

Where Do We Go From Here?

By Ken Deaner

David Ellsworth recommends turning many bowls, hollows and platters as the best way to become a good turner. Once you have mastered turning you can set your sights on finding your own voice. Your work will become recognizable to others. The curves and lines will be pleasing to the eye. There will not be any tool marks left on the piece. No screw holes or chuck marks will be found on the base of the piece. No end grain tear-out will be visible. The finish will compliment the piece not detract from it. Mastering turning takes time.

Should a good turner use a gouge, skew or scraper? The end result is more important than the means used to achieve that result. Use the tool that makes you comfortable. How thin is thin? If you are making a plate for salad or fruit it should be thick enough to withstand use. If you are shooting for a sculptural piece that is going to be carved it must have some thickness or you will cut through the wall.

Do you enjoy turning bowls, pens, or boxes for friends or are you committed to challenging yourself to create sculptural forms that tickle your fancy? Both require study. Read books and tapes on turning. Attend symposiums around the state and nation. Read magazines and journals focused on turning. Understand what turning looked like two decades ago and what it looks like today.

Good form is not subjective. The eye knows when a turned vessel has a "fair curve." Don't fool yourself into thinking a piece that clunks down on the table will look as graceful as a piece that rises up from a delicate base and soars to a great top. At the Hunter Mountain Craft Festival in Hunter New York this past summer there were several turners exhibiting. Those who were members of the AAW and local turning clubs were quickly recognizable. The guy with the bowl collection with screw holes in the base of his turnings and chuck teeth marks on the bottom of his pieces was certainly doing his own thing. He was not a member of the AAW. The general public was buying these cheaply made items and was getting what they paid for. A quality turning takes both time and thought. It is well finished. It is reverse turned so that the lathe attachment method is removed. Look at items coming in from the Philippines or China. They have the same shoddy fin-

ish. They are turned out in quantity with speed as the criteria not quality.

The United States leads the world in the production of quality art turning but turners from around the world are quickly catching up with us. The Symposium in Orlando was proof of this. The open gallery had the work of hundreds of turners from all over the world. Sweden, France, China, Australia, England, Ireland, France, Canada, New Zealand and many other countries were represented. The influence of culture and locality was clear as people walked up and down the rows of tables. A special exhibit generated from an AAW challenge to its members, "From Sea to Odyssey," displayed the work of turners from many lands.

Collectors are asking questions like what influenced your work? Where is your studio? What is your cultural heritage? People often see the American West in a piece or the Middle East or Far East influences. It proves that turning has certainly advanced far beyond bowl making.

Some of the work currently being produced does not look turned. Pieces are being cut up and put back together so that the origination of the form is clouded. Clever new techniques are being invented that enables the turned form to be transformed into new and amazing shapes that make the audience wonder how the piece was made.

Turning is moving in many exciting new directions. We should not forget its origins and pay attention to new turners that are starting out on a great adventure. The general public should be educated as to how much time goes into a great piece while appreciating the fact that they can buy a lathe and have great fun turning bowls.

Not everyone is an artist but anyone can become a wood turner and aspire to creating great things.

Informal Show and Tell

Bob Brady, Ken Deaner, Carl Saenger and others displayed their work