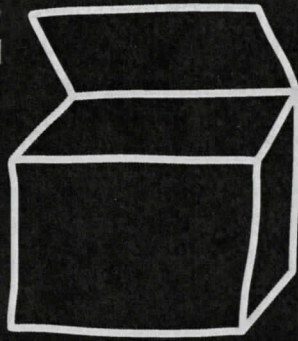


THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX



by Ron Zdroik



MAKING A GREAT TURNING EVEN GREATER

Metal Leaf

Take a piece of metal (gold, silver, copper or some type of composition metal) and pound it until it is ultra-thin, less than 2 microns thick (that's about 8/100,000 of an inch) and you have metal leaf. Metal leaf is extremely fragile and require a delicate touch to handle and apply but the results are stunning. The wood must be sanded smooth and clean of dust. You don't need to have the final finish on the area you wish to cover but it needs to have some type of sealer (undercoating). I use a coat of thinned water-based varnish. The leaf can also be applied over an irregular surface but this requires a lot more practice.

You will need an adhesive, also known as sizing, when applying the leaf. The sizing dries from a milky white to clear. The sizing application brush needs to be cleaned immediately after use with a hot water and ammonia solution. Application of the leaf can be done with a soft bristle brush or very clean hands. Use the brush to carefully press the leaf smooth. Breaks or open area in the leaf can be covered with additional sizing and leaf material. Since metal leaf is very fragile, don't use it where there is constant hand contact such as the inside of a nut bowl or a lidded jewelry box but it can certainly be used in areas such as a recessed band around the outside of a bowl or the top of a lid. I would suggest that you clear-coat it with a gloss urethane or water-based varnish. You can carefully use a soft bristled brush or an airbrush at low pressure. One to two coats is usually sufficient to provide protection.

Brand name: Mona Lisa (made by Speedball) - available at Artist and Display and online.

Airbrush

Whether it's a custom paint job on that '68 Camaro or adding some great accents to a vase, the airbrush is a wonderful piece of engineering. Think of it as a paint spray can with much, much better control. I would strongly suggest using water-based acrylic paints because of the ease of clean-up and lower toxicity as compared to lacquer and enamel-based paints (but you should still wear a good respirator). The airbrush can be used to spray a general overall color, detailed artwork, graduated tones of color, stippling, stenciling, wood dyes and even the final finish on your bowls and vases.

All you need to start airbrushing is some air (most shops already have an air compressor) and an airbrush. I would suggest a double-action airbrush, either the siphon or gravity-feed models. Prices for airbrushes range from \$25 to \$200 plus. If you go with the dirt cheap model, just make absolutely sure it sprays a clean, circular pattern with no spitting. Most airbrushing requires around 25 to 35 psi. Don't worry about CFM capacity as airbrushes need very little volume.

Your finished airbrushing should be clear-coated with some type of finish or varnish. A few coats of gloss varnish will help enhance the colors while a satin finish will mute the colors somewhat. Be careful when using water-based varnishes on acrylic paints - go with several thin coats. Like turning, airbrushing requires practice. Doing a quick coat of a transparent paint or a gloss finish is fairly simple but stenciling, blending and artwork will take time to be proficient.

Continued...

All acrylic paints designed for airbrushes, known as FLUID PAINTS, can be used directly from the bottle. You can use a MEDIUM to thin regular fluid acrylic paints for use through an airbrush. You can also use an EXTENDER to make paints more transparent. DO NOT try to thin regular acrylic tube paints - use only paints designed for airbrushes.

...And clean the airbrush thoroughly after use! (Use water or a soap-based cleaner for acrylic paints).

Brand names: Paasche and Badger - start at around \$50 - \$75. Iwata - start at around \$75 to \$200 plus. Some models are available at Artist and Display. All can be found at DixieArt.com. Badger can be found at Michaels. Badger and Iwata at Dickblick.com. Cheap off-brands can be found at Harbor Freight and other discount stores.

Paints: Use high quality FLUID airbrush acrylics such as Golden (my preference), Createx and ComArt - available at Artist and Display and online at Dixieart.com and Dickblick.com.

Wood Dye

I use TransFast dye powders- easy to prepare with hot water and can be stored for a long time in a sealed containers (I use old 35 mm film canisters - remember those?). You don't need a lot - liquid dyes go a long way. Wear rubber or nitrile gloves to avoid getting the dye all over your hands. Dyes can easily be blended and multiple colors can be applied to your turnings. Of course, lighter woods will bring out the dye colors more strongly than medium to darker woods. One of the great features of dyes is the ability to make woods that are normally avoided by turners, such as poplar and pine, to really show off their grains. You would be amazed on how dramatic these grains can be. You can usually apply the dye directly to most woods but soft woods (particularly pine) should be coated with a sealer to help prevent mottling and splotchiness. Use a normal wood sealer or very diluted water-based varnish (one coat is sufficient). TransFast dyes are available at Woodcraft and Rockler.

Metal and Glass

Using metals, glass and other materials can add a great effect to wood turnings. Whether used as a small accent or a major design element, these materials are inexpensive and easily available.

Suggested uses include:

Copper plumbing pipe or tubing with a brushed-on patina (numerous patinas are available at Stain Glass Studio).

Brass or copper wire that can be used as "stitching".

Small glass or ceramic mosaic tiles or even broken pieces can be incorporated in flat areas of bowls. Use colors that complement the wood.

Natural Materials

Many turners already use natural materials (beside the wood of course!) when they turn a natural-edged bowl.

Other suggestions include:

Using sticks and branches for legs.

Vines and other similar materials for wrapping.

Stones and pebbles - although turquoise is the most obvious, many other stones such as simple smooth pebbles or crush granite can be used.

Using leaves and other natural items, which then can be coated with a clear acrylic resin or similar material.

Legs and Feet

The use of legs on my turnings seem to be my signature of artistic expression. Adding legs to a simple bowl or vase adds a much higher level of artistic interest to the turning. Taking a straightforward, utilitarian bowl used to hold nuts and adding feet or legs now can make that bowl much more dramatic, all the while it is still a useful bowl filled with cashews and almonds. Whether it is a simple base using three turned balls of a contrasting wood or intricate steam-bent legs with metal inlay or patinated copper tubing, adding legs to your turning allows you to transform that great turning into an even greater turning.