

Katherine Kowalski

“Fine, Refined Turnery”

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Decorating Spindlework

Please see my web site www.KatherineKowalski.com for a supplier list, and more information, and always feel free to e-mail me with any questions.

I begin this presentation with spindlework technique, reviewing the movements and tool positions to properly make beads, coves, and vee-grooves with a Cindy Drozda grind spindle gouge. While there are many tools that can be used to make these cuts, using one primarily is more efficient in production woodturning because one doesn't waste time changing tools. Keep the tool rest as close to the work as possible, making sure that the tool is positioned back *far* enough that the contact with the rest occurs on the unbeveled portion of the tool. Height of the tool rest should be such that the point of the tool is at the center of the spindle when the tool is held parallel to the ground.

Is decoration right for this piece?

An important question to answer. Make sure your decoration is well away from the “holdable” parts of a pen or crochet hook, or the “grabbable” part of a bottlestopper. Not only is it uncomfortable to the hand, but it has a chance of damaging your decoration – sharp gemstones dig into the hand, paint might rub off, or rings break.



Making captured rings on a fine spindle:

- Begin by planing a cylinder of wood.
- Always make more rings than you think you need – some will inevitably break. Hard, brittle woods like Dymondwood™ are especially prone to breakage and take a very fine touch to create successful rings. It is *much* easier to make rings on softer domestics, or flexible, oily woods like Cocobolo or Bocote.
- Mark out the ring positions, making vee-grooves on either side.
- Round off the corners of the tops of the rings with a spindle gouge.
- Using the ring-cutting/mini-parting tool, cut in from each side of the rings at a 45° angle toward the center of the ring. ***Do not part off the rings at this stage.***
- Sand & finish the rings.
- Now part off each ring, gently entering each parting groove, making sure not to scratch the top-side of the rings.
- Carefully pare down each containing side to desired diameter, *making sure not to go thinly enough that the rings fall off.*
- Making a half-bead on each side allows for easier sanding of the underside of the rings, which can be done with some 320 grit sandpaper wrapped around each side, and gently turning the rings over the top.
- Adding a turned design underneath the rings is desirable – the more diameter available, the easier it is to work with. A straight/cylindrical design tends to look boring on an otherwise ornate piece.
- Rings are complete!



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My Signature Ornate Crochet hooks are created using a combination of fine turning, pyrography, painting with metallic acrylics, and inset with precious gemstones.

Pyrography:

- Use a high-quality pyrography system for best results and finest details.
- Domestic natural woods are MUCH easier to burn than Dymondwood™ or dense exotics.
- I use a stippling technique with a “writing tip” style pyrography pen, and signs the piece with a “skew” shaped pen.
- Start out with a simple design in whatever motif pleases you: flowers, leaves, swirls, geometrics, etc.
- Control the heat setting carefully. Light-colored or softer woods will have overburn marks with too much heat.
- There are a variety of special tips for the pyrography pens – experiment to find your own style!

Painting:

- For consumable products, I use metallic acrylic paints which can be purchased from craft stores. (Do not use these paints on fine art pieces unless you have researched the archivability of same).
- Metallic paints have a special glitter and shine that brings life and a jewel-like texture to the design.
- Make a color card for easy reference. Paint the first letter of each color name on a white card, organizing the colors by family, (reds together, blues together, etc.)
- Coordinate paints with your gemstone (if you choose to inset one). Choose colors from a palette that compliments the color of the wood.
- Paint in layers, allowing colors in one section to dry as you paint another part. (Paint all the flower petals first, then paint the vines, etc. before adding a second layer to the petals).
- Paint multiple layers of color to achieve a jewel-like effect. E.g. add lighter purple swashes over a dark purple petal to add depth.
- My love of Indonesian art, especially *batik* hand-painted fabrics, inspired me to use layers of dots of color to create the distinct look my signature pieces have.



Gemstone Setting:

- Using Snap-Set™ silver and gold settings allows you to set almost any type of gemstone you wish. These can be purchased as flat-bottomed, or with a post, (as in an earring setting).
- Buy gemstones that coordinate with the sizes of settings you’ve chosen.
- These settings allow for a countersink that gives the stone a chance to sparkle wildly!
- Drill a hole of appropriate size in your spindle; this should result in a **jam fit**; the setting should not be loose in the hole. Secure with epoxy or Titebond glue. **Make absolutely sure that no adhesive touches the surface of the stone; otherwise it will not sparkle.**

Finishing:

- Because the painting is done in tiny indentations, there is little need for a top-coat.
- If you wish to top-coat the piece, **do so before adhering the gemstone.** (Otherwise, *cover* the stone. A finish will eliminate the sparkle of the gemstone). A coat of spray lacquer is recommended for top-coating the acrylic paint.

One final note: I always recommend learning from a professional turner – the experience they teach is invaluable!