



TURNING 28

WITH LARRY RANDOLPH

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Sandblasting



Many artists use sandblasting or sand carving in their work. Pascal Oudet, Bill Luce, Jim Piper, Trent Bosch, Al Hockenbery and others have been exploring this technique for many years with incredible results. Some use it to completely blast away the softer spring growth in a ring to make “skeleton bowls” or pieces that in some instances look more like doilies. Yet others use it to highlight those growth rings while masking off areas to preserve the highly sanded and finished surface. Many of them use the process in conjunction with adding other methods of carving, coloring and amendments to their works.



Woods that have more open spring growth rings make for better sandblasting. Examples but certainly not limited to: Ash, Hackberry, Honey Locust, White Oak, Red Oak etc. make good selections as the softer spring growth is easier to remove through blasting than the harder winter rings. The softer woods like Douglas Fir are what some artists, like Bill Luce, use to make “Skeleton Bowls”.

In this demonstration, we’ll discuss the minimum equipment needed into the more elaborate setups if you plan to use this as a regular accompaniment to your turning.

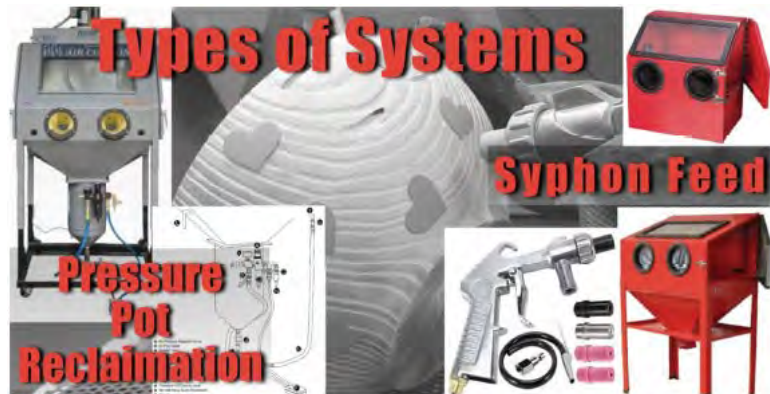
Firstly, as with any shop activity where there is dust, it is most important to protect your lungs. You simply must wear a mask that will protect you from the very fine particulate that sandblasting can create. I use a mask produced and sold by RZ Mast at www.rzmask.com. In addition to wearing a good mask that can filter out the small particulate you should also use dust collection with, at a minimum, enough cfm (cubic feet per minute) to keep the cabinet clear during its use. A shop vacuum “might” work, but a dedicated dust collector would be best.

*****ALWAYS PROTECT YOUR LUNGS*****

There are two main types or systems of sandblasting that would easily be used on wood. The first and most common is the syphon blast cabinet much like the ones sold for under \$200 at Harbor Freight (don’t forget the coupon). These systems have a compressed air line that

pushes air over another line that is buried in the abrasive in the bottom of the cabinet creating a suction that pulls the abrasive into the air stream.

For those that may spend hours blasting away on their pieces a second option could be a better though more expensive solution. This style of cabinet has a captured pressure pot system. With these systems, they propel the abrasive from the same hose the compressed air line uses.



In this demonstration, we'll discuss not only the systems mentioned above, but also the various abrasives that are commonly available and those that are most appropriate for use on wood. There are many to choose from and can be a bit overwhelming. We'll discuss other parts and pieces that can be used to increase your opportunities with this texturing option.

I use sandblasting in various ways and I'll demonstrate blasting an entire piece with no plan other than to give it an aged appearance after blasting. And then I'll also demonstrated a piece that incorporates masking off areas to protect the original surface of the wood. This will include coloring that space under the mask and also the textured surface after sandblasting the soft growth rings away.

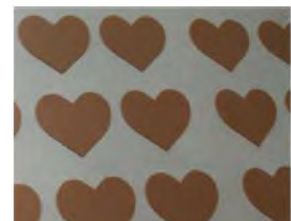
In this second example, I start with a 4"x12" ash bowl blank and turn a bowl leaving the tenon. Sanding the bowl up to 400 grit. Then I air brushed red aniline dye completely covering the outside of the bowl.



Sandblast resist or mask allows you to cover an area and protect it from the sandblast media. We'll discuss various vendors and mask products. Using the sandblast resist or mask can be done as simply as using an exacto knife and cutting out various shapes. I use a vinyl cutter (aka plotter) for this along with a software package – "Sure Cuts Alot".

