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PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

DEAR ABANA MEMBERS,

I want to thank the board of Directors and you, the ABANA membership, for allowing me to serve as your new president. I also want to thank outgoing president Doug Learm for his time and efforts in seeing the association through some very difficult times indeed. He put us in a position where we can all move ahead and work together freely for blacksmithing. You have elected Maegan Crowley of New Jersey and Don Kemper from Washington to be our new directors and we welcome them with their fresh energy for this endless task.

Chris Winterstein, Will Hightower, and Dave Mudge were also re-elected. The percentage of members who voted was tiny. I once dropped out of another organization because it was not democratic. The members had no vote. If I give up my right to vote, I give up my right to complain, and I never want to choose that! Winston Churchill said, “Democracy is the worst political system in the world—except for all the others.” Please nominate, vote, and elect directors that will work for whatever you think ABANA needs to do. Thanks.

Our treasurer, Will Hightower, has put ABANA on firm financial ground by his daily attention to ABANA’s business. He has also developed a plan to reorganize and increase the size and long-term security of the Endowment Trust. This will provide secure funding for scholarships, among other things, as it grows.

The LaCrosse conference is behind us and the board has spent a lot of time digesting the feedback we received. Dave Koenig has agreed to be conference chair for 2004 and we will formally announce the dates and location very soon. The board volunteered to put on the LaCrosse conference with great help from members of The Guild of Metalsmiths, The Upper Midwest Blacksmiths, The Illinois Valley Blacksmiths, and many others. Thank you to all. We did this to learn firsthand and what is required to put on this huge event and it worked! And how! We are now developing solid plans for long-term conference continuity so that they will be better organized in all the ways people have pointed out. We hope to see you there! I had a fantastic time. Several attendees told me it was the best time they ever had!

In the meantime there are several other great conferences happening around the continent. These include Ironfest, which will be in Grapevine, Texas, May 30 to June 1 and CANIRON IV, which will be in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, July 10 to 13. I am sure they will both be well worth attending.

ABANA is striving to meet and hope exceed the goals of its founders. We promote the ancient art of blacksmithing by distributing information via our publications and the web site, educate with articles, conferences, and scholarships. Perhaps most importantly, we help connect smiths to others so that they can learn, work, and contribute to the evolution of smithing. Finally, when I find myself in a bind, I just ask myself, “What would Manfred Bredohl do?”

May your hammer strike true,
Scott Lankton
DEAR EDITOR,

Would you please post the following in the Winter issue of The Anvil’s Ring:

- Exhibition opportunity at the National Repoussé Exhibition opening December 2003 at William King Center in Abingdon, Virginia, with possible other venues. Please send one-page bio, 10 images (any format), short statement regarding repoussé technique, and self-addressed return envelope to: Curatorial InSight, Box 505, Christiansburg, VA 24068. Phone: 540/382-3946.
  
  Anna Fariello, fariello@vt.edu, Christiansburg, Virginia

DEAR EDITOR,

The following picture is of a plow that Jim Pierce of Hastings Forge was commissioned to do by descendants of Willa Cather. It was for a grave in Red Cloud, Nebraska. The entrance to town has a full-scale plow on a big stand to commemorate Willa Cather having lived there all her life. Jim went out and took measurements and came up with the lifelike scale replica of the plow. All our members of the Prairie Blacksmiths Association of Nebraska were amazed at the realistic replica. Here are some vital statistics to give your readers a better picture:

- Willa Cather was born on December 7, 1873, near Winchester, Virginia. Her name was originally Willela, but the family always called her Willie.
- To the outrage of the townspeople of Red Cloud, Willa used to medically experiment on animals with a set of medical instruments, and in high school her greatest ambition was to become a doctor.
- She entered the University of Nebraska. Her intent was to study science; however she changed her focus to writing after a professor sent one of her essays to the town’s newspaper, The Journal, and it was published. During her years at the university she wrote over 400 pieces for The Journal and quickly made a name for herself.
- After graduation Cather was offered a job at Home Monthly, a magazine in Pittsburgh. In addition to writing stories for them, she also helped with editing, writing editorials and nonfiction.
- Her first novel, Alexander’s Bridge, was published in 1912. From that point on, Willa Cather became a great American novelist. She died in 1947 at the age of 70.

Donald E. Stanley, dstanley@cccusa.net

DEAR EDITOR,

As a recent re-subscriber to The Anvil’s Ring after an absence of a dozen years and as a working smith for over 25 years and as a general crank, I submit several observations:

Why do the editors take and print advertisements that list only a web address? Has everyone at The Anvil’s Ring submitted to silicon snake oil? I still type with my old Underwood typewriter, own a book of current stamps and am hard-wired to the phone company. A mail address and a phone number do not seem to be an unreasonable requirement.

See Mail on page 5
It is fine to sell full-page ads, but who thought of the policy to advertise cast and mass-produced items for fabricators? I feel that if you can’t twist a bar, if a basket twist gives you a pain, and the thought of a scroll gets you down, then maybe you should not be a blacksmith. There are lots of jobs that require no skill or little imagination, like an elected politician. If the hardworking editor would care to know what Yellin thought of applied castings to his work, I refer you to The Anvil’s Ring, Summer of 1982, page 12, sidebar.

When did the editorial policy of The Anvil’s Ring change to feature silversmithing (cover story, Winter 2002)? What gives? The title, and cut-welded plate sculpture mer, 2002, cast sculpture (ibid.) silversmithing (cover story, Summer 2002). Meaningless babble and “double-speak” should be unacceptable, but is used almost to exclusion by the critic to obfuscate the issue, to hide their lack of understanding. And this chap is an English professor. No wonder students are illiterate. Remember that one wag said some years ago that “critics are like eunuchs in a harem: they see it done every day, they know how it is done, but they can’t do it themselves,” so they write about it. All objects d’art do not exhibit the ontological juxtaposition of the present paradigm in conjunction with a cerebral reality. Even Freud was overheard muttering that “sometimes a cigar is only a cigar.”

Other than the above, it ain’t worth my time to get the right Tools...
**ABANA BUSINESS**

**CONFERENCE CD ON SALE**

The CD from the Gallery and Pump House Exhibition is selling now for $10 plus $5 shipping and handling. See the ABANA Sales page (page 58, this issue) for complete information.

**ABANA CONTRACTS OPEN FOR BID**

The contract for the ABANA Central Office Administrator is reviewed yearly. Contact Jerry Kagle, 616 E. Rockwood Blvd., Spokane, WA 99201. 509/624-8001 or e-mail: kaglejr@aol.com to request an information packet.

The Anvil’s Ring contract was reviewed in November, 2001 and extends until 2004. The Hammer’s Blow contract was reviewed in November, 2001 and extends until 2003. Any parties interested in bidding for the editors’ positions can submit a resume any time to: Dorothy Stiegler, 18023 Shake Ridge Road, Sutter Creek, CA 95685. 209/296-6471. E-mail: anvilart@jps.net.

**ELECTION OF MEMBERS TO THE ABANA BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

The Artist-Blacksmiths Association (ABANA) is run by a board of 15 directors elected by the membership. These elected volunteers serve as officers, committee chairpersons and members of committees. Five of the 15 directors are elected each year for a three-year term.

To run for election one is required to be an ABANA member in good standing and provide a nominating petition signed by at least 10 ABANA members. This should be submitted with a photograph and candidate statement to the ABANA Central Office, P.O. 816, Farmington, GA 30638 by June 15th of the election year.

**REGISTRATION BROCHURE FOR 2004 ABANA CONFERENCE**

The registration brochure will be included in the Winter 2003 issue of the Hammer’s Blow for the 2004 ABANA Conference.

**CANADIAN MAILING**

ABANA Canadian members are now being mailed the Hammer’s Blow and The Anvil’s Ring through the same company that has been handling our overseas mailing. This should result in better service to our Canadian members. Please let Board member Dorothy Stiegler know whether your delivery service has improved or not. Contact her, 18023 Shake Ridge Road, Sutter Creek, CA 95685. 209/296-6471. E-mail: anvilart@jps.net.

