

Kurt's clinic

Kurt Hertzog answers readers' questions

PHOTOGRAPHS BY KURT HERTZOG



“
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a batch of lighting and camera gear is set up...***
”

I really like how you show the answers with pictures. It's easier for me to understand the key point(s). How do you setup and take those shots? Do you have a helper/photographer?

Thank you for the kind words. I try to make the images and captions reinforce the key points I've made in the text. I'm certainly not an expert but I'm told there are many ways people consume information. Whether words alone, pictures alone, or a combination of both, I try to make it clear. Also, audio and video are great for conveying info but not readily available here.

On the helper/photographer... No, I don't have a helper. When I am working on my Q & A column or any other writings, I am a one-man band. As such, working at the lathe can be cumbersome when a batch of lighting and camera gear is set up and occasionally underfoot. I usually have the column outlined or partially written beforehand, allowing me to make a shot list to complement the text. I plan what I need for shots in the most workable sequence, set up the camera and strobes for that shot, either turn to that point or be turning to capture the needed illustration. I pre-focus on the key spot and then use the self-timer to give a delay allowing me to get where I need to be located or making chips as is needed.

Even though I can review the images on the camera back, that display size doesn't tell me enough. Until they are put into the computer and displayed on the larger monitor, focus, lighting, composition, and general visual appearance can't be determined accurately. I usually take plenty of images since 'film' is now cheap, and I've already done the hard part by setting everything up. I may as well take many images to later choose from before I change things around for the next shot. Depending on how much turning or shop work needs to be done, and how many shots I think I'll need, I usually will set up a camera with a couple of strobes or speedlights in soft boxes. Whether strobes or speedlights, there is more than enough illumination to adequately light the whole scene and overpower the ambient lighting. I almost always use some form of strobe lighting since I want to light the subject, create single-colour temperature images by overwhelming the ambient, and to stop action for clarity. Most of the time I use my midsized Oneway 12-24 lathe in the basement.

It is much easier to work in a warm environment being heated during the winter and airconditioned in the summer. When I need to use a larger lathe, I need to work in the garage on my Oneway 24-36 lathe.

1 Capturing images to support the information in an article requires a bit of planning. This photographic setup is quite easy being out of the way, but others are more challenging **2** When I'm working on any shop project, I capture shots that may be of use for a future article. Someday, I may be explaining one method I use painting my eggshell ornaments.

In the garage, I'm at the mercy of the outside temps since, while it's closed in, the garage is not tied into the HVAC. I use basically the same photo set-up. On the larger lathe, it is more inconvenient to position and work around lighting stands and camera tripods based on the location. As a general practice, I almost always shoot speculation images for my photo files while turning, airbrushing, or doing other shop work. It is handy to already have an assortment of images that might find their way into an article of some sort down the road. I started writing woodturning articles back in 2008. Over the 250-plus articles published in the various woodturning magazines worldwide, I have accumulated more than 350,000 photos in my photo archive. Either those used, shot and not used, or just shot for potential use someday, this collection of images is a great resource to pull from as needed.

I have been using my files and rasps on my woodturning. The problem is that they tend to clog up, especially with any wet woods. Any suggestions on preventing this?

I don't have any silver bullet for preventing clogging of any of your files. I can offer some ideas on how to unclog them. If you haven't added a file card to your kit, I recommend that you purchase one. It isn't expensive and properly used should last a lifetime. It is a bit of a misnomer being called a file card since one side is a stiff-bristled brush and the other is an array of stiff wire needles. One side or the other will be useful for cleaning files, whether used for woods, plastics, metals, or other materials. Be certain that you keep the metal tines of the card from bending damage. I hang mine on a nail overhead rather than pitching it into the toolbox.



3 File cards are modestly priced, easily used, and with reasonable care will last a lifetime. They are available with both fibre bristles or just wire bristles alone.

◀ **I've seen a variety of methods used to sign work. Also, varying information included. Do you sign your work? What do you use? What do you include?**

There are a host of things to think about. Are you selling your work? If so, I'm pretty sure you should be signing it since the new owner would like the work documented as to the creator. If you ever become 'collected', your name alone will be part of the value. Certainly, any gallery will insist that your work is authenticated with your signature. With that, what should be included and how should you do it?

Obviously, you should decide on what name to use and how much of it. Last name alone? Entire name? A pen name? Your choice. Printed, script, fancy, artistic? What about the date? You might think including the date is important and will let yourself or the new owner know when it was made. Well, what about any gallery that doesn't want to worry about old work? If it doesn't sell this year,

will someone want to buy the work hanging around unsold? Why is this piece still in the gallery? Some things to think about. Where do you sign it? What do you use to sign it? Location may be pretty standard. Most turnings are signed on the underside. Bowls, vessels, lidded boxes, etc., are usually signed on the bottom.

Other items can be signed in a location that doesn't detract from the turning. An inconspicuous place that can be easily found but isn't a detraction. You can use a woodburning iron with a fine writing tip, a permanent marker, or embedded and personalised cabochon. Now, when do you sign it? Before or after the finish is applied? Will the marker bleed or come off if you put a finish on over it? Do you want to burn through the finish with your woodburning signature? How much space do you have and how easy is it to sign?

I have it lucky. I intentionally don't sell my work so I have no galleries, collectors,

or anyone else to please. My work is either kept, donated to causes, or swapped with other turners. As such, anything leaving me for another is signed. Usually, but not always, dated with year as well. Signed so the new owner knows the maker and the year to indicate the time it was made in my turning life. I hope that my work continues to improve as the years go by. I rarely sign with anything other than a Pigma Micron permanent marker after the finish is completed and cured.

I always sign my work with my script signature with my first and last name. I take pains to make the signature legible, sized to fit well in the space set aside for the autograph, and neat enough to be read. There are times when I sign items inside, under rims, or hidden. These are done based on who is getting it and whether there is a good spot to sign or I need to create a place. Items that are just going to hang around, be demo pieces for classes, or are practice/development pieces, I don't bother to sign.



4 I've settled on one of two methods of marking. Either a very fine-tipped woodburner or an archival ink marker. The Pigma Micron markers are available in many colours and tip sizes **5** A very fine-tipped woodburner isn't easily found. Judicious filing, sanding, and bending can create one. With practice, very fine-lined autographs or other markings can be made **6** Dedicating, signing, and dating an ornament roof while it is still easily accessible. Some signing is readily found and others, based on design, is less easily seen **7** Once assembled, it would be impossible to sign. Underneath the rim is about the only place that lends itself for autographing