

Presenting work

Kurt Hertzog suggests ways of showcasing your pens



There are thousands of pen turners in the world cranking out the same kits, often using the same or similar blanks and finishes. With all skill levels available, finished pen quality is usually the separator between turners. Once the final product is flawless, how do you separate yourself from the masses? Creating unique blanks is one method. Resin casting and other blank creation methods have gained popularity and can be an area of distinction. One of the areas that I think is ripe for exploration by pen makers of all levels is presentation. I

believe giving a handmade pen of any sort in a velour bag or plastic sleeve is degrading to the end result. The bag or sleeve is discarded and the pen, depending on the result, may or may not find ongoing use. Creating a turning or other artistic presentation method can elevate the entire project as well as insure the recipient will display and use both the pen and presentation piece. Exotic presentation cases are nice but unless they easily double as a penholder or stand, they may also be relegated to the desk drawer. As we close the series,

I'd like to offer simple methods that will let your pen live on the recipient's desk, night stand, hall table, telephone nook or other ongoing use location, rather than get put into the drawer with all the other pens. Another benefit is that the pen and stand photograph well, showcasing both rather than a pen leaning on a plastic holder. Many of the illustrations use my kitless creations but all work well with any of the kit pens. I'll show the presentation ideas I've used from about 20 years ago until now, not as answers but as thought starters for you.

◀ Turned bases

You can probably sketch dozens of shapes and ideas for turned stands right off the top of your head. If you have sufficient stock, you can use the pen species for the stand as well. If not, other species can be used as well as being painted, pierced, or decorated after turning. Sizes and shapes

are very flexible and can be tailored for the end user's pen location. One of the shapes that I've used often is that of an ink bottle or reservoir. Much like a dip pen ink supply, you can create a stand that resembles an ink bottle that will stand the pen up presented for easy use.



Given as a set, this pen and stand will decorate any office desk or area needing a pen. A collaboration with Binh Pho



Simple-shape stands with solid colours do not compete with more ornate pens, and by giving the owner a way to keep the pen on their desk, it will always be ready for use rather than in the drawer



Woods that don't exhibit character on their own can be pierced or in other ways enhanced



While it doesn't beam with figure, this piece of cherry turned to resemble an ink reservoir is pleasing



A desk pen and stand done in blackwood (*Dalbergia melanoxylon*) in collaboration with Bill Ooms



The bases need not be exotic species or designs. Here's a simple, pretty maple turning accepts any kit pen

Cut material bases

When you are dealing with artistic decorations such as painting, pyrography, carving and others, sometimes all you need is a flat canvas. Scraps cut at the bandsaw into the desired shape will serve well. I often take burl cap that doesn't lend itself to other applications and turn it into a base for a pen. Flat stock from resawing can be used if it has any figure by cutting the funnel feature. If there isn't any figure, it can be painted and otherwise decorated. Leaving the rough saw marks gives a rustic character if that is your goal.



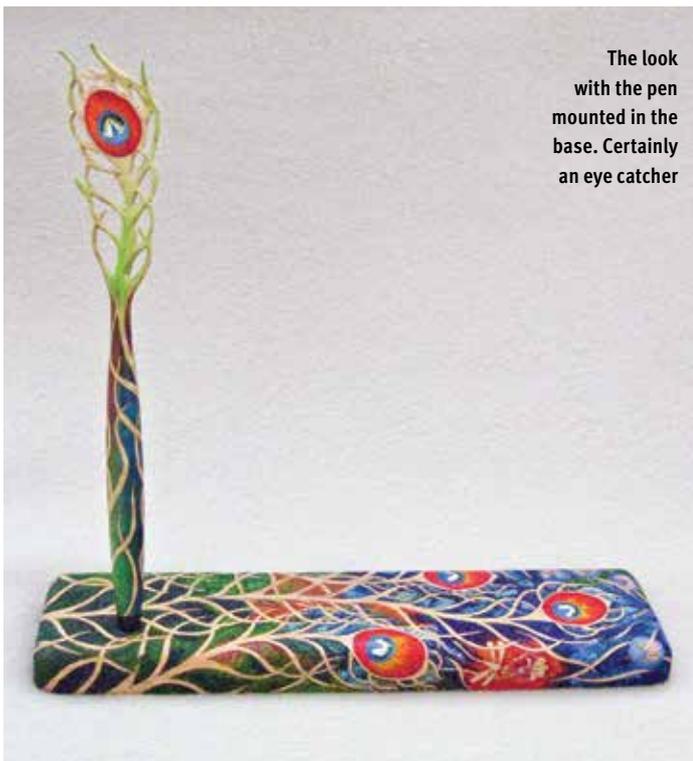
A burl cap that resembled a turtle is pressed into service as a stand for these three laser-cut pens