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NEWS RELEASE FROM PETERS VALLEY CRAFT EDUCATION CENTER

Peters Valley Craft Education Center is pleased to announce that Meagan Crowley, resident blacksmith, has been awarded an Emerging Artist Grant by the American Craft Council. This grant was awarded to 10 artists nationally, who are at the beginning of their professional careers. Grants are given to artists working in all craft media (clay, fiber, glass, metal, wood and mixed media), including both functional and nonfunctional objects. Up to $7,000 per artist will be granted for travel, research, professional development, or to purchase studio equipment or supplies to explore new work.

Peters Valley Craft Center is a nonprofit educational center that offers year-round workshops. Residencies, exhibitions, opportunities and scholarships are available. See web site at www.pvcrafts.org or call 973/948-5200.

AMERICAN CRAFT COUNCIL ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS FOR 2003 EMERGING ARTIST GRANTS

The American Craft Council invites new artists to apply for the Council’s 2003 Emerging Artist Grants. Applications are available online at www.craftcouncil.org or by contacting the Council at 800/724-0859, X 231, or e-mail: mudvisi@craftcouncil.org. Completed applications must be received at the Council’s New York office by 5 pm Friday, March 7, 2003.

The American Craft Council’s annual Emerging Artist Grants provide support for up to 10 craft artists who are in the beginning stages of their professional careers. Grants are given to artists working in all craft media (clay, fiber, glass, metal, wood and mixed media), including both functional and nonfunctional objects. Up to $7,000 per artist will be granted for travel, research, professional development, or to purchase studio equipment or supplies to explore new work. Funding is not available for general living or operational expenses.

The American Craft Council is a national, nonprofit educational organization founded in 1943. Its mission is to promote understanding and appreciation of contemporary American craft. Programs include the bimonthly magazine, American Craft, as well as 11 annual juried craft shows presenting artists and their work in major cities across the United States. Membership is open to all. For more information, call 800/724-0859 or see web site at www.craftcouncil.org.

NOTE FROM THE METAL MUSEUM, MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE

Dear Fellow Smith,

I don’t know why, but blacksmiths admire books almost as much as they do finely crafted tools. And pictures of neat ironwork, historic shops and old trade catalogues. We all have a trove of treasured books, a stash of old clip-pings and stacks of past issues of The Anvil’s Ring. At the Metal Museum we are extremely fortunate to have more books, folios, slides and videos than you can fit into ten pickups with the springs squashed flat. Too bad they are all in storage because of space problems.

That is getting ready to change. We value a library as one of our most important resources. In it the soul of our craft resides, so it deserves the best space and care possible. We are so married to that principle that the Museum is undertaking a $1.5 million capital campaign to renovate a historic building on the grounds for the finest decorative metals library in the country. Clean and simple.

This project has received the blessings of several foundations, corporations and major individual donors with commitments now totaling over $800,000, which is more than half the goal, but not for a start. The “big boys” are in. Now it’s time for all of us black-smiths to step up to the plate. In fact, we are the ones who will most directly benefit from the library.

Please take a moment to consider sending a contribution to the Museum. An anonymous foundation will match your gift, giving your dollars twice the punch.

Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions, please contact me at 901/774-6180 or metal@wspice.com. And may your anvil never rust for lack of work.

PETER S VALLEY BLACKSMITHING: 19 KUHN RD. LAYTON, N.J. 07851

Peters Valley Craft Center

2003 SUMMER WORKSHOP CATALOG

www.pvcrafts.org or call (973) 948-5200

Christina Schmigel
Doug Hendrickson
Warren Holtzman
Meagan Crowley
Corrina Mensoff
Dorothy Steiger
Rishi Eastman
Zach Noble

* Master Class *

This class, open to advanced students, will be working on a project led by Artist/Blacksmith Alfred Boller of Germany

Please check our website for images of instructor work & workshop descriptions.

www.pvcrafts.org

For Pictorial How-to-do-its by:

• Chris Axelsson
• Bob Heath
• Stephen Bendi
• Doug Hendrickson
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• Edward Martin
• Trueraack
• James Melcher
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Tip-to-Tip  Face Height Weight
Length    Width

C Zidor  39"  7"  13"  450 lbs.
Centurion  31 1/2"  7"  9"  260 lbs.
Titan  24 1/4"  5"  7"  120 lbs.
This wreath was made by the Tuesday Night Blacksmiths (Canada) and donated to the Festival of Trees, an annual fundraiser for Saskatoon City Hospital. The following text was sent to us by ABANA member Craig Campbell, describing the symbolism of the individual elements. The group spent approximately 60 hours designing and building the piece. It is the third year the group has donated a metal/Christmas project to the festival, which is held at the Saskatoon branch of the Western Development Museum.

**TITLE:**

THE TRUE MEANING OF CHRISTMAS

**ARTISTS:**

The Tuesday Night Blacksmiths

**MATERIAL:**

Mild steel, brass highlights, enamel clear coat finish

**TECHNIQUES:**

Traditional blacksmithing; i.e., forge welding, riveting, splitting, drilling, drawing out, upsetting and chasing, along with some modern electric welding

**SPECIFICATIONS**

Wreath Weight: 18 pounds; Stand Weight: 9 pounds; Overall Height: 50"; Wreath Diameter: 20"

**SYMBOLISM**

**ANGEL ON HIGH:**

The Greek derivation of angel is 'messenger', therefore, angels are messengers from Heaven. In the Bible, they bring good news from God, such as telling Joseph and Mary of events to come and telling the wise men and shepherds of the birth of Jesus.

**WREATH:**

The circle-shaped wreath symbolizes the never-ending love of God. This love encompasses all things and all people.

**CROSS:**

Before Christ the cross was an instrument of shameful execution. After Christ’s death the cross became the universal symbol of Christian faith. It reminds us that God so loved us that he gave his only begotten Son that we may have everlasting life.

**STAR:**

By starlight, wise people looked for the baby Jesus to celebrate his birth. The light heralds that which transforms the whole world, calls earthly leaders to account, and restores nations. Some see the light because they have been yearning for it; some see it because it shines on them, and some find the light because others bring them to it. However we come to it, we recognize the light as justice and salvation for everyone.

**LAMB & CROOK:**

The Lord is our Shepherd. Jesus Christ became the Shepherd of the human race and is represented here by the shepherd’s crook. The lamb symbolizes us, the people.

**CANDLE:**

Candle light reminds us of the power and presence of God. We call Jesus Christ the Light of the World. During the Christmas season and at other times during the church year, a candle is lit to remind us of the presence of Christ in our lives.

**BELL:**

A bell is used to ring from a tower or steeple as an invitation for people to come to the house of God. A chime or carillon of bells sends music and hymns of the church out over the community and reminds us of the priority of the things of God over the things of man.
Catherine West. Nashwauk, Minnesota
Rose wall hangings. Iron

Dean Piesner. St. Jacobs, Ontario, Canada
Double helix (short sword)

Joseph Anderson. Walnut Cove, North Carolina
Untitled. 4 1/2’ h.

