

**FEBURARY 2018 DEMONSTRATION  
EMBELLISHING WITH BOB IRELAND**

On Tuesday, February 13<sup>th</sup>, members and guests of the Central New York Woodturners gathered at the Camillus Middle School for their monthly meeting. **Bob Ireland**, our demonstrator, talked about the variety of methods by which we can embellish any woodworking piece.

Using a PowerPoint presentation to start, Bob stimulated some thinking for the attendees. He provided some perspective by first defining embellishing: to make something more attractive by the addition of



decorative details or features. He reminded everyone that the debate “to embellish or not” started several years ago and there are no wrong answers.

Bob admitted that at times it doesn’t pay to embellish but suggested that you would embellish to:

- ✓ Bring out the character in the wood
- ✓ Cover mistakes
- ✓ Highlight character marks
- ✓ Hide unattractive wood

Embellishing can be done on or off the lathe although Bob focused on off lathe for the demo. It can include:

- ✓ Carving
- ✓ Piercing
- ✓ Pyrography
- ✓ Painting / Staining / Dying
- ✓ Bleaching / Ebonizing
- ✓ Sand Blasting

- ✓ Liming (brings out open grains)
- ✓ Gilding
- ✓ Filling
- ✓ Adding to

You can perform multiple embellishments like the late Binh Pho.

Is segmentation embellishing? Hmm ...

When embellishing, you need to set a focal point for the piece. Where does your eye go when looking at a piece? Much of this is personal preference that you must incorporate into your processing. Use pieces completed by other turners to help you understand your likes and dislikes.

Can you go too far with embellishing? Yes Remember—you can do whatever you want with embellishing. AND, let your two senses—visual and feel—help you!



At this point, Bob moved to the stage and

started to discuss a variety of texturing processes, not embellishing as a whole. He started with pyrography (i.e. wood burning). He noted that he uses a variety of tools and created a storyboard (right) that he uses to guide temperature and tool use. For safety, he advised everyone to look at their work environment



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before starting any woodburning. Make sure you don't have flammable product around your work area. Wear safety glasses. Have adequate ventilation. Bob has a special fan (below) that is part of his



woodburning work area and brought it to distribute any fumes during his demonstration.

For woodburning equipment, you can purchase a cheap \$15 unit at local craft stores but you will be limited as to tips and temperature. Professional woodburners are made by Burnmaster, Colwood, Optima, and Razertip are popular models. A good review of tools can be found on the Sawdust Connection website [here](#). If you are going to the Totally Turning event or just heading to Saratoga for one day, there is usually a vendor there with woodburners, tips, and even carving equipment.

Bob moved from pyrography to carving and admitted that the hand tools he uses are his father's as they share a shop. However, he also will use a Dremel-type tool with a variety of bits to create different textures. Again, creating a storyboard would give you ideas as to what effect you would receive with each bit.

During the discussion on carving, Bob reminded everyone that you need to pay attention to the pattern, making sure you are consistent around a whole piece. And, remember you can create different patterns within a piece by adding lines that create

separation between the patterns.

Bob uses a variety of his pieces to show how paint can be used to embellish. He encouraged attendees to explore products by Golden (available at The Art Store on Erie Blvd in Syracuse or online), air brush tools, and non-traditional tools such as cake decorating tools for applying paints.

What seemed to catch the attention of many attendees was Bob's use of non-traditional tools to apply texture. What can you do with a screwdriver and hammer? What about a hammer and nails? How about tap bolts—large and small? What about a drill bit? Just remember, you may get an effect you don't want so try first! The samples below give were shown as samples of texturing.

Another technique is called **ukibori**. Using a metal tool, you create warts and bumps in the wood. The surface is then carved down level with the bottom of the depression formed by the punch and the area where the depressions were is wetted with boiling water (use a small brush). Wetting the surface should be done soon after punching. The crushed wood fibers will swell up when wet, creating a bump above the surrounding surface. The secret to successfully using this technique is knowing how much you can depress the wood fibers without breaking or cutting them, and using dry wood. Investigate this method on the internet!

**Be creative. Experiment. Enjoy your journey into embellishing!**



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