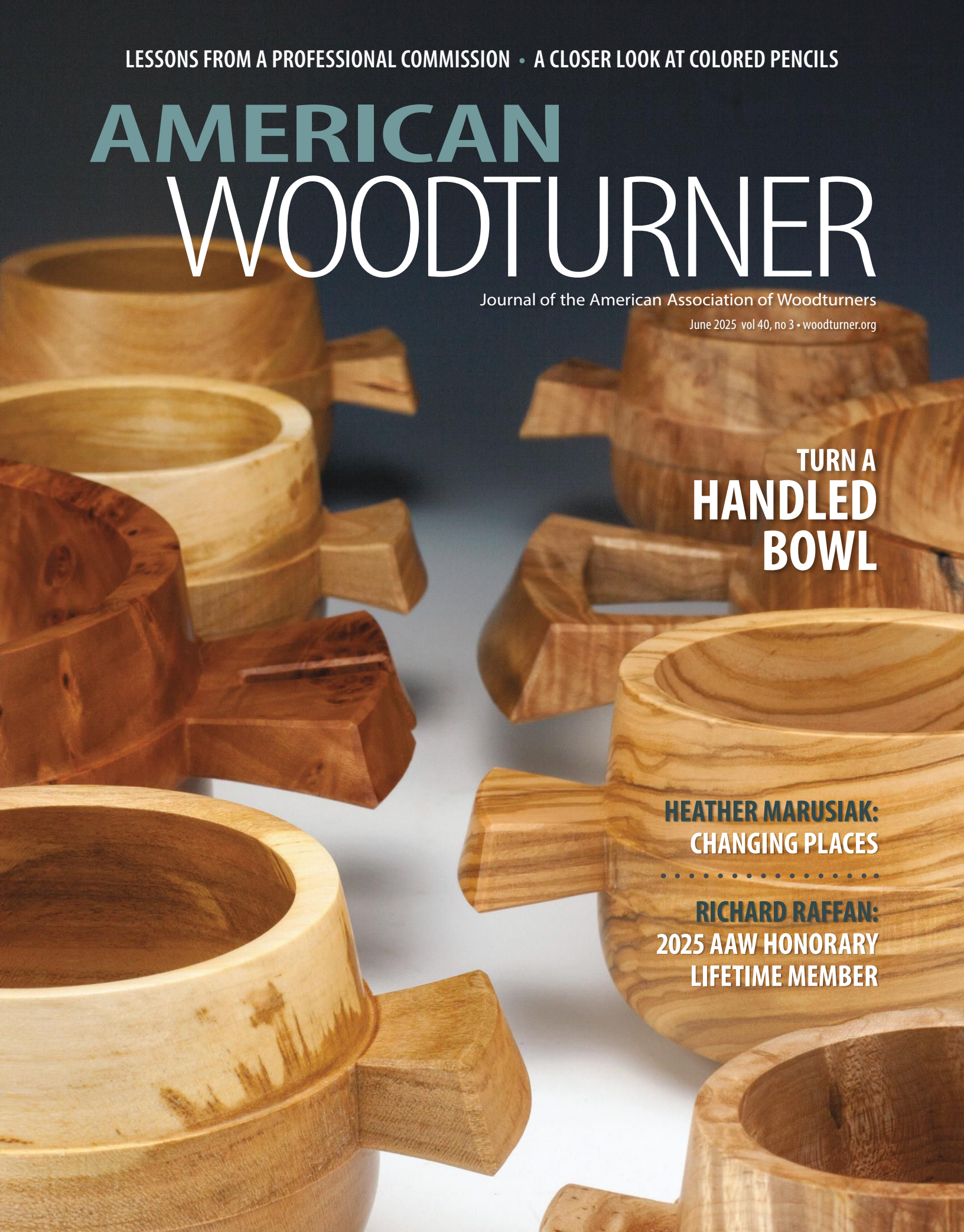
LESSONS FROM A PROFESSIONAL COMMISSION • A CLOSER LOOK AT COLORED PENCILS

AMERICAN WOODTURNER

Journal of the American Association of Woodturners

June 2025 vol 40, no 3 • woodturner.org



TURN A HANDLED BOWL

HEATHER MARUSIAK: CHANGING PLACES

RICHARD RAFFAN: 2025 AAW HONORARY LIFETIME MEMBER

Greg Whitaker

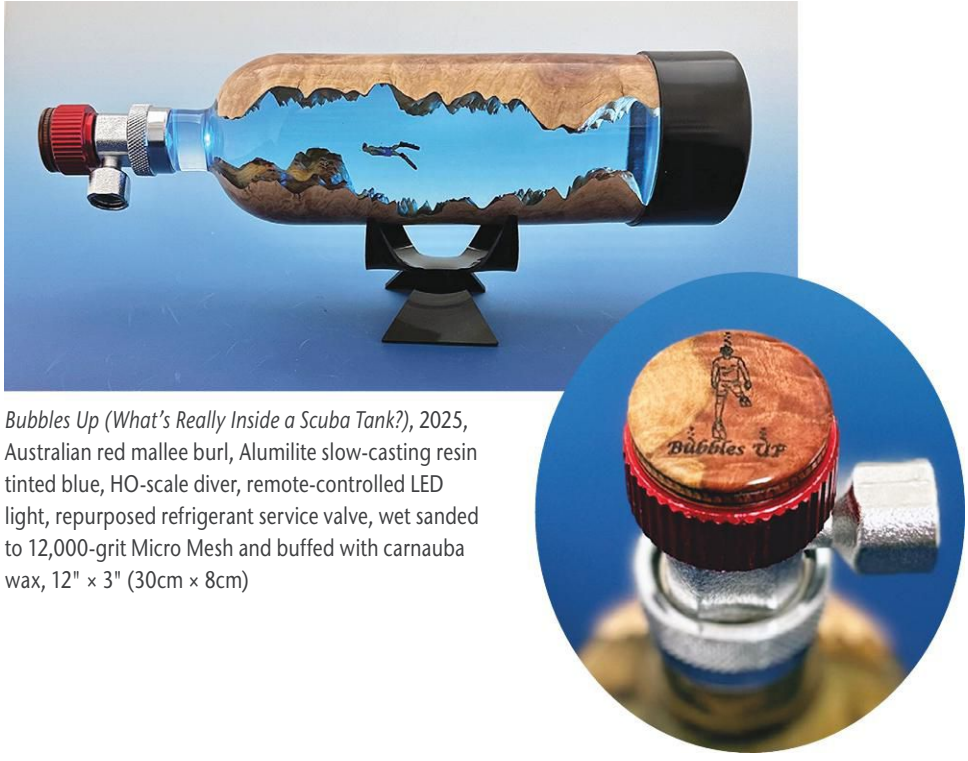
Minnesota

Hydroponic, 2023, Australian red mallee burl, Ocean Blue-tinted Alumilite slow-casting resin, artificial roots and leaves, wet sanded to 12,000-grit Micro Mesh and buffed with carnauba wax, Vase only: 7" × 4" (18cm × 10cm)

My grandfather, who was a wood pattern maker by trade, introduced me to woodworking at a young age. When I was in junior high in the mid-1960s, I was exposed to woodturning for the first time, and that was the beginning of my turning adventure. I am one of those turners who rarely turns the same thing twice, and I truly enjoy the mental process of dreaming up something new.

Like many turners, my first exposure to resin turning was pen making, but things took a turn when I was given a copy of Keith Lackner's book, *Woodturning with Resin* (Cedar Lane Press, 2021). Combining resin and woods like Australian burls opened up a whole new world for me. I started with pieces that incorporated opaque resins but soon found myself wanting to see more of the wood and the inside of the piece. The next step was to look for ways to add interest to the inside, much like a ship in a bottle. That's when I decided to try HO-scale figures. To my surprise, even seasoned woodturners experience a moment of curiosity when they hold what seems like a common object (such as a jar, bottle, or vase) and see another world inside. The next question usually is, "How did you do that?" ■

Fore, 2025, Tee: cherry, resin, artificial turf, lacquer; golf ball: Australian red mallee burl, Water Clear Alumilite casting resin, HO-scale golf figures, sand, wet sanded to 12,000-grit Micro Mesh and buffed with carnauba wax, 7¾" × 4" (20cm × 10cm)



Bubbles Up (What's Really Inside a Scuba Tank?), 2025, Australian red mallee burl, Alumilite slow-casting resin tinted blue, HO-scale diver, remote-controlled LED light, repurposed refrigerant service valve, wet sanded to 12,000-grit Micro Mesh and buffed with carnauba wax, 12" × 3" (30cm × 8cm)

Getting High, the Hard Way, 2025, Australian red mallee burl, Water Clear Alumilite casting resin, HO-scale rock climbing figures, embroidery thread (for climbing ropes), shrink-wrap wine cork seal, wet sanded to 12,000-grit Micro Mesh and buffed with carnauba wax, 10½" × 3" (27cm × 8cm)

Winds of Change, 2022, Australian red mallee burl, Alumilite slow-casting resin, red and orange dye, wet sanded to 12,000-grit Micro Mesh and buffed with carnauba wax, 4" (10cm) diameter

The One That Got Away (What's Really Inside a Bobber?), 2025, Australian red mallee burl, Alumilite slow-casting resin (clear and tinted blue), HO-scale fisherman, artificial fish, wet sanded to 12,000-grit Micro Mesh and buffed with carnauba wax, 8" × 4" (20cm × 10cm)

Go Fly a Kite, 2024, Australian red mallee burl, apple (jar cap), metal jar lid ring, Water Clear Alumilite casting resin, HO-scale kite flying figures, wet sanded to 12,000-grit Micro Mesh and buffed with carnauba wax, 7" × 3¾" (18cm × 10cm)

AAW | AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF WOODTURNERS

Mission: Strengthen and empower the global woodturning community

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

American Woodturner (ISSN 0895-9005) is published bimonthly by:
American Association of Woodturners
222 Landmark Center, 75 5th St W
Saint Paul, MN 55102-7704

Periodicals postage paid at Saint Paul, MN, and at additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *American Woodturner*, AAW
222 Landmark Center, 75 5th St W
Saint Paul, MN 55102-7704

office: 651-484-9094
toll free: 877-595-9094

email: memberservices@woodturner.org
website: woodturner.org
gallery website: galleryofwoodart.org

Executive Director Jennifer Newberg
Curator Tib Shaw

Yearly General membership in the American Association of Woodturners is $74 and includes a subscription to *American Woodturner*. Dues for international members are equivalent to USA amounts before exchange rates are applied. All electronic-journal memberships are $60 yearly or USA equivalent.

Send dues to:
American Association of Woodturners
222 Landmark Center
75 5th St W
St. Paul, MN 55102-7704 USA

Or join online at woodturner.org

Printed in the USA by Quad/Graphics, West Allis, WI

MIX Paper | Supporting responsible forestry FSC® C084269

Inside This Issue

June 2025 vol 40, no 3

FEATURES

AMERICAN WOODTURNER

Journal of the American Association of Woodturners

ASSOCIATION NEWS

WOODTURNERS CHATTER

GALLERY

COVER

Cover: Mark Gardner, Handled Bowls

Back cover: David Bartell

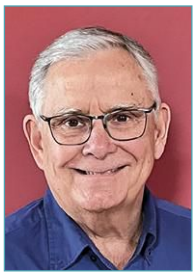
Editor's Note

In the last issue, I pointed out that this Journal is *by* woodturners and *for* woodturners. As KC Kendall says below, that concept is in line with the core AAW value of "Sharing." Taking a closer look at the different sections of *American Woodturner*, there are several options for sharing your ideas. If you don't want to commit to writing a full feature article, an easier approach is to share a tip for the Tips section—they are short and fun! The Members' Gallery section is where you can share examples of your work. In all, *AW* reveals what others are doing in their shops around the world. What will you add to the conversation?

Joshua Friend

—Joshua Friend

From the President



Hail & Farewell

As previously announced, Jennifer Newberg is resigning as AAW's executive director and will depart in early June. Jen's many contributions include the challenging but successful implementation of virtual symposia during the Covid-19 pandemic. She helped to successfully resume in-person symposia starting in Chattanooga. Jen managed through many staffing changes while also supporting major improvements in our accounting systems. Our communications with members were restaged to be more friendly and welcoming. We sincerely wish Jen well in her future endeavors.

We are very excited about the arrival of our new executive director, Gretchen Willbrandt. Gretchen is passionate about being part of a membership-based organization and comes with a strong background in such organizations in the Minnesota area. We are pleased that Gretchen has joined us and look forward to a long relationship.

AAW values – Sharing

In my previous president's letter, I said I will highlight one of AAW's values from the set of values defined by our board, staff and membership. "Sharing" is the next value to explore: "We are committed to sharing knowledge, time, techniques and inspiration with the broad woodturning community."

When I started turning in 2007, I was immediately struck by the open and helpful nature of those I met in the Ohio Valley Woodturners Guild. I received great advice on getting started. How do I decide what lathe to buy? What about chucks, tools, accessories, and more? Where might I go to take lessons? Would I like to have someone come to my shop to help? All this and more helped me get off to a good start in a new endeavor that has added great meaning to my life. I consistently hear the same message from AAW members that I meet.

Our publications, *American Woodturner* and *Woodturning Fundamentals*, and our website might well have a catch phrase: "By woodturners, for woodturners," reflecting how we share with each other. AAW members have written the vast majority of the almost forty years of articles that debuted in our publications and now reside permanently in our searchable online archive.

Assume you like to make boxes. And you have an approach and a design that you think others might like to try. Imagine how much time and effort it takes to clearly describe the steps so that others can try it. Now reflect on almost four decades of content, probably over 2,000 articles, produced by members like you. This truly embodies the spirit of sharing that makes the woodturning community unique and great to be a part of.

Saint Paul AAW Symposium

It is not too late—you can still join us in Saint Paul, Minnesota, for our 39th Annual International Woodturning Symposium. What fun it will be to join with fellow woodturners from forty-nine states and nine countries. Our tradeshow is packed with over forty-six vendors, all ready to help with your every question. They will happily send you home with all you need to try out the projects and ideas available to you in your selection from seventy-nine demonstrations. This year's special guests are Tom Silva (from *This Old House* fame) and his daughter Kate, who are excited to join us and share their passion for woodturning.

When you are in Saint Paul, be sure to visit our Gallery of Wood Art at our headquarters in the Landmark Center, a short walk from the Convention Center. There is much to see: vintage lathes, beautiful pieces from our permanent collection, and more.

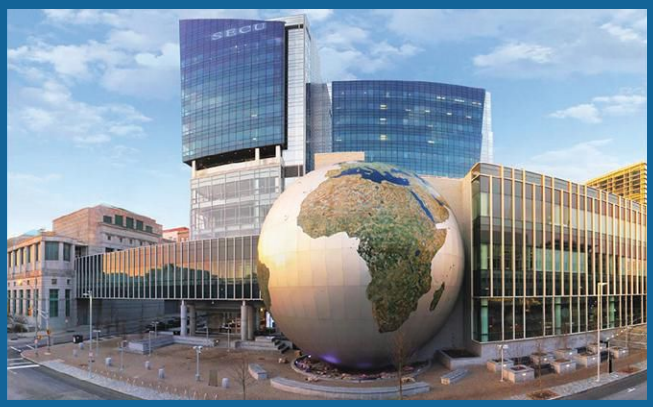
If you cannot join us in person, be sure to sign up for the Virtual Symposium, with ongoing access to twenty demonstrations for ninety days. Nearly 1,000 people from over ninety countries have taken advantage of this innovative option in prior years.

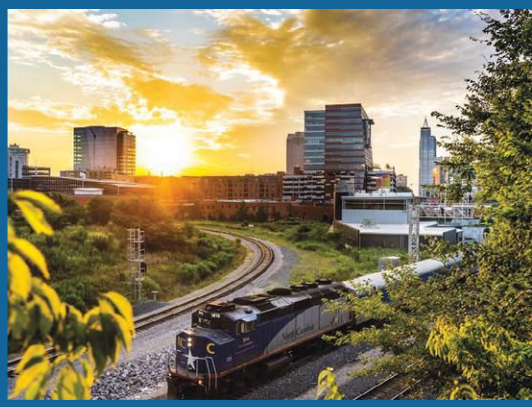
In 2026, our Symposium will be held in Raleigh, North Carolina, the site of our 2019 Symposium.

As always, your comments and suggestions are welcome; please reach out to me or any of our staff or board members. I look forward to meeting many of you in Saint Paul.

KC Kendall, Jr

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

2025 AAW INTERNATIONAL WOODTURNING SYMPOSIUM

June 12-15 in Saint Paul, Minnesota

-OR-

Attend the AAW Virtual Symposium!

Can't Make it to Minnesota? WATCH FROM HOME!

20 Demonstrations Live-Streamed, Recorded, & Available to Watch Later

REGISTER FOR THE VIRTUAL SYMPOSIUM AT AAWSYMPOSIUM.ORG

The 2025 AAW Virtual Woodturning Symposium will be livestreaming demonstrations from Saint Paul, Minnesota. You will have the opportunity to learn from woodturning demonstrators from Australia, France, the United Kingdom, Luxembourg, and across the United States from the comfort of your own home. Twenty demonstrations ranging from fundamental skills to innovative forms will be live-streamed and recorded. Here is just a glimpse of some of the topics being covered:

- Bowl Turning Fundamentals
- Turning Green to Finished
- Copper Lidded Box
- Hand Cut Barley Twist Spindle
- Textured & Colored Platter
- Improvisation on a Root Burl
- Walking Teapot
- Spindle Turning Fundamentals

***Visit the AAW Symposium website, aawsymposium.org**, to see the full list of demonstrations and registration information.*

Pull together at least five of your chapter friends and you can get an additional group discount of $20 each

Our Heartfelt Thanks, Saint Paul Symposium Sponsors and Exhibitors!

In-Kind Donors

Woodcraft
Easy Wood Tools
Crown Hand Tools
Peke Safety
Ron Day
Teknatool
GluBoost
The Walnut Log
Jeff Brockett
Saint Paul Cultural STAR Grant

A Special Thank You to JPW Industries

JPW Industries, makers of Powermatic and JET lathes, continues its legacy with the AAW as the donor of the 2025 Symposium raffle lathe in Saint Paul, Minnesota. The company is also a key sponsor of our Learn to Turn Youth Program as well as Symposium demonstration rooms.

Thank you to the many vendors filling the tradeshow in Saint Paul, Minnesota, this year:

Airbrushing Wood
Advanced Lathe Tools, LLC
Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts
AZ Carbide
Bad Dog Tools
Big Monk Lumber Company
Branches to Bowls, Ltd.
Carter and Son Toolworks
Chefwarekits / EZ Jigs
Craft Supplies USA
Curt Theobald Studios
Easy Inlay
Easy Wood Tools
ExoticBlanks.com
Hunter Tool Systems
JJ Marlex, Inc.
John Jordan Woodturning
Kallenshaan Woods
Liquid Solutions, LLC
Lyle Jamieson Woodturning, LLC
MDI Woodcarvers Supply
Mullet Tools
Oneway Manufacturing
Peke Safety
Planet Plus, Ltd
Power Carving Depot
Powermatic / JPW Industries
Reforged Wood
Right Angle
Robust Tools
Rockler Woodworking & Hardware
Stainless Bottle Stoppers
Stuart Batty Tools
Teknatool USA, Inc.
The Walnut Log, LLC
Thompson Lathe
Tom's Tools
Transpiration Turning
Trent Bosch Tools
Turning Native, LLC / Ashley Harwood
Urbaneer, LLC
Walrus Oil
Woodcraft
Woodturners Wonders

Join the AAW Legacy Society

When you think about what will happen to your belongings after you're gone, it is natural to think about the people and organizations that have meant something to you. If you have been a member of the American Association of Woodturners (AAW) during your lifetime and believe in our mission, you can ensure we will continue to make a positive difference far into the future.

You can easily include a bequest in your will or trust, and it is flexible:

- It does not affect your finances during your lifetime.
- It is private, not disclosed until after your passing.
- You can change it any time before your death.

Specify an amount or percentage

You can specify a certain amount or a percentage of what is left in your estate after other expenses. Generally, giving a percentage allows for more flexibility in your long-term planning. Your gift is deductible for federal estate tax purposes, and there is no limit on the deduction. Plus, it is often exempt from state inheritance taxes.

Sample bequest language

Simple bequest language that you can provide to your estate attorney might read like this: "I give, devise, and bequeath [specific dollar amount, or percentage of estate] to the American Association of Woodturners, a nonprofit organization located at 75 5th Street W, 222 Landmark Center, Saint Paul, MN 55102 USA [Tax ID: 45-3809279], for its general purposes."

"I'm glad Susan has taken up woodturning. But it's all I can do to keep up with the wood shavings!"

FROM THE EDITOR'S INBOX

Send emails to editor@woodturner.org

The Cumberland Woodturners of Crossville, Tennessee, prides itself on giving back to the community through special projects and events. The club resumed its annual partnership last year with Dogwood Exchange Village Green mall and the First National Bank, which served as sales locations for our 2024 Christmas ornament and turned art fundraiser. We are happy to report that we broke our past sales record by selling more than 750 ornaments and generating over $16,000. We are proud to have donated all proceeds to local community charities. The 2024 recipients were House of Hope and Kids on the Rise, both of which help hundreds of kids in need throughout the year.
—Thomas Neckvatal, President, Cumberland Woodturners

I enjoyed Jim Sannerud's article, "My Journey to Natural Finishes," in the April 2025 issue (vol 40, no 2). I am also a big proponent of tung oil and Mahoney's Walnut Oil, although I use other finishes, such as shellac, lacquer, and Beall buffing, depending on the wood and intended use. As a PhD organic chemist, I found a few curious items in the article. The author refers to the SDS on (1S)-2,6,6-Trimethylbicyclo[3.1.1]hept-2-ene, can't find out what it is, and "decided not to use any product containing that ingredient." This is none other than alpha-pinene, one of the main ingredients in turpentine. And I can assure him that mineral oil, a well-known laxative, is indeed "truly food safe."
—Robin Clark, California

In the April 2025 issue of *AW* (vol 40, no 2), Mike Darlow claims in a letter to the editor that there is a "suite of techniques that are optimum for all turners without significant handicaps who desire to turn to their full potential." But what constitutes a "significant handicap"? And what about turners with varying levels of experience, hand strength, dexterity, and comfort with different tools? All of these factors influence which techniques work best for various individuals.

