

Born from Wood:

The Niagara Frontier Wood Carvers

April 8—June 24, 2019



CASTELLANI
ART MUSEUM
OF NIAGARA UNIVERSITY

"Pulling a carving out of wood..."

...it just gives such a wonderful feeling."

- Deborah Barbour



Born from Wood: The Niagara Frontier Wood Carvers

From the first rough cut to the final finishing touch, every woodcarving is a journey: a path of thought, intent, and action behind every movement of blade against wood.

Born from Wood: The Niagara Frontier Wood Carvers features the woodworks of thirteen members of the Niagara Frontier Wood Carvers club. This exhibit provides a glimpse into the tools, techniques, meanings, and materials found in wood carving and wood burning: from caricatures and relief carvings to figurative sculptures and 'unburned' artworks.

Wood carving is the traditional art of creating designs and figures out of wood with bladed tools such as knives, gouges, chisels, and saws. Carving art out of wood requires great patience, focus, and perseverance to bring each figure, motif, and design to life.

Related to wood carving is wood burning, where designs are made on the surface of the wood itself through the use of heated metal-tip tools like a soldering pen.

Born from Wood: The Niagara Frontier Wood Carvers is curated by Niagara University students in the Art History with Museum Studies course AHM357A: Exhibiting Cultures in collaboration with the Niagara Frontier Wood Carvers. We hope that it sparks your curiosity in the traditional arts of wood carving and wood burning and inspires your creative pursuits.

Artist Bios

Doug Bathke has been a wood carver for 55 years, and has been teaching carving for 46. Doug has collected over 300 tools and carved everything from small figures to carousel horses and large signs.

Gary Rockenbrock enjoys carving small abstract and realistic animal figures, and has been carving for about four years.

Emily Dahlstrom has been a woodcarver and club member for decades. Seven years ago she took up wood burning and has invented her own technique.

Thomas Heyer has been working with wood in some form since his childhood, beginning as the gofer for his father's woodworking projects.

Robert Miller has 30 years of wood carving experience, and enjoys carving small figures—especially Santa Clauses.

Paul Yaeger has been carving for over 30 years, and began with birds as he was an avid birdwatcher. He recently has been interested in carving caricatures.

Tim Shilling enjoys carving Christmas ornaments, wildlife, and scenery such as covered bridges or barns. Over his 20 years of experience, Tim also sometimes uses other materials and techniques like stone or wood stains.

Deborah Barbour started carving five years ago after taking Fred Bates' carving classes. Deborah likes to experiment with new carving techniques, and has been adding to a nativity set over the years.

Gary Dahlstrom got his start in carving on a boy scout weekend about 15 years ago, after being given a knife and wood by another carver on the trip.

Kenneth Heimiller has seven years of wood carving experience, and especially enjoys carving animals and birds.

Karl Heilemann is the newest member of the NFWC, and has been carving for over three years. Surrounded by woodworking through his family, Karl began to carve when he was able to devote more time to learning.

Stephen Caruana has been a studio artist for 42 years and a wood carver for 16, focusing recently on realistic figurative carvings and wood burnings.

Lee Smith has been carving for about 15 years and enjoys working on his carvings both at home and on camping trips.

Niagara Frontier Wood Carvers

Founded in 1974, the Niagara Frontier Wood Carvers (NFWC) are one of the oldest continuing wood carving clubs in Western New York, currently based in North Tonawanda. Meetings of the club are social, instructional, and artistic, being opportunities to share and exchange new ideas, learn new skills, and get feedback on current projects.



Niagara Frontier Wood Carvers Sign, Rich Reimers & Ted Piatrowski, n.d

Five members of the NFWC club also belonged to the Herschell Carrousel Factory Museum Guild that carved the Niagara County Logo for the Niagara County bicentennial. This carved logo can be seen hanging in the Niagara County Legislature Chamber in Lockport.

From non-carvers and beginners to experienced carvers, membership in the club is open to anyone interested in the arts of wood carving and wood burning.

Cover Images:

Doug Bathke, *Native American bust*, n.d.

(inset)

Deborah Barbour, *Old Salt*, 2019

Paul Yaeger, *Iris*, 2015

Kenneth Heimiller, *Heron*, n.d.

Karl Heilemann, *Love Spoon*, 2018

Lee Smith, *Owl*, n.d.

Gary Dahlstrom, *Castle Chess Set*, 2018

Tim Shilling, *Wood Spirit*, 2017

Robert Miller, *Leafman*, 2009

Gary Rockenbrock, *Fox*, n.d.

Stephen Caruana, *Philosophy Professor*, 2016

Emily Dahlstrom, *Hogwarts Burns*, 2013

Thomas Heyer, *Hippogriff*, 2015

Acknowledgments

Special thanks to Doug Bathke and the Niagara Frontier Wood Carvers, Deb, Paul, Ken, Karl, Lee, Gary, Tim, Bob, Gary, Stephen, Emily, and Tom for sharing their great knowledge of wood carving and wood burning, and working with us to develop an exhibition of their work. Special thanks also to Megan Hahin, Director of the Herschell Carrousel Factory Museum, and Castellani Art Museum staff.

Curators:

Edward Y. Millar

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Nicholas Hertz

Melanie Polanco

Elizabeth Rice

Stephanie Toohey

Sierra West

Featured Artists:

Doug Bathke

Deborah Barbour

Stephen Caruana

Emily Dahlstrom

Gary Dahlstrom

Karl Heilemann

Kenneth Heimiller

Thomas Heyer

Robert Miller

Gary Rockenbrock

Tim Shilling

Lee Smith

Paul Yaeger



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