

Member Profile
Sara Robinson
Member # 37524



Sara Robinson has been working for several years to discover the secrets of natural spalting and to apply her discoveries to woodturning and woodworking projects.

If you are a fan of spalted wood, you will be a fan of Sara Robinson. Her research as an assistant professor at Oregon State University has led to all sorts of new information about spalting and fungi that produce vivid colors. Because of her work, in the near future the spalting process that formerly took months may only take minutes.

Name: Sara Robinson
Hometown: Normal, IL
Number of Years Turning: 15

What motivated you to join AAW?
Access to the journal and to the woodturning community



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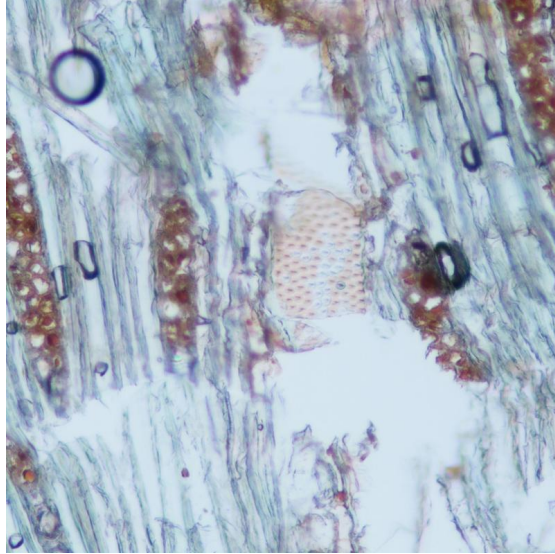
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When you look at your turnings, what do you see?

I see living color. Because of what I do at Oregon State University, my interests lie in using natural spaltting fungi to produce vivid colors which I, in turn, apply to my woodturnings and to woodworking items, as well.



Orange stain in an unidentified wood from the Peruvian Amazon. Stain is apparent in the rays and intervessel pits. Photo courtesy Sarath Vega Gutierrez

Who, or what, was your greatest teacher/influence?

Without a doubt, my high school shop teacher, Mr. David Bloom.

What was your happiest turning moment?

My first hollow form. I'm not sure how old I was, maybe 18 or so. I'd been turning for about three years then, and had never tackled hollow forms. They just seemed too slow to make, and I like fast turning. I did it out of hemlock with a skew chisel and hollowing tool. The biggest challenge for me was patience. I did NOT like the time it took to keep hollowing cut after cut. I like big shavings and fast results. But my patience did pay off and I am proud of that first piece.

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Curly red maple with black zone lines, white rot, yellow stain, red stain, and green stain.

What is your favorite wood/tool and why?

The standard flat top 3/8" bowl gouge. It can't be beat! It is very versatile and if you know what you are doing, you literally do not need any other tool.

Where do you see the field of woodturning going?

Into the hands of a more diverse audience. I've been attending woodturning guilds and symposiums for over a decade now. When I began, I was one of maybe two or three women and the only person under forty. Now I see women making up around 10% of woodturners (not great, but better), and a fair number of young people. Even more importantly, I am starting to see people of color filtering into what was once a predominately white sphere. *This all make me very happy.*



Sara does an interpretive dance of an emerging mushroom aka a happy dance

In addition to woodturning, what other crafts/hobbies have you enjoyed?

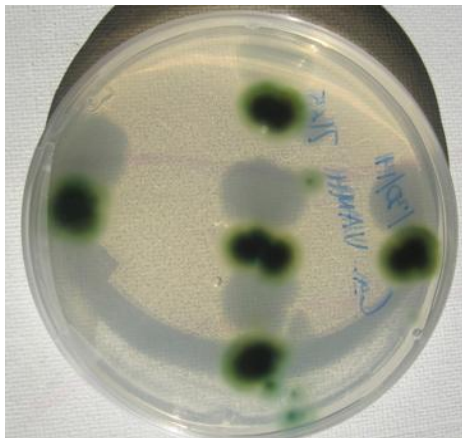
Writing. I write science fiction and fantasy novels. Under a pen name, of course.

Has being a part of AAW affected your life and work? How?

It has allowed access to funds to establish woodturning programs at the university level for students. For example, because of some generous contributions by the Women In Turning (WIT), OSU is now able to establish a turning room for students, complete with donated lathes, chucks, and tools!"

What is your favorite project or piece?

Because I am so involved in the spalting process and the wide range of colors that natural fungi can create, my favorite pieces right now incorporate the use of those colors. We have been working for some times to develop a method for fast spalting for the pigmenting fungi. Once our work is complete, pigment spalting can be achieved in a matter of minutes, instead of months.



Five point monoculture of *Chlorociboria aeruginosa* on 2% malt agar



Petri plates stacked on a lab bench in the Applied Mycology Lab, ready to inoculate wood!




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