Darlow also writes that "...the quality of a cut is determined solely by the geometry and quality of the edge actively cutting, and by how it is presented and traversed," and "These factors for any particular cut are the same for all turners." He might as well be describing machines, but turners are not a fixed variable, they are individuals.

Darlow believes his ideas should influence not only how turning is taught, but also what editors should publish. However, he fails to take account of the diversity of the world-wide turning movement. Good luck with the idea of getting all teachers of turning all over the world to conform to his dogmatic ideas; and publishing only one way of doing things would not only be boring, it would also discourage innovation. The strength of the turning community lies in its adaptability and creativity, so if different turners benefit from different techniques, instruction should help turners find what works best for them and not limit them to one narrow-minded approach.
—Terry Martin, Australia

Woodturners gathered at the Oregon Woodturning Symposium 2025 to show their support for the Linn Benton Food Share. Our Empty Bowls project was a huge success. Initially, the goal was set at 100 bowls. With eight clubs volunteering to help organize the Symposium, each club committed to turning ten bowls, which would give us at least eighty. But with seventy-six turners, there were 194 bowls donated and 162 of them sold, raising $4,050. Carly Fonk, Director of the Linn Benton Food Share, said, "This is amazing! Each dollar we receive provides approximately five meals' worth of food. That is 20,250 meals for individuals and families in Linn and Benton County! This will have a huge impact on those experiencing food insecurity and hunger in our community."

The remaining bowls were donated to the Linn Benton Gleaning Program for use in an upcoming fundraiser. We are grateful to the number of people who came out to purchase bowls and support the food share program. A heartfelt thank you goes out to everyone who helped make this project a success.
—Mark Choitz, President, Oregon Woodturning Symposium

Assoc. of Woodturners of South Africa Annual Symposium

In September 2024, the annual symposium of the Association of Woodturners of South Africa (AWSA) was held at Northlink College in Plattekloof, Cape Town. The symposium was organized and hosted by The Western Cape Woodturners Association under the able guidance of Gert Ferreira and his committee.

Through a very generous donation from an American woodturner, we were able to bring renowned British woodturner Phil Irons to the 2024 event, which was attended by 115 delegates from all over South Africa. Phil held a masterclass the day before the symposium and then offered excellent demonstrations over the next three days, which were all well attended. Our event includes trade and tool suppliers, a raffle, a gala dinner, as well as an auction that brings in much needed funds for the Association.

2025 AWSA symposium

This year's AWSA symposium will again be held at Northlink College in Plattekloof, Cape Town, October 3-6. We welcome all woodturners interested in coming to South Africa to attend the symposium. An overseas demonstrator is yet to be announced. **For the latest information, visit awsa.org.za.**

—Peter Nicolle, South Africa

The Emerald Coast Woodturning Guild of Santa Rosa Beach, Florida, recently gathered to celebrate the artistry and dedication of its members. Three distinguished awards were presented, beginning with the New Woodturner of the Year award, which was given to Margaret Landry. Margaret has demonstrated exceptional skill and persistence in mastering woodturning techniques, earning her this well-deserved recognition.

The President's Award was presented to John Blackwood in acknowledgment of his steadfast commitment to supporting the Guild. His tireless efforts and consistent contributions have been integral to the group's growth and success.

Lastly, our club's prestigious Lifetime Achievement Award went to Dr. Al Prince, whose breathtaking creations and visionary craftsmanship have left an indelible mark on the woodturning community.

We would like to thank and recognize the following vendors for generously donating items to our award recipients: Doug Thompson Tools, Carter and Sons Tools, Packard Wood Works, Woodcraft, Craft Supplies USA, Ron Brown's Best, Klingspor, Wood Turner's Wonders, and Treeline.

—Brad Davis, Emerald Coast Woodturning Guild, Florida

Margaret Landry – New Turner of the Year

John Blackwood – President's Award

Dr. Al Prince – Lifetime Achievement Award

I want to let people know what the Southeast Oklahoma Woodturners (SOW) has been doing to help students of various ages learn about woodturning. Our club members taught a three-week class at the high school in Wright City, Oklahoma, and then moved equipment to another school in Battiest, Oklahoma. There, Chris Wood, Mike Love, and Earl Braddy taught twenty-five fifth and sixth graders spindle turning, with fun projects like snowmen, snowwomen, and miniature bats (it is a school that loves baseball and softball). The emphasis was on safety, form, art, finishing, and decorating. It was a challenge to teach such young students, but they stepped up and met the challenge.

In addition to teaching at various area schools, our instructors started adult night classes, sharing their joy of woodturning with students of all ages.

—Sarah Clinesmith, Secretary, Southeast Oklahoma Woodturners

New AAW Executive Director

The AAW Board of Directors is excited to welcome Gretchen Wilbrandt as our new executive director. Gretchen brings exceptional experience in nonprofit leadership, fundraising, and member engagement. Most recently with Urban Boatbuilders, she successfully led development efforts and built strong community partnerships. She previously served as executive director of the Minnetonka Yacht Club, where her leadership fostered deeper connection among members and helped create a welcoming, intergenerational environment.

A passionate handcraft hobbyist, Gretchen shares AAW's spirit of creativity and collaboration. Woodturners can be excited by her fresh perspective, strategic mindset, and deep appreciation for craft, all of which will help AAW thrive into the future. Please help us welcome Gretchen in person at the AAW Symposium this June in Saint Paul, Minnesota.

Teknatool Provides Meeting Place for Florida West Coast Woodturners

The Florida West Coast Woodturners (FWCW) supports the central Gulf Coast area of Florida, a populous and still-growing area. Space to live or work can be hard to come by, so when the club's prior host, a local community arts center, opted out of hosting our meetings, the club took quick action to find a new home.

A task force was assembled and began evaluating options, which eventually included Teknatool, a family business now in its third generation and highly regarded in the woodturning community for their NOVA brand. With their U.S. facility in Clearwater, Florida, being convenient for our club members, task force lead Sean Kubovcik called the company and left a voicemail message. Teknatool VP of Operations Tom Rathert quickly responded with assurance that the club could be accommodated. "We're thrilled to host the Florida West Coast Woodturners at our premises, strengthening our connection to the people who matter most—the woodturning community," said Teknatool Marketing Executive Sabrina Latimer.

Charitable projects

FWCW is excited to move forward with Teknatool's support. We are dedicated to community service. Charitable projects provide inspiration and valuable experience for members, as well as functional or financial support for organizations that help others. This year, our outreach projects will include wig stands to be donated to Moffitt Cancer Center, Beads of Courage boxes to be donated to Johns Hopkins All Children's Hospital, bowls to be donated to Feeding Tampa Bay for their Empty Bowls fundraiser, and Christmas tree ornaments to be donated to The ARC Tampa Bay for the annual tree raffle fundraiser benefiting their mission to support and empower people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

In 2024, the twenty-nine active members of FWCW donated sixty-one bowls, nineteen wig stands, eighteen bead boxes, and 172 Christmas ornaments. FWCW's Patrick Sikes Memorial Iron Turner Challenge, named for a long-time club member and supporter, provides additional inspiration, challenges, and prizes for club members who successfully complete twelve assigned projects throughout the year.

For more, visit floridawestcoastwoodturners.org.

—Wendy Brickman, Florida

Club members who completed the 2024 Patrick Sikes Memorial Iron Turner Challenge.

Generous club donations of Beads of Courage boxes and wig stands.

RMWS to Host First-Ever All-Women Lineup

This September, for the 23rd year, more than 300 people will gather in Loveland, Colorado, for the annual Rocky Mountain Woodturning Symposium (RMWS). Each year, the symposium features a carefully selected group of the finest woodturners from around the globe, and this year, they all happen to be women, a groundbreaking first in the field.

History

In 1994, when the AAW was set to host its annual national event in Fort Collins, Colorado, the Rocky Mountain Woodturners Club was formed. The AAW was looking for volunteers, and a group of local woodturners was looking to promote woodturning on a more local level, so forming a club made sense. The AAW Symposium was held that summer at Colorado State University in the Industrial Sciences and Technology Education Department, headed by Dr. Lee Carter. It was a huge success, and it really energized woodturning in the area.

Capitalizing on this momentum, the club began discussions about hosting its own small woodturning event. With a grant of $1,000 from the AAW, in addition to contributions from the well-established Front Range Woodturners in Denver, Colorado, the inaugural Rocky Mountain Woodturning Symposium was held on October 13, 1999. While modest in scale, drawing about 150 attendees, the event featured Clay Foster as the keynote demonstrator alongside various local turners. Despite its humble budget, the event was a tremendous success, spurring the growth of woodturning in Colorado.

After several successful years of a one-day event, in the early 2000s the event moved into a bigger venue and expanded to two days. This marked a significant leap that broadened the event's reach, attracting attendees from beyond Colorado. Today the event spans over three days, with forty-five rotations.

The RMWS has endured its share of challenges over the years, such as a last-minute cancellation in 2013 due to a flood, as well as a hiatus during the Covid-19 pandemic. However, the symposium returned in 2023, stronger than ever.

2025 all-women lineup

In 2025, the RMWS is excited to highlight a selection of talented and diverse women turners, who have been historically underrepresented in the field. While the symposium has consistently featured top demonstrators from across the globe, it also strives to provide a platform for the next generation of turners. The planning for the 2025 symposium initially featured a substantial number of women on the shortlist of potential demonstrators, leading to the concept of showcasing women turners. This approach was made possible by the surge in female turners in recent years. Consequently, in 2025, the RMWS opted for an all-women lead demonstrator roster. Despite regional demonstrator applications being open to all, a significant number of female applicants were received. Serendipitously, all regional demonstrators selected turned out to be women, marking the first-ever all-women woodturning symposium.

While progress has been made, the woodturning community remains largely dominated by an older, predominantly male demographic. Recognizing this, it is evident that there exists substantial untapped potential. Fostering inclusivity and welcoming all contributions are essential to the field's continued evolution.

By placing an emphasis on women turners and a paradigm shift in the demonstrator lineup, the RMWS aspires to set a precedent for broader diversity in woodturning symposia. An inclusive field not only promotes growth but also infuses vitality into the upcoming generation of turners.

The 2025 demonstrations at RMWS encompass a diverse array of techniques, from bowls and spindles to sculptural work, Japanese turning, functional lamps, split turning, photography, surface treatment, carving, coloring, and more. The symposium aims to offer a well-balanced event with something for everyone.

A fun event

The symposium weekend will kick off on Friday with two rotations and a casual meet and greet featuring an ice cream social. Saturday brings a full day of demonstrations with lunch and an instant gallery critique. Sunday offers two more rotations and some entertainment—the Longest Shaving Contest. This light-hearted competition allows both demonstrators and attendees to vie for the record of the longest shaving, currently held by Yann Marot with a remarkable 39-foot-long shaving.

While maintaining the core goal of promoting and fostering the local woodturning community, the RMWS has grown over the years to gain national recognition and acclaim. In 2024, attendees came from thirty-five states and three countries. ▸

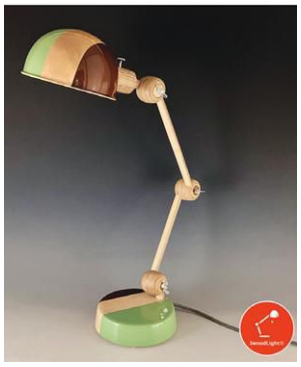
—Kailee Bosch, Rocky Mountain Woodturners, Colorado

WHAT, WHERE, WHEN?

- Rocky Mountain Woodturning Symposium
- Loveland, Colorado
- September 19-21, 2025
- Early registration discount through June 20; visit rmwoodturningsymposium.com or find us Instagram and Facebook

Rocky Mountain Woodturning Symposium 2025 — All-Women Lineup


Sally Ault, California

Nathalie Groeneweg (France)


Cindy Drozda, Colorado


Ashley Harwood, South Carolina


Emily Ford, Utah


Jolie Karno, California


Rabea Gebler (Japan, joining virtually)


Kristin LeVier, Idaho

Heather Marusiak, Kansas

Katie Stofel, Tennessee

Merryll Saylan, California

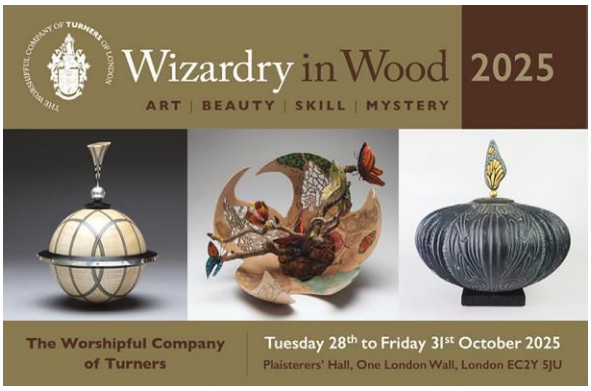
Janine Wang, Oregon

Tib Shaw, Minnesota

Andi Wolfe, Ohio

Margaret Stiles, Colorado

Wizardry in Wood: London's New Tradition, Well Established



A rich history

One of the oldest livery companies in London, the Turners' Company was already established as a guild in the 12th century, a guild being an association of craftsmen or merchants formed for mutual aid and protection and for the furtherance of their professional interests. Some 200 years later, Edward III decreed that "wooden measures, as well for wine as for ale" should be made only by "turnours" with marks of their own, and the medieval turners established the English pint as an official measure. In 1604, the Company received its Royal Charter from James I and to this day continues to celebrate and support the "art or mysterie" of turning.

The Wizardry in Wood event was originally conceived in 2004 to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the granting of the Royal Charter. The Company had long held bi-annual turning competitions, but in that year decided to also hold a grand exhibition of turning at Pewterer's Hall in London. In only two-and-a-half days, Wizardry in Wood attracted more than 1,000 visitors.

Plans were soon made to hold a second exhibition, in 2008, this time in Carpenters' Hall, which was to remain the event's home for the next thirteen years. The theme of the 2008 event was again to promote excellence in the art and craft of woodturning. Exhibitors were chosen to show the best contemporary work as a counterpoint to examples from the finest historic collections of the last 400 years.

The year 2012 was a busy one in London, with Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II's Diamond Jubilee and the London Summer Olympics. Wizardry in Wood came to London that year and was attended by 2,000 people, including visitors from Iceland, Scandinavia, Germany, Belgium, and France. Set once again in Carpenters' Hall, attendees were treated to an amazing display of work by twenty of the best contemporary woodturners in the U.K. Also on display were exhibits from the Victorian era from the Science Museum's Holtzapffel collection. Holtzapffel of London was the foremost builder of lathes, producing a range of accessories so that increasingly complex projects could be undertaken.

In 2016, Wizardry in Wood returned to Carpenter's Hall to great success. The competitions attracted the largest number of entries to date, and visitors often had to queue to view the amazing array of works.

The planned event for 2020 was necessarily postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic but was staged once again at Carpenter's Hall over five days in 2021. By now considered one of Europe's leading exhibitions of contemporary woodturning, Wizardry in Wood was a huge success for exhibitors, city and craft visitors, competition entrants, and the Turners' Company and its Charity.

2025 Wizardry in Wood

And now in 2025, Wizardry in Wood will be staged at Plaisterers' Hall, London, England, October 28-31, and will feature fourteen of the U.K.'s most talented turners, as well as the Company's bi-annual competitions. There will be displays, talks, and demonstrations, with something for everyone from the wonderful "art or mysterie" of turning!

For more, visit turnersco.com.

—Paul Logan, England


Wizardry in Wood 2012, Carpenters' Hall, London.


Dame Fiona Woolf (right) presents U.K. woodturner Joey Richardson with an award at Wizardry in Wood 2012.


Tobias Kaye displays one of his sounding bowls, Wizardry in Wood 2012.

Calendar of Events

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

Canada

June 25-July 26, 2025, Fraser Valley Woodturners Guild's *12 Turners* exhibition, O'Connor Gallery, Chilliwack Cultural Centre, Chilliwack, British Columbia. On view Wednesday to Saturday, Noon-5:30 p.m. The exhibition, free of charge, comprises a wide range of turned work by twelve members of the Fraser Valley Woodturners Guild. For more, visit fvwg.ca.

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.

Connecticut

May 3–July 6, 2025, *Turning 20*, an exhibition featuring more than fifty turned works by members of the Nutmeg Woodturners League, Lynn Tendler Bignell Gallery, Brookfield Craft Center, Brookfield. The exhibition celebrates the 20th anniversary of the Nutmeg Woodturners League calling BCC's Turning Center its home. For more, visit nutmegwoodturnersleague.org and brookfieldcraft.org.

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 Mexico

June 14, 2025, Albuquerque Woodworking Show, St. John's United Methodist Church, Albuquerque. Sponsored by the Albuquerque Woodworkers Association, an exhibition in partnership with the New Mexico Woodturners, Rio Grande Woodcarvers, and the Fine Woodworking Program of the Santa Fe Community College. For more, visit abqawa.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 *Turning 20*

Julann Troiano, *Peaceful Garden*, 2025, Sapele, dried florals, West System epoxy resin, polyurethane, 1½" × 11" (38mm × 28cm)

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

Cardboard protects bed ways

I use pieces of cardboard to cover my lathe bed when turning green wood, particularly oak which makes the bed rust very quickly (*Photo 1*). I have tried other suggestions of paste wax, WD40, fluid film, etc., but none of those do the trick and I end up scrubbing the rust off of the lathe bed with a woven abrasive pad and then oiling the bed ways.

1

In extreme cases where wet wood shavings are left sitting on the bed ways, deeper pitting will occur, causing permanent damage to your lathe (*Photo 2*).


2

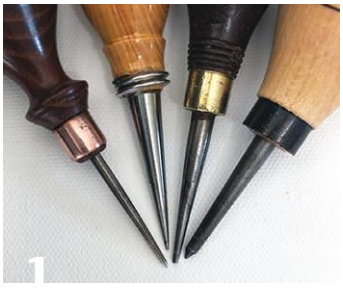
I don't want my new lathe to be rusty. But since I started covering the bed ways when turning green wood, I very seldom get rust. I have several sizes of cardboard precut for this purpose, depending on the location of the banjo and tailstock. I do spray the bed with fluid film or WD40 before laying down the cardboard. If I have a large-diameter piece on the lathe, I use Press'n Seal® plastic food wrap to cover the bed ways.

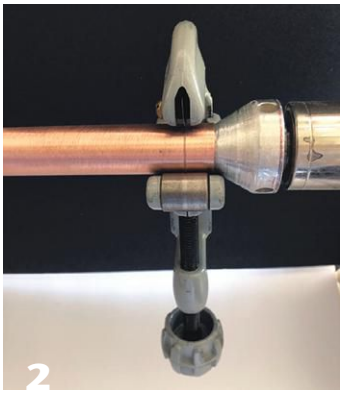
—Vince Vogel, Pennsylvania, AAW member since 2022

Drill bit storage

I started making pens in 1998. Since there are so many proprietary drill bit sizes, I needed a way to organize them. I made a stand out of scrap wood and found plastic tubes to hold the drill bits. Labeling the tubes makes it easy to find the specific drill needed for a project.

—John Kaner, Alaska, AAW member since 2004


1


2

Cut tool ferrules at the lathe

I make ferrules for the tool handles I turn (*Photo 1*), and you can too. Ferrules prevent endgrain from splitting and add a jewel-like quality to any tool.

Start with a piece of copper pipe 12" (30cm) long and 1" (25mm) in diameter. I mount the pipe between centers, using a jam chuck to drive the pipe and a cone center in the tailstock. Clean the pipe with steel wool to make it shiny, then spray it with lacquer to prevent it from tarnishing.

Next, I mark the position of the cutline on the pipe and use my skew chisel to cut a shallow groove, which acts like a track for the cutting wheel on the pipe cutter. Without this groove, the cutter would likely travel off line.

With the pipe cutter in place *and the lathe off*, I spin the lathe handwheel slowly in reverse and let the cutting wheel slice off a new ferrule (*Photo 2*). The last step is to clean off any burr left from the cutter. I do this by using a round file or a piece of sandpaper wrapped around a dowel.

I use E6000 glue to cement ferrules to handles. This glue stays flexible when dry, so when the wood moves due to humidity, the glue keeps the ferrule locked in place. The glue fumes are toxic, so work in a well-ventilated space and/or wear an organic vapor mask.

—Tim Heil, Minnesota, AAW member since 2001

Morse taper drills, taps, mandrels

As a production craft show turner, I appreciate any ideas that help me work more efficiently. I must have drilled a thousand letter "O" sized holes in my career. With this much use, having a drill bit that is integral to the Morse taper in my tailstock or headstock helps boost productivity. However, a useful range of drills with an integral Morse taper is not widely available—especially since my tailstock uses a #3 Morse taper. And what is available is expensive.

My solution was to make my own by gluing a drill bit into a Morse taper arbor. This approach also works well for permanently mounting thread taps and mandrels (*Photo 1*). A drill chuck arbor with a Morse taper on one end and another taper on the other end can be purchased for around $10. (Note that I purchase just the Morse taper arbor without the drill chuck.) It is necessary to drill into the end of the arbor, but as it comes, the steel is too hard to drill. So I heat the taper with a propane blowtorch until it starts to glow red, then let it cool slowly. Mount the mandrel in the tailstock, chuck up a drill bit in the headstock, and drill a close-fitting hole for the drill or other accessory you want to mount.

I use a slow-setting epoxy, preferably one noted for "steel," to glue the drill into the Morse taper arbor. I mount a pre-drilled piece of scrap wood in a scroll chuck on the headstock and use the hole to keep the drill perfectly aligned during glue-up (*Photo 2*).

—David Staeheli, Alaska, AAW member since 1998


1


2

Plastic bottle cutout as clamping pad

When edge-gluing three or more boards to cut rings on the bandsaw for stacked-ring bowls, I like to use cauls to keep the boards' surfaces aligned. But when gluing only two boards, I have found a simple and effective way to keep them aligned without having to resort to the longer cauls—a cut-out section of a plastic bottle used as a clamping pad.

I use a pair of scissors to cut extended "C" shapes from recycled plastic bottles. After clamping the boards in the traditional manner, I slip a plastic "C" over each end of the two mating boards and apply clamps.

The C-shaped plastic not only keeps the heads of the metal clamps from marring the boards, but it also keeps the clamps from sticking to the boards, while at the same time ensuring their alignment. Depending on the size, you can cut two or three clamping pads from one bottle.

