

From Crosscut – www.wwa.org.za - October 2013

Nico Swart

By Donovan Adams



On a recent trip to my home town of Port Elizabeth, I visited Nico Swart at his business premises "Barenesta" in North End. For those of you who don't know Nico, he is a professional woodworker and artist, specialising in turning and wood sculpture. It is here that Nico runs his furniture restoration business, mostly handled by his staff, which frees him to work on his art forms. It is a perfectly suited building, with offices, display room and workshop downstairs whilst his wood turning school workshop is upstairs with 6 lathes and top quality tools to boot. Three are shown in the picture below. He also has a large variety of Bonsai Trees outside but I never got to query him about this other passion of his. Not to mention piles and piles of wood!



He is turning 60 soon, and to mark the occasion will be exhibiting his fifth solo exhibition by displaying 60 objects. His work ranges from precise, high quality turned pieces including bowls, platters, murals, hollow forms, drift woods extending right through to highly sort after creative one-off art gallery sculptural pieces. It's easy to see that he is an artist at the top of his game - yet he remains very humble maintaining a thirst to keep learning. I so enjoyed some time hearing about his story and passion for the art form and after all these years he still gets such joy from creating wood art and mentoring students.



He invited me to attend his Saturday beginners turning class as he had a spare lathe open and what a joy to be taught how to turn apples by the master himself. This is an 8 week course and I only wish I was living back home in PE if not just to be able to have the privilege of completing the course with him. He

seemed pleased with my efforts, and I'd like to think that I represented the WWA members proudly. I learned specifically how to handle a spindle gouge with confidence. Nico expressed his desire to see more cohesion and sharing of knowledge between wood turners around the country. Do pop in for a visit if you are ever in the area - he would love to meet you!

