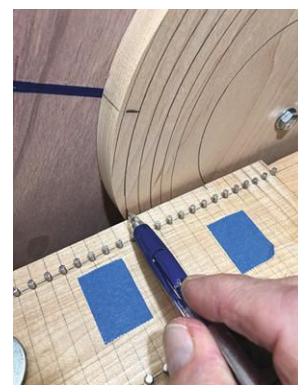
Adjust the counterweight until the assembly is balanced. Counterweights can be stacked for larger parts. Note the adhesive-backed grip tape to prevent the counterweight from moving. Bolt snugly.

STEP 6

Toolrest alignment. (A) Vertical alignment is achieved with a length of PVC pipe cut to position the point of the cutting tool on the height of the lathe.



(B) Since the cutting tool uses the side of the toolrest as a depth stop, it is critical that the distance between the toolrest and the part be accurately adjusted. To achieve this, a 3/16"-thick gauge is "sandwiched" between the toolrest and the part. After the banjo and toolrest levers are tightened, the top plate can be adjusted by loosening the bolts that go through oversized holes and then tightened when the "sandwich" is snug. Note that the grooving pattern can be confirmed with a pencil. The masking tape on the tool rest marks the starting and stopping points.



STEP 7

Depth of cut. To adjust the depth of cut, the cutting tool is slid forward next to the part until the handle contacts the toolrest, and then the set screw is tightened.



STEP 8



The four sets of grooves can be turned with a “light” sharpening of the cutting tool after each set. I like to number the indexing marks to help keep track of which set I’m on.

STEP 9

Apply paint. I use milk paint because I like the available colors and it is easy to sand off. An acid brush works well to get the paint down into the grooves.



STEP 10

Sand paint off the face, or top surface.



STEP 11



Trim outside diameter and mirror pocket. Mount on center on a standard faceplate. The part is secured with four screws through the faceplate and into the back of the mirror frame, so the central bolt can be removed.

STEP 12

Finish. Add a top coat if desired, and glue in the mirror.



John Sutter is a retired patternmaker/production engineer living in Portland, Oregon. John lives in a houseboat and enjoys woodturning in his self-built floating shop.

Online Video!



You’ve read the article—now see the helpful video John Sutter and Roger Crooks created to accompany it. Just visit tiny.cc/Sutter or scan the QR code with your mobile device.



SHOPMADE INDEXING JIG

Steve Wilson

Using figured wood to make a bowl is always nice, but sometimes finding interesting species is not easy. Where I live, north of Detroit, Michigan, there were many silver maple trees planted in the 1950s and 1960s that have come to full maturity and beyond. So there are a lot of neighborhood trees and trees being cleared off of building lots that are now being thrown away. These are the trees I have the opportunity to use, and most of them are maple.

These old growth neighborhood trees usually have smooth grain, except at branch areas, so a lot of the wood is plain grained and solid. This is prime wood for bowls, but the plain grain does not show off the bowl form well. As a woodturner, I count myself primarily a sculptor, so form, proportion, edge, and shape are important. I want to highlight these attributes, but I'm not likely to put cows or flowers or faces on my bowls. To put that kind of ornamentation on a bowl distracts and

obscures the form, and it becomes the art, rather than the bowl itself.

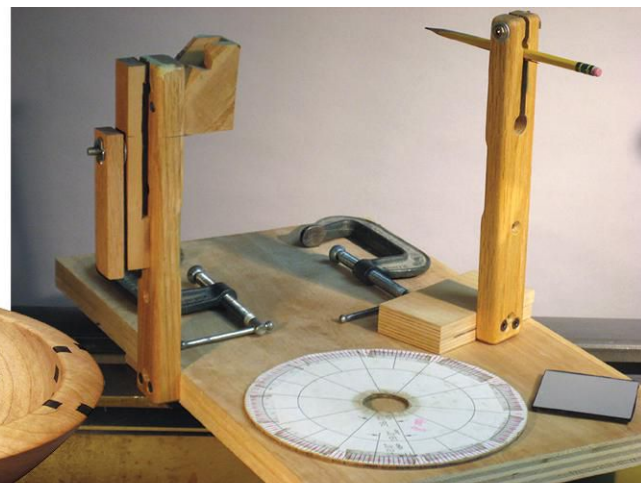
To overcome this challenge, I prefer to use modest abstract decoration to accentuate the form. In my case, I like small squares. To this end, I've developed a jig to accurately divide a bowl down to a single degree. From here, I lay out the horizontal lines by eye so that each division is a square. These line intersections could be considered center lines for other patterns such as inlaid circular plugs. Instead, I use them as is to burn in squares either in lines or spirals. I find that these little squares in a spiral pattern act to show off the form of the bowl without obscuring the wood (*Photo 1*).

A better indexing jig

I find the indexers on most wood lathes to be useless, so I ignore the one on my

lathe. Being able to divide a circle into 360 radial lines is the key to laying out spirals, diamonds, and other patterns you might dream up. My indexing jig allows for more accuracy and flexibility (*see Downloadable Drawings! sidebar*). Note that because there are so many different lathes in use today, the drawings should be used only as a guide and adapted to your particular lathe.

At the heart of an accurate layout is an accurate disk with crisp black lines. I used a computer-aided design, or CAD, program to make a circle 8" (20cm) in diameter, called a polar grid. This size allows it to be printed on a regular printer. So far, I've tried three spacings for different applications: 360, 216, and 180. Next, I made groups of 9 and then 18. This just keeps me from getting lost among the lines. Last, the center circle is the same size

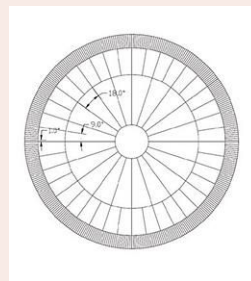
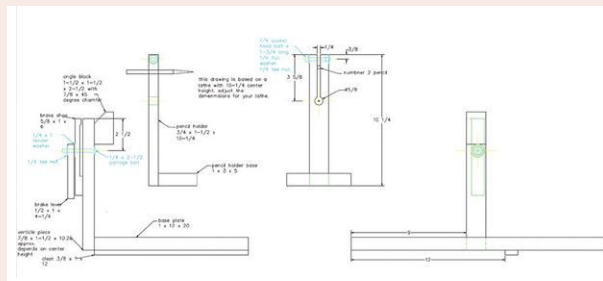


Modest abstract decoration



The 11" (28cm) bowl illustrated in this article, Norway maple, with two sets of spiral patterns denoted by small squares.

Downloadable Drawings!



Detailed technical drawings of Steve Wilson's indexing jig, including polar grids, are available for download at tiny.cc/AWextrs.

as the pilot on the spindle. The first group of lines on the polar grid should be at least $\frac{1}{2}$ " or $\frac{5}{8}$ " (13mm or 16mm) long. The second group is 1" (25mm) long, and the third group ends at the pilot diameter.

Avoid using water-soluble glue to mount the printed paper grid on a $\frac{1}{8}$ "- (3mm-) thick piece of hardboard; to avoid wrinkles in the paper, use a spray adhesive instead. 3M makes a good spray adhesive, but do this work outside because of the fumes. After the paper is mounted on the hardboard disk, drill or saw an undersized hole for the pilot and saw the 8" diameter close to final size. Use a disk or belt sander to trim the diameter to size. Use cyanoacrylate (CA) glue to stiffen the hardboard fibers of the pilot hole, then wrap a piece of medium-grit sandpaper around a round handle or dowel and carefully bring the pilot diameter up to a snug fit on the lathe spindle using the center circle to keep the pattern centered.

Mount the disk with the two-degree markings behind the chuck on the lathe spindle. The plywood baseplate is mounted to the bed ways with two C clamps. I used a $2\frac{3}{4}$ "- (7cm-) square make-up mirror for illustrating this article, but a $1\frac{1}{2}$ " (38mm) square would be less bulky in use (*Photos 2, 3*).

I use a good flat piece of plywood as my work surface, or baseplate, on the bed ways. I chose 1"-thick Baltic birch plywood. My baseplate measures 12" \times 20" (30cm \times 51cm), but I think a width of 13" or 14" (33cm or 36cm) would be better. This depends on the size of the work that is to be laid out; mine is usually under 20" in diameter and less than 8" tall. I have had to add another piece of plywood across the bed ways to lay out taller pieces.

The vertical piece that is attached to the base does several jobs. First, it acts as the accurate reference for the height to the center of the spindle. With the mirror mounted, the top surface acts as the sighting plane to accurately see the line on the disk. Second, it holds the drag brake and acts as part of the friction, and third, it has an angle block to mount

The jig mounted on the lathe

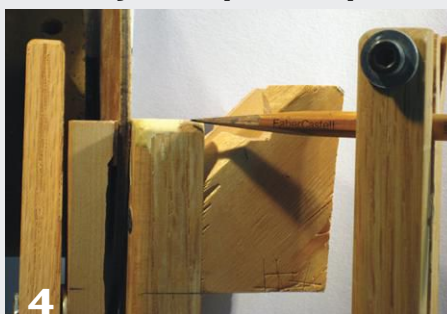


2 Mount the disk, or polar grid, with the paper facing the tailstock. The author uses a chuck to hold the disk in place, but a faceplate up to 6" in diameter could also be used. The plywood base is clamped to the bed ways.



3 An angled mirror allows for sighting across the top of the vertical piece without having to bend down to the centerline of the spindle for each division line.

A finely sharpened pencil



4 A pencil sharpened with a sanding block to an acute angle improves marking accuracy.

Sand to 600 grit



5 The bowl turned and sanded, ready for indexing.

the mirror. Measure the distance from the top of the bed ways to the center of the headstock spindle, then add at least $\frac{1}{8}$ ". This length will be adjusted later. I mounted this piece 9" back from the front edge of the baseplate with two #10 \times $1\frac{1}{2}$ "-long flathead, square-drive screws and yellow glue. Sand off any remainder below the baseplate.

As noted, mount the baseplate to the lathe with a couple C clamps. Mount a flat disk of plywood in the chuck. Place the pencil holder on the baseplate and set the pencil to the center of the disk in the chuck. Mark a horizontal line on the disk, then revolve the disk 180 degrees and mark it again. Chances are that one line will not be drawn exactly over the other, so adjust the pencil and try again. When one line is drawn perfectly over the other,

the pencil is exactly at the centerline of the spindle. Now, mark the vertical piece. If possible, saw this surface on the table saw using a fine carbide blade and miter gauge, as it needs to be smooth and flat.

I use a mirror mounted on the angle block to allow sighting across the top of the vertical piece without having to bend down to the centerline of the spindle 360 times per bowl. A piece of mirror $1\frac{1}{2}$ " square or $1\frac{1}{2}$ "-diameter round is attached to the angle surface, then the block is moved up or down to find the best view for sighting across the top of the vertical. Glue and screw the mirror block here, but make sure the flathead screws are set below the wood's surface because this is a braking surface. Next, mount the brake arm with glue and two more screws. ►

A little trial and error is called for next. Temporarily mount the cleat to the bottom of the baseplate so that there is a good view of the lines on the disk across the top of the vertical piece and that the brake arm will make nearly full contact with the back of the indexing disk. Set the cleat perpendicular to the long edges of the baseplate and position just so, then C-clamp two more pieces of wood tight to the cleat as a reference for location. Remove the cleat, then glue and screw it back in place.

The pencil in the holder is set to the height of the view table (center height of the chuck). Notice how the pencil

has been sharpened with a sanding block. I make mine about a 10-degree angle and less than $\frac{1}{32}$ " (0.8mm) thick at the tip (*Photo 4*). In use, the pencil holder can be quickly set to center from the top of the vertical.

Decorating a bowl

To start, decide how large and small the squares need to be for your project.