—Dustin Davis, Maryland, AAW member since 2009

Keep kit bushings organized

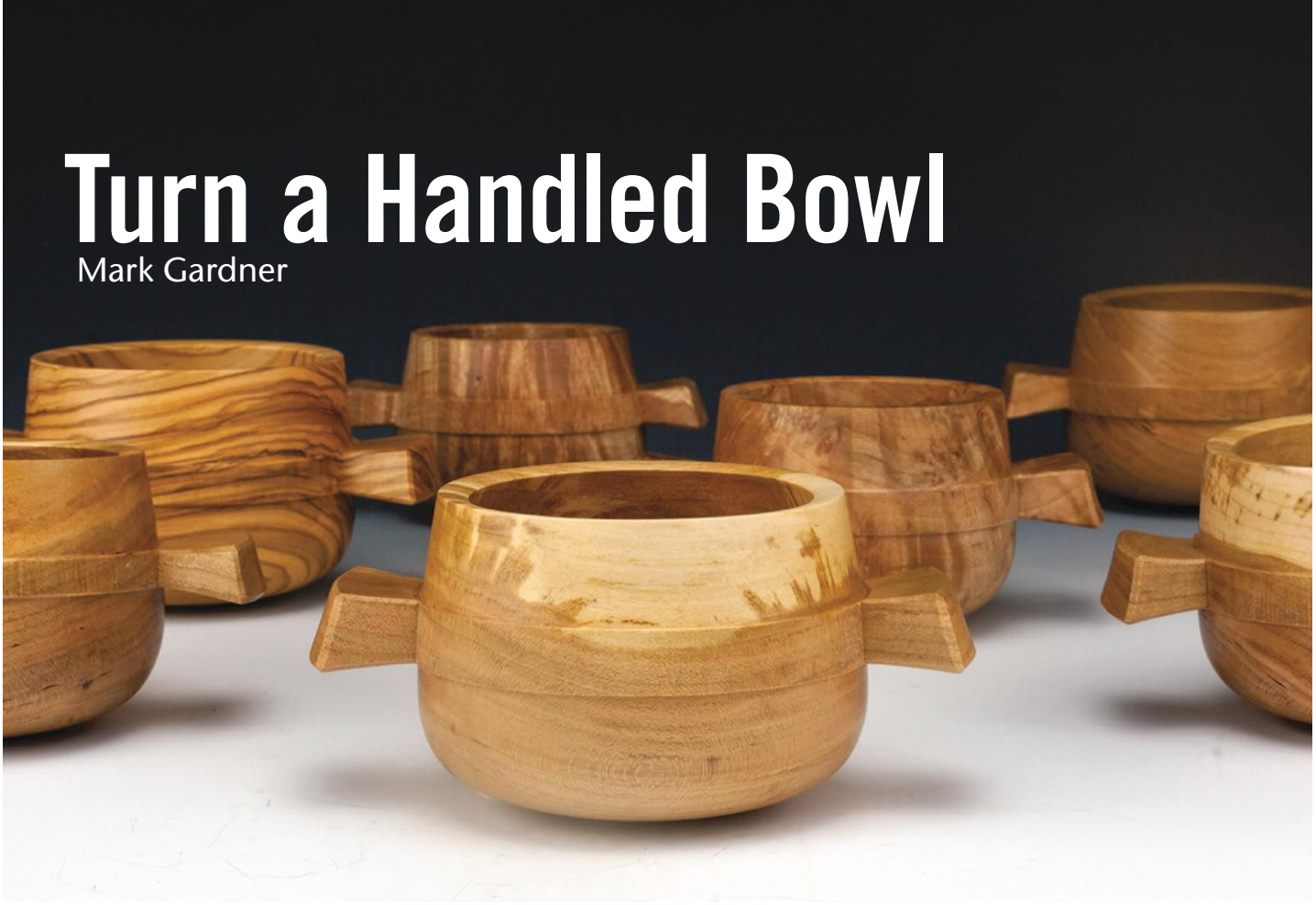
Having acquired fifty-nine proprietary bushing sets for pen and other turning kits, storage became an issue. The little bags they came in were easily torn. Initially, I tried the lidded plastic cases with dividers, but I accidentally knocked an open case off my workbench, scattering bushings across the floor. I then spent hours using a caliper and bushing charts to reorganize my bushings.

Ultimately, I decided to use clear 35mm film canisters kept in the larger plastic lidded cases. For some labels, I reused stickers from the original packaging, and for others, I made new labels.

—John Kaner, Alaska, AAW member since 2004

Turn a Handled Bowl

Mark Gardner



I started making handled bowls in 1998 while assisting John Jordan in a class at Arrowmont. Before that, I had been working under a self-imposed rule that all of my pieces would be made, start to finish, on the lathe. Handled bowls were my first attempt at making something that required work off of the lathe to complete, and it turned out breaking my "rule" opened up countless possibilities for my woodturning.

One nice thing about these projects is that I can take advantage of smaller-diameter logs. For woodturners starting with green wood, the diameter of the log is usually the limiting factor for the scale of a turned bowl. Adding handles to the bowls allows me to make larger pieces even when starting with a relatively small-diameter log.

Wood prep

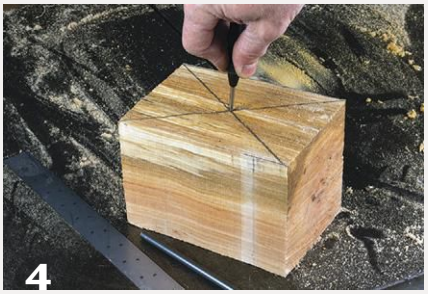
For the bowl illustrated in this article, I started with a cherry log about 10" (25cm) in diameter. With a chainsaw, I cut a couple of inches off the end of the log and then confirmed I had completely removed any cracks in the end-grain. I then cut a 6" (15cm) length off the log. With freshly cut ends and the log safely supported, I cut the bark off the outside edges and then ripped the log lengthwise, using the center pith crack as a guide. Once the chainsaw work was complete, I finished rough-shaping the blank at the bandsaw (*Photos 1-3*). Trim the sides of the log equally so you end up with a blank about 4" (10cm) square and 6" long.

I typically orient the bowl in the blank so that the pith is near the bottom of the bowl and the sapwood is at the top of the bowl. This way, as the bowl dries, it will warp to an oval

Wood prep

(*1-2*) With fresh ends cut on the log, the author trims away bark from the side of the log and then halves the log at the pith.

(*3*) The turning blank is finalized at the bandsaw.

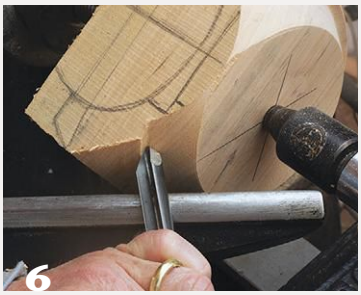


Mark centers, draw bowl profile

(*4*) Mark the turning centers of the blank, not on the ends but on the blank's sides.

(*5*) After drawing the bowl profile on the blank, mount the work between centers with the log's sapwood at the headstock side.

Turn lower profile, form tenon



(*6*) Begin by turning away the bottom corners of the blank.

(*7-8*) Form a chucking tenon. The author first uses a bowl gouge and then refines the tenon corners with a small spindle gouge.

shape and the grain pattern in the bottom of the bowl will also be oval. I find these elements complement each other visually.

I located the center of both the top and bottom of the blank and marked them with a center punch (*Photo 4*). On pieces like this, it is useful to draw the bowl shape directly on the blank (*Photo 5*). The flat sides from the bandsaw cuts provide nice surfaces to draw on. Not knowing exactly where the handles are going to be on the bowl is one of the challenges of this project, and the drawing helps me home in on their location a bit quicker. As shown in *Photo 5*, I mounted the blank between centers and adjusted it between the drive and live center points to achieve a balanced orientation, both visually and physically.

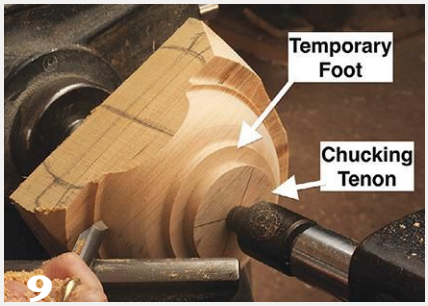
Turn outer profile

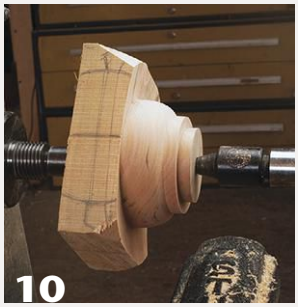
Using a ½" (13mm) bowl gouge, I started turning the underside of the bowl, paring away the bottom corners (*Photo 6*). I made several cuts until the tailstock side of the blank was approximately the diameter of the tenon I would need for remounting the piece later. Size the tenon to fit the jaws of your chuck (*Photo 7*). I used a small spindle gouge to clean up the inside corner to ensure a good seat in the chuck jaws (*Photo 8*).

Next, I turned a temporary foot. This foot will be turned away later since the bowl will feature a round bottom, but for now it will provide support during hollowing. Shape the lower half of the bowl, up to the handle area, before switching to the top half (*Photos 9, 10*).

I tend to "sneak up" on the placement and thickness of the handles, removing a bit of wood from both top and bottom and then stopping the lathe to take a look at the profile (*Photo 11*). Once you turn the wood away, you can't put it back to essentially "reposition" the handles, so take care getting the placement just right. ▸

Complete lower half





Shape the bottom half of the bowl, including a temporary foot.

Since this is a slightly closed sidegrain form, I want to work from small diameter to large, which in this case means turning from foot to handle and from rim to handle, with the handle area being the widest part of the bowl. What I wind up with, when the outside is finished, is a bowl with a roughly rectangular flange around the middle of the form. I will typically shape the outermost edge of the flange as well to give it a bit of curve that follows the curve of the bowl (*Photo 12*).

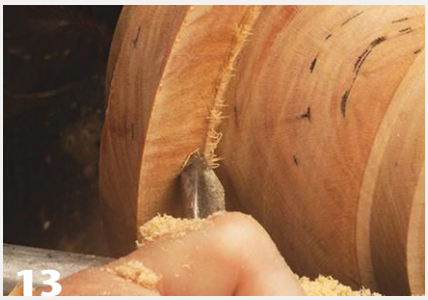
I also like to undercut the handles slightly on both the top and bottom, giving them a bit of a flared profile. I use a ⅜" (10mm) spindle gouge to work from the outer edges of the handles and into the corners where they meet the bowl (*Photo 13*). The spindle gouge has a sharper angle than my bowl gouge, so it is better at getting into tight corners.

One of the challenges of this project is getting the profile of the bowl to look as though it flows continuously under the handles. A good tool to help you see the curve, as it is interrupted

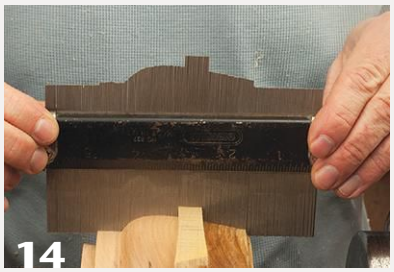
Fine-tune the handle flange


11
Shape the top half of the bowl, leaving a rectangular flange that will later become the handles.


12
Shape the outside edge of the handle to a slight angle.


13
The author uses a small spindle gouge to clean up the corners where the flange meets the bowl.

Confirm lines


14
Check the profile of the bowl with the help of a contour gauge. Aim for a continuous line above and below the handle flange.

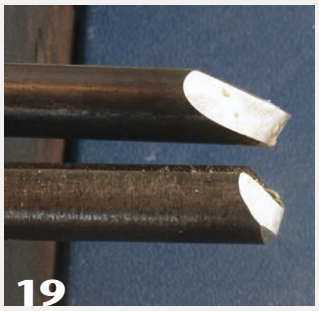
Turn bowl rim


15


16
With the bowl now mounted in a chuck, the author first flattens the face using a shear-scraping cut and then angles the rim inward with a bevel-supported cut.


17


18


19

Hollow bowl

Hollow the interior of the bowl. The author starts with a bowl gouge with a traditional side grind and then switches to a blunter "bottom feeder," which maintains bevel support at the bottom.

by the flange, is a contour, or profile, gauge. Press the gauge over the narrowest part of the flange and then take it away to see how well the curve flows. The contour gauge translates the three-dimensional form of the bowl into a line drawing. It eliminates a lot of extra visual information and allows me to see just the curve of the bowl (*Photo 14*).

Hollow the bowl

When I was happy with the outside shape of the bowl, I reverse-mounted the work, gripping the tenon in a chuck. If the bowl isn't running perfectly true after remounting it, take light cuts on every surface to bring the bowl back into round.

Satisfied with the outside surfaces, I then flattened the rim with a shear-scraping cut using a ½" bowl gouge. I like to slope the rim inward slightly with a bevel-supported cut (*Photos 15, 16*).

I began hollowing the bowl using a bowl gouge with a traditional grind (*Photos 17, 18*), but as I progressed to the bottom, it became impossible to maintain bevel contact. The shaft of the gouge ran into the rim of the bowl and wouldn't allow bevel support, so I switched to a much blunter gouge, often called a bottom feeder (*Photo 19*). I completed the hollowing and blended the areas turned by the two gouges. For bowls like these, I aim for a consistent wall thickness of ¼" to ⅜" (6mm to 10mm).

Since this bowl will feature a round bottom, I drew a pencil line continuing the curve of the outside of the bowl onto the temporary foot. In relation to this line, I drew a second line, both to indicate the bowl's thickness at the bottom and to provide me with a target depth for hollowing. I use a simple gauge to check the depth as I go (*Photos 20-22*).

Sand the bowl

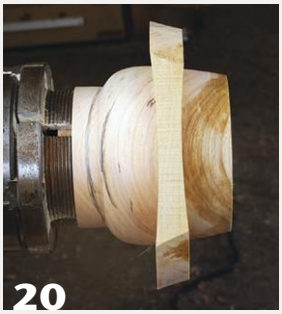
With the hollowing complete, I sanded the bowl. Due to its size and odd shape—with the flange around the outside—I sanded the outside of the bowl by hand and the inside with a 2" (5cm) disk mounted on a mandrel in a lightweight electric drill (*Photos 23, 24*). I usually sand to 320 or 400 grit for most domestic hardwoods, and to 600 grit for harder exotic woods.

Complete the bottom

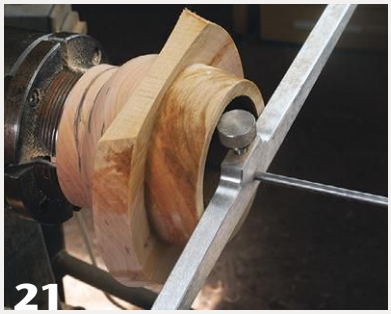
With the inside of the bowl, as well as the area above the handles, sanded, I reverse-mounted the work to finish the outside bottom of the bowl. I removed it from the chuck and turned a jam chuck from a piece of scrap wood. I turned a tenon with a square shoulder to match the opening of the bowl (*Photo 25*). Strive for a tight fit but not so tight that you risk cracking the bowl when pushing it onto the jam chuck. Mount the bowl on the jam chuck and bring up the tailstock for added security (*Photo 26*).

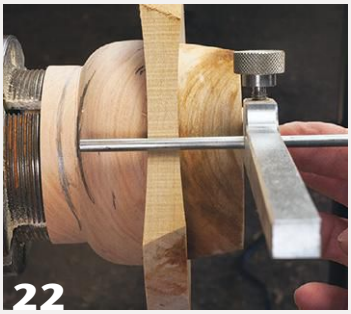
Using the ½" bowl gouge again, I turned away the tenon and ▸

Confirm bowl depth



The remainder of the bowl's profile is drawn onto the temporary foot (lower curved line at far left). A second line is drawn to indicate the bottom thickness and interior depth.





A depth gauge indicates hollowing progress to the intended depth.

Sand bowl

Sand the top half of the exterior by hand and the interior using a small sanding pad in an electric drill.

temporary foot and shaped the base until the rounded bottom of the bowl had a continuous curve (*Photos 27-29*). I removed the tailstock only when it got in the way and I had just a small amount of wood left to remove. The last bit was turned away, without tailstock support, using a ⅜" spindle gouge.

Finally, I sanded the bottom half of the bowl (*Photo 30*).

Form the handles

After taking the bowl off the lathe, I drew a centerline on the underside of the flange, positioning the centerline along the long grain fibers. Next, I drew the handle shapes using the centerline as a guide (*Photo 31*). I do this by eye, but you could easily make a pattern to ensure the handles are exactly the same size and shape.

I like to cut the handles out on the bandsaw. Make the first cuts on the side profile lines in towards the bowl. Place the bowl rim-side down and, holding the bowl firmly, cut the handle profile (*Photo 32*). Next, I placed the bowl on its rim just behind the blade so that the profile of the bowl was visually in line with the blade. I tilted the bandsaw table until the blade was tangent to the bowl right where the flange meets the bowl, as shown in *Photo 33*. I had to cut the handles out in two passes in order to cut into both corners where the handles meet the bowl.

I made the first cuts on the right side of the blade, removing the majority of the waste wood between the handles

Reverse-mount bowl


25


26

Turn a custom jam chuck from scrap wood to fit snugly inside the opening of the bowl. Bring up the tailstock for extra support.

Complete bowl base


27


28


29

Turn away the tenon and the temporary foot, and shape the curve of the bowl's bottom. Leave the tailstock in place for as long as possible, before turning away the nub that remains.

Sand bottom


30

Sand the bottom of the bowl by hand.

Cut handle profiles


31


32

With the handles drawn on the bottom of the flange, the author cuts the outside profiles at the bandsaw. The flat rim of the bowl registers safely on the bandsaw table.

(*Photo 34*). To remove the remaining waste, you'll cut on the left side of the blade, so you will need to tilt the table in the other direction. Most bandsaws I have used allow their tables to tilt a few degrees to the left. Sometimes there is a stop that needs to be removed to allow this. If the table doesn't tilt to the left, a wooden auxiliary table can be made with a few degrees of tilt to allow the left tilting of the bowl. Ten degrees is usually more than enough. Place the bowl against the left side of the blade where you have just cut, and tilt the table to the left until the blade is running parallel to the first cut (*Photo 35*). Now you can finish cutting out the handles (*Photo 36*).

I like to leave a raised band between the handles, so when I'm cutting, I'm careful to leave a consistent depth to the band. I like the texture left from the bandsaw and prefer to leave it as is if I've done a good job cutting out the handles. Another option would be to carve the bandsaw marks away, leaving a smooth band between the handles or carving the band away completely.

After sanding the top and bottom of the handles, I chiseled their sides, passing the chisel from their ends toward the bowl (*Photo 37*). This gave the handles a bit of flare from top to bottom. Finally, I chamfered the corners of the handles using a sharp knife (*Photo 38*).

Final steps

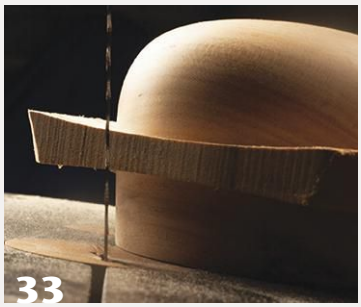
The last steps are to finish the bowl and sign it. Since the bowl was made from a green (still-wet) log, it will air-dry and not only warp to an oval shape, but the rim will distort, too. This is why I like to cut the handles right away, before the rim has moved and won't sit flat on the bandsaw table.

By placing the handles in line with the long wood fibers, the handles end up on the long axis of the oval, which feels right and visually accentuates the "oval-ness" of the bowl. By placing the pith near the bottom and the sapwood at the top, the rim distorts in a more subtle, pleasing way, rather than warping to the kind of peak one tends to get when the pith is at the rim of the bowl.

There are many variations possible based on this idea. I have made wider, shallower versions as well as bowls with very long handles. I've even made bowls with one handle, a spoon, or ladle using this same technique. ■

Mark Gardner lives and works with wood in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains in Saluda, North Carolina. His work has been featured in American Woodturner *as well as* Woodwork *magazine, and he has written articles for* Fine Woodworking. *Mark teaches and demonstrates around North America for woodturning clubs and craft schools. For more, visit markgardnerstudio.com.*

Cut away waste



Tilt the bandsaw table to the right for the first angled cuts to remove the majority of the waste between the handles.

Make final waste cuts

Tilt the bandsaw table to the left to make the remaining cuts on the handles.

Fine-tune handles

The author uses first a chisel to shape the edges of the handles and then a sharp knife to bevel the edges.

LESSONS FROM A PROFESSIONAL COMMISSION

Photo: Corey Morgan

Jim Echter

Project request

Recently, I received a request to turn sixteen domed medallions from a professional custom woodworker who was making a set of doors out of Douglas fir. The medallions would serve as accents in the door design.

In our initial conversation, he said he could ship the wood to me. I usually have my customers provide me with blanks milled to the proper size, along with a few extra blanks "just in case." You never know if you might get a catch or if there is a significant flaw in one of the blanks, such as a stress crack or a major knot in a bad location. But this time I suggested that since the maximum diameter of each piece was only 3½" (9cm), I could locally source a clear Douglas fir 2×4, saving time and expense, which he appreciated.

Each commission is different, but I always try to work with the customer to make it either easier or less expensive for them. They appreciate those efforts that differentiate me from my competition.

I sent my customer a quote for the turned medallions, and he sent me the down payment so I could get started.

Drawings and story sticks

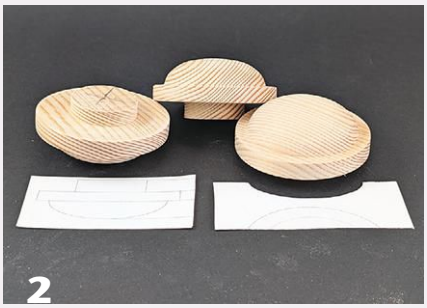
The customer initially sent me a PDF drawing and said I could just print it out and it should be full scale. Of course, it wasn't full scale when I measured the key dimensions. But by doing a little basic math, I determined that I had to scale the file 100.9 percent. When I printed the file at that size, the drawing was now accurate. Even if you make your own drawing using a CAD system, always check the print for accurate size, as many

SYMPOSIUM DEMONSTRATOR IN SAINT PAUL!

Jim Echter will be a demonstrator at AAW's 2025 International Symposium in Saint Paul, Minnesota, where he will share his insights on a variety of turning topics. Don't miss this chance to learn from a pro, live and in person! For more, visit woodturner.org.

