

Totally Turning

Mark Baker reviews this large US event



Nick Agar in demonstration mode

Totally Turning is an annual US woodturning symposium run by the Adirondack Woodturning Association, which is a special interest group of the Northeastern Woodworkers Association.

Held in 2019 at the Saratoga Springs City Center and the adjoining Saratoga Hilton, Saratoga Springs, New York, the event is part of a larger woodworking show entitled Showcase. The two are run as separate events, so a ticket to Totally Turning does not allow you to see the woodworking rotations, but the trade show and exhibition areas for Totally Turning and the woodworking exhibition are open to all, so you get a chance to see what other amazing creations and goodies are on display.

I was fortunate enough to visit the exhibition in March 2019 and have to say I had a great time.

REASONS TO GO

Symposia are places to learn, share and experience new things on a scale it is difficult to find anywhere other than at major woodworking shows. But the atmosphere and experience is different at those events than at symposia and this is why people love attending them when they can.

Symposia are events that are dedicated

to and focused on what people love and want to learn more about. As is usually the case, attendees learn and gain new insight from what they see there.

But – and this is a big part of symposia – people also meet up with friends, make new ones, share thoughts and ideas, see what others are doing and hopefully go away with some new enthusiasm and ideas to play around with.

Well, My visit to Totally Turning was a real treat and trust me when I say there was plenty to see.

FRIENDLY AND WELL RUN

Totally Turning is all you would expect from a symposia, and it is friendly, unrushed and of a size that's not overawing. All comers are met with the same enthusiasm, friendliness and kindness and everyone appeared to be well cared for, looked after and helped when required.

There are, as you might guess, many diverse rotations for people to attend as they choose, but the variety and mix is such that there is plenty to see, be challenged by and learn from. But the organisation is such that it's easy to work out what you would like to see and not be so overcome with choice that you end up like a startled rabbit in headlights.

I met many people at the symposium, and they loved the demonstrations. I saw many people among the trade stalls, which covered turning, carving and woodworking, and – as is usually the case at such events – people were carrying away bags of goodies they had bought to add to their workshop.

TREATS ON SHOW

The display of turning and the woodworking exhibition were real treats. The turning display showed a wide variety of items and, when talking to people in the gallery, they were busy sharing thoughts and asking questions as to what techniques were used.

The display of woodworking in the main hall showcased everything from carving, intarsia, and scoll saw work to furniture and cabinetmaking – along with so much more.

Brilliant work indeed and it definitely gets the creative mind working.

Nothing seemed rushed about the event. I am sure that there were some hiccups but the helpers and organisers – at least as far as I could see – had everything covered and running like a well-oiled machine.

I suppose that is what 28 years of hard-earned experience brings.



A selection of work by Stan Blanchard

THE FUTURE

It's a fact that many events either thrive and survive or fail. Given this particular one's long history, it must be getting something right.

I must admit I loved this event. It was large enough to provide a wide variety of attractions for attendees, but small enough that I felt as though nothing was too much trouble and that every person at the symposium was valued and cared for. That is not just my opinion either. When I was chatting to people, many spoke of the event in a similar and glowing-terms manner – that included the woodworking events too.

If you get the chance to go, I think you will have a great time and the locality is ideal for further exploration of the wider area too.

The 2020 event heralds the 29th such show and it will be on 29 and 30 March. Just to give you a heads up, the line up of demonstrators will include: Art Liestman, Hans Weissflog, Michael Blankenship, Rudy Lopez, Derek Weidman, Kurt Hertzog, Joe Fleming, Rick Angus, Lynda Zibbideo and more.

For more information visit:
www.totallyturning.com



Cherry and holly form by Malcolm Ray



Ambrosia maple bowl by Andy DiPietro



Bamboo and resin form by Michael Smith



Basket weave-effect vase by Jim & Shelley Kent



Sculptural bowl by Peter Walen



Chair, by Jim Lewis, part of the Woodworkers Showcase exhibition



Murmuration, by Michael Foster



Teapot in Ash & Leather, by John Jordan



The Iron Maiden, by Derrick Te Poster