For an 11" (28cm) bowl, the "two degrees" disk (180 divisions) works well. Held by the foot, finish the bowl inside and out, and sand it to 600-grit abrasive (*Photo 5*). Remove the chuck from the lathe, put on the disk, or

polar grid, of choice and return the chuck to the spindle. Snug the chuck, place the baseplate on the lathe bed so that the brake is around the disk and the cleat is pulled tight to the front bed way, then clamp the base to the ways—one clamp under the chuck and under the front bed way, one clamp toward the tailstock under the back bed way.

Sight down the mirror and across the view table to locate disk lines accurately. Set the brake lever for light drag, so that the bowl remains steady while drawing the lines (*Photo 6*).

Photo 7 shows measuring the size of the largest squares—in this case, a bit more than $\frac{3}{16}$ " using the two-degree spacing. This is just what I wanted for this project. For your project, use different numbers of degrees for different sizes of bowls or artistic requirements. For this bowl, I drew lines on the bowl every two degrees, inside and out (*Photos 8, 9*). Mark all of the divisions. Sometimes I only mark inside or outside, and sometimes both. Remove the indexer, remove the disk, and then return the chuck to the spindle.

Make a worktable to fit in your banjo (*Photo 10*). Start with two scraps of $\frac{3}{4}$ " (19mm) plywood, 3" × 12" (8cm × 30cm). Drill a 1" hole through one piece of plywood offset toward one end by 1" and centered on the width. Glue and clamp these pieces together face to face, so that the corners align.

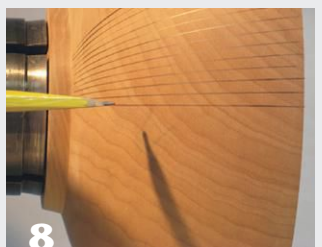
Next, turn the leg, or post, to fit your banjo, so that the height of the table will be $\frac{1}{8}$ " to $\frac{3}{16}$ " less than the center height of the chuck. Make one end a snug fit for the 1" hole and about $\frac{1}{8}$ " shorter than the depth of the hole it will go into. Take care to cut the shoulder cleanly and that the rim of the shoulder is high. This will allow the table to sit squarely on the post. The middle part of the post should be at least $1\frac{1}{2}$ " in diameter and long enough to fit your banjo at center height. Make the last bit of post a close fit for your banjo with sufficient length to clamp with the banjo clamp. Glue the post into the table mortise and add

Locate disk lines accurately



(6) Sight down the mirror and across the view table to locate disk lines accurately.

(7) The author draws lines every two degrees and measures to confirm accuracy.



Draw lines outside and in

Lines vertical to the bowl are drawn both outside and in.

Banjo-mounted work surface



Make a custom work surface with a post to fit your banjo.

Add horizontal lines



On the work surface, clamp a scrap of plywood as a pencil guide, and begin laying out the cross lines (latitude).

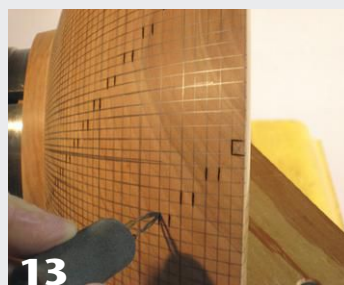
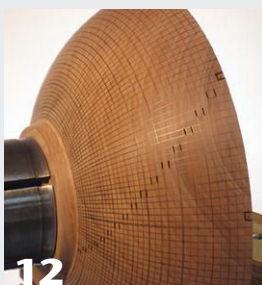
a flathead screw into the top of the post for extra strength and to hold things together while the glue sets.

Install this shopmade work surface in the banjo, and using a spring clamp and a scrap of plywood as a guide for a pencil, mark the lines that will be horizontal in the finished bowl (*Photo 11*). Hold the pencil against the guide, lightly press the pencil to the bowl, and revolve the bowl by hand. Gauge the length of the square by eye against its width. The squares get progressively smaller as the center of the bowl is approached.

For this bowl, I chose to use a double spiral pattern. So, starting at the top outside of the bowl, I marked every eighteenth square for ten spirals. For this spiral, I counted two squares toward the foot and two squares down and burned the two horizontal lines. Then, with the burning knife, burn all the horizontal lines for the first spiral (*Photos 12, 13*). The second spiral set was based on counting four squares by two squares. The two spiral sets can be seen in *Photos 1, 16, and 18*.

I draw the latitude lines with the chuck on the lathe, but the vertical lines are

Burn in spiral patterns



When all of the lines are drawn, both vertical and horizontal, it's time to decide on a pattern. The author started at the rim with a square, then counted toward the headstock two squares and down two more before burning another square. The spiral pattern is repeated.

more easily done off the lathe. Leave the bowl in the chuck, of course (*Photo 14*).

A piece of plywood with a hole sawed through it to accept my chuck lets me work over the bed ways, making the burning more ergonomic for some of the lines (*Photos 15, 16*).

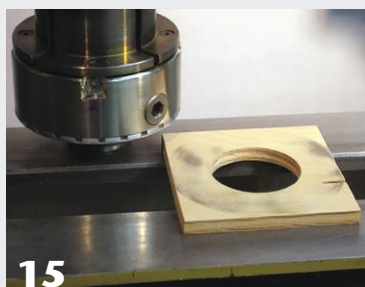
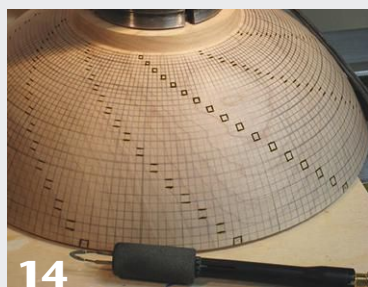
Final steps

With all of the woodburning completed, erase all of the pencil lines. The graphite will get embedded in the grain and darken the wood. Even with a good drafting eraser, some of the graphite remains. It helps to wet the full surface of the bowl, which raises the grain

and helps with the small dents caused by penciling the lines. Fully wet the surface, but it shouldn't drip. Let the bowl dry completely. Re-sand the bowl with 320-grit paper to remove all traces of the graphite and the raised edges of the burn lines, then bring the surface back with 400-grit and 600-grit paper.

Using a shopmade jam chuck and some ½"-thick foam, bring the tailstock up to finish the bottom (*Photos 17, 18*). Now simply add your favorite finish. ■

Steve Wilson has been turning since the mid 1970s, showing since 2010, and demonstrating and teaching since 2008. For more, visit theboxandbowl.com.



Off-lathe burning

(14) Vertical lines are more easily drawn off the lathe.

(15-16) A plywood disk with a hole in the middle to accept the chuck allows the author to hold the work securely on the bed ways.



Reverse-mount, complete bottom

After all the patterns have been burned in, reverse-mount the bowl and complete the bottom.

MASUR BIRCH BOX

WITH PEWTER ACCENTS



Jimmy Clewes

Project materials

Masur birch is in the top five of my favorite woods, not only from a turning point of view, but also aesthetically. This slow-growing tree is harvested in winter from a frozen landscape and originates in Northern Europe. Masur birch is fairly rare now and is expensive to buy. I am fortunate to have purchased several logs over twenty-five years ago.

The pewter I use for accents is called Britannia pewter, which is lead free and contains 97% tin, 2.5% bismuth, and .5% copper. It is made in the United States and is available from

online sellers. The price varies depending on the marketplace; at the time of this writing, the cost was \$59.99 for a 2-lb. bar (*Photo 1*).

I use a company called Rio Grande jewelry supplies, based in New Mexico, for my gold leaf.

The box will have a textured pewter ring as a joint and a decorative pewter disk as an accent on the lid. When deciding on the diameter of the pewter ring, an important thing to consider is the outside and inside diameter of the jaws of your chuck. Being able to hold the relatively soft pewter in the recesses you will form to hold it accurately when machining and texturing makes a big difference. If the jaws are the wrong size, the pewter will be compressed or expanded out of round. Make the diameter of joints in the ring to fit the outside and inside diameters of the jaws you are using.

Cast the pewter

Chuck a scrap of wood (I used ash) in sidegrain, or faceplate, orientation. With a $\frac{1}{8}$ " (3mm) parting tool, form the recesses for both the ring and the central disk (*Photos 2-4*). The reason I chose sidegrain orientation

is that I have found when using endgrain, even a small amount of moisture can cause air bubbles to form in the pewter while cooling and therefore a less solid disk, which when turning, could reveal air pockets or flaws. I made my ring 3" (8cm) in diameter, $\frac{5}{16}$ " (8mm) wide, and $\frac{1}{4}$ " (6mm) deep. I used a Vicmarc VM120 chuck.

I use a cast iron casting ladle that belonged to my wife's father. He used it to make fishing weights and lures. These ladles are available online also.

Heat and melt the pewter until it becomes very fluid in the ladle and then carefully pour it into the mold, as shown in the *opening image* of this article and *Photo 5*. As a point of interest, the melting point for pewter is 563°F, and the pouring temperature is 650°F. Don't rush this step, as you have several seconds to pour before the pewter starts to cool, and you can always reheat the pewter with a torch to make it flow again. After several minutes in the form, the pewter will have cooled enough for you to be able to remove the disk in the middle. This should just pop out, as

Project materials



Pewter bar and gold leaf.

the pewter will shrink slightly as it cools.

If after pouring the pewter into the mold you see any slight voids, you can run the gas torch over the top of the pewter to make it flow again, as it takes several minutes for it to fully cool in the mold. I pour the pewter disk at the same time as the ring. The size of the mold for the disk was 1¼" (32mm) diameter and ⅛" (1.5mm) deep.

Remove the ring

Unlike the central disk, the ring will get tighter in the mold while cooling.

As it shrinks it will press firmly against the inside diameter of the mold. You need to true at least two surfaces and form a recess in the pewter ring before it can be cut and released from the mold. First, true up the face of the ring using a long-grind bowl gouge. With the flute almost closed, the tool is basically a sharp negative-rake scraper, and, at a speed of around 800 to 1000 rpm, it will remove the pewter easily (Photo 6). Make sure to put a piece of paper towel on the bed of the lathe to catch the pewter shavings so they can be recycled.

After the face of the pewter ring has been trued up, true up the outside edge of the ring using a ⅛" parting tool (Photos 7, 8). You can cut right through and into the wooden mold. Then, cut a recess on the inside of the ring approximately ⅛" deep (Photos 9, 10). This recess will allow you to hold the ring in the chuck jaws so you can turn the other side, and it will become an attachment surface, or joint, by which you will later glue the pewter ring to the box base.

The last step is to remove, or part, the ring, again using the ⅛" parting ►

Prepare casting form



2 A waste block is turned and recesses formed for casting the ring and central disk.



3



4

Pour melted pewter



5 Melt the pewter with a torch, then pour it into the mold.

True up the ring



6



7



8

The disk will fall out as it cools and shrinks, but the ring will get tighter against its inside diameter. The author trues up the surfaces of the soft pewter using a bowl gouge and parting tool. Cutting into the wood on the outside diameter will not release the ring.

tool. True up and cut on the inside edge of the ring at the same time. I turn the speed down to around 500 rpm, as this cut will release the ring from the scrap wood. The ring should gently fall off and catch on the parting tool (*Photos 11, 12*).

Texture the ring and disk

The ring

Remount the pewter ring on the chuck, expanding the jaws into the recess that you just formed (*Photo 13*). Expand the jaws enough to hold the ring, but don't over-tighten it, as the pewter is so soft that you can distort it.

Using the 1/8" parting tool again, cut a recess that the box lid will drop into, about 1/16" deep (*Photo 14*).

