

John Showalter

Vale Craft Gallery

230 West Superior Street, Chicago IL 60654
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John Showalter, creator of Bowled Expressions, is a native of Wheaton, Illinois and a long-time suburban Chicago professional who recently retired from his private practice of hand surgery, the first in the Chicago suburbs. Since retiring, he has devoted his time to volunteering, and his new passion: wood turning.



Using only reclaimed local hardwood, he now creates lathe-turned objects of art, specializing in spalted wood with voids and natural bark edges. Most of this wood has been relegated to the brush pile to rot, or to the fireplace to be destroyed. Yet the spalting (partial decay), the natural edges and the cavitations in this wood that make it useless for anything else, make it perfect for turned works of art that reveal the inherent and paradoxical beauty of these defects, with spectacular graining and character that make each piece unique. Turning natural bark edges, and incorporating the voids or knots, adds substantial risk that the work-in-progress will shatter, especially at the most critical final stages of refinement. Successfully negotiating the perils of fragile (unstable) wood, loosely attached bark, or large voids where the tool must bridge gaps in the high-speed rotation of the wood, uncovers a raw beauty that defies explanation.

Most of his works are of classic design and form, adding to the eye appeal of the patterns uncovered by the turning process. John has recently begun to turn deeper vessels, expanding his portfolio to include free-standing items large enough for floor display.

John has displayed his works in multiple regional arts shows, winning a Patron's Sponsorship Award in St. Charles. His art is also on display at the Cantigny Memorial Park (Wheaton, IL) gift shop where the items for sale are turned from Cantigny's own forest.