

WOOD TURNING CENTER

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Civilization As They Knew It: Work by Stephen Paulsen 1963 - 2008

April 4 – July 19, 2008

(Wood Turning Center, Philadelphia, PA) The Wood Turning Center, located in Old City, invites the public to an opening reception with the artist featured in ***Civilization as They Knew It*** on First Friday, April 4, 2008, 5:30-7:30pm. Gallery talks and Q & A occurs during the open reception. The exhibit can be viewed from April 4 – July 19, 2008.

“Civilization as They Knew It” provides a retrospective of Californian Stephen Paulsen’s evolving work, from fifteen years old to the current work created with his son, Ulysses, a glassblower. Stephen’s infamous wall pieces create stories of ancient times through the interior architecture of fictional tombs. The viewer shares a window on this world through the descriptive titles that begin - then drop - the short story about each piece. Other wall pieces recall museum-like cabinets of curiosities. “Civilization as They Knew It” is the objects and crypts found in Stephen Paulsen’s mind.

Within each exquisite cranny, Paulsen installs chalices and vessels in realistic miniature landscapes – too fragile to handle and untouchable - at a distance. Magically, the ancient world comes to life. Each wall piece suggests treasure hunts, hidden tombs, and mystery – all in exotic woods. Paulsen says, “I revel in the places, within us and outside of us, where the past and the future momentarily coexist beyond geography and fashion, while time flies.”

Stephen Paulsen has painted, sculpted, and worked wood as long as he can remember. The son of an expert woodworker, he grew up with the saws and the smell of new chips. In 1963, at the age of 15, he had his first gallery show in Palo Alto, California, exhibiting wood sculpture and wood-cut prints. While studying art, drama, and literature at the University of California at Santa Barbara, he supported himself by working in the manufacture and sale of carved and inlaid musical instruments.

In 1971 Paulsen moved to the Pacific Northwest, where he learned logging, millwork, and the manufacture of lumber. Back in Santa Barbara in 1973, he worked for 3 years as the in-house cabinetmaker for a large industrial firm.

Combining a small studio business and sales at local art festivals and galleries made it possible to leave the corporation in 1976, and devote full time to his custom work. His well-known wooden scent bottle dates from 1978, and appeared in magazines from American Craft to House Beautiful.

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Paulsen’s unique wall constructions evolved in 1985. Part assemblage and part diorama,

these boxed landscapes provide the latitude to imagine and create layouts, fragile objects and imaginary scenes that radically differ from other artists' one-of-a-kind turned objects. Over time, the constructions have become more refined, including those produced now with his son.

THE WOOD TURNING CENTER:

At its Old City, Philadelphia location the Center features international contemporary wood art in changing exhibits, a permanent collection showing the breadth of wood art, a research library, and an eclectic mix of merchandise in the Museum Store. The Center is open Tuesday – Friday, 10am – 5pm and Saturday 12pm – 5pm. Admission is free. Donations support the Center's educational mission. For more information, please call 215-923-800, email info@woodturningcenter.org or visit www.woodturningcenter.org.

Programming at the Center is supported in part by generous funds from the following Foundations, Sponsors and Cambium Circle Members: Fleur Bresler, Harvey Fein, Henry Jordan, Bruce Kaiser, Stephen C. Keeble and Karen Depew, Alan Keiser, Tim and Sheryl Kochman, Alan LeCoff, Albert and Tina LeCoff, Ed Levy, Terry Moritz, Judson Randall, Greg and Regina Rhoa, Norty Rockler, Anonymous Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts; Pennsylvania Council on the Arts; Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission; Philadelphia Cultural Fund; and Friends of the Wood Turning Center. Corporate Sponsors include Caviar Assouline, Chase, and Penn State Industries.

Wood Turning Center

The Wood Turning Center is an art and educational organization whose mission is the encouragement and enhancement of individuals creating art from wood and other materials with a primary focus on turned and carved wood objects, and promoting public appreciation of such art.

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