



Woodturning Today: A Dramatic Evolution: Celebrating The American Association of Woodturners 25th Anniversary 1986-2011

By John Kelsey

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Woodturning Today: A Dramatic Evolution celebrates the 25th anniversary of the American Association of Woodturners (AAW), an organization that connects woodturners worldwide through the sharing of inspiration and techniques. This silver anniversary book project records the captivating history of the AAW and recounts the role the organization and its members have played in the evolution of woodturning to a highly respected art form; the tremendous growth as an amateur activity; and the stature of woodturning in the context of American and international craft and culture. With personal stories by diverse voices and stunning photographs that capture the beauty of turned art, the enthusiasm of woodturners, and the camaraderie of turning events, Woodturning Today is an informative and inspiring perspective of the past 25 years.

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Editorial Review

Review

One of the page titles in this book refers to 'artistic woodturning'. It is a convenient, though perhaps not entirely accurate, distinction to make between the craft as it was practised from antiquity through to the 1960's and 70's and woodturning as we know it today. Although essentially a history, viewing this book as belonging only within the narrow confines decreed by this description, does it a serious disservice. It is also an exploration of modern woodturning and an exposition of the work of many of the craftsmen and women who have been at the forefront of its development, principally in the USA. We have no way of knowing how many thousands of years have passed since a crude lathe was used to produce the world's first turned piece of wood. We do know, however, that with the exception of a few remarkable diversions such as the ornamental turning of Holtzaphel, woodturning remained much the same over most of that period. It was the confluence of ideas, technology, social and economic factors in the decades after World War II that brought about the extraordinary changes that we have witnessed since 1985. It was in that year the American Association of Woodturners was established and it is the history of this organisation that is the primary focus of *Woodturning Today*. (It is, of course, significant that *The Australian Woodworker* was first published in 1985 and that in its early years, the editorial frequently addressed woodturning and its development in Australia.) The organisation of the content in *Woodturning Today* is both unusual and interesting. The first half of the book is built around a timeline from 1960 to 2010. There are essays by former presidents and board members of the Association, photos of the work being produced at intervals throughout the period and there are personal stories from woodturners, presented in sections called Voices. The interweaving of the various threads makes an absorbing narrative. The second half of the book begins with *Woodturning since 1985*, or to use the name given this study: *Woodturning in the Era of the American Association of Woodturners: 1986-2010*. This is followed by consideration of woodturning today when the AAW boasts 13000 members organised into more than 300 chapters. Examples of work produced in this period, continue to illustrate the text and the Voices also continue to provide a personal view of the trends that built the craft and the Association. The book ends with some notes on future directions and the personal reflections of more than 20 woodturners, some famous, some not, who experienced first hand, at least part of the movement that has led to the craft as it is now. This is a book for anyone who has an interest in woodturning. Although centred on the growth of the American Association of Woodturners, it provides a wealth of subsidiary information to give woodturners of today an overview of the trends that have shaped their craft and an indication of their place in history.

From the Back Cover

Discover the Beauty of Wood Shaped by the Hands of a Community When it comes to the many traditional methods of working with wood, there's something very special about woodturning. Woodturning is easy to learn and quick to accomplish; with a few tools, limited practice, and a small amount of space, anyone can unlock the beauty of wood in the time it takes to prepare a meal. Woodturning is not discriminating; when it comes to wood, any chunk will do, including whatever is on your firewood pile. Best of all, woodturning is an endlessly fulfilling and rewarding craft because it is truly a personal expression of form and style: not only is every piece of wood unique, but every woodturner seems to invent his or her own distinctive approach to working with it. And though the basics are not difficult to learn, mastery is an absorbing pursuit that can take a lifetime. Like the craft it supports, the American Association of Woodturners (AAW) is a truly unique organization. Fueled by a commitment to build a community of shared ideas, techniques, and passion, the AAW has played a crucial role in the development of contemporary woodturning and wood art. With a bimonthly journal, *American Woodturner*, regular meetings at 300-plus local chapters, and an

amazing annual symposium attracting thousands, the AAW's spirit of sharing runs through everything it has done during its 25-year history. And it largely explains the organization's phenomenal growth since its founding in 1986 to more than 14,000 members today. *Woodturning Today: A Dramatic Evolution* chronicles the impressive growth of the woodturning field, and the development of the AAW within it. This unique perspective celebrates the connection between the two and the role this premier woodturning organization has played in making woodturning a highly respected art form.

About the Author

John Kelsey is a journalist, an editor, and a writer who specializes in woodworking and furniture making. He is a former editor in chief for *Fine Woodworking* magazine, editorial director for Fox Chapel Publishing, and the author of several woodworking books, including *Furniture Projects for the Deck and Lawn* and *Kid Crafts: Woodworking*.

Users Review

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