

# CALGARY WOODTURNERS GUILD NEWSLETTER



## October 5th Meeting

*"Instant Gallery" picture of the month*

*From our last meeting: A segmented turning by John Kroeger.*



### Issue 4, October 2010

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It's easy to have your work posted in the newsletter; just bring it to the next meeting!



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## From the Editor...

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Apologies the newsletter is late this month; I was on a combination business and vacation trip back east. Nothing quite like oaks and maples foliage in the fall!

I'm always on the lookout for additional content for the newsletter. So if there is anything you'd like to see included such

as announcements of some event, items for sale, tips, or even an interesting website you have come across, just send it to me and I'll include it here.

This edition continues with the second of a multipart series on design. Thanks to Barbara Hall of the Northwest Woodturners for passing this on to us.



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## October 5<sup>th</sup> Meeting

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Minutes of CWTG – October 5th, 2010

Dennis Milbrandt presiding.

Minutes not yet available. They will be included in next month's newsletter.

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## Design - Part 2

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To briefly review our discussion on design in the previous Newsletter: We defined design as the visual relationship of the parts of a piece to each other. The first element of design we discussed was balance. We defined balance as the visual impression of the weight distribution of a piece. A piece is balanced symmetrically when both sides are mirror images of the other. A piece is asymmetrically balanced when the sides are no longer visual mirror images of each other, but the piece retains weight symmetry. The third type of balance is radial, like the petals radiating out from the center of a flower. Now we need to apply three-dimensional thinking because our pieces are not two-dimensional but are 'in the round'.

As we examine our piece we do not see a flat picture with only length and breadth as a scribble on a piece of paper; but an expanse with physical depth because our turnings are three dimensional. Which means the relationship between the piece and our eyes is constantly changing as we view it from different angles and distances. Our concept of balance and the success of our pieces becomes much more complicated. This is one reason why many pieces are not successful; there is a "flat spot" when viewed from certain angles. I designed a free form piece that I felt was good; it was successful from all angles and even from the top and bottom view except I had not taken its base of support into consideration. You can't float a bronze sculpture in thin air. I had a very difficult time trying to integrate a base into the design, because doing so altered the balance of the original piece.

To be a good three-dimensional designer we should be learn to visualize mentally the whole form, rotating it mentally in all directions. We need to explore the play of depth, the impact of mass, the flow of space on a three dimensional form. The three primary viewing directions are vertical, up and down (top and bottom of the piece); horizontal - left and right, and transverse - forward and backward. When we construct our piece we also need to consider the effect of size, color, texture and distribution. Size can be measured by its height, width and thickness. Color along with its light and dark values distinguish our form from its environment and gives pattern. Texture defines the tactile surface characteristics,

and also contributes visually with color to the pattern. Distribution refers to how the mass of the article is distributed throughout space, and is one of the most important contributors to the feeling a piece invokes in the viewer.

Take for example the simple egg form. By itself it is balanced, symmetric in the vertical plane, asymmetrical in the horizontal plane, radially balanced along its axis. It is a simple form with no color or texture to affect our response. If we place the egg with the large end down, we get a feeling of relaxation, well-being, satisfaction. Yet if we simply rotate the form so the large end is up, we get instead an uncomfortable feeling. All of a sudden those pleasant feelings turn to anxiety, a sense of edginess. This is due in large part to the effect of distribution - and our innate personal experience with gravity. We "know" the egg with the large end up is naturally unstable, and likely to fall over, and so we apply our personal experiences when we evaluate the egg. Our emotional responses result from the marriage of the piece and our personal experience. It is important to note that neither position is right or wrong, but rather different. We can be free to choose how we design our piece, so as to direct our viewer towards certain types of experiences. As another example of how personal experience can affect our view of a design, take the simple pac-man shape. If we point the mouth up, we might get a sense of laughing. But rotate the design just a few degrees and the shape now feels more like crying.

Other relational elements we will consider are direction, space and gravity. Direction refers to the suggestion or illusion of movement. Often when I work with children we talk about direction in terms of incorporating swing into our pieces. Swing is a feeling of movement: a horse with its neck raised, a frog about to jump. Space whether positive (occupied), negative or illusionary (absence of mass) is very important in our sense of balance about a sculpture. We see this all the time when we watch dancers who frame an area with their arm or leg movements. Empty space that is enclosed becomes a part of the piece. Gravity is a necessary ingredient in our interpretation of balance; our turnings cannot float in air (as I once remembered - too late) without being anchored, supported or hung. The sense of gravity is not visual; but psychological. We tend to attribute heaviness or lightness with our sense of gravity. As you add other elements such as metal or glass to your pieces, remember your viewer will have a sense of how these elements are supposed to feel. He or she may reject a thin walled piece because it does not feel substantial or question whether a bowl has sufficient

weight. We are at the mercy of how potential viewers and critics judge our turnings. Their feelings and interpretations are often not based on the skill level or work involved in creating the piece.

All the visual elements combined together constitute what we generally call “form”. Form in this sense is not just a shape that is seen, but is a structure of definite size, color and texture, weight, balance, and feeling. The way these elements are presented together in a piece is called structure. We will continue next month with a discussion of form. Form as volume, positive and negative form that we touched on this month, form and color distribution and patterning and the interrelationships of form and my favorite overused truism “Form Follows Function”.

**Calgary events:**

This month, make plans to attend the Black Forest Wood Expo held October 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>. Come and join in a celebration of the wonders of wood.

**Interesting websites:**

Trees, Wood and People:

<http://www.turningtools.co.uk/trees/treeart.html>

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## About the guild...

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**MEETINGS**

The Guild meets on the first Tuesday, each month (except July and August) at 7:00 PM at Black Forest Wood Co., Bay 7, 603 – 77<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE, Calgary. Visitors are welcome.

**WEBSITE**

<http://www.calgarywoodturners.com>

**CLUB OFFICERS**

President and Director	Dennis Milbrandt	403 605-8420
Sec-Treas. and Director	Jim Osenton	403-286-3667
Vice President and Director	Duncan Robertson	403-870-7331
Assistant Treasurer	Peter Eddy	403-650-4979
Director	Jim Leslie	403- 226-5933
Assistant Secretary	??	
Director	Tim Dorcas	403-650-9177
Director	Mike Swendsen	403-651-4806

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BAR-B-QUE (ANNUAL)	Ron Falconer
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