

Woodturners Worldwide Virtual Symposium January 2022



By Robin Goodman

Following their successful initial online symposium in 2020 – see my article in November 2020 Turnings – a second one took place for 4 days in January 2022. This time Mathew Deighton was assisted by Stephen Stokes, Phil Irons and Carl Burns from the UK. Nearly 40 demos spread over 4 days were given by turners from 9 countries, some familiar some completely new. In addition, there were separate discussion groups on various subjects.

Timings were generally set to be more convenient for those in USA time zones, so that in the UK the demos ran on until 2am. However, this did not matter, since all the 1½ hour demos and additional ½ hour Q&A sessions were made available for 30 days. For my convenience I did not watch a single demo live; only for one discussion on resins did I participate live. A big advantage of this is that one can fast forward demos at any stage when viewing the recordings and can decide how much to watch if any. I watched only the ones that I thought would be more interesting for me.

Here, I can only give a flavour of a few of the demos that I watched, mainly involving texturing and finishing:

Andrew Daniels has been turning and sculpting in Australia for 10 years; for his demo he showed the tools and techniques he used to create two of his pieces, which both had significant texturing. Jacaranda is a relatively soft Australian timber, so is easy and quick to work with, when creating texturing with a variety of shapes of burrs and carbide bits. For some of the coarser texturing he also uses a small angle grinder. He likes to use white paint on his textured surfaces, but it does mean that side lighting is required to show off the detail in the texturing. (Images 1-4).





Image 3



Image 4

Benoît Averly lives and works in Burgundy, France,



Image 6

but is well known throughout the world in woodturning circles. Some of us have seen him



Image 5

demonstrate live, especially turning his earlier signature tapered lid boxes. He now concentrates on surface texture and many of his pieces are flat murals rather than turned pieces, (Image 5). He uses subtle contrasts with lines and textures often inspired by nature, (Images 6 & 7). Correct

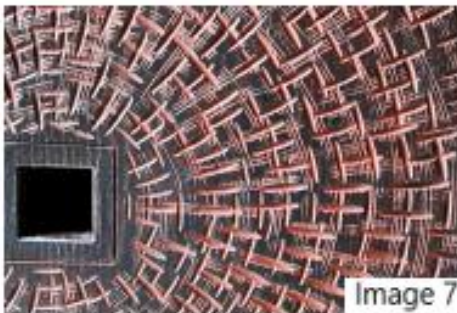


Image 7

lighting is crucial for most of his pieces, usually side lighting to show up the texture, which may appear slightly bland with front lighting only. He uses a very wide range of



Image 8

drills, grinders, burrs and bits, (Image 8).

Elizabeth Weber is a teacher from Seattle. She has always loved wooden objects and looks for



Image 9

ways to add vibrancy and movement to the things she creates, using colours, textures and shapes. She showed how she creates her wave/leaf motif on turned pieces,(Image 9).

She used to suffer hand pain from using Dremel type hand pieces, but for power

carving now finds a micromotor so much better - quieter, lighter and easy for changing bits. She draws the leaf pattern on the wood in pencil, then starts with Saburr tooth bits; coarser green ball then finer yellow one, followed by carbide bits. However, she also uses hand carving chisels, before tidying up with small carbide burrs, sometimes texturing within the leaf outline. For colouring she likes to use milk paints, (Image 10).



Image 10

Scott Grove from USA is an artist, sculptor and designer, who also turns. Veneers and inlays are two of his special interests.

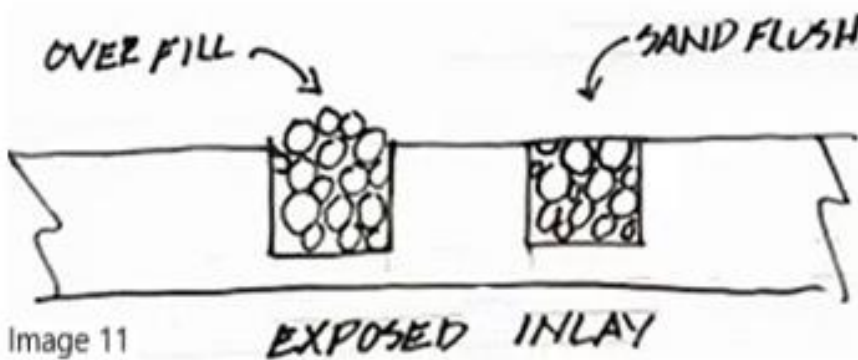


Image 11

For his demo he concentrated on insitu inlays, where crushed materials are set in resin or CA glue within a groove or crack. With an 'exposed' inlay, (Image 11), the inlay fragments are cast slightly

proud of the wood, then sanded down flush, so that the material shows through at the surface on completion. In contrast, with an 'encapsulated' inlay, (Image 12), the filler/binder material is kept below the final surface, so that the finished surface is only resin or CA glue that may

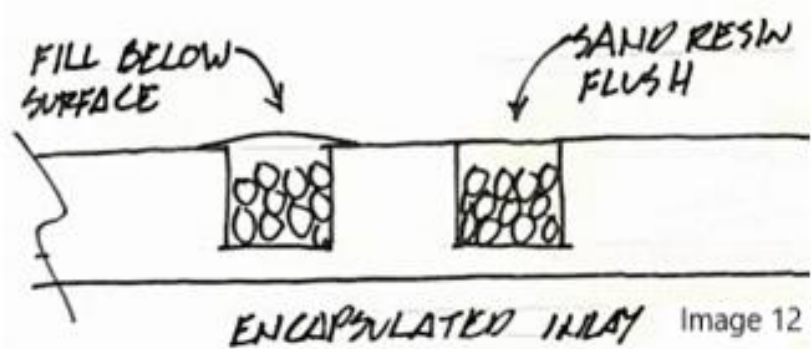


Image 12



Image 13

have been sanded down or left as a dome or meniscus, (Image 13).