Russell Jaques. Port Townsend, Washington
Damascus choker. 8” x 5”

Oleh Bonkovsky. Lviv, Ukraine
“The Wind.” 34” x 48” x 1”

Joel Davis. Albert Lea, Minnesota
Viking belt axe. 18”
Nickel wrought iron damascus

Bruce LePage. Grantsburg, Wisconsin
Silver mounted English style belt buckle

Angelo Bartolucci. Meldola, Italy
Small flower 3”, Bird 5” x 5”

Corrina R. Mensoff. Atlanta, Georgia
Bird boat II. 18” x 24”
Copper sheet

Randy McDaniel. Sinking Spring, Pennsylvania
“Queen Is-A Bell,” “Lasso Larry.” Forged steel and titanium

Bruce LePage. Grantsburg, Wisconsin
Silver mounted English style belt buckle

Photos by Sandy Andrews

ABANA GALLERY
Maegan E. Crowley. Layton, New Jersey
Perforated sheet form

Mindy Gardner. Farmer City, Illinois
Rooster weather-vane. Mild steel

Jon Soini. Quilcene, Washington
Six forged tools. Forged steel, wood

Sean C. Kingston. Nineveh, Indiana
Dish. Wrought iron, motorcycle chain

Lewis Meyer. Louisville, Kentucky
Rose hip candlesticks. 2" x 9" x 18". (5-piece group). Forged steel

Terry Carson. Eatonville, Washington
2 flowers from one piece with stands inspired by Angelo Bartolucci. 13" x 18". Steel and pure iron

Maurice Hamburger. Phoenix, Arizona
Round box with bail, swaged box, z-box, square bottle oil stopper. All less than 3". Forged and fabricated steel

Andrew Macdonald. DeSoto, Illinois
Table with glass. 22" x 20" x 20". Mild steel

Austin Ironworks. Kansas City, Missouri
Railing prototype. 12" x 12" x 36". Mild steel

Pavol Zlazos. Slovenia
Embossing hammer and tools

Lewis Miller. Louisville, Kentucky
Rose hip candlesticks. 2" x 9" x 18". (5-piece group). Forged steel

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A commission of a snapping turtle began for a client, who lived on Turtle Lake. The craftsman was my husband, Roger Loyson, who had to plan what material to use, how large would this turtle be, and whether it should be an abstract in design or closer to the real creature. The project would span over a year’s time with 450 hours of hands-on work and some sleepless nights. The idea was to make a creature larger than life and he decided to make it look more lifelike than abstract. The next step was acquiring many turtle shells from all over the United States using the Internet, and the plan began to take shape. But with all the work and time Roger saw ahead, he said to himself, why not use a really exceptional and beautiful metal like bronze? Since it was to be an outside piece of art it would rust if steel were used, and paint was not an option. This was Roger’s first commissioned piece and he was nervous. His previous training was primarily in steel fabrication, with an additional three years of blacksmithing.

I vowed to do the best I could,” Roger explained, “like my Dad always taught me.” Shortly thereafter began a 450-hour creation of a giant snapping turtle. The first step was to find a company who sold sheet bronze. His first attempts searching the Internet found one company in California with the needed .060 (1/16) silicon bronze sheet, his first order was placed and he anxiously awaited its arrival. Roger determined the size of the giant turtle shell would be 2.75 times larger than the 16” taxidermy model he was using (shell only). “I know that probably doesn’t sound gigantic, but multiplied out that made a carapace (top shell) of 43” long, with a total body length of 7’ 6”. The weight came to over 300 pounds—one big snapper!

“I guess I wanted a turtle that would make a person stop and look—sometimes only larger than life can do. That I worked directly in bronze sheet because there would be only one made; it would be unique and it would be a challenge to create. Once you work directly with the metal (bronze) it seems to speak to you, telling you what shape and form it desires. Personally do not think clay modeling would have been as satisfying for me, or demanding enough. “The method I used to bring this animal up into bronze relief was to take an actual pattern of 38 scutes (of top shell), making up the carapace. I traced each scute on plastic, off the model, and multiplied it 2.75 times. Then I formed each plate using typical metalworking tools: a short bag, wood stump, wood hammer, and steel shapes to work from the back side (repouse).” Bronze wire was welded from the back side, joining the plates together. No welds were to show on the front, and eventually 13 major scutes were finished. Then the 25 smaller plates around the perimeter completed the top of the shell.

Each scute was worked from the back side with a wood mallet to add slight texture so that light would reflect the many prism shapes. An air engraver was used to make up the age lines. “I was learning as I went that bronze would only take on a “life look” if you worked every inch of it. So far so good—the top shell had lots of character and detail. I figured the only mistake I could make was to “see” a mistake and not correct it. I prepared for 50 percent in mistakes in this project.”

Next came forming body parts. Roger came up with the idea of mounting the shell on a trep and having it higher off the floor, similar to frames that auto restorers use to repair antique cars. That way the shell could be mounted at a predetermined height and still be able to be turned from top to bottom, in order to be worked on easily. On the common rail sliding foot pads

This was Roger’s first commissioned piece and he was nervous. His previous training was primarily in steel fabrication, with an additional three years of blacksmithing.
People so often look at my work and say, “One sees so few hammer marks.” I never think of trying to get rid of those hammer marks. I simply can’t imagine leaving any marks on it that I didn’t specifically want, because that would be competing against what I was trying to get across in my work.

We had the opportunity to talk with Daniel Miller at the New England School of Metalwork in Auburn, Maine, where he had just finished teaching a class called “Joinery: at the Core.”

RING: Daniel, where did you start blacksmithing and what has your exposure been to various people who have influenced you?

DANIEL: I’ll have to go back to a time before I got into ironwork. At the age of 11 I started working in a leather shop in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, where I grew up. I made a lot of sandals, belts, and leather purses. I then set up a shop in the basement of my home. Instead of coming home and playing at 11 years old, I would make things. I had discovered that producing useful things with my own hands was what I enjoyed doing. I remember how my mother worried that my penchant for work rather than play would ‘roar’ of my childhood. Perhaps she was right, for variations on that theme have followed me throughout my life in the form of advice like, “Do you have to take everything so seriously? Lighten up!” I guess I would if I knew how. But this, like other aspects of my life, seems to be quite beyond my control.

I stayed with leatherwork until I left for college. My quasi-addiction to making things with my hands was satisfied by the practice of taking one art class to two academic classes for every quarter I was enrolled.

After that I belonged to one art class to two academic classes for every quarter I was enrolled. I realized I needed to figure out a way to spend the rest of my life doing that. I simply can’t imagine leaving any marks on it that I didn’t specifically want, because that would be competing against what I was trying to get across in my work.

DANIEL: I imagine leaving marks. I never get rid of those marks. So few hammer marks. I simply can’t imagine leaving any marks on it that I didn’t specifically want, because that would be competing against what I was trying to get across in my work.

RING: You mentioned to me that the craftsman’s mark was a sign of ownership. I thought that all those years of daily contact with those forms: thousand of belts, hundreds of sandals—caused me to almost appropriate those forms. I remember saying, “This is form taken by things that my hands make.” I really do think that this is the reason the metalwork has the look that it does today. I’m not comfortable with heavy, solid, massive forms because I didn’t get to know them intimately as a child, and therefore don’t seem to be able to elicit the kind of affection for them that would’ve been needed to bring them into my work. That’s why I don’t work a whole lot with square stock or round stock, but mostly with stuff that is real similar to gusset—especially dealing with strap forms that are stretched, and stretched tight, and being able to see the force that has been on the piece by just how it looks. And I also think of these forms as being things which are light and are being flipped through the air, like a whip or a ribbon.

DANIEL: You described a lot of your work as a model of your life’s relationships. Most everything I am doing is kind of self-portraiture. I feel that even the medium of metal itself is that kind of self-portrait. I yield to the forces around me—life and the structure of my past. I am more wed to being changed than I am to maintaining the same structure and integrity. Yet I’m more wedded to being changed than I am to maintaining the structure of my past. I feel that even the medium of metal itself is that kind of self-portrait. I yield to the forces around me—life and the structure of my past.

RING: You describe a lot of your work as a model of your life’s relationships.
The project begins with the premise that the work should have a definite function, and then the function determines the shape. It may be used as an object to either give you pleasure or to create a certain atmosphere. For me, that would be parallel to how one personality relates, or holds to, another personality.

RING: Would you say that this last fireplace set that you made is the epitome of that? (Photo on page 24.)

DANIEL: Yes, exactly. It will happen somewhere in the project between the end of the first third and the beginning of the last third. During the first part I mainly have a sense of the fact that I want to make this thing. And I might even have a sense that I want to explore this idea while making this thing. Then the trick is just to get in the shop and get your hands moving, not being afraid of the fact that you don’t know what it is that you’re trying to make. Then, as you’re moving through it, if you’re thinking, feeling and observing hard enough while you keep working, the piece takes on its own life. You get an idea of what it is becoming and where it’s going and you try to follow that. The image that I’ve always used is the idea of riding a horse. You keep the reins in your hand but keep them as loose as you can so that the horse is your rider in the piece you are making can go where it wants and you follow it. If you force it to go on the path that you know, you’re not going to get anywhere new. You will see the exact same view that you’ve seen before, as opposed to where it takes you.

