

# Passionate woodturners meet

Armed with chisel and lathe, woodturning enthusiasts flocked to Pietermaritzburg for the annual Association of Woodturners of South Africa (AWSA) 2009 Symposium held from July 2-5. By Johann Stadler.



◀ *Nick Agar, a woodturning artist from the United Kingdom with an art piece he created during one of his demonstrations.*

**M**ore than 80 woodturners from around the country attended the annual Association of Woodturners of South Africa (AWSA) 2009 Symposium in July. It was hosted for the second time by the Natal Midlands Woodworkers Guild at the Pietermaritzburg campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Woodturners came to exhibit their own pieces, attend demonstrations and especially to meet the guest speaker, Nick Agar, a woodturning artist from the United Kingdom.

Nick Agar's work is inspired and influenced by nature, geography, ancient artefacts and cultures worldwide and he feels a strong connection with ancient civilisations and their artworks, such as North American Indians, Egyptians, Mayans and Aborigines. After running his own

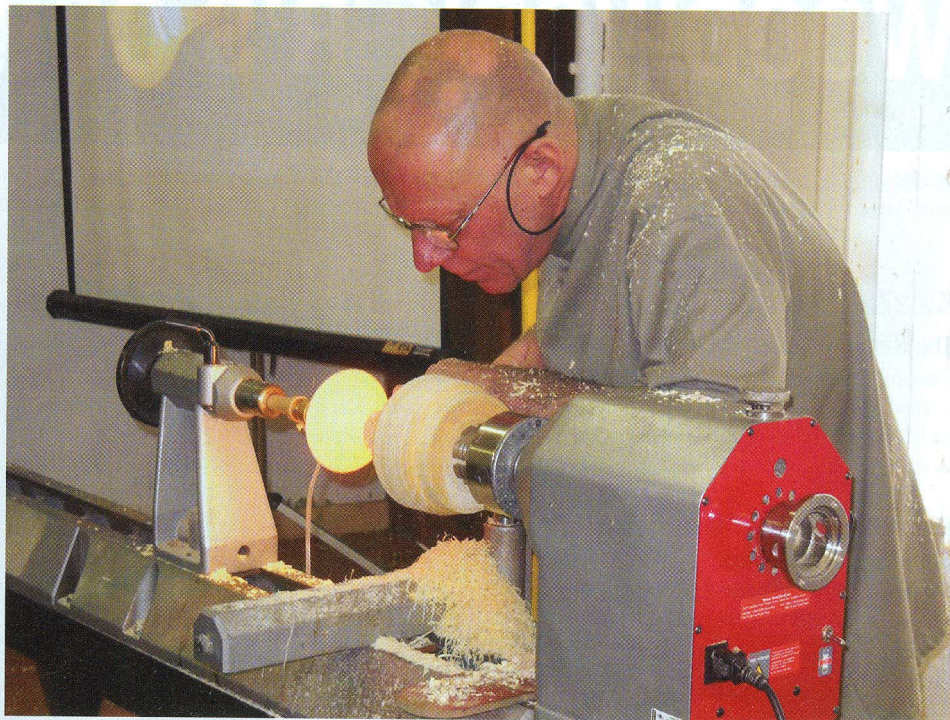
▼ *Some of the masterpieces exhibited by local artists at the symposium.*





▲ Many of the art pieces left me breathless on my first visit to the exhibition.

► Dries Blignaut demonstrates how to turn a thin walled goblet.



successful studio and gallery in Dartington, Devon for 10 years, Nick set up the South Hams School of Woodturning in his new, purpose-built workshop and studios on the banks of the river Dart in Devon. Between demonstrations and teaching in the UK and abroad, he concentrates on producing new work and commissions for collectors and selected galleries.

Nick opened the symposium with a lecture and demonstration on multi centre wall sculptures, taking into consideration design, use of colour, texture and power carving, and most importantly, safety. On day two, he focused on turning, scorching, carving with an angle grinder and colouring

with wax tips on a burnt and bronzed bowel, while day three was a discussion of his decorative shield.

Many other masters in the woodworking fraternity also attended the symposium and demonstrated their unique talents. Among them were Michelle Rall, who lectured on shapes, forms and seeking inspiration from ceramic shapes. Dries Blignaut showed off his talents by turning a thin walled goblet on the lathe, and Shabeer Mohamed demonstrated how to turn pens. John Wessels, Perrie Bullock, Dennis Laidler, Alan Ferguson, Piet Smith, Juliet Armstrong, Nigel Waters, Clyde Neumann, Chris Morewood, Butch Smuts, Robin Reynolds

and Chris Terry all had their chance to contribute towards the success of the symposium in the lecture hall.

Fund-raising also formed part of the symposium in the form of an auction and lucky draw. Turners were asked to support this initiative by providing turned items for the auction, and a large percentage of the funds raised were donated to Cindi (Children in Distress), a charitable organisation founded in Pietermaritzburg.

There is no doubt that all who attended the symposium left filled with ideas, inspiration and newly gained knowledge from their interaction with others who share the same passion for woodworking. ■



▲ Many businesses jumped at the opportunity to sell their products at the symposium, such as Red Ivory Trading which sells South African indigenous wood.



▲ The main lecture hall was packed with woodturning enthusiasts, hungry to learn skills from experts such as Nick Agar and many other local artists.