

Phil Brennon Demonstrates

Phil Brennon, a full time professional turner, teacher and owner of Van-Gogh's Ear, a gallery in Prescott, Arizona. He is well known for his Southwest style turnings. Phil is also the President of the AAW.

Phil began his workshop with a slide presentation. He states, "Poor form is poor turning." Amateurs can hollow using today's tool technology but that does not mean that the forms they create are good forms. Turners must learn to create a good form before they begin to decorate their work.

Phil showed the club how to turn a Southwest form. He then explained how to weave leather into the rim of the form. He cuts his own leather hides with a rotary cutter and does a number of different weaves on his rims. A fact sheet on weaving will be made available to the club if you would like to try the technique. Remember to use CA glue on the inside of the rim before pulling the leather through the holes. If you do not you will likely break your rim.

Phil advocates trying mixed media with turnings. He uses soapstone, pipestone, talc, and polymer resins to decorate his work. He also uses metals and leafs as decoration. Phil will sandblast a form, smoke it or burn it to create unique textures. He has even tried powdered graphite and gun shot to add texture to his bowls.

The second part of Phil's demonstration was a rapid succession of texturing tools and techniques that should open minds to new ideas and the wallets of those who want to experiment using new tools. Phil began with an air powered auto body saw, moved to air powered stone mason tools, and then to a simple electric engraver. He demonstrated pyrography (burning) as well as gold leafing. Phil showed us the Arbortech mini and maxi carver and the blades that make texturing easy.

Phil would need more than a week to demonstrate in any detail all of the textures that can be achieved using tools from other disciplines.

The most important lesson to be learned from the day is that the only limit to creating novel turned art is your imagination. Phil freely shared his knowledge with the Club because he is continually trying new ideas to "WOW" collectors. He has barely touched the surface of decorating turned objects.

One of our members asked Phil how he chooses artists to show in his gallery. He warns turners not to walk into a gallery with work. Make an appointment with a gallery owner before you go to the gallery to show your stuff. Galleries have more artists contact them than they have room to display. Their time to review art is limited. Very often gallery owners discover you.

Phil went on to say that pricing your work depends on the amount of time you put into a piece, the cost of materials and your reputation.

The day was jam packed with information. It is difficult to process so much data. Phil was kind enough to prepare a number of information worksheets: *Consideration of Form and Design for Southwest Vessel in Wood* and *Turning Ponderosa Pine*. He will forward an additional sheet on weaving leather.

Learning to Turn

Experienced as well as beginning turners can benefit from instruction. Many of us began turning and tried to teach ourselves. The process is a difficult one if not an impossible one. Joining a club, attending the AAW or Utah Symposiums will help you improve your turning. There is no substitute for small group class instruction or one on one instruction with an experienced turner. Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts in Tennessee, the Cambell School in North Carolina, and a number of other craft schools offer weekend along with one and two week classes that truly teach you how to turn. Once you become familiar with the tools and good form you can move to turning wood into art.

Visit the internet to locate craft schools and review the courses being offered. Ask club members for help. Watch videos and read books. Our club library is great. Our next meeting will be dedicated to helping you become a better turner. You will have a hands on opportunity to improve your skills.