

AWSA NEWS LETTER JULY 2018 – BREAKING YOUR BOUNDARIES

Dear Fellow Wood Tuners

As we make progress towards the goal of having a National Body which will provide tangible benefits to both local clubs and individuals we have scripted this our first newsletter. We hope that you will find it worthwhile? In addition to the newsletter we are about to launch a column on useful tips for Woodturners. This column will be available on our website (AWSA.Org.Za).

We are pleased to report that we have had some positive response to our recent letter calling for suggestions on the future role of AWSA. From the feedback we are now researching various international models with a view to presenting a model which takes into consideration the realities of our situation in South Africa. We plan to have a concept ready for the September symposium.

Last month the Sedgefield Woodturners were taken on a journey of **DESIGN** presented by Chris Smart. Chris emphasised the need for an artist to firstly design what they have in mind and then to work on that design until some perfection is attained. His message rang a bell with so many of us who come up with an idea, get on the lathe and if nothing good materialises we abandon the project. I like many of you have a shelf full of abandoned projects. Chris's advice is that you try and try again until you produce a turned piece that you are proud of. Chris inspired us and gave us some very useful tips on how to design artefacts that can be turned on a lathe. ***You will notice that we have included Chris as one of our demonstrators for the September Symposium.***

For the past few months I have been experimenting with polymer clay as a possible filler. There are quite a lot of challenges which if sorted out I will share with you in September. So far, I have only been able to access one example where a turner has used polymer clay in enhancing his workpiece. There are numerous examples where polymer clay is used on its own in pen making but limited applications of polymer clay and wood. In trying to get to understand polymer clay I have found a very interesting source of information from The Blue Bottle Tree (thebluebottletree.com)

In preparation for the upcoming Symposium in September and in line with the "Breaking Your Boundaries" theme from our keynote demonstrator John Wessels and the wakeup call from Chris Smart I have selected an article from The Blue Bottle Tree which I hope will resonate with you and inspire you to come to the September Symposium.

"Like most people, I'll bet you try quite hard to be good at what you do. I think it stems from being in school where it was terrible to be picked last or to make the lowest grade. You wanted to show your friends that you were cool and make your parents proud. Of course, you've moved on since then, but the desire to do your best has stayed with you.

However, along with the desire to succeed is the fear of failing spectacularly, in a big flaming ball of embarrassment.

In order to make good art, art that brings something special to the world, you need to try things that you haven't done before. You have to reach out into the darkness and explore new and unfamiliar ideas. But the further you go into the realm of the unknown, the bigger the crash will be when (I didn't say if) you fail.

To avoid risk it's only natural to try to stay safe. It's easiest to stay in the middle, in the zone of mediocrity. Instead of risking failure, you embrace the familiar and rely on old techniques and make variations on the same things everyone else does. But that won't help you make good art.

In order to make good art, you have to make bad art. You have to fail. But don't just throw your hands up and hate yourself for being a failure. Figure out what wrong. Examine it. What needs to change? Then learn how to fix it next time. If you need help with design, read a design book (I recommend a great one below). If you need to learn a better way of doing something, seek tutorials and courses that will help you understand the process better. If your work is sloppy, practice over and over (and over) again until you can create those cuts with precision and finish your work neatly.

Nobody makes good art their very first try. Good art only comes after making bad art. You never see the bad art that the masters make, but that doesn't mean they don't make it. Of course, they do. And you will too.

Now get busy making bad art. When you begin to welcome the bad art as the teacher it is, you will find yourself making good art more easily and I promise that you'll love it all the more".

By Ginger Davis Allman – The Blue Bottle Tree (thebluebottletree.com – April 2018)

I Hope to see you in September

Roy Marcus