To add texture to the pewter ring, I used a Warner knurling tool with a serrated-edge cutter. Turning the speed down to around 400 rpm, I held the tool firmly and made sure the cutter was on the center line. The depth of pattern will depend on how much pressure you apply. The pattern is very reminiscent of the edge of some coins and is simple but attractive (*Photos 15-16*).

The disk

To texture the disk, it is necessary to glue it back into the central recess in the scrap block. I used a gel cyanoacrylate (CA) glue and accelerator. Again, using the wing of the long-grind bowl gouge, I trued up the disk so it was

Form recess #1



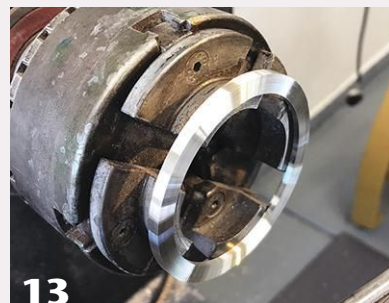
Use a parting tool to form a shallow recess to be used for gluing the ring to the box rim.

Remove ring from waste block



Cutting on the inside diameter of the ring will free the ring from the waste block.

Mount ring on chuck



Expand your chuck jaws into the recess formed in the pewter ring.

Recess #2, plus texture



(14) Form a second recess in the ring, this one to accept the box lid.

(15-16) Texture the rim of the ring.

ready to be textured. I prefer a slight dome shape as opposed to a flat surface (Photo 17).

There are three factors that will change the pattern produced when texturing—the speed of the lathe, the pressure, and how quickly or slowly you traverse the tool over the surface. I would advise you to cast the disk a little thicker to begin with, so you can have several practice tries, cleaning up the surface with the wing of the bowl gouge each time.

Using the Sorby texturing tool at an angle of about 45 degrees and the speed set at around 500 rpm, I was happy with the radiating pattern. It is impossible to describe in words the amount of pressure I applied, but you will find the right amount after a couple of tries. I wanted to frame the spiral pattern with the serrated knurling tool, so using the $\frac{1}{8}$ " parting tool, I turned some of the pattern away from the edge and repeated the same technique as on the pewter ring. Note that changing the angle and the pressure can give different results. I also relieved a little from the middle of the disk (Photos 18-20).

Add gold leaf

Leaving the work in the chuck, I removed the chuck from the lathe and prepared the disk's surface to receive gold leaf. I used a fine brush to apply the size, or adhesive, to ensure the size gets into all the textured surfaces (Photo 21). When first applied, the size is milky in appearance but will dry clear.

I then applied the gold leaf, which came from Thailand, using a soft sable brush (Photo 22). This loose leaf comes in $1\frac{1}{2}$ " (38mm) squares and is sold to locals and tourists to adorn Buddha statues. As a point of interest, some of the Buddha statues are reputed to have increased in size by

several inches of gold over hundreds of years.

After I applied the gold leaf, I used the soft sable brush to push the leaf into the texture and to remove any excess leaf from the surface. To clean up and sharpen the definition of the leaf, I remounted the chuck on the lathe and, using a homemade fine parting tool, cleaned up the excess leaf.

I removed the disk from the waste block by undercutting the back with a small chisel and a sharp tap. ►

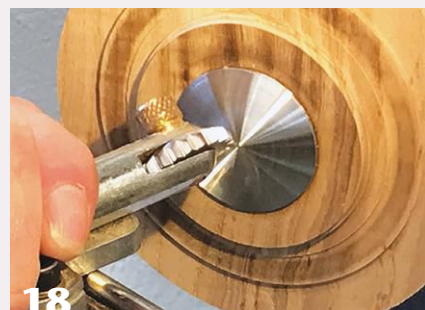
True up central disk



17 Since the disk will have fallen out of its casting form, you'll have to glue it back in to true it up.

Texture disk

The author uses a variety of tools to add interesting texture to the central disk. If you cast the disk extra thick, you'll be able to have several tries to get the results you like.



Add gold leaf to disk



The author adds size and gold leaf as an additional highlight.

Turn the box

With the pewter components ready, I started making the box itself. As I mentioned earlier, Masur birch is a delight to turn; it is easy on the tools and sands and finishes very well.

The blank size was 4" (10cm) in diameter and 3" (8cm) long. I much prefer wider than taller boxes. Having mounted the blank between centers, I used a spindle-roughing gouge to turn the blank from square

to round and then a 1/8" parting tool to cut a 1/8"-deep tenon on each end to fit my chuck. Finally, I drew a line at approximately one-third of the height of the box and used a thin parting tool to separate the lid from the base (*Photos 23, 24*).

I turned the box base first. After holding the blank in the chuck and truing up the face, the next step was to fit the pewter ring. "Measure twice and cut once," as

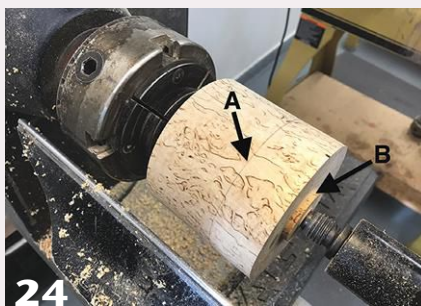
the old saying goes, was in order to get a good fit of the ring to the box. I find it easier to measure and allow for extra wood to get the right fit. I use dividers with sharp points for accurate measurements (*Photo 25*).

After fitting the ring and looking at the piece, I decided the box needed a simple but effective design detail. Using a homemade bead-forming tool, I turned a bead

Rough-turn box



The author uses a spindle-roughing gouge to turn the box to a cylinder.

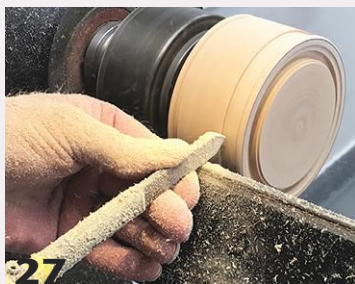


A: The box is marked so that the upper one-third will become the lid. Not shown, the lid is parted on this line. B: Form a tenon on each end of the blank for easy workholding.

Fit ring to box



Sneak up on a good fit of the pewter ring to the box rim.



Finish-turn outside of box

The author adds decorative beads, one at the bottom and one just under the pewter ring, and removes material between them.



Hollow the box

The author uses a variety of hollowing tools to excavate material from inside the box.

adjacent to the pewter ring and to balance that bead turned another at the base. The excess wood between the beads was then turned away (Photos 26-28).

Having turned the outside of the box base, I used my hollowing tool, the Mate 2, with an 8mm cutter to remove most the wood from the inside of the base. My hollowing tools cut, not scrape. There are several ways of hollowing boxes, so use the technique and tool that suits you best. Then, using my box scraper, I cleaned up the side walls and bottom of the box before sanding the inside and outside to 600 grit (Photos 29-31).

The finish I like to use on my boxes is a slightly thinned down shellac, which I find penetrates farther into the wood. The mix I use is 75% shellac and 25% denatured alcohol. After the shellac is dry, I then sand lightly with OOOO steel wool and then apply a light coat of microcrystalline wax, buffed to a satin sheen with a lint-free cloth.

I then removed the completed box base from the chuck and replaced it with the blank for the lid. True up the surface of the lid. I used a parting tool and then with the pewter ring in place on the base, you can now measure and scribe a line on the trued up surface of the lid (Photos 32, 33). I always measure a little more than I need and then sneak up on the actual fit of the lid, allowing for a decorative bead to mirror the bead on the box base (Photos 34, 35). In this case, the lid just drops nicely into place with only a very small amount of play.

After fitting the lid, I used a small bowl gouge to hollow inside the lid and then sanded and finished the lid (Photo 36).

Using my Vicmarc 100 chuck, I attached the 90mm jaws, which almost matched exactly the

Fit lid to pewter ring, 1



Use dividers to transfer the target diameter to the lid blank.



Fit lid to pewter ring, 2



Fine-tune the fit of the lid. The author decides to add a bead on the lid to mirror the one just under the pewter ring.

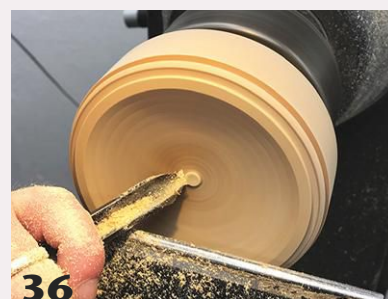


diameter of the small tenon acting as the joint (Photo 37). This meant there was far less chance of any marks being left on the piece from the jaws. For a little extra support, I used the tailstock and revolving center.

Using a $\frac{3}{8}$ " spindle gouge, I shaped the lid and decided that a simple ogee on the top would be sufficient, as the pewter, texture, and gold leaf-accented disk would be the focal point on top (Photo 38). Before fitting the disk, I sanded the top and finished it in the same manner as the box base.

To fit the disk in the lid, I used a set of dividers to measure just less than the diameter of the disk and then scribed the line on the lid to form the recess. You can take wood

Hollow the lid



Hollowing the lid will lighten it and add a touch of elegance.

off, but you can't put it back on, so measuring less gives you a chance to take very small cuts and "sneak up" on the fit. Ideally, the disk should be a snug fit in the recess. I attached it in place using a few small drops of gel CA glue (Photos 39-41). ►

The last task is to reverse-mount the base of the box to complete the box bottom. To do this, I turned a jam chuck from a piece of scrap wood to a diameter that will snugly fit inside the box. Be sure to make the tenon on the jam chuck a decent

length—mine was about $\frac{3}{4}$ " (19mm) long—which will give more support and lower the risk of the jam chuck failing. A piece of paper tissue over the jam chuck will protect the finish on the inside of the box (Photos 42-44).

This is a great little project that I feel most turners could attempt and enjoy trying without a great deal of expense. Be sure to take all the safety precautions when woodturning. And when melting and pouring pewter, always wear safety glasses and gloves at a minimum. I hope you enjoy these ideas and will explore the possibilities of adding pewter accents to your turning. ■

Turn top of lid

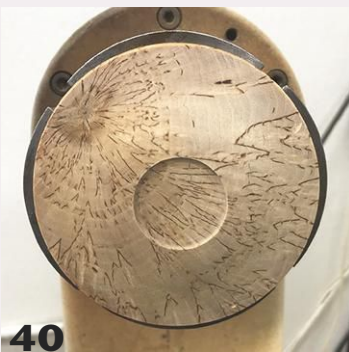


With the lid now reverse-mounted in the chuck, shape the top. Here, a simple ogee shape is used.



Jimmy Clewes offers woodturning classes, both group and private, at his workshop in Las Vegas, Nevada. For more, visit jimmyclewes.com or email Jimmy at jimmyclewes@gmail.com.

Fit central disk in lid



Dividers are used to gauge and transfer the disk's diameter to the lid. Form a recess and glue in the disk.

Reverse-mount box, complete bottom



A jam chuck is used to reverse-mount the box so its bottom can be completed.



The Woodturners' Network: a Tradition of Mentorship

How do we learn woodturning? Many of us are self-taught, while others have taken intensive classes with experts. Craft schools around the country offer valuable experiences—see D Wood’s April 2022 *AW* article, “Education by Immersion: The Art-and-Craft School Experience” (vol 37, no 2, page 35). But probably the most common way we learn is through one-on-one connection at the chapter level. There are more than 365 AAW chapters worldwide. Many offer formal mentorship programs, while others have members who always step up and say, “Sure, I’ll help you with that. Give me a call or stop by my shop.” If you have been

around woodturners, this will come as no surprise; we are known for generously sharing knowledge, without concern for competition or keeping trade secrets. Very few industries offer such a welcoming starting point.

