

Echos From the "BAT" Cave

Baltimore Area Turners

BALTIMORE AREA

TURNERS

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MIDAS TOUCH



Alex Robinson (left) took BAT on a tour through the wonderful world of gilding. After walking the group through some amazing examples of architectural gilding, he demonstrated the basics of gilding, turning objects like an ordinary scallop shell into gold (below).



Also inside, **Richard Dietrich** reviews a BAT library DVD.

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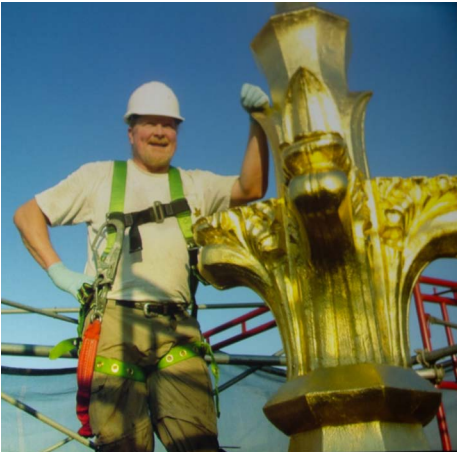
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GILDING DEMO



Alex Robinson discusses mortants.



Alex poses atop Manhattan skyscraper gilded by his company.
(picture of Alex's photo)



Final touches gilding King Stone in Kauai temple.
(picture of Alex's photo)

Alex Robinson, son of long-time BAT member Court Robinson, has done his share of turning but since his teens, his passion has been gilding. He is a professional gilder for [The Gilder's Studio](#). He wanted to share that passion with BAT. Gilding is rife with foreign sounding terms and concepts like Bole, Mordent, Gilder's Tip, and Gesso. By the end of his presentation, we were as comfortable with those terms as we are with Headstock, Live Center, Bowl Gouge.

The key to good gilding starts with surface preparation. The surface must be perfect - the gold leaf will go into any defect. Alex's presentation started with ample preparation. He began with a quick overview of the two types of gilding: Mordant based, that is, gilding to an adhesive, and Activated glue - gilding onto liquid glue. The remainder of the talk covered Mordant based gilding. Traditionally, the mordant is oil-based (varnish) which is applied to the surface and allowed to dry to 'whistling tack,' where it can be touched lightly without damaging and won't stick to the finger but is still tacky. With oil-based mordant, the 'Moment of Tackiness' can be very short. Modern synthetic water-based mordants, such as Aquasize, provide a more predictable and longer tack time. He stressed that the standard for his company is no visible flaws on the surface, regardless of the size of the job. A pinhead-size gap is a flaw and all flaws need to be chased down, especially in exterior work, where gold leaf shades the mordant from damaging UV rays. Any gap would allow UV to damage the mordant, causing undermining of the gilding.

As examples of The Gilder's Studio's work, he showed slides of a building in Manhattan where the 22 story top of the building was gilded with \$1M of gold covering its 35,000 sq ft. Another series of slides showed a hand carved granite temple in Kauai, the rainiest spot on earth (90" of rain a year). The granite King Stone's surface was prepared in 5 steps, including [German Mineral Paint](#), and finally coated with [Aquasize](#) mordant. All layers had to allow water vapor to penetrate. [Gold](#) was applied in 8" rolls and it needed to be gilded twice. He showed an example of interior gilding of the Clouds and Organ Pipes of the [Segerstrom Orange County Performing Arts Center](#). This used aluminum gilding which, after application, is 'skewed' with a lambskin mat which further flattens the subsurface. This slide show served not only to awe group with the scale and artistry of his work, but also allowed him to reiterate and reinforce the principles and terminology involved in mordant gilding.

He showed items prepared for gilding and then did some gilding. Turned wood lends itself to gilding very well. For a flat finish, the fresh-cut wood is filled with Gesso (a mixture of animal glue and ground Calcium Carbonate (regular, not superfine); [Liberon](#) makes it.) It can be spit-polished with the

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Alex's box o' gear



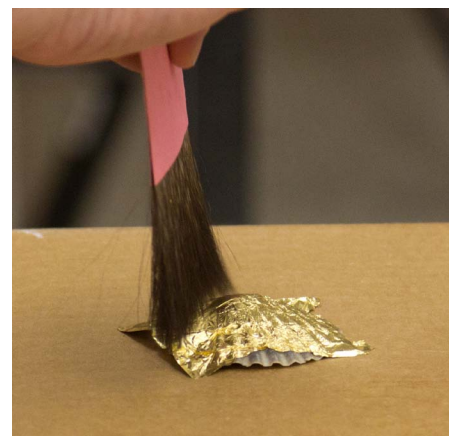
Applying mordant to shell.



