

Why Mushrooms?

Mushrooms are my favourite subject. They give me freedom to explore shapes without having to follow restrictive design rules. They're particularly suited to the bi-convex, complex curves which I enjoy using.

Traditionalists sometimes regard them as mere trivial whimsy, and seem happier to see me doing something more practical. I think they're missing the point. Decorative work should be decorative. It doesn't have to justify its existence by being practical. Turners have been producing "useless" decorative pieces for centuries.

Practicality is less important today than in the past. You've probably heard the story of the beautiful, practical box, which the owner uses to keep a piece of paper, reminding him what woods it's made of. It was bought for its looks, not because it was essential for storage.

When I introduce a practical element to a design, I have to decide if it will be really practical, or if the shape's the important thing, and the practical purpose is purely nominal. Either way, the finished piece should be fit for purpose, and the shape would be different from a purely sculptural piece.

A typical turned mushroom has three pieces. That gives you 3 chances to play. Finding shapes and patterns which go together to form a cohesive whole teaches you a lot about design. You often find that traditionally correct proportions become less relevant with extreme Rose Turned shapes. A successful mushroom should have an individual "character". This individuality is often enhanced by slightly strange proportions.