

The CNEW Skew

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October 2007

Editorial

I wasn't planning to attend the Albany Symposium this year but when Richard DiPerna came down with flu and offered his ticket to the first taker, well – that's nearly as good as free wood, isn't it? So as well as spending money on some not-so-free wood from Curtis Lumber and Bruce Hoover's Sanding Solution, I came away with a few new ideas. Paul Petrie reiterated a few points about surface decoration, chief among them the fact that you have to be sitting (or standing, or lying) comfortably. Good light and magnification are also essential, otherwise the repetitive motions and the strain will soon convince you there are better ways to spend an evening. And when stippling, no shortcuts! If you don't cover the entire surface, the few remaining flat spots will stick out like a sore thumb once the finish goes on. In any kind of piercing or stippling, it is generally advisable to draw the patterns first so you avoid making all the marks in straight lines or the same size – randomness is usually desirable.

Peter Exton did a very interesting 2-part rotation on his explorations of multi-centred spindle turning, although the second part was slowed down by several people who felt they could skip the first part and then proved they should not have by asking questions that had already been answered. Peter was considerably more patient than I would have been. As part of the rotation, Peter showed a series of slides starting from his work with furniture, where the turning is in a subsidiary role, through to more recent work where there is no sign of anything functional. Of one table, he commented that the proportion of the top diameter to the height was "about" the Golden Proportion!

Finally, I watched Andre Martel use his hook tool to hollow out a natural-edge lampshade from a whole log (with some bits hacked off until it fit on the lathe). As is common with this sort of demo, it took a while to

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President's Message

I just got back from Totally Turning in Albany NY. and I had a great time as I met some new people and touched base with some old friends. There were a lot of wood blanks as well as quite a number of tools to purchase if you had some extra change to part with. They had a place to turn a pen, they also had an egg cup race where you turned against a clock to see who was the fastest. I saw eight demos and enjoyed them all and learned something at each one. I also met our speaker for November, George Guadiane who will not charge the club if we all bring a turned piece for Charlie's Wheelchair Project. It is time to finish up all those projects that you are going to bring to the Craft Fair which is the weekend immediately following Thanksgiving, also we have to take down our booth which is stored upstairs from where we meet on the Wednesday before about 3 or 4 people are needed for approx. 1 hour. The club is looking for someone to take over the duties of the Editor for the club newsletter for the coming year. I am having fun are you?????

AL

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Club Officers and Contact Info for 2007

President, Al Faul
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 VP, External, Mary Maguire
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 Treasurer, Norma Hogan
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Minutes of October Meeting

Tim Elliott

Guests/visitors: none. New members: Peter Wilcox
 Treasurer Norma Hogan reported that our bank balance is now \$3127.96

Our December meeting will include elections for 2008 officers. Al Faul will step down from the office of president. Graeme Young has also announced that he will step down as newsletter editor.

The Woodworks show will again be at the big E fairgrounds in Springfield Jan 11-13. Our booth will be next to the gallery for better security of items on display. Totally Turning will be held in Albany this month. The Woodcarver's show will be October 21 at Middlesex Community College.

The Worcester Center for Crafts is having an open-house event this Saturday aimed at kids. They have asked CNEW if we can provide a demonstrator but no one seemed to be available on short notice.

Thanks to Dave Eaton for taking action on the grinder and sharpening jig that CNEW donated to the Craft Center this month. Dave made sure these items were purchased, delivered, and installed.

Frank White reported that Peters Valley Craft Center in New Jersey has some woodturning-themed Summer workshops. See www.petersvalley.org for details. At the moment the site only lists workshops for the 2007 season, which ended in September.

Frank also reported that longtime CNEW member Ray Hayden died in September. He was 95.

Beth Ireland will be demoing artistic wood turning for the Eastern MA Guild of Woodworkers on

October 13 in or near Bolton. Details are available at www.emgw.org.

Dave Eaton has coordinated with Hartville Tool Woodworking to get CNEW discounted pricing on items ordered from their website: www.hartvilletool.com.