Rough-sawn and painted stand to go along with a matching painted pen



A collaboration done with Binh Pho as a donation to the AAW Educational Grant fund



The look with the pen mounted in the base. Certainly an eye catcher



A rose wood dip pen with abalone scales. The stand is white Corian with turned mounting pegs

◀ Solid block bases

I'm often at a loss as to what to do with nicely figured blocks that are offcuts from bowls or other projects. These make ideal bases or stands for pens. Their irregular sizes and shapes lend themselves to a 'free-form' result. Rather than trying to square



An assortment of shapes done from scraps. Irregularly sanded angles create interest

things up and make perfect geometrical shapes, I sand them at the belt sander just enough to get a flat for sanding and finishing. Taking every surface at whatever angle it is cut and sanding only to flat creates interesting shapes for pen bases.



These solid base stands work well with pens in the same species or something in contrast

Drilling holes

For many of the bent shapes and certainly the desk boxes/nests, there is no need for a tapered drilling. If any holes are needed, they are usually a straight-through clearance hole accomplished with a Forstner bit. If you want a pen to nest in the funnel style, you'll need to be able to drill a tapered hole. I haven't found a tapered reamer yet that is perfect. Of course, the angle needed varies by the kit and for custom nibs. I have two different

sized reamers that I pick from that will get me close enough to serve my purpose. I use my drill press for both perpendicular holes and angled holes. The only difference is the need for a fixture or nest to drill angled holes. For all of the drilled holes, I use a machinist's starter drill to precisely locate and provide a good starting point for the drill. I then drill a 6mm hole just deeper than my planned finished depth. The tapered reamer is

then used to provide the taper for the pen. This is trial-and-error drilling since I want to see the seated depth versus the amount of exposed nib. This is all tempered by the stability of the pen when seated in the taper. Straight holes could be drilled in the lathe if the base is mounted. A pistol drill could also be used with care and good clamping. A woodworker's bench vice with padding can provide straight or angled mounting.



A starter drill for location followed by a body drill will set things well for the tapered reamer



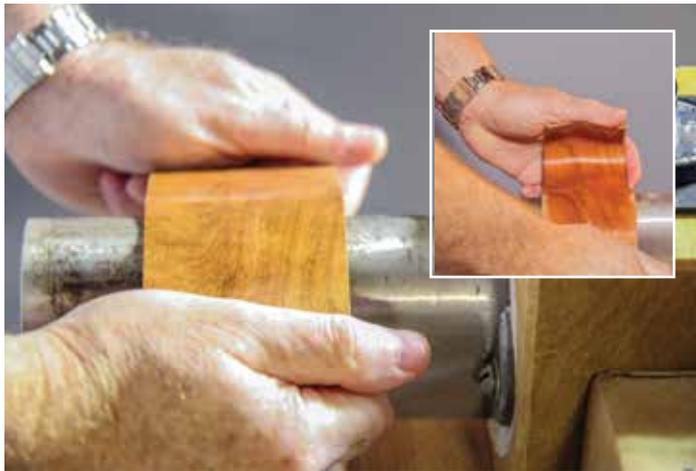
Tapered reamers don't match the angles perfectly but they get close enough to seat and support the pen



Fixturing for safely done angled drillings can be quickly done with scraps and hot-melt glue

Bent shapes

For many years I've been enjoying experimenting with steam bending. Many of my ornament stands are created by steam bending resawn stock. Steam-bent stock also lends itself to pen stands. These can be sanded and finished to enjoy the beauty of the existing figure or altered. I paint, pyrograph, burn, and pierce these steam bendings to suit the occasion. There are two cautions for those who undertake steam bending for stands. Do your bending before you pierce or drill holes. Bending with these alterations in place usually results in failures during bending. Holes and piercing sites are a



Steam bending isn't a daunting task and can easily be learned, opening a whole new horizon in stands and pens

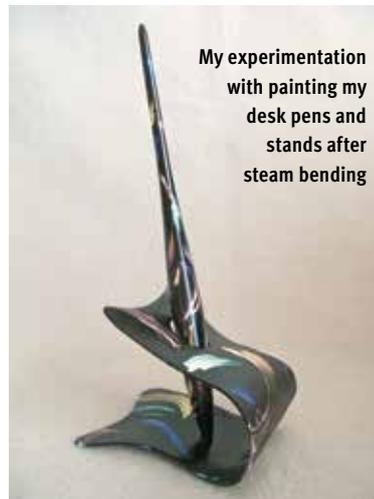
location for cracks and separations to begin during the stresses of bending. More information on steam bending can be found in *WT270*. Piercing can be done without special precaution after bending, but drilling does require some attention. Applying tape to both sides of the material at the site of the hole to be drilled helps minimise fracturing during drilling. Support backing is paramount when drilling any bent work to provide a solid support to the material while drilling. Step up in sizes from a pilot size to a finished size in several steps. Forstner bits work better when drilling larger sized holes.



