

Kurt's clinic

Kurt Hertzog answers some readers' questions

Finishing

Question: I just read the article on 'Finishing' in *Woodturning* magazine. I'm curious about some of the recommendations and other ideas. Was he right in his suggestions? How do you finish your turnings?

Answer: I've retrieved and read the article you refer to. When I get my copy of *Woodturning* magazine, I usually skim it for articles of interest, read them, and file the magazine away for future reference. I hope you are saving each of yours since the contents are usually timeless and become a valuable library of techniques and problem-solving references for the future. First, with questions about any particular article, I suggest you contact the author directly. While I can't commit those authors to additional work, I'm certain any question about their article or area of expertise would be responded to as soon as time permitted. I know many of them personally and those I know are genuinely interested in sharing their expertise. I didn't see anything in that article that didn't seem accurate. Even if I didn't agree with something, it isn't my place to publicly offer a differing opinion. Do be aware that every article is reviewed by other accomplished turners for accuracy prior to publishing. As the old saying goes, 'there is more than one road to the destination'. Modified somewhat to avoid any controversy.

Regardless of finish type or technique, say to yourself PREP. Now say it again. PREP. Without proper preparation of your item to be finished, the end point, in my opinion, will usually be junk. I've seen wonderful, clear, pool-deep and polished lacquer finishes on turnings where I could easily see sanding scratches below the finish. How sad. My woodturning finishing is so simple I hesitate to hold it up for scrutiny. I have three extremely simple finishes that cover 99% of my needs. I use CA or lacquer and, to a far less degree, a wipe-on poly. As for CA, I've written quite a bit on my CA techniques. In a nutshell, brand doesn't matter to me, I use only thin, and rely on the build of many, many quickly applied axial coats to build my thickness. Refer to *WT307*, *WT298*, *WTD22*, and *AWFeb17* for a comprehensive coverage on the subject. My other go-to finish is lacquer. While I own HVLP and regular spray equipment to shoot lacquer, I usually am too lazy to use those because my batch sizes are small, after which the equipment needs proper cleaning. I most often shoot rattle can lacquer from the discount stores. Whether their cheapest house brand



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A well-executed finish can often get that last bit of 'pop' from a trip to the buffing wheel with some Carnuba wax

or the more costly, big-name brands, I find prep and application technique are far more important than brand. Think prep and environment for lacquer. The temperature and humidity will doom you when using lacquer. The temperature window as noted on the product spec sheet is important. Violate it at your own risk.

Also, pay attention to the humidity. There are days to shoot lacquer and there are days not to. Unless you have the environmental controls of the high-end paint/finish shops, you are at the mercy of each day's weather conditions. Not intended to scare you, just to make you aware that environment will help or hurt you. Find my articles in *American Woodturner* Feb. 2017, *WT306*, and *WT285* for in-depth content on lacquer. On the rare occasion that I think my turning benefits with a different finish than one of those two, I reach for a can of Minwax Antique Oil Wipe-On Poly. Simple wipe on, wipe off, let it rest, repeat until you're happy. I'm into simple. At the end of my finishing regardless of which, I might but not always head to the buffer. Large diameter, modest rpm, occasionally a jeweller's rouge buff or just Beall wax wheel. Just to punch things up.



The turning needs to have been properly prepped prior to any finish. Time spent getting the surface ready is time well spent



Personally, after sufficient hardening of lacquer, I find a light buffing (read cutting) with a jeweller's rouge enhances the final look

Lucky dip!

Question: I've sent questions to you in the past and you've never used them. What gives? Don't you like them? How do the questions get picked?

Answer: When I receive a question that probably won't be used or will be waiting for a long time in the queue, I usually try to answer personally. Sometimes a proper answer will require more time and effort than I can provide at that particular moment. While I try to do my best, those responses sometimes slip into the 'to do pile' only to get buried. Please do remember that I write a Q&A column and am not running a personal help desk. I'm sorry you feel slighted because your question(s) haven't been used in print but please accept my word that no offence is ever intended. On selection, I keep a

running list of questions so that there are many to choose from as I work on each issue. There are several criteria that I use for selection. First and foremost is the interest and applicability to the largest number of readers. Having only space for three questions and answers maximum and sometimes fewer, I select questions for maximum appeal. Another consideration is the space required for a meaningful and useful answer, including image(s) and caption(s). Lastly is the topic mix among the questions contained in any issue. I feel it would be a mistake to fill any issue with all pen, bowl turning,

finishing, sharpening, or some other single topic. By mixing more than one topic into each issue, I hope to have a little something of interest for as many readers as I can. Remember that the lead time for the magazine is many months. What I write and deliver to my editor now won't be in your mailbox or on the newsstands for many months. I'm quite sure your questions are on the list and will certainly be considered for use every month as I select questions for any particular issue. One day they may be the right fit and you'll see them in the magazine.



Regardless of whose hollowing tools you own or use, sharp edges, proper speeds and feeds, and technique are more important than name label

Hollowing dilemmas

Question: I just got some 'reader fill in any name' hollowers and I'm not exactly happy with them. I am trying to hollow end grain. Tried many other tools too looking for a brand that works. How do you all hollow end grain in a small hole? What is the best way to deep hollow end-grained orientation vessels through small holes?

Answer: I always hesitate to include specific brand names in the column. Not usually pertinent to the discussion and often a brand is unfairly maligned. On the brand you speak of... I own many tools from it, although not specifically its hollowing tools, and find them all superbly designed and built. I trust its hollowing tools follow that same excellence, but remember my opinion is based on my other tools from the brand. Your lack of success with several brands leads me to believe it is your technique and expectations that are the real issue. Virtually all deep-hollowed vessels are done into end grain so it can be very successfully done by many turners at differing skill levels. I suggest you find someone who can give you instruction on end-grain hollowing. Learn technique including proper tool sharpening, positioning, speeds and feeds, etc. It can be a fellow club member who exhibits that mastery, a class with a local or touring pro, online class, or other source. Don't worry about hollowing through a small hole yet. Worry about mastering the tools and techniques in the wide open in the same materials you will ultimately use.

Dry wood will cut differently than green wood as will all of the different species. The basics will be the same or similar but get so you can be very successful at end-grain cutting in the materials you will be using. Since hollowing through a hole makes you rely on feel rather than sight, your instructor or self-teaching efforts will likely include focusing on tool control while visually watching only the tool/toolrest area. Knowing the tool tip position, cutter orientation, and internal conditions by feel rather than sight is the goal. Some tape applied to the toolrest limiting your positioning and travel, simulating conditions of hollowing through a hole, will be good practice. That done, you can rig a sheet of paper in front of your toolrest with a hole to hollow through. Start with a large hole and practice as you continue to reduce the hole size. Of course, real internal hollowing requires stopping for periodic removal of debris. Your practice in an open form cutting through a paper or cardboard mask won't require this now. Fundamental knowledge and focused practice will solve almost any shortcoming. As you progress, I'm certain you'll be able to use any maker's quality tools successfully.



Hollowing through a small hole really isn't difficult, though it does take some practice. Don't believe just buying some particular tool solves everything

Send your questions to Kurt's email: kurt@kurthertzog.com