



As The Wood Turns Internet Version

December 2005



**CWTC Meeting 7 PM Second
Tuesday of each month**

**Location: Woodcraft
Supply Store, 1280
E. Dundee Rd,
Palatine IL
847-774-1186**

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Curls From the President's Platter
By Paul Shotola

“The material was pure, and his art was pure; how could the result have been other than wonderful?”

Is it not great to be able to quote Thoreau? I found this line in an essay on **Wharton Esherick**, a 1900's pioneer of wood craftsmanship. Esherick was a social renegade, a recluse, and a genuine “starving artist”. He had a true

connection to the natural world, and was inspired by nature, rural life and the simplicity of the Arts and Crafts philosophy in an era that celebrated the Industrial Revolution and the hustle and bustle of city life. A copy of Thoreau's "Walden" was on his nightstand. He was true to his vision, however, no matter how poorly his art sold during his lifetime.

As woodturners, is our material pure? It is the most organic of materials for both art and craft. No two pieces of wood are alike, even cut from the same log. The material can shape our direction, or it can be chosen to highlight our vision. Wood can be the finished surface and structure, or serve as a canvas for further treatment, such as carving, dye, paint, and an unlimited number of manipulations. Wood is dynamic and has apparent limitations, but careful use of the material can more than compensate for the challenges inherent in working with it.

The harder question to answer is: "Is our art pure?" What makes art "pure"? Is it originality, a fair curve, a balance between elements in the work? Is it the emotion that is raised in the viewer's mind? To my mind, when your own vision comes through, when your personality is on display in the finished work, there is purity in your art. That's when you tell your own story.

Ray Key calls the process "finding your own voice" and that is a challenge. It comes after the craftsmanship is attained. It comes after the study of the artists and mentors before you. It comes after your eye is trained to recognize fine form, balance, color and scale. But I believe it can and will come to you. Your inner vision is not like anyone else's, and if you let your "voice" out, your artistic goals will be achieved. Can the result be other than wonderful?

The next time you step up to the lathe, look for the purity of materials inherent in wood, let your own voice help you find purity in your design, and please turn safely.

For more information on Wharton Esherick, visit <http://www.levins.com/esh5.html>

Paul Shotola
Email address:

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Weekend Master Turner Demo Schedule

Curt Theobald
Demonstration, Saturday January 21

Jacques Vesery
Demonstration, February 25

Meeting Demonstrators 2005

January 2006
Threaded Lid Boxes — **Fran Islin**

February 2006
Turning Platters for February —
Dick Sing

One-day hands-on class

February 26

Eli Avisera

Demonstration, April 1

Two-day hands-on class

April 3-4

Trent Bosch

Demonstration, May 6

One-day hands-on class

May 7-8

Graeme Priddle

Demonstration, June 19-20

Possible **hands-on class**

Bonnie Klein

Demonstration, November 4

One-day hands-on class

November 6-7



Curt Theobald

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Stuck? Just Ask Yourself the Right Question

By Dave Forney

November, 2005

Don Derry is a Washington State woodturner who, some would assume, is obsessed with color. Certainly his brightly colored, shiny vessels, which are often mistaken for blown glass, could leave one with that impression. But after talking to Don and taking his class, one quickly finds out that form is just as important in Don's work.

Recently Don spent three days demonstrating for and leading a hands-on class for members of the Chicago Woodturners organization. During that period, he spent a lot of time talking about form and very little talking about color. Don readily admits that he knows very little about color theory. In fact, Don does not even demonstrate coloring techniques in his sessions. Aside from the health dangers of spraying solvents in an enclosed environment, Don allows that he simply doesn't have an easy to understand way to demonstrate what he does. In his work, he counts on an intrinsic knowledge about what looks good on his vessels. This is not something that translates well to the demonstration format.

While he will readily address the technical questions as to **How** he produces his work (what products he uses, etc), he highly recommends those interested in color to hire an art teacher to explain color theory. One would never suspect this based on the end result of his efforts.

Day 1 of the hands-on class was spent turning ‘form models’. Don asked the class of four to turn various forms from a mental template. Forms included a sphere, an egg, a pear, a preg (a form which, to most people, is recognized as pear-like even though it's more obvious features are far more egg-like in proportion; think avocado), a football, a Coke bottle, and a bowling pin. We all carry with us mental templates of these objects which are as individual as we are. As Don expected, we ended up with four variations of each. Was one variation better than the other? It all depends on your own perception and mental template. Don explained that there are certain features that make these objects what they are; the right curve, the frumpy bottom, tangential contact at only one point. Getting these features **right** can make a big difference in the form and our appreciation of it. In an effort to learn from each other, we spent a lot of time critiquing each other's forms. Throughout the day, Don would periodically gather us around one of the lathes and ask a question of the in-progress work; “Where is the high spot?” In our class, that opinion sometimes differed among the attendees. This goes back to our individual perception of the forms and is perfectly acceptable.