RING: I’m quoting you here: “It seems like the work just decides to show up when I show up. When I’m least conscious of what I’m doing my best work comes out.” Does that mean your subconscious mind is at work, or is it just a coincidence that you’re there?

DANIEL: That’s exactly what it means. You do the best work when you do the least work. You have this feeling that it’s going on. But with the Visiting Artist Program, I finally got to do a lot of production work in order to feed a family. But the hammer and anvil were also there doing the work. And I don’t mean that to seem exceedingly mysterious or exceedingly humble; it’s just realistic. And that is why I think I am as excited by a final piece as anyone else is who looks at it, because it’s as mysterious to me as it is to anyone else. This isn’t true of everything that I make, of course. But it is unquestionably true about the best things I make.

RING: This has been somewhat of a recent phenomenon for you, hasn’t it? There was a time when you had to do a lot of production work in order to feed a family.

DANIEL: That’s right. There was the exception of one four-year period—which was the only ‘flush’ period in my life. North Carolina had what was called the Visiting Artist Program. The concept was that the state’s commission—what Paul Zimmerman thought should pay for any community college (of which there were 57 in the state) that wanted to have a professional artist whose job was to expose his or her art form to that community. It wouldn’t cost the community college a penny. They would have this extra person on staff. Half of your time was spent conveying your art form to the community (e.g., scores of blacksmithing demonstrations at public schools) and the other half of the time was completely for yourself to develop your own work. Up to that point I’d been doing the craft show line: the American Craft Council Shows, the Smithsonian Show and others, and moving along nicely with that. But with the Visiting Artist Program, I finally got to work that was meaningful. It was almost as if something in me became more accurate. I had started doing that is when I began to realize the real function of my unconscious mind in what I was doing. The first time I noticed it was when I was working on my second sculpture. I was wanting to make a piece about my marriage, and would be titled “Homage to Marriage.” I was in love with the concept of marriage in general and of my own specifically, so I knew that’s what I wanted to work on. I went down to the shop and had this idea in my head about what I wanted to do. It was going to be something in the form of a love knot, but tied in metal. It seemed appropriate. But I always find something else to do; however, when I have something I need to do. I had seen one form that Paul Zimmerman had made, which I had found just so fascinating and so beautiful. I thought, well, I’d just put this sculpture aside and I think I’ll see if I can make this form. So I made one of those forms and really liked it—just total experimentation. And then I made another one of those forms because I liked the first one so much. I laid them out together and then quickly realized that I needed to continue on those two pieces for the sculpture that I was wanting to do on marriage.

The final piece ended up being infinitesimally better than a love knot, and unquestionably a more accurate description of my marriage. What it is that I wanted to work on was a form that was a love knot would be. It was a portrait of two souls flying loosely, but beautifully connected, through the universe, which a love knot would have never conveyed. This was fascinating, when I gave it in to my resident demon (procrastination) and decided to experiment with Paul Zimmerman’s beautiful forms I thought I had decided not to make the sculpture, but there is no question that sculpture is what was uppermost in my mind, no matter what I thought I was making. It was as though my hands couldn’t care less that my conscious mind had said, “Let’s put off the sculpture,” because they were taking orders from my unconscious mind, which could no more drop what it had in its teeth than a pit bull could. It was wanting to explore the idea of making a form that would expose the truth of this idea was going to proceed with or without my permission or input. And that was when I realized that this is a phenomenon that I should start watching, in order to see if this was just one fluke that would never happen again or
if it would begin happening more often. And it did begin happening more, with one piece after another. I think I made 30 or 12 sculptural pieces, each one evolving, form-wise, from the other.

By the third or fourth piece that I made I got the sense that the form I wanted to make was really solidly already within me somehow, and that it was just sitting in a dark corner—a very dark corner of my own interior. It was thoroughly complete, but I just couldn't see across the room enough to make out what it looked like. I remember making one piece in particular called "Paolo and Francesca," which illustrated this process. After a month of making forms, halting, rearranging forms, combining forms and making more forms, but not quite knowing where I was going, all of a sudden while making a final bend on the piece, setting it on the floor in exhaustion and turning around and looking back at it, I realized, that's it! That's what was there in that dark corner—wonderful! I recall I made a peculiar base for it, and it was the base that I understood. I remembered afterwards feeling a sense of pride, or something close to it, as well as a sense of responsibility for the base. But I didn't feel the tiniest bit of pride or responsibility in the sculpture itself, because I felt that I had virtually nothing to do with it. But having found it left in the shop, a peculiar base for it, and it was the base that I there in that dark corner—wonderful! I recall I made a peculiar base for it, and it was the base that I understood. I remembered afterwards feeling a sense of pride, or something close to it, as well as a sense of responsibility for the base. But I didn't feel the tiniest bit of pride or responsibility in the sculpture itself, because I felt that I had virtually nothing to do with it. But having found it left in the shop, a peculiar base for it, and it was the base that I

Years ago I wrote an article for Anvil’s Ring, maligning computers—making the capacity for imagination which has given you this idea of being able to use the computer to do a little bit of a drawing; then you press a button and it will show you the piece from all sorts of different angles. My sense was that you don’t want to know ahead of time what it's going to be or else you won’t be letting it be what it wants to be.

I remember having the sense that, my first piece to do when I get out to the shop, is to unite my blindfold. And then start working—as opposed to having a well-established design ahead of time. So often a design is meditative! For me it’s more of a sense that part of an idea shows up and I just grab the soapstone and write it or draw it on the floor, in order for me not to lose the concept. RING: Does some of your inspiration come from that stage between sleep and waking? DANIEL: A lot of it has, yes. Being in the shower is also wonderful. It sounds ridiculous, but being in the warmness and wetness of a shower sometimes actually recalls what the womb felt like and you’re just really at rest. The drawing is really more record keeping, either of the subconscious work with people. And then start working—as opposed to having a well-established design ahead of time. So often a design is meditative! For me it’s more of a sense that part of an idea shows up and I just grab the soapstone and write it or draw it on the floor, in order for me not to lose the concept. RING: Do you use drawing to solve technical issues or is that part of the creative process? DANIEL: The drawing for me is more to solve technical issues. I feel that the creative process happens when the metal is hot and its moving, when joints are being formed. I guess some of the subconscious work is going on with the drawing. But I feel more of it comes with the working of the metal, with the drawing being a way of getting ideas in order to be able to recapture them.

RING: So that's what you meant when you said the detail drawings make you feel 'hobbled'? DANIEL: Yes, very much so. The last thing I'm interested in doing is reproducing a drawing, even if it's my drawing. That's why I usually want the drawings to be in the air, and I may end up with just tracings of the pieces as they get made, then figuring out how they are going to integrate into the final form. The drawing is really more record keeping, either of something that has already been made or the record keeping of a technique or little part of an idea that I just can’t afford to forget. I love to draw pictures of things, or to doodle, but it’s used much more as a tool in my imagination. It’s not an expressive aspect of my imagination, and so often the drawing that I do will be just laughable in comparison to how the final piece turns out. There may be no visible relationship. But the drawing often has a great value may be in the fact that it begins the process. It may be like the kick in the pants which gets the journey started, but is forgotten by the end of the journey.

RING: You mentioned that the first priority for you in making a piece was to find out what it means to be human. Now that’s a rather profound statement. This also mentioned that some of your pieces appear to be almost like a tapestry of your life—particularly in the joinery because it’s symbolic of your relationship with people. DANIEL: With some kinds of joinery, especially where you’re dealing with the punching of holes, where it’s obvious that one form is thoroughly penetration of another, you have imagery of one piece allowing the other piece in, in order to explore its interior. So you have the willingness for complete disclosure, just not of the outside of you, but of the inside of you. It’s obvious with other joints that you have much less direct contact. With the use of the wedges which, for awhile were so much a part of my work, it was the idea of wanting a visual symbol of the extreme tightness of a joint. In possibly an unpleasant way, the wedge could show extreme stress or tension. In a more pleasant way it could show the fidelity of a relationship: that you can tell by looking at it that it is wonderfully tight and is not going to fall loose or fall apart.

