



Central Connecticut Woodturners

A Chapter of the American Association of Woodturning

Dedicated to the Advancement of Woodturning

www.ccwoodturners.org

March 2007 Issue

President's Notes:

I recently received a telephone call from Mark Lefebvre, CCW Webmaster, about the opportunity for the CCW to get a Walnut tree. This is a good size tree and could have some interesting wood in it. The tree is located on property that is not accessible until the snow stops and the ground has a chance to dry. So with the recent snow storm and the melting, that hopefully will occur, it may be awhile before the CCW club members have a chance to harvest the Walnut Tree. Mark will keep us up to date and notify the Club when the harvest can happen. There will be a sign-up sheet at the next meeting for members who want to help collect this tree.



Club members, Al D'Aantonio & Ken Langworthy, display their work at the January meeting.

THE RUBBERWOOD HAS ARRIVED

The CCW has purchased 30 turning squares of Rubberwood (*Hevea Brasiliensis*) for our 2007 club challenge. The squares are 3x3x20 inches. The cost is \$5 per square (limit one per member) but you get your \$5 back if you turn something from the rubberwood and enter it into our competition at the November meeting.

Rubberwood is considered eco-friendly as the trees are re-planted right after they are harvested. Our rubberwood came from rubber plantations in Malaysia. After 15 to 20 years a rubber tree fails to yield much latex and then the trees are harvested for their timber and replanted. The wood has excellent working properties.

See Albert D'Antonio at the February or March meeting and \$5 gets you a piece of rubberwood. First come, first served basis.

Next Meeting:

**Tuesday,
March 27, 2007**

@

**Connecticut Valley
School of
Woodworking**

249 Spencer Street
Manchester, CT 06040

**Demo Topic:
Sharpening Tools**

Club dues are due at the January meeting.

(It's now March)

If your dues are not paid in full by April you will be dropped from the active member list and this will be your last newsletter.

Annual Dues: \$35.00

Contact: Alan Moltz,
CCW Treasurer.

Thanks!

April Meeting:

April 24, 2007

Jim Kephart's Shop

Topic TBD

Turning Wooden Bowls Into Whirls Of Color

Storrs Artist Jazzes Up His Creations With Air-Brushed Dyes And Acrylics

By DEBORAH HORNBLOW, March 2, 2007 "[Hartford Courant](#)"

Michael Allison is a wood-turner, a guy who hauls a block of wood onto a lathe and then, through the steady application of muscle, patience and will, turns it into something artful - a bowl, a vase, a platter or something more whimsical.

But Allison doesn't stop there. "I'm one of those unconventional wood-turning guys. I don't just turn wood and polish it," he says.

Five to six years ago, Allison began coloring his creations, using the air-brushed dyes and acrylics familiar to him from his former career as a maker of musical instruments. Now his wooden bowls come in the racy hues more readily found on electric guitars.



The decision to incorporate eye-popping color into his creations "was at one time both radical and controversial in the wood-turning world," says Allison, but the technique seems to be gaining acceptance and attention. Allison is the subject of a story in the Spring 2007 issue of *American Woodturner* journal, and a sampling of his work is featured on the cover under the heading "Show Your Colors." The home page of the American Association of Woodturners recently showed a dyed vessel by another artist, Bruce Forrest.

Allison initially began coloring his works as a means of differentiating them from what he calls the "round and brown" trade standard. "Everybody does that," he says. "There are 12,000 members of the American Association of Woodturners," Allison says, stressing the word thousand. Weed out the banister- and chair rail-makers, and standing out is still difficult.

"The color thing, that's what sets me apart," Allison says, speaking in the living room of the Storrs home he shares with his wife and children, the shelves and mantel lined with variations of his work - from early all natural wood pieces to his increasingly daring painted ones.

Allison began his color experiments gingerly and characterizes his first efforts as "very hesitant and conservative." In fall 2001, at the Fine Furnishings and Fine Crafts shows in Providence, he says, "I showed a simple open maple bowl, red on the outside, natural inside, low-key, somewhat boring and certainly non-threatening."

It was there that Allison's color began turning heads. "Some designer types at the show were encouraging," he says. "I did a bit more and sold some things in summer 2002."

Juries for some of the competitive craft shows also took note, and Allison was awarded exhibition space at a few of them. "You wouldn't believe how competitive it is," he says.

Allison crafts all of his pieces in the handsomely equipped basement studio of his home. One room contains a professional-grade lathe, the pony-size machine that holds blocks of wood and turns them steadily. Another larger room is lined with neat shelves of tools, dyes and other equipment.

Much of the wood Allison uses comes from foraging expeditions. "You don't want to go driving with me," he says, noting his penchant for frequent stops at the sight of promising specimens. Neighbors and friends also contribute chunks of wood - sections with prized burls, the knotty lumps that sometimes appear on trees; spalting, an alteration of wood grain that is a byproduct of wood rot; parasite afflictions such as the one made by the ambrosia beetle, whose traces resemble a sun-splash; and those with a V-shaped crotch. All impart distinctive character to individual pieces. Allison also participates in "wood swaps" and auctions held by a Connecticut chapter of the American Association of Woodturners.

