

# TURNING WOOD INTO ART

## *The Jane and Arthur Mason Collection.*

KEN KEOUGHAN

THE OPENING OF THE EXHIBITION OF the Jane and Arthur Mason Collection entitled *Turning Wood into Art* at the Mint Museum of Craft+Design marked the kick-off of a wonderful four-day weekend of wood art in Charlotte, NC. The Collectors of Wood Art held their 4th Annual CWA Forum concurrent with the Mason/Mint weekend, May 18-21.

First, the events connected with the opening began Thursday with a sparkling reception at the spanking new facility of the Mint Museum of Craft + Design. This was attended by over 400 happily jabbering people ranging from a college pal of Arthur Mason's to the museum staff, a very liberal representation of the artists whose work was on exhibit, and 100 or more members of the CWA.

Also included were representatives of the 10 art galleries who had work for sale on display at the Marriott City Centre Hotel and/or at several venues in Charlotte. Mark Leach, Curator of the museum and his staff were very congenial hosts and hostesses.

### **A tribute to the Masons**

A dinner that was indeed sumptuous, back at the Marriott followed the 1½-hour reception. The dinner, which was served to 380 guests, was yet another reflection of the Masons' generosity and thoughtfulness. Each guest had been assigned a specific seat at a specific table. Jane and Arthur Mason arranged most of that seating, the museum staff the rest. As one would expect there were talks and toasts and bright conversation. But there was no rubber chicken, no frozen peas and not a single boring moment. Appropriate and genuinely sincere tribute was paid to Jane and Arthur Mason. And the dinner drew

to close when Todd Hoyer presented the Mason's with a copy of their own beautiful catalog, *Turning Wood Into Art*, signed by all of the artists present at the opening.

What about Charlotte as a venue? From the viewpoint of an attendee the city was magnificent. The downtown area mixed the trendiness of big-time urban with the architectural tradition of the Old South. People were pleasant and helpful. Four local art galleries within walking distance mounted significant displays of wood art. The Bank of America, a sponsor of the subsequent AAW Symposium in Charlotte had work by Mark Lindquist on display.

### **"Hands-on" exhibit for kids**

A few words about the Exhibition. The Museum and Jane and Arthur went to significant lengths to put together a "Hands-On" area. Mark Leach, who has young children, feels very strongly about the Museum's commitment to education. And he believes "experiential learning" is a great way to generate interest. In the "Hands-On" gallery you can see how Virginia Dotson laminates her beautiful pieces; how Mark Sfirri turns with multiple axes; how Ron Kent's oil processes capitalize on the natural translucence of Norfolk Pine. Many other artists also have pieces in the "Hands-On" gallery. The individual artists contributed all of this work, which can be picked up and handled. It represents a fascinating way to learn about wood turning, a wonderful means of fulfilling some of the "educational" goals, of virtually every person and organization connected with contemporary turning.

In addition to the 125 objects from the Masons, several other turned pieces, including historic works, were given to the Mint Museum of Craft +

Design in tribute to Jane and Arthur Mason by Susan Steinhauser, Daniel Greenberg and Ruth Greenberg. Susan and Daniel also gave a major grant to the Museum, as did the Rebecca Klemm Foundation.

