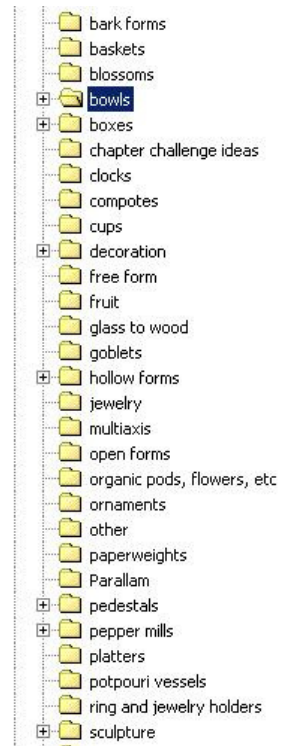


## Creating your own photo archive for design choices

I love art, and I appreciate art, but I am not very good at creating art from scratch out of my own head – I'm afraid I'm genetically mostly a left-brained physicist. But I do know what I like, and I recognize it when I see it. So artistic "imagination" for me begins with experience -- and from there, I synthesize, meld, and massage things I've seen to suit my sensibilities. That wouldn't sound very good in an Artists Statement – I guess that's why I'm not an artist. But I do enjoy making a wide variety of different types of turned wood projects, and I rarely duplicate anything, except occasionally for Holiday gifts.

Perhaps you have noticed a propensity in my *Click It* web site recommendations to highlight sites with good photo galleries (such as this month's Glendale Woodturners Guild). Now you understand the reason. Since I also have an increasingly limited short-term memory, I find it necessary to save things I like for future review. That's where my computer comes in handy. About five years ago, I started keeping small copies of photos of turned items that I found attractive and thought that I might be able to make myself at some time in the future. I collect these from a variety of online forums and galleries. The point is not to try to copy them but to permit me to review them and fill my mind with a range of design possibilities when I'm trying to deal with a given piece of wood.



When I began writing this article I was amazed to find that I have collected over 3000 images. Needless to say, I have them all organized in a library-like folder tree so I can find any specific type of turned item very quickly. The number of categories has increased with time to the point where I now have 38 major headings, some of which have many divisions of their own. One of the most important things I learned early on is to name the files using the name of the turner as the first item. This way I can give proper credit where appropriate, and I learn to appreciate the styles of given individuals. Given my extensive photo archive, I can apply my scientific approach to the problem – planning, analysis, tradeoff evaluation, etc., to stimulate my right brain and come up with an action plan that will hopefully result in what is, for me, a pleasing piece. All that remains is to do the turning, sanding, augmentation, and finishing.

When I start a project, I begin by browsing through the appropriate folders and viewing the thumbnails. I copy out a first cut of maybe 20 items into an *ad hoc* folder and then go through and make a second cut to about 12. I print those as thumbnails on a single piece of paper. Then I start making decisions. There are many choices – if it's a bowl, what kind of rim will I use, what body shape, what kind of foot (if any)? Will it be pure turning, or will I try some coloring or texturing? At this point, with a design in mind, I begin turning. I remain flexible -- depending on what I find inside, I may change my mind and go back to the sheet – or create a new sheet. In this way, I am able to create pieces that please me, and I can make a variety of things from a piece of wood, depending on my mood and whims at the time.

Give it a try yourself. Collect some photos of items that you enjoy. Before long, you too may have a significant set of variations to help you make your design choices.

*Always use common sense. Things that work in one situation may not work in another. Follow all Safety Rules. If it feels wrong, it probably is; stop and rethink. Your Mileage May Vary*