

From SOFA to Lathe

Top Gallery Show Offers Many Fields Of Inspiration

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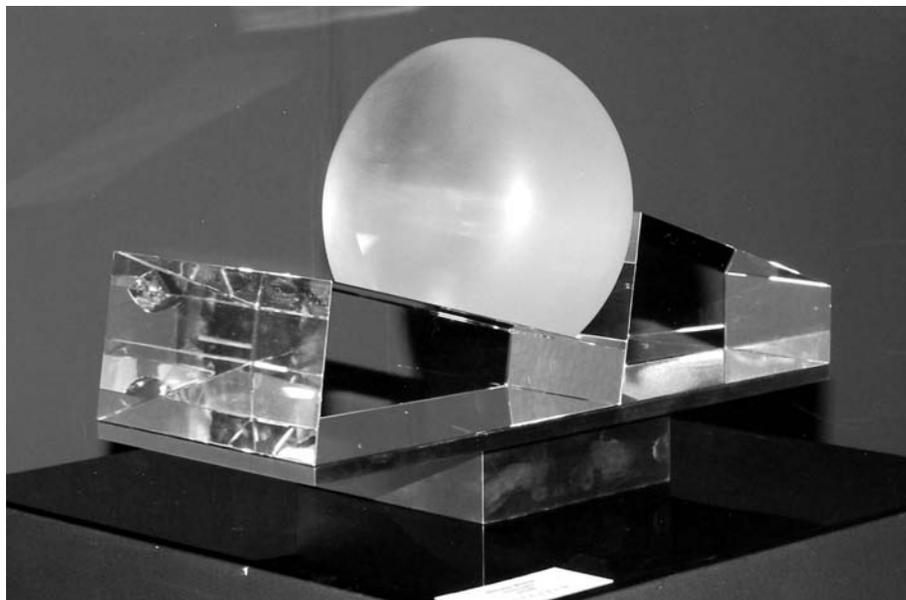
AS A TURNER, I RECENTLY found it enlightening to browse through a large gallery show without, believe it or not, being solely focused on the woodturning being displayed. At first, this seemed a little strange, since turning has been such a large part of my life in recent years.

But the more I thought about it, the more it seemed a perfectly logical part of my development as a turner.

Within the last several years, woodturning has undergone a major transformation, which blurs the distinctions between it and works composed in other media, such as glass, metal, clay and porcelain.

The thirst for new inspiration is contagious among all artists, and I bet I was not alone in my fascination with ideas developed in other media presented at SOFA (Sculpture Objects, Functional Art) Exhibition at Chicago's Navy Pier last Fall.

The annual exhibit included the very best of the top galleries presenting the works of their internationally acclaimed artists.



Nary a trace of wood in wood, but the angles, planes, sphere and other forms are familiar to any artist or craftsperson. And the design possibilities for turners abound. This glass piece called "Natural Bridge" was created by David Dowler. All photos in this article by Binh Pho.

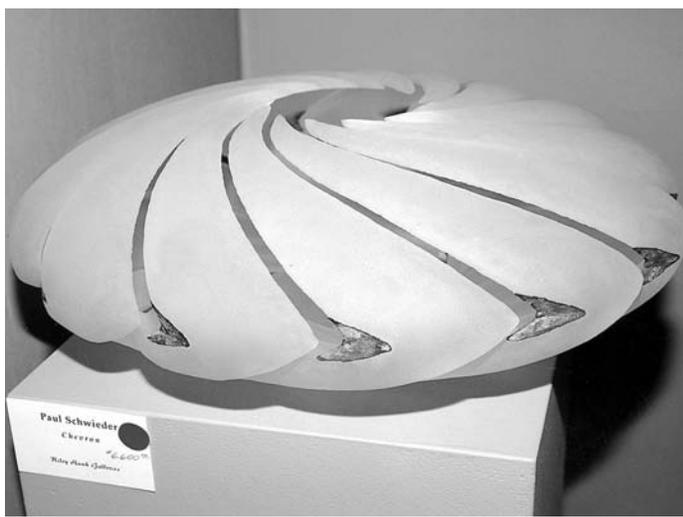
The exposition at SOFA proved an excellent opportunity to explore possibilities -- to push the envelope in terms of forms, color, shape, textures, finishes, humor and all sorts of other

ideas. All those touches that enter turners minds every time they go to the lathe.