There are things that make me feel more comfortable about possibilities of relationships. If my life at different times has been tortured by issues of relationships falling apart, of infidelities, then making a symbol of something that is reliably held together is a balm for the brain. To be able to say that a joint like this does exist, it’s right here in front of me, then the result is that it is not an impossibility in
I GOT TO WHERE
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FORM MATTERED TO
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AWAY FROM FORCE.

This universe.

A really good symbol for me of the function of art is the symbol of Moses in the desert coming across the burning bush. What was consequential in that story, about the specific burning bush, was that it was not consumed by the fire. I feel like each one of us is Moses as we are forming the burning bush — this thing in motion, in action, in process. But the issue is that while we are in the midst of living it, it’s being consumed, it’s changing so fast and we’re such a part of those changes that we can’t look closely enough to see what is really there. Art takes the power, or the heat of life, like that burning bush, but it is not consumed. So you are able to spend all the time you want staring at it and examining it and looking at it from all sides, feeling closer to it and getting familiar with it — not feeling like it’s something that’s moving so fast you can’t focus on it. Our brains seem much more able to grasp and handle the symbol of a thing, rather than the thing itself.

It’s probably why there are symbols elicit such dramatic emotions, whereas dwelling upon it doesn’t quite elicit the same feeling.

The symbol is abstract. But for some reason the abstract thing makes the concrete thing more complex than it was. It’s a mystery to me, but I know that it’s the core, and that is why I make things because I am so curious about what’s going on inside me, things I can’t see. However, I can see if I make a symbol of it and look at it.

You employ a lot of welding as well as traditional methods in your joinery. That is an interesting combination.

I recall years ago hearing Francis Whitaker say that if you did a good job of it and knew what you were doing, you could basically make a railing with mortar and tenon joints as quickly as you could by welding it. I think that is true about joinery, especially if you spend a little time to develop the technique to do it.

You showed us how to use both mig and tig welding in doing plug welds, which is a behind-the-scenes support system for the piece to insure stability, but doesn’t detract from the aesthetics of the joinery of the piece.

Yes, it insures stability and security, especially for pieces that are outside, and accessible to casual or malicious hands.

So design and composition determine the aesthetic impact of the piece, and not the process.

Yes. If you’re after a composition in which everything is zooming upwards, let’s say, and that kind of ascending motion is really important; if you have to use many little horizontal pieces like rivets to hold this together, you’re diluting the vertical motion by all these little horizontal bits of rivets or of nails.

So if you want the full power of a vertical motion, you have to make joints which will only reinforce vertical motion. If you have horizontal bonds, you’ll need to make them invisible or else the horizontal forms will be diluting the force of the design. So the means to me, the core of it, just not wanting to do anything that goes against the main thrust of the piece, either technically or design-wise. So the idea is you have to figure out some way to technical means that will promote the movement of the piece — the flow of the piece.

It’s fortunate that in dealing with metal, it’s relatively easy to do that.

I’ll say! In machining you’re dealing with this medium as a cold solid. In welding you’re dealing with it as a liquid, and I would always try to point out that there is this other middle stage of dealing with it as a kind of a soft, plastic form. I feel, going back to Malcolm X and ‘By whatever means necessary,’ it’s just wonderful that this is a medium that has these three separate incarnations that we can weave together in whatever way we want, to get forms—such a thorough variety of forms by using solid, plastic and liquid.

During your lecture you mentioned that you thought the first priority, for you, in making a piece, was to find out what it means to be a human being.

Yes; that certainly sounds very grandiose. But what I mean is that we all know that to be a human being is to be this huge composite of emotions, psychological and intellectual phenomena. And when I say to find out what it means to be a human being, there might be this one psychological component or this one biological component of being a human being which, for some reason, I’ll fixate on. And then I’ll have to avail myself of any symbol or system of symbols that might be able to bring me into a more intimate relationship with that idea. Malcolm X’s ‘By whatever means necessary’ applies as well to my non-discriminuting struggle to find better ways to get a grip for ‘Chargrill, North Carolina,’ as it does to my non-discriminatory approach to metalworking techniques so long as I think they might help me solve the problem in front of me. For example, I could say that I’m not all that curious about Francis Crick’s astronomy as a science, but in a way I’m wonderfully curious about astronomy. It’s because, again, human beings have used astronomy to elicit metaphorical symbols of what is going on inside a human being, and whether you’re talking about mythology, astrology or magic, or relativity. So there are so many different areas in which to pursue this obsessive curiosity!

It seems like, as of late, each piece that you have done has progressively had a greater emotional impact on you.

I think that’s true and I feel like knocking on wood about it, because I don’t feel I deserve that kind of good fortune, to have things seem to progressively be doing a better job of what I want them to do for me. We all know the history of so many artists who, unfortunately, do their best work when they are young and then everything else is a sloppy rerun and that would be just horrifyingly depressing. So I feel that every time I’m given something that is better than the last piece I made, I’m just that much more fortunate.

It has been most interesting talking with you.
and volunteered to make the key and ward box, major components, before the conference, but no one took my deadline seriously. 

I declared an April 1st deadline, so that I would have plenty of time to assemble the lock. I couldn’t sell the idea, but all were ready to work together for the conference. Although we had planned to complete our two previous projects: a classical chest and a Gothic doorknocker before the conference began, we had worked furiously through each event to see some other demonstrations during the event. I gave Carl the job of forging the pilasters and pediment with a green man face to go in the center of the lock front. I called the team members, Tina Chisena, Carl Close, Pete Renzetti and Paul Spaulding with an idea for producing a Gothic lock entirely new to me. I was too close to home for me not to be involved. 

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The eight sides of the ward box were bent from a single strip of iron. The back was silver-soldered to the sides as was the flange at the front, with which the ward box was mounted to the back of the lock plate. The ward assembly was screwed to the back of the ward box so it could be removed for filing as the key bit was made to the wards. 

Paul admitted that making and fitting the "X" wards to the bit was ten times more difficult than he had imagined. 

Besides drawing the overall design, I would make the lock case and internal works, (other than the ward box,) and fit all the other smith's components into the case. 

During the two long winter breaks that he would have from his job at Cooperstown Farm Museum before ABANA 2002, Paul Spaulding finished the ward box and the bit of the key before completing the intricate piercing on the upper portion of the key so that the ward box and bit portion of the key could be sent to me. The rest of the lock mechanism was constructed around these two pieces. 

To form the bit and stem in one piece, Paul forged an "L" shaped blank. He drove a quatrefoil punch (with four rounded eights) into a pilot hole bored in the bit end of the stem, producing a four-lobe hole. The pilot hole was not drilled completely through the stem so that solid material remained on the end to be threaded later for fastening to the rest of the key. 

The stem was further shaped by tightening around a ribbed mandrel using a hobbing chisel. The inside of the tubular stem was cleaned up cold with a hardened broach in the 4-ribbed shape. The broach was widened at the leading end and ground sharply square on the end to produce a shearing action. The outside of the stem was dressed with a file as was the profile of the bit. 

A pin was filed to fit the four-lobe hole in the key. Another quatrefoil hole was drilled in a cylinder large enough to accept the stem of the key. A slot was cut down one side of the cylinder to admit the bit. The cylinder and pin together would form the top of the key hole. Both were affixed to a plate which was to rotate in the back of the ward box. A shoulder turned on the front of the cylinder and a tenon on the center pin which protruded through the back of the ward box would be the axes for this rotation. 

The end of the cylinder and center pin as well as the end of the key stem were upset slightly and filed so that a very close fit was achieved as the key entered the hole of the key, but more clearance was available after that point. 

The ward ways or clefts of work before the conference. I was excited! 

Paul forged the elaborate turret handle of the key from a piece of 3/8” x 1/2” wrought iron. The upper end was bored and drifted to a square taper, widest at the top. Below this the bar was split side to side and drifted to form a round opening. A shelf was chiseled around each side of the round opening to receive a pierced rosette which was eventually set in like a stone, with a lip chased over its edge. The square turret was pierced with drills. A jeweler’s saw could not be used as on the rosettes because of the necessity of passing the blade through two sides at once. Instead the holes were squared and shaped with chisels and files. Paul refined the resulting pattern by chiseling the surface of some parts making them appear to lie beneath others. 