Gilder's Tip and finger knife.

heel of the hand while spinning on the lathe. Bole, a dyed clay application, can be used to color portions of the piece (typically red in the depths, yellow on the peaks). The mordant is applied, then gold leaf is lifted with a Gilder's Tip (a wide flat brush primed by rubbing face, hair or a thin layer of Vaseline) and applied to the surface. A mop (a broad soft brush) is used to press the gold leaf onto the surface. A pencil (fine point brush) is used to press it into the crevices.

More gold can be applied to irregular surfaces, such as a scallop shell, and will stick to the voids. It can be burnished with an agate burnishing stone. Afterward, it is sealed with clear coat.



Applying gold leaf to shell.



Applying gold leaf to prepared wood.

Alex showed a framed dome mirror which was a silver-gilded dome glass (or [watch glass](#)). The glue for mirror gilding must be just right - if too strong, it will be dull. He uses a 7:1 acetone dilution of the adhesive. It is applied with a pounce (cotton wrapped in tight-weave cloth - like a French polishing rubber). The acetone dries immediately, leaving a thin film of adhesive - leaf is applied right away.



Mopping leaf into crevices.



Mopping leaf onto wood.

This information-packed presentation served as a great introduction to gilding. It should help inspire many BAT members to give [gilding](#) a try. Thanks, Alex!



Finishing up.

DVD REVIEW: BOXES, GOBLETS & SCREWTHREADS

by **Richard Dietrich**

Dennis White Teaches Woodturning 3:
Boxes, Goblets and Screwthreads

Guild of Master Craftsmen Publications
Fox Chapel Publishing

BAT library 102

I have always enjoyed watching a craftsman at work. As a child, I loved to watch my next door neighbor, a mechanic, working on a project. Watching Dennis White turn was a similar experience.

This is a video from another era. Nowadays, turners, such as Bill Grumbine or Lyle Jamieson, go into exacting detail in their videos, often pausing to draw a diagram on a flip chart or show an enlarged version of a tool. Dennis White just turns. It's like watching a skilled surgeon do an operation. Every motion is sure and confident.

The 1987 video starts with a shot of the Harrison Graduate lathe with a timber mounted on it. As an off-screen announcer describes the play-by-play, you see an elegant beaded box formed. The body of the box is bored out with a flat auger and a skew used as a scraper; the top is not hollowed at all, and the bottoms, which are parted off, are never shown. But the exterior is lovely. Several more boxes of different styles are made in a similar manner. The viewer is invited by the narrator to "Study these pictures carefully."

It's a little different in the next part, wherein two goblets are made. The cups are hollowed using the back-hollowing technique used by Richard Raffan in his Box Turning video. I've never understood it until watching Dennis White. Not only is the technique repeated in the video, it is done in slow motion with the announcer describing the technique in detail. The first goblet is turned with the cup supported by a jam chuck on a dead center; the second is turned unsupported. Both are parted off at the bottom.

Finally, a box with a threaded lid is fashioned from *Lignum vitae*. The threads are hand chased and the lid miraculously mates with the body of the box. Finally, it is turned to the shape of an apple and, as the others, parted off.

It was mesmerizing to watch Dennis White turn. His more than 65 years of woodturning experience is evident in every move he makes. The emphasis is definitely on the turning; you never see his face until the very end of the video when he utters the only 9 words he ever speaks.

This is probably not the best video for a beginning turner - I would recommend Richard Raffan's Turning Boxes or Turning Projects but it predates them by several years.

For threading, Allan Batty's Hand Thread Chasing video is much more thorough and equally British.

NEW TO THE LIBRARY



BAT President Susan Shane holds two DVDs recently donated by their makers. Mark Spagnuolo's *A Simple Varnish Finish* and David Springett's *Elliptical Turning: an introduction* will be available for borrowing from the BAT library.



Donated items included Elm and Cedar logs, Cherry turning block, Staghorn Sumac and Cherry rounds, Lilac splits, S&S Maple, Cherry, Plum, and Maple spindle blanks, Green Olive wood block and more. Thanks, all

RAFFLE NEWS

There will be a special two-month raffle for the **Mark Sfirri Candlestick and Squiggle** (pictured below). Tickets will be sold at the August and September meetings and the drawing will be held at the September meeting. The winner need not be present to win.



BALTIMORE AREA TURNERS

Baltimore Area Turners meets every month on the second Wednesday of the month at the Greater Baltimore Woodcraft Store at:

1125 Cromwell Bridge Road
Towson, MD 21286

Next meeting:
August 10, 2011 at 6:30 PM

Featured:
Show and Tell



PRESIDENT'S CHALLENGE

The President's challenge for AUGUST, as announced last month, is to turn something from a Banksia Pod. A weed pot, vase, salt & pepper shakers, tea light, candle holder, small desk clock, box, etc. If you have previously turned something from a Banksia pod, please turn something new and different to challenge yourself. Bring it to Show and Tell at the August meeting.

Susan Shane