Story sticks, templates, and center finders

When the author has extensive production jobs, he uses sturdy plastic story sticks and gauges that are laser cut from ¼"-thick material.



For this short run of turned medallions, the printed design drawings, cut out, serve as story sticks/templates.

Locate mounting centers

The center is drilled with a small hole for mounting the work on a screw chuck.

printers and copiers are not 100 percent to scale.

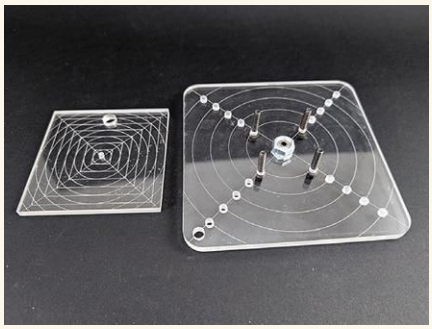
The volume of the project determines what material I use for my story sticks. I have some production parts that I make in high quantities. For those, I have had story sticks laser cut out of ¼"- (6mm-) thick plastic (*Photo 1*). For medium-volume projects, I make story sticks out of thin wood. Since this project called for only sixteen turned pieces, I simply printed the design on heavy card stock. I then cut out the templates to use them as story sticks for duplicating the medallions. Perfect for this job (*Photo 2*).

Preparations

I purchased a clear Douglas fir 2×4 at my local big box store and cut twenty (four extra) square blanks and marked the centers, making sure there were no defects such as knots or checks. The centers were drilled with a ⅛"-diameter hole 1" deep so I could mount the blanks on a screw chuck (*Photo 3*). *See the Find Centers Quickly sidebar.*

For efficiency, you don't want to have to measure every detail for each piece. This is where the story sticks, dividers, calipers, and a custom screw chuck come into play. ▸

Find Centers Quickly



As a production turner, I always look for ways to speed up my output. One way is to be able to locate the turning centers of blanks faster. Here are two center-finding gauges that have really helped in that area. I had the gauges laser-cut at my local trophy shop.

The smaller gauge shown at left measures 3½" square with circles and squares marked every ¼". The center hole is sized for my spring-loaded center punch. (The other hole is just for hanging it when not in use.) It is very easy and quick to find the center of both square and round stock where absolute precision is not required.

The gauge shown at right is used when I have a production run of items such as balusters. It is a self-centering jig, and I use a ⅛"- (3mm-) diameter drill to mark the blank's center, rather than a center punch. This gauge is 5½" (14cm) square, utilizes a homemade drill bushing made out of a bolt and nut, and has a series of five holes drilled and tapped for 10-32 × 1" cap screws. The holes are laid out every ½" (13mm) off the jig center starting at 1" (25mm).

To use the jig, thread the four cap screws into the appropriate ring of holes. Twist the jig on the end of the turning blank until the screws contact all four sides. Then drill a small hole to mark the center. I can go down a line of twenty balusters in seconds—much faster than using a ruler and pencil from corner to corner.

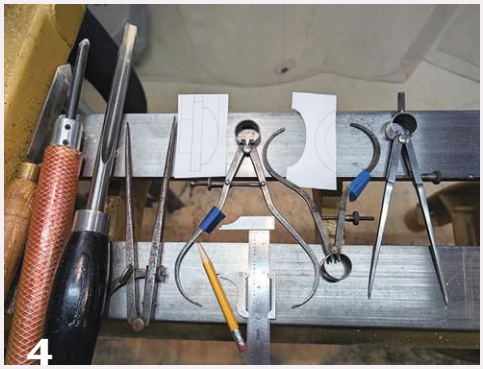
Set everything once and you are good to go (*Photos 4, 5*).

The medallion design called for a 1½"- (38mm-) diameter tenon on the back. This is so they could be glued into holes drilled in the door panels (*Photo 6*). As woodturners, we all have a box of cutoffs saved for an unknown use. I used one such scrap piece to make a screw chuck that was exactly 1½" in diameter (*Photo 7*). This eliminated the need for one caliper, as I could simply part down to the chuck's diameter without measuring, speeding up production.

Roughing the blanks

Now I had a decision to make. Do I take the time to use a compass to draw a circle slightly larger than the maximum diameter and then rough-cut all of the blanks round on my bandsaw prior to turning them? My other option was to mount the square blanks on the screw chuck, bring up the tailstock with a wood touch point, and, using my bowl gouge, turn the corners away. I chose the latter method and simply turned the blanks from square (*Photos 8, 9*).

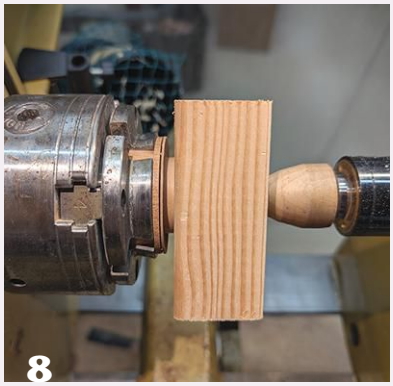
Tools to speed up production



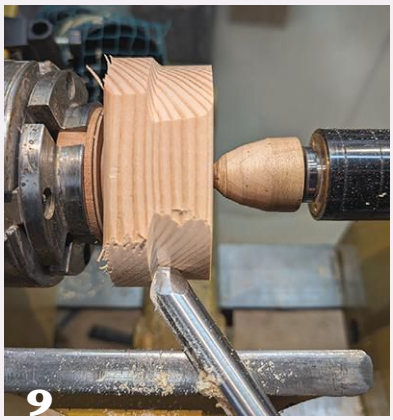
4 For the sake of efficiency, have all the necessary tools at the ready, calipers and dividers preset to key diameters.

5 Dividers are set directly from the printed design drawing.

Rough-turn the medallions



8 The square turning blank is mounted on the screw chuck, and tailstock pressure provides added security. A wood touch point on the live center leaves minimal if any marks on the workpiece.



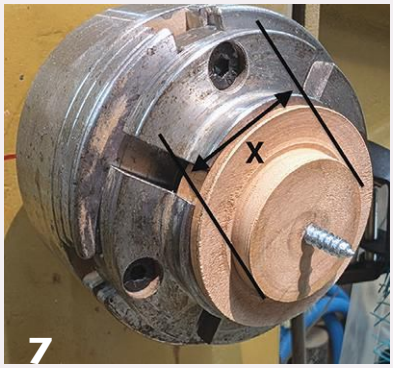
9 The author turns the blank round using a bowl gouge pushed toward the headstock.

Planning for installation

6 Photo: Corey Morgan

The author's customer, a professional woodworker, predrilled mortises in the custom doors to accept the tenons turned on the medallions.

Custom screw chuck



7 The author's custom screw chuck is sized to match the desired diameter of the tenon on the medallion, in this case 1½". Using the screw chuck as a visual reference when sizing the tenon saves steps and time.

Once I got started, it took only four or five cuts in about ten seconds to bring the blanks to round.

When turning the blanks round, I made cuts through the sidegrain *toward* the headstock. This is the direction the wood should be cut in this orientation, and moving the gouge toward the headstock actually tightens the blank on the screw chuck. The tailstock live center ensures the blank is held securely between centers for safety.

Once I had rough-turned a medallion, it was time to set the two key diameters—3½" for the maximum overall diameter and 3" (8cm) for the maximum diameter of the dome. To do this, I first had to clean up the front face. Remember, I was using a construction-grade 2×4. Once the face was straight and smooth, I used two pointed dividers to mark both dimensions (*Photo 10*).

Using a push cut and a shear cut with my ⅝" (16mm) bowl gouge, I turned the blank to its final 3½" diameter (*Photo 11*). The cut surface was very smooth and just needed to be touched up with a little 180-grit sandpaper.

Sizing and turning medallion shape

With the blank now sized to its maximum diameter and the domed section diameter marked on the front with the 3" dividers, I used the side-view story stick to lay out the depths of the dome and the body section that rests against the door (*Photo 12*). Working on the dome shoulder detail first, I used a bowl gouge to slice through ▸

Mark diameters

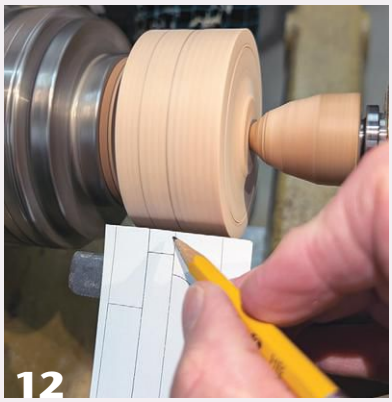
10

Both the maximum diameter and the diameter of the domed portion are marked on the workpiece. When using dividers, make sure to allow only the left point/leg to ever touch the wood.

11

The author turns the work to its maximum diameter, 3½".

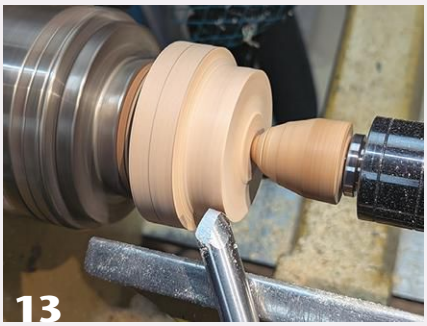
Mark key transition points



12

A template/story stick is used to mark key points on the blank.

Turn and confirm dome diameter



13

14

The dome's diameter is established and confirmed with a preset caliper.

Clean up dome shoulder

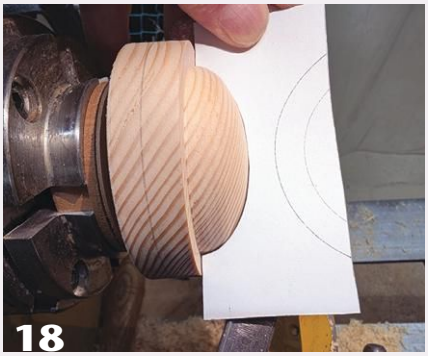
15

The author uses a detail gouge to form a tight corner at the shoulder of the dome.

Turn and confirm dome shape


16


17


18

The dome shape is turned and confirmed using a cut-out template.

the sidegrain and confirmed the diameter using the caliper set to 3" (*Photos 13, 14*).

I cleaned up the shoulder using a ⅜" detail gouge (*Photo 15*) before proceeding to shape the dome profile.

Turning a perfect dome is not the easiest thing to do, but I knew that if I made a mistake, I could redo the dome by extending the depth of the shoulder. I had the flexibility to re-mark the thickness of the material that rests against the door if necessary. And if the glue tenon ended up being a little shorter, that would not be a big deal. I turned the dome shape and then confirmed the profile against the printed story stick (*Photos 16-18*).

Final steps

The last section to be turned was the tenon that will be glued into the mortise in the door. Since I made a custom screw chuck that was 1½" in diameter, I quickly parted and smoothed the tenon to the required diameter, using the screw chuck as a visual aid. I then did a final diameter check using a caliper (*Photo 19*). I turned a small chamfer on the end of the tenon to make insertion in the hole during door assembly easier. I also undercut the bottom of the shoulder so the medallion would sit tightly against the door with no gaps when glued into place.

At this point, the pieces were ready for final sanding. The customer requested that I sand to 220 grit, as that was the final grit he would be using on the doors.

Summary

A commission job like this can offer several valuable takeaways for the woodturner, both in terms of customer satisfaction and your own production efficiency.

- Have a meaningful conversation with your customer, and look for opportunities to make it easier for them or to save them money.
- Confirm the accuracy of your prints or copies, especially if they were supposedly printed at full-scale size.
- Figure out at the start what tools you will need to speed up your production process.
- Take advantage of dividers and calipers—set them to key measurements ahead of time.
- Make story sticks for repeatability. ■

Jim Echter is a master woodturner and owner of True Creations Woodturning. With over fifty years of experience, Jim specializes in custom architectural turning, manufactures, a line of tools for fiber spinners, and demonstrates at national and regional symposia. You can read Jim's articles or book him for a club demo, class, or IRD through his website, tcturning.com. He is open to email and phone questions.

Turn and confirm tenon diameter


19

Not shown, the medallion's tenon is turned to size. Here, the author confirms its diameter with a caliper.

TURNING HOLLOW FORMS:
A VISIT WITH KEVIN JESEQUEL

Rick Rich *Photos by the author, except where noted.*

Kevin Jesequel poses in his Oregon workshop.

I am mainly a spindle turner who does faceplate turning only as needed for the occasional platter, bowl, or stool seat. Lately, however, I have noticed that a lot of turners are interested in hollow forms and hollowed vessels, especially those with natural edges. I tend to look at *all* turned forms with interest and wonder, and recently I began to consider whether I was being drawn to hollowing. Was my curiosity enough for me to set aside my skew? The only way for me to know was to get a closer look at the process from a master of the craft.

The hollow form demos I have attended didn't resolve my curiosity. I wanted to watch a thin-walled vessel being turned right in front of me, up close and personal. If that brought me a newfound desire to hollow, I would become a hollow-form artist. If it didn't, at least I would have answered my question.

When I mentioned my curiosity to Kevin Jesequel, he invited me over for some hollow-form turning. Kevin is one of my favorite hollow-form turners. In 2024, the AAW's Professional Outreach Program (POP) selected him as one of two POP Showcase Artists and featured his work at the AAW International Symposium in Portland, Oregon. If you've seen Kevin demonstrate, I'm sure you'd agree that he is an expert.

A visit with a master

We set the day, and I arrived to Kevin waving me into his open garage, which houses his workshop. Kevin told me his wife thought a garage was for parking cars but that she puts up with his shop anyway. His workspace contains a lot of tools, including several from international sources, such as the Australian-made Vicmarc lathe with rotating headstock. Importantly, Kevin also has three grinders, each set up for grinding and sharpening the various tools he uses and makes (*Photo 1*).

I visited with Kevin for only a couple of hours, but during that time I enjoyed a short shop tour (remember, it's a garage), an informative discussion on tool manufacturing, and of course the turning of a hollow form by Kevin. I should mention here that Kevin has one (or two) of everything—an impressive assortment of quality tools—but much to my dismay only two skew chisels.

Wood selection

The wood Kevin selected for the hollow form that day, he informed me while ▸

AAW POP Showcase Artist

As a POP Showcase Artist, Kevin demonstrated his work at the 2024 AAW International Symposium.

Photo: Andi Wolfe

A well-equipped turning shop

1

Emphasizing the importance of using sharp tools, Kevin's well-equipped shop includes three grinders, each for different purposes.

Photo: Kevin Jesequel

Mounting work between centers

(*2*) After cutting the blank round at the bandsaw, Kevin finds an insect hole in the wood.

(*3*) Kevin uses a safety center in the headstock spindle to drive the work, as this kind of drive has less impact on the wood.

Truing the blank

Truing the side of the blank with a bevel-supported cut and the tailstock end with just the wing of the gouge.

An unwanted visitor!

Sure enough, a grub emerges partway and is then removed from the workpiece.

Forming a chucking tenon

Kevin forms a tenon at the tailstock end.

uncovering a large pile of small logs on the garage floor, was hawthorn that had come from nearby in Portland. The tree had a buttressed base, from which this piece was cut. Kevin put the wood on his bandsaw and cut a 6"- (15cm-) diameter round with bark on one end. The piece will be turned crossgrain, he explained. "Interesting," I replied, though I had no idea what difference that would make in a hollow form.

Typically, if the final form is to be shorter than it is wide, Kevin said he will use sidegrain blanks (turned in crossgrain, or faceplate, orientation). And if the final form is to be taller than it is wide, he will use endgrain blanks (spindle orientation, with the grain running parallel to the bed ways). The endgrain does not reflect light like side-, or facegrain, he told me, so it usually looks duller than the rest of the wood. On shorter hollow forms, the focus is on the top, which would be dull if it were endgrain. On a taller form, the focus is on the side(s) of the piece, which look better if they are side- or facegrain. That explanation made sense to me.

Before turning, Kevin pointed out a small bug hole in the wood (*Photo 2*) and said he hoped the blank wasn't infested. Neither of us likes to see bugs, worms, termites, or other crawling things in the shop. He told me about a time he received what he thought was dry solid wood in a bag, and later opened it only to release a bunch of termites. Kevin said they ran instantly to his stash of good wood, and it took hours to find and kill them all.

Rough-shaping the form

Kevin mounted the turning blank between centers. He uses a safety drive since it allows him to easily reposition the workpiece and has a small drive circle that corresponds well with the small mouth openings he prefers on his hollow forms (*Photo 3*). A typical four-prong drive, on the other hand, would compress the wood fibers and

Shaping the profile


8


9


10

(8) With the work now remounted with the tenon held in a chuck, Kevin removes waste wood from the lower portion of the form.

(*9*) Turning the area around the mouth of the hollow form.

(*10*) The gouge is presented in a shear-scraping position to smooth the wood surface.

leave deep marks across the area where the mouth will be. These deep marks would have to be turned away to prevent cracks from forming.

The turning started with a bowl gouge to true the outside of the form and then flatten the end of the blank (*Photos 4, 5*). When Kevin stopped the lathe, he said he hoped any bugs were flung out, but we saw one peeking out of a small hole near the revolving center. Kevin grabbed a needle point tool and pulled out a small grub, making us wonder how many others were in the shavings (*Photo 6*).

Kevin turned a tenon at the tailstock end (*Photo 7*), remounted the work in a chuck, and stabilized it with a revolving center in the tailstock. I noticed that Kevin used the tailstock for support throughout the shaping process "to minimize vibration," he told me.

After moving the toolrest to the headstock side of the workpiece, Kevin turned away quite a bit of wood and explained that he likes to remove enough so that the shoulder (the widest point of the form) is positioned higher on the piece (*Photo 8*). He normally does this rough-shaping while the piece is still between centers, but he doesn't usually have someone snapping pictures over his shoulder, either.

Next Kevin put his gouge to serious work. As a spindle turner, I could get used to this part of the process. Thus far, I had enjoyed Kevin's demo and was beginning to see myself making a few hollow forms.

As I mentioned earlier, Kevin likes to make the mouth of his hollow forms quite small. I watched as he cut nearly all the way up to the edge of the revolving center's cup (*Photo 9*). After defining the outside edge of what would be the opening, Kevin told me that he leaves extra wood at the opening, which gets turned away later but provides a cushion of wood in case something doesn't go exactly to plan.

He then finished shaping the outside of the form. The final cuts were shear-scraping passes with the bowl gouge (*Photo 10*), and I was impressed with how smooth the surface was when he was done. I was also impressed with the shape of the outside and how quickly Kevin had turned it.

Hollowing the form


11

The author tries his hand at hollowing.

Compressed air cleanout


12

Periodically during hollowing, the wood shavings must be cleared. A blast of compressed air does the job.

Hollowing

Before hollowing the piece, Kevin drilled the center to depth using a drill bit attached to a handle. To visualize the drilling depth, he simply held the bit next to the form and then drilled to ▸

that depth. The center hole was small, just ⅜" (9.5mm) in diameter. I was then given the honor of making the first hollowing cuts. Kevin handed me his shopmade, almost straight cutting tool. I pushed the cutter into the very small center hole, moved it to the left and felt it cutting (*Photo 11*). I didn't cut much, as the tool started to get a bit grabby, so I handed it back to Kevin.

Kevin then showed me how to hollow using a variety of similar tools, each with a slightly longer and more bent tip than the previous one. With lots of experience, he was comfortable being fairly aggressive during this stage of the turning process and needed to blow out the chips often (*Photo 12*). He explained that he has turned enough hollow forms to know when he is getting close to the final wall thickness and needs to slow down. Kevin took what looked like catches in stride and made it look easy. "If you push the tip into the wood wrong, you can feel it kick a little inside," he told me as the tool slightly rotated in his hands. He removed the tool from inside the wood and showed me how the cutting tip was 90 degrees to the set screws on the handle. This lets him know where the tip is pointing when it's inside the form and, if it rotates a little, helps him to reorientate the tool.

After Kevin revealed this helpful tool tip, I noticed the tool handle had a rubbery woven tubing on it (*Photo 13*). Hung behind his lathe was more similar tubing waiting to be used on a new handle. Kevin told me that he orders solid aluminum cylinders and makes his own handles. He drills the cylinder on the lathe for the cutting tips and then drills and taps the set screw holes. The tubing goes on the outside to give a better grip on the handle. Kevin's solid handles are longer and heavier than those available commercially and provide a good counter-balance to the business end inside the hollow form, he said.

As Kevin hollowed his way to the bottom of the form, he asked if I wanted to give it another go. I did, of course, and he coached me the entire way. He told me to hold the tool firmly and adopt a good stance with feet apart. To engage the tool tip carefully, he instructed me to insert the tool tip into the form and then rotate it to the left until it began cutting. "Don't push too far forward right away," he said. We practiced first with the lathe off and then on.

I did as Kevin instructed until the cutter somehow crept too far forward and I felt the tool quickly grab and rotate. As soon as the tool spun—leaving the tip facing downward, which I knew because the set screws were now sideways—the small mouth opening had expanded from ⅜" to a monstrous ¾" (19mm)! That's the reason for leaving extra material at the mouth opening, Kevin reminded me. Fortunately for my wounded pride, the piece was not broken, and we were able to continue.

Kevin uses a piece of bent wire for checking the hollowing progress, which is simple and efficient (*Photo 14*). After he finished hollowing the form, I wanted to look inside to check his work. Because of a bark inclusion or bug hole (we weren't sure which), there was a void on the shoulder of the form. Kevin held a flashlight to the void, which lit up the inside. I was able to see


13


14

Shopmade tools

(*13*) Kevin makes his own hollowing tools. The handles are solid aluminum covered with grippy tubing.

(*14*) A simple bent wire suffices as a wall-thickness gauge.


15


16

Blending the mouth

(*15*) A light shone through the bug hole reveals a hollowing job well done.

(*16*) The mouth of the hollow form is completed with a spindle gouge and the surrounding area blended with the upper section.

that Kevin cut neatly and cleanly all the way to the bottom (*Photo 15*).

The next step was to complete the now much larger-diameter mouth with a spindle gouge (*Photo 16*). The vessel walls were roughly ⅛" (3mm) thick, and Kevin used his gouge to alternately cut and shear-scrape, blending the mouth area into the form.

Completing the base

Next the vessel was removed from the chuck and the chuck removed from the lathe. I gauged the weight of the hollowed form while Kevin put a cone attachment on his revolving center, and I was surprised how light it was.