The vinyl cutter came from USCutter at uscutter.com. It is important to note that when using a vinyl cutter for masking, that you use a 60 degree blade and set the downward pressure twice as heavy as you would for standard vinyl.

Once the vinyl cutter has done its work, I can place the masking material on the wood. I must be careful to not touch or interfere with the adhesive on the sandblast resist as it could easily not properly adhere to the wood. Once on the wood, be sure to press it firmly in place to ensure its adhesion.





Now that I have the resist material in place, I can use the sandblaster to remove as much of the softer growth rings as I want. This all boils down to preference and the amount of time you are willing to commit to this process. For this piece, I am using coarse ground glass from Ballotini which can be purchased through Amazon.com. The settings are approximately 90 psi which produces 16 cfm from my 80 gallon compressor. Though this can be accomplished with a smaller compressor, you will be limited to shorter blasting times as the smaller compressor will take longer to regenerate the pressure needed. Patience is the key.

Once the softer growth ring is carved away by the abrasive media, I then use my air compressor nozzle to blow any remaining dust or media off the piece.

Then I paint or dye that area with the color of my choosing. In this instance, I used my airbrush and a black aniline dye (Artisan from www.thewalnutlog.com). Other dyes can be used, but I find that Artisan sets a little quicker. It is important to make sure that you paint from two or three different directions to ensure you cover all sides of the adhesive mask for crisp lines.

Paints I use: Golden HiFlow, Krylon Short Cuts flat black or you can also use Marsh Ink. All available from Amazon.com.

My dye of choice: Artisan from www.thewalnutlog.com

After coloring the uncovered blasted area with the base color then I use a dry brush technique to apply a top coat color. This particular color is Mylands metallic silver paint also available from www.thewalnutlog.com.



Dry brushing is achieved by barely grabbing paint on the tip of a stiff brush, a good stiff chip brush will work. Make sure that you have paper or a paper towel to remove the excess from the tip of the brush. Basically, you are just barely leaving residue on the piece by briskly slapping the brush back and forth over the wood. You shouldn't see much come off the brush. Remember that it is easier to put more on, but you can't take it back off. So, be patient.

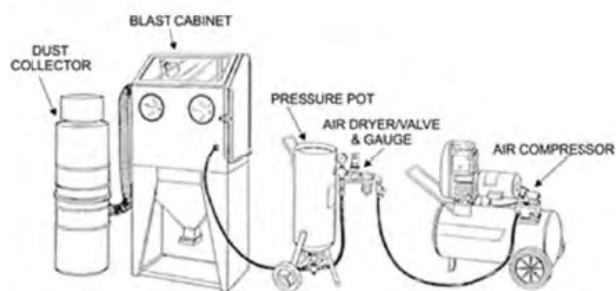
Then after the dry brushing is completed and dry, I gently remove the masking material, being careful to get all of the tacky adhesive off of the piece.

Once all of the mask is removed, I give the outside and rim 3 or 4 light coats of a matte lacquer. After the lacquer has cured, I turn out the inside and finish it with Mylands Sanding Sealer, Yorkshire Grit and Hampshire Sheen. I can then reverse it, remove the tenon and use the same finishing regiment as I did on the inside: Mylands Sanding Sealer, Yorkshire Grit and Hampshire Sheen.





As stated, this demonstration will have many aspects to it, general sandblasting information and the tools and equipment needed to get started. Then once the equipment is accumulated, how to use it in several different ways to create more textural interest in your woodturning.



Resources

M2 Mesh Reusable Dust/Pollution RZ Mask – www.rzmask.com

Basic syphon feed sandblast cabinet: Central Pneumatic – Harbor Freight 40 lb Model

Minimum 30 gallon air compressor capable of 9 cfm @ 90 psi

Sandblast Mask – Anchor T227, 22 mil BlastLite – www.uscutter.com

Ballotini Ground Glass Blast Media (coarse) – Amazon.com

Artisan Dyes – www.thewalnutlog.com

Golden HiFlow, Marsh Ink – Amazon.com

Mylands Metallic Paint – www.thewalnutlog.com

Mylands Sanding Sealer – www.thewalnutlog.com

Yorkshire Grit – www.thewalnutlog.com

Hampshire Sheen – www.thewalnutlog.com

I'm happy to answer questions after the demo.