Many of us started woodturning because we were inspired by and/or supported by someone else—a specific turner, a family member, a friend, or even a stranger. I took note when a turner thanked me for featuring her work in this journal: “Thank you so much for sharing my work. It means a lot to me—but *maybe even more to the people who have helped me.*” This sparked the idea to publish short

stories of appreciation for those who have helped us along the way. I hope you will enjoy these examples of mentorship. The phrase “Each one teach one” carries a powerful message for how we can take care of each other. ►

—Joshua Friend, Editor, *American Woodturner*



Every year growing up, my grandpa let me pick a woodturned pen that he made to give to my teacher at the end of the school year. When I was 15, he showed me how to make my own to give to my teacher that year. After college, I didn't have any teachers or professors to give pens to, so I put a pause on my woodturning journey. Two years later, I was laid off from my job due to Covid. I moved in with my grandpa, Marlan Anderson, so we could keep each other company. While we were looking for something to do, he suggested, "How about we turn a pen?" For the next three months, we were turning pens, bottle stoppers, and small bowls to sell at our local farmer's market.

When I started my job search again, I was given a list of every nonprofit hiring in the twin cities. To narrow the search, I looked for "woodworking," and one job listing showed up for the American Association of Woodturners, the specific type of woodworking I was

interested in! I applied and got the job, and have been with the AAW for four years now. My grandpa always supported my woodturning journey by encouraging me to reach out to other woodturners to expand my knowledge (he considered himself more of a woodworker than a woodturner). Linda Ferber has picked up where he left off, and has inspired me to step outside of my comfort zone as a turner and try new things. I've begun experimenting with embellishments, design, and new tools to create pieces I never could have imagined making five years ago. I am looking forward to all the



Alexa Manning with her grandfather and woodturning mentor, Marlan Anderson.

possibilities of things I can create going forward, thanks to my wonderful mentors who spent their time and resources to teach me this wonderful craft.

—Alexa Manning, Minnesota, AAW Marketing and Member Services Coordinator



Alexa Manning with Linda Ferber, another inspiring mentor.

Photo: Andi Wolfe



Emily Ford with her woodturning mentor, Kirk DeHeer.

I met Kirk DeHeer at the Utah Woodturning Symposium in 2016. Truth be told, I didn't know him from Adam, and little did I know he was one of the greatest turners I would ever have the pleasure to meet. The Utah Symposium typically took place over Mother's Day weekend, and that year Kirk gifted me a bowl gouge (my first, actually).

As my admiration for Kirk's skill deepened and our acquaintance grew, I jokingly dubbed him my "woodturning boyfriend"—a phase I've since outgrown. I would diligently take notes whenever he demonstrated nearby, considering myself his most enthusiastic and, admittedly at times, obnoxious protégé. I've often quipped to anyone who

would listen that Kirk has forgotten more about woodturning than I could ever hope to learn.

His extensive knowledge, generously shared with all, acquired from years of "standing on the shoulders of giants," as he aptly puts it, has established him as one of the pre-eminent woodturning teachers of our time. Observing his teaching style, first as a student and now as an instructor myself, has played a significant role in shaping my journey. I wouldn't be where I am today without his reassuring guidance and encouragement. I am profoundly honored and forever grateful to consider this remarkable man my mentor, colleague, and friend.

—Emily Ford, Utah

I have been a proud member of the Indiana County Woodturners Association (ICWA) for over twelve years. During my first meeting, I was intrigued by the ability of one of the members to convey his vast and diverse knowledge of woodturning.



ICWA member *and* mentor, John Sinosky.

These attributes made me gravitate towards him in hopes that I could obtain some of that knowledge and skill. His willingness to assist and share his experiences with the club members was very rewarding.

It didn't take long for John Sinosky and me to become good friends. We not only chatted at the meetings, but it became common for us to speak multiple times a week. Any turning I was doing was made better with John's input and expertise. John's knowledge does not stop at woodturning. He has mastered embellishing, incorporating epoxy into his turnings, painting, dyeing, carving, and woodburning in addition to air brushing. With John's guidance and encouragement, I have expanded into those areas also. Although I have not reached the skill level that John has, I enjoy learning and practicing these skills.

Over four years ago as the president's tenure was up, John

encouraged me to step into that role. With John being a chapter board member at large, that made the decision an easy one. I knew I would have John's total support and guidance, as over and over I had witnessed his support and guidance with all the elected officers.

This past year John has become more than a mentor of woodturning. Unfortunately, I was diagnosed with cancer. John has beat cancer twice, thus becoming an inspiration *and* mentor giving me hope and comfort during this journey.

To sum things up, I have not only found a wonderful friend, but also a mentor and a confidante in John Sinosky. Without his support, guidance, and encouragement, I would not be at the skill level or have the knowledge that I now have. I hope everyone has the opportunity to have a "John" in their life.

—Dave Fairman, Pennsylvania

I haven't had a long-term mentor, but here's a write-up about the most formative feedback I've ever received. It's no secret that most, if not all, contemporary turners have been influenced in some way by David Ellsworth. I'm no different, though I was fortunate to attend one of his in-home workshops in 2022, where he gave me some feedback that changed my entire perspective on how I approach the lathe.

During lunch one afternoon, he invited me and the other students to share any work we'd brought from home for an impromptu critique. I was less than two years into my woodturning journey, so was very nervous to show my primitive work, but was also proud of the progress I'd seen and excited at prospect of a kind word from

such a significant leader in the art of woodturning.

The first piece I put on the table was a sapele bowl that had a large, chunky (and unsightly, if I'm being honest) foot. At the time, I was reluctant to re-chuck my work for fear of "ruining" all of the hard work I'd done at the other end, so most of my bowls looked very clunky and bottom-heavy. David picked it up, turned it over to see the mortise I'd used to secure the bowl during hollowing, then looked me square in the eye and said very directly, "Don't let your tools dictate what you create. You're limiting yourself." Those words changed my entire perspective and it's the best feedback I've ever gotten. It's pushed me to first consider what it is I want to create

and then to figure out what steps to take in pursuit of that vision. It also emboldened me to take chances and think beyond the "standard" steps we learn in Woodturning 101. Turning can be simple and formulaic, but it doesn't have to be. That was a revelation. ►

—Jaramiah Severns, Roswell, Georgia

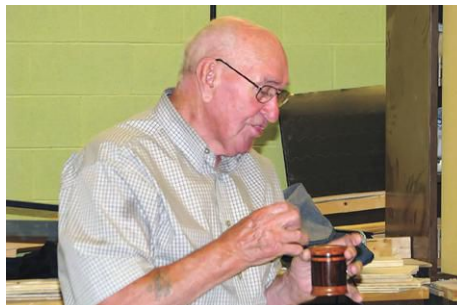


Timely words from a trusted source can change our approach.

You asked for stories of special people who inspired anyone on their woodturning journey. I had such a person, but sadly he passed away in 2020; his name was Norman Ingraham. Norm was already a member of the Avalon Woodturners Guild when I joined. He had been a refrigeration installer for many years, so he knew all about vacuum pumps and systems, etc. I had known him previously in that capacity, and we became good friends. Norm visited my shop every Wednesday night for several years (while his wife was bowling).

Norm made tools for me and set up a vacuum chuck system that worked

perfectly. He would come with tools and wood and things partly done and plans of other things to make. We started with small items, spin tops, bottle stoppers, small vases, etc., then advanced to small containers with



Norman Ingraham demonstrating at an Avalon Woodturners Guild meeting.

screw tops (he had thread-cutting tools) and bowls and segmented items, at which he was particular skilled. Norm showed me how to make the sleds, cut the rings, glue them, and the actual turning.

Norm was a pleasant and friendly person who was really interested and dedicated to woodturning and was always ready and eager to help and give advice to anyone. He often demonstrated at our club meetings and passed on his knowledge. Our club lost a valuable and dedicated member upon his passing, and I lost a good friend.

—Don Jacobs, Avalon Woodturners Guild, Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada

Like many hobbyists, I converted my garage into a workshop. With online media as my instructor, my shop became equipped and I felt comfortable using every tool. To make knobs, legs, and “accessories” for flat work, I bought a used mini-lathe and went through the same process of educating myself online regarding tool safety and use. The lathe, however, remained intimidating and therefore dormant for over a year.

At that time, I attended the Texas Woodworking Festival, where our local chapter, the Central Texas Woodturners Association (CTWA), had an Introduction to Woodturning booth. I expressed interest and was happily informed that upon joining the club, I would be offered free hands-on instruction. I immediately grabbed the opportunity, and to my good fortune, the mentor I received was AAW and SWAT founding member, world-traveling instructor and author, S. Gary Roberts.

Whenever time presented itself, I visited with Gary and Old Yeller, his trusty Powermatic. There I learned the fundamentals of woodturning while actually making useful and

attractive items. I was hooked! With safety at the forefront, Gary took me through a systematic process of tool preparation, spindle turning, facework, box making, and indexing and embellishing. Through his one-on-one guidance, I quickly built confidence and began using my lathe at home, and I even upgraded my machine. Under Gary’s advisement, I joined the AAW and attended my first regional symposium (SWAT) where I was introduced to woodturning legends.



S. Gary Roberts (standing right in the left photo), an AAW Honorary Lifetime Member, has mentored many in his Texas workshop.

I am now instructing new members of our chapter in a manner similar to how Gary taught me. I also receive a plethora of teaching from CTWA members at our monthly meetings, for which I am eternally grateful. And while I still avail myself of online instruction, it pales to the experience of turning on Old Yeller under Gary’s watchful eye. Without the mentorship I received, I am certain that mini-lathe would still be in a corner of my shop, collecting sawdust instead of shavings.

—Michael Josephs, Austin, Texas



When I started woodturning, YouTube was my mentor. There were a lot of good and bad within all the posted videos, but it got me started and off into the world of turning. I found an online forum group called WoodBarter, and there it was strongly encouraged to join a local turning club and so I did. That proved its weight in gold, as many of the more experienced members were more than willing to help during sawdust sessions. One of the greatest things about this craft is that many people are willing to help you learn!

Through WoodBarter, I met Lee Sky, who had his own studio and was a regional demonstrator as well. We quickly became friends, and he has taught me a lot, especially about tools. If you are not using the tools

right, then you will struggle with every other aspect of turning. Him being on the east coast of Florida and me being on the west coast of Florida, it can be very difficult to get together as often as I would like to, but each time we do, I always learn something new.

The biggest thing that I have learned through mentorship is that you don't have to be a professional turner to mentor. I mentor for our club and have had a lot of success getting turners on the road to their new obsession. I also learned that if you are teaching, you pay a lot more attention to your own techniques, which makes you a better turner as well. I strongly encourage mentorship because of the reward for both the mentored and mentor!

—Lou Currier, *Peace River Woodturners, Florida*



Lou Currier (left) and his mentor Lee Sky, 2018.

I walked into the Rockler store in Pasadena and asked how to carve a bowl. A store clerk, Gary, told me you need a lathe for that. "What's a lathe?" I asked. I had not had much experience with power tools. Gary taught me how to use an electric drill, a wrench, vice, and a clamp, and he got me past my initial terror

of the bandsaw. But he didn't make the mistake of giving me his phone number. That was something Kirk DeHeer did.

From then on, Kirk's phone didn't stop ringing. Through tears and triumphs, he patiently saw me pick up my first steel tool, try to quit in a haze of crying, come back to

make my first perfect cut, survive emergency room visits, and sell my first piece. Kirk DeHeer stopped me from harming myself on sharp bowl edges and applauded my many successes. Without concern for his personal time or financial gain, he has mentored me every day. Even though I live multiple states away, he has always found the time to walk me through a challenge. Kirk's dedication to not only teaching but mentoring woodturners is the driving force behind my passion for the craft.

