

How to Photograph Your Woodturnings

By Mike Lanahan

Who am I

- I'm Mike Lanahan, and I'm a woodturner.
- Long time woodworker, learning woodturner
- Retired from Semiconductor Industry
- Engineering, Production, Quality & Reliability Background



Ground Rules

- No need for note taking
 - A Portable Document Format (pdf) copy of this presentation is available on Yahoo!
[Groups/WBAW/Files/Meeting%20Handouts/How to Photograph your Woodturnings.pdf](#)
- Ask questions.
 - It's your time, but I've only got an hour.
 - There is a lot to cover. Let me know if it is too fast.
 - There is an arbitrary limit to the number of questions per person, if disruptive.
- Sit back, and relax

Photography Background

- 7 years old - First introduction to photography in my Dad's darkroom, watching the magic of an image forming on a piece of paper. Wow!
- Darkroom/Chem Lab since age 10
- High School Newspaper Photographer
- SCUBA diver/ Underwater Photographer & Instructor
- Past Editor the Award Winning SVW Newsletter



This is NOT Rocket Science

- Using the 80/20 rule – 80% of what is important is NOT technical.
- It is mostly common sense.
- I will not focus (pun intended) on f-stops/apertures, ISO settings, camera sensors, lens resolution, or other photo minutia.
- I will propose some cost effective ways to set-up a photo shoot to improve woodturning images.

What is Your Objective

- Share with friends & family.
- Post on Facebook, etc.
- Club Newsletter
- Contest, Gallery or Publications will have detailed requirements of file type, and size.
- My objective is to address the first 3, to help you capture better to darn good images.

Keys to Good “Product” Photos

- Neutral Background
- Diffused Light
- Good Color Light
- Steady Camera Support
- Composition and Shooting Angle
- Lens/Zoom Choice

Neutral Background

- Don't Compete with the Turning, it is the Star.
- Neutral: White, Grey, Black or Graduated.
Other colors can be OK, but be careful.
- Seamless. Continuous flow from Top Back, to Front Bottom.
- Paper Sheets from Craft Stores (Michael's)
- Cloth OK, but may see a coarse weave.

Don't Distract from Turning



Diffused Light

- Diffused light is generally the most flattering.
- Point Sources Create Harsh Shadows
- Disable Flash on Camera
- Bounce Flash off Ceiling
- Outdoors, Overcast day on North Side of building with reflective cards to fill in.
- Light Boxes/Tents

Diffused Light



Overcast Day, North side of house



Light Tent, for use any day.

Light Color

- Your Light Source will affect Color Balance.
- Match to Camera Setting
- Choose a Daylight or White Light Source
 - Halogen
 - CFL's 5000-6000 K
 - Strobes/Slaves good color, but tricky
 - No preview
- Overcast day on North side of house

Steady Camera

- Tripod Preferred
 - Support Bean Bag, or Bag of Rice
- Remote Shutter Release
- Timer Mode
- DSLR – Mirror Up, if you want to be picky.

Steady Camera

200 mm examples



Hand Held



Tripod



Hand Held w Image Stabilization

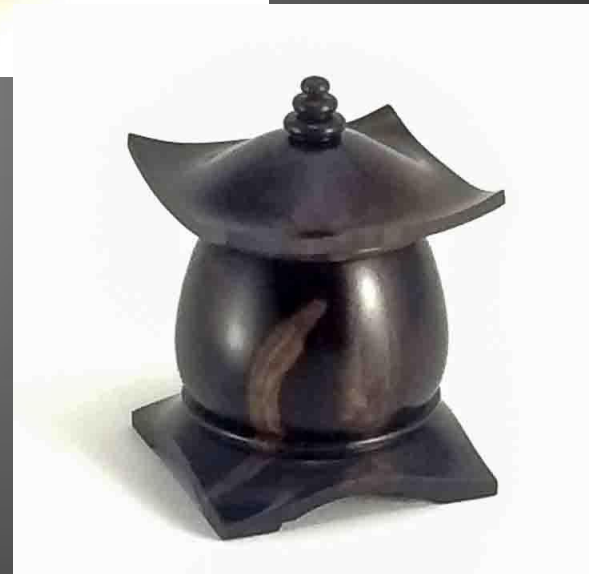
Tripod Mount for Cell Phone



Composition

- Fill the Frame
 - Leave space for a border
- Rule of 1/3's if Applicable
- Shoot down at an angle (to see inside a bowl) but not so steep as to hide a foot.
- Shoot in Portrait mode for Tall Subjects
- Best side forward

