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The Worshipful Company of Turners

20th November 2013

To whom it may concern

I am the current Master of The Worshipful Company of Turners and I am writing in support of the nomination of Mr Ray Key, a Freeman of our Company, for a national honour.

The Worshipful Company of Turners is 51st in order of precedence of the 109 Livery Companies of the City of London. Receiving its Royal Charter in 1604, the Company succeeded the Guild of Turners whose origins are believed to date from late in the 12th century. In more recent times the Company's stated aims are to support the Craft, the City, and Charity. The craft of turning is the skilful and judicious use of the lathe, the mother of all machine tools, to produce items from a variety of materials to the requisite form, dimensions and finish. In recognition of Ray's contribution to furthering the craft of turning and of the exquisite skill he has displayed he was made a Freeman by presentation of our Company in 2002, an honour which is awarded sparingly.

Ray Key is one of the premier figures in world turning; he is a member of the Register of Professional Turners and an ambassador both for the craft and our Company around the world.

His achievements are many. He is in constant demand to demonstrate his acclaimed techniques and style in many countries and also at club meetings around the United Kingdom. He teaches every year at the Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts in Tennessee, U.S.A. He has given presentations on numerous occasions at the Association of American Woodturners International Seminars and at the Utah Seminars as well as Seminars in Canada, Ireland, Norway, New Zealand, Israel, France and Germany.

He is both President and a life member of the Association of Woodturners of Great Britain. He is President of the Worcestershire Guild of Designer Craftsmen and a life member of The Association of American Woodturners – the only life member from outside the USA.

He was the founding chairman of the Association of Woodturners of Great Britain, the national organisation for both amateur and professional woodturners, and was involved in the early stages of the formation of the American Association and the Irish Guild. He is the person to whom everyone comes for advice on both turning and organisational matters, and his prodigious memory is a constant source of help and information. He is very generous with the provision of pieces for charity auctions and in supplying his time and materials in the form of cut timber for youth training events.

He wrote his first book on Woodturning and Design in 1985 and since then he has written a further two books and numerous videos, together with regular articles in the woodturning press and associated journals. His work is displayed in the International Craft Museum (Kuala Lumpur), Contemporary Craft Museum (Honolulu), Kunstgewerbe Museum (Berlin), Detroit Institute of Arts & Crafts, Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Arrowmont School of Arts & Crafts

(USA), Woodturning Centre (USA) and at museums in the UK which include Abingdon, Birmingham, Stoke, the British Council Craft Study Centre, the Parnham House Collection, Victoria and Albert and the Fitzwilliam.

Since becoming a Freeman of the Company he has worked tirelessly with the Company's craft committee, the Howe Committee, to promote and further the craft of turning. He has provided expert guidance in the award of Company bursaries which help new professional turners further their careers through targeted financial support. The Company's biennial turning competition has benefited for many years from his involvement both as an adviser and as a judge. He has been pivotal in helping to produce and promote the Company's prestigious exhibition of the craft of woodturning, Wizardry in Wood, which is held every four years (see the website www.wizardryinwood.co.uk). His expertise and advice will again be used to the full in the lead up to the next exhibition in 2016.

Until recently there has been no formal accreditation of craftsmanship in wood turning. In 2012, The Company, inspired by the work of the Livery Companies Skills Council and the Master Certificate Task Group determined that there should be a Master in Turning award. This is a lifetime achievement award for those in the craft of turning who have given many years of outstanding service to the craft, attained high levels of skill and excellence, and achieved wide and possibly international recognition, whilst contributing to the wider development of the craft. A panel of assessors, chaired by the then Master Turner and consisting of members of the Company and senior representatives of the three main craft associations within the United Kingdom met to consider suitable candidates. It was decided, unanimously, that only one person met the very demanding criteria, Ray Key. In October 2012 Ray was presented with the Master in Turning award by Alderman Fiona Woolf, who is the current Lord Mayor.

There is no one else in this country that has done as much to promote and further the craft. His dedication to the creation and development of the Association of Woodturners of Great Britain has been extraordinary whilst, at the same time, working to become one of the finest professional turners in the world.

I am therefore very pleased to support his nomination for a national honour both for my own part and on behalf of The Worshipful Company of Turners

Yours faithfully

Rhidian Jones
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