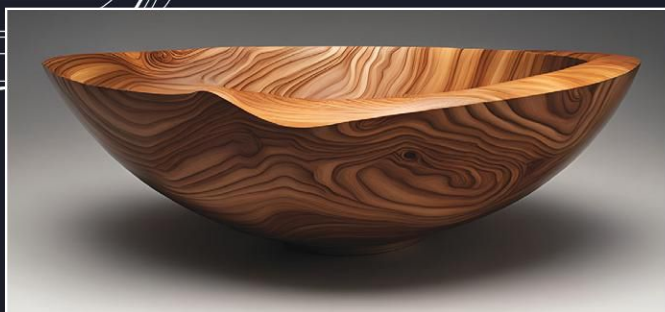
I recently saw Gary back at the Rockler store. He said he had no idea what I would end up doing when he first showed me how to use a lathe. I've never seen a prouder teacher. I reminded him that he warned me, woodturning could be addictive—and it certainly is.

—Tiprin Follett, *California*

Tiprin Follett with key mentors Gary (left) and Kirk DeHeer.



THESE BOWLS DON'T EXIST



AI-generated "Wooden Bowl" (Style: Sinister).

USING [AI] TO ELEVATE YOUR WOODTURNING

Gregory Conti

The idea of an article on artificial intelligence, or AI, in *American Woodturner* may seem odd. In fact, woodturning and AI may seem miles apart. However, you probably have heard all the buzz around AI over the past year or two. This is for good reason. Powerful AI text and image generating tools emerged from research labs and became available online at low or no cost. As woodturners, we can use these tools to explore new ideas and prototype concepts, gain inspiration, and push the limits of our technical execution. To prove the point, you'll see examples of woodturning inspired by AI-generated images later in the article.

I've been a woodturner for about twenty years, but when I'm not turning wood, I'm a technologist and like to stay up to date on new technologies. For fun, I tried using an AI image generation tool to make images of wooden bowls, and several bowls appeared. After a few attempts, an amazing bowl appeared and I thought, "Wow, that bowl could be on the cover of *American Woodturner*. A little later, I found another bowl that I could envision in the journal, and then another and another (*Photos 1-3*).

I continued generating more images of AI bowls. Some were amazing, some simple, others complex, and some patently absurd. I realized that one

could create a vibrant and differentiated career as a woodturner by incorporating AI into the creative process.

This article will show you how to use these tools and, I hope, inspire you to give AI image generation a try. You may be surprised that you don't have to be an expert to use these tools. AI has certainly inspired my woodturning, and I believe it can do the same for you.

How AI image generation works

AI image generation tools are made by training an AI system with massive numbers of images. With sufficiently large training image input, the system finds patterns in the data. By using

increasingly sophisticated AI techniques, these tools differentiate between various objects, such as a bowl, table, painting, or person. When fed images of human creativity on this scale, the tools can generate new objects as well as mix and match disparate objects and styles to create entirely new combinations.

Tool users generate new images by providing prompts, such as “wooden bowl in the style of Picasso” to the system. You will see several AI-generated images in this article, and each image is captioned with the prompt that generated it.

Are such tools truly creative? Do they create entirely new forms of art? Technically no. However, given the diverse range of human creativity used to train these systems and the near infinite ways these creations may be morphed, there is an endless well of possibilities. Herein lies opportunity and inspiration for the woodturner.

There are certainly limits to AI image-generating technology. Sometimes the system gets it right, and sometimes it gets it wrong. And sometimes “wrong” works to our advantage when seeking new ideas.

How to get started

To generate the images in this article, I used a tool called NightCafe



“Wooden Bowl in the Style of Picasso” (Style: NightCafe). AI image generation tools allow you to combine physical objects with many artistic styles.

(creator.nightcafe.studio), as shown in *Photo 4*. However, there are many alternatives. Just search the web for “AI image generation tool” and you’ll receive a host of free or low-cost options. When using an image generation tool, you’ll encounter options like the following:

Model

AI systems are trained to perform tasks, and the result is called a model. I’ve used the default model which is for general-purpose image generation. You can also use other models optimized for things like art, people, and photorealism.

A cohesive theme



“Wooden Bowls” (Style: Pop Art). You are not limited to generating a single bowl per attempt. Here are nine colorful bowls generated at one time. Each bowl is unique but united by a cohesive theme.

Text prompt

Here is where you describe what you want to generate. For example, “large wooden bowls.”

Style

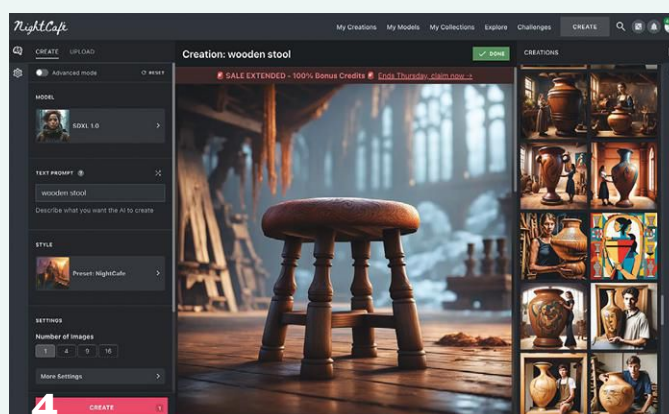
From an inspiration perspective, the style setting is where things get interesting. You can choose from a wide variety of styles, like: Pop Art, Neo Impressionist, Steampunk, Cyberpunk, Vibrant, Striking, Epic, Photo, and many others.

With these core settings in place, you then hit the Create button and see the ►



“Wooden Bowls” (Style: Epic). Sometimes AI tools generate exquisite work that would require an expert woodturner and woodcarver to execute well.

An AI interface



Example of an AI image-generation tool interface (NightCafe). On the left are the settings for model, text prompt, and style. The prompt here is for “wooden stool,” and the resulting image is in the center. On the right are previously generated images.

results. If an image is close but not quite what you want, the Evolve option will create similar images. Or you can hit Create again and you'll see varied images. You won't see the same image twice.

Prototyping strategies

Now that we've seen examples and had an overview of the interface, let's look at potential woodturning applications.

Experimenting with different prompts

The easiest approach is simply to use the same prompt repeatedly, as the system will generate varied results each time. As you proceed, you will naturally start refining your prompts to home in on desired results. You can explore scale, backgrounds, human models, and embellishment inspired by desired artists. You might try "young woodturner holding a giant wooden vase painted by Warhol," see *Photo 5*, and then try pivoting to a different model and artist, *Photo 6*.

Experimenting with different styles

You can explore a new theme and test it using a variety of styles to see if you like the results. I tried using the prompt "wooden bowls with many small holes" using the Striking and Pop Art styles (*Photos 7, 8*). I liked how some of the bowls mixed a single larger hole and numerous smaller holes in an asymmetric pattern.

Experimenting with different objects

Much more is possible. You can generate just about any woodturned object, from mortar and pestle sets to lidded boxes and candleholders (*Photos 9, 10*). Notice the elegant shapes and compelling presentation. You might try wig stands, or even an art gallery complete with paintings of bowls (*Photos 11, 12*).

You can use the same style choice for diverse objects. For example, you might try the Pop Art style with bowls, vases, pepper mills, and bracelets to create a cohesive theme across a body of work.

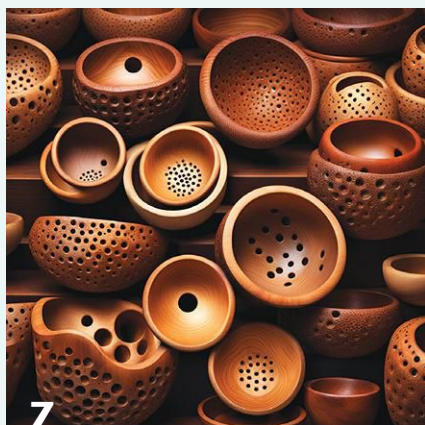
Note, however, there are some woodturned objects the image generation system doesn't seem to understand, yet. In my testing, magic wands, rolling pins, wooden staffs, and even lathes yielded poor results. These failures could have been due to an incorrect prompt on my part, or more likely, the system hadn't been adequately trained on these objects.

People, embellishments

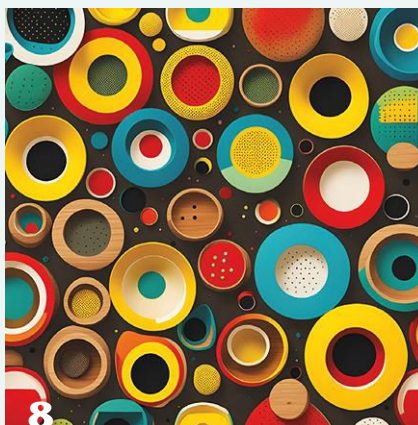


Two images using the NightCafe style: "Young Woodturner Holding a Giant Wooden Vase Painted by Warhol" (left) and "Young Woodturner Holding a Large Wooden Vase Inspired by Kusama Against a Gray Background." These tools have the powerful capability to include realistic humans in the images and allow you to explore variations of embellishment, scale, and backgrounds.

Variations on a theme



"Wooden Bowls With Many Small Holes" (Style: Striking).



"Wooden Bowls With Many Small Holes" (Style: Pop Art).

There are virtually endless possibilities to explore. A key takeaway is that virtual prototyping can be easier and more efficient than making a physical prototype.

There are virtually endless possibilities to explore. A key takeaway is that virtual prototyping can be easier and more efficient than making a physical prototype.

Overcoming implementation challenges

We all have limits to our ability as woodturners. AI image generation will produce turned objects that are beyond our ability. I see these as challenges rather than obstacles. It pushes us to seek out innovative solutions to achieve the design we wish.

When faced with a compelling object we wish to create but don't exactly know how, what can we do? Could we fashion a new jig or tool, or employ an off-lathe shaping technique? Maybe we modify the design to something we can create, yet still capture that interesting essence. We might find a collaborator with the needed skill. Regardless of the approach, this exercise stretches and grows our skillsets, making us better turners. Consider the beads inside the bowl in *Photo 13*. How might you make those beads in practice?

Hallucinations as design inspiration

With image generation, sometimes the details are off. I found the AI frequently violated norms of design and sometimes the laws of physics. Hallucination is the term of art for this behavior, when an AI generates results that are inaccurate but presented as fact. If you were a lawyer using AI to research legal precedent and the AI hallucinated, that would be bad. For the woodturner, however, hallucinations provide design inspiration. It is that close but imperfect understanding by the AI that provides opportunity.

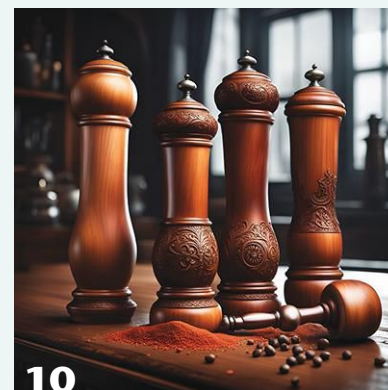
If you study the images, you'll see both subtle and egregious errors. The woodgrain doesn't match any known woods. Rims may not be continuous, and the wood warped

Exploring boxes



9
“Woodturned Lidded Boxes” (Style: Bon Voyage).

AI pepper grinders



10
“Tall Wooden Pepper Grinders” (Style: Epic). Oftentimes image generation will present the object in a compelling way, such as the spice in the foreground.

Wig stands



11
“Wooden Wig Stands” (Style: Bon Voyage). AI image generation works well with a wide variety of turned objects.

