Finishing Techniques

Sanding

The first consideration in achieving a nice finish is having a blemish free surface on your turning. Tear out, tool marks and sanding scratches must be removed. Any surface defects will be magnified when the finish is applied.

Since most of my turnings are 6 to 8 inch diameter, I power sand using a drill with a 2 inch sanding disks. 3 inch sanding disks may work better on larger turnings and platters.

Begin with a course grit like 80 or 100 if there are tear out and tool marks to be removed. Sometimes it is helpful on tear out to stiffen the fibers with sanding sealer or soak with a 50/50 mixture of liquid dish washing soap and water.

I generally start with 120 grit and sand with each succeeding grit (180, 220, 320, 400, and 600).

Danish Oil

Watco Danish Oil is my choice of finish on most woods. This comes in the brown can and I only use the natural color. Watco comes in various colors or stains. Watco is a blend of penetrating oil and varnish which hardens in the wood, not on the wood. Watco penetrates into wood, enhancing the natural look and feel of the wood.

I use a rag and simply wipe on the oil. I let it stand a few minutes and re-apply as the end grain will soak up the oil more quickly than the side grain. Re-apply the oil as it soaks in. After 15 minutes or so, use a paper towel and wipe off the remaining oil.

Let the finish dry for at least a day. I generally apply a second coat which will not soak in as much as the first coat has hardened the wood. Soft woods such as mango and Norfolk pine may require additional coats.

One of the reasons I like Watco is that it is not a surface finish. If after it dries if I find a sanding scratch or blemish, I can re-apply another coat of Watco and wet sand with 600 grit, the area needing additional attention.

Tung Oil

I do not use Watco Danish Oil on milo wood. Occasionally, there is a reaction between the milo and the Watco which prevents the finish from drying. The finish remains sticky. On milo I use Formby's Tung Oil Finish (low gloss). I just wipe it on with a rag, rub it in a bit, and wipe off with a paper towel. It dries pretty quickly, so generally I'll coat the inside, wipe it off, and then coat the outside. Formby's does penetrate the wood, but I consider it mostly a surface finish.

Note: Always dispose of oily rags properly.

Beall Buffing System

The Beall buffing system is a 3-step process. A colored ring on the buff identifies the compound or wax it is to be used with: red for Tripoli; white for White Diamond; and yellow for Carnauba Wax.

Choose the buff marked with the red ring and apply a generous amount of the Tripoli compound to the spinning buff. Polish the bowl while always being aware of the rotation of the ball.

Next apply a small amount of White Diamond compound to the buff with the white ring and buff your work lightly. This will remove the residue left from the Tripoli compound.

Lastly, charge the final buff with Carnauba Wax. Buffing your bowl very lightly with the wax buff will produce a beautiful protective sheen. Overuse of wax will dull the finish.

If Tripoli Compound becomes too built-up on a buff, you may need to clean it. In order to do this, hold a block of wood against the spinning buff until the build-up is removed. Buffs used for White Diamond or Carnauba Wax should not require cleaning.

Resources on Finishing

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qx1sHlRovKE -- Tom Iovino on finishing

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nnGAszlcUkc – Chris Morgan, Peter Tkacs, and John Solberg

http://www.woodcentral.com/russ/russindex.shtml -- Russ Fairfield's website with lots of information

Resources on Buffing

http://www.bealltool.com/products/buffing/buffer.php -- Beall Tool Company

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1XgspdjERyI – Russ Fairfield

http://www.bealltool.com/instructions.php -- Bowl Buffing Instructions

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DXcnAMwA3lk -- Kevin Krull

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