The form was then mounted between the safety drive and the cone center, with the soon-to-be-turned-away tenon at the headstock end. I watched curiously as Kevin wrapped electrical tape around the safety drive and the nub of wood left from when it was originally mounted between centers. I should mention that Kevin is a professional electrician and a proud member of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers union. This is why he used this little-known trick to strengthen the connection point and add some extra friction, reducing the amount of required tailstock pressure (*Photo 17*).

Kevin then turned away the tenon and continued removing wood, shaping it to follow the flowing form down to an impossibly small foot (*Photo 18*). He told me that a small foot gives the hollow form more visual lift and contributes to a nice shape. I agreed. Kevin typically leaves his hollow forms just a little bit thicker near the bottom to give them better balance and stability.

With a small palm-sized carving gouge, Kevin expertly cut away the small nub at the bottom of the foot in a few deft strokes (*Photo 19*). When I am faced with this task, I use a gouge that is much too large and firm—quite different than the appropriately sized carving gouge Kevin used. I believe I will be investing in a palm-sized carving gouge soon.

The turned but not sanded hollow form was complete, as shown in *Photo 20*. Because the foot area was about ¼" (6mm) thick and there was a little grub hole, Kevin wanted to heat it in the microwave for a minute. In addition to reducing any chance of another visitor coming out, it dries the wood, too.

Final thoughts

The completed hollow form had a very nice shape to it; it was hollowed quickly and efficiently using home-made tooling, and I watched it all. This opportunity confirmed for me that a hollow form is purely artistic work. I struggle with the idea of turning artistic pieces because I get so much satisfaction from turning useful items for the garden, kitchen, and around the house. So I'll leave the hollow forms to Kevin, although watching him turn one was a real treat that I will repeat any chance I get. I'm glad to have discovered first-hand that turning hollow forms is not for me, but that's okay; as was recently pointed out, woodturning is a big tent, and everyone is welcome. ■

Rick Rich is a part-time woodturner from Washington State. He is a member of the AAW, the Cascade Woodturners in Portland, Oregon, and a founding member and current president of the Southwest Washington Woodturners in Vancouver, Washington.

Removing the tenon

(*17-18*) The form is remounted between centers, again using the safety drive, but this time with electrical tape wrapped around the drive and remaining nub of wood, adding grip and requiring less tailstock pressure. Kevin turns away the tenon and forms the base.

Finalizing the foot

(*19*) The small foot is completed with a palm-sized gouge.

(*20*) The turned but not yet sanded hollow form.

A Closer Look at Colored Pencils

Neil Donovan

In 1994, my mentor and longtime art collaborator John Vahanian suggested that he use artist's colored pencils for the coloration of *Crow Pond*, a piece we were creating for the *Challenge V* exhibition at the Wood Turning Center in Philadelphia (now called the Museum for Art in Wood). Of course, I was familiar with colored pencils from my elementary school days, but it would not have occurred to me to use them on a serious sculpture. As you can see in the photographs of *Crow Pond* (*Photos 1, 2*), John employed a much-practiced cross hatching technique on the stylized trees and the dramatic shadows that stretch out across the drained pond. The forms, with their light, shadow, and color, were all applied with Prismacolor Premier pencils.

In this article, I hope to create some enthusiasm for this unlikely but effective medium. I'll present two of the techniques that I've practiced since the 1990s. But before we dive into application, it's important to take a good look at the strengths and limitations of this medium. The following overview of lightfastness will aid woodturners in their understanding and selection of wax-based, colored pencils for embellishment of their work.

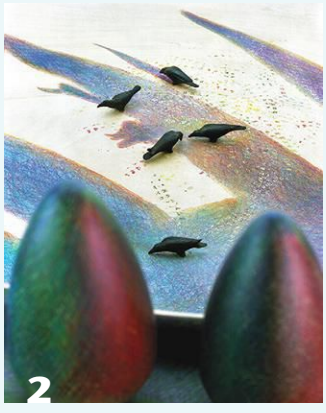
Lightfastness and fugitive color

My investigation of wax-based pencils began with an unanticipated question from John Vanco, the fifty-year veteran director of the Erie Art Museum (Pennsylvania). Having visited a show of my work, John simply asked whether the pencils I was using were lightfast. I was immediately concerned; I didn't know.

As a woodworker, I was aware that the sun fades some woods (walnut) and darkens others (cherry). And experience taught me that ultraviolet light could drain the reds and greens from a low-cost art print, reducing an initially beautiful, full-colored image to an anemic assortment of grays and blues. However, I assumed that any expensive, professional-quality colored pencil would provide an archival level of lasting hue and chroma. Visiting the Prismacolor website, I quickly learned that this was not the case.

To their credit, the makers of Prismacolor pencils, my go-to brand, have developed a lightfastness chart, which rates the ability of their 150 colors to retain their original characteristics and withstand the effects of light over time. Prismacolor tests lightfastness in accordance with the American Society for Testing Materials (ASTM D6901-06) to establish their rating chart. The system is simple and helpful, rating each color on a scale from I-V (1-5) with I being the most lightfast. Typically, the higher the chroma (color saturation and intensity), the more likely the color is to fade or experience "fugitive color" over time. Pigments are degraded by sunlight, humidity, temperature, and pollution. Pigments are divided into two categories: inorganic and organic; both come with a downside.

1



2

Crow Pond, 1994, Basswood, Prismacolor® pencils, 30" (76cm) diameter

Inorganic pigments

Inorganic pigments are generally derived from natural minerals or synthetic oxides, sulfides, or salts of metallic elements. These pigments are utilized to create an array of highly ultraviolet- (UV-)

resistant colors, with long-term staying power. However, on the downside, inorganic pigments typically exhibit low intensity chroma. A highly lightfast orange hue, for example, will not pack a punch of brilliant color. It will be subdued in nature (think weathered pumpkin vs. fresh orange). Fortunately, there are notable exceptions to this general rule. Prismacolor's Permanent Red and Cobalt Blue Hue, for example, both earn the ASTM highest rating of I.

Organic pigments

Organic pigments are derived from vegetable and animal extracts or, more recently, from synthetic materials. An inspiring array of bold, high-chroma colored pencils is manufactured with organic pigments. The downside when selecting these lush and inviting colors is that most of them are limited to moderate or low-duration lightfastness. Organic pigments will fade over time, sometimes disappearing altogether; thus the phrase, "fugitive color." This issue must be considered when applying color to a woodturning, especially if the object is to be sold and presented as a professional work of art or craft.

As woodturners, we are all too familiar with colors fading. Consider the lovely green and purple hues that sometimes grace the heartwood of our common yellow poplar. I haven't forgotten my disappointment as a young woodworker when I discovered that my dramatic poplar mirror frame had quickly faded to muddy shades of brown. The same is true of most species. We know that colorful tropical species such as purpleheart and padauk, and even our native black walnut, are all seriously compromised by ultraviolet light over time. We can slow this process with UV-blocking finishes, but as the song says, "...a change is gonna come."

My journey with colored pencils

After seeing John Vahanian's successful coloration of *Crow Pond*, I was excited to expand the use of color in my woodturning. I was intrigued by John's careful color layering process, and I realized that pencils might provide a remedy for my longtime trepidation with paint and the manner in which colors relate to one another. I knew from early missteps that paint went on quickly, and, once on the wood, there was no turning back. It reminded me of the speedy and significant damage I could do with a belt sander to a tabletop. I really wanted to play with color, but I needed something that was more manageable than paint. I was happy to discover that applying color with wax pencils is an inherently slow, incremental process. Another wonderful advantage of wax pencils is that there is virtually no bleeding of color into adjacent grain beyond intended boundaries.

Pinstriping basics

3 Form a V-groove (or grooves) using a pointed scraper.

4 Use the toolrest to support the colored pencil as you apply color in the V-grooves.

Pinstriping example

5

6

Checkered Flag (spin top), 2024, Maple, Prismacolor® pencils, 4½" (11cm) diameter

Getting started

What follows are two techniques for applying color to turnings with colored pencils: pinstriping and color blending. With a little practice on a spin top, or perhaps a simple platter, I think you will be confident in adding color to your work.

Pinstriping

Initially, while working on the rim of a maple platter, I arrived at the idea of cutting a 1⁄16"- (1.5mm-) deep V-groove with a pointed scraper (*Photo 3*) and coloring the groove with a fine red line of color (*Photos 4-6*)—pinstriping, if you will.

In this first attempt on the rotating platter, it appeared that I had effortlessly created a clean, crisp red line within the V-groove. However, when I inspected the stopped platter, I found that the endgrain held more red wax than the long grain; ▸

the color saturation of the line was inconsistent (*Photo 7*). It was the same uneven color that one would expect when applying a pigment-based wood finishing stain. This was when I was introduced to the concept of "tooth."

Charcoal and pastel artists understand that the surface texture, or tooth, of their paper determines how much medium the paper will grab and hold. In woodturning, we need to create the proper tooth on our object's surface. Think about swiping a crayon across a plate glass window and then across a brick. The glass is too smooth to hold any crayon wax, and the brick is so coarse as to create a spotty, irregular line. We need a surface that's somewhere in between these extremes.

By sanding with various grits of sandpaper, I was able to dial in the ideal tooth. With some experimentation, I learned that softer hardwoods, such as poplar, tend to exhibit a natural tooth that will hold the pencil wax, often without sanding. Harder species, like maple or ash, generally performed well after sanding at medium to low lathe speeds with 180-grit paper. It should come as no surprise that each new turning blank will require just a bit of experimentation to determine which sandpaper will create the ideal surface to hold the wax and pigment.

Refer again to the maple spin top with the checkerboard interior (*Photos 5, 6*) to see several simple V-grooves filled with a red pencil. Let me walk you through the fairly straightforward process of creating a clean, consistently colored pinstripe.

First, cut and sand your object to the desired shape. Care must be taken to avoid creating highs and lows on the surface during sanding. As we know, long-grain carves more readily than endgrain and over-sanding will sometimes create lows in the softer grain. This inconsistency will become evident with the cutting of a fine V-groove. If the surface of the endgrain stands slightly "proud" of the long grain, the pointed scraper will cut more deeply in these areas. This inconsistent depth of cut will be quite noticeable, given that the purpose of the pinstripe is to establish a focal point on the object. One remedy is to deepen and widen the V-groove a bit so that minute variances in the groove will be less evident.

I really wanted to play with color, but I needed something that was more manageable than paint. I was happy to discover that applying color with wax pencils is an inherently slow, incremental process.

Pinstriping is a great entry point for the use of colored pencils in woodturning. I would begin with a simple platter form, cutting ten or twelve practice V-grooves in the surface with a sharp pointed scraper. It is important to have a fresh burr on the cutting edge and to hold the tool steady to create a clean groove with no tearout. As stated, some woods will accept wax in a groove right from the scraper, while others will require that the interior of the groove be scuffed up a bit with a rigid corner of creased 180-grit paper. Again, experiment with grit and lathe speed to create the ideal tooth.

As you practice coloring the grooves, you will quickly learn that the length and angle of the pencil point play a critical role in your success (*Photo 8*). When applying the colored wax to the wood, a fair amount of pressure is required and a long graphite-style point frequently breaks under this pressure. While the standard pencil sharpener creates the ideal point for a graphite pencil, the softer wax of a colored pencil requires a less acute tip.

Start with a light touch and gradually increase pressure on the pencil as you monitor the saturation of colored wax within your groove. I like a heavy saturation of color in the depth and side walls of the groove, but consistency around the circle is most important. The groove will not be literally filled with wax: the depth and definition of the groove should still be easily visible.

I use the toolrest to steady the pencil and carefully align the point with the groove, as shown in *Photo 4*; a high-intensity light is helpful here. A soft paint brush will gently clear the residual powdered wax from the groove after I've achieved the coloration I'm looking for.

When creating a fine V-groove, even a freshly sharpened pencil may need

Potential issues

7

Inconsistent color saturation and/or errant color on surrounding wood are potential issues you might encounter when pinstriping.

8

The shape of the pencil tip makes a big difference when coloring in a groove. A thin knife-shaped tip, formed by sanding two sides of a sharpened pencil, will produce good results.

minor modification to allow the tip of the pencil to reach the depth of the V-groove. Simply sand the conical point on two opposing sides to create a knife edge, which will enable the pencil point to access the deepest recess of the groove. You'll find that the knife-shaped wax will be almost immediately absorbed into the groove, so you may need to repeat the knife-edge sharpening several times to transfer enough wax into the depth of the groove. As the point recedes, its resulting shape will naturally begin to color the side walls of the groove. Don't be afraid to push on the pencil at this stage, as the heat of friction is an aid to the application of the wax.

While wax will not bleed across the grain, care will be required to stay within the boundaries of the groove. A dulled pencil tip that exceeds the width of the groove will transfer unwanted wax onto the surface of the object, as shown in *Photo 7*. This errant color will need to be carefully sanded away without disturbing the original fine V-groove.

Please don't be intimidated by these careful instructions. Once you've colored a dozen practice grooves on a spin top or platter surface, I'm confident that you'll be ready to apply your new skill to a fine turning.

Color blending

The second technique is color blending. This may take a bit more practice to master than the pinstriping, but it's really not difficult and the results can be dramatic. For your first attempt, I recommend working on the exterior of a simple bowl or platter. After establishing the proper tooth on the wood surface, select a white pencil as well as a light, medium, and dark shade of a favorite color. Here we'll use three hues of blue.

Start by laying down a fully saturated band of dark blue, about ¼" (6mm) wide. Next, lay down similar bands of the medium and light blue adjacent to and in contact with the initial dark band (*Photo 9*). A bit of overlap is fine.

Color blending

Apply different shades of a color adjacent to one another.

Use a pigmentless blending pencil to ease the transitions between colors.

These initial bands need not be perfect, as they are just the foundational colors.

Now the fun begins. Prismacolor makes a wax blending pencil of a slightly harder wax that contains no color pigment. With the blender, apply light-to-medium pressure directly to the three bands to initiate a melding of the colors (*Photo 10*). With the white pencil, apply color between the light and medium bands. With the light blue pencil, apply color between the medium and darkest bands. Again, use the blender and the lighter colored pencils to begin to merge and fuse the colors together.

A fair amount of pressure will create the heat of friction to accommodate this blending. However, too much pressure may actually scrape away your base coats and the progress you've made. Should this occur, recovery is easy. At any point, you can add more of any of the blues or white to achieve an effect you are happy with. There is no right or wrong approach; experiment with saturation and a variety of colors to create different effects.

Color blending is a great way to learn how colors interact with one another. As children, we learned that blue and yellow make green. Try creating a green hue as you blend your blue and yellow pencils.

Add a top coat

Whether pinstriping or blending, the finished colored area should be lightly sprayed with a UV-resistant clear acrylic finish. Several light coats work best. Be careful not to soak the wax with finish, as this may cause some color bleeding. Conversely, a wet coat of spray lacquer can be used to intentionally melt and bleed colors to interesting effect.

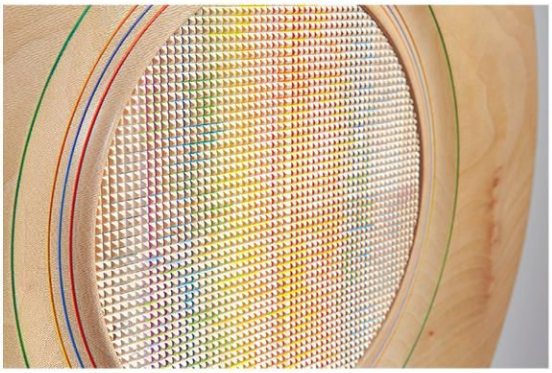
Conclusion

Woodturners are an adventuresome lot. I hope you'll approach these new coloration techniques as a child at play. It's never too late to investigate color theory and venture beyond the basics of primary colors. There are lots of good books and internet articles that do a great job of teaching color theory.

After you've mastered pinstriping and some simple color blends, develop your own techniques. There is no correct recipe, nor is there a specific outcome for which to strive. I am excited to see what you come up with. ■

Neil Donovan began turning in high school woodshop in the mid 1970s and went on to become a woodshop teacher and vocational school administrator. He earned a master's degree in furniture design under Christopher Weiland at Indiana University of Pennsylvania in 1983. Currently, Neil is surrounded by family in Columbus, Ohio, where he creates sculpture and teaches woodworking.

Colored Pencil Work by Neil Donovan

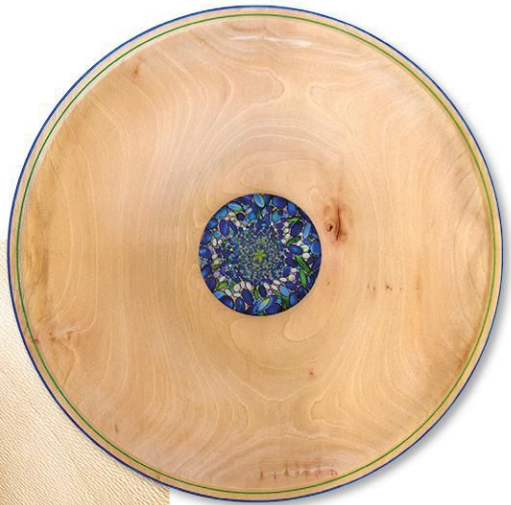


Color Grid (detail), 2016, Sycamore, Prismacolor® pencils, 23" (58cm) diameter

Parasols, 2023, Maple, Prismacolor® pencils, 28" × 4½" (71cm × 11cm)

Sixty-Four Characters, 2023, Wood, Prismacolor® pencils, 20" (51cm) square

Seven Sisters (detail), 2023, Maple, Prismacolor® pencils, 3"- (8cm-) diameter disks



Heather's Window, 2016, Sycamore, Prismacolor® pencils, 23" (58cm) diameter

Eclipse, 2023, Maple, oak, Prismacolor® pencils, 9" (23cm) diameter

SPECIAL SERIES: WHAT ACHES?
COMMON AILMENTS AFFECTING THE WOODTURNER

Robin McIntyre, Joanne Brown, and Dr. Peter Bentivegna

Photos by Andrew Campbell, except where noted.

When Bad Thumbs Have Got You Down

The human hand is a marvelous architectural structure that allows for considerable dexterity and strength. A crucial player in hand function is the thumb, which facilitates multiple combination motions for both precision and power. These motions put the thumb in precise alignment with the other fingers to allow the hand to perform various activities such as picking up a dime, turning a key, picking up a spatula, swinging a hammer, or maneuvering a spoon. In woodturning, these activities would equate to picking up a sanding disk, rotating a switch on the lathe, grasping a turning tool, using a mallet, or holding sandpaper. When the thumb has difficulties that cause pain, stiffness, weakness, or decreased sensation, problems arise in all areas of daily function, including woodturning.

The multiple structures in the thumb are precisely coordinated. *Figure 1* shows that the thumb comprises three joints: the interphalangeal joint (IP), the metacarpal joint (MP), and the carpal-metacarpal joint (CMC). The IP and MP joints are hinge-like in their function, while the CMC is a saddle joint that allows for unique motions in several directions to position the thumb for function. Motions between bones are restrained by normally taut, strong ligaments that attach bone to bone. Importantly, the friction between smooth joint surfaces is less than the friction between two pieces of glass sliding across each other.

Multiple muscles work to maneuver the thumb into the needed functional position for a variety of grasping patterns and for precision and power grips. These muscles and their tendons, which attach the muscle to bone, can become overworked with repetitive motion (*Figure 2*).

What's in a thumb?

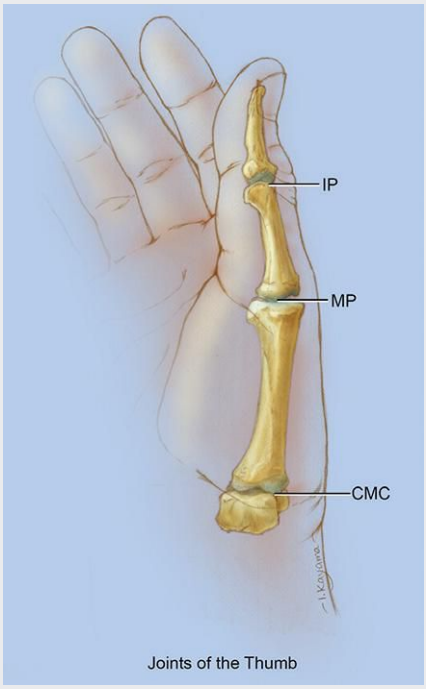


Figure 1. Joints of the thumb, with carpal bones: interphalangeal (IP), metacarpal (MP), and carpal-metacarpal (CMC).

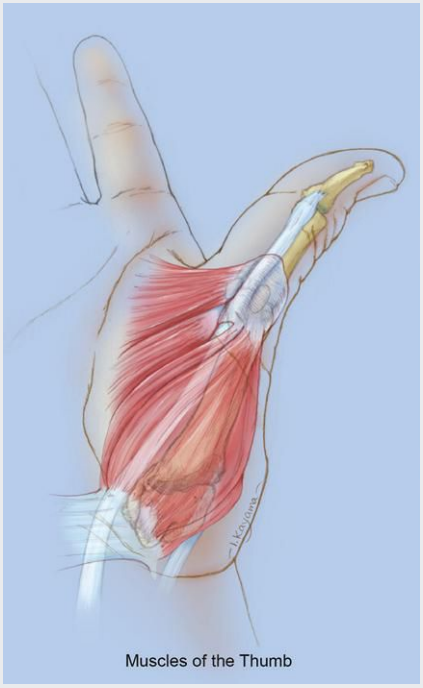


Figure 2. Muscles of the thumb.

Illustrations: Studio Kayama

Common thumb problems

When an irregular joint surface or swelling in the joint appears, it may cause arthritis. Arthritis has many forms, but the most common involving the thumb is osteoarthritis (OA). Thumb arthritis is more common in women than in men, perhaps due to less taut ligaments due to shifting female hormones. OA is commonly referred to as "wear and tear" arthritis. Irregular "gritty" joint surfaces are due to heavy joint use over time or damage from prior accidents and are also influenced by gender and heredity. Pain, weakness, stiffness, and decreased function can all be experienced with OA. If the joint continues to deteriorate, partial dislocation of the CMC joint can result, which causes malalignment of the joint and more symptoms. ▸

Tendonitis is a common problem that develops from strain, overuse, poor positioning, or repetitive motion around the thumb. Tendons and the smooth sheath tunnels that they slide through can become inflamed and/or swollen, leading to pain and weakness. Trigger finger, a form of tendonitis that commonly effects the thumb, can occur with repeated gripping such as with the use of tools. It may be experienced as pain and sudden "locking" of the thumb in flexion. Repeated catching and releasing irritates the tendon and may require oral anti-inflammatory medication, splinting, injection of the site with an anti-inflammatory medication, or surgery.