This idea of the high spot is foremost in Don's turning and teaching as it directly relates to good form. If a shape is not quite right but one is not sure why, asking this question often gets us going again. The answer tells us where to make the next cut and leads to a better shape. It can also make the difference between a good form and a great form.

Don was not always a wood turner. He spent time working in tooling and process design, as a cabinet maker, and even spent time playing the guitar in a rock band. In 1994, he saw the instant gallery at the American Association of Woodturner's Fort Collins, Colorado symposium and thinking “I can make that”, embarked on his first efforts in turning. Time spent as a production turner selling Christmas ornaments on the craft fair circuit influenced Don to make more arty pieces. What he had noticed at that first symposium was the lack of color in the instant gallery. He decided that use of color in his own work would set him apart from other turners. It did and not always in a positive way. Collectors were initially taken aback that color was being used to obscure the wood. Other woodturners who pioneered the use of color report a similar early reaction.

Day 2 of the hands-on was spent reviewing the form models from the day before and using Don's hollowing rig to make Christmas ornaments and hollow forms. The lessons learned with the models really helped with the shape and line of the hollow forms.

Don believes that turning needs to be intentioned. Turners have to have something in mind when they go in the shop. “Today I want to turn a...”. If there is no intention, often we get stuck and quit after only a few minutes. This is a shame since, for most of us, turning is such a joy and something we

look forward to doing.

Like with many subjects, practice is important. Don advocates turning only one shape for a period of time; both to work on form, but also to develop muscle memory. When it becomes easy to turn that form, move on to another form and turn only that one for a period of time. If you get stuck, always ask yourself “where is the high spot?”

Don agrees that there is always more than one solution to making a great form or resolving a curve. While Nature is a great source of inspiration and design, (Don picks up river rocks from a beach near his home and tries to capture the uniqueness of each stone, in wood, as his own form of practice), soliciting and accepting honest critique is another great way to improve our “eye”. A little shorter here, a little less curve there can greatly improve or degrade an object. Getting several opinions of our progress is an important tool to our growth as turners. Over time, this methodology will greatly increase our skill and enjoyment of the craft.

Lessons taken away from Don include; Have an intention when going into the shop, practice good form, ask yourself “where is the high spot?”. Oh, and hire an art teacher if you want to learn about color .

Dave Forney is a member of the Chicago Woodturners and the AAW. He has been turning for about 4 years.

Minutes of the Chicago Woodturners Club Meeting
November 8, 2005
By Paul Cavanagh

President Paul Shotola opened the meeting at 7:10 pm. The usual house and safety rules were described.

Paul Shotola announced that November is nominations month for the positions of President and Secretary. Both of the incumbents are willing to accept another term. There were no other nominations. The incumbents were therefore nominated and seconded.

Andy Kuby reported that our membership is at 208, six new members tonight. We had four visitors.

Thanks were expressed to the 12 volunteers that worked at SOFA. **Larry Heuvelman** worked about 72 hours! (Rumor has it that he slept under one of the lathes on all of the shavings.)

December meeting is the Holiday Party! No demo but lots of food; bring a dish to share. CWT provides the drinks!

The next guest demonstrator is **Curt Theobald** on 1/21/06. Come and see this precision turner and his segmented vessels.

The Woodcraft Turning Day has been moved to Nov 12 to accommodate CWT and SOFA. Come make some chips and new friends! Turn a Pen for the Troops: Woodcraft will provide the kit you provide the labor.

Paul Shotola stressed that the CWT will participate in the 2006 AAW Collaborative Challenge. We have Collaborative Coordinator! Dick Stone volunteered to lead CWT's entry for the 2006 AAW Challenge. See Dick with your ideas for a project and participate. It's a lot of fun.

The gallery was reviewed by **Gary Hubbard**. He had a nice collection of gallery items of various designs.

Tickets were only sold for a chance to win the chain-sawed bear from the CWT picnic. The bear will be awarded at the Holiday Party in December.

The demonstration was performed by **Pixie Eslinger**. She showed tools and techniques for carving on turned pieces. She stressed safety first because carelessness hurts or kills.

Clean-up Volunteers for December

Bob and Marie Hunter

Everybody Else

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