November Meeting

George Guadiane (George's website is turnedbygeorge.com) - bring a piece for Project Goodwill

Editorial, ctd.

get through that much wood and you could only get a general idea of how the tool is used – neither live viewing nor video really lets you see exactly where the cutting edge is, what direction it's going, how far below or above centre the tool tip is, etc. And even if you could figure out all those variables, it may not be obvious which ones are important and which are merely incidental.

Graeme

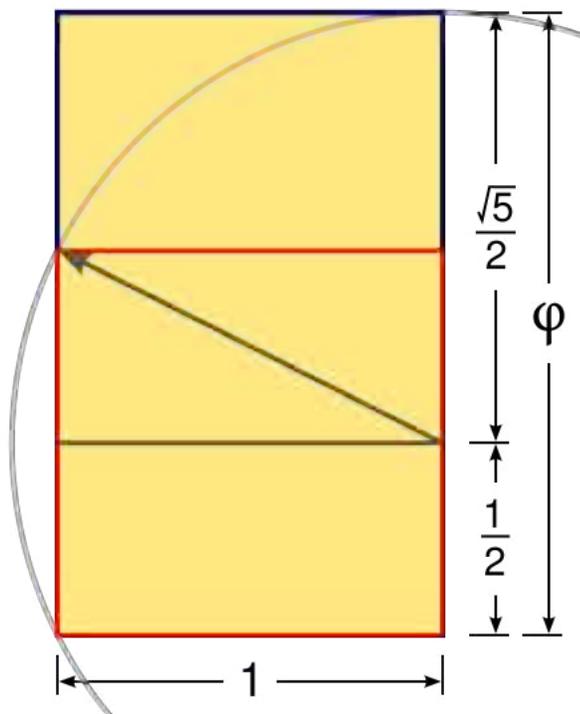
Design Discussion

Graeme Young

This is an expansion on the design discussion that occupied the second half of the October meeting. We covered quite a few points, including some that had little to do with design as such.

First up was a discussion of the Golden Mean, also known as the Golden Proportion or Golden Section. The proportion in question is 1:phi where phi is the Greek letter Phi, representing an irrational number with the value 1.618034.... You can construct such a rectangle with ruler and compass as follows

- Draw a square (red in the diagram) with sides equal to the length of the short side of your desired rectangle
- Find the midpoint of a side and extend the compass from there to one of the non-adjacent corners
- Draw an arc, continuing past the side the compass rests on
- Extend that side to meet the arc. This establishes the length of the long side of your rectangle



The Golden Mean has been used in art and architecture since the ancient Greeks and became especially popular during the Renaissance. Studies have found that if people are shown rectangles of various proportions, the Golden Rectangle is the one most commonly found to be most pleasing.

So how, if at all, do we apply the Golden Mean in turning? None of the panel used the Golden Mean in their design process and none of us thought it a good idea to slavishly produce work adhering closely to this “ideal”. Even Mike Darlow, an author whose work I often find excessively technical and finicky, recently published an article arguing against reliance on the Golden Mean. Something I learned a long time ago:

*Rules
are for the Obedience of Fools
and the Guidance of Wise Men.*

Of course, deliberately avoiding the Golden Proportion will get you a lot of ugly bowls. So will “wasting” the minimum amount of wood by removing just enough to make the outside round and then digging out the inside. That approach tends to produce bowls with straight sides and flat bottoms – boring if not downright ugly. You can keep the same height and diameter but remove less from the inside and more from the outside. This is not only easier, it allows you to make a lot of more interesting shapes. And if you cut away wood to make the most pleasing shape you can instead of the biggest, then measure the results, you’ll probably find a proportion not far from the Golden Mean in there somewhere.

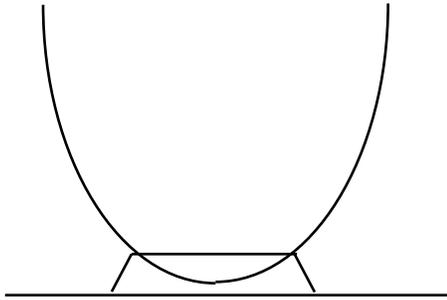
Hal Mahon put up one of his pieces for discussion. Nobody took issue with the proportions but we did feel that the overall form could be improved. Near the base, the form narrows gradually then makes a sudden turn towards the foot. It would be greatly improved by smoothing out (fairing) the curve from the largest diameter to the foot. Will showed a flexible plastic rule he uses for playing with curves. French curves are also useful for this.



