

Women in turning

The Worshipful Company of Turners talks to leading female woodturners



Female woodturners are in the minority in the woodturning world. This woodturning world, however, has been changing and evolving over the past few years at a very exciting rate. With many artists exploring new techniques and ideas, more and more exciting artwork is being created. Much of this extraordinary, beautiful artwork is being created by women.

Woodturning has never been so accessible as it is now, but not enough people know about it; we want to shout out about how creative, exciting and fulfilling working with timber and a woodturning lathe can be; with its, seemingly, endless possibilities.

On the Register of Professional Turners, we are privileged to have 11 women artists and the Register, in its 45 year history, has just appointed its first female chair. Not the result of gesture politics, but a clear, determined, positive drive from the RPT and the Worshipful Company of Turners to welcome women into woodturning.

Here we celebrate some of our female woodturners who will be exhibiting at Wizardry in Wood in Carpenters' Hall in London, 13-16 October 2021. How better to inspire other females to join them in taking to the lathe than to view the exquisite works from these amazing women artists?



Sally Burnett

'I am quite solitary in my making practice so the feeling of loneliness created by the isolation of lockdown was unexpected and impacted on the mindset required for creativity. I was 'rescued' from this malaise by a commission for Lexus UK to make a piece inspired by the Lexus RX plug-in hybrid. I was one of five makers participating in this Takumi project. The process of design, development and making was documented on video and stills (a particularly challenging process due to lockdown and a very small studio space) and early in 2021 it was released on social media platforms as a short film.

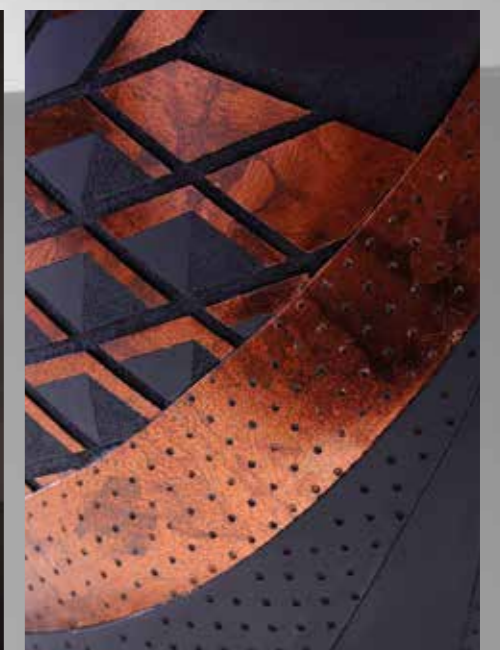
'With many of my usual routes to market closed or limited, it has meant that more time could be devoted to developing original work, with the exploration of new techniques and processes.

The results will be launched in January 2022 in Paris, when hopefully we will all once again begin to socialise and flourish.

'I was a bursary winner in 2015 and also became one of the emerging makers in the Crafts Council Hothouse scheme in 2016.

'The tagline for my brand is the Art of Wood, distinctive, original and beautifully made.

'I am essentially a designer/maker of elegant wooden vessels and sculptures for bespoke luxury interiors. I use native English timbers, usually from trees felled for land clearance or storm damage. Most pieces are lathe turned, often green, and then heavily carved and decorated. Many pieces incorporate precious gold, silver and platinum leaf.'



Joey Richardson

For Joey, quality is of paramount importance and involves just two factors. The first is the concept and the second is the execution. The concept, which includes the material, message and story of the artwork, must work in a symbiotic relationship with well-executed high craft skills and detail.

Each of Joey's creations starts with stimulation, inspiration, imagination and the original thought. This leads to research, working out the concept and finally the execution. She never creates a maquette as all of her energy, excitement and inspiration goes straight into the passion and soul of the finished pieces.

'Creating is my therapy, my escapism, I lose myself in the work. I feel excited and fulfilled seeing the piece come to life in my hands. I love exploring and illustrating stories through symbolic form and repeated motifs, breathing life into, and creating a soul for, each unique piece. My work is inspired by nature, life experiences and imagination drawn from my inner self.'

Nature and, more specifically, wood, is the driving force in Joey's sculptural practice. It informs her themes and guides her expressions. From memento mori through mimesis via a mischievous wit, her delicate wood forms and contemporary, mixed-media sculptures are moulded by and seek to encapsulate nature. 'It shapes me and, in turn, I shape it.'

