

# Bill Ooms

## ...Art in Wood



*"SPIRAL TRIANGLES"  
Holly wood patterned with burnt lines and ebony dye  
4" x 5" x 5"*



*Bill Ooms*

Wood is a unique medium for an artist — a tree was once a living thing of beauty. A wood artist has the opportunity to transform the once-living wood into something uniquely different that retains its beauty for generations to come.

Bill Ooms is one such wood artist. His artistry, while evolving into new forms and shapes, is limited only by his imagination. As a second generation wood-turner, he learned basic woodworking techniques from his father. Even as a young man, his desire was to envision and create new things. This led him to his first career in engineering, and now he has returned to his roots as a full-time woodworker in his shop north of Prescott, Arizona.

Much of Bill's early wood work was turning hollow vases inspired by the pottery of Native Americans. Bill collects pottery and often spends time touring the pueblos of Arizona and New Mexico for inspiration. "I've learned a lot about shape and form from Native American potters," says Bill. "It doesn't matter if you're working with clay or wood — it's all about shape and form. I seldom add much decoration to the wood — I let the grain and natural features of the wood be the dominant decoration."

His hollow vases can be incredibly thin — often less than 1/8" thick. Bill knows the limits of the wood. After turning and hollowing the inside, he sands the piece and applies layers of hand-rubbed oil finish mixed to his own specifications. "This type of finish takes longer, but it preserves the warm feel of the wood," according to Ooms. "I love to see people pick up one of



*"DNA"  
Maple, Boire, Imbuya, and  
Maple Burl wood on a marble base  
30" x 15" x 11"*

my pieces and gently enjoy the feel of the wood."

From where does all the wood come? Much of the wood is gathered from local tree removal services or from storm damaged trees. Some wood is obtained from other woodworkers throughout the country or purchased from wood suppliers who can certify that no endangered species are used. Much of the wood is wet or recently cut, so Bill dries all his wood in a special kiln that he built to insure stability.

Bill is now combining his wood-turning skills with his math and engineering background to create unique wood sculptures he

calls "ribbon sculptures." They resemble a thin ribbon of wood that twists and winds into a closed shape. Each curved section of the ribbon is turned on the lathe; then all the highly precise curved sections are assembled together into the final sculpture.

Most of his creations start with the aid of 3-D computer simulation. Bill could not find any commercial software that met his needs, so he wrote his own computer program for this purpose. This enables him to view the sculpture from all directions prior to beginning the actual construction. Bill says, "I don't want to spend four weeks in the shop making a piece without



*"MASUR BIRCH VASE"  
Masur Birch wood with ebony accents and finial  
10" x 4" x 4"*



*"BLACK & TAN"*  
Zircote and Maple wood on an Oak Burl base  
24" x 14" x 9"



*"MAPLE BURL VASE"*  
Maple Burl wood with a natural edge  
11" x 6" x 6"

knowing that it will look nice. The simulation lets me see it first, and then I can go to the shop and cut the expensive wood. I'll spend hours on the computer trying to fit various shapes together to come up with something pleasing. This has really been a break-through and helps me explore new shapes."

Bill stresses to his customers that no two of his ribbon sculptures are alike. Some of the ribbon sculptures are made from a single type of wood. Others may include thin strips of contrasting veneer to give the appearance of "pin-stripes" between pieces. More recently he has begun to segment several different kinds of wood together to form patterns within the flowing ribbon.

Where will he go next? "I've really been enjoying making sculptures," according to Bill, "so it will be exciting to explore the limits of the wood, my imagination and technology." 

**For more information on Bill's work:  
WWW.BILLOOMS.COM**



*"TRINITY"*  
Morado wood  
19" x 19" x 6"