



Museum for Art in Wood

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THE CENTER FOR ART IN WOOD REBRANDS AS THE MUSEUM FOR ART IN WOOD, CONTINUES MISSION TO INTERPRET, NURTURE, AND CHAMPION CONTEMPORARY ART IN WOOD

Philadelphia, PA | January 30, 2023 – Over the last four decades, [The Center for Art in Wood](#) (141 N. 3rd Street, Philadelphia, PA 19106) has enhanced the public's understanding of contemporary art in wood through its extensive collection, programming, exhibitions, and documentation. On January 30, the organization officially rebrands as the **Museum for Art in Wood** after undergoing an intensive and diligent planning process. The move allows the Museum to be further recognized by an international community of artists, scholars, and collectors as a critical resource in studying art, craft, and design in wood. It also reinforces the **Museum for Art in Wood's** mission to stimulate and nurture creative engagements surrounding wood, an organic, shapeable, sustainable, and conceptually inspiring material.

In addition to the rebranding, the organization is honored to announce a historic and transformative \$10 million endowment from the [Windgate Foundation](#), designated to strengthen the future of the Museum and allow the organization to expand its mission, programs, and plans for growth. \$3.5 million of the gift is held as a named, designated endowment at the Arkansas Community Foundation with the remaining invested by the **Museum for Art in Wood**. The Windgate Foundation, which provides critical funding for contemporary craft and visual arts education in the United States, previously awarded the Museum smaller endowment gifts supporting its renowned international residency program and general operating fund.

“The endowment is a culmination of our partnership over the past 29 years, and clearly shows our belief in the leadership, values, and mission of the organization,” said Patricia Forgy, Windgate Foundation Executive Director. “We are thrilled to congratulate the newly named **Museum for Art in Wood** on this exciting transformation and encourage others to visit and support this exceptional institution.”

“This organization has grown to become the world leader in building appreciation, awareness, and scholarship for art in wood,” said Jennifer-Navva Milliken, **Museum for Art in Wood's** Executive Director and Chief Curator. “From its earliest days as the Wood Turning Center to its pivotal move to the current location in the cultural and historic heart of Philadelphia, this dynamic Museum has hosted groundbreaking exhibitions, built a distinctive and important collection and archives, and opened its doors to the wonder of creativity in wood to visitors locally, regionally, and internationally. We look forward to engaging the public with new and exciting opportunities and experiences under a name that encapsulates all we do. The name change clarifies our work and mission, while the impact of the extraordinary and unprecedented support from the Windgate Foundation helps to stabilize our footing as we envision an exciting future. We can't wait to welcome everyone to the **Museum for Art in Wood**.”

Under the new branding, the **Museum for Art in Wood** will host an inaugural, community-focused, exhibition and shared-making project titled [The Mashrabiya Project](#). The Project, which launches March 3 and features new works by international artists from across the Islamic world, was made possible by a project grant from the Pew Center for Arts & Heritage. The cornerstone of *The Mashrabiya Project* is *Seeing Through Space*, a multi-disciplinary exhibition featuring newly commissioned works from six female-identifying international artists. *The Mashrabiya Project* also includes interactive programming, a shared-making experience, and a publication showcasing and exploring the significance of the wood-turned mashrabiya. Curated by Milliken, this will be the first effort in the United States to examine this architectural object and its prominence in Islamic and Egyptian craft while highlighting its greater cultural significance in contemporary art. The **Museum for Art in Wood** will present *The Mashrabiya Project* from March 3 to July 23, 2023, and host hybrid programming to encourage further public engagement and discussion.

History of the Museum for Art in Wood

The **Museum for Art in Wood** emerged from biannual wood-turning symposiums and exhibitions held at the George School in Bucks County, PA, between 1976 and 1981. Wood-turning is a craft that involves using a lathe to rotate pieces of wood while an operator carves them into curved, axial shapes. The practice has been used for centuries to create utilitarian objects, including table legs, balusters, serving utensils, vessels, and architectural elements. Believed to have originated in ancient Egypt, this artisanal means of production is still practiced worldwide. However, in the latter part of the twentieth century, the lathe caught the interest of artists and sculptors, who began turning objects that represented formal or conceptual concerns rather than strictly functional.

The events were organized by wood-turning artist Albert LeCoff, his twin brother, real estate and commercial assets specialist Alan LeCoff, and woodworker and educator Palmer Sharpless. The trio is credited with spurring interest and expanding awareness around using wood-turning as a contemporary art form. In 1981, for the 10th and final wood-turning symposium, Albert LeCoff organized the national tour of the accompanying exhibition, *The First North American Turned Object Show*. This was the first wood-turning exhibition to tour North America, displayed at five different venues.

In 1986, the LeCoff brothers incorporated the Wood Turning Center as a 501(c)(3), with Albert taking the helm as Executive Director. He organized the first international exhibition of lathe-turned objects in 1988, titled the *International Turned Objects Show*. The Center continued to serve the global arts community and hosted two international wood-turning conferences.

