

## Mitch Gray: No two pieces are ever alike - Winnsboro Gallery to feature woodworker's items

Written by BY TERRY MATHEWS, News-Telegram Arts Editor  
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The Winn



sboro Gallery houses many objects of fine art. Among the most popular items in the shop are Mitch Gray's carved creations.

According to gallery owner Mary Smith, "It takes a special person to take a big log, see something beautiful in it and transform that wood into a piece of art."



Gray has experimented with all aspects of woodworking, settling on the lathe.

"I grew up in Marlowe, Okla., where my dad was a carpenter," Gray said during a telephone interview from his home in Quitman Thursday afternoon. "I grew up driving nails and working with wood."

Gray wanted to be a photographer, but realized there were a lot of "starving camera buffs looking for work," so after a two-year stint in the Army, he hired on at IBM in Dallas in 1969.

After he retired in 2000, Gray and Debra, his wife of 32 years, moved to the Clear Lakes community in Quitman.

Although he had no formal art training, Gray has worked in several mediums, including stained glass, blown glass and clay.

"I gave up glass because it was too expensive and too hot," he explained. "Working with clay is laborious. It's really physical, so when you start throwing 25-35 pounds of clay, it really gets to

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your shoulders. I'm not 25 years old anymore."

Clay also doesn't offer the degree of versatility Gray prefers.

"I don't care what you do with a terra cotta pot, it's still a terra cotta pot," Grand said. "With wood, no two bowls are alike."

When he retired to East Texas, Gray put out the word that he needed wood.

"If you tell people you need wood, you'll end up with more than you'll ever need," he said. "There are a lot of beautiful things in nature. It never ceases to amaze me what you can find in a chunk of firewood."

Gray recently found inspiration in his own back yard.

"I cut down an elm tree a couple of months ago, and it made some of the prettiest bowls I've seen," he said.

The unique features of each work of art Gray creates are part of what make them so popular.



"You can go to Neiman-Marcus and buy a sweater and 10,000 people could be wearing the same thing," Gray said. "You can take a tree, make 10 bowls, and all of them are going to look different."

Gray is involved with the East Texas Woodturners. The group meets on the second Saturday of each month at 9 a.m. on the West Campus of Tyler Junior College's West Campus, located on

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West Loop 323 and Robinson Street, according to their website,  
[www.easttexaswoodworkers.com](http://www.easttexaswoodworkers.com)

A special exhibit of Gray's work will be on display at The Winnsboro Gallery, 214 North Main Street, Winnsboro, from July 24 to August 8.

The gallery will host an artist's reception for Gray on Friday, July 24, from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Visitors can talk with Gray, enjoy his beautiful wooden creations and purchase one of his creations.

There is no charge to attend the reception, and the public is invited.

For more information contact Mary Smith at The Winnsboro Gallery, 903-342-3438.