Prolonged pinch with the thumb and prolonged grip can lead to increased pressure in the carpal tunnel of the wrist, which can lead to carpal tunnel syndrome (see the June 2019 issue of *American Woodturner*), causing pain, numbness, and weakness in the hand.

Certified hand therapist

Rather than wait until your thumb problems are exacerbated, talk to your healthcare provider about a referral to a certified hand therapist (CHT), either an occupational therapist (OT) or a physical therapist (PT). Your CHT will review all of your daily activities, including woodturning, and can suggest adaptions and/or adaptive devices. After thorough evaluation, they may also suggest rest, exercise, ergonomic adaptations, and/or additional supports.

Exercise for the thumbs needs to be done cautiously to balance muscles in the thumb but not overwork painful joints or inflamed tendons. Typically, overuse syndromes require a period of rest. The muscles of the hand are very small, and exercises are used more to maintain motion of the joints rather than strengthen it. Your CHT can teach you specifically how to stabilize your thumb joints while maintaining motion to improve flexibility and function, but see the *Gentle Exercises for Overall Mobility sidebar* for exercises you can begin right away.

Splinting can be used during the daytime (functional splints) and/or at night (resting splints)—*Photos 1 and 2*. Splinting both protects and supports the joints. Protecting your thumbs at night allows the tendons and joints to rest without being strained by unfavorable positioning as you sleep. Never use a splint while turning, as elastic or Velcro closures may get pulled into the spinning lathe and plastic components could slide on the tools.

Taping using an athletic textured wrap can also be used to protect and support the joints—*Photo 3*. Most people can learn how to tape their own thumbs with practice. Taping offers flexible support and is another functional alternative to splinting.

Care for your thumbs

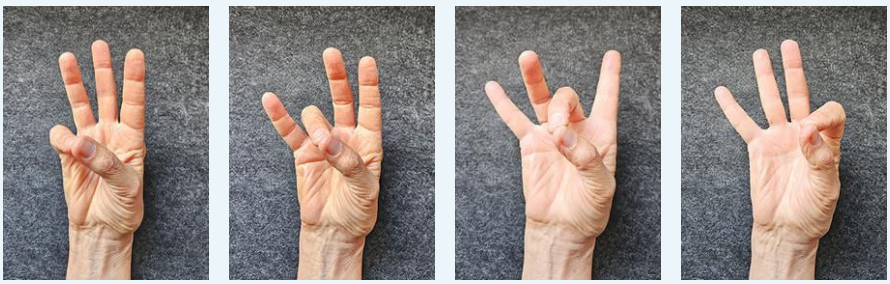
We use our thumbs constantly in daily activities and certainly in woodturning. Repetitive motion can result in straining the joints, ligaments, and tendons of the thumb. To decrease the likelihood of causing new or aggravating existing problems, pay attention to your joints before, during, and after your time at the lathe.

Before activity

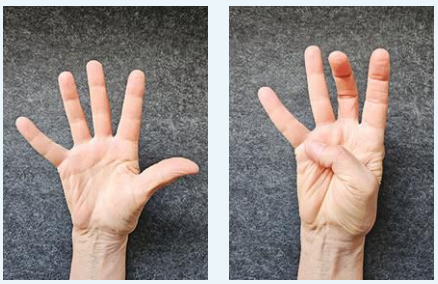
- Prior to a session at the lathe, heat—from hot mitts, a moist towel warmed in the microwave, a heating pad, or immersion in warm water—can relieve symptoms of pain, swelling, and stiffness. Moist heat has better penetration than dry heat. Another option is paraffin and paraffin baths, which are

Gentle Exercises for Overall Mobility

1) Start with your thumb and fingers gently spread apart. Touch the tip of your thumb to the tip of each finger in turn—first the pinky, then gently spread, then the ring finger, gently spread, etc.



2) Start with your thumb and fingers gently spread apart. Touch the tip of the thumb to the base of the little finger and gently spread.



sold for home use at medical supply companies.
- Heat used in the morning helps to relieve stiffness on waking and can also be used after turning. Use 10-15 minutes daily followed by gentle motion exercises.
- Do not use heat if you have impaired sensation or, if used, check often to make sure skin is not too red. Also, do not use heat for the first 24 hours after an acute injury, as ice is preferred.
- Talk with your medical provider about anti-inflammatory/pain relief medication that may be appropriate for you, either over-the-counter or prescription.

During activity

To avoid thumb stress/injury during a prolonged activity such as turning or embellishing, it is important to use proper ergonomics. All the little stresses and strains add up to thumb issues, but, conversely, small adaptations can make a difference in alleviating symptoms.
- Good form and gentle motions are the most important aspects to maintaining hand function, joint integrity, and functional performance of the thumb to avoid overstretching the joints.
- Use whole body motion as you turn, with the tool supported against your hip or torso, rather than controlling it with just your arms and hands (*Photo 4*).
- Always ensure your tools are sharp and your lathe speed is adequate, and take light cuts to reduce the jarring and strain on your hands and thumbs. Prep your blank with more initial shaping at the bandsaw to reduce the added strain of roughing at the lathe.
- Pace yourself. Take a break to rest your hands and gently spread and straighten your thumb and fingers to alleviate stiffness. Rest 5 minutes every 30 minutes, depending on the task you are performing, or alternate or rotate tasks to give your hands and thumbs a rest.
- Avoid stretching your thumbs by extending them backwards. For example, rather than pushing firmly with just your thumbs to stabilize a blank on a glue block, use your whole hand to produce pressure.
- Support the tool adequately but avoid the "white knuckle" grip. Alternate using an overhand and underhand grip on the tool (*Photos 5, 6*).
- Use multiple fingers to support hand motions such as applying a finish, and use both hands together for motions like sanding or removing a chuck from the spindle (*Photos 7, 8*). ▸

Thumb support


1
A functional splint customized by a hand therapist.


2
A resting splint purchased from a pharmacy.


3
Taping using flexible non-adhesive tape.

Whole body technique


4
This turner uses whole body motion, with the tool tucked against her torso, an asymmetrical tool handle, and an overhand grip on the tool.

Photo: Robin McIntyre

Alternate your grip

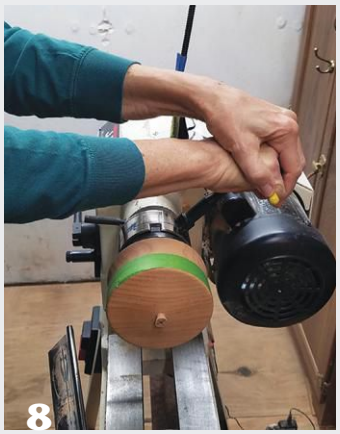

5


6

Alternate grips to give your thumbs a rest and change of position. At left, an overhand grip, and at right, an underhand grip.

Photo: Robin McIntyre

Look Ma, two hands!



(*7*) Using two hands with sandpaper spreads out the strain on small joints.

(*8*) Two hands working together decreases the stress on individual joints.

Wrapped tool grips

Wrapping tool handles with textured tape adds both friction and diameter to the tool handle.

Photo: Robin McIntyre

Use a mallet

Never use your hand as a mallet.

Jar gripper

Jar grippers increase the friction between the lid and your hand, decreasing joint stress and increasing your gripping ability. They can also be used on knobs and other locking mechanisms around the shop.

Equipment in your shop

- Wrap textured tape around tool handles (*Photo 9*), or use an asymmetrical tool handle. Textured tape increases the diameter of the handle and adds friction, so you can relax your grip.
- Use a mallet, not your hand, to engage the knock-out bar (*Photo 10*).
- A jar gripper improves the friction and power of your grip when a lid or lathe part is stuck (*Photo 11*).
- Use scissors to open a plastic bag of parts rather than pulling it open with your fingers and thumbs.
- A captured system reduces strain during hollowing.
- When embellishing or marking out a project, use a medium-diameter pencil, woodburning tool, or carver, which allows you to use less gripping pressure.
- Work in a position where you can support your arms, which lets you relax your grip.

Referral to a hand surgeon

In some cases, more aggressive treatment of the thumb is required for relief of pain and improvement of function. A hand surgeon evaluates whether further treatment is indicated. Following a thorough history, evaluation, and testing, the surgeon may recommend ongoing conservative management, a cortisone injection, or surgery. A cortisone injection decreases inflammation in and around the tendons and/or joint itself.

Common surgical procedures for the thumb are ligament reconstruction and tendon interposition, ligament reconstruction, and total joint replacement.

Ligament reconstruction and tendon interposition is the most common type of thumb arthritis surgery. It involves removing damaged joint surfaces and creating a cushion of other tissues to keep the bones separated. This procedure is

helpful for those with moderate to severe thumb arthritis, especially if pinching or gripping is a struggle. Ligament reconstruction is helpful for people who have damaged ligaments but not damaged cartilage and is a procedure to stabilize the CMC joint. It can provide significant pain relief in people with early thumb arthritis and may also help to slow the progression of the condition. It does not, however, fix any damaged bone or cartilage.

Total joint replacement is the complete replacement of a damaged thumb joint. Surgeons remove the joint before installing metal or pyrocarbon prostheses. They may also add synthetic cushioning spacers between the prostheses.

Following surgery, with appropriate time to heal and strengthen the thumb, it is likely that many people can return to woodturning.

Medical case study

RM is a 69-year-old-woman who began to have thumb discomfort in her 40s. Despite applying joint protection techniques in her daily life and work, she had intermittent bouts of pain and dysfunction of both thumbs.

RM had been turning for about a dozen years, and although woodturning specifically did not aggravate her thumb discomfort, she suspected that her beginner-level skill was likely not helping. Eventually, she sought medical investigation. Her primary care provider referred her to a hand surgeon. X-rays showed slight dislocation of both thumbs, but the joint surfaces looked fairly smooth for her age. RM's pain and dysfunction were primarily caused by tendonitis from overuse. She was encouraged to use anti-inflammatory medication and was referred to an occupational therapist/certified hand therapist.

RM was fitted with custom splints for both thumbs for day/night use, was instructed in thumb-taping techniques, and used heat and ultrasound for inflammation. She also reviewed joint protection techniques, was encouraged to use adapted tools, and was prescribed specific isometric exercises for strengthening without increasing inflammation. RM was able to resume woodturning activities with specific attention to protecting her thumbs from overuse. She continues to perform strengthening exercises and uses anti-inflammatory medication and splints intermittently as needed during flare-ups.

Surgical case study

SA is an 81-year-old man who began noticing gradual weakening of his left thumb in his early 70s. The CMC joint was troublesome, to the point where it was affecting his hobbies of woodturning and playing golf. Eventually, SA decided it was time to see a hand surgeon. X-rays showed deterioration of the CMC joint caused by osteoarthritis. Over the next few months, with help from a hand therapist, he tried a brace, anti-inflammatory medication, and various topical creams and ointments. He received cortisone injections, which provided only temporary relief.

At age 77, SA knew he needed a more permanent solution for his thumb joint pain and weakness and had CMC joint arthroplasty with ligament reconstruction and tendon transfer. The rough joint surface was removed and replaced with a synthetic surface. The ligament reconstruction and tendon transfer helped to stabilize the revised joint. The outpatient surgery, done under a regional nerve block, took less than an hour. SA wore a cast and sling for 10 days, with the cast being removed for bathing. He then wore a splint for a month and avoided forceful gripping. He began exercises directed by a hand therapist for mobility and worked with putty for resistance exercise. After a rehabilitation period of 3-4 months, SA was confident enough to resume his normal activities, with full recovery by 6 months. He was able to return to woodturning and, four years later, continues to have a fully functioning thumb joint without pain or weakness. ■

Robin McIntyre is a retired physical therapist who is a hobbyist woodturner. She is active in the Cape Cod Woodturners as a board member and Women in Turning (WIT) Liaison, in addition to being on the AAW WIT Committee.

Joanne Brown MS, OTR/L, CHT, is an experienced hand therapist with over 20 years of experience working with patients with orthopedic hand conditions. She is currently the Director of Content for OnlineCE.com and is a hobbyist woodturner.

Dr. Peter Bentivegna, MD FACS, is a Board Certified Plastic Surgeon with added qualifications (CAQ) in Hand Surgery. He is immediate Past President of the New England Hand Society and is a member of the American Society of Surgery of the Hand and the American Association of Orthopedic Surgeons. He is in private practice on Cape Cod, Massachusetts.

HEATHER MARUSIAK: *CHANGING PLACES*

Photos courtesy of the artist.

D Wood

In the period between the American Revolutionary War and the Civil War, wives of soldiers traveled to battlefields to assist their husbands by cooking, cleaning barracks, repairing clothes, helping in field hospitals, and tending to horses. In return for these much-needed contributions, the women received food rations that compensated for the soldiers' paltry wages. Such costs, as well as payments to wives of fallen officers (but not regulars), prompted discouragement of marriage: in 1847, the U.S. Congress passed a bill that denied married men the right to enlist. The prevailing attitude, until World War II was, "If the Army wanted you to have a wife, they would have issued you one."

Following WWII, militia leaders recognized that proximity to wives and families boosted enlistees' morale on national and international bases. Wives were considered by the Army to be "good soldiers," like their husbands, but their duties were to maintain the home, raise children, and host formal and informal social functions. In addition, it was assumed that these "captive" women would serve voluntarily in family support organizations created (and understaffed) by the Department of Defense. Working outside the home was frowned upon, apart from the fact that maintaining employment while being repeatedly transferred for short periods was impossible.

By the early 1980s, military wives rallied against their unpaid work in service of the armed forces and sought the end of prohibition against jobs outside the home. Recent statistics show that 24 percent of military spouses are still unemployed because their partners' duties—e.g., shifts, odd hours, training, sudden call-ups, deployments—require a spouse's home presence. Constant relocations—moving every few months or couple of years—are often crippling to a mate's professional aspirations. Many organizations shy away from hiring military spouses because of fear of employee turnover. These realities inhibit wives (male and female) and partners, 84 percent of whom have been educated to a college level, from realizing their potential.

Being an army wife, for artist and art educator Heather Marusiak, has required facing its challenges and benefits. It has meant making sacrifices in her career on one hand and acquiring skill as a woodturner on the other. Her selection as one of two Showcase Artists in the AAW's Professional Outreach Program (POP) for 2024 is evidence that the latter is gaining recognition. Heather's trajectory is a testament to her philosophy of "learning to thrive where you're planted."

"Toto, we're in Kansas!"

Heather currently lives in Kansas where the state motto is, appropriately enough, *Ad astra per aspera* (To the stars through difficulties). She has been there since 2018 while her husband's deployments took him to Korea and Poland. Long periods of aloneness require personal resilience, the attribute that Heather has developed in the years her husband has been on combat deployments and other rotations abroad. For some of her counterparts, however, inner strength cannot always be conjured up. The incidence of taking drugs, alcoholism, and mental illness amongst army wives is notable; yet, contrarily, a sizeable percentage (21 percent) operate their own businesses. Heather is on the cusp of launching one of those businesses, in the sense of marketing her one-of-a-kind pieces. Her introduction to the lathe happened in 2020.

Heather's husband Jason was home from Poland and the couple dropped by a local folk festival where "there was a woodturning group doing a demonstration. They had a lathe and I saw them making a bowl." It was not as if this event was Heather's first experience of craft. She grew up in a household where her father was a master cabinetmaker, and her mother dabbled in weaving, drum-making, and writing. As a child she relished any kind of art practice and avidly browsed books showing work by Leonardo da Vinci, Andy Goldsworthy, and Georgia O'Keeffe. When she went to college, she chose a program in art education. The initial year of a five-year program was studio art, with exposure to a broad range of media. Art practice continued in years two, three, and four; training to teach art from pre-kindergarten to Grade 12 was emphasized in the last two years. Heather says she would have valued placing all her eggs in a studio art basket, but being the first person in her family to attend a tertiary institution, her choice was pragmatic: assured art-related employment.

Exposure to a lathe near the Fort Riley Military Base jangled an artistic nerve. Fortunately, this was spotted: "My husband noticed that I was eyeing it, and he gifted me a lathe several months later for my birthday in the summer of 2020." On her own again, Heather began poring over books and observing interactive remote demonstrations (IRDs) during the COVID-19 lockdown given by the AAW and individual woodturners. To become accustomed to this new tool, she made bowls and goblets that, based on her father's reverence for natural wood, were orthodox in form and color.

"I give WIT all the credit for getting me involved so deeply into this craft."

Then she was introduced to the AAW's Women in Turning (WIT) group.

Heather says, "I give WIT all the credit for getting me involved so deeply into this craft." She participated in her first virtual WIT eXchange about three months into woodturning. The virtual eXchange is a collaboration of three strangers who are given a noun and a modifier and eight weeks to create something based on those words. "I was just learning, a baby turner. I was exposed to many wonderful people, and I got to see different techniques on the lathe and embellishments because of having weekly meetings with our group and the larger group. I saw people carving, burning, and coloring their work, and people fixing their work into the chuck in ways I hadn't even thought of." Heather participated in three virtual WIT eXchanges (2020, 2021, 2022) as well as viewing WIT Presents artist talks whereby a female woodturner shows their early work and progression and shares their creative process. "I found those to be incredibly powerful, incredibly inspiring, and they keyed me into a world of craft that I didn't know existed. I didn't realize there was a whole artistic movement happening."

In addition to WIT, another strong influence was *New Masters of Woodturning: Expanding the Boundaries of Wood Art*, by Kevin Wallace and Terry Martin. Heather recalls, "I ordered a copy and it showed up on my doorstep. In this book, on the same day, I learned about Louise Hibbert and Graeme Priddle and Jacques Vesery and Peter Hromek and Rolly Munro and Michael Hosaluk. Each page was a new epiphany. I didn't know how they were doing what they were doing on these pages, but I wanted to pursue this. Very quickly I went from turning bowls to turning bowl-shaped objects that I would then embellish or mutilate."

Both Hibbert and Vesery continue to inspire Heather's work, not only in ▸

Pieces from left:
Mermaid's Purse, 2024, Maple, cherry, pyrography, acrylic paint, 5¼" × 6½" × 3¾" (13cm × 17cm × 10cm)

"*Mermaid's Purse* is an amalgam of abstracted mollusk and marine egg capsule forms that allude to creativity and fertility."

Remnant, 2023, Cherry, acrylic paint, 3½" × 3½" × 5½" (9cm × 9cm × 14cm)

"A curious structure hints at the remains of a fuller form. The work sits atop a 250-million-year-old Permian limestone specimen riddled with fossils."

Coterie, 2023, Maple, pyrography, acrylic paint, 5" × 6" × 6" (13cm × 15cm × 15cm)

subject matter—sea forms, plankton, and mollusks—but in intensely marked surfaces and application of color. The image of *Mermaid's Purse, Remnant,* and *Coterie* shows creatures or partial creatures that might be seen in a rock pool. The iridescence on the objects suggests that water still surrounds them as it catches the light and causes shimmer. The shapes are curious, from an environment, or imagination, that requires further investigation. Since Kansas was covered by a shallow sea millions of years ago, the marine fossils that are under Heather's feet in the limestone are bound to come to light in her woodturning and carving.

Yellow Brick Road

Heather's selection as a POP Showcase Artist at the AAW Symposium in Portland, Oregon, required delivering two workshops. The success of these presentations was undoubtedly due to her teacher training at Towson University, Maryland. In addition, the opportunity had special meaning: "This was my first time teaching anything woodturning-related and the first time teaching from my own portfolio instead of art generally." One demonstration primarily took the form of a lecture on color theory—the color wheel, harmony, warm vs. cool—with examples from art masters as well as turned art. Heather's aim was educating the audience "to be able to make smart choices about color, knowing how colors work together." The second demo, called Addition and Subtraction, progressed from making a form on the lathe to carving away portions of it.

Evidence that Heather's practice is what she preaches exists in *Cocoon*. This seemingly simple hollow vessel becomes rich with the contrast between the smooth glossy inner surface and the textured, striated exterior. The solid copper tone inside repeats when blended with olive-green on the external ridges. *Cocoon* is reflective, both figuratively and literally, of complementary coloring based on theory, and the elimination of material to achieve negative space and concave/convex curves.

Such an accomplished work from someone who has been turning for only four years is a credit to talent as well as perseverance. Following graduation from Towson in 2008 with qualifications to teach art, Heather found placement in a public charter school in inner-city Baltimore. She "really fell in love with the young people and got excited about sharing my passion with them." However, life intervened: she became engaged to a young U.S. Army officer and suddenly relocated to Germany. There she was a substitute high school teacher on the military base and helped in an after-school art program. In order to satisfy her creative leanings, Heather and Jason made longbows, progressing from laminated to self (a bow from a single piece of wood), in a room in their apartment.

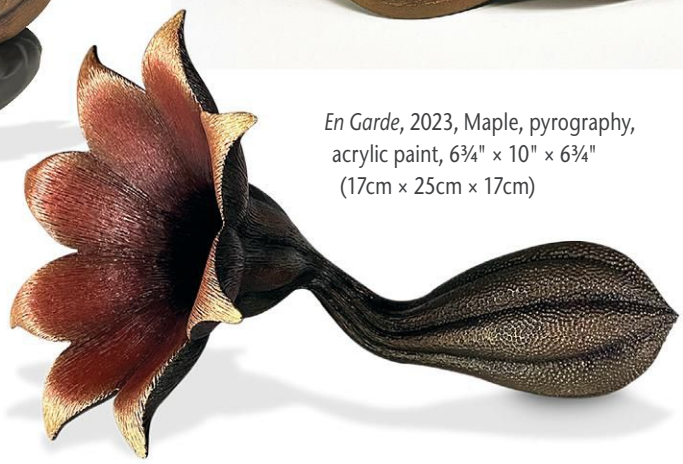
The next duty stations were Oklahoma and Alabama. She taught in a high school in Alabama (2012-13), enrolled for a masters' degree in art education at Troy University (Troy,

> **"My forms reference different parts that you might be able to recognize from nature in terms of texture and color. All have some turned component. I see the lathe as a carving tool." –Heather Marusiak**

Heart of Hearts, 2024, Maple, ash, pyrography, acrylic paint, 9" × 6" × 1½" (23cm × 15cm × 38mm)

Carapace, 2024, Ash, cherry, flame texturing, pyrography, acrylic medium, acrylic paint, 5½" × 12¾" × 6¾" (14cm × 32cm × 17cm)

"Inspired by the weathered shell of a turtle."



