

Wizardry in Wood Exhibition October 2012

By Robin Goodman

Every 4 years, this wonderful turning exhibition is put together by the Worshipful Company of Turners in the Carpenters Hall, London. It is the UK's only large exhibition dedicated to Contemporary and Historical woodturning.

Contemporary exhibition

Exhibitors included over 20 of the leading woodturners in the UK, many familiar, some less so. They were all manning their stands, so it was a great opportunity to chat to many of them.

Joey Richardson featured strongly in the publicity for the exhibition, partly no doubt because she was the recipient of a Turners' Company bursary award a few years ago, when she spent time under the tutelage of Binh Pho in America. Her characteristic style of pierced, coloured floral pieces - see photo 1 - is becoming instantly recognisable and she has recently obtained funding to develop the casting in glass of some of her turned pieces.



1

Margaret Garrard is also a past bursary winner; she spent time with Alain Mailand in France, having previously had tuition from Binh Pho. Her trademark beautiful pieces feature fine tracery created by piercing; photo 2 shows one of her less intricate works.



2



3

Nick Agar, patron of our Max Carey Woodturning Trust, is well known internationally, especially for his striking wall sculptures. A new piece in a slightly different style is shown in photo 3. A number of club members are being inspired this year by taking part in 2 day workshops at his base in Devon.

Stuart King, our November demonstrator, spends much of his time researching and recording rural crafts of the past and this influences his turned pieces, many of which are out of the ordinary. The centre of the main exhibition hall was dominated by

Stuart puffing away on his reconstruction of a 1480 lathe design by Leonardo da Vinci - photo 4. Unlike most very early lathes that used reciprocal motion, this treadle lathe used a large timber flywheel to produce a continuous cutting motion. However it requires a lot of effort to turn and medieval turners preferred to use versions of the pole lathe.



4



5

Carlyn Lindsay, who went to art college, has specialised in laminating and produces very attractive pieces. Typically she uses several different coloured veneers sandwiched in various directions between sections of sycamore - photo 5. Together with several of the other exhibitors, she was demonstrating at the Strictly Woodturning event in Axminster this month.



Other turners included : **Stuart Mortimer** with his characteristic spiralled vessels. **Rosemary Wright**, who included a series of simple yet effective collage panels such as the one in photo 6.



6

Peter Archer specialises in fine crafted vessels and bowls that are coloured and carved – photo 7 (above).

Bob Chapman included his best known ‘Night at the Opera’ piece that was inspired by the shape of the opera house in Tenerife and was featured in the Woodturner magazine last year – photo 8.



8

Mark Sanger who is known to interesting pieces e.g. as photo 9.



9

many club members, exhibited some of his

Historical Exhibits

- a. Numerous items from the **Mary Rose** in 1545 were on show, varying from turned bowls for eating to turned wooden pulleys and dagger handles.
- b. The **Holtzapffel Collection** – Between 1794 and 1913, The Holtzapffel family business in London produced thousands of lathes, the majority of which were suitable for ornamental turning. Although the lathe on show was well over 100 years old, the tailstock, tool rest and bed bars looked remarkably similar to those on modern day lathes. Numerous historical items were on show, including the small ivory item shown in photo 10.



10

- c. Private Collection of **Theo Faberge** – Theo, who was born in London in 1922, was descended from Russian jeweller of Faberge egg fame. He restored a Holtzapffel lathe and produced many fine items.
- d. **Bert Marsh** Retrospective – In memory of his death last year, there was a display of many of his turned items.
- e. Sumptuous thrones made for the royal barge in the Jubilee Pageant on the Thames. These included **special finials** with spiral fluting and rope twists around the rim that were made in oak by **Stuart Mortimer**.

Competitions

The company also runs several competitions biennially. Entries from these competitions were on display. **Andy Mason** seems to have been the only ABWT member to enter these competitions, but he came up trumps and is to be warmly congratulated for winning first prize in two of the main categories – the Felix Levy Freestyle turning competition and the Plain Turning competition for AWGB members only. The first winning ‘Anemone’ bowl was pictured and described in the March edition of Turnings. The second ‘Spirax’ bowl with skewed spiralled fluting, see front cover, is another beautifully crafted piece that involved many painstaking hours of precise hand carving after the initial turning on the lathe. A master craftsman at work, or should I say Master Mason!



Conclusion

An excellent exhibition of a great variety of beautifully turned pieces, both new and old and a great chance to speak to many of our top turners. It was particularly noticeable that the majority of the leading turners taking part are now using some form of carving, piercing, texturing or colouring to enhance their works and also an increasing number have some form of art background, such as art college. The Bert Marsh exhibition alongside, provided the contrast of a turner, who very rarely used any form of decoration, but relied purely on form. This also applies to Ray Key, who was participating in the main exhibition. This was a very rewarding event and well worth the trip to London for those club members who made the journey. It is just a pity that we will have to wait 4 years until the next one.