Cracks in a turned piece can be disguised by filling with CA glue and matching sawdust, as shown by Michael McCrae Steele at his February club demo. For a large crack, it may be best to part fill first, after applying a sanding sealer. Alternatively, the cracks can be made a

feature by using coloured material and fillers instead. The method is generally the same whether a crack or a deliberate groove.

Many different materials as fillers can be used. Popular are crushed coral, turquoise, paua shell, abalone and opal; these are most convenient if bought already crushed, (Images 14 & 15), but you can crush your own. Some of these materials can also be bought as a veneer or band. Metal powders as an



Image 14



Image 15

alternative are readily available to buy. The hardness of the filler relative to the wood needs to be born in mind if it is to be left exposed. If the hardness (defined on a Mohs scale) is much less or greater than that of the wood, it may be difficult to sand to a smooth uniform finish.

You will undoubtedly have CA glue in your workshop, but if you are using finely ground stone or powders then it needs to be the thin, preferably very thin version. Tip: don't store CA glue, which is activated by moisture, in fridge after opening. Air inside will condense moisture when cooled and drop into the glue. OK in fridge before opening. To last longer, seal in a container with dessicant for storage.

Clear resin is often best for the binder. Fast 5 minute epoxy is not so good for a finished surface as it tends to be softer and does not polish up so well as the normal grade, but can be useful for a first layer on infilling. Epoxy comes in different grades; for inlays the coating version is best, rather than the deep type. They should all be mixed in accurate proportions, whether by weight of volume. UV resin, such as 'Solarez', can be used for a very rapid set, but needs a special UV torch, unless strong sunlight is available.

For vertical surfaces or rings it may be easier to use a ready made band inlay or veneer, which can be bought in different widths or cut from a larger piece, (Image 16) Unless provided with self adhesive backing, this still needs to be glued in place and you may need to continue slow rotation on the lathe while the glue or thick clear coating achieves an initial set. A surface coating of resin or CA may be needed if further sanding is required.



Image 16

CA and epoxy can be turned down with light gouge cuts, scrapers or carbide tips, before

sanding up to 600 grit with normal abrasive. Micromesh pads are ideal for much finer grits up to say 12,000. Burnishing cream also works fine to obtain a glossy final finish and a buffing wheel kit can also be used.

Kirsty Dalton is an artist and designer, who likes to turn and carve wood in her native Scotland, where she runs her business Primitive Woodland Line. She demonstrated some wood finishing techniques. Starting by demonstrating pyrography, she moved on to the use of waxes.

Rub'n Buff metallic waxes are one her favourites, with at least 2



Image 18

coats applied with a sponge to a very smooth wood surface and then thoroughly

buffed up without any finish on top. She finds it so much easier and uniform than using silver or gold leaf, (Image 17). She also likes to use Chestnut iridescent and metallic paints, slowly building up different colours, starting with the light colours, (Image 18).



Image 17

Derek Weidman lives in Pennsylvania and has been producing some amazing multi-axis turnings for nearly 15 years. The lathe is used as a carving machine, with a series of arc cuts on many different axes to create unusual sculptural pieces that are often representative of nature such as animals or animal heads, (Images 19-21). He has built up a vocabulary of shapes and cuts that can produce such a variety of shapes and effects.



Image 20

This demo of making a multi-axis dragon head was filmed over 6 hours, then edited down to the allotted 1½ hours, but he commented on it live. He started with a log about 500mm long by



Image 19



Image 21

250 mm diameter, which would exert large forces when out of balance, so he emphasised the safety aspects such as : lathe bolted to floor, using cup centres both ends, ensuring tailstock very

tight and the use of a full face shield. To provide a visual check that no sliding of the tailstock has occurred, he likes to use some sawdust thrown on to the lathe bed at front of tailstock; a piece of tape stuck to the lathe bed could also be used. Any slight movement of the tailstock is then visible and could lead to the piece dangerously spinning off.

Sometimes he carves parts out of the blank with a chainsaw before he starts turning. Most of the time the piece is significantly out of balance, so speeds are low and most cuts intermittent or 'interrupted'. Often there is a ghost image showing both the profile along the top and the different shape along the bottom. He cuts using the bottom wing of the gouge, but not a bevel rubbing cut.

Because he has been doing this type of work for many years, he can now visualise the effect of the arc cuts as he continually moves the work to different centres. Even if sketched out beforehand, beginners will find it extremely difficult to work out what cuts are required on all the different centres to achieve a shape.

He likes to use light coloured woods and finishes them using a burning torch; restricting the blackening to only parts of a piece, (Images 22 & 23). He may do some extra carving with a rotary carving to add detail and may add colour as well.



Image 22



Image 23

There were many other demos, some by familiar names such as Phil Irons, Pat Carroll and Gary Lowe, some unfamiliar such as Jan Hovens, Cheryl Lewis and Kirk DeHir, covering a wide range of turning techniques and pieces. All in all, there was something for everybody and it was well worth signing up for the Symposium.