COURT ASSISTANT, WORSHIPFUL COMPANY OF TURNERS

- 2018 MA Fine Art, University of Lincoln
- 2016 made Fellow of the Society of Designer Craftsmen
- 2015 QEST (Queen Elizabeth Scholarship Trust) Award of excellence
- 2012 scholarship from QEST to travel back to America to cast my wooden forms in glass. This altered my life, taking my hobby into a full-time profession.
- 2005 Worshipful Company of Turners bursary funded travel to America and study with the late Binh Pho.

Joey's specialism is combining traditional skills of woodturning with innovative techniques of piercing, texturing, airbrushing and carving so every piece tells a story and has its own soul. Her recent MA in Fine Art has added a theoretical depth to her work, allowing Joey to investigate the emotional, autobiographical and symbiotic relationship humans have with trees. The MA offered Joey the opportunity to experiment with different media, thoughts and ideas, so creating new approaches to the concept, execution and curation of her work.

Nearly all of Joey's sculptural wood



objects are created out of reclaimed sycamore. Using both her crafts skills and the material to achieve overall aims

and objectives, her work has strong links to the history of the place and the origin of material.

Louise Hibbert

'I discovered turning wood at university back in the early '90s, when it was simply another technique that I could use to create the designs I had come up with. We were very much encouraged not to study the work of other makers but come up with our own ideas and ways to make them. We also had to show all of our visual research and design development and this approach has stayed with me throughout my career. Creating my own nature-inspired designs, finding innovative solutions to problems, learning new techniques and breaking the rules of tradition has always been the most exciting part of the making process for me. Mixing materials to increase the possibilities for texture, palette and material qualities that wood offers on

its own allows me to further articulate the often overlooked intricacies of the incredible flora and fauna we share this beautiful world with.

'High quality of finish is also very important. I was fortunate to have the opportunity to become friends with American woodturner Hayley Smith and her great integrity, producing pieces to the highest of standards, definitely rubbed off on me.'

- 2016 First prize Worshipful Company of Turners Open Themed Competition
- 2010 £4500 grant awarded by Arts Council of Wales for Coleoptera – an exploration of beetle-inspired boxes
- 2004 \$3000 grant awarded from FORM, Australia to help develop the Genus

- Australis project
- 2002 £2500 grant from the Worshipful Company of Turners for Plankton Project
 - 2002 Welsh bursary for Plankton Project with Sarah Parker-Eaton
 - 2000 Arts Council of Wales grant to attend Breaking Barriers Conference, Canada
 - 1999 £2000 Award at the National Eisteddfod of Wales, Arts and Crafts Exhibition

Louise has exhibited widely and has work in various private and public collections. She has also been part of collaborative projects, such as an international sculpture project, Nature and Nurture, at the Vidyarthi Niketan School, Bhaktapur, Nepal.



Carlyn Lindsay

Carlyn's number one priority is quality. She will remake a piece repeatedly until it is right for her. She never gets bored.

'I am excited by linear structures. Although you would find it impossible to find a pylon, railway tracks or cranes within my work, they have influenced and inspired me.'

'I begin in my head, then I take my head to my sketch book and empty it out on to the page. I draw around the idea – it may be a practical piece, or simply a shape, but just as important. The problems of how to make a piece are generally worked out bit by bit in my sleep, night after night, the sketch book sharing my solutions helping me to work it out. That's one of the jobs of the sketch book. From there my next step is to turn models, make maquettes and play with my ideas. Together with those and the sketch book, the lightbulb is lit. I'm closer to cutting my first veneers and planks for the refined model, the final piece approaches, the verification.'

- 2004 Tony Boase Tribute Award
- 2003 Worshipful Company of Turners Bursary Award
- 1989 Wickes DIY Bursary Award
- 1989 Prince's Youth Business Trust, business start-up grant
- 1989 Prince's Youth Business Trust, test marketing grant
- 1984 Tim Turner travelling Scholarship exhibition award

'I have been working with materials all of my life. Woodwork and art were my favourite subjects at school. I went to a state-of-the-art comprehensive school with fantastic facilities. My two friends and I were the first girls to take woodwork as an O Level option. The teachers were great and everyone was treated equally. Girls and boys had the same opportunities.'

'From school I went on to a two-year Art Foundation Course, it was a joyful time. From there I completed a three-year BA Hons course in Three-Dimensional Art and Design, Wood, Metal & Plastics.'

'When I left art school and desperately needed a job I looked for the most convenient type of work for me. I applied for a vacancy as a cabinet maker at a large furniture workshop. Apart from two older women I was the only 'girl', at 22 years old, and I was expected to do the same job as the 'boys', and I did with glee. They were great fun and held no barriers, I was one of them, it was a real hoot. We all worked really hard producing furniture which went around the world adorning offices, e.g: dealers' desks for the bank of England, Canon Street, London, desks for the Ministry of Defence, bedroom furniture



for university halls of residence, large-scale furniture for churches, for example, a pulpit. I learnt about 'production', it was really interesting. As a workforce we spent our days, lunchtimes and some evenings together. A few of the boys were members of a pool team, so when I thrashed them at the local pub one lunchtime, they encouraged me to join. To me that shows how accepted I was as another 'person' who could equal them, in many ways.

