

# Behind the Scenes

with Kurt Hertzog



## The Wood Turning Center

A very important part of the woodturning world is located on the quiet corner of Fifth and Vine in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. It is the home of the Wood Turning Center. The Center, formed in 1986, is dedicated to the education, preservation, and promotion of contemporary wood art. The founder and Executive Director of the Wood Turning Center is Albert LeCoff.

Back in the 1970s, Albert and Alan LeCoff and Palmer Sharpless organized and ran woodturning symposiums at the George School in Newtown, Pennsylvania. They held these symposiums twice a year from 1976 to 1981. The Utah Woodturning Symposium and later the American Association of Woodturners Symposium would build on this model.

Since the creation of the Center, it has become home to the largest collection of turned objects. The center puts on three to five exhibitions each year. There is an International Turning Exchange each year, which includes five artists, a journalist, and a scholar. This exchange is in its fourteenth year. The Center participates with the local college art curriculums to foster artists' development in working with wood. This is in addition to the community outreach to encourage hands-on experience with students. They have twenty-five mini-lathes in this program.

One of the most ambitious projects on the Center's agenda is the scanning, indexing, and posting of their more than 25,000 documents. This wealth of wood art history is to be available to all through their website. Though the Center is open to everyone to visit and do research, the physical location limits participation. Having this resource available through the web will make it accessible to everyone worldwide.

If you are ever in Philadelphia, make sure you have time available to visit the Wood Turning Center. These photos don't do it justice. The history of the craft and art of wood is incredible and right before your eyes. In the interim, you can find more about the Wood Turning Center and enjoy it remotely by visiting them at [www.woodturningcenter.org](http://www.woodturningcenter.org).



**Fig. 1.** The Wood Turning Center is in an unassuming building on the corner of Fifth and Vine in Philadelphia.



**Fig. 2.** It has simple, straightforward goals of the education, preservation, and promotion of contemporary wood art.



**Fig. 3.** The foyer has an impressive display of turnings, as well as turnings that are for sale.



**Fig. 6.** The displays are visible from the street through the windows that run along the entire length of the building.



**Fig. 4.** It is quite an honor to be included in the window display at the center.



**Fig. 7.** The next rooms contain a rotating featured artist display.

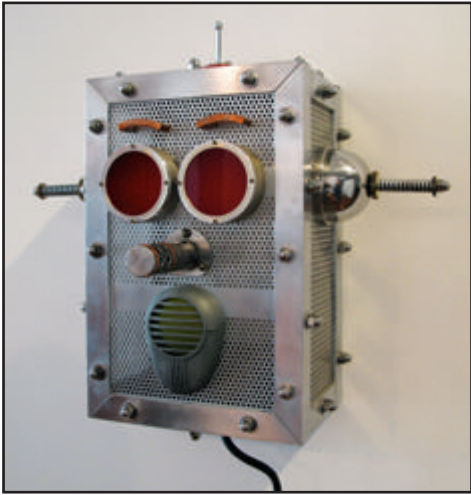


**Fig. 5.** The turnings range in size from miniatures to relatively large turnings.



**Fig. 8.** The featured artist display—Steve Madsen shown here—contains specially selected works.

**Fig. 9.**  
Sometimes  
the selected  
works move  
a bit beyond  
wood.



**Fig. 12.**  
The works  
of various artists  
are prominent  
throughout  
the library.



**Fig. 10.** Adjacent to the featured artist exhibit is the library and study area.



**Fig. 13.** The video playback area is equally as decorated with fine woodturned art.

**Fig. 11.**  
This is a partial  
view of the  
extensive  
library that  
is available to  
anyone interested  
in studying  
the available  
published works.



**Fig. 14.**  
The founder  
and Executive  
Director of the  
Wood Turning  
Center is  
Albert LeCoff.





**Fig. 15.** The Center has an extensive collection of wood art from the earliest days through the modern.



**Fig. 18.** The variety spans a wide array of techniques.



**Fig. 16.** The collection often includes work that spans an artist's career from early to current.



**Fig. 19.** More of the depth and breadth of the Wood Turning Center's collection.



**Fig. 17.** The Wood Turning Center's collection is rich with the history of woodturning.



**Fig. 20.** In addition to the permanent collection, there is an impressive assortment of works by various artists that are offered in the sales area.