Fill the Frame



Shooting Angle



Lens or Zoom Choice

- Wide Angle (Zoom Out) Distorts the Image
 - Has good depth of field (how much is in focus)
- Telephoto (Zoom In) Compresses image
 - Less depth of field
 - Magnifies camera movement
- Intermediate Telephoto is more flattering
- Zoom with your feet vs. Digital Zoom
- Focus $\frac{1}{3}$ of the distance back from the front of the subject to maximize depth of field

Wide Angle to Telephoto



Close or Wide Angle Distorts Form



Wide Angle



Telephoto

Camera Settings

- Hey – Did you notice, until selecting the focus point, everything applies to cell phone cameras as well as DSLR's?
- The best camera may be the one you have with you, but more advanced cameras give the photographer more control.
- Select the highest resolution image your camera will allow.

iPhone

- Native Camera App gives you Limited Control
- Camera+ App (\$1.99) adds more control
 - More accurate focus point
 - Exposure control target area
 - Exposure adjustment
 - Timer
 - Horizon
- Security Tip: Turn Off Geotagging

iPhone Camera App



iPhone Camera App

Camera+ App for iPhone



Camera Settings 2

- RAW images give better adjustment performance than JPEG if you edit the images.
- Choose a low ISO setting (100 typically) to reduce noise. The newer the camera, the higher you can go.
- Choose a setting with sufficient depth of field for your work. Sports is low DOF, and Architectural is high DOF. Or select Aperture Control, and set the f-stop (f8 to f11).

Focus



Front



Back



Front to Back

Shoot!

- Clean the piece of lint or dust before shooting. Microfiber is your friend.
- Take Lots of Pictures. Digital is Free.
- Adjust light position, shooting position, etc. based on results.

Post Processing

- Although a topic of its own, ALMOST ALL images benefit by post processing: cropping, exposure adjustment, white balance adjustment, sharpening, ect.
- Save a copy of your image before you adjust it.
- Use editing software that is non destructive.
 - JPEG images degrade with each edit and re-save.
 - Adobe Lightroom (Complicated) stores adjustments to the image, and you export an edited image without altering the original.

