

To stimulate and simulate the design process for woodturners, Cindy Drozda (aka Left Brain) and David Nittmann (aka Right Brain) presented this demonstration at the Front Range Woodturners in Denver. This summer, they took the demonstration on the road and presented at the Utah Woodturning Symposium and the AAW Symposium in Richmond.

**A**re you an *artist*? What we make as woodturners, whether it's a candlestick, a bowl, or an abstract object, is *art*. It's a means of self-expression.

How does this expression evolve? It comes as a delicate balance between the conflicts of the two hemispheres of the brain. The right side is artistic, the left side is calculating. The right, innovative; the left, technical. Right, instinct; left, knowledge. Right, talent; left, skill.

What is essential for the design process is a balance between unworkable fantasy and endless to-dos. So how do we get started on the path to signature work? The answer is to copy, modify, and iterate, the same method we used to develop our own written signature.

Use your right brain to find a piece that you like. The piece we chose for this presentation is a vase by Steve Sinner at *right*. His distinctive style has well-defined features in the lip, neck, and body. Smooth transitions between refined details exemplify his signature work. Steve's surface treatment is exceptional artistry displayed on superb form.

Sources for your choice could be friends, contemporaries, museums, galleries, books, and magazines. Most studio artists, provided that you don't sell the copy, have no objection to you using their work for learning purposes.

# Left Brain Right Brain

By Cindy Drozda  
and David Nittmann

## Exercise left brain

Closely observe the piece that you have chosen. With your left brain, measure all the major diameters and associated heights. Also examine the transitions between the major points. Now make a drawing or template of the piece. At the lathe, lay out and reproduce the object. Set the completed piece next to your choice and compare. Repeat this process until you have a reasonably exact copy of the piece.

## Engage right brain

Now put a blank on the lathe, engage the right brain, and make your object from memory. Compare this effort to the original and observe similarities and differences. What aspects of the differences

interest you? Be very left-brain specific in your analysis. Explore these variations with more iteration. Quantity equates to quality.

## Put it all together

The next step is to put the same details on a completely different-size blank. Let the left brain begin the process, but you will soon find the right brain exerting its influence on the final shape to accommodate the different size, especially in the transition areas. Add or subtract details, color, and/or texture to come up with something that pleases the right side while holding on to the original idea with the left side.



Please have fun and play.

There are NO failures, only new information. Begin with your dominant side and allow the recessive side to influence the finished piece. What you need to know about the next piece is contained in your last piece. Quantity is the road to quality.

Colorado woodturners David Nittmann ([david@davidnittmann.com](mailto:david@davidnittmann.com)) and Cindy Drozda ([cindy@cindydrozda.com](mailto:cindy@cindydrozda.com)) live in Boulder. David is a featured demonstrator at the Albuquerque symposium.

## Recommended reading

Here are three books to help you exercise both sides of your brain.

**Art & Fear** by David Bayles and Ted Orland, Capra Press (ISBN 0-88496-379-9)

**The Alphabet Versus the Goddess** by Leonard Shlain, Penguin Books (ISBN 0-670-87883-9)

**Designing Furniture** by Fine Woodworking editors, Taunton Press (ISBN 0-942391-02-0)