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### Michael Finkelstein

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Recently featured in the December 2007 issue of Canadian House & Home Magazine, Michael Finkelstein is a Toronto-based eco woodturner with a long-standing interest in woodworking.



Walnut Bowl#414

#### For any laypersons among us, what is the mechanical process of woodturning?

*Woodturning is the art and process of shaping wood into various forms, usually on a wood lathe. I cut wet wood logs into various sizes of bowl and hollow-form "blanks" or unturned wood. These bowl blanks are mounted a wood lathe and turned into shape, using various tools to hollow out the inside and shape the outside of the blank. They are then dried, sanded and hand-finished using various techniques.*



Apple Bowl#159

#### Can you pinpoint a specific moment when you became interested in it?

*I was a professional licensed customs-broker and international freight-forwarder for 20 years, but have enjoyed woodworking for 30. I got into woodturning specifically after I had bought a mini-lathe to "turn" dials for the wooden locks exhibited at the Toronto Outdoor Art Exhibition (from 2003 through 2005). I enjoyed the woodturning process so much, that I began making small bowls.*

#### What is so special to you about wood?

*I handcraft bowls and platters from hardwoods that I personally select from tree recycling sites and the streets of the Greater Toronto Area. I enjoy the challenge that the wood medium provides because the woodturning craft encompasses both a technical process and an artistic element, and allows me to work with natural and recycled local materials. Damaged trees can be stressed with burls, bark inclusions, voids and crotch seams which have beautiful figure when wood-turned into a nice shape.*



Beech Burl Bowl #462

#### How do you choose the logs that you use to create your bowls?

*As I look at a tree log to be cut with my chainsaw, I try to envision the end-product bowl or vase in the tree. Only hardwood logs with unusual shape, design or figure in the grain are selected. I believe that each piece of wood is unique with its own special personality.*

*I often inscribe the name of the street (where I found the log) on the foot of the bowl.*

#### Is there a type of wood you prefer to use?

*Local hardwoods like maple, cherry, apple, walnut, birch, black ash, etc*



Mulberry #104

#### How long from start to finish does it take you to produce an item?

*That depends on the type of wood, size/dimensions, design & shape of the workpiece and other factors. Small pieces can take up to 1 hour and larger pieces may take an entire week to craft the actual piece. However, the preparation time including cutting logs, drying before final turning and the finishing process can stretch the time to three to six months.*

#### Do you have a final shape or design in mind?

*While I begin turning each piece with some final shape and design in mind, the wood's natural form, grain and figure guides and inspires me to bring out the best characteristics in the final artistic form.*

#### What inspires your designs?

*Shapes and forms found in nature, keeping in mind both form and function.*



**Sugar Maple #186**

*Working in wood obviously throws up some issues of sustainability – something you obviously take very seriously. Besides using recycled logs and number the resulting woodturnings so that they can be traced back to a site or street, what other ways would you recommend to others seeking to decrease their eco footprint?*

*My full statement is in my website, but some things I've implemented are re-wiring the woodturning Lathe & Dust Collector System for 240v to reduce energy consumption not using an air conditioner in the shop, using eco-bulbs for workshop lighting and eco-friendly, food-safe finishing materials. Also, I recycle wood chips from the production process and only air-dry bowls and platters.*



**Sugar Maple Bowl #182**

**Do you ever find it difficult to let go of the pieces you create?**

*Yes. I sometimes keep these pieces in my home for a few months before I put them in the studio. A piece I was especially proud of was a red maple ambrosia-figure large bowl, which is on the front page of my website. It's a combination of a beautiful piece of wood with a pleasing form, and it's very functional.*

Visit [Michael Finkelstein's website](#) to see more of his work.

**If you are unsatisfied with a piece, what do you do?**

*Cut it up into smaller pieces of wood and make into mini-pocket pens, or small plates, trivets, etc. I try to re-use any wood that has nice figure in it.*

**What are your plans for the future? And what are you working on at the moment?**

*Gradually growing my woodturning business is a priority for me. I have a steady clientele with many commission work requests for special pieces. I'm woodturning on a daily basis and I enjoy what I'm doing. I'm working now on finishing some very interesting burl-figure bowls and platters that are in my "ready to finish" inventory. I also just started creating a collection of highly figured wooden cheese boards and extra-large boards for food presentation, which are a natural compliment to the bowls and platters.*

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