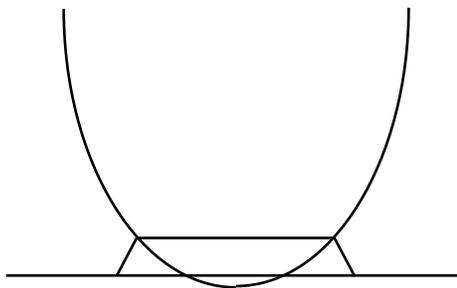
Not far into the discussion, Will made the point that it was important to keep purpose in mind. The design considerations for a functional salad bowl are quite different from those of a bowl designed to sit on a shelf and look elegant. The salad bowl needs a wide foot, or a wide base and no foot at all, to make it stable. The

elegant bowl will usually have a small foot to lift it off the surface it sits on. The salad bowl should have some heft to it so it doesn't feel like it might break if handled roughly. The elegant bowl should look and feel light and delicate. The rim of the salad bowl should be designed to make it easy to hold; there is no such constraint on the rim of the elegant bowl.

Someone mentioned Richard Raffan's suggestion that the foot and the curve of the bowl should be such that if you removed the foot and extended the curve, the bowl would sit on or just above the table, as in the first diagram.



The foot should not be so shallow relative to the curve that the bowl would be buried in the table as in the second diagram. Nobody had any strong opinions on the usefulness of this as a guide



although it does prevent a very wide, shallow foot (which is generally a Good Thing).

Somewhere along the way the question of thinness was raised. We concluded that this was largely a fad, often used to show the turner's mastery of the craft without adding anything to the aesthetics of the turning. Some artistic turning does depend on being very thin for its effect, but there are probably just as many artistic turnings that work only because the walls are very thick. Consistent thickness is generally more important than making a turning as thin as possible. From a purely practical viewpoint, inconsistent thickness increases the possibility of cracking. A thin rim leads a viewer to expect that the piece will be light: a thick, heavy base will be an unpleasant surprise when she or he picks up the turning. Even worse is a piece that is mostly quite thin but very thin in one spot: someone will inevitably put a light behind it. To really see how consistent a wall thickness you are achieving, Raffan recommends

running the occasional bowl through the bandsaw. I've done this a few times and it really is educational.

Somebody mentioned the work of Binh Pho during the discussion of thinness. We didn't take this up but my own opinion is that if we must have categories, Binh Pho better fits the traditional category of painter or sculptor. Forget the lathe, forget the wood, forget the high level of craftsmanship that enables Binh to produce those very thin, consistent vessels. All that is only preparing the canvas for the painting and piercing that is the whole point of the work. Binh has taken a step forward in using a canvas which is 3-dimensional while most painters still limit themselves to two dimensions. In conjunction with the piercing, this allows the viewer to look through the front surface of the work and see the inside of the back surface, an effect more often found in sculpture. Until very recently, all Binh Pho's work has been on thin turned wood but I think this should be considered equivalent to a painter choosing to work on canvas, or watercolour paper, or rough plywood, or aluminium – it's just a substrate chosen to complement the particular style of painting. In fact, in some recent work Binh has done away with the wood entirely. If anyone had been paying close attention, in the American Crafts magazine that Frank passed around there is an advert for the Function+Art Gallery in Chicago. It shows two forms of the same work by Binh Pho, one in wood and the other in cast glass.

At the end, the discussion went a little off-topic onto the subject of finishes. Will again noted that if you are producing for sale, you should produce what people want to buy. In the Northeast that means dark and shiny. Finishes that can give a high gloss include lacquers, urethane oil and pretty much any finish that builds a finish. Graeme was not keen on the amount of time it took to apply the multiple coats required and was frustrated by spending a lot of time sanding out all the scratches only to have swirls, brush marks and even runs appear in the finishing stage. Graeme's preference was for oils like tung oil and products like Formby's tung oil varnish which penetrate without leaving swirls or marks and give a much flatter finish. A high gloss can be achieved in most cases by buffing.

