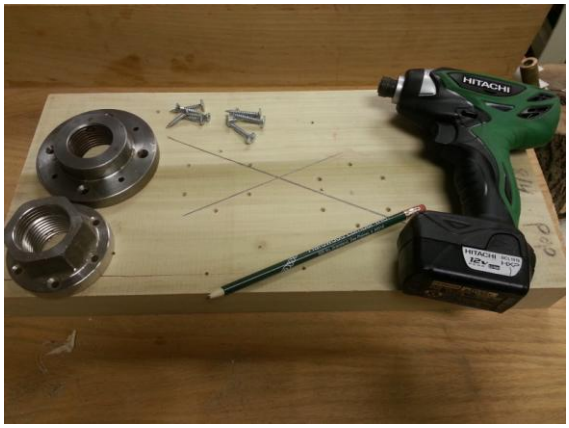
# Eccentric Wall Plaque, Methods and Thoughts

Clint Stevens

Bowls are nice, boxes are great but man, they fill the table top quickly. Then they fill the curio cabinet, the coffee table and the side board. Before you know it you can't find the sofa for the turnings and the dog can't make it to the back door. Wouldn't it be nice if you could turn things that could hang on the wall instead? As an additional incentive, now you can use those pieces of wood that are not quite the right size for bowls. Welcome to methods for eccentric wall plaques.

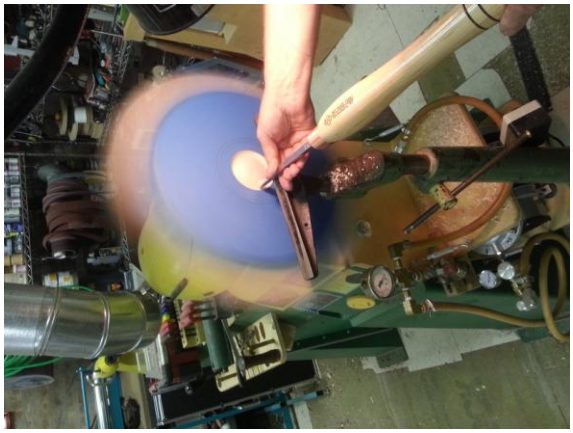
First (always first), a bit of safety. Cover your eyes. We don't want a nick name like patch. Don't put any fingers over the tool rest that you plan on using in the future. And finally, slow the lathe down. Do yourself a favor and read my one page treatise on forces in eccentric turning. We don't want any surprises.




It's important to select your wood carefully and lay out an rough design for it. The wood may be natural edged or plain sawn. It might be just a half inch thick or a couple inches thick. Examine the wood for any faults and its best face. Make sure that at least the back side of the piece is flat. This can be accomplished with a belt or bench sander.

Be sure to have a sacrificial piece of thick plywood or solid hardwood large enough to maximize the common surface between the wall plaque and sacrificial mounting wood.

Glue the sacrificial mounting board to the work piece and allow it to dry. You could use PVC glue, but I find that in addition to clamping the pieces together overnight for drying, it's a bear to remove the sacrificial mounting piece when you have finished turning. I prefer a generous application of glue from a hot glue gun. By "generous" I mean at least a full stick. This will cool before you can finish the job and join both pieces of wood. I overcome this problem by reheating the glue with a heat gun. When the glue is soft again, press the boards together until the glue sets up.

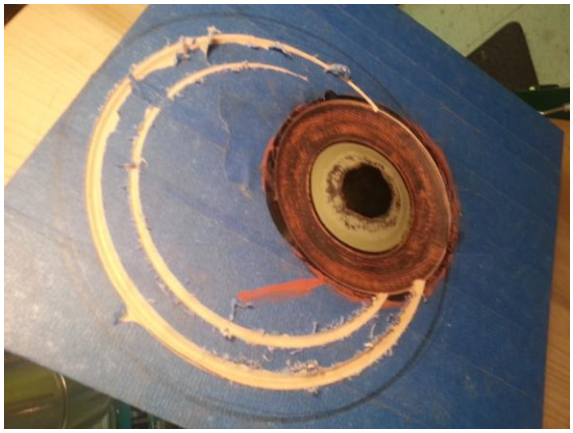


If your intention is to select multiple axis for turning, be sure that the maximum offset doesn't exceed the swing. In short, you don't want the turning to hit the bed as it goes around. If possible, turn over the lathe bed. If this isn't possible, some lathes allow for outboard turning where the piece can swing between the spindle and the floor. For outboard turning you must have a floor stand tool rest. The stand must be steady and heavy. It also helps to have the tool rest very close to the turning.

You must also decide whether the front surface will be sanded or left rough before turning. It's a challenge to sand the surface after turning. Before laying out the turned crescents and bowls, examine the wood for any special or unusual features that you would like to show off by not cutting through them.

Set up the faceplate on the outermost location you wish to turn on. Mount the piece on the lathe just to make sure it turns well without hitting the lathe bed. Turn on the lathe at a very slow speed (I like about 100 rpm for most pieces.) Stand out of the danger area in case the piece separates from the glue. Slowly pick up the speed until you hit the speed at which the lathe develops a slight shudder. Turn the lathe speed down and remember it. This is the fastest speed that you can turn at. Depending on the size of the piece and the amount of offset, I usually keep this under 300 rpm for larger pieces and never more than about 600 rpm for the smaller pieces. Just don't forget that you may have the very real excitement of the work piece separating from the glue. Also, avoid the outer edges of the turning. Even at speeds of 300 rpm the outer edge can easily travel at 30 mph. That could prove to be painful at the very least.

Once the work piece has been toughly screwed to the faceplate (at least eight steel screws), examined and tested, you are ready to turn. For this job I use a 3/4" bowl gouge with an unusual 35 degree bevel. This tool minimizes vibration when cutting into the wood. I also find a variety of



texturing tools and scrapers to be useful. I like Easy Wood Tools "Easy Detailer." This is a pointy scraper ideal for small area work and crescents. Regardless of the tool you use be sure to use a very light touch. There is little that will force your attention more than a catch with one of these eccentric projects.

When the first bowl portion of the turning is finished, consider whether you would like to move the center or add crescents. For crescents, you must tilt the wall plaque on its current axis. This is done by removing the turning from the lathe and slightly loosening the faceplate. Insert a shim under the faceplate in the direction that you would like the crescents oriented on. Retighten the faceplate with the shim inserted. Note that the wider the shim, the narrower and deeper the crescents will be cut. My favorite shims are popsicle sticks and folded playing cards. Very thin shims are useful for making a series of thin ethereal crescents.

Once remounted the crescents can be cut with a bowl gouge or scraper.

The wall plaque can be sanded on the lathe only where the circular area doesn't cross another carved feature.

When the face work is complete the plaque can be painted, textured, or finished.

Remove the plaque from the lathe and lay it on a padded surface. Unscrew the faceplate. Remove the sacrificial mounting wood by tapping a wide wood chisel around the outside. Tap the chisel in the direction of the long grain so that the finished plaque won't split. Once the plaque is removed inspect the back side and decide if the back should be sanded or not.

The plaque can be hung with any sturdy wall mounting method. My favorite is a one inch keyhole style plate, easily available. Felt feet on the bottom back corners will eliminate the possibility of damage to your plaque or the walls.