Art gallery



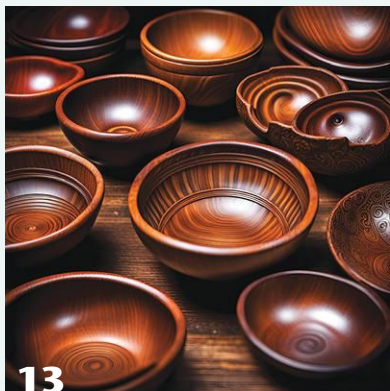
12
“Art Gallery with People Looking at Paintings of Bowls” (Style: NightCafe). AI image generation can do more than just simple objects and people. Here the author has used it to envision an art gallery.

in improbable ways. In some cases, the object couldn't be created using any known woodturning method. Image-generation tools can reduce hallucinations using a technique called negative prompts, but hallucinations aren't always bad. When something is “wrong” but we find the result compelling, we should take that on as a challenge.

Here is an example. I wanted to explore funeral urns. I used the query

“large woodturned funeral urn” with the Pop Art style (*Photo 14*). Typically, funeral urns are somber objects, but these results were not. However, a vibrant urn might be a fitting way to celebrate the life of a vibrant person. Unexpectedly, the system hallucinated and created tall urns with constricted middles. Such urns would be difficult to turn and not really fit for purpose. Thinking laterally though, what if we considered the object as two urns, ►

Woodturning challenges



13
“Wooden Bowls” (Style: Striking). Note the delicate interior beading in the central bowl. How might this be achieved in practice? Also note the double bowl hallucination in the top right.

which could be turned, used independently, and later attached? This might be a way to honor a married couple or lifetime partners.

Exploring variations of your own work

By default, image-generation tools generate a random result. For example, a prompt of a “wooden bowl” generates a random wooden bowl. If you try the same prompt again, you get a quite different bowl. This occurs because the AI chooses a random starting point out of all possible wooden bowls. However, you can use an uploaded image as a starting point, known as a seed. This capability affords interesting possibilities.

As an example, I uploaded an image of three roleplaying dice cups that I made and set this as the seed (Photo 15). This means the system will generate results similar to the uploaded image. Then I generated a series of images using the prompt “woodturned cups in the style of Picasso.” Each resulting image was different but similar to my seed image. This allowed me to choose the result I liked best (Photo 16). As you consider the picture, notice that the lighting, horizon line, number of cups, and general arrangement are all similar to the original, but

the Picasso-like paintings are new additions.

You may use any image as a starting point, which opens a wide range of possibilities. Note, however, the system does not authorize copyrighted seed images without permission.

Creating objects that do exist

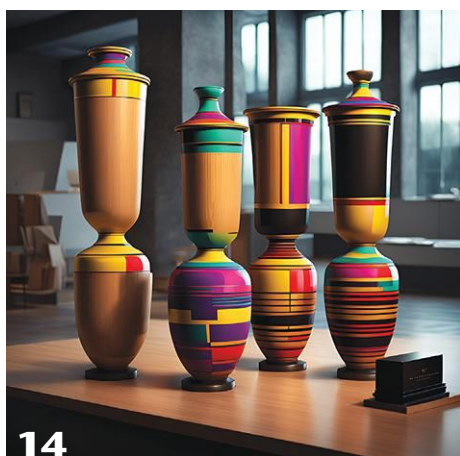
To complete this article, I wanted to turn objects inspired by an AI image. Of the 1,000+ images I generated, “Young woodturner holding a giant pepper mill designed by Picasso” is my favorite (Photo 17). I like how the viewer’s eyes are first drawn to the eyes of the model and then to the elegant pepper mill that indeed looks like it was made by Picasso.

As this isn’t a how-to article on turning a pepper mill, I’ll skip the basics and instead highlight my thought process. The narrow middle of the mill was the biggest challenge. Many pepper mill mechanisms require a large-diameter hole through the entire body, which isn’t feasible given this mill’s narrow mid-section.

I looked for an alternative mill mechanism and found a variety, CrushGrind, that used a friction fit to hold the top in place, which avoided the need for a rod through the entire length of the mill. My mill rotates by holding the red base and twisting the top. Effectively, I flipped the typical large body and small grip pepper mill to a small body and large-grip design.

This approach works but left little space to store pepper. To overcome this challenge, I made a hollow tenon for the base which fits into a mortise in the top (Photo 18). Now the mill holds a larger supply of peppercorns while allowing the base to nest neatly into the top.

I wanted to emulate but not exactly duplicate the AI mill. I took measurements of key dimensions from the



14
“Large Woodturned Funeral Urn” (Style: Pop Art).

Using a “seed”



15
You can upload an image to the AI image generator to use as a starting point, or seed, such as these three roleplaying game dice cups.



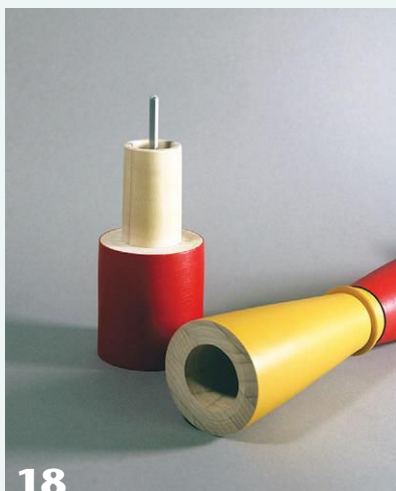
16
“Woodturned Cups in the Style of Picasso” (Style: NightCafe). Note the image generator understood the basic objects in the original seed image as cups, modified the shapes, and added Picasso-like paintings.

From AI to reality



17

"Young Woodturner Holding a Giant Pepper Mill Designed by Picasso" (Style: NightCafe).



18



19

(18-19) The author's actual turned mill flips the traditional large body and small twist grip paradigm. Here you can see the small red body and large top grip. The body's tenon provides stability and extra peppercorn storage. *Picasso's Pepper Mill*, Poplar, 18" × 2¾" (46cm × 7cm).

image and created a spreadsheet to scale these dimensions to pepper mills of any desired height and fashioned a story stick to serve as a general guide when turning. You can see the finished mill in *Photo 19*. Note the larger-diameter mid-section which provides added strength for practical use.

I then continued with the theme and turned two more mills based on the image. For me, the hardest part of the AI mill was the narrow mid-section and devising a turning approach to work around that constraint. For these new mills, I tried a different approach and created one inspired by the top half of the AI mill and another inspired by the bottom. See *Photo 20* for the result.

Were these pepper mills a success? This exercise pushed me out of my comfort zone and into areas of turning that I had not explored before. It helped me grow as a woodturner. So yes, I'd call that a success.

Conclusions

We often turn to the world around us for inspiration. AI

image generation tools provide a complementary space to explore, offering a near endless font of inspiration from the virtual world. We can mix and match objects and artistic styles in ways never before possible. We can quickly prototype concepts, investigate evolution of our current work, and identify new avenues to explore. Yes, today's generative AI has flaws, but the flaws themselves can be sources of inspiration.

Generative AI systems are game changing and disruptive but are a reality today and will continue to get better. It is worth our time to investigate this emerging technology and consider how such tools might support our work.

I've saved the most important question for last, though. Will AI replace woodturners? No. Not as long as human consumers and art collectors value handmade creations. Not as long as humans continue to innovate. Not as long as we woodturners enjoy the art and craft of woodturning.

Another interpretation

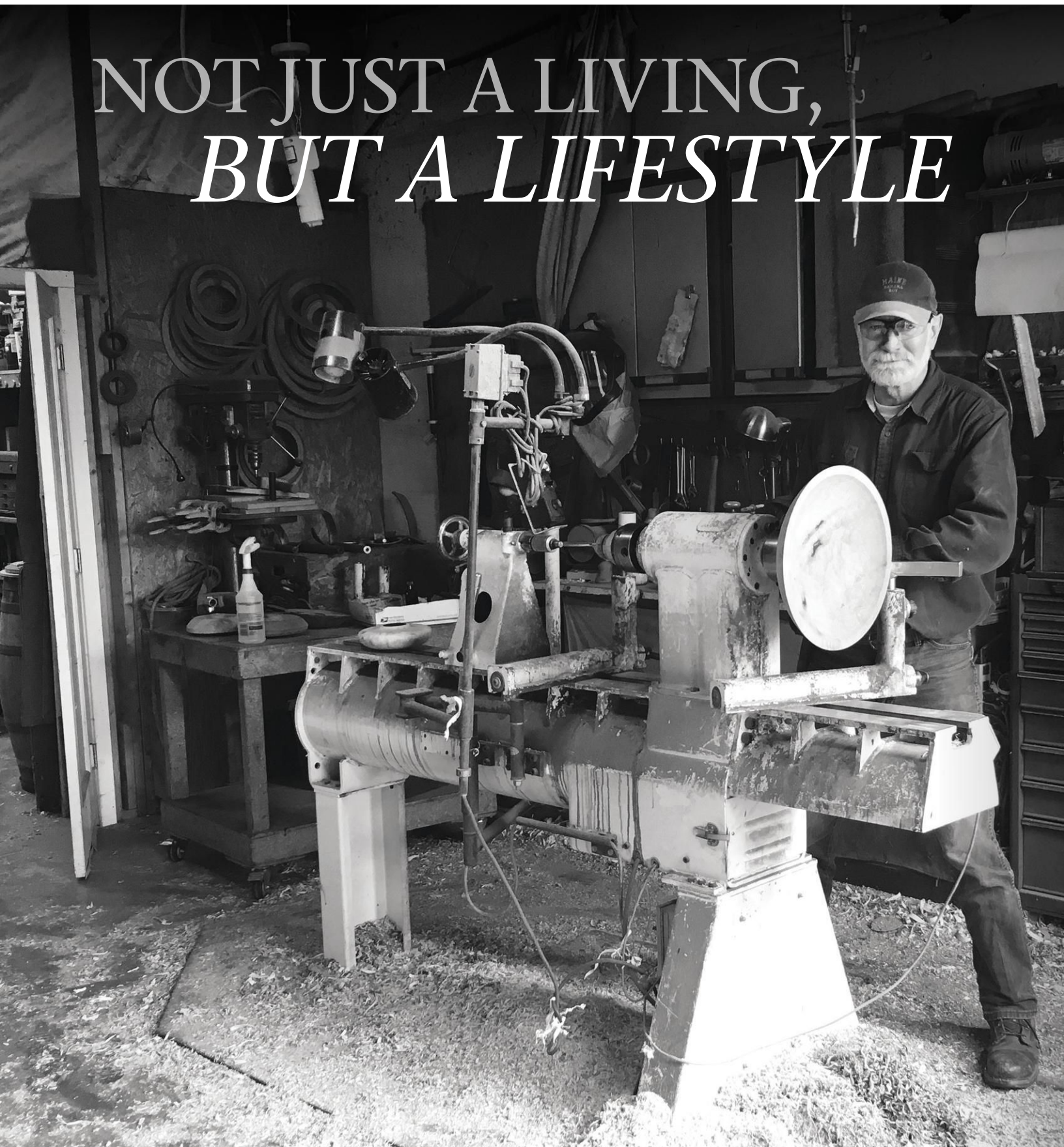


20

The author's second take: two separate mills, one inspired by the top half of the AI mill and another inspired by the bottom. Each is about 11" × 3" (28cm × 8cm).

Greg Conti has been a woodturner for twenty years and lives in New York's Hudson Valley. He's a hacker, maker, computer scientist, and a principal at Kopidion Cybersecurity.

NOT JUST A LIVING, *BUT A LIFESTYLE*



THE WORKADAY CAREER OF BRAD ADAMS

Steve Forrest

Photos by Brad Adams, except where noted.

It's a funny thing about woodturning. In many fields, there are a few well-known superstars and then lots of anonymous journeymen, skilled workers making a living generally as employees. But in woodturning, it seems, there are lots of superstars but precious few journeymen, and even fewer solo acts. Brad Adams of Benicia, California, is one of the relative few who earns his bread purely through woodturning—no videos, no teaching, no proprietary tools, no social media, and no day job. Just skillful turning that has been tuned to his market through years of critical attention.