He eschews purchasing wood, as some other wood-turners do, or working with tropical varieties. "If

you're willing to work with what you find in Eastern Connecticut, there's a lot," he says, motioning beyond the windows of his living room to the thickly forested acres that constitute his back yard. The bounty is what he calls "the joy of working in a wooded state."

Each block of wood Allison culls is cut down to a manageable size, or at least a size that can fit through the studio doorway. The species of wood - including white ash, willow, birch, cherry and maple - and the shape help determine what he will make of it. "You figure out stuff based on the wood you get," he says.

Each block is put on Allison's lathe and hollowed out in a process that takes several hours and sends wood chips or peels flying.

"Stand over here," warns Allison's 11-year-old daughter, Eva, who appears to be learning the trade at her father's elbow.

Allison learned part of his craft from his father, who took a few woodworking courses in an adult-education program and "made some decent things for around the house," Allison says. "I grew up knowing that a regular person could make things out of wood."

When pieces come off the lathe, Allison finishes them by sanding, polishing and coloring, applying dye with rags for a solid finish, or using an airbrush for a more shaded look. A high-gloss lacquer or varnish is the last coat.

An upstairs closet is filled with carefully shelved items ready for shows - a ruby-colored sideways clamshell he calls "the lips," oval vessels of classical proportion made from the crotches of trees, and a two-piece vase-shaped form in a modern mix of purple and green.

At times Allison leaves a bark edge on his works; in others, he exaggerates the line by applying black or copper leaf colors. "These are ways of taking interesting wood and making it more interesting," he says.

Allison's favorite piece is the result of a minor catastrophe. He was working on a large gourd-shaped piece, one that had to be hollowed out through a small hole at the top. It was "10 seconds to completion" when it cracked on the lathe, a seam splitting open around its middle. Rather than tossing it away, Allison set the piece on his worktable and got out his drill. He created a pattern of piercings that runs like a crocheted collar where the crack used to be.

"You're limited by what you've done and what you can do," says Allison, who continues to experiment. One of his most unconventional pieces is a two-part insect form with wings spread over four legs and small jewels glued to its back.

"The latter part of [the last] century, people started taking wood-turning and making it an artistic expression," Allison says. "We're in the infant stages."

For more information on Michael Allison's work, call 860-429-3490 or go to www.michaelallison.us.

Note: This article is reprinted from the "Hartford Current"





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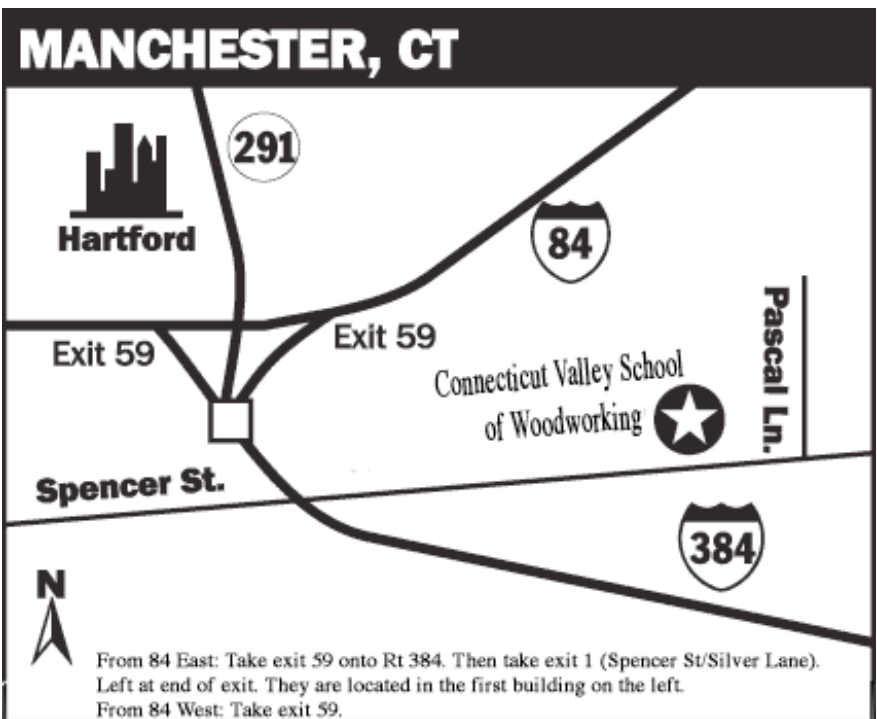
~ Legal Stuff ~

The Central Connecticut Woodturners (CCW) was founded in 1994 to support the needs of woodturners in the central Connecticut area. Its purpose is to promote a higher standard of excellence in woodturning by providing an ever expanding source of information and resources to its membership. Memberships are calendar basis from January 1 through December 31. Annual dues are \$35 or \$20 for six months or less.

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Address: _____

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Dues (\$35) payable to:
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