

Finishing, Texturing & Colouring

An AWGB sponsored workshop by George Foweraker & Mark Raby on 4th August 2012

By Robin Goodman



George Foweraker, an experienced professional woodturner, demonstrates texturing techniques

increased opportunities to see what others are doing around the world that can provide inspiration and sometimes guidance as well.

This workshop gave the 6 participants an insight into a surprisingly large range of techniques for enhancing turned pieces, in spite of the workshop only lasting one day. The partnership of the 2 instructors worked well.

George Foweraker, an experienced professional woodturner, took half the group for each half of the day to concentrate on texturing plus some colouring.

Hardly anyone in the country knows more about finishing and colouring wood than **Mark Raby**, who took the other three to demonstrate a variety of ways to colour one's work as well as how to improve finishing skills.

George took us through some of the wide variety of patterns that can be produced by a texturing/spiralling tool. There are plenty of variables to play with such as different wheels, angles of presentation, height of tool rest, speed of lathe and pressure on the tool. Experimentation is the name of the game. Various ways to delineate or frame textured areas were shown, since this frequently improves the overall appearance. Texturing often shows up better by colouring and George demonstrated this with diffuser applied spirit stains and by the application of gilt cream.

Use of a reciprocating power carver and rotary disc cutter/carver were also shown as a quick way to produce texture or patterns, irregular patterns being easier to produce than a uniform regular pattern and questionably appearing more artistic. Again by varying the angle of the disc and the speed of the lathe (can be stationary), different types of cut and patterns can be produced. George highlighted the safety issues with the use of some of these power tools.

Some woodturners prefer plain wood finishes, but sometimes their turning expertise is not matched by their finishing skills and the final finish does not do justice to their turned pieces. An increasing number are becoming interested in enhancing their pieces by changing the surface either with texture or colour or both; there is so much scope and variety in such decoration. This trend has been helped by special tools or use of existing tools in new ways, an increasing variety of types of paint/stains and different methods for applying or combining them. There are also



Finishing and colouring expert Mark Raby

Mark started with useful tips on sanding and finishing; often turners concentrate most on form and correct use of turning tools and do not give enough time or consideration to the finish, which is one of the aspects you notice first when viewing a piece. Even sanding appears a straightforward job, but one we can improve on and save time if we do it right e.g. do not miss out a grit, press too hard or generate too much heat.

Mark has demonstrated the use of spirit stains for many years and has been instrumental in bringing metallic stains to the market – a product most of us had not come across before. Choice of colours and ways of blending them together is very much up to the individual and a plus point is that normally the wood grain will still show through. Consideration has to be given to the order and blending of the colours and the type of sealer must be appropriate to the subsequent finish.



Some of us had previously tried using white liming wax on an open-grained piece with mixed success, but here we were given some extra tips for better success.

Coloured grain infill can also be effective, so either add colour to the white liming wax or choose a readymade one such as verdigris or black patinating wax.

There are many makes of acrylic paint suitable for wood, but Mark likes the range and vibrancy of Jo Sonja's paints, especially the iridescent and metallic ranges, which can produce stunning effects when used on a dark background. So many different effects and swirls can be produced, merely by experimenting with different types of applicator and these were strikingly demonstrated.



"I am sure that my first attemptcan be considerably improved upon...."

Because of the limited time to cover a lot of ground, the instructors had sensibly decided to limit the hands-on element of the course. However, we all did some colouring and decoration on the lathe using the radial splatter technique with opal dust and iridescent paints that can produce some wonderful results, although I am sure that my first attempt – see photo – can be considerably improved upon with practice and experimentation. We were all happy to take the results home with us. Even this trial was rather more pleasing than the basic spin art I had tried as a child.

Five of the six turners who attended are members of the club – Peter Oram, Bryan Probett, Kevin Daniels, Bryan Milham and myself – see group photo.

We all thanked George and Mark for a very instructive and stimulating day and took away many ideas to try out in our own workshops. There are so many possibilities for decoration of turnings. There is no right or wrong method, but experimentation with different types of paint/stains and different methods of application, together with possible modification after initial application, can lead to pleasant surprises as well as some that are only fit for the bin.