Out of Camera vs. Post Processed

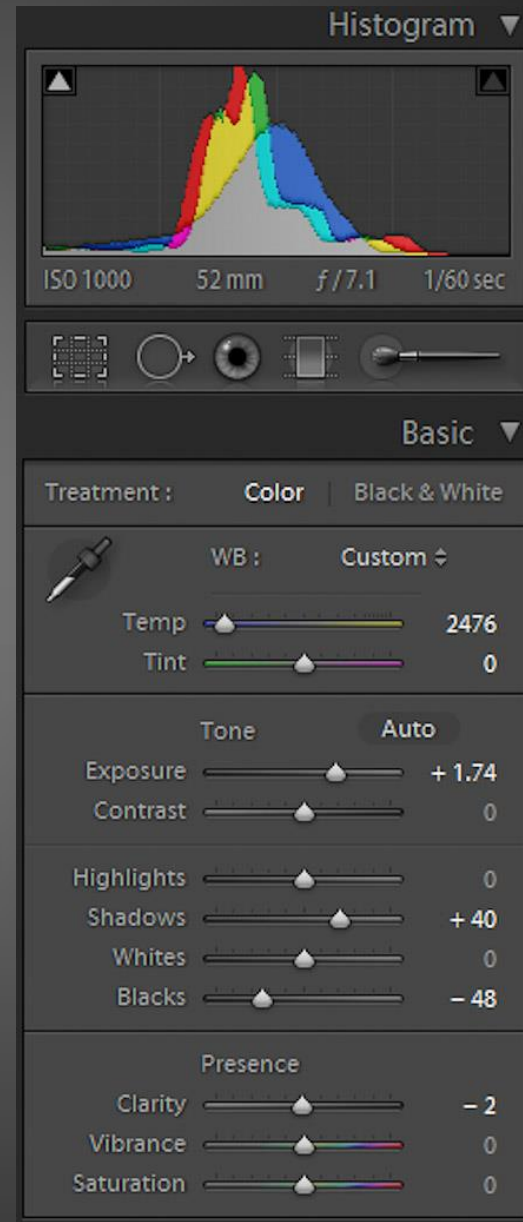


Adobe Lightroom

- It is Nondestructive
- Rich feature set
- Runs OK on a laptop
- Organizes & Manages images too
- Reasonable price
- Frequently updated to recognize RAW files from newly released cameras.

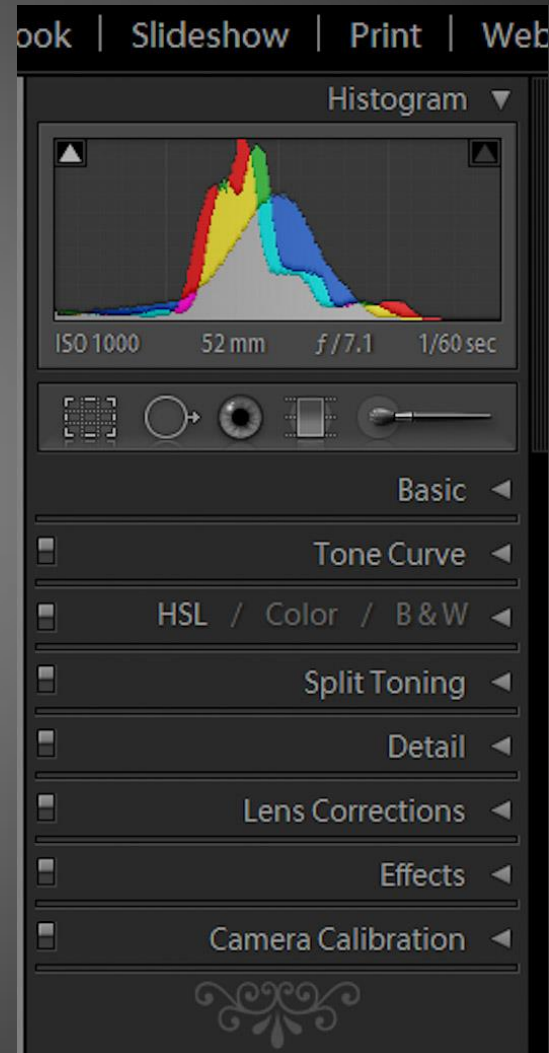
Lightroom Develop Module Tools

- Histogram
- Crop
- Spot Removal – Clone or Heal
- Red-Eye
- Graduated Adjustment
- Adjustment Brush
- Basic Tools
 - Exposure
 - Contrast
 - Highlights
 - Shadow
 - Whites
 - Blacks
 - Clarity
 - Vibrance
 - Saturation



Develop Tools, continued

- Tone Curves
- HSL / Color / B&W
- Split Toning
- Detail
 - Sharpening
 - Noise Reduction
- Lens Corrections
- Effects
 - Vignetting & Grain
- Camera Calibration



References

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<http://katherinekowalski.blogspot.com/2009/12/photographing-your-work-tutorial.html>
- Stunning Digital Photos Show Off Your Turnings, by Ed Kelle,
American Woodturner, August 2012, vol 27, no 4.

Equipment

- Cowboy Studios, Top Open Photo Softbox Light Tent Shooting Cube, www.cowboystudio.com
 - 17" \$21
 - 24" \$29
 - 30" \$33
- 3 - Bayco 8 ½" Heat Lamps, 125w max, Home Depot, \$9.97.
- Daylight CFL bulbs, Home Depot, 14 W (60 W equivalent), 800 lumens, 5000 K.
- Tripod
- Camera+ (\$1.99)
- Adobe Lightroom (\$150)