

Albert LeCoff Biography

ALBERT LeCOFF

***Co-Founder and Executive Director, The Center for Art in Wood
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, US***

The Center for Art in Wood grew out of a series of wood turning symposia at the George School in Bucks County, PA between 1976 and 1981. The LeCoff brothers, Albert and Alan, along with George School Compliance Notes: Compliance met woodshop teacher Palmer Sharpless, organized the workshops. These symposia are now credited with spurring the growth, understanding, and appreciation of wood turning as a contemporary art.

In 1981, as part of the tenth, final symposium held at Bucks County Community College, Albert organized the ground-breaking touring exhibition, *The First North American Turned Object Show*, and accompanying publication, *A Gallery of Turned Objects*. The exhibition was then presented in joint exhibits at the Richard Kagan and Works Galleries in Philadelphia. Setting early precedents, the exhibit toured nationally to five museums.

In November 1986, the LeCoff brothers incorporated the Wood Turning Center as a 501(c)(3). Albert became Executive Director, a post he still holds. In 1988, the Center organized the first international exhibition of lathe-turned objects. Entitled the *International Turned Objects Show (ITOS)*, the exhibition and concurrent publication, *Lathe-Turned Objects: An International Exhibition*, would become the first of many Center exhibits to tour nationally. ITOS reached many general audiences who awoke for the first time to the art and beauty of objects made from chunks of wood.

Other firsts included two international gatherings, the *1993 World Turning Conference* held at the Hagley Museum & Library and the *1997 World Turning Conference* held at Winterthur Museum & Gardens in Wilmington, Delaware and the Philip and Muriel Berman Museum of Art in Collegeville, Pennsylvania, these events featured lectures and wood turning demonstrations. Historical and contemporary presentations are documented in illustrated conference papers.

In 2001, the Center collaborated with the Yale University Art Gallery to research, present and document *Wood Turning in North America Since 1930*. This extensive survey of wood turned art traveled from the Minneapolis Institute of Arts to the Smithsonian American Art Museum-Renwick Gallery and then to Yale University Art Gallery. The accompanying color publication soon became a touchstone of documentation of 20th century wood craft in context. In 2003, the American Craft Council (ACC) recognized Albert LeCoff as an ACC Honorary Fellow.

In 2011, the Center moved from Vine Street to a larger building in the heart of the Old City Philadelphia arts and culture district. That same year, the Center changed its name to The Center for Art in Wood to reflect its evolution into an organization that fosters and presents the broad range of art that artists make from wood, and wood in combination with other materials. To celebrate its 25th anniversary in that same year, the Center

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published *Turning to Art in Wood: A Creative Journey*. This large format portfolio, with essays and color plates, along with an accompanying exhibition, features a large sample of the Center's Museum Collection.

Since its founding, the Center has organized over 100 exhibits, and published more than 25 books focused on wood art. The Center stands as an invaluable resource for artists, educators, curators, students, collectors and the general public.