In fact if I found someone with the the turner's equivalent of writer's



Stuart Barustein's glass work employed forms familiar to turners, which were embellished with color and texture.



Paul Schwieder's glass pieces reminded the author of the work of California turner Bill Hunter.



“Nucleus,” above left, a sculptured bronze piece by Mark Stasz could be wood, but regardless of material it offers material for thought. Turners will feel right at home in Guy Michaels’ booth, above right; he turns alabaster.

block and can’t seem to get anything done, I’d recommend spending a little time in a visual feast like this.

Familiar names like Dale Chihuly, Dan Dailey, and Wendell Castle were represented. Also, a large number of our top turners were represented

through del Mano gallery almost from A to Z, from Ray Allen to Hans Weissflog. Here also were works from the Hand & Spirit Gallery by both Phil and Ed Moulthrop and Bert Marsh, from Gael Montgomerie at the Compendium gallery, and Dan

Kvitka and Guy Michaels (who turns alabaster) at the William Zimmer gallery .

At the Mariposa gallery, Steve Madsen’s pieces were displayed. In one piece, he has created a life-sized valet, coat rack and mannequin, interestingly put together with color dyed and turned maple parts.

Several works by Riley Hawk gallery’s glass artists were truly eye catching. Of particular interest to me was the way in which Paul Schwieder’s glass vessels work reminded me of the work of woodturner William Hunter, out of California. His vessels of blown glass incorporate a lot of negative space, and are further carved and etched with acid.

Lino Tagliapietra , a master in crystal, was also represented by Riley Hawk. His tall, richly colored and sinuous forms reminded me of woodturner Michael Hosaluk. His



The del Mano Gallery featured many turnings, as well as objects created in other media.

explorations of form, lots of color, surface texture, and what appeared to be cut and paste techniques were stimulating.

Crystal, stunning and delicate

Tagliapietra also had a crystal piece displayed, entitled "Eve," a transparently delicate vessel that appeared to have a leaf form and stem materializing from the crystal. I also spoke with another master in crystal, David Dowler. His two pieces, "Ozone" and "Natural Bridge" were displayed by Steuben Glass gallery. The crystal pieces are absolutely stunning, and, of particular interest to me. It occurred to me that a similar look can also be achieved in wood.

Stuart Barustein's work, shown on Page 25, and displayed by Urban Glass, also caught my eye. It appears that he shaped three different layers of glass into a bowl, and then drilled dimples in the inside so the different colors would show through.

The metal pieces I saw resembled woodturning the most. The color and form of Carol Warner's piece entitled "Bridge I," shown below and displayed by SNAG Metal Work gallery is very similar to woodturning. I also saw other pieces that displayed a lot

The 10 Adopted Rules of Thumb - Wendell Castle:

1. If you are in love with an idea you are no judge of its beauty or value.
2. It is difficult to see the whole picture when you are inside the frame.
3. After learning the tricks of the trade, don't think you know the trade.
4. We hear and apprehend what we already know
5. The dog that stays on the porch will find no bones.
6. Never state a problem in the same terms it was brought to you.
7. If it is offbeat or surprising, it's probably useful.
8. If you do not expect the unexpected, you will not find it.
9. Don't get too serious.
10. If you hit the bulls eye every time, the target is too near.

These rules by renowned furniture maker and designer Wendell Castle were among the materials distributed at SOFA. The author passes them along "just for fun." And, for inspiration.

of very intricate surface work including turned copper, beads and paint.

Mark Stasz' piece entitled "Nucleus," shown on the previous page, is actually sculpted bronze, but it resembles woodturning, and suggested

a lot of design possibilities.

It seemed that no matter where I looked I found objects that were stimulating in themselves, but also crossed over into the kind I'd like to do in my woodshop: pieces in porcelain offered a lot of designs that reminded me of Frank Sudol's work.

Several porcelain pieces reminded me of the power of line and the feeling of motion that can be created with diagonals, waves and other simple, well-thought out elements.

I left the show with a zillion ideas for my future woodturning projects and I felt like I just had a seven course dinner for my mind.

It was a good thing I had to write this article, because I was sorting out ideas on my way home. Hopefully this article give you some food for thought for your next turning.

Binh Pho is a turner and teacher in Maple Park, IL.



Carol Warner's piece "Bridge I" showed how closely metal pieces can resemble wood and stimulate designs in wood.