

# New Zealand Symposium

Malcolm Zander



Glenn Lucas

Photo: Ian Connelly

In early October 2012, New Zealand held its first international woodturning symposium, organized by a committee of ten from the South Auckland Woodturners Guild (SAWG), headed by Dick Veitch and Terry Scott. Nearly 200 keen turners attended, primarily Kiwis but with a significant contingent from what is commonly referred to in NZ as the “West Island” (aka Australia, some 1,400 miles away).

I was invited to demonstrate, along with Molly Winton, Kelly Dunn, and Alan Carter (United States); Glenn Lucas (Ireland); Doug Fisher (Canada); Guilio Marcolongo and Liz and Neil Scobie from Australia; and Alby Hall, Gordon Pembridge, Niki Marshall, Mike Davies, and Jasper Murphy from New Zealand.

Along with most of the attendees, we were all housed together in a boarding school a half-hour south of Auckland. We shared dormitories, classrooms, a large dining hall, and a gymnasium that served as a trade hall as well as an amphitheatre. This arrangement kept costs down (an important factor for retired hobbyist turners), made for a unique, intimately friendly atmosphere, and fostered much camaraderie. When you have breakfast, lunch, and dinner in the same room together, you quickly meet and talk to a lot of interesting people.

Many Kiwis and Aussies belong to the World of Woodturners (WoW) online forum, so as is the custom, a WoW swap took place, and some 30 WoW-ies exchanged pieces they had brought with them. We posted photos of the exchanges on the WoW forum site that show many happy campers pleased with their new acquisitions.

## Instant Gallery

Symposium organizers asked Molly Winton and me to do the critique of the Instant Gallery. We were taken

Demonstrator Niki Marshall uses a large tungsten carbide-tipped saw to cut the block of limestone into a manageable size for turning. The three vases on the piece of limestone illustrate what Marshall makes out of the slab.

Photo: Ross Johnson



WoW-ies (World of Woodturners online forum)

Photo: Ian Connelly



Doug Fisher

Photo: Ian Connelly



Molly Winton

Photo: Ian Connelly



Neil Scobie

Photo: Ross Johnson

aback by the high quality of the work on display. The craftsmanship and finishes were invariably impeccable, and we saw some truly unusual and imaginative pieces. My only criticism was that some were seriously underpriced.

Ken Dick's (Australia) shallow sheoak bowl caught my attention with its crisp clean edges, striking figure, and flat rim, cleanly embellished with randomly pierced holes ranging from about 1/8" (3mm) to 1/32" (1mm). The pierced design complemented the bowl beautifully in an understated way. I commented to Molly, "Look at

that—constellations in a night sky." The next day as I was standing next to the bowl, Ken Dick approached. When I complimented him on the piece, he replied, "Well, I was out in the Australian desert one night, and looked up..." He didn't need to say anything else.

Brian Hawkins brought two lovely little bowls with metal leaf centers perfectly applied. He created each bowl's unusual border by applying paint into a groove around the leaf center, and then spinning the piece on the lathe so the paint flew outward toward the rim.

Molly Winton snapped up one of these bowls, and Alan Carter quickly bought the other. I missed out.

Dick Veitch displayed several oak burl vessels that brought to mind Christian Burchard's madrone vessels. They were turned wet, then dried, sandblasted, stained, and sanded.

The quiet elegance of Phil Quinn's piece belied its true nature. A delicate series of patterns ornamented the surface which, when the piece was turned over, extended right across the base. Quinn hollowed the interior from the underside, cleverly masking the plug. The asymmetry of the form added extra interest.

Roger Dean's pine bowl, made from laminated sheets of pine, boasted awesome carving. Roger carved the chain links in the center portion using a simple whittling knife.

Other noteworthy pieces deserve mention: Tony Waterson's most unusual small bowl turned from a rotted crotch and then pyrographed to feature the imperfection; Terry Scott's dramatic miro platter; Bruce Cowley's intricately carved miro bowl with exquisite workmanship and pyrography; Peter Williams's simple but elegant bowl from 40,000-year-old swamp kauri; Bruce Wood's asymmetrically hollowed and pyrographed rimu sphere; and Colin Parkinson's metallic *thermette* (a classic Kiwi camping item for heating water over a fire) in true Gerrit Van Ness style, complete with a white enameled tin mug, a chip on its base—except both were all pine. Masterful.

The abundance of interesting work included a display of spoons, with two exceptionally fine examples by Leith Gray and Ken Newton. Spoon collector Norman Stevens invited attendees to submit spoons for possible purchase and also sent a selection of spoons from his collection for display. Stevens, from Connecticut, bought six spoons from photographs of the ones in the Instant Gallery. ▶

## Evening festivities

After supper on Saturday night we all gathered on the bleachers in the gymnasium to find out what kind of show Terry Scott had planned for the evening. Details were secret. Two teams of demonstrators were told to show up, with no further instructions. The Possum Pie team consisted of Down Under turners Guilio Marcolongo, Neil Scobie, Alby Hall, and Gordon Pembridge. The French Fries team had Glenn Lucas, Doug Fisher, Molly Winton, and Alan Carter. Each team was stationed at a large lathe and then informed that within forty-five minutes they must use the contents of a large accompanying box to prepare a luscious meal. The most appetizing meal would be decided by audience applause.