If the AAW's online forum is any indication, many turners dream about turning for a living. *American Woodturner* has run any number of articles about it. Being your own boss, making beautiful objects, turning away from the rat race—it all sounds sort of romantic. So what is a working woodturner's life actually like? What does it really take?

An organized workspace

Start with the shop—an unmarked commercial bay in a light industrial complex. The town is Benicia, in the non-descript flats on the east side of San Francisco Bay. Railroad tracks sprawl everywhere, and large parking areas for imported cars lie at the bay's edge. Giant oil storage tanks loom in the surrounding hills. Trees are few and far between. It's hardly romantic, but inexpensive and functional.

Brad's shop itself is lined with shelves with large caches of bowl blanks drying in various stages of production. A proud, stained Oneway commands the workspace, with a minimal set of tools and a grinder close at hand. There are tools for big work—chainsaws, lifts, boiling pots. Behind the open work area is a small, clean office with finished work and a desktop space for staging photography. Everywhere there are plastic bins, rolling storage cabinets, and shelves with sorted work and tools ready for dispatch. It's crowded, but not chaotic. There is a place for everything, and everything is in its place. And Brad knows where everything is.

This is no accident. Brad is, by nature, an organized guy. It's been a through line in his life. Whatever he has done, he has been the one to sort things out, figuring out the best way to accomplish something with the least amount of effort. Like many folks raised on a farm, his can-do, self-reliant competence formed early. Whether by necessity or nature, it's baked into Brad's personality and career.

Corn-fed beginnings

Brad hails from an Illinois farm, growing up raising corn, soy, vegetables,

livestock. Driving a tractor for the family by age 7, and commercially by age 15, he realized early that he didn't want to be a farmer. There was too much work, with no days off. A bright but unruly student, he landed at Texas A&M, where he obtained a B.S. in fisheries biology and learned to be a different kind of farmer. Working on shrimp boats in the Gulf of Mexico, his studies focused on shrimp cultivation. But Texas was too hot, so he ended up trading that location for Prudhoe Bay, Alaska, working on environmental impact reports. For eight years, Brad had no permanent address, doing cold, hard, at times slimy work involving various fish carcasses, and taking three months a year to decompress, diving in warmer climes.

During his time on the ocean, Brad's problem-solving skills generally led him into positions of leadership. One captain referred to him as "the perfect combination of lazy, but smart," but it was actually a matter of being efficient. Brad was always asking, *Why?* What's the least amount of work it will take to complete a task, and do it better?

While visiting an old college roommate in Berkeley in 1986, Brad stumbled into the tech world as it was exploding. He was familiar with early Apple computers from his time processing data on fish, and even owned one of the original Macintosh models. He got involved in the Berkeley Mac users group, and thus began a lucrative but ultimately unfulfilling career in the tech industry. Married by now, he was making good money, but not a good living. By the turn of the century, the pressure was such that, if he continued on the same path, he felt like either the job was going to kill him or he was going to kill someone else. What to do?

Like a lot of folks of a certain age, Brad had accumulated a shop full of tools, but he lacked a lathe. When a project building a fireplace surround for his wife called for turned elements, she traded a beaten up old boat of Brad's for a ▶

Madrone Burl Bowl,
2024, Madrone,
walnut oil,
3¾" x 11½"
(10cm x 29cm)



Shopsmith so the project could proceed. After turning his first bowl, Brad never looked back. Before long, the table saw had become a surface for storing bowl blanks. The fireplace was never completed.

Like many turners, Brad's first bowls were "dog dishes." Over the next few years, Brad became increasingly involved with turning. He joined the Bay Area Woodturners and, as their librarian, watched every video in their extensive library. He saw a few pro demos but was largely self-taught. Trips to local museums honed his aesthetic, and the primacy of sharp tools and scrupulous sanding asserted themselves. Like so many turners, he started showing in local arts and crafts fairs, mostly to clear space at home. As his work continued to improve, it was woodturning that offered a potential exit route off the corporate speedway.

Farmer genes pro and con

For Brad, it was never a matter of being an "artist." "I don't have that artist gene at all—I'm a farmer," he explains. He approached making a living as a woodturner the same way you might view a non-productive field or a broken tractor. There were facts to observe and ponder and new ways to put it together successfully.

At a time when woodturning was making its claim as a proper art form, Brad turned in the other direction. "Every town used to have a Smith, a Cooper, a Wright, and a Turner," he said, noting the historical sources of the names. He would see if it were possible to still make a living as a turner.

He knew being a pure artist wasn't his path, nor did he see himself as a production turner. He also mentioned that he didn't want to "mine the miners"—that is, make money providing tools, supplies, or instruction to other turners. He did know that he wanted to make something beautiful and high quality by hand, and then sell it to someone who would appreciate it. He wanted both the income and the personal satisfaction. Long before the "Farm to Market" movement, Brad chose a path where there would be no

In the shop

Adams' non-descript workspace on the east side of San Francisco Bay accommodates large numbers of large pieces, and the machinery to handle them.



Successful sales booth



Elements of a successful booth—appealing merchandise at a range of prices in an attractive display, a professional banner, a heavily trafficked location, and an engaged, welcoming presence.

Photos: Steve Forrest



Bottle openers and wine stoppers may not seem like a big deal, but they kept Adams going during the pandemic. As soon as one sells, Brad has another ready to go.

Running the business is like weaving a giant tapestry—every thread pulls on every other thread, and they all have to support each other.

middleman. Rather than depending on others, he would be his own boss and his own employee. And he knew he wanted to make a living at it—not get rich, but make a living. From the get-go, he knew he needed to make something people would want to buy.

Business acumen

Farmer Brad ran the numbers first. He had been making on the order of thirty bowls a year as an engaged hobbyist. He calculated he needed to do more than ten times that, with increased prices. Brad's goal was to earn half of what he earned working in a corporation, and he gave himself five years to achieve his goal. It was a bumpy transition. He says his work was mediocre at first—his finishes were lacking, and he was trying to be too “tricky.” In addition to issues with his own work quality, he had to figure out the marketing. “I tried lots of shows that were terrible,” he said. Many galleries didn't sell much, they failed to return work, or they outright went out of business.

But over time, he figured some things out. Shows needed a focus to work for him. Brad realized that “art and alcohol are a good mix when you are a vendor.” Fortunately, there is no shortage of art and wine shows in the San Francisco Bay area. He learned that most of what people buy are presents and that everything he sold should be both beautiful and useful. “Even an ugly bowl has a purpose,” he noted, “and since everyone's taste in art is different, it's not a good idea to give art as a present.” And while he had a website from the start, he learned that seeing the work in person, and especially handling it, was critical to selling anything. Brad actively sells through his website, but most of those sales are driven by people first seeing the work in person. “You have to get your stuff in front of people. If I can get them to pick it up, it's 50/50 they'll buy it.”

Ultimately, Brad mostly gave up selling at various weekend shows for a set location. He discovered the possibilities

of selling in San Francisco, and in particular, the Ferry Building. The Ferry Building is uniquely centrally located. Commuters from the East, South, and North Bay troop through this area mornings and evenings, and tourists flow through continuously. The weekend farmers' markets attract locals as well as visitors. And we're not talking small numbers of folks—it's hordes of people. For someone with something to sell, the exposure is extraordinary, and the cost is nominal. For years, Brad had a regular Wednesday slot, and that was enough. The commuters had the income, Brad had the turnings that filled their needs for wedding presents and such, and he sold thousands of pieces over the years.

When Covid hit, Brad had to adapt, like everyone else. Once again, it was time for some serious problem-solving. As the commuters dried up and people started working from home, Brad scrambled to salvage sales, and scraped by. “Beer bottle openers saved me,” he said and added wryly, “Thank God for Ruth Niles.” A key survival tactic was moving his sales day to weekends, because the revamped economy featured more tourists than commuters. With the general recovery, he built back up. Nowadays, his clientele has a different profile, but he's back in the saddle.

Adventure awaits



This truckload of huge madrone root burls is par for the course for Adams. Large quantities come at a discount, and nothing is wasted. There's a reason why madrone burl is popular, and Adams' favorite tool is the chainsaw. “Burls aren't the treasure. They're the treasure chest—you have to *open* them.”



Running the numbers

You wouldn't think selling one day a week would be enough, but that's just the tip of a much larger iceberg. Brad's no-nonsense, efficient approach involves specific work on specific days. Like any business, economies of scale, batch runs, and repetitive processes maximize value. Mondays he turns small stuff, mostly bottle openers and bottle stoppers. He makes upwards of twenty a day, and seemingly always needs to replenish them. He sells as many as he makes, and they account for close to one-third of his income. ►

A day's work



Walnut roughed and waxed—all in a day's work. Batching is an essential aspect of the efficiency needed to survive and thrive as a working turner.

On average, Brad spends two days a week turning bowls, ikebana vases, and other larger items, and two days a week roughing, finishing, and taking care of business—photographing, updating his website, etc. Brad processes a huge load of wood every year, on the order of 20,000 pounds. Again—it's a business. He doesn't have time to squander chasing after a little piece here or there. When he receives a load, it's often for a favorable price from one of his favorite providers, because he's a repeat, volume customer. To minimize waste, he dedicates time to processing the wood quickly. In general,



Photo: Steve Forrest

A figured walnut ikebana vase is dressed up with flowers from Adams' garden. These vases salvage otherwise unwanted cores, employ standard size inserts, and are dramatic and eye-catching. All of which adds up to increased sales and profits.

An unorthodox approach



Photo: Steve Forrest

Ultra-thin, flexible cabinet scrapers make quick work of tooling marks. Sanding can start at 220 grit.

green wood is never around more than a month before it's processed. He roughs and sells hundreds of bowls a year.

And sales days are extraordinarily long. He's up at 4:00 a.m., out of the house by 5:00, gets assigned a location by lottery, sets up his canopy, and is selling from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., at which point he tears it all down and heads home. An average work week is sixty hours.

Workflows

Brad works long hours, but he's hardly wasting time. He has organized his workflow to a remarkable degree. One of the most ingenious, integrated aspects of this is his van. A bare-bones unit to start, he has custom built and adapted so many features, it's hard to digest just how functional it all is. Storage units fit under, in, and next to other units; stuff rolls in and out, collapses against the walls, and straps onto racks. Storage cabinets work double duty as display cabinets, and everything is on wheels. He can transport a professional-quality booth, including shelving and displays, not to mention his actual products, all in one tidy little van.

The products Brad makes also reflect Darwinian decisions around efficiency—it's survival of the fittest. Brad cores a lot of big blanks, but what to do with that last core? An 8" (20cm) bowl is tricky to sell. But by using those cores for ikebana vases, Brad can convert them into cash without having to hollow at all. With minimal work needed to dress the external form, all he has to do is drill the central recess, because the pin inserts are standardized. And there is a ready market for the vases in the area, where a clean, elegant aesthetic is generally appreciated.

In addition, Brad offers both wine stoppers and bottle openers as "starters" for customers. These attractive, useful objects take advantage of small offcuts, and the beauty of the wood itself requires only modest embellishment, if any. Moreover, because they are small and portable, they are easy for tourists to take on an airplane. Minimal effort,

maximal profit, and again, strategic decision-making leads to success.

Because he deals in such large quantities of wood, Brad is able to ensure a supply of premium stock at a relatively low cost for his bread-and-butter salad bowls. Live-edge work asks a premium, but Brad's technique is so efficient, he can sell work for accessible (but not "bargain") prices. And Brad notes, "The market determines the prices." He has to make work that people want, for prices that they'll pay, in such a way that it's all worth his time. Running the business is like weaving a giant tapestry—every thread pulls on every other thread, and they all have to support each other.

