

# 20 minutes with Antone Forneris

Tegan Foley spends 20 minutes finding out more about the sculptural, turned works of **Antone Forneris**, whose passion for wood drives his art and visual expression



## Can you explain why you chose to work with the medium of wood?

Using wood comes naturally to me as I enjoy looking at the shapes of trees, especially when the deciduous ones drop their leaves and expose their structure. I work with what the tree provides, highlighting the natural design that was a reaction to the environment where the tree grew. All trees have a story to tell if only they could talk. My work brings out the stories that I see for all to enjoy.



## What is your favourite timber to work with?

I use wood that is indigenous to north Florida. I am more concerned with the shape of the wood and what I see in the tree rather than a particular species. Most of the wood I use has been taken down for new development, toppled by storms, or by homeowners removing trees to protect their residences or to create more light.



## What are your current likes and dislikes within the sphere of turning?

Wood is becoming more acceptable by art collectors. This trend will add value to all our work. I see turning going in two distinct directions. One is the decorative route where colouring and carving rule. The other direction is sculptural, where

the purity of shape dominates.



## What direction do you see your work taking?

My work is taking me towards sculpting and exploring the nuances that nature provides. I want to communicate the natural beauty and unique shapes that trees offer, so many people never take the time to study the structural aspect of the tree and the beauty it holds.



## Can you describe the view from your workshop?

My workshop is surrounded by oak and pine trees that are 60-80ft tall, so I see the woods when looking out of the windows.



## What music and which book are you currently into?

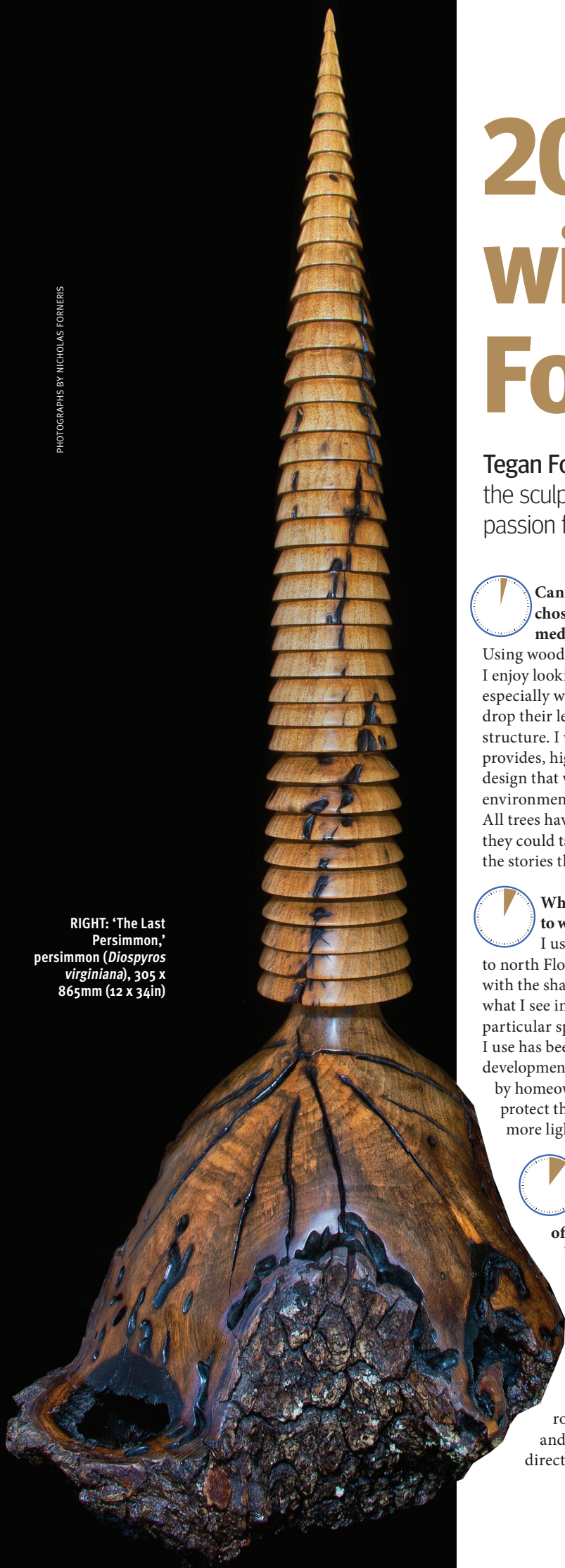
I listen to a lot of electric blues when rough turning but when it comes to the final shaping, I switch to jazz. I don't find time to read novels unless I am on an airplane. I do try to get to the movie theatre once a week or so, especially to see foreign films. I find that foreign film directors rely more on facial expressions than cinematography to communicate to the viewer. I find this simple approach to be more demanding of the viewer and more rewarding. This makes me remember how important the little things can be when all tied together in my work.



## Tell us about the piece you are currently working on.

I recently had the opportunity to walk through the National Gallery of Art's Sculpture Park and was inspired.

RIGHT: 'The Last Persimmon,' persimmon (*Diospyros virginiana*), 305 x 865mm (12 x 34in)





I am doing a whimsical series called 'Oldenburg Stemware' as a tribute to one of my favourite sculptors, Claes Oldenburg. Every time I see his work my inner self smiles.



**If you could only offer one bit of advice to someone starting out turning, what would it be and why?**

Learn the craft and craftsmanship first, and experiment with the aspects you like. Allow individuality to develop by working in series, because that's the way you find your voice.



**Which turners do you most admire, and why?**

The turners that earn my admiration are the ones that broke ground to new directions. I am a fan of Ed Moulthrop. He had to develop the tools and techniques before he could produce his work. I spent time with Steve Sinner, who also does large works. He has a background in engineering so we spent a lot of time on safety as well as aesthetics that only wood can offer the artist.



**What do you think the best single development in turning has been?**

Realising that the lathe is just a tool. The lathe just helps remove the wood not needed in the design. Many in the field use the lathe to create the canvas, thus allowing them to be more expressive in their work.



**What do you see yourself doing in five years' time?**

There is still a lot for me to explore. I like incorporating natural elements of the tree into my designs. Nature has a unique way of expressing movement and I try to capture that in my work.



**What do you see as the biggest thing that has hindered the development of woodturning in general?**

In my opinion, too many woodturners lack the courage to be creative. I believe that the fear of failure overtakes their artistic side.



**What is your biggest regret?**

Not having started turning earlier in life. I've tried to make up for it by spending time with some of the best woodturners alive and studying the history of wood art.



**What are your other interests besides turning?**

Gardening gets a lot of my time. I also exercise for an hour or two a day to keep strong and limber. Working with large pieces of wood requires that I stay physically fit.



**What three things in your workshop could you not do without?**

Besides my lathe (sharpener and tools), the chainsaw, bandsaw and engine hoist (I can't lift a 300lb log onto my lathe). I have to get to the tree before it is cut up for hauling to a disposal facility in order to find the sections that have a story to tell. ●

### CONTACT DETAILS

**Email:** [aforneris@yahoo.com](mailto:aforneris@yahoo.com)

**Website:** [www.awoodturner.com](http://www.awoodturner.com)

Antone is also on Facebook. Simply go to [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com) and search for Antone Forneris



**LEFT: 'First Tree.'** Antone used nature's negative space as a design element. He rough turned four similar trees of the same type of wood. All had checked or split. At this point he started using the void as a design element

**BELOW:** Antone turning one of his forms on the lathe

