

Brendan Stemp's Multi-Axis Woodturning

by Vic Wood

Brendan Stemp has made a significant contribution to the world of woodturning with his development of a technique that enables him to turn very interesting forms on, and up to, three different axes.



Hobart (Huon Pine) — turned on two axes with the legs carved from two rims that were also turned (220mm x 100mm x 120mm)

He helped me turn some of the bigger square edged bowls. In doing so he became the only person I have seen snap a 16mm bowl gouge in two. He has not made this mistake again.

Brendan spent 15 years in woodturning limbo, distracted by full time teaching, hang gliding, mortgages, home renovations, rock climbing and children (in that order). However, he did continue to do the occasional woodturning in his spare time and also started a part time woodworking business.



Red Gum Bowl (Red Gum) — turned on two axes. The legs were cut from a separate bowl using a bandsaw (190mm x 80mm x 110mm)

While multi-axis turning is not new, Brendan's technique is. The bowls and containers he is producing can be considered truly unique.

At a time when exhibition woodturnings are relying more and more on embellishments completed off the lathe, Brendan's work stands apart. In most cases his pieces have been completed entirely on the lathe and he has resisted the temptation to follow the trends of carving, piercing or colouring.

Brendan had a very fortunate start to his woodturning career. While studying to be an Art and Craft teacher at Melbourne State College (majoring in woodcraft), he attended a woodturning demonstration and was immediately attracted to it. The demonstrator paused for a lunch break and Brendan saw an opportunity to satisfy a course requirement — professional work experience.

The teaching course required all students to complete four weeks of work experience in an area in which they were



Tangere Videre Est (Tasmanian Myrtle) — all of this piece was turned on the lathe including the void underneath (220mm x 120mm x 100mm)

In 2002 a long-held desire to live in the country was realised when he moved to Horsham with his family to take up a teaching position. Another long-held desire was realised three years later, when an opportunity arose to demonstrate the skills he had acquired in woodturning.

Since turning his attention back to turning, Brendan has developed some

majoring and he thought this demonstrator might be able to help him out. After some consideration Brendan's request was accepted and he ventured up to Mittagong NSW in 1985 to spend two weeks with Richard Raffan.

He enjoyed this introduction to woodturning so much (what wood turner wouldn't?) that he decided to approach me to take him on for the other two weeks of his work experience. This I did and then employed him over the summer break to help with an exhibition I was putting together.