For nearly 15 years, the Center operated from Albert's home in Germantown, a northwest Philadelphia, PA neighborhood, before being moved to a public facility at 501 Vine Street in 2000. In 2001, the Center collaborated with Yale University's Art Gallery to research and document contemporary wood-turning. This extensive survey, titled *Wood Turning in North America Since 1930*, was released as a color publication contextualizing twentieth-century craft in wood. In 2003, the American Craft Council (ACC) recognized LeCoff as an ACC Honorary Fellow for his dedication and prolific service to the field of art in wood.

In 2011, the Center rebranded, changing its name to The Center for Art in Wood to reflect its evolution into a non-profit highlighting artists and research in the broader field of art in wood. The Center also moved to its current location at 141 N. 3rd Street, in the heart of Philadelphia's Old City arts and gallery district. The inaugural exhibition, *Turning to Art in Wood: A Creative Journey*, featured a large sample of

the Center's permanent collection. A catalog documenting the works in the permanent collection is updated every five years with newly acquired objects and artwork.

In 2018, LeCoff retired from his post as Executive Director, and Jennifer-Navva Milliken, a curator specializing in contemporary craft and design, was brought on to lead the vision and direction of the Center in its next phase. Milliken was named Executive Director & Chief Curator in 2021.

Collections & Archives

Visitors to the **Museum for Art in Wood** can view one of the most extensive institutional collections of contemporary art in wood. Admission is free, allowing guests to view a selection of its [permanent collection](#) with over 1,200 objects and rotating exhibitions on display in the [Gerry Lenfest Gallery](#). The Museum's collection is a testimony of this thriving field and includes turned objects, sculptures, studio furniture, installation, video, and more.

The Museum also maintains an extensive archive documenting the field of art in wood. [The Fleur & Charles Bresler Research Library](#) consists of over 1,000 books, manuscripts, and journals that preserve the history of wood-turning and woodworking. The library also includes the [Earl Powel Artist Research Files](#), which contain over 25,000 images and international artists' records. The library provides a detailed look at the continuing evolution of these art forms within the broader field of contemporary art. Members of the Museum have free access to the Museum archives for research.

Programs & Exhibitions

Through its annual [Windgate Arts Residency Program in Wood](#), the Museum awards prestigious fellowships to an international pool of applicants. Resident Fellows explore new work through research and collaboration while scholars and documentarians capture their experiences. The residency culminates with an exhibition of new and original works created by the Fellows, displayed at the Museum. In the last 26 years, over 160 artists have participated in the program, including American curator and historian Glenn Adamson, Korean sculptor Cha Jong-Rye, and Ghanaian sculptor and fantasy coffin carpenter Eric Adjete Anang.

The Museum is synonymous with groundbreaking exhibitions, many of which have been displayed on loan throughout the United States. Early presentations include the *International Turned Objects Show*, *Turning to Art in Wood*, and the touring collection exhibition *Explorations: Selections from The Center for Art in Wood* solidified the organization's place on the international map. In recent years, seminal group exhibitions *On the Edge of Your Seat: Chairs for the Twenty-First Century*, *Making a Seat at the Table: Women Transform Woodworking*, along with solo presentations of leading artists Humaira Abid, Damien Davis, Michael Ferris, Dorothy Gill Barnes, Merryll Saylan, Norm Sartorius, and David Stephens, have transformed the public perception of art in wood.

The Museum is distinguished for its dynamic and wide-ranging public programming, including unique virtual opportunities to engage with its collection, exhibitions, and artistic community. Art enthusiasts can join home craft workshops hosted by the Museum's staff, listen to exclusive interviews, attend virtual Artist Talks, or watch artists give virtual tours of their studios. They can also take a guided tour of the latest exhibition or attend the monthly *Object Lessons* series, where special guests interpret artwork from the Museum's collection. Visitors can even find cocktail tutorials and yoga videos geared towards soothing the aches and pains associated with the woodworking craft.

The **Museum for Art in Wood** offers additional residencies, fellowships, and award programs, further

showcasing the importance of the art form on the world stage while supporting artists who demonstrate exceptional craftsmanship, conceptual strength, and the testing of skill and vision in their work.

Images: Live [HERE](#)

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About Museum for Art in Wood:

The Museum for Art in Wood is the international leader for contemporary art and creativity in the material of wood. The Museum engages, educates, and inspires the public through the exhibition, collection, and interpretation of contemporary art in wood. Founded in 1986 and sited in Philadelphia, the Museum for Art in Wood serves a local and international community. It has built its reputation by providing opportunities for makers and visitors to experience craft directly, through participatory programming; seminal exhibitions and documentation; and the growth, conservation, exhibition, and care of its permanent collection. The Museum's practice of keeping these resources free and available to the public emphasizes its commitment to building a democratic and inclusive community. Visit museumforartinwood.org to learn more.