

INTRODUCING...

STORY BY PATRICIA GREAVES

Madeleine Sabo

Nogal woman works wonders from wood

SITUATED IN THE VILLAGE of Nogal, bordered by Lincoln National Forest, Madeleine Sabo's hilltop studio is surrounded by the majestic beauty of wood. Inside, Lincoln County's sole full-time, female wood turner creates earthy, one-of-a-kind vessels from raw material she finds in the area's mountains and ranches.

"When I first saw a chunk of raw wood being turned on a lathe, changing from the ordinary into something extraordinary, I was hooked," Sabo says, explaining her passion. She quickly discovered her light touch is an asset in this exacting art, even though her size was a challenge. "Most lathes are designed for six-foot-tall men. I'm not the tallest woman around," laughs the decidedly petite Sabo. Her husband, Steve, solved this problem by building a wheeled platform for her to stand on.

After four years of often frustrating work, where bowls sometimes flew off the lathe and broke, she now turns graceful pieces of art. Her finished works follow the natural curves of the native wood and highlight its myriad colors—espresso, caramel, honey, toffee, purple, tan, and cream. Sabo lets the

Below— Madeleine Sabo, Lincoln County's only full-time female wood turner, shows off the tools of her trade in her Nogal studio.



Above—Nogal's Madeleine Sabo carved this earthy, one-of-a-kind vessel from juniper root.

grain of the wood guide the finished form of each piece.

Visitors to the studio are treated to a demonstration as Sabo explains the different steps required in turning a wood bowl or vase so they will better understand the skill involved. "I encourage people to pick up and hold the pieces because wood should be touched," she emphasizes. "There is warmth in wood, and people feel the connection." She explains what to look for in turned-wood art: hers or someone else's. "Look at the bottom of the piece, she says. "If it is finished carefully, it is a sign of a talented turner who takes pride in her work." She further notes that the shape at the bottom should curve under slightly. "That makes it seem as if there is a small shadow, a subtle detail that makes the piece more visually interesting."

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When she's not carving, Sabo and her husband (also a turner) gather juniper, burls, walnut, mesquite, and salt cedar around Lincoln County and on a friend's ranch. They believe that carving different kinds of wood is an exciting learning experience. "Working with wood is a serendipitous adventure," Sabo says. "You can never know beforehand what you will find inside." But you can be sure that Sabo will use her skills to reveal nature's heretofore unseen beauty. www.artisticartfromwood.com

After 20 hot years in Texas, Patricia Greaves is enjoying retirement with her husband in beautiful southeastern New Mexico



PHOTOS COURTESY MADELEINE SABO