



PHOTOGRAPHS BY CURT THEOBALD

MAIN: Cha' Hu',
cherry (*Prunus spp.*)
190mm (7½in) x
70mm (2¾in)
x 110mm (4¼in)

20 minutes with Curt Theobald



Tegan Foley speaks to Curt Theobald, one of the world's leading segmented turners. Curt makes a number of highly acclaimed works and demonstrates on the subject, in addition to producing his own tools



How has segmented turning changed since you first became part of it?

I think the biggest change in segmented turning is the number of people doing segmented work. The creativity and exploration of

segmented work has increased tremendously. Currently there are many more people doing segmented work. I think this is directly related to the books and tutorial DVDs that I and others have created that make this process much more achievable.

RIGHT:
Archeology
series,
spalted
maple (*Acer
campestre*)
190mm
(7½in) x
150mm (6in)
x 150mm (6in)





You are one of the world's leading exponents on segmented turning, where do you see yourself in five years' time?

Experimenting with scale/proportion and continuing to explore ways in which to assemble and turn segmented work, as well as pursuing more sculptural pieces.



How does woodturning tuition work alongside your career as a full-time segmented turner?

I travel and teach segmented woodturning at regional and national symposiums and woodturning clubs several times a year. I also host three-day hands-on workshops at my home. It is a great opportunity for me to share the craft with others. It allows me a chance to see segmented work through the eyes of others. The teaching takes a lot of time and energy but is very satisfying. I am always amazed at what I learn from students when I am teaching.



The pieces you create are very complex; can anyone learn segmented turning?

I thrive on the challenges segmented work offers. I have many ideas that I don't fully comprehend yet. Segmented turning can be learned by anyone who has a little patience. By starting with simple projects and then progressing to more complicated designs, as your skills improve, almost anyone can have success in segmented turning. Most importantly, you need to be aware of the grain orientation of the woods that are being glued together and keep the grain in the same direction. This is the most common mistake that beginners and sometimes more experienced segmented turners make.



Tell us about the piece you are currently working on.

A large scale grouping of pieces that are mostly cylindrical in shape and will become part of a sculptural work. There are three elements in the pieces representing the three members of my family.



Which other turners do you most admire?

David Ellsworth for his encouragement; Bud Latven for his technically challenging works; and Thierry Martenon for his artistic approach.



What do you think the future holds for woodturning in general?

I think turning is in its infancy. There is lots of interest being generated in the field of contemporary wood art. The quality and ingenuity of work being created today is quite impressive compared to only five years ago.



What three pieces of equipment in your workshop could you not do without?

Other than my lathe, I would have to say my disc sander, table saw and the mitre saw.



Do you think there is a difference between segmented turning in the USA compared to that in the UK?

Segmented work worldwide has gained popularity in the past 10 years, and this is largely due to the quality of the work being produced by segmented turners. I am seeing many more segmented pieces in the pages of *Woodturning* magazine than in past years. To fully answer the question regarding differences, I think I would need to make a visit to look at the segmented work currently being created in the UK. ●

CONTACT DETAILS

Email: cwtheobald@wyoming.com
Website: www.curttheobald.com



ABOVE: 'Looking Forward Looking Back,' English walnut (*Juglans nigra*) and clear glass, 150mm (6in) x 75mm (3in) x 50mm (2in)



BELOW: Curt turning one of his segmented pieces