

Roger Nass

“Inside the Tree”

East Gallery

Aug 21 - Nov 13, 2021



Artist's Statement:

Upon retiring in 2003, I was looking for a hobby to occupy my spare time. For years I was jealous of my two sisters, Rosemary Millette and Theresa Marschel, who are nationally known wildlife artists. I knew that I would never achieve their level of talent, but I envied the fact that they were leaving behind beautiful wildlife paintings.

Moving to Ames, Iowa, we selected a property with a house and an outbuilding, which could serve as a shop. I acquired woodworking equipment and started to build Craftsman style furniture. I hosted an Ames Woodworkers meeting on pen turning and got hooked on the world of wood turning.

After developing technical skills which allowed me to turn about any form I desired (bowls, platters, vases, hollow forms, etc.), I began to seek out more interesting parts of the tree.

While everyone has observed the beauty of trees, very few know what the tree wood looks like. Hardwood furniture and decorative trim moldings are most always stained and don't show the tree wood coloring. I also discovered the most interesting wood is located in the tree crown, which is never harvested for lumber.

In recent years, I have sought out tree species and locations where the most interesting and beautiful wood grains are found. This also occasionally includes burls, which are rare in Iowa. Iowa is blessed with an environment that supports the growth of a large variety of trees, many of which are not indigenous to the area. Trees are always coming down for many reasons, so I am never tempted to cut them down just for turning wood.

My goal in all my turning is to produce a pleasing form which shows the grain to the best advantage. My finish is all below the surface (varnish, lacquers, acrylics, etc. are above the surface). My goal is to get the wood to look like it was when fresh cut. After the piece is saturated with oil and dried, I buff it out and get the final finished look.

During the past three years, I have had the good fortune of finding a massive Red Elm burl and a large Red Oak burl, both of which are featured in the Blanden's display. In addition, the Derecho that hit Iowa last summer provided a massive amount of turning stock. I have had the opportunity of turning several species not native to Iowa which came from the Iowa Arboretum due to the storm. A few of these pieces will be available for the Blanden exhibit.

The exhibit features only trees that grew in Central Iowa. While not all the trees are native to the area, many species have been imported and thrived in our Iowa climate. My ultimate goal is to make useful, wooden items, but, more importantly, to feature the beauty of these trees that even the most expensive hardwood furniture does not show.