

LAYOUT AND CARVING ON WOODTURNINGS

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INSPIRATION:

Look around for ideas and patterns - nature/plants/animals/geometric shapes/waves. We learn the procedures by copying from others and grow from there.

LAYOUT:

Form and Shape - This can be a whole week long course by itself. Study those that you like and make patterns if you need to. **NO EMBELLISHMENT OR CARVING WILL IMPROVE ON A BAD FORM.** Contrary to what I have read by others, no wood has ever spoken to me that resulted in a good shape. It has all come from a plan ahead of time.

The horizontal lines are applied to the turning with the use of a flat or curved pencil rest. Paul Fennell coats his turning with CA glue, then uses colored ball point pens for layout. I prefer a flat carpenter's pencil and spray the lines with fixative after they are applied.

The vertical lines are drawn with the lathe spinning, starting from the high point and making squares all the way to both ends. Having established this "grid" we can transfer our pattern from graph paper to the turning. Theoretically, anything we can draw on graph paper can be transferred to a round object. If we need to color code, as in the case of basketweave, I do it with gel pens and respray the fixative.

Another method of making a spiral is to make a vertical line at the wide point of the hollow form. The next line goes around one half the distance to the top and bottom. Keep dividing in half till you run out of room. Use these connecting points to form a spiral. Look at Avelino Samuel's work to see how it looks.

If there will be piercing in the finished form, depth holes may be drilled in these places prior to hollowing to ensure a uniform wall thickness.

If there will be a lowered portion on the finished form, use a drill stop to set the depth of holes for a guide in the carving.

CARVING TIPS:

Practice on a flat board will help your procedure. Species and thickness should be the same as your turning.

Layout design all the way around your finished form to make sure it fits.

If the background will be recessed, depth holes will be drilled at this time.

Do rough cutting with reciprocating carver, hand carving tools, or flex shaft tools. **LEAVE LAYOUT MARKS ON FOR REFERENCE!**

Piercing is done with high speed tools (dental handpiece or NSK Presto) in a thin turning. It is very hard to pierce wood that is more than 1/8" thick.

Fine carving is done with micromotor using burrs and mandrel sanders. **NOW YOU CAN CARVE UP TO THE LINES!**

Rough sand using cones/diamond dust discs and shapes/tadpoles/sticks.

Fine sand using appropriate shapes for the surface skipping grits so you can see previous scratches (100/220/400). THIS IS THE TIME TO REMOVE ALL PENCIL LINES.

SANDING:

Final shaping is usually done by sanding. Usually, a half speed (10-20,000 rpm) works better and makes less dust. For sanding discs, apply paper backed (not plastic, it melts with heat) two sided tape to sandpaper and punch discs or cut in squares. These discs are then stuck to a mandrel or roof nail. A round disc can sand up to other features without rounding the edges over. Using square discs will give a tapered shape to the edges. It all depends on what you need for the finished piece. Use the best paper you can find - it lasts longer - you get 100-200 discs per sheet.

SANDPAPER IS A CUTTING TOOL! If it is dull you are wasting time and may burn the surface. Since we are using small pieces it is really cheap.

Different areas will need to be sanded with different tools. Slotted mandrels and diamond dust burrs are used for different shapes.

Hand sanding can be accomplished using sticks, rods, cones, credit cards, tadpoles, or just plain paper. Work your way through the grits until you are satisfied.

TEXTURING:

Brushed texture - use a wire wheel - steel for coarse, brass for fine - try it by hand first, you have more control and it goes fairly fast.

Stippled - Leather punches, engraving tool, center punch, or sharp point on a woodburner.

Orange Peel - Round over the point in an engraving tool, roughen it with sandpaper so it doesn't slide too easily and just "scribble" with the tool so you have no pattern. After a while you will see the texture appear.

FINISHING:

Finish polish using Bristle Discs/Scotch Brite/Buffering wheels. After all this work, it would be a shame to have the wrong finish ruin everything. Remember the practice board from the beginning? If you made it out of the same material, you could practice finish on it too. A safe finish for almost anything is Krylon "Matte" spray. It will darken light woods very slightly, however it may leave cherry and walnut flat looking. Try a sample before you ruin your work!