En Garde, 2023, Maple, pyrography, acrylic paint, 6¾" × 10" × 6¾" (17cm × 25cm × 17cm)

Cocoon, 2022, Cherry, pyrography, acrylic paint, 2½" × 6¾" × 2½" (6cm × 17cm × 6cm)

Votive Womb, 2022, Cherry, pyrography, acrylic paint, 2" × 4¾" × 4" (5cm × 12cm × 10cm)

"Created in the spirit of ancient votives offered in exchange for protection and health, this womb vessel is born from ruminations on life, loss, and bodily autonomy."

Alabama), and improved her skills in ceramics, which she acknowledges has influence on her woodturning. They then moved to North Carolina, and despite feeling grounded with a dream job teaching art in elementary school and a close network of friends (2014-2018), the Army required another shift, to Kansas. This move coincided with Heather's pregnancy, the pandemic (during which Jason was in Korea), and severe post-partum depression and anxiety.

Although it is "normal" for some women to feel depression after giving birth, it is not surprising that serial uprooting, loneliness, and having solo responsibility for a sleepless infant would take its toll. Heather admits, "I realized that I didn't recognize myself, my surroundings, or anything." In retrospect, she believes that the ancient tradition of making small wooden toys for her daughter was what slowly lifted the blues. She carved and decorated a rocking horse as well, and shortly thereafter encountered the lathe. She declares that "making sawdust in her garage" is what saved her sanity and led to acceptance of her peripatetic lifestyle.

Ruby slippers

Heather describes her portfolio as "a naturalist shelf of curiosities." She elaborates: "My forms reference different parts that you might be able to recognize from nature in terms of texture and color. All have some turned component. I see the lathe as a carving tool. I'm able to create a substrate—a beautiful hollow substrate." She spends more time off than on the lathe but believes she couldn't do without this tool. Heather describes a vessel as being like "lungs that hold air and breath"; it is animate. Wood, itself, is "alive," and despite her affinity with ceramics, she sees timber as the most appropriate material for her subject matter.

Viewing Heather's turned and carved creations, in light of her continual uprooting and displacement, raises speculation. For example, *Carapace* is described by the maker as depicting "a vulnerable creature taking up protective armor." The curvaceous form with gold and bronze tones, texturing by means of flame and pyrography, and play of light and shadow shows ▸

consummate conscious control of an outcome. A viewer might swiftly conclude that *Carapace* is organic and abstract and intriguing. But I contend that there is more going on: this sculptural piece is anthropomorphic.

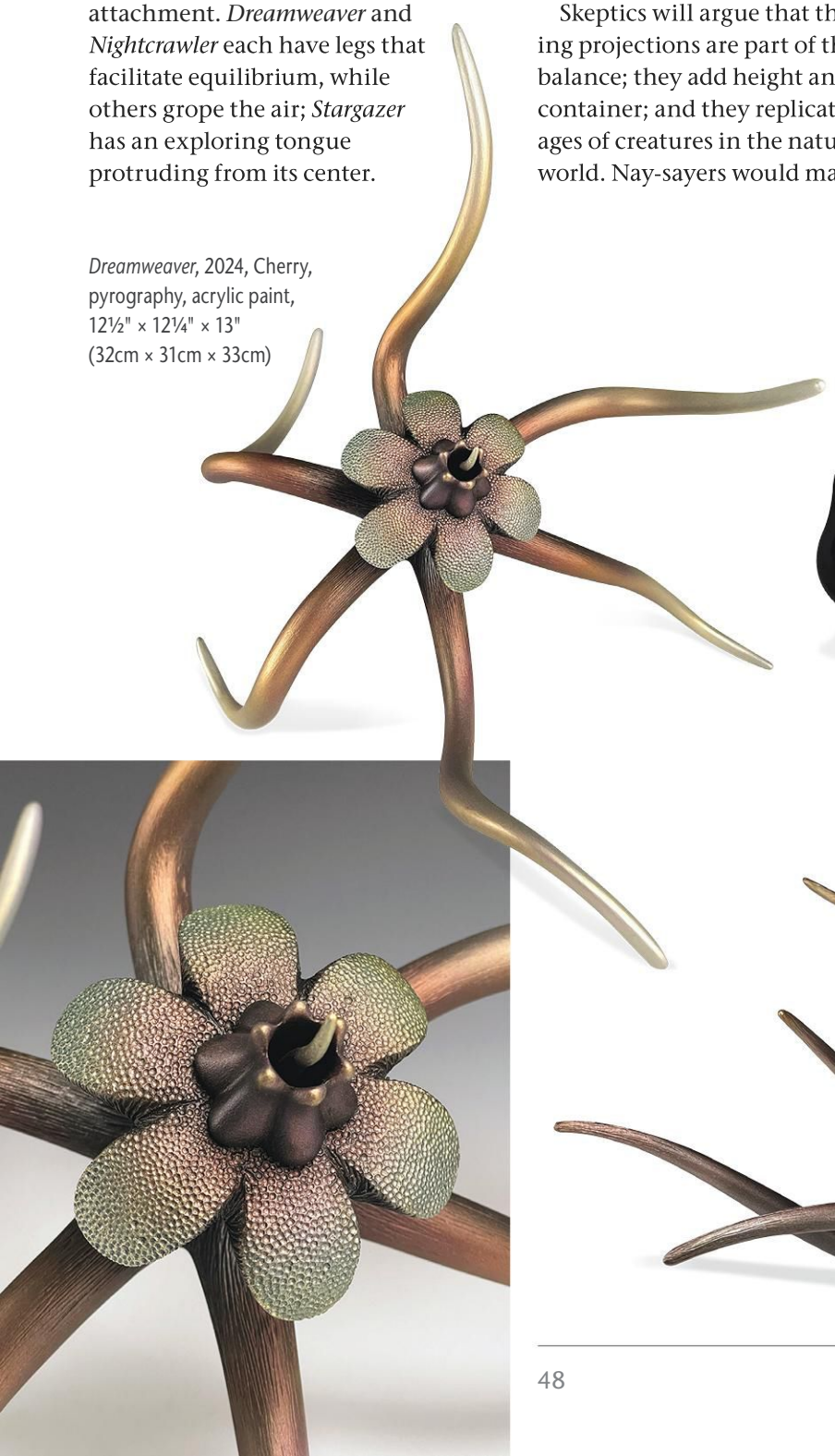
Carapace has a sensor or tendril that reaches out, testing the surroundings, possibly for something to hold. *Coterie* includes similar shoots striving for attachment. *Dreamweaver* and *Nightcrawler* each have legs that facilitate equilibrium, while others grope the air; *Stargazer* has an exploring tongue protruding from its center.

The artist has plausible explanations for these objects—*Dreamweaver* was provoked by her daughter's night terrors. Yet I wonder about the symbolism of the frequent inclusion of "feelers." Doesn't a human, like a turtle, seek psychic protection when security is nebulous? Isn't there in all of us an unconscious yearning for putting down roots and settlement?

Skeptics will argue that the sprouting projections are part of the design's balance; they add height and imply container; and they replicate appendages of creatures in the natural world. Nay-sayers would maintain that Heather Marusiak's back story is unnecessary for observing her work. I would agree. Nevertheless, art assessment often brings the artist's (and, certainly, the viewer's) personal experience to bear on its judgement.

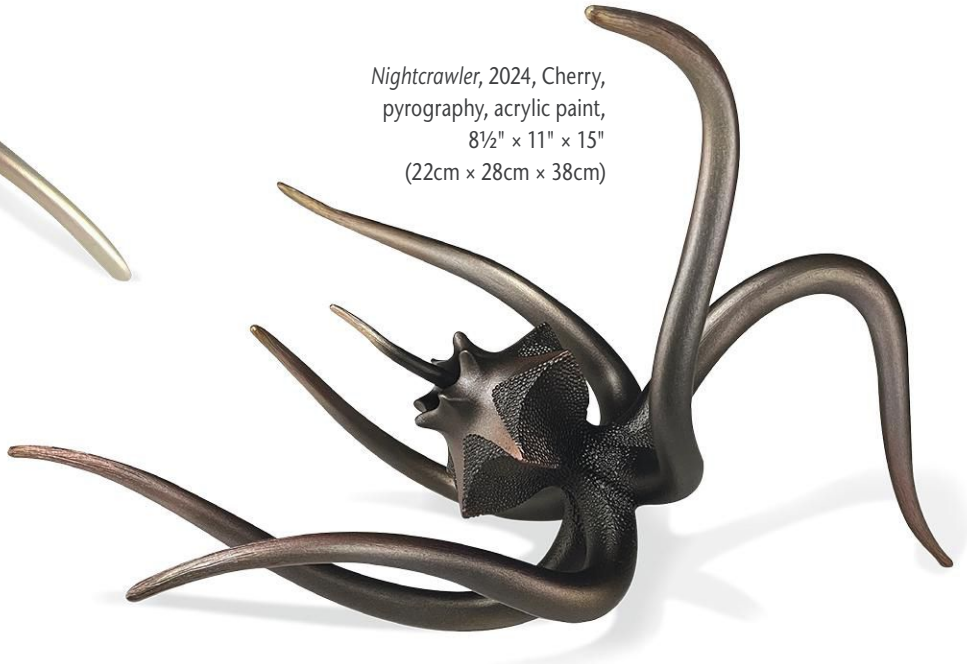
As a final example of the personal, *Ouroboros* depicts a snake consuming itself, representing the endless cycle of life, death, and rebirth. The snake is like a mobius strip that has no end; it is self-contained. Being reliant on one's own resources is another interpretation of ouroboros, and my brief familiarity with Heather convinces me that she is adept at doing just that.

Dreamweaver, 2024, Cherry, pyrography, acrylic paint, 12½" × 12¼" × 13" (32cm × 31cm × 33cm)



Stargazer, 2022, Cherry, pyrography, acrylic paint, 5" × 6¾" × 4½" (13cm × 17cm × 11cm)

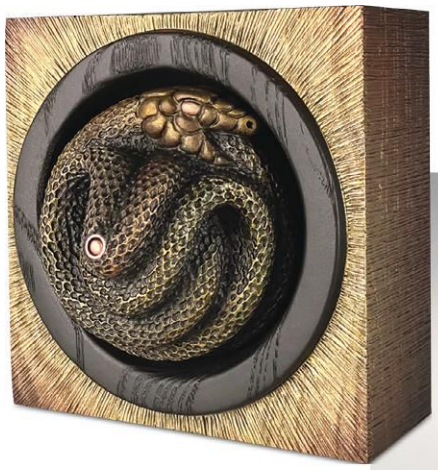
Nightcrawler, 2024, Cherry, pyrography, acrylic paint, 8½" × 11" × 15" (22cm × 28cm × 38cm)



Emerald City

Wearing a demonstrator's smock in Portland in 2024 put Heather Marusiak on the woodturning map. Going forward, she wants to somehow balance her making and teaching, in addition to being a craftmaking role model for her daughter. *Crow Mask* indulges an interest in ancestral skills and artistic practices. The mask refers not only to Indigenous facsimiles but the masks of *commedia dell'arte* characters. With resources in world art and a lathe-centered tool kit, Heather is an exemplar of the small but growing contingent of young energized woodturners.

Since 2018, when her daughter was born, Heather has chosen to be a stay-at-home mother, except for teaching early childhood art and STEAM classes while her daughter attended pre-K and kindergarten. This enables her to be a present parent. At the same time, she is an active member of the Flint Hills Woodturners, serving on the club's board as liaison between the AAW and WIT. She edits the club's monthly newsletter, helps with audio-visual presentations, and occasionally demonstrates. On the home front, she looks forward to Jason's retirement in 2027 when they can decide on a "forever" location and dwelling. Heather says, "We're still looking at where that is. I've taken a shine to Kansas in a way I did not expect—the quiet beauty of the prairie, the history you feel when you walk on the limestone." Her evolution as an artist, as an army wife or not, will reflect whatever and wherever is around her. ■



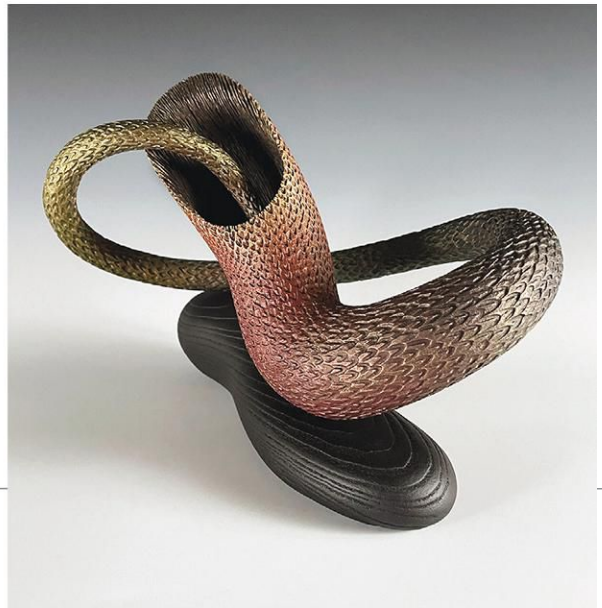
Immortal Coil, 2024, Cherry, ash, pyrography, acrylic paint, 5" × 5" × 3½" (13cm × 13cm × 9cm)

"This ouroboros is an object of meditation, a spherical adaptation of a traditional Cretan labyrinth. As the snake devours its tail, it perishes, yet its body is provided the sustenance for its rebirth. This labrysphere is filled with copper beads that lend weight, shift balance, and gently rattle as it is rotated."

D Wood designed and made furniture to earn a Diploma in Crafts and Design at Sheridan College in Canada and an MFA at the Rhode Island School of Design. In 2012, she earned a PhD in Design Studies from University of Otago. D is the editor of Craft is Political *(Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2021).*

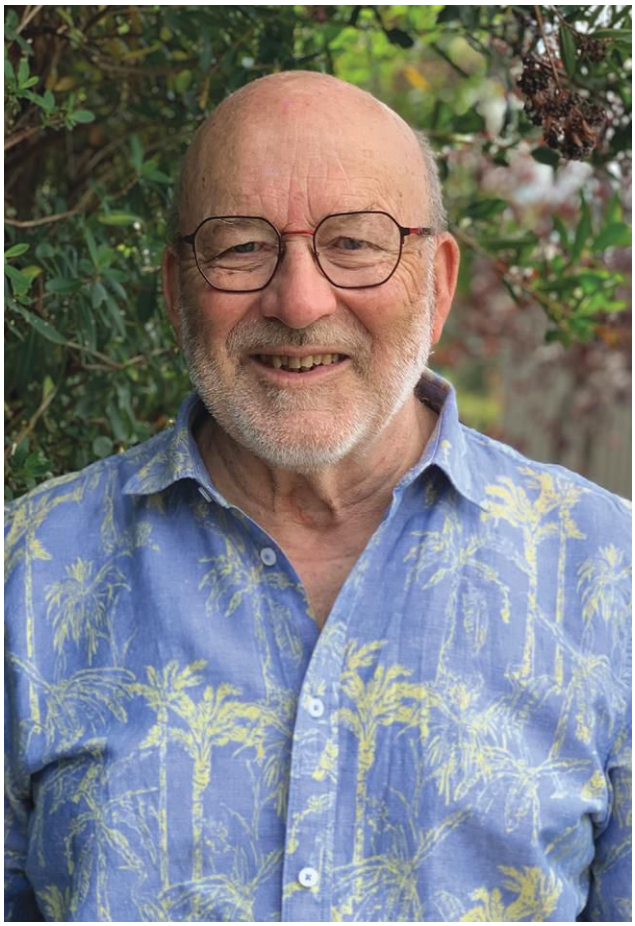
With resources in world art and a lathe-centered tool kit, Heather is an exemplar of the small but growing contingent of young energized woodturners.

Crow Mask, 2024, Cherry, pyrography, acrylic paint, 5" × 5¼" × 8¾" (13cm × 13cm × 22cm)



Ouroboros, 2023, Cherry, pyrography, acrylic paint, 7" × 9" × 9" (18cm × 23cm × 23cm)

"In ancient Greek, *ouroboros* means 'tail-eating,' a symbol of endless life, death, and rebirth. As the serpent devours its tail, it is in a constant state of death and renewal."



RICHARD RAFFAN:

2025 AAW HONORARY LIFETIME MEMBER

The AAW Board of Directors, at its discretion, confers honorary lifetime membership to persons who, in its judgement, have made extraordinary contributions to the American Association of Woodturners and the advancement of woodturning. This year, the honor goes to Anglo Australian turner Richard Raffan in recognition of his long record of support of the AAW and ambassadorship for woodturning in general.

A budding career

Timing is everything. Richard Raffan inadvertently timed his woodturning career just right, managing to find himself in the right places at the right time and with the requisite talents. Any sort of fame or notoriety, even within the woodturning community (which didn't exist in 1970), was never part of his plan.

Woodturning was never a hobby for Richard. He went straight at being a professional, and his first time at the lathe was on January 5, 1970. He was 26 and looking for a sea change, unaware that a craft revival was under way and that he would become part of it. He notes, "All I ever wanted to be known for was delivering orders on time—and making stuff that sold well enough that retailers would reorder on a regular basis."

He learned the basics watching Rendall "Bill" Crang, who did all the turning in the professional shop where Richard spent the first four months of his budding career. He notes that at that time, "facework was held using screw chucks, faceplates, and jam chucks; endgrain projects were held using cup chucks or three-jaw engineer's chucks. Turning tools, and particularly bowl gouges, weren't generally available. Specialist turning supply companies were a decade away."

Richard admits that when he set up shop on his own, he was "barely competent." He effectively made his own

Walnut, 1970, 4" × 8" (10cm × 20cm)

"My first major piece that still looks good. Made for my mother's birthday, after ten weeks of concentrated turning, and I think it shows I had potential as a turner."

apprenticeship turning runs of simple bowls, scoops, light pulls, lamp bases, and platters. He aimed for repetition, offered in a catalogue, but early ineptitude meant he ended up with boxes full of one-offs. He gradually refined his turning skills but found that making enough items to generate the cash needed to pay his bills involved long hours and reams of abrasive.

By the end of May of his first year in business, he had turned several dozen bowls, boxes, scoops, and lamp bases, which in June he loaded into his car and drove east, cold-calling at small gift shops (later called galleries). Within 100 miles, he sold everything and took a few new orders. Three weeks later, Richard took a similar trip westward with the same result. By August 1970, he could barely keep up with the repeat orders and abandoned his catalogue since galleries preferred the novelty of one-off bowls.

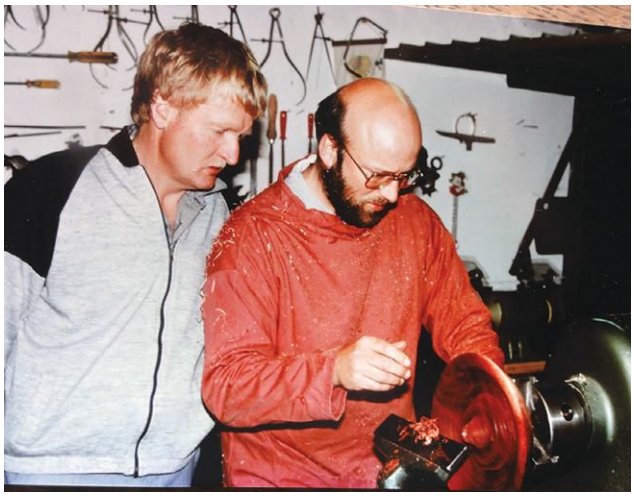
Richard notes, "Selling what I made was never a problem: my shapes, finish, and strikingly different timbers stood out from the morass of teak tableware then in vogue. After my two selling trips, people came to *me*. My problem was fulfilling orders quickly but fortunately, because woodturning had virtually died as a handcraft, there was no competition from other turners until the mid-1970s, and by then I was ahead of the pack."

Next steps

In 1973, Richard was the only woodturner represented in *The Craftsman's Art* exhibition at London's Victoria and Albert Museum, which displayed the *crème-de-la-crème* of British crafts for the newly established Crafts Advisory Committee. He displayed a yew bowl and a rippled ash salad set, just two of the 470 objects chosen from about 28,000 submitted. This led to an invitation to go on the new CAC slide index, ▸

(*Left*) Labeling bowls on order at Bodgers Hole, Topsham, Devon, 1973.

(*Right*) "During a 1984 demo in Canberra, where I met Vic Wood. He'd come from Melbourne and we hit it off. Over the next few years, we did several joint workshops, alternating demos and often commentating on each other's approach. We had rigorous postmortems in order to improve our presentations."



(*Left*) Bowls in various woods from 1976 to 1983.

(*Right*) Demonstrating at the 2017 AAW International Symposium, Kansas City, Missouri.

Photo: Andi Wolfe

Exhibition salt bowls (rather than run-of-the-mill, which were yew), 1978.

Eucalypt burl, 1985, 6⅝" (17cm) diameter

"I love making these, but they are difficult to sell, and suitable burl is scarce. You have to be in the right place at the right time."

"Throughout the 1970s, I sold at least fifty scoops a week, and they paid for all my basic living expenses. I could make sixty to seventy in a day."

exhibit in *Domestic Objects* at the new CAC Gallery in London, and then join the CAC slide index selection panel. He notes, "Throughout the 1970s, there was rarely a time when I didn't have work in a major crafts exhibition in Britain or Europe. Often, I was the only turner and still something of a novelty within the British crafts environment."

Richard moved to Australia in 1982, when woodturning was

Boxwood boxes, 2008, approx. 1½" (4cm) diameter

"One of dozens of similar groupings. When I decided to turn for a living, I intended to turn groups of boxes, but sculptural groups didn't interest Australian galleries other than exhibition pieces. Most boxes in sets eventually sold individually."

Cocobolo and tulip boxes, 2005, 2" (5cm) diameter

"Boxes like these have been a production item from 1977. Since 1985, most sold at American woodturning symposiums."

beginning to take off as a hobby. Thousands of hobby turners were looking for instruction, and Richard was adept with the tools after a decade of production turning. Added to that, in 1980 a British publisher approached him about writing a woodturning manual. He submitted a manuscript that he also showed to John Kelsey at the Taunton Press, figuring an American publisher would reach a wider audience. Taunton made a vastly superior offer and in 1985 published *Turning Wood with Richard Raffan* with a complementary video. Video was a new medium at that time, so again Richard was in the right place at the right time.

