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Beginner's Guide to Woodturning

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Chapter 1. Woodturning Explained

The crafting of objects from different materials is an inseparable part of the technological progress and the life of people. There are some crafts that are more specific than others. Woodturning is a type of woodworking, but it uses crafting methods that are fundamentally from ancient times. You should definitely learn about this unique craft.

What is woodturning?

Woodturning involves the spinning movement of the wood which is shaped with special tools and the use of a stationary tool called a lathe. A lathe resembles a motorized table with legs. A number of tools which perform different functions are applied to the wood. In this way the piece is cut, shaped, drilled, sanded or knurled. Generally, you can make any sort of object with the use of a lathe.

The early craftsmen used lathes and woodturning techniques to create objects for home use such as bowls. It is interesting to note that the first tool of this type was invented in the 14th century BC by the Ancient Egyptians. Improved versions of the lathe came into use in the Middle Ages.

During the industrial revolution the tool was motorized, which made it even more functional and easy to use. With the growing of mass

production woodturning became the main manufacturing process in a lot of industries. The techniques were used for the production of parts for wooden furniture from legs and stretchers to fine ornaments. Wooden pencils and pens were also made with the use of motorized lathes. Various other objects such as chess pieces and musical instruments were produced in this way as well.

In fact, these wooden objects are still manufactured with lathes. The only difference is that the tools used for commercial mass production today are totally automated and are operated with the use of computers. The human involvement in the actual woodturning has become completely obsolete. However, this is not so for the hobbyist. You can use a motorized lathe to make all sort of functional and decorative objects by hand. You can even turn your hobby into a business since the original, unique and personalized items crafted in this way are highly valued.

As a start, you have to pick a reliable lathe. These are readily available on the market. You should opt for one with components made from the strongest steel. In this way it will work efficiently for longer. Tools of high speed steel require less frequent sharpening. This makes the work process more effective, convenient and even more cost-efficient. You are highly recommended to choose tools from high speed steel.

There are all types of woodturning tools that you need to equip yourself

with. You will need a roughing gouge for the initial rounding of the wood. A spindle gouge will allow you to create all sorts of details. You will need a bowl gouge, a bowl saver and a hollowing tool as well. The hollowing tool is used for making deeper cuts. You will have to use a skew chisel and a specific scraper to smooth the wood. The auger is used for the drilling of holes. You will have to use a parting tool to separate the wood piece from the lathe.

There are a number of woodturning techniques that you can use to produce a variety of beautiful objects. Spindle turning is the simplest and most common method used for the making of furniture parts such as table legs, spindles and pens. One lathe the spur center digs into the wood. The other center also supports the work piece. In faceplate woodturning the object is secured with screws to a faceplate and then a tool is used for its crafting. This technique is used for making hollow objects such as bowls and platters.

More elaborate techniques involve eccentric and elliptical turning. The former is characterized by turning a wood piece a number of times with the axis of rotation being changed each time. Elliptical turning involves the alteration of the actual center of rotation of the piece. In this way the cuts become oval rather than round. Therming and segment turning are other popular techniques. The latter is used for the creation of particularly artistic pieces.

Woodturning is interesting, rewarding and fun. It requires a lot of work, but your efforts will pay off in the end. The important thing is to take all safety measures when working.

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