Embellishment of Lids
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Adding your own touch to the lid of a box or bowl takes it to another level. There are many different types of embellishments to try. We will only be able to cover a few in this demo.

This demo is not about lid shape or fit but those are important to a successful piece.

A tight lid fit is something woodturners do mostly to impress other woodturners. You need a tight fit during the turning process so you can finish the shape of the lid without it coming off but if the lid is on a functional box; you might want to loosen the fit after the lid has been completed to allow for a one handed lid removal.
I will show you a technique that I use to hold the lid in the chuck to do final detail work.

Lid shape is another thing to consider. If the box is functional the lid has to have a gripping spot so it can be removed without a fight. If the box is small enough (under about 4") a flare or overhang is a good place to grab the lid. A knob or a finial (not a delicate finial) is also useful to lift the lid if the lid does not have a tight fit. A lid over 4 inches wide really requires a strong knob for a 1 handed lid removal.

Some types of embellishments:

Beads or grooves…as an embellishment or as a frame for an inlay or texture band.

Inlays
    Cabochon-stone or wood
    Stone "donuts"
    Buttons
    Earrings
    Marbles
    String or cord
    Small beads
    Other found objects…not limited to round.
    Grommets
    Pewter (solder) inlay

Textures

    Chatter work-with or without color
    Spirals with Sorby tool or Elf
    Lines made with threading tool
    Sandblasting
    Pyrography-burning pens or brands
    Carving

Inserting wire dots
Paint
Ukibori

Knobs or finials

Added knob or finial
Knob included as part of the shape
Other materials used as a knob or a decorative element

Making a wood cabochon:

Chose the wood for its color, grain or for something that makes it interesting. Making a cabochon to inlay into a lid is a great way to use those very small pieces of beautiful wood that you can't bring yourself to throw away.
Burl is a great choice which can create an interesting pattern. A piece of wood with bark inclusions or voids is also very effective…just fill the voids with something. You can use crushed stone, sawdust, coffee (for a very dark color), cinnamon (for a reddish color), curry (for a yellowish color), etc. Keep filling the void with the filler material and flood with thin CA. Add the CA in a number of small fills and keep adding filler material as needed. Try to avoid using accelerator until you have totally filled the space. It will go off by itself eventually…just don't rush it. The accelerator could cause the CA to go off too fast and that will create a foamy appearance.

Turn a waste block with a very flat face. Most cabochons will be less than 1" in diameter and the waste block doesn't need to be much larger than that.
Flatten the back of the cabochon blank on a belt sander…a very flat surface is vital.
Attach the cabochon wood to the waste block with double stick tape. Be sure to use woodturners tape or carpet tape. It has to be very sticky and strong.
Use a tailstock live center (a cup without a point is best) and put some pressure on the wood so the tape really gets a good hold.
Turn the cabochon round and start shaping the top. Remove the tailstock when you need to finish the shape. Sand through the grits and use whatever finish you like. I like CA.
Pry the piece off with a chisel or a skew.
Clean the sticky off (if you need to) with acetone…don't use mineral spirits.
You can leave the sticky residue on the waste block until it starts to build up in spots and makes an un-level surface. The sticky on the cabochon might interfere with the glue you use to inlay it, so remove that.

Design considerations:

Think about the proportions…the size of the inlay plus the framing bead or groove in relation to the size of the lid. Also consider the side profile. Your inlay should appear to be part of the flow of the shape…not just something stuck on.

When you are planning to embellish a lid, leave a bit of extra wood in the top of the lid. That will give you some wiggle room in case you don't get the inlay right the first time. Don't forget the bottom of the box. You can create a texture, bead or groove on the bottom that repeats something you did on the lid. You might also think about creating a small detail inside the top of the lid…give the eye a surprise!

Texturing:

Simple bands of texture can be very effective. Using a chatter tool is an easy way to get an unusual textural pattern on the end grain of a box lid. If you are using a light wood and want to add some color, put a light base color down first, chatter through it then lightly touch other colors to the patterned areas to add depth and interest. Cut small v-grooves to set off areas of pattern. Use archival pens to avoid color fading.
Dark wood with chatter work gives an elegant texture .You can also add color to dark wood. It will give a subtle depth to the pattern.
If you don't like the chatter pattern you created…just erase with your gouge and try again.
The density of the wood, speed of the lathe, pressure on the tool and the speed you move the tool all change the pattern. You will never get two alike. A hard wood is the best material for chattering but try it on softer woods too. You might like it.

Spirals can be created using the Sorby spiraling tool or the Decorating Elf. You can add color or just let the texture speak for itself.

A band of small lines is easy to make with a point tool, small skew or a threading tool. A beading tool also makes short work of creating a nice even bead or series of beads.

Any texturing tool has a learning curve so chuck up a piece of hard wood and practice until you know you can do what you want on your finished box.

Ukibori is an interesting way to add an interesting surface change.

Carving

A carved design makes an excellent embellishment. You can carve using any tools you are comfortable with. I like to use a rotary tool with different sizes and shapes of burrs to create different lines and patterns. A high speed dental tool with small burrs, a reciprocal carver or hand held carving tool are excellent for creating another look to your carving.

<u>Pyrography</u>

You can add an interesting embellishment using a Pyrography pen to create lines, patterns, textures or something pictorial. You might also try using a brand for an over all pattern.
Burning a carved surface adds another level of interest.
Burning the surface with a torch is yet another way to add surface interest. You can burn an insert before adding it to the lid.

<u>Milk Paint</u>

Milk paint over a textured surface is wonderful. You can layer several colors…usually using black as the last layer…then burnish the surface to expose some of the wood and the other colors. The burnishing brings a lovely sheen to the surface.

<u>Other kinds of inlays</u>

Think about other materials that you can inlay into a lid. Make a groove and lay in cord, yarn, pine needles, metal shavings, a string of small beads, etc…try whatever you can think of. Some materials will work better with a large lid so think about how flexible the material is. A practice lid is small and easy to make and you can just cut away an experiment that didn't work.

Inlaying crushed stone is very effective. Carve a pattern and fill with the stone to color the design. You can also use other materials like finely ground coffee, resin, spices, sawdust…anything that can be held in the groove or pattern you created in the wood. Use CA or epoxy to imbed the material then turn and sand to smooth the surface.

Drill various sizes of holes in a pleasing pattern in dark wood and inset silver, brass or aluminum wire into the holes. File the wire almost to the surface then turn and sand to finish so they will appear as shiny dots in the dark surface.

Pewter is beautiful when used to fill a natural void. You can melt solder with a torch and drip it into the void. Smooth it with a palate knife and then sand it smooth. Flood the area you filled with CA glue to make sure the pewter doesn't come out of the void.