A collar was forge-welded and drifted to fit around the open square end of the turret. A square dome was sunk and filed to fit within the edge of the collar which extended beyond the turret. 

This capital dome was pierced like the rosettes and turret before it was set in place and the collar edge chased over the base of the dome to secure it. Foliate forms were carved where the turret met the barrel form with the rosettes. The key is a stunning piece of sculpture on its own.

There were again, planning a major project which would take weeks of work before the conference. I was excited! 

The names of the artists are engraved on the back. 

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REPOUSSÉ KEYHOLE COVER 

Pete Renzetti produced the cover with embossed smith at his anvil, using lead as a back-up material so as to obtain very crisp detail and a finely planished surface. Pete formed a frame of 1/8” x 5/8” steel strap and tack-welded the 18-gauge draw-quality steel panel for the door in the center, creating a 5/16” deep reservoir for lead on
Peter Renzetti produced the door, with embossed smith at his anvil, using lead as a backup material so as to obtain very crisp detail and a finely planished surface. This was smoothed with a round file. The moldings were riveted to the top plate with the rivet holes bored at an angle to miss the edges of the sides. There are screw holes in the jamb plate for mounting the keeper to the jamb.

LOCK CASE
Though my drawing of the original lock design had straight sides, I felt inspired to swap sides with a molded bottom edge. I made a 3/4"-wide stamp in the shape of the desired molding and drove it into a 2"-wide swage forged to fit my 1" hardie hole. The spread caused by driving the stamp into the face of the die was corrected as it occurred. The impression was filed before the swage was hardened. I upset the edge of pure iron flat stock. The upset edge was then driven into the deeper side of the swage. After being swaged hot, the pieces were pickled in vinegar then swaged again cold to get a cleaner scale-free finish. The pieces still needed filing and so were bent slightly to allow lengthwise filing on a convex surface. The corners of the molded sides were each given one dovetail with hack saw and jeweler's saw and the sides were morticed to accept tenons from the plate to which all the components were fastened. This inner plate had an opening chiseled in the center for the plate on the front of Paul's ward box, which included the key hole.

Though Paul made all his screws from scratch, threading rods then upsetting the heads in a threaded bolster, I only made a few screws completely, re-heading the rest from commercial screws and re-sawing the slots.

When the sides were joined around the inner plate, corner blocks were made by cutting lengthwise from a strip swaged in a 90-degree "V" swage. To make the strip, square stock was placed in a bed of flux and swaged into a "V" shape. The flash was then cut off and the strip was swaged again cold to get a cleaner scale-free finish. The pieces still needed filing and so were bent slightly to allow lengthwise filing on a convex surface.

The case was brazed after joining to further secure the mountings.

Studs riveted into sides and back before assembly.

Details of rough carving

PANELS
Tina Chisena pieced the two panels with their milled and foliate forms either side of the pilasters and pediment using a jeweler's saw. She carved the surface to give the design greater form. In the center of each panel she fastened a silver medalion with the ARANA Conference date and location engraved. Tina chased, saved, and filed the rivet heads—a hammer and an anvil on one medalion and floral designs on the other, before cold-soldering them to the wire rivet shanks. Then the medalions were secured with the rivets using soft wood to back up the decorative rivet heads when the shanks were peined. The ends of the rivet shanks were split with a fine jeweler's saw blade so they could be spread rather than peined, preventing damage to the rivet heads, where the medalions were secured to the panels.

KEEPER
Clancy assembled a box-type keeper on the face of which he carved a foliate design. The side walls were dovetailed to each other and the jamplate with two openings for the lock bolts. To make the strip, square stock was placed in the swage and a heading tool was used to forge down the exposed corner of the square. These blocks were braised in the fire inside each of the case corners. When they floated on the flux I pulled a couple of the blocks into their corners causing deformation of the case, which plagued me throughout the rest of the project.

The molding for the lock face was made like the sides, swaged hot, then cold after pickling, then filed. Carl's architectural parts, Peter's door and Tina's panels were all riveted to a plate with chisel-cut openings. These were framed by riveting the molding to the edge of the plate. Holes were bored through the inner lock plate, the spacer and through the face plate into the back of the molding. The holes in the face plate were tapped to accept screws from behind to secure the lock face to the door.

The spring on the tumbler was forged from coil spring and, as often is the case when I forge springs, was too stiff for the application. It was ground out to let the tumbler work smoothly. The designs on the tumbler, slide bar and name plate were all chased cold. The only material removed was that which was filed from the edges. The plate material was all hammered from heavier sheet to prevent a rolled finish from contrasting with forged material, even though much was filed.

Though several parts were finished at the conference, we had time this year to see some of the demonstrators and to demonstrate some techniques on pieces not needed for the completion of the lock.

In keeping with the breakdown of our resolve not to undertake another complex project such as this, Pete Renzetti, who had sworn that he couldn't afford another large auction purchase, once again out-bid the rest of the ABANA attendants to place the lock on the shelf next to the two earlier group projects he owns.

I had hoped to make two separate bolts in the lock, perhaps with a tumbler also. As it turned out I had space for only one bolt to pass through the wards, so I gave it a double bolt end at the jam side of the lock. The tumbler fits all right around the "X" ward because it needed only to rise and fall. The bottom of the tumbler, where the key strikes it, was cut to a convex curve fitting around the ward and allowing the tumbler to lift just enough to disengage the bolt.

For fun, I gave the tumbler a head like a dolpin fish with a single tooth to fit into notches in the top of the bolt in the lock and unlock positions.

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Though Paul made all his screws from scratch, threading rods then upsetting the heads in a threaded bolster, I only made a few screws completely, re-heading the rest from commercial screws and re-sawing the slots.

The spring on the tumbler was forged from coil spring and, as often is the case when I forge springs, was too stiff for the application. It was ground out to let the tumbler work smoothly. The designs on the tumbler, slide bar and name plate were all chased cold. The only material removed was that which was filed from the edges. The plate material was all hammered from heavier sheet to prevent a rolled finish from contrasting with forged material, even though much was filed.

Though several parts were finished at the conference, we had time this year to see some of the demonstrators and to demonstrate some techniques on pieces not needed for the completion of the lock.

In keeping with the breakdown of our resolve not to undertake another complex project such as this, Pete Renzetti, who had sworn that he couldn't afford another large auction purchase, once again out-bid the rest of the ABANA attendants to place the lock on the shelf next to the two earlier group projects he owns.

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Neptune Gate
Construction Experience

By Dan Nauman

I was approached by the Friends of Villa Terrace Decorative Arts Museum (FVT) in 1999 to help design and build a gate for what was to be the newly renovated gardens for Villa Terrace Decorative Arts Museum. As the museum wished to have Wisconsin-based artists involved in the project, Eric Mohn of Hubertus, WI was also asked to participate. Besides Eric and me, the FVT asked whom I felt would benefit this project. I responded with Tom Latane’, of T+C, me whom I felt would benefit this project. In 1998, Milwaukee landscape architect David Adler based on a 16th-century Tuscan-style landscape, complete with Mediterranean plantings. Buettner’s plans included creating three terraces with dwarf flowering crab trees. Below, a “meadow” would be used for special event space, and a fishpond (used historically to keep fresh fish for the day’s catch) would also be restored. Statuary of Greek and Roman gods, two secret gardens, potted citrus trees, culinary and medicinal herbs would adorn the newly restored landscape. The focal point of the gardens would be the restored classic Mediterranean plantings. Buettner’s garden plan to reflect a 16th-century Tuscan-style landscape, complete with Mediterranean plantings. Buettner’s plans included creating three terraces with dwarf flowering crab trees. Below, a “meadow” would be used for special event space, and a fishpond (used historically to keep fresh fish for the day’s catch) would also be restored. Statuary of Greek and Roman gods, two secret gardens, potted citrus trees, culinary and medicinal herbs would adorn the newly restored landscape. The focal point of the gardens would be the restored classic

In 1998, Milwaukee landscape architect Dennis Buettner created the grand garden plan to reflect a 16th-century Tuscan-style landscape, complete with Mediterranean plantings. Buettner’s plans included creating three terraces with dwarf flowering crab trees. Below, a “meadow” would be used for special event space, and a fishpond (used historically to keep fresh fish for the day’s catch) would also be restored. Statuary of Greek and Roman gods, two secret gardens, potted citrus trees, culinary and medicinal herbs would adorn the newly restored landscape. The focal point of the gardens would be the restored classic. I felt Tom was a perfect fit for this aspect of the gate.