One example of Brad's aptitude for efficiency is his use of cabinet scrapers. These are ultra-thin (0.010", or 0.25mm), flexible scrapers. Suggested by a machinist who recommended using shims as scrapers, Brad immediately realized the benefits. Quickly putting a burr on them with a small disk sander and simply holding them by hand at an effective cutting angle, he uses these on virtually any profile with shockingly quick and impressive results. The scrapers radically reduce sanding time. Rather than following the conventional wisdom, Brad has forged his own path.

Efficiency doesn't only apply to production. For *every* piece, he makes a card showing the price, serial number, species, and information about the tree's provenance. Of course, he has templates ready to go on his computer. Cards are printed and stored numerically. Whenever anything sells, he pulls up a new piece, and its corresponding card. There's no hunting around, no improvising, no lost notes, no misplaced records. And it's all updated in real time to the website. Efficiency reigns but it takes time, both to set up and to execute.

With all this talk about the business side of things, it would be easy to give short shrift to Brad's skill and taste. But his technique has been honed by long hours at the lathe, and he is a stickler for



(Left) Dyed Maple Burl Bowl, 2022, Maple burl, dye, lacquer, 1¾" x 3½" (4cm x 9cm)



(Right) Madrone Burl Natural-Edge Bowl, 2024, Madrone burl, walnut oil, 7½" x 16" (19cm x 41cm)

details. While not a fan of “small and fiddly” work, he notices every aspect of a piece, from proportion to curve to surface to finish. His modest embellishments are tasteful and eye-catching. He’s his own biggest critic, and the quality-control is demanding. Brad’s work is, quite simply, unassumingly beautiful.

Not just a living, but a lifestyle

One recent, sunny Saturday, I watched Brad in action at the Ferry Building. He has a natural, unforced charisma as he manages his booth. His easy, relaxed manner connected with visitors, and he had a lot of them. The sheer numbers of people flowing through this central square was mind-boggling. The vendors in the market have formed a little community, and they look out for each other—minding booths for bathroom breaks, treating each other to little morsels, etc. Market days are a welcome variation from the long, solitary workdays at the lathe. The full range of humanity is on display at the Ferry Building, and Brad welcomes all of it.

He also studies people. He notes what draws them, the subtle signals they send, the relationships being played out in front of him. Some people see a piece and immediately buy it—others need time to fondle the work, talk to family, go away, and come back before they convince themselves. Some folks want footed work; others prefer a plain base. For these reasons, Brad doesn’t tie himself to any one style. “I pride myself on not having a signature shape. I like being a mercenary,” he says. Again, it was never about being

an artist—it was always about filling a niche. His role is to provide a range of objects, styles, and prices, and let people make up their own minds, rather than presenting them with only his preferences. But truth be told, he does find the big salad bowls to be the most fun to turn. His favorite tool isn’t even the lathe—it’s the chainsaw. And a twinkle comes to his eyes when he talks about burls. “Burls aren’t the treasure. They’re the treasure chest—you have to *open* them.”

The days are long, and the chainsaws aren’t getting any lighter. As he said about market day, “I do enjoy these days, but I am ready for Advil at the end.” Despite his attention to making work as easy as possible, he has a genuine concern about wear and tear on his body, as anybody who has worked raw wood can attest.

Brad still enjoys his job. He likes his boss, and he likes his customers. He feels a distinct satisfaction when people show

him a picture of the salad they had last night in the bowl he made. “No one ever proudly showed me a picture of an internet router I sold them,” he said, reflecting on his high-tech career. It worked out being a turner—he just doesn’t want to work quite as hard at it. But he can’t see not doing it. After his last vacation, he was eager to get back to the shop so he could turn more. Brad Adams has the best blue collar job in the world. ■

For more, visit brad-adams-woodturner.square.site.

Steve Forrest is a former RN and teacher whose third act is as a woodturner. He also gets to combine his interests and skills as an editor and occasional writer for American Woodturner and Woodturning Fundamentals. He is the current President of the Wine Country Woodturners in Sonoma County, California, where he lives with his wife, pets, and lathe. See his work at steveforrestwoodturning.com and on Instagram, @steveforrestwoodturning.

Simple problem-solving



Yet another example of Brad’s approach to problem-solving, this time for a small issue: shavings down your neck or under your faceshield? Not with this patented and very pricey neck gaiter.

Functional mobility



Brad’s van is just as important and well organized as his shop space and is a key element to the success of his business.

MEMBERS' GALLERY

Clayton Thigpen, Mississippi

Woodturning started for me as just another creative interest to try, appreciate, and ultimately forget. But it's been several years now, and I can't fathom moving on from it, to the point where I have begun entirely shifting into a career as a production turner. So many of the other creative pursuits I have tried—illustration, graphic design, 3D modeling— all had a common pitfall: they all begin with the dreaded "blank page" staring back at me. With woodturning, no project ever starts with empty space. This makes it feel like more of a collaboration with nature than just a mind straining to create something from nothing.

At first, 100% of what I enjoyed was the actual process of turning wood. Surprisingly, being able to travel across the country to attend club meetings, demonstrate, and even teach at such wonderful places like the John C. Campbell Folk School, has ironically lowered that percentage. These days, it has become more of an even fifty-fifty split, where I am passionate about actually turning just as much as I am about getting the chance to interact with others and learn from any awesome person who is willing to share what they know (which, with woodturners, is pretty much everybody!).



(Clockwise from top left)

Mimosa Cherokee Vase, 2024, Mimosa, tung oil finish, 7½" x 5" (19cm x 13cm)

Mimosa Platter, 2024, Mimosa, tung oil finish, 10" (25cm) diameter

Osage Orange Obelisk, 2024, Osage orange, linseed oil, beeswax, 5" x 2¼" (13cm x 6cm)

Live Edge Vase, 2024, Bradford pear, tung oil, cyanoacrylate (CA) glue, 8" (20cm) tall



Pear Jewelry Box, 2024, Bradford pear, OB Shine Juice, 4½" x 6" (11cm x 15cm)



Tissue Box Cover, 2025, Koa, yacht varnish, 6" x 10" (15cm x 25cm)

Rian Jarvis, Hawai'i

I am a third-generation craftsman, wood finisher, painter, carpenter, jeweler, furniture designer and maker, color-matching expert, job supervisor, as well as an expert on heirloom furniture repair and restoration, acid cold patinas on metal, 24k goldleaf, and antique aging finishes on wood and metal. I have been turning wood for twenty-five years, and among all of these crafts, woodturning is my favorite.

Hawaiian koa is extremely expensive, so I purchase rejected pieces wherever I can and laminate them to make turning rounds.

I've been making tissue box covers for many years but only in square shapes. Recently, I challenged myself to make them round, which is much more difficult to accomplish. I've made about fifteen of these so far, and they sell very well in my local gallery.



Connie van der Walt, New Zealand

I have had a passion for making things since my early years. I was introduced to woodturning in school when I grew up in South Africa in the late 1980s. After school, I continued doing the odd turning now and then on a homebuilt lathe. It was always spindle turning and just part of furniture. It got more serious as years passed, although it was always a hobby, giving me a second income with commissions. After moving to New Zealand in 2019, I became more intrigued by the artistic aspect of turning. Nowadays, I enjoy it more than ever. I don't do it as an income, only as a hobby. If something sells, it is a bonus. I always seek something new and different to challenge my skill set. I like to decorate turnings with pyrography and carving, but form and wood grain are always prominent.

For more, follow Connie on Instagram, @connievdwalt1.



Just a Bowl, 2024, Puriri, oil finish, 4" x 10½" (10cm x 27cm)

Medieval Double Act, 2024, Oak, mahogany, gilders paste, paints, carving, pyrography, oil finish, 7½" x 12" (19cm x 30cm)

Inferno, 2024, Ancient kauri, pyrography, oil finish, 4¾" x 7½" (12cm x 19cm)



Fantail Jewelry Box, 2024, Ancient kauri, matai, black maire, acrylic paint, oil finish, 7" x 4" (18cm x 10cm)



Puriri Natural Edge, 2024, Puriri (carved and ebonized), Danish oil, 4" x 7" (10cm x 18cm)

Footed Natural Edge Bowl, 2024, Puriri, charring, oil finish, 4¾" x 10½" (12cm x 27cm)

Patrick Matthews, New Jersey

Fon Du Lac (Bottom of the Lake)

My artistic journey began in 2022 with retirement. After a lifetime in the wood products industry, I found myself drawn to woodturning, a medium that allows me to explore the three-dimensional beauty inherent in wood. The recent drought in New Jersey revealed long-submerged trees at the bottom of the Manasquan Reservoir. These ancient, water-logged timbers, some submerged for over thirty years, speak of the transformative power of nature. My work seeks to capture the essence of the trees, highlighting their textures, forms, and inner beauty.

Woodturning is a subtractive process, taking away layers and exploring themes of transformation and renewal. Retirement, a period of reinvention, mirrors the process of transforming raw, waterlogged wood into compelling art. For me, the pieces represent the unexpected beauty found in unexpected places, a reflection of my own journey of self-discovery. Oak and willow root, once submerged and forgotten, are now transformed into objects of contemplation and wonder.

Timbers exposed by drought



Manasquan Reservoir drought, January 2025. Normally, these logs and stumps are under several feet of water.



Finding unattached lathe-sized pieces required quite a bit of searching.



Items turned from trees exposed by the Manasquan Reservoir drought, 2024, Oak and willow root, put here to succulent purpose.

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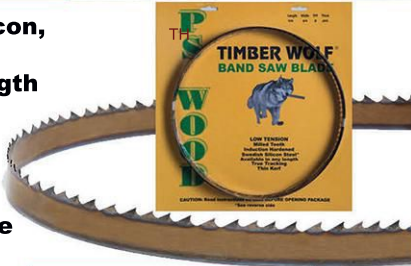


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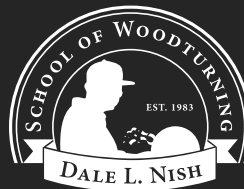
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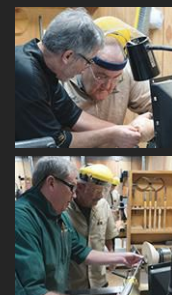
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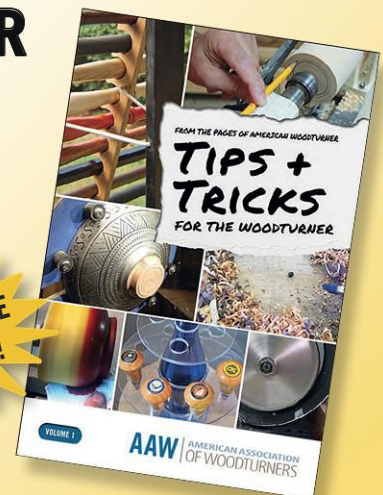
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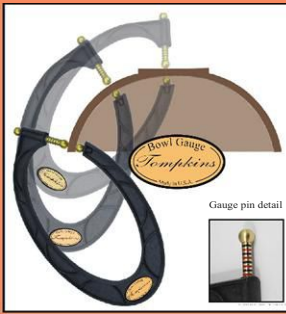




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Spiral Rosettes

A few years ago, I was searching for a way to embellish the tops of some swivel-lid boxes I had made for holiday gifts. What developed was a lathe-based technique to produce what I like to call “spiral rosettes.” As time passed and one project led to another, and another, and another, it occurred to me that perhaps a more appropriate term might be “rabbit hole rosettes,” but I decided on the former label.

Inside This Issue!

Learn how to add spiral rosettes to your turned work. See John Sutter's how-to article on page 24.

