

Colin Hamer
Bytown Woodturners
March 11, 2012

I'm not going to try to describe every step that Colin did in spinning and casting, soldering and planishing. You really had to be there to watch this craftsman at his work. He makes it look so easy to spin the pewter that he uses and that he shapes into many different designs. I did a hands on with spinning and was capable of burning one of his wooden tools that he uses for shaping, thus causing my example of a small bowl to become even smaller.

Colin's background

Colin has been at his art for thirty-six years and his ease of describing the use of the pewter and his demonstrating capabilities show the love that he has for his craft/art. For this truly is a craft that is learned and perfected over a number of years and an art which is shown by what he produces.

Visit his website (hamerpewter.com) to view his incredible scope of work.

Hilights of Colin's demonstration

Spinning Pewter

Colin began the day by spinning a small bowl, taking us very carefully through the steps that are involved from making his mark on the pewter disk to polishing the finished piece.

He described the making of the forms which are used for shaping the finished product and how to get the most out of the flat pieces of pewter that he uses to begin the process.

The tools used in pewter smithing can be very simple and some, like the hardwood dowels that he uses for the spinning can be made by the craftsmen themselves. Colin very readily demonstrated all the tools that he uses for all the different articles that he makes. Baby cups, water jugs, candlesticks, he led us through the steps that he takes to make each one.

Casting Pewter

In the afternoon, casting was the big topic. With very simple tools and leftover pieces of pewter Colin made Christmas decorations, part of a candle stick, the handle for a jug. But he not only made them, he described how to make the molds that can be used again and again to produce a final piece that is able to be duplicated.

One fascinating piece was made with a cup of molten pewter poured into a simple aluminium bowl, swirled around and cooled to make a rather different kind of salad bowl. Pewter melts at a low point and also hardens quickly so the science behind it makes the artist look good. Soldering and welding closed out the day and again, very simple tasks that make a piece amazingly beautiful.

Hands On Session

There was hands on time available and a few of the turners took up the challenge, some did very well, others of the heavy handed type (and I won't mention names) attacked the pewter in a way that Colin had never seen before, causing the pewter to fracture into pieces that looked like a very sharp tool for destroying anything in its path.

The day was great, the company was enjoyable, the teacher was informative. Colin was able to impart some knowledge into the minds of a number of woodturners who hopefully will carry on this artist's work and allow others to become more familiar with not one but two very old arts.

Laurie Riley
March 23, 2012