

Hidden Beauty

I know for sure that I did not create the beauty in the pieces you see here. God did that for us as a gift. In His wisdom and awesome generosity, He put it inside rough exteriors for us to uncover.

An uncut chunk of wood is not usually very pretty. Sometimes you can get a glimpse of the potential inside, but only if you know what to look for. Sometimes, like this red mallee burl, the exterior is so spiky and dangerous you can barely handle it. The cool thing is, you can uncover the hidden beauty inside with a little effort.



People are often like that, too. I am learning something about myself and other people as I explore woodworking. God has hidden a beauty within many people, but we often lack the patience, zeal, or desire to uncover it. Sometimes they are just too spiky and dangerous. As a former pastor and personal coach, I have to remind myself of this truth. I hope as you explore this little journey in the uncovering of the beauty in a piece of wood that you might see yourself or others in the way Jesus of Nazareth sees you.



This chunk of red mallee caught my eye because it was kind of oblong, but not too much. Other than that, there wasn't much to go on. These pictures are from the site where I purchased them (www.leetreewoodworks.com).



Once in the shop, I found the highest point on the back, and that became the center of the bowl. I knew right away this was going to be a challenge, because it was off-center more than I thought, meaning I was going to have to run the lathe slowly. And, the interrupted cut was going to be very punishing on me and the equipment. Those hard, sharp spikes are almost invisible when you start the lathe, so there is an air of danger and the potential for a nasty injury along the way.

It seemed to take forever to get the initial cuts done. But with perseverance, I began to see some beauty showing through the spikes. The red swirling burl pattern peeking out kept me inspired to keep going, despite the spikes.

Here, the back is almost rough-turned. You can really see the beauty popping out all over!



Now, I am using a scraper to start the smoothing before sanding the back. But wait, I still have the front of the bowl to start on! I apologize that I don't have any photos of the process of finishing the interior. Once the back is fully sanded (in this case to about 1200 grit), I sealed it to keep the dust out of the pores and to keep fingerprints to a minimum. (You don't want to spoil the progress you have made, just like with people!)

Working the "bowl" side is different in that you are really cutting into the heart of the burl as well as revealing the beauty in the "wings." The cutting, scraping, and sanding takes a long time because the wood is very hard. But, perseverance pays off, and finally, I got to polish out the surfaces after many steps of sealing, fine sanding, sealing some more, and buffing.



The final form is quite stunning. Note that there are still some spikes left over, just to remind us where the beauty came from. Like many of us, the road to perfection leaves us with some of our spikes still intact. The nice thing is that they all get removed at the end of days by the one who loves us the most.

I hope you enjoyed my little story.
Blessings,
John