

## Woodturning Design: Presentation for WBW by Barry and Laura Uden, February 2009

### A. Ensuring Good Design Before and During Turning

#### 1. Design Elements

- The design elements are aspects of the piece that can be manipulated or modified by the artist to create the design
- The design elements include:
  - a) Color/value
  - b) Texture
  - c) Shape/form/movement
  - d) Scale/proportion

##### 1a. **Color/Value**

- The color of the wood should suit the purpose and shape of the piece to make it interesting. If multiple colors are used in a piece, they should be complementary or similar in the warmth or coolness of the tones. Value is the degree of light and dark in any part of the design.

##### 1b. **Texture**

- This is the degree of roughness or smoothness in objects. It is about surface quality, either tactile or visual. Texture can be real (tactile), or can be implied by burning or painting the surface, or by using patterns, such as with segmented pieces.

##### 1c. **Shape/Form/Movement**

- Shape / form is a characteristic of an object that makes it appear to vary when viewed from different angles.
- Movement has to do with the visual flow through the composition.
- Attention should be paid to the point at which the flow changes shape or direction. Shape changes should be either smooth and gradual or distinct and sharp: an in-between approach can look like a mistake.

##### 1d. **Scale/Proportion**

- Scale refers to variations in overall size. The size should be fit for use unless designing miniatures. Proportion refers to the relative comparison of sizes of objects, lines or shapes within the piece.
- Avoid placing any design feature or shape change (e.g., bead, ridge, edge of a lid, etc.) close to the halfway point vertically up a piece. This is also true for the location of the center of gravity or widest point on the piece – a 1/3 to 2/3 proportion usually looks good, and often (not always), above center is best.
- For bowls and platters, the rule of thumb is that the base should be about 1/3 of the diameter of the piece.
- For closed forms, a good rule of thumb is that the size of the top opening should be 1/3 of the diameter of the piece or less.

## 2. Design Principles

- The design principles can be seen in how the design applies the design elements
- These principles are described in the characteristics of the piece, and include:
  - a) Center of interest
  - b) Balance
  - c) Harmony
  - d) Rhythm
  - e) Contrast

### 2a. **Center of Interest**

- This is an area that first attracts attention in a composition. This area is more important when compared to the other objects or elements in a composition. This can be by contrast of values, more colors, and placement in the format. Related to proportion, it is usually good practice to NOT put a major design element at the exact middle of the piece. Instead, follow the golden mean or rule of thirds.

### 2b. **Balance**

- This is a feeling of visual equality in shape, form, value, color, etc. Balance can be symmetrical and evenly balanced or asymmetrical. Colors, values, textures, shapes, etc., can be used in creating a balance in a composition. For closed forms, a good rule of thumb is that the size of the top opening should be relatively similar in size to the base.

### 2c. **Harmony**

- Harmony brings together a composition with similar aspects. Too much harmony without variety is boring, while too much variation without harmony is chaotic.

### 2d. **Rhythm**

- Rhythm is a movement in which some elements recur regularly, such as a bead or finial design. It enhances the feeling of harmony of the piece. Although the sizes of the repeated objects can vary, it is important to keep the proportions the same; otherwise, it can look like a mistake.

### 2e. **Contrast**

- Contrast is the variation between shapes or tones in the piece. It offers a change in value creating a visual discord in a composition. Contrast shows the difference between shapes and can be used as a background to bring objects out and forward in a design. It can also be used to create an area of emphasis.

### **C. Ensuring Good Design After Turning**

#### **1. Look for Consistency Throughout the Piece**

- Of style
- Of embellishment/treatment
- Of finish
- Of proportion

#### **2. Ensure Harmony of Design Characteristics**

- Finish aligned with purpose
- Finish aligned with style
- Wood color and pattern aligned with embellishment/treatment

### **D. What Not To Do**

- Striving for too much complexity – simple can be both beautiful and elegant
- Trying to make something too big from the blank, resulting in poor form. Instead, adjust the style or type of piece, or make two smaller items
- Not planning the piece ahead of time
- Not visualizing or outlining the piece while in progress