

Spotlight on the Arts

A Marriage of Styles

Artistic couple creates beautiful objects together

BY DEANNA MASCLE

JACK and Linda Fifield's marriage has blossomed over a quarter of a century due to the many common bonds they share – appreciation for family, enjoyment of nature and a love of beauty. However, it has only been in the last few years that the Eastern Kentucky couple have also discovered they share the ability to create beauty.

Linda Fifield has always considered herself an artist. She believes her talents and appreciation of beauty are as much a part of her as her brown eyes and dark hair. A dentist by profession, Jack came much later to learn of his own latent talents.

Today, both Fifields have garnered national recognition for their work and are well on their way to achieving their goal of supporting themselves entirely from their art.

Finished forms

Linda's work most often involves wood-turned forms encased in beads. It has been described by critics as "a feast for the eyes," "striking," "wonderful" and "a delight."

It was a 1975 visit to the Native American section of the Field Museum in Chicago that inspired Linda to follow her current path. She admired a display of beautiful twined and coiled Indian baskets created with tiny perfect stitches that looked like beadwork. Following that epiphany, she began working with beads, first experimenting with a variety of forms from glass to pottery, but their fragility worried her. Then, in 1994, she bought a lathe for her husband as a 20th anniversary gift. When he



Jack Fifield displays a bowl after he has completed the lathe work. He will continue to finish the piece as it dries by applying varnish and polishing.

showed her how to turn wood vessels for her beadwork, the final piece of her artistic path fell into place.

Natural art

Jack's road to becoming one of Kentucky's most outstanding new artists was a longer, more circuitous route than Linda's. Born in Iowa and raised in Minnesota, he came to Kentucky in the 1970s as a dental student and fell in love with this part of the country and with one particular Kentucky woman. Woodworking has long been his hobby, but it was not until Linda gave him the lathe that he began turning wood and creating art.

"I love the beauty of wood and the way it works," Jack says.

He turns his pieces when the wood is still "wet" – that is, green and unseasoned. This suits both his artistry and his temperament. He enjoys the immediate gratification of being able to begin working with a piece of wood as soon as he has found it and brought it home.

A perfect marriage

Jack and Linda Fifields' work has been included in more than 50 exhibitions over the past two years in places ranging from from Wisconsin to Washington.

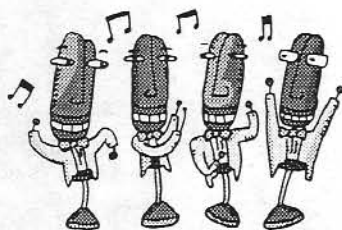
Together they have created cremation urns, wine goblets, water fountains, candlesticks, boxes, and a shaman's rattle.

For the Fifields, the ultimate goal is to support themselves financially with their art. But they have already one important and more personal goal – they have made the world a more beautiful place with their creations.

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