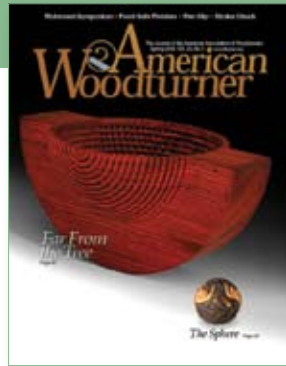


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It's Crete to Me

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American Association of Woodturners

In the ancient land of Greece and on the island of Crete, Nikos Siragas, the AAW's only Greek member, has carved out a niche in this tourist area. Nikos, a 30-year veteran, has a small shop and a fine gallery in Rethymno, just off the main drive along the Sea of Crete.

In good weather, you can find Nikos demonstrating outside on the street in front of his gallery. Selling woodturnings anywhere is a challenge at times, but Nikos has discovered tourists like to take home items that represent Greece. More than 95 percent of his sales are to non-Greeks, with most items selling for between \$10 and \$100. His work includes ring stands, bracelets, fruit, bowls, and sculpted turnings. Nikos (siragas.gr) has also published a book, *From Tree to Gallery*.

One of Nikos' great selling points is that most of his turnings are from olive, among the most beautiful and great turning woods in the world.

Nikos fights (as all wood artists have at times) the view that wood is for fire or building purposes, not for art or fine crafts. His mother once heard some local residents say just outside his gallery, "This poor man is trying to make money from wood."

If you happen to be traveling in that part of the world, Nikos and his wife, Frances, will warmly greet you.

—Alan Lacer



Photo: Frances Wildey



Photo: Photo Rethymno

Above: "Genie Goblet," one of Nikos's signature pieces, is inspired by the Sea of Crete. Olive; 7 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 2 $\frac{3}{8}$ ". Collection of Dale and Norene Nish. **Left:** Olive root; 9 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 9 x 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ ".



Photo: Juhani Vitanen

When demonstrating outdoors, Nikos turns at a 70-year-old metal lathe converted to woodturning.

"Eel Vase;" is also inspired by the sea. Olive; 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 5". "I used to go fishing with my father and I remembered the movement of the sea eels we sometimes got on the boat. This inspired the fins on the sides of this carved vase."