"I've made hundreds of verdigris and rust pots. I regard them as exhibition rather than production items because they are difficult to wholesale."

Beginning in 1983, Richard demonstrated at most of the annual Utah Symposiums, which led to hands-on workshops all over North America. Conducting workshops on his way to Britain to visit family suited him well and became part of his annual schedule, despite making it difficult to keep on top of regular orders at home. He explains, "Teaching got me out of the workshop for a few weeks each year—a working holiday with most workshops in North America and Europe and a chance to meet a lot of interesting people I wouldn't have met otherwise."

Giving critiques were an important part of Richard's presence at the 1983-87 Utah Symposiums ▸

"In 1978, John Makepeace commissioned "a piece to wow them" for his Parnham Collection. I came up with a set of spillikins, the first of around 200 sets. They became a production item, with many going to public collections."

Tubes in elm, 2005

"These generally sold in small groups through exhibitions and at American turning symposiums."

and Buxton, U.K. symposiums. His preferred approach was, and still is, to assess three similar pieces made by one person. He explains, "Make one a benchmark, then assess why one is better, why the other not so good. The quality is immaterial, as there is always room for improvement and nobody gets hurt. It was gratifying to watch work in symposium instant galleries moving on from what had been near universal clunky 'round and brown.' I know *Turned Bowl Design*, later revamped as *The Art of Turned Bowls*, helped many turners reassess their approach to bowl turning."

Quieter endeavors

Over the past forty years, Richard has written dozens of magazine articles, published several more books and videos with Taunton Press, demonstrated at symposia, and led hands-on workshops, all with the intention of helping people get more out of the craft. However, he emphasizes that teaching and writing were always ancillary to supplying his regular customers with bowls.

Sales of all craftworks dwindled after 9/11, and when his main outlet in Sydney closed in 2008, Richard ceased full-time production. Aged 65, he was ready for cleaner and quieter endeavors but continued writing magazine articles and conducting demos and workshops.

In December 2021, appalled by the number of turners displaying their lack of skill on YouTube, Richard published the first of now over 300 videos, aiming to show competent turning. He says that the videos are mostly like his symposium demos in that, while turning, he conducts a running commentary on what he's doing and why. He tries to answer questions as they might form in the mind of the viewer. Richard's YouTube channel, @RichardRaffanwoodturning, has more than 45,000 subscribers.

With such a distinguished career and having taught so many turners worldwide via his books, videos, and in-person instruction, Richard Raffan is highly deserving of Honorary Lifetime Membership in the AAW.

—*AAW Contributing Staff*

For more, visit Richard's website, richardraffan.com.au.

Richard was in the right place at the right time, and he made several videos for the Taunton Press. Plus, there are French, German, Chinese, and Korean editions of some of his books—all helping to establish him as a foundational name in woodturning.

FOR FURTHER READING

EXPLORE!

Two profiles on Richard Raffan have been published in *American Woodturner*, and he has contributed several articles chronicling other turners, tools, and projects. Following is a partial list; log in at woodturner.org and use the Explore! search tool to find more.

- "Richard Raffan: I Don't Feel the Need to Be Different, but I Would Like to Be Good," by Terry Martin, June 2012 (vol 27, no 3)
- "Richard Raffan: A Gentleman with Strong Opinions," by Ken Keoughan, Winter 2002 (vol 17, no 4)
- "Scrapers: A Eulogy," by Richard Raffan, April 2012 (vol 27, no 2)
- "It's All in the Jaws," by Richard Raffan, December 2010 (vol 25, no 6)
- "On Demonstrating," by Richard Raffan, April 2019 (vol 34, no 2)

DAVID ELLSWORTH, NORTH CAROLINA, AAW MEMBER #1 AND HONORARY LIFETIME MEMBER

I first met Richard Raffan at Parnham House in England over four decades ago. We were both demonstrating at a conference run by furniture maker John Makepeace. Parnham was actually a 14th-century castle that housed John's woodworking school. I was exposed not only to a professional working craft school, but also to a sense of royalty due to the commissions being made by the students that ultimately found their way into upper class homes.

Richard and I maintained a consistent level of communication over the years, including after he moved to Australia. Richard became a prolific writer of how-to books and was certainly an inspiration for me to write my own book. In fact, when I told Richard I was in the process of writing a book, he asked me to send him a list of my chapter headings, which I did. His response was very positive, with one exception: "Don't include anything about the 'body' in your chapter descriptions, or the Australian turners won't buy it." I remain amused to this day.

Clearly, Richard has inspired a mountain of woodturners not only to take up the craft of woodturning but, through his example, to increase their technical and design skills exponentially. He is most deserved of this prestigious Lifetime Achievement Award.

BETTY SCARPINO, INDIANA, AAW HONORARY LIFETIME MEMBER

In the early 1990s at a symposium in Provo, Utah, I attended one of Richard Raffan's sessions. Its title, "Fixings," intrigued me. Not sure what to expect, I joined the handful of woodturners seating themselves at desks in the designated room—a typical university classroom, but with no lathe, no tools or wood, just a chalkboard. We began to ponder what Richard would be presenting. With no savory smells of mashed potatoes or green bean casserole evident, maybe Richard would be discussing how to salvage broken turnings? Or perhaps methods of solving woodturning problems? You know, how to fix things.

Richard arrived, greeted us, and introduced the topic: various methods of attaching wood to a lathe. Oh, okay! Affixing. Someone laughed and spoke up about the American Thanksgiving tradition of "fixings" to accompany turkey. With the ice broken and Richard in on the joke, he proceeded.

While I remember, in general, many of the woodturning sessions I've attended in my career, this one stands out as especially informative, fun, and interactive. Richard's fame preceded him, but not all famous people live up to their billing. Richard always did. Awarding Richard Raffan Honorary Lifetime Membership is long overdue.

MICHAEL (MICK) O'DONNELL, SCOTLAND

Meeting Richard Raffan in Scotland in 1981 changed my life. In the 1970s, I was a part-time woodturner working in the byre of my croft (small holding of four acres) on the north coast of Scotland; I kept warm by our milk cow in the next stall. I was making functional domestic items—lamps, bowls, spinning wheels—all from kiln-dried African hardwoods.

Hearing that a world-famous bowl turner was coming to Scotland was beyond my comprehension, but I thought it would be interesting to take a look. Richard Raffan was to demonstrate to a small group of woodturners. I met him the day before the event, and as I was going to look at some timber, Richard came along. The wood was slabbed, wet, and waney edged and of absolutely no use to me. But Richard bought ten holly trees to be transported over 600 miles south to Devon. On the third day of his demo, I went back to the site and bought two trees to be transported 100 miles north to Caithness. The rest is history, and Richard remains a good friend and colleague some forty-four years on.

BENOÎT AVERLY, FRANCE

What I liked right away when I met Richard was that he would go straight to the point. He will pick the right tool and do the right move with the minimum steps in order to get a simple and accurate shape. With wood as with people: no unnecessary moves and no unnecessary words, all that sprinkled with a great sense of humor, perfect ingredients for becoming one of the best production turners and teachers. I have to say, I was waiting and hoping for the year Richard would become an AAW Honorary Lifetime Member. ▸

ROGER BENNETT, IRELAND

When I discovered woodturning in the early 1990s, there was no internet and not many books on the subject. Exotic woods and spectacular figuring were prized over form; the writing was more about technique than design. Richard Raffan's *Turned Bowl Design* filled the void. It became my bible. In his clear elegant prose, he analysed the elements which together make a good bowl. He compared open and closed forms, convex and concave curves, round and footed bases, flat and rolled rims. He compared successes and failures and showed how a small adjustment, for example to the tightness of a curve, could make all the difference.

Some fifteen years earlier, my wife and I were given a beautiful wooden bowl as a wedding present. It immediately became our go-to salad bowl. It wasn't until I acquired Richard's book that the name incised on the base meant anything to us: "Richard Raffan, Brazilian Walnut." We have been using this bowl daily for almost fifty years. It embodies its maker's precepts for success, both visual and tactile. It is still in pristine condition, and my copy of the book is properly dog-eared and full of marginal notes.

GLENN LUCAS, IRELAND

Richard Raffan has been inspiring woodturners for over fifty years, and like so many, I count myself lucky to have learned from him. His books and videos set the standard, but it's when you see him in person that you truly understand his gift—not just for turning, but for teaching. He gives everything in a demo, never holding back, explaining every movement as if it's the most important thing in the world.

More than that, I've been fortunate to spend many happy hours with Richard as a friend. We've shared unforgettable times—hanging out on the Norwegian woodturning cruise, strolling in the mountains of County Carlow, waiting in boarding areas at international airports, exploring an Aussie lake in a boat. And, of course, "having the craic" playing snooker in an Irish kitchen.

When I started demonstrating, Richard gave me advice I've never forgotten: "If you're looking for a pencil, describe the pencil—keep the audience with you." It seems so simple, but that's the kind of wisdom he shares—practical, thoughtful, and always spot-on. Richard hasn't just shaped wood, he's shaped the way woodturning is taught and shared. His generosity, clarity, and skill have left a mark on so many of us, and I know his influence will carry on for generations to come.

TOM WIRSING, COLORADO

Richard Raffan changed my life. I began turning wood as a teenager in my dad's workshop, but I only ever turned spindles, primarily furniture legs. When I was in my 50s, I attended a Richard Raffan demonstration at a Woodcraft store in Illinois. Richard turned a bowl from a piece of green American black cherry. It was the first time I had ever seen anyone do a facegrain turning. And I was watching *Richard Raffan*, a world-class turner, prolific writer, and renowned teacher! I was fascinated, and I was hooked. I joined the AAW to learn more. I became a regular participant at two AAW chapters. I learned rapidly. I became a chapter president. Then I was elected to the AAW Board of Directors and, eventually, AAW president.

That chance encounter with Richard sent me in an entirely new direction and has profoundly changed my life. It was the first step in a journey which has brought a tremendous sense of accomplishment, has introduced me to woodturning friends from around the world, and has afforded me the opportunity to give back in wonderful and enjoyable ways. Those are rare privileges. I owe much to Richard.

MIKE MAHONEY, CALIFORNIA

I met Richard in 1988 at the Utah Woodturning Symposium. He did a rotation on production turning. Within the ninety minutes allotted, Richard made many items. These were very complex turnings that should have taken more time to make. It was clear to me that he was the best craftsman I had ever witnessed. I quickly befriended Richard, and we have stayed in touch ever since. He led me to become a professional production woodturner and was there to offer advice as I was in the process.

KEITH GOTSCHALL, COLORADO

Early in my career, I took a class with Richard, the first of my woodturning heros whom I actually met. We became fast friends, and he has remained a longtime friend and mentor. Richard has been generous with his time and company. I am certainly not the only one who can say that Richard showed me how to turn. Thousands have learned from his videos, books, hands-on classes and now his YouTube channel.

Richard's elegant fluency with the skew was an attraction from the start. The techniques he employs have always been rooted in traditional techniques he was shown, or just simple and obvious methods he found on his own.

One of the things I value most about Richard is his honesty. There is a bravery that allows him to say to you that your bowl could be better, the shape could be refined, or your artistic expression is frivolous. How refreshingly direct! And his eye for these things is never wrong. His books on design have helped so many become better turners because he was willing to say, "This curve is good, this one is bad." So often our criticisms are couched in politeness, not wanting to hurt feelings, but Richard's seemingly impersonal critiques have always come from a belief that anyone with a talent and the tools should be striving to perfect their forms. That encouragement has done the field of woodturning immeasurable good, and he has lifted all of us with his own work.

KIRK DEHEER, UTAH

It is fitting that the AAW has chosen Richard Raffan for this honor. He has had an influence on so many of us. With his writing, videos, demos, and, of course, hands-on classes, I believe it would be hard to find a woodturner who was not inspired by him in some way.

One time, I was assisting in Richard's class and was preparing the turning stock by squaring rectangular spindle stock. I threw away some of the offcuts, but Richard pulled them out of the trash. He cut them up and gave them to a student, asking him to practice his skew work. The student was upset at first, thinking he was being picked on, until he realized Richard was trying to teach him finesse. He has a knack for seeing what a student needs and offering just the right approach.

MIKE PEACE, GEORGIA

In my early days as an eager hobby woodturner, I accumulated most of Richard Raffan's books. His detailed step-by-step photos, paired with clear explanations, provided invaluable guidance—insights that could only come from a true production turner. I initially turned to his books to better understand tool use, refine my technique, and improve my design sense. Over time, as my skills grew and I began teaching and demonstrating, I found myself returning to those same well-worn pages. They not only helped me refine my own turning, but also gave me a framework for explaining the *why* behind each tool and technique.

More recently, I've had the incredible honor of collaborating with Richard in the monthly *4-Ways Collaboration* alongside Sam Angelo and Tomislav Tomašić. For the past two years, we've taken turns choosing projects, each creating and releasing a video simultaneously at the start of the month. Working alongside someone whose books shaped my early learning has been both surreal and deeply rewarding.

Richard's impact on the woodturning world is immeasurable, and this Honorary Lifetime Membership from the AAW is a well-deserved recognition of his contributions.

TOMISLAV TOMAŠIĆ, CROATIA

I am the woodturner I am today because of Richard Raffan, and words cannot express how much he has helped me and my family. I never got a chance to be a hobby turner, and this meant each minute at the lathe had to be efficient and profitable to justify time away from my family. This was the reason I first contacted Richard, sending him email after email with different topics and questions to help me learn to be a professional woodturner. Richard always found the time to respond and help me out, and over the years we became friends as well as mentor and mentee. Because of Richard, I have been able to make a living turning wood. If anyone deserves this award from the AAW, it is Richard Raffan. ■

Members' Gallery

Dave Roberts, British Columbia, Canada

In the early 1980s, I purchased a Shopsmith Mark 5 from a mall demonstration/sales event. Along with shop classes in high school, this was my introduction to woodturning. While I taught myself how to turn on that machine, it took over twenty-five years for me to purchase a dedicated lathe. After a thirty-seven-year career installing and maintaining signal and train control systems, I continue to enjoy working with my hands.

My wife Alison and I spend our days in the shop turning; I am never bored or wonder what to make, it just seems to happen. Alison has a huge influence on my creative process and work.

Since moving to the west coast from eastern Canada, I have become very fond of the local Pacific Northwest woods. While I really like Australian burls, I would have to say arbutus root burl is my favorite. I harvest all of the local woods I turn, and this allows me to create the sizes and shapes I choose. I enjoy the challenge of figuring out how to mount and turn large pieces—some with rocks embedded—and then removing all traces as to how the work was held.

For more, visit darawoodworks.com and follow Dave on Instagram, @dave_roberts_darawoodworks.

Señor Menzies, 2024, Arbutus, yellow cedar, sail thread, acrylic paint, lacquer, 24" (61cm) diameter

Robin's Egg Raffia Sun Hat, 2024, Arbutus burl, London plane maple veneer, milk paint, 17" (43cm) diameter

A Diamond in the Rough, 2023, Arbutus root burl with naturally embedded stone, tung oil, 12" × 18" × 14" (30cm × 46cm × 36cm), 26 lbs. (12kg)

Pacific Yew Vessel, 2024, Pacific yew, tung oil, 30" × 11" (76cm × 28cm)

Courtney Paz Gale, California

Like many woodturners before me, I'm inspired by natural spaces and trees, silent witnesses to the passing of many of our lifetimes. In each piece, the sorrow of a lost limb or tree is met with the joy of creation, mirroring the tension of our own experiences of loss and renewal.

I find that creation is not always about control but about listening. From log to final coat, I listen throughout the entire process, collaborating with the wood's character. As the features of the wood reveal themselves, my vision for the piece evolves. Taking discarded wood from rejected waste to a valued unique piece for the home is especially fulfilling. Who among us hasn't seen magic and beauty in unexpected places, or in unassuming people? This is probably why I enjoy working with fussy or less desirable woods like cottonwood.

I hope my work gently encourages reflection on environmental stewardship and the value of craftsmanship, and serves as a quiet reminder of the connection between us and the natural world. In a world where commodities often replace heirloom goods, we woodturners invite all to pause, to witness, and to cherish the life that sustains us all.

For more, visit oakenwell.com or follow Courtney on Instagram, @oakenwell.

Bradford Pear Closed Form, 2024, Bradford pear, satin wipe-on polyurethane, 4" × 5" (10cm × 13cm)

Elm Burl Bowl, 2024, Siberian elm, Odie's oil, 4½" × 12" (11cm × 30cm)

Cottonwood Bowl, 2021, Rio Grande cottonwood, Clapham's Beeswax, 2¼" × 5¾" (6cm × 15cm)

Ripple, 2025, Wildfire pine, gloss lacquer, 2½" × 6" × 3¾" (6cm × 15cm × 10cm)

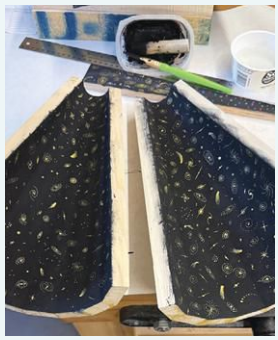
Big Bang Stool, 2025, Poplar, plywood, glass, paint (milk, acrylic, metallic, and phosphorescent), gold pen, wax, 23" × 16" × 16" (58cm × 41cm × 41cm)

Louise Prockter, Washington, D.C.

I took up woodworking a few years ago as an escape from the stress of the pandemic. I was especially drawn to woodturning, appreciating the meditative absorption it brings.

Early this year, I participated in the two-month woodturning intensive at the Center for Furniture Craftsmanship in Maine, with the incomparable Beth Ireland as instructor. This amazing experience helped me to grow my turning and design skills, especially in learning how to use turned elements to create other objects. One of our projects was to make a stool, and we were encouraged to let our imaginations run wild as to the style and decoration. Given my profession as a space scientist, my stool was inspired by the Big Bang event that created the universe. The coopered, turned, and carved cone is decorated inside with tiny galaxies and glow-in-the-dark paint to give an idea of how everything in the universe exploded out from a tiny point of energy. The turned legs reference early exploration of the night sky through antique brass and leather telescopes. While not, perhaps, the most practical of objects, this stool was a lot of fun to make and is a great conversation piece.

Coopered, turned, and carved



John M. Vining, Virginia

My intention with this piece, other than learning how to turn, was to create a playful object that people would enjoy interacting with as well as talk and chuckle about. I decided to take an innocuous item that is present and unnoticed in everyday life and make it the central focal point of the piece. Heavily influenced by the classic *Wile E. Coyote* cartoons animated by Chuck Jones and Maurice Noble, *The Lag Stool* is a playful look at an ordinary object. ▸

The Lag Stool, 2025, Poplar, acrylic and milk paint (burnished with steel wool), 26" × 14" × 14" (66cm × 36cm × 36cm)

Tom Windross, Ireland

I am a young woodturner (age 15) from County Waterford, Ireland, working with locally sourced, storm-damaged trees to create what I hope are beautiful, practical, artistic pieces. I find inspiration in the natural beauty of the wood and endeavor to highlight the attractive grain, figure, form, and texture in the pieces I turn.

I am passionate about working with wood and constantly challenge myself to try new techniques and develop my skills. I am particularly interested in learning from other woodturners, here in Ireland and farther afield. I believe that by traveling and learning from others, I can gain a deeper understanding of the craft and expand my own artistic creativity. I hope to become well regarded as a woodturner and to share my knowledge and passion with others.

In October 2024, I attended the Irish Woodturners Guild National Seminar for the first time, where I won first place in my category and was awarded the prestigious President's prize. I am grateful for the support and encouragement I have received from the IWG, and I would also like to extend my thanks to everyone who has supported my woodturning journey so far.

For more, follow Tom on Instagram, @tomwindross_woodturner.

Natural-Edge Lidded Vessel, 2024, Hazel, beeswax, 5" × 7" × 4½" (13cm × 18cm × 11cm)

Hazel Hollow Form, 2023, Hazel, beeswax, 3½" × 5" (9cm × 13cm)

Glenn Lucas-Style Dublin Viking Bowl, 2024, Ash, beeswax, 4" × 7½" (10cm × 19cm)

Oculus, 2023, Spanish chestnut, water-based dye, beeswax, 15" × 15" × 2" (38cm × 38cm × 5cm)

Spalted Bud Vases, 2023, Spalted apple and beech, beeswax, tallest: 10" × 2" (25cm × 5cm)

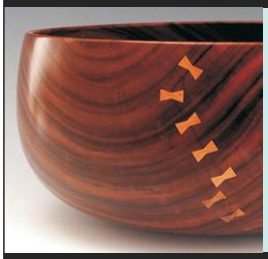
David Bartell, Texas

Inspired by Lidded Basketry, 2024, Mesquite, ink, acrylic paint, turquoise inlay, turquoise stone, 9" × 8" (23cm × 20cm)

Mesquite Vase, 2022, Mesquite, archival ink, acrylic paint, 11" × 9" (28cm × 23cm)

Southwestern-Style Vase, 2023, Mesquite, archival ink, acrylic paint, 6" × 6" (15cm × 15cm)

Untitled, 2024, Mesquite, ink, acrylic paint, 7" × 8" (18cm × 20cm)



advertisingindex

To advertise in *American Woodturner*, contact Erica Nelson, 763-497-1778, erica.nelson@ewald.com.

DAVID BARTELL
TEXAS

A few years ago, I was visiting a woodturning friend who has New Mexico roots and a collection of beautiful Native American baskets and pottery. Seeing his collection brought back the appreciation I had developed for Southwestern art when I was stationed in New Mexico with the military years ago. With the help of some old *Arizona Highways* magazines, the wheels started turning on how I might incorporate Native American-inspired shapes and features into my work.

I thought the basket illusion technique might be the ticket if applied in a limited manner—to "suggest" basketry or pottery while still allowing the wood to show through. The wood I use primarily is mesquite. It has wonderful color and ever-different features that are worth exposing. I believe the embellishments, patterns, colors, and jewelry elements help to celebrate the wood.

Within the category of Native American basketry are many functional, ceremonial, and purely artistic styles that have been exciting inspiration for turning projects. I hope that what I do honors and respects the fabulous artistic contributions of Native American cultures and does justice to the magnificence of the wood.

For more, follow David on Instagram, @wildwoodstex, or visit his webpage, texaswildwoods.com.

A Place for Your Burdens (inspired by an Apache ceremonial burden basket), 2024, Mesquite, ink, acrylic paint, turquoise stones, jewelry elements, leather with metal tips, 7" × 7" (18cm × 18cm)

Inside This Issue!
See more examples of David Bartell's work on page 60.