'My next job was making high-end teak garden furniture. The company had started in 1920 and I was the very first female employed as a maker. They built me my own work bench, a bit lower than the other benches. Again, the guys were great, they took me on board and simply expected the same skills and knowledge from me as anyone else. Again, it was fun, I just couldn't keep up with the ½ pint for every pint they drank on occasional nights out. When I left, they employed two young women. I was so pleased, obviously I had made an impact.'



'However, my experiences of being a female in a male-dominated world while being self-employed were very different. I started my design-making business in 1989. I consider myself very fortunate to have been able to do this. I had amazing support from my family, the Prince's Youth Business Trust and some good customers to kick off my income. I picked up other customers quite quickly – in fact, I still do the woodturning for one of my first customers to this very day. My clients had no doubt that I was capable of any job but a minority of the public simply couldn't believe that a small, young woman like me was capable of such fine work. I was asked such questions as 'who does the turning for you?', 'do you think you can manage to make that?', 'are you any good with chisels?'. Thankfully, some attitudes have changed, but there is still a long way to go.'



Jay Heryet

As the new chair of the Register of Professional Turners (RPT), Jay won't be exhibiting at Wizardry, but you can visit her on the RPT stand.

Jay explores the many techniques of woodturning. She particularly enjoys working with wet wood as this affords spontaneity, and working timber straight from the log provides endless joy and inspiration.

Hollow vessels form the basis for much of her work; she will transform them by composition, manipulation and using them as a canvas for painting and carving.

The precise nature of hand thread-chasing is such a contrast; meticulous planning and timber selection is necessary for the success of each threaded piece.

Whatever the item, form and attention to detail are paramount.

- 2018 Commission for Her Majesty's 92nd birthday.
- 2013 Coronation Festival QEST Enterprises Exhibitor
- 2010 International Turning Exchange Residency
- 2010 QEST Scholarship
- 2003 Tony Boase Tribute Award
- 2003 won the Worshipful Company of Turners Bursary Award

Margaret Garrard

'I enjoy looking at trees out in the countryside and am intrigued with what is found "beneath the bark" of a tree – texture, grain, colour and smell.'

'As a child I was taught to embroider, knit, and later machine sew by my mother, sitting with my sister by an open fire on winter evenings. So I have always been interested in and creative with texture, colour and design.'

'I started woodturning in 1995 as a hobby. From the year 2000 I have been a self-employed woodturner. Margaret Garrard, Art in Wood, and later became a member of the Register of Professional Woodturners. I have had the opportunities to turn large, very large and also small pieces, via commissions and bespoke work. I have entered many competitions over the years which has brought me recognition for my artistic work. I mainly work with sycamore for my artistic work for its close grain and bland colour. This allows me to add colour with an airbrush, and the tight grain is great for piercing, allowing my design ideas to come to fruition.'



'During the Covid troubles I have been grounded from the demonstrations I am usually doing throughout the year. I believe all work should be of the best quality and this is uppermost in my mind while I work at the lathe or my workbench, whatever the project is. As a demonstrator I feel my job, passion, is to share the knowledge and techniques I have acquired for the use and enjoyment of others.'

'My involuted turning work offers confidence to try something different, that it may not be as difficult as first thought.'

'The painting and piercing is much more expressive, using the airbrush, piercing tool and micro motor for carving.'

'Commissions small or large are a

pleasure, and sometimes a challenge, working from drawings or being given an idea to start my creativity.'

- 2007 Worshipful Company of Turners Bursary Award
- 2014 Pablo Nemzoff Collaborations
- 2016 America Association of Woodturners Award of Excellence
- 2018 Worshipful Company of Turners The Masters Open Competition 1st prize, theme 100th Anniversary of the Armistice.
- 2018 Ray Key Collaborations
- 2020 America Association of Woodturners Women in Turning Collaborations. WIT Virtual Exchange



All our 15 exhibitors can be seen at <https://turnersco.com/turning/wiw/>

Wizardry in Wood is at Carpenters' Hall in London, open to the public from Wednesday 13-16 October 2021. The Turning Competitions will also be exhibited and there will be the opportunity to buy these unique pieces. Tickets are available on Eventbrite. <https://turnersco.com/turning/wiw/>