Ornamental Turners International Meets in San Jose, CA

by Albert and Tina LeCoff

The Ornamental Turning International (OTI) organization passionately focuses on the art, machinery and tools utilized in ornamental turning (www.ornamentalturners.org)

The OTI meets every two years and attracts US and international turners of renown. The meetings provide stellar opportunities to get updated on this ancient and contemporary specialty and to catch up with veteran and new ornamental turners. The September 2010 OTI meeting in San Jose, CA welcomed 80 turners plus 22 guests/spouses and this made it a friendly, informative update on the OT niche. A number of the ornamental turners also are "plain" turners – Dewey Garrett, Bonnie Klein. This year's OTI meeting also attracted three turners from England and one from New Zealand.

Throughout the three day meeting, participants were stimulated by the informal gallery of classic and contemporary work executed by veteran and newly "infected" ornamental turners, displays of tools and machines, and publications and antiques associated with OT. Sessions included materials, cutting tools, sharpening, maintenance of cutting frames, work made with oval chucks, overviews on the work of Joshua Salesin, Jon Sauer and George Baumgartl. A highlight of the sessions was a precedent-setting review of how volunteer ornamental turners helped the London Science Museum catalogue its OT objects and machines during this past year. Kudos to President Steve White and local master OT turner Jon Sauer for their organization of a very memorable OTI weekend.

The OTI also presents awards of excellence. This year's included (Images below):

- OTI Masters Cup to Joshua Salesin for Pagoda
- OTI Straight Line Cup to Robert Sakauye
- OTI Rose Cup to Robert Sakauye
- newly established OTI Friendship Cup to Bill Ooms
  (acknowledges excellent work by an OT who has worked five years or less in the field)

Interestingly, Bill is among those who have developed computer-assisted ornamental lathes (i.e. Dewey Garrett), somewhat of a recent trend in OT. Of particular note - all three winners personify the OTI's efforts to interest younger makers in the art of OT.

At the meeting, Albert was pleased to announce an extraordinary recent gift to the Wood Turning Center's museum collection. Walter Balliet of New Jersey has just donated over 175 ornamental turned objects from his private collection to the Center. Included are objects by the late Frank Knox and the late Dale Chase, as well as many objects made on Walter's homemade, Holtzapffel inspired ornamental lathe with Rose Engine attachments. See more details about this donation in this issue of Turning Points, Focus on the Collection.

The OTI fundraising auction was tempting and fun. The Wood Turning Center's board of trustees thanks the OTI for their spontaneous donation of the proceeds of the auction to support the Center's ongoing programs and relocation to a busier site to the heart of Old City Philadelphia. The Wood Turning Center and curators has organized OT exhibitions in the past (Rose Engines and Kings, curator Jon Sauer) and we will continue to, based on the creative, gorgeous work being made.

The OTI donation was inspired by the announcement that the Center has a new $ 20,000 challenge grant from an OT artist and long time supporter. When we raise $ 20,000, the donor will match it with $ 20,000. SO - the OTI donation will be doubled. Donations will help the Center plan for the future display of the Balliet Collection and include OT among other future exhibitions. You can donate to the new challenge through PayPal on our secure web site: www.woodturningcenter.org or mail your check to: Wood Turning Center, Attn: Challenge Grant.

The OTI meets in 2012 in Scranton, PA (2 hours north of Philadelphia). You can be sure that the Center will plan special OT events at the Center for OTI participants!

Winner of the OTI Master Cup
Joshua Salesin
Pagoda Box, 2010
11 H x 4 W
African Blackwood, European Boxwood

The Pagoda Box features five separate boxes from the combination of 21 different parts, all hand turned using an ornamental lathe and rose engine lathe. The form was inspired by the Ruiguang pagoda, the earliest Buddhist temple in Suzhou built in the year 247.

Winner of the OTI Straight Line Cup
Robert Sakauye
*Needle Case***,** 2010
Fine Silver
3" long X 3/8" wide

The needle case was made from three 1 1/2 inch discs of fine silver pressed from a 24 gauge sheet with a disc cutter. These three discs were pressed through custom dies and punches with a Bonny Doon press. It required a sequence of 9 different punches and dies to reach the final size for the top and bottom of the needle case and 10 different punches and dies to reach the final size of the inner tube. The three seamless tubes produced had a final thickness of 26 gauge. Each tube was parted off to a final length and sanded to fit using a metal lathe.

The tubes were patterned using a technique called engine turning. The top and bottom tubes were mounted on a custom pencil chuck attached to a Wilh Stahl straight line. The Wilh Stahl straight line was produced in Pforzheim, Germany from around the 1930s to the 1950s. The pencil chuck rotates the needle case so that 120 equally spaced cuts can be made. The zig-zag lines are transferred for each cut when a spring loaded touch rubs against a pattern bar. A fixed tool cutter in the tool slide is pushed into the piece as the hand crank is turned to move the piece up and down in a vertical motion. The wave pattern is produced by a auxiliary worm that shifts the touch on the pattern bar with each successive cut. A sequence movement of 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,10,9,8,8,7,6,5,4,3,2,1 units and back in the reverse direction produces a wave like pattern.

Winner of the OTI Rose Engine Cup
Robert Sakauye
*Top Box***,** 2010
African blackwood, turkish boxwood
2.25” Diam x 2.75” H

Winner of the OTI Friendship Cup
Bill Ooms
Egg Cup, September, 2010
African blackwood, red mallee burl
4.8" High x 1.9" Diameter

The egg is made from Red Mallee Burl and is free to be removed. The lid is screw-on.

Equipment used: Home-made ornamental lathe (computer controlled). The computer moves the cutter and spindle to imitate the rocking and pumping of a traditional rose engine.

Artist Statement: I'm fascinated by spiral designs. The pattern on the top/bottom of the egg cup has spiral facets arranged to go quickly in one direction, and more slowly in the other direction. The stem also has a spiral design which blends into the cup. The shape of all the pieces is turned by hand on a traditional lathe, then the ornamentation is done to conform to the hand-turned shape.


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