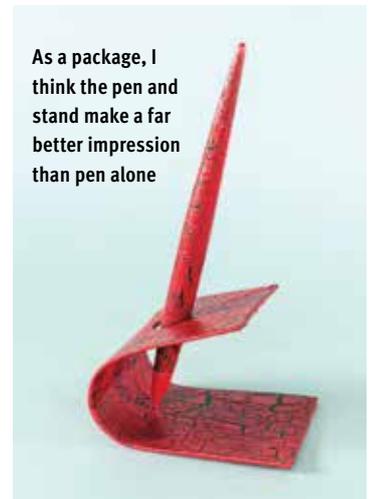
Once I am set up for steam bending, I'll do several to have some readily available when needed



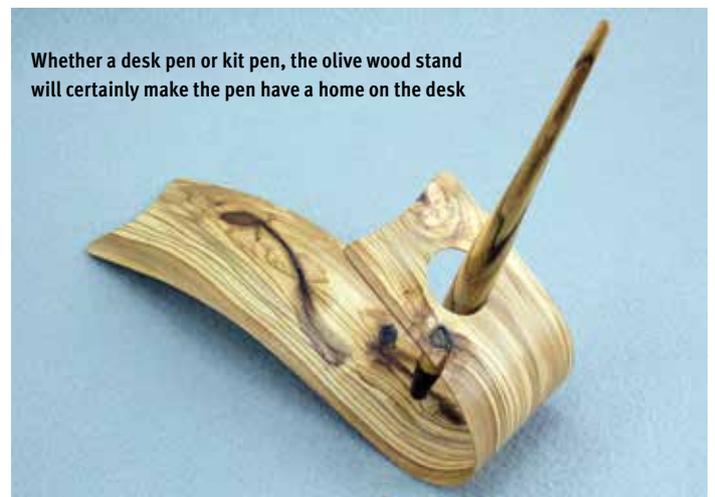
A different look at the pair. Yes, the curves in the pen were steam bent. Far more challenging than the stand



My experimentation with painting my desk pens and stands after steam bending



As a package, I think the pen and stand make a far better impression than pen alone



Whether a desk pen or kit pen, the olive wood stand will certainly make the pen have a home on the desk

Cutting shapes

If you have no interest in steam bending wood, you can make pen stands and bases by cutting wood to shape. One of the great uses for bowls that have met with the misfortune of the inside reaching the outside is cutting the remains into ornament and pen stands. Observe the necessary precautions when cutting bowls on the bandsaw. Curves and twists that can be done with steam bending can



Laser engraving a box will help a bit. My 25th anniversary AAW donation of 25 pens and boxes



A presentation box I made for the occasion. Colour fill of laser engraving by Pat Lawson



In my opinion, this takes pen giving to a new level. It certainly will spend its time on the desk for use.



A special occasion requires an appropriate box. I made one for the presentation



In honour of Mike Roux's 50th birthday, the box I created and inlaid with abalone shell

Premade and custom

There is a wide variety of premade pen boxes available through the various retailers. The faux leather versions and the speciality shaped boxes are nice for delivery but they usually wind up in the drawer. Some of the wooden boxes can double as a display and use stand, especially if the interior is nicely adorned. The wooden boxes, pens themselves, and specially made stands can all be enhanced with laser engraving and colour fill. Any image that can be delivered to the laser vendor can be engraved. This personalisation adds value and can be as simple or as ornate as desired. There are many vendors available to provide this service.

Conclusions

Presentation is a method for you to enhance your pen creations, potentially create a signature style, and show off your other woodworking and artistic skills. Because nearly all of the bases, stands, and cradles you create can be 'universal', you can prepare them in advance. You can work on stands as time permits and stockpile an assortment of them. When you need one, you can select the one that best suits the current application. If you haven't cut the funnel until now, you'll need to finish that one item to suit the application and you'll have a very special presentation method available for your pen. The balance of time and materials you select between your pen and your presentation method is your choice. I think presentation is a wide-open field. You can express yourself with both your pen and your presentation methods. Experiment with it and use it to help separate your work from that of the masses. ●

Presentation isn't difficult and can certainly upscale your pen work. Let your creativity loose in this area