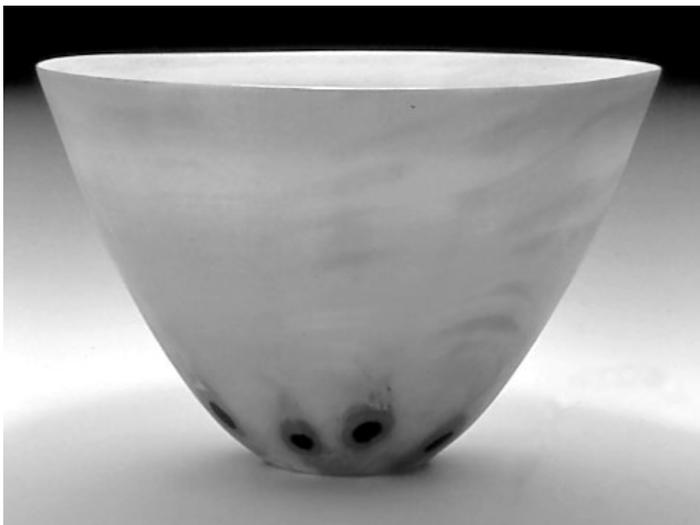
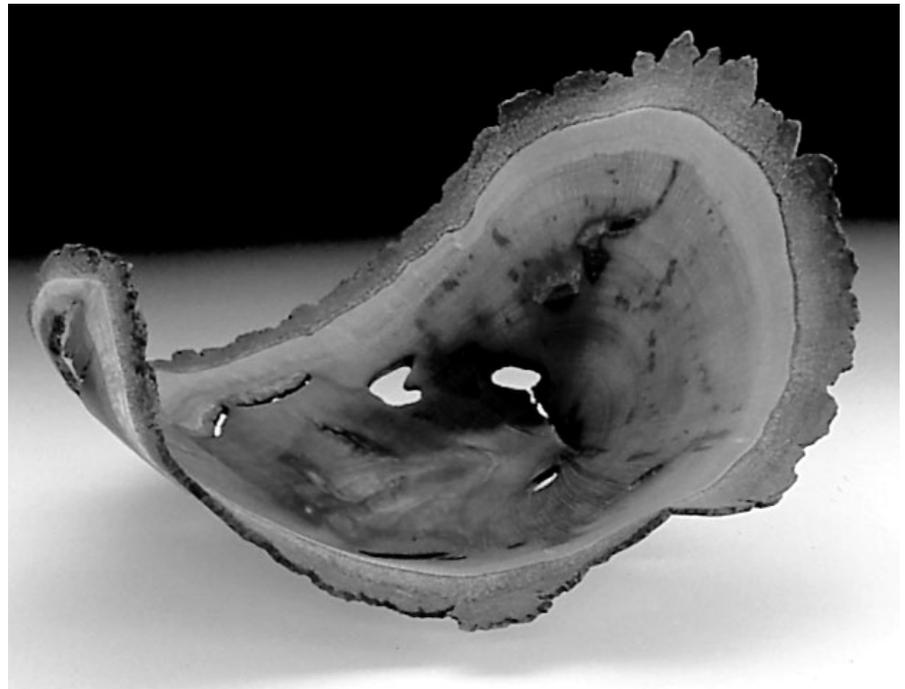
The significance of the 4th Annual CWA Forum running concurrent with the Mason/Mint Opening really cannot be overstated. It was the presence of the CWA that inspired the six national galleries to be represented. They included Center of the Earth of Charlotte, del Mano of Los Angeles, Hodges Taylor of Charlotte, Sansar of Washington D.C., Signature Gallery of Atlanta, and Southern Highlands of Asheville, North Carolina. In addition to these, 4 more local galleries, Noel Gallery, Joie Lassiter Gallery, Jerald Melburg Gallery and Gallery WDO carried special shows featuring wood.

### **Ellsworth sets inspirational tone**

David Ellsworth opened the Forum with a speech that will be quoted for years to come. (*The full text of that speech is printed on pages 30-35 of this Journal.*)

Michael Peterson, Merryll Saylan, Richard Hooper and Clay Foster in a panel discussion entertained the question of *The Germ of Ideas: Where Does Inspiration Come From*. At lunch Diane Rhem, a noted talk-show hostess, described the horror of losing her voice and the boundless joy she experienced in getting it back. Both events are chronicled in her book *Finding My Voice*. Curt Warnke, head of Exhibitions at the museum and Michael Monroe, former Curator-in-Charge of the Renwick and a powerful voice for wood as art, gave excellent walk-throughs of the exhibit on Saturday morning, focusing on how works were lighted, why they were displayed at the height selected, and

## A Glimpse at the Mason Collection



**Among the objects being displayed in the inaugural exhibition of the Jane and Arthur Mason collection at the Mint Museum of Craft + Design in Charlotte, NC, are: Clockwise from upper left: an untitled piece by William and Marianne Hunter; a 1986 piece from the Conical Series by Todd Hoyer; and left, a small gold translucent bowl by Ron Kent. The show — Turning Wood into Art — will be on display at the museum until Oct. 8, 2000. Photos: Courtesy of the Mint Museum.**

other display refinements that collectors and artists are constantly struggling with. There were other panel discussions, special gallery tours and, co-sponsored by AAW and Bank of America, sidewalk-turning demonstrations.

This opening we hope is predictive

of more such events in the near future. Generosity, good fellowship and camaraderie characterized it. But that is just the first glimpse of the dust jacket of a very worthwhile book. The interest here is intense and its focus is education ... educating the public, including other museums, colleges and

universities, galleries, the world of Art and the world of Small Children about wood and its place and importance as Art. And yes, that's Art with a capital "A".

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