The Neptune Gate was to be incorporated into the gardens, potted citrus trees, culinary and medicinal herbs would adorn the newly restored landscape. The focal point of the gardens would be the restored classic. I felt Tom was a perfect fit for this aspect of the gate.

The FVT informed us that they had a budget of about $15,000 to spend on the project. In our previous discussions, we (the smiths) wanted to build a gate providing a design worthy of the museum which houses Colnik’s work. Based on that premise, Eric and I met with the FVT and explained our goal of not just a gate, but a work of art as well. After our ideas were presented, the FVT increased the budget to an amount with which we were comfortable.

All three smiths independently created gate designs. Together, we reviewed the drawings, and then utilized various motifs from all of our renditions. Typically, Neptune is flanked by dolphins. As dolphins are not native to the fresh waters of Lake Michigan, we opted for sturgeons. We agreed that sturgeons are more interesting in their anatomy than dolphins, and still fit the grotesques of the classic blacksmith’s design. After our drawings were submitted, a final drawing was prepared for presentation to the FVT. We were all extremely pleased with our combined efforts, and so too were the FVT. The project was a “go.”

Since having three independent smiths design and build the gate was such a unique endeavor, I prepared a grant request and submitted it to the Wisconsin Arts Board (WAB) to document the gate. George Lottermoser, a photographer, was hired to photographically record the progress of the gate. Along with the documentation, the WAB grant included an open house at the assembly site (Eric’s shop). There would be demonstrations at the open house, as well as at the installation site at a later date. Finally, a booklet was to be prepared for the last of the demonstrations. The booklet would include the three smiths’ commentaries and biographies, graphs, an explanation of the motifs used in the design, and Lottermoser’s in-process photos. The Wisconsin Arts Board said this was their favorite project for that particular year. Since having three independent smiths design and build the gate was such a unique endeavor, I prepared a grant request and submitted it to the Wisconsin Arts Board (WAB) to document the gate. George Lottermoser, a photographer, was hired to photographically record the progress of the gate. Along with the documentation, the WAB grant included an open house at the assembly site (Eric’s shop). There would be demonstrations at the open house, as well as at the installation site at a later date. Finally, a booklet was to be prepared for the last of the demonstrations. The booklet would include the three smiths’ commentaries and biographies, graphs, an explanation of the motifs used in the design, and Lottermoser’s in-process photos. The Wisconsin Arts Board said this was their favorite project for that particular year.
The design for the two leaves flanking the central leaf was taken from the 10th Anniversary issue of The Anvil’s Ring. Each of these leaves was hand cut from 11-gauge steel, filed, chased, and then hand shaped. The chasing was performed by first gluing the pattern onto the steel. Then, using various small rounded chisels, I lightly chased in the details. The pattern was then removed, and the chasing refined. The nine quatrefoils were each made from one piece of 3/8” square stock. The method used was the “Whitaker” method, which is explained in The Blacksmith’s Cookbook, by Francis Whitaker. The method requires forge-welds to create each cusps, then flattened perpendicular to the weld, which tests the integrity of the original weld. Each cusp was then hand cut and filed to one of the five various shapes. The foils were then shaped, once again using bending forks. The final foil was welded together to complete the form. Rivets were used to fasten the quatrefoils to the rings.

The tips of the tridents flanking the gates needed mass, so 1 1/4” round stock was used. The tips were started with the power hammer, however most of the forging and shaping was with the hand hammer. I utilized the fine, cone shaped horn on my newly acquired Czechoslovakian double horn anvil to create the rounded shoulder beneath each face of the pyramid-shaped tips. I emphasize that the anvil as its shoulder beneath each face of the pyramid-shaped tips. I emphasize that the anvil as its tip was driven, I used a thick, flat bar with a plate slightly larger than the finished hole size, beneath the bar being drifted. This prevented hot metal pushing into an otherwise too-large hole and distorting the piercing. The bosses for the main shaft of the tridents were made with the same power hammer dies as the wave pattern. But instead of forging in the round, they were forged in almost an octagon shape from 1 1/8” round bar. A flatter was used to smooth the finish of the bar. The bosses provided a perfect seat and transition to the leaf husks I made to adorn the shafts.

I used the French style of repousse’ to shape the many leaves in the project. This method utilizes many small hammers and complementing stakes to accomplish the broad range of facets, veins, and lobes. The leaves were cut from 14-gauge sheet, and contoured first to get the primary shape. After shaping, they were veined with the various stakes and hammer, then planished on 100% of their surface. The leaves were annealed several times to reduce work hardening, which can cause cracks if work continues in these hardened areas. This is close and tedious work. I estimated that over a six to eight-hour period, there were at least 20,000 hammer blows to produce one large leaf. All the snub end scrolls were shaped by hand hammer. No jigs or dies were used. I discovered after making several of these that the dependence on jigs was inhibiting the learning process.

I designed the crowning Rococo style leaf element in the lunette to reflect the shell behind Neptune. The design for the two leaves flanking the central leaf was taken from the 10th Anniversary issue of The Anvil’s Ring. Each of these leaves was hand cut from 11-gauge steel, filed, chased, and then hand shaped. The chasing was performed by first gluing the pattern onto the steel. Then, using various small rounded chisels, I lightly chased in the details. The pattern was then removed, and the chasing refined. The nine quatrefoils were each made from one piece of 3/8” square stock. The method used was the “Whitaker” method, which is explained in The Blacksmith’s Cookbook, by Francis Whitaker. The method requires forge-welds to create each cusps, then flattened perpendicular to the weld, which tests the integrity of the original weld. Each cusp was then hand cut and filed to one of the five various shapes. The foils were then shaped, once again using bending forks. The final foil was welded together to complete the form. Rivets were used to fasten the quatrefoils to the rings.

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Eric was to build the main frame, the two central gates, the two sweeping side panels, and the two urns flanking the gates. He would also be in charge of the installation, foundation, and the coating for the gates. Tom’s responsibility was to create Neptune, the large shell, the two sturgeons flanking Neptune and the two whitefish in the frieze.

My task was to create the wave pattern of “S” scrolls and rococo crest in the lunette; the nine quatrefoils with various shaped cups in the frieze; the two end pier finials with large acanthus leaves and snub end scrolls; the two large tridents with scrolls and repousse’ husks; and the scrollwork with repousse’ husks contained in the end piers.

My first task was to produce the wave pattern surrounding Neptune in the lunette. I designed a set of dies to create the boss in the middle of each “S” scroll. ABANA member Harley Larson then created these dies for my Sahiner SM-50 power hammer. The scrolls were made from 1” round bar, starting with the boss, which was forged in the round. I used a round -faced hammer to forge the transition from round to a rectangle, which terminated on both ends into fishtail scrolls. Each scroll was hand shaped utilizing bending forks. The scrolls were then drifted and tapped. The frame was countersunk to accept pan-head screws, and the scrolls were then screwed to the frame, using squashed balls as spacers.

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Dan Nauman planishes on the the leaves for the crest on the outside pairs of the gates.

The crest awaiting final assembly and fitting.

Neptune Gate demonstration on Milwaukee’s Lake Michigan lake front for the general public, sponsored in part by the Wisconsin Arts Board. Left to right, Tom Lamantia, Dan Nauman, Eric Moiniak, and Jeff Moiniak.
I found that I could produce a better snub end faster with just the hand hammer and the anvil. This proved yet again that sound hand forging practice delivers superior results.

As I reflect on this project, I am filled with awe which now grace Sopra Mare. I have, and will, visit this place often. For instance, the evolution of the gates grew increasingly astounding. Every time an element was added to the frame, I was astounded. The most incredible element to me was Tom’s image of Neptune flanked by the sturgeons. Once Neptune was installed into the frame, the magnitude of what we were creating swelled up inside of me. This awe was the rich surprise hidden in the process which I never anticipated.

