

Too Cool: Woodwork By Dagan

BY SUZANNE C. LEE

When he's not learning to drive or preparing for college, Dagan Prusky makes and sells hand-turned wood pens.



Left—high schooler Dagan Prusky spends his weekends selling his hand-turned wood writing instruments.

From top—Woodwork by Dagan Dual-Tone Red Mallee Burl and blue resin hybrid body on component part cartridge/converter-filling fountain pen with bicolored stainless steel nib.

Right—light red resin and Australian Burl rollerball and Buckeye Burl fountain pen.

Bottom—Dagan at his self-purchased lathe in his parents' garage.



At 15, I was placing prank phone calls to self-help lines and actively avoiding class, but youth doesn't always equal impulsivity and carelessness. Dagan Prusky, a precocious and impressive young man of that age, fell in love with the lathe and discovered a great talent for woodworking. (He humbly disagrees with the assertion that he is a prodigy, but everyone else concurs that Dagan is a genius with the material.)

A pen purchased in San Francisco, California, reaffirmed for Dagan an existing affinity for collecting. This was coupled with an (initially unwanted) experience at summer camp where he happened to encounter and work with a lathe. Dagan's exposure to and fascination with the art, along with his craftsmanship capabilities, led to a much larger enterprise. It all began and ended, however, with the young man, himself. It is all his skill, his art, his vision.

Dagan offers, "I love lathe work mostly because of how satisfying it is to see a project from beginning to end. Every time I turn a piece of wood, I'm curious about what hidden beauty is inside because there is absolutely no telling what the final product will look like from the raw block to the finished pen."

Initially, Dagan made twist-action ballpoints, but as his business blossomed he branched out to bolt-action ballpoints and rollerballs. He has offered a variety of themes, wanting each pen to be perfectly suited to every customer. Ultimately, customer requests led to the production of fountain pens.

Like any artisan, Dagan seeks to use raw materials to create beautiful, meaningful items. Excellent at communication and erudite as any adult, he is wholly capable of describing his process.





Chicago Pen Show

May 1-4, 2025

DoubleTree by Hilton Oak Brook
1909 Spring Road Oak Brook, IL

Public Show: May 2-4

Friday: 12 noon-5:30 pm

Saturday: 9 am-5:30 pm

Sunday: 9 am-4 pm

Admission: Friday \$25 cash/\$26 credit

Sat/Sun \$10 cash/\$11 credit

Children 12 and under free

Trader Day opens at 9 am, May 1

Weekend Pass \$60

Whisk(e)y tasting \$29

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Pen Auction 8:00 pm, May 2
Seminars

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Show Information:

Roger Wooten 630.272.1019

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From top—Woodwork by Dagan Twist ballpoints in Cocobolo wood with gunmetal components and Thuya Burl with silver-plated appointments; Dagan's newest design matches Bocote wood to antiqued brass trim with a fishing motif.

“When I turn a block, in a sense, [I am] uncovering its beauty. I don’t have a very structured process. Unlike some pen turners, I don’t use any guides or templates on my pens, they are completely done by hand. Each pen is unique. That being said, I have a couple of designs I use over and over. To make the designs feel nice when writing, there is some structure in my process. My most popular pen design has a ridge for your thumb and index to grip and another ridge for your pullicue (skin between index finger and thumb). I never know what my final product will look like at the start. Sometimes, I’ll find a knot or crack which I’ll have to adjust for. It’s all just part of the fun of wood turning,” Dagan explains.

Veteran woodworkers exclaim over his mastery and urge him to continue “saving the art of woodworking.” Adamantly humble, Dagan objects, claiming that he sees the craft becoming more and more popular. Streaming services and social media have been part of this artistic revival. Ironically, Dagan was never exposed to social media (and I would argue we are all the richer for that lack). Dagan is not the typical adolescent—he is focused and thoughtful, circumspect and imaginative.

Robyn Prusky, Dagan’s mother, reflects, “It’s been fun watching Dagan grow his business from a tiny fold-up table to a full booth. Dagan is self-motivated and has done this all on his own. I used to pay him to make recipes so that he would learn how to cook. With that money, a stipend he made at a summer art program, and his birthday savings, he made his first big purchase, the lathe. Since then, he has created a spreadsheet for anything he has to purchase on our Amazon account and always pays us back. He has also saved money and invested. He has big financial goals. I’m sure nothing will stop him.”

From my many-years distance in age from him, I realize that Dagan was the kid in high school who knew his own interests and pursued them, who was capable beyond his years, who always knew who he was and never wavered. It doesn’t take long after high school for people to realize who is really cool, and Dagan is definitely cool.

Find Dagan’s shop and flea market schedule at woodworkbydagan.com.