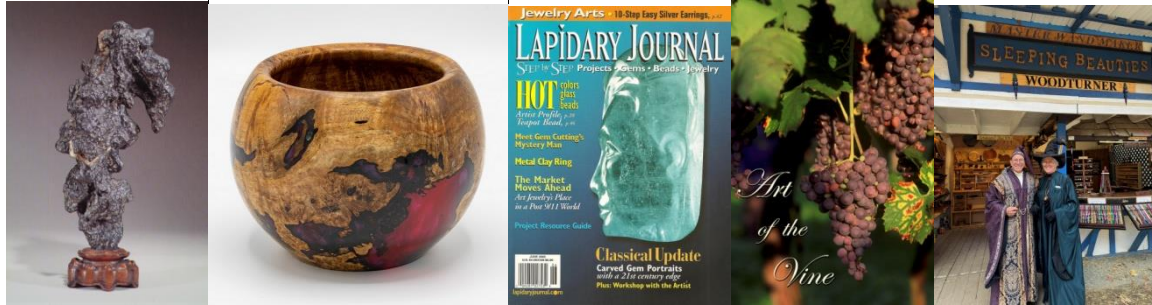


Spring 2024 Wildacres Speaker-in-Residence: Michael J. Colella

We are very fortunate to have a fabulous new Speaker-in-Residence for the Spring 2024 session of the EFMLS Wildacres Workshop, Michael. J. Colella, a multi-faceted artist, who will share his passion of photography, rocks and minerals, world sands, suiseki stones, and wood-turning art.



Michael J. Colella is a native Washingtonian who grew up in Silver Spring, Maryland. As a child, Mike used to go hunting with his dad and scour the ground for rocks and possible fossils. In 5th grade, his dad made a wooden display case for his collection to enter in the school science fair, and his first connection to the earth was formed.

Mike attended Frostburg State College at Good Counsel in Wheaton to major in Psychology. He got involved with multi media education and most importantly would learn photography. Fresh out of college he secured a job as Media Specialist at John F. Kennedy High School in Wheaton, MD, and for the next seven years he taught photography, photographed student life, while honing his photographic skills. He also learned woodturning, a skill that will resurface later.

Mike married Sue in 1974, had a family and bought a house in Kensington. He left the school and branched out as an independent commercial photographer. Mike and his 10-year old son joined the Gem, Lapidary, & Mineral Society of DC in 1987. With his rock passion re-ignited, Mike served as program director, newsletter editor, and club president.

Photography became his prime work. People were his main interest, especially children, and weddings became a big portion of his career for the next 30 years. He also photographed wine bottles by traveling to wineries all over Italy, Spain, Chile and Mexico, photographing the wines and their makers. Shooting glass helped immensely when it came time to photograph minerals, jewelry and gemstone sculptures. One such photo of a beautiful sculpture landed us the cover of the famed *Lapidary Journal*.

In the spring of 2000 at the Philadelphia Flower show he stumbled upon a display of very unique stones, and that was his introduction to Suiseki - the ancient art of viewing stones. Mike creates the bases for the stones he collects. He became a founding member of the Potomac Viewing Stone Group, which is still active.

A few years later Mike saw some turned wooden items at a local craft show and that sparked a memory. He bought equipment, joined a club, took some lessons and hobby # 3 took over, reconnecting with the earth with wood this time. It took about 10 years to become proficient enough to start selling his work. He was accepted as a guest artist in 2013 and 2014 at the Maryland Renaissance Festival. In 2015 his dream came true and a booth became available, and thus Mike and his wife became permanent resident wood artists at the festival to date.

Today Mike still enjoys photography, collecting rocks and minerals and viewing stones. He also has a quite extensive sand collection, which he has photographed.

Michael will give six presentations at Wildacres on all these art forms and travels. I've known Mike for over 35 years. He has photographed much of my work. Get ready to see and hear how all these experiences became one man's connection to the Earth. I am sure you will enjoy his stunning photography and stories of his life passions. Mike will be accompanied by his wife Sue.

Helen Serras-Herman, Speaker-in-Residence Coordinator, Wildacres Committee