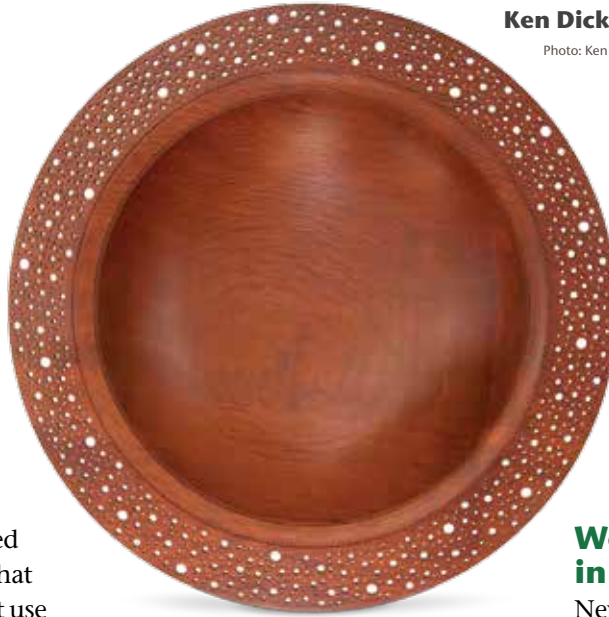
Included in each of the two boxes was a large square of the gnarliest piece of dry, difficult-to-turn kauri wood Terry Scott could find. Grain ran in all directions. The objective apparently was to give the demonstrators a hard time in public. Even though the wood proved to be no obstacle for Glenn Lucas and Guilio Marcolongo, two of the most skilled turners in the business, a more entertaining and educational

approach would have been the use of solid green wood.

For the Possum Pies, Neil Scobie carved impressive bananas and Gordon Pembridge airbrushed a large paper hanging lamp to make a realistic pumpkin. But the French Fries team was up to the challenge, producing among other things a plate of painted wood shavings and small spheres to make a fine spaghetti and meatball dish, a painted cheese log with a small brown wooden mouse (chocolate mousse?) attacking it, along with a

**Ken Dick**, *Untitled*, 2012, Sheoak, 2½" × 12" (6cm × 30cm)

Photo: Ken Dick



platter of colored plastic fruit surrounding an inflated white vinyl glove, digits sticking straight up—finger food! The audience voted enthusiastically in favor of the French Fries team.

Terry Scott, assisted by Kelly Dunn, provided hilarious running commentary. It was a lot of fun and great entertainment!

## Woodworking in New Zealand

New Zealand must have one of the highest per capita percentages of woodworkers anywhere. Two reasons may be the abundance of unique indigenous woods, and the do-it-yourself culture of Kiwis. (Okay, Aussies too). The NZ National Association of Woodworkers lists no less than forty-one woodturning or woodworking clubs or guilds. This, in a country with a population of just 4.5 million, a little more than the size of Los Angeles.

The Aoraki program also significantly contributed to the high level of work in the Instant Gallery. It is a structured training program of courses



**Dick Veitch**, *Pots*, 2012, Oak burl, tallest, 8" × 5½" (20cm × 14cm)

Photo: Dick Veitch



**Bryan Hawkins**, *Untitled*, 2012, Rimu, variegated brass leaf, India ink, acrylic paint, 2" × 3¾" (5cm × 10cm)

Photo: Dick Veitch



**Roger Dean**, *Chain Link Bowl*, Pine, 5" × 8" (14cm × 20cm)

Photo: Dick Veitch



Terry Scott (left) and Doug Fisher ham it up at the Saturday night team competition

Photo: Ian Connolly



Finger Food by French Fries team, turned platter, plastic vegetables, inflated vinyl glove

Photo: Ross Johnson

developed by the Aoraki Polytechnic in collaboration with woodturners from Christchurch, Auckland, and other clubs. It consists of a series of modules, some obligatory and some elective. Those completing the program earn a Certificate in Woodturning. The evening prior to the symposium opening, demonstrators attended a ceremony held in the SAWG clubroom to mark the graduation of eight club members from the Aoraki program. Graduates displayed pieces they made, representing a variety of styles. All were of high quality. One graduate told me the program had made him a more complete woodturner

because it took him out of his comfort zone by requiring him to make pieces and use techniques he would not otherwise have attempted.

Throughout the symposium, participants commented that the Aoraki program has raised the national standard of woodturning in a major way over the last four years. This program offers a potential model for AAW local chapters. As Terry Scott says, “We have seen an increase in the show-and-tell competitions being entered, and the quality and quantity of work. Speaking for myself and other tutors, the course has been an amazing journey as we have learnt skills we wouldn’t have learnt if we had stayed in our own environment. My own demonstrations have also seen an improvement as I’ve learnt how to better convey what I am trying to put across.”

For a summary of the Aoraki program courses, download the file “Aoraki Course Information” from the AAW website at [woodturner.org/products/aw](http://woodturner.org/products/aw). Detailed learning outcomes may be obtained from Dick Veitch, [dveitch@kiwilink.net.nz](mailto:dveitch@kiwilink.net.nz).

### Symposium handout book

Dick Veitch, symposium chair, put together a professional handout book, photographed all the pieces in the Instant Gallery, and ran the auction, which was held on the final day. The proceeds of the auction—nearly \$4,000—were donated to the St. John’s Ambulance organization, whose youth provided snack food and coffee/tea during the breaks between rotations.

Congratulations on an excellent job to Dick Veitch, Terry Scott, and the SAWG committee and club volunteers. Judging from the numerous enthusiastic comments from the attendees, this first NZ international symposium will be followed by others. ■

Malcolm Zander is a Canadian who was born in New Zealand. His website is [malcolmzander.com](http://malcolmzander.com).



Phil Quinn, Green Vase, 2012, Macrocarpa (Monterey cypress), 14½" x 3½" (37cm x 9cm)

Photo: Dick Veitch

Leith Gray, Untitled spoon, 2012, Arbutus unedo (Irish strawberry tree), 8¾" (21cm) long

Photo: Dick Veitch



Photo: Phil Quinn