

Combining three
woodturner cuts

Pleasing Profiles

Every cut you make at the lathe involves a straight line, cove, or bead. The success of your piece depends on how you put the three together.

By David Nittmann

I was listening to my favorite local public radio and happened to hear Allan Watts discussing “Yes & No.” This famous “Right Brain/Left Brain” discussion ended with Allan saying, “Don’t be afraid of nothing!”

The program got me thinking about the positive and negative space in our wooden projects—the yin and yang of woodturning. Look at the examples and see the line created by the interaction of black and white. Let these examples serve as possibilities for creativity in your forms.

Roman ogee combines 3 woodturner cuts

There are three cuts woodturners can make at the lathe: straight, cove, and bead. The way we combine these three shapes creates the interest factor in our artwork. Here’s one popular variation.

First, let the straight line become a point and call it the “transition” from bead to cove. You can vary visual interest by moving the transition point along the curve as shown in four more variations.

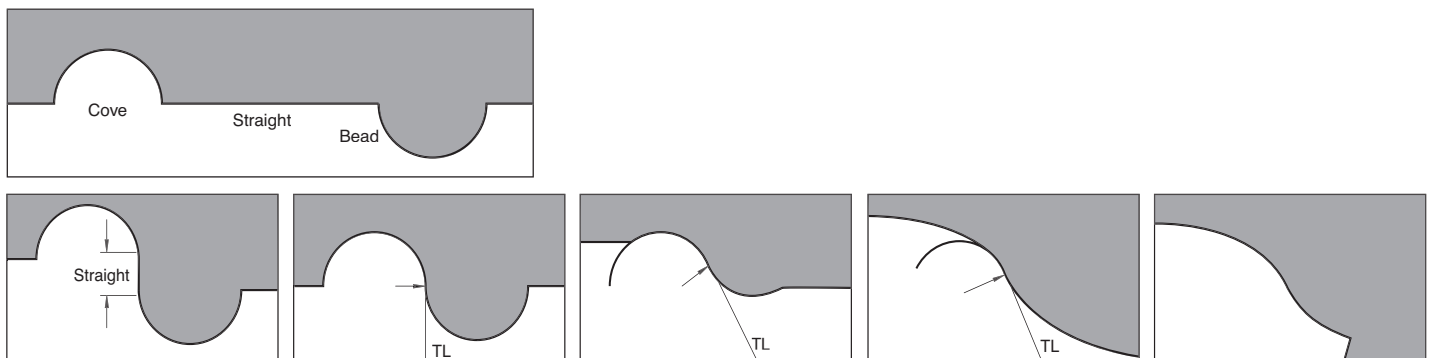
By extending these curves at either end, the graceful ogee curve evolves. Now, add a foot, and a

bowl form is created. Richard Raffan explains this wonderfully in his classic book *Turned Bowl Design*—a must for every woodturning library.

Open vessel

The ogee is a great shape for illustrating design variation. Using the open vessel, for example, we can see the visual changes made as we move the transition line (the figures show “TL”= tangent line) up and down the curve. Shifting the tangent line from a symmetrical to an asymmetrical location adds interest to the form.

ROMAN OGEE





Cindy Drozda's "Sedna" exhibits a classic ogee profile.

The Golden Mean (sometimes called the Two-Thirds Rule) often helps start the asymmetrical placement of the tangent line, but this so-called rule should not restrict the final form. Just a small movement of the line can drastically change the dynamics of the piece.

Classic urn

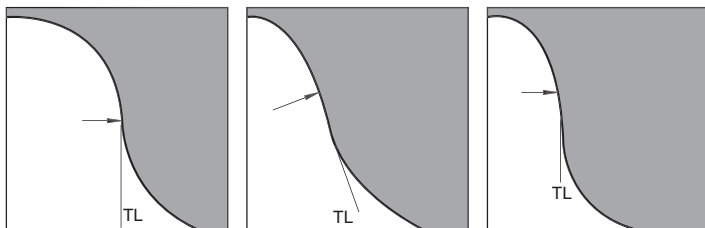
Using the ogee to create a closed vessel adds more opportunity to explore form. The classic urn shape exemplifies this creativity. Here, the curve change from shoulder to neck is based on the Golden Mean. However, the influence of tangent line changes on the top and sides of the vessel.

Your eye will catch any anomalies in the smoothness of your cutting technique that can detract from the finished form, but these are minor bumps. Look to the overall shape for inspiration in sketching out your next project.

With this confidence in your shapes, you can update Allan's expression to say, "No fear."

David Nittmann is a studio woodturner who lives in Boulder, Colorado. David (david@davidnittmann.com) is a founding member of the Rocky Mountain Woodturners.

OPEN VESSEL



Illustrations: Roxanne LeMoine

CLASSIC URN