Club Poll Results

Here are the results of the club poll, recently conducted on the CNEW website. Even allowing for the fact that not all members have web access, the results were rather disappointing: only 14 members took the time to fill in the survey. Some members did not answer every question and some questions allowed multiple answers, which is why the total for each question is not always 14.

Q. Are there any CNEW members you would like to see do a demo?

A. Yes (2), No (1), Total: 3 votes.

Q. For club-demos this year what would you like to see most.

A. finials for boxes (10), hollow-forms (8), unusual materials (8), specialty tools – hook, coring, etc. (8), tool sharpening (6), segmented turning (6), natural edge bowls (4). Multiple-answer question.

Q. What do you think your skill level is?

A. Very basic (2), novice (3), intermediate (4), advanced (3), Total 12 votes, nobody classed themselves as non-turner or expert.

Q. Do you think you need help - or that a mentor can provide help?

A. I want help in some areas (2), mentors could help (5), mentors do help (3), mentors have not helped (0). Total 10 votes.

Q. How many BUSINESS MEETINGS did you “not like”?

A. Every one was good (2); A couple not good (2); Several left something to be desired (4). No votes for “50% aren’t worth it” or worse, but one vote for “I only come for the demo or wood swap”. Total 9 votes.

Q. How many of the meeting DEMO’s did you “not like”?

A. Every one was good (1); A couple not good (6); Several left something to be desired (1). No votes for “50% aren’t worth it” or worse. Total 8 votes.

Q. Would you be interested in having a panel discussion instead of a turning demo? If so, what topic(s)?

A. Yes (10), No (1), Total 11 votes.

Suggested topics: design (8), spalted wood (7), drying methods(7), pricing your work (6), another topic (2).

Multiple-answer question.

Q. What type of demonstrations are the most useful for you?

A: design (7), projects (6), standard tool use (6), use of uncommon tools (5), surface decoration (3), segmented turning (2). Multiple-answer question.

Q. Would you bring in something for an “Instant Gallery” if the items were critiqued?

A. Yes (9), No (0), Total 9 votes.

Q. How long should the demonstration section of the meeting be?

A. 90 minutes (6), 60 minutes (4), 30 minutes (2), Total 12 votes.

Q. Would you participate in a “club challenge”?

A. Yes (3), likely (8), very unlikely (3), Total 14 votes.

Q. Would you like to do a club demo this year?

A. Yes (2), maybe (1), maybe with help (1), no (2), Total 6 votes.



Frank White – Mountain Ash



Bill Leger – Padauk and Red Oak Bowl



Hal Mahon – Laminated form



Bill LeClerc – Maple/Walnut
Open Segmented Bowl

Show and Tell Photographs by Mike Stone

Graeme Young – Trio of
Oak Burl Bowls (Cored)



Rick Angus – Spalted Maple Bowl



Arnie Paye – Maple/Walnut Turned and Scroll Sawn



Paul Charbonneau – Spalted Maple Vessel



Joe Harbey – Red Cedar Bowl



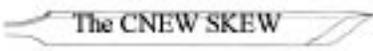
Bill LeClerc – Maple/Cherry Bowl



Frank White – Maple Burl/Walnut/
Ebony/Ivory Urn

Paul Charbonneau explaining his bowl-cutting
bandsaw jig

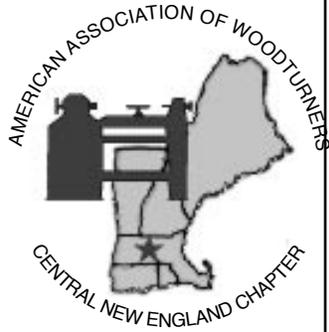




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*Central New England Woodturners
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On the web: www.cnew.org

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E-mail _____

If you wish, please let us know more about you and your interests.

Old member New member Turning how many years? _____

Selling your work? Yes No Where? _____

What programs would you like to see at our meetings?

Would you be interested in demonstrating at one of our meetings? Yes No