Generously, the Milwaukee-based Demmer Foundation provided the funding for the gates as a gift to Villa Terrace Decorative Arts Museum, and to Milwaukee. I would like to extend my gratitude to the Demmer Foundation for their kindness. Thanks also to the Friends of Villa Terrace Decorative Arts Museum, who campaigned and labored to resurrect the gardens, as well as to Dennis Buettner, the master of the plan. I would also like to thank my colleagues in this endeavor, Tom Latane’ and Eric Moebius for their collaboration, hard work, and the vision to see these gates to completion.

The gates are finished now, and are the portal to the incredibly majestic Tuscan gardens which now grace Sopra Mare. I have, and will, visit this place often. ★

... this was ... like throwing your heart over the fence. If you want to really succeed, you must work vigorously to that end. This project had several such elements. Thus, I have learned many things through this experience, but the mystery is not gone.
METALL DESIGN INTERNATIONAL 2003

The new 5th yearbook published by HEPHAISTOS again presents international metal designers and a selection of their works. They have in common that they raise the forging trade to the level of art by masterly interpretation of chosen or given subjects. The Czech Republic, Italy, Finland and Germany are the home countries of three new metal designers, which Peter Elgass has compiled in Metal Design International 2003: Claudia Botten, Italy; Josef Ruzik, Germany; Leopold Habermann, Czechoslovakia; Oskar Halen, Germany; Jaroslav Kaspár, Czechoslovakia; Thomas Gustav Kemkott, Germany; Hans Klausmeier, Germany; Olivi Osara, Finland; and Pavel Tasovsky, Czechoslovakia.

The metal designers and their contemporary works are presented by carefully selected pictures – 448 black-and-white pictures in duplex print – as well as short biographies and anecdotes in German and English.

Metall Design International 2003 is published by Peter Elgass, ISBN No. 3-831951-18-9, 224 pages with 448 black-and-white pictures in duplex print; text in German and English; Euro 42.00, order No. 240, Verlag HEPHAISTOS, Gnadenberg Weg 4, D-87509 Immenstadt-Werdenstein, Germany. Tel +49 (8379) 72 80 16. Fax: +49 (8379) 72 80 18.

The previous yearbook of Metal Design International are available at a price of Euro 42.00 each. 1999, year 2000 (order # 159), 2001 (order #150) and 2002 (order #260).

METZGER PATTERN BOOK FOR THE ARTIST-BLACKSMITH

Professor Metzger made the beautiful and incredibly detailed drawings for his Pattern Book with two objectives: first, to present a collection of outstanding examples of hand-forged ironwork from each of the significant stylistic periods: Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque, and Rococo. He chose buds and flowers, leaf work, scrolls, and cartouches, all of which are superb in design and execution. Metzger’s second objective was to show how a two-dimensional drawing of an object, on flat paper, could be developed to produce a pattern from which an accurate copy of a three-dimensional figure could be made. The editor of The Anvil’s Ring in 1983 chose to reprint Metzger’s Pattern Book as the 10th anniversary issue of The Ring. Unfortunately, no translation was available, and the German text, which explained in detail how the pattern drawing was made, was not included.

This new edition has a complete translation, and Metzger’s simple procedure for determining the length of straight material necessary to produce an irregular curve, and the width of material needed for a deeply concave leaf, is clearly explained. The pattern, or stencil thus drawn, can be used to trace a blank, from which the artist-blacksmith, with repoussé, forging, or chasing, will give life and character to the work just as was done a hundred years ago.

In Metzger’s time, the pattern would have been cut from a sheet, with hammer and chisel, and filed to finish. Then a blank would be traced and again cut out by hand.

There is now a very different process available. There are many metalworking shops with computer-controlled laser cutting equipment. The pattern drawings in this book can be traced directly: the data will be stored, and additional blanks cut as wanted. The cost of the laser-cut blank would be far less than the cost of the handmade work and, if a number of blanks were wanted, the cost would be much lower still.

The artist-blacksmith, of course, make a pattern from work of his own, using Metzger’s method of determining the dimensions, and then have laser-cut blanks produced for forging.

Thus, this book both preserves the art of the seventeenth and earlier centuries, and finds a new avenue in a technique of our time. ★

By now, you’ve probably heard of Fred Holder’s BLACKSMITH’S GAZETTE. It is designed to provide guidance in blacksmithing techniques and to keep you informed as much as possible with what is happening in the blacksmithing craft. We are not an art publication. Our purpose is to provide good information on technique and news.

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Inspired by Art Nouveau Paris Metro stops, blacksmith Tom Wilson from Milwaukee created an intricate, eight-sided kiosk that was installed in front of a local Milwaukee restaurant last year. The kiosk and signboards are made from forged and fabricated steel and copper. “I wanted them to be free-form and organic,” says Wilson, who has studied art in Italy, Amsterdam and Paris.

The original plan for the kiosks/signboards was to provide maps and information, but due to the highly artistic nature of Wilson’s work, the project’s mission changed from mere information stations to one-of-a-kind public art.

The BID Association, with the city of Milwaukee, is funding the 1.5 million dollar streetscape makeover project, which not only includes the kiosks and signboards, but new paving and asphalt, lighting and trees. They also contracted with Tom Wilson to create 13 benches that were finished and installed late last summer.
The "nuts & bolts" of making decorative Bolts & Nuts.

EDITORS NOTE: Part 1 of this article appeared in the last issue of Anvil's Ring. By George Dixon

**BOLTS**

Here is a simple vise tool which is used to hold the finished bolt blank, for layout and chiseling. It is fabricated out of either four pieces of flat stock (1/2" x 1 1/2") or two pieces of heavy wall angle iron. The "spring" is a 1/8" or 3/16" piece of mild steel flat stock. It holds the tool open in the vise until the vise jaws are closed.

Drill the holes with the two halves of the tool clamped together in a vise. Place a business card between the jaws before clamping. The card stock spacer helps to keep the pilot drill bit from traveling.

Lay out the bolt head pattern with a silver pencil or a scribe. Use a hammer and a curved chisel to cold-mark the pattern cuts.

Heat the bolt head with a torch. Drop the threaded rod shank into the appropriate hole in the tooling and tighten the vise. Using the same chisel as was used in the cold layout phase, develop the decorative pattern. Work evenly around the four sides of the bolt head. Making several cycles of cuts usually gives better results than trying to push the effect. Once the pattern has been completed, wire brush the bolt and threads. For clear-coated, interior work, consider taking some 80-grit emery cloth and buff the high spots lightly. This will create contrast between the surface of the bolt head and the chisel cuts.

This process is intended for non-structural applications and situations where the bolt's head is not stressed.

**NUTS**

While a square nut looks better than a hex-head nut, a square nut which has been hot-chiseled cannot be beat as a decorative fastener.

The tooling for decorating square nuts is simple to make. This tool is to position the nut and guide the chisel as it cold-marks the layout on the nut. A three-inch piece of angle iron is welded to a piece of bar stock. Do not weld on the inside of the angle or the weldment will be in the way of the nut.

To accommodate varying sizes of square nuts, a piece of sheet metal is cut and bent to serve as a spacer. Spacers from 16 gauge to 12 gauge are usually enough.

Place the square nut up against the inside of the layout tool. Set a curved chisel snugly against the web of the vertical angle iron as it rests on the corner of the nut. By pressing down on the chisel the nut is held in place. The chisel is struck, the nut is rotated and the process of laying out the corners continues.

When a nut is heated and chisel cut there will be some displacement of metal. Outward displacement is good, inward displacement is not. If the threaded hole through the nut is distorted during the hot chiseling phase, then it won't fit a bolt. In addition, the nut needs to be registered in place during the hot work.

Drill a "slip-fit" hole in a piece of bar stock, such as 1/2" x 2". Position a piece of threaded rod in the hole and weld it from the back. Cut two pieces of smaller bar stock and weld them onto the back as shown. These bars can either act as 'legs' for the fixture or clamping flanges for vise-mounting the fixture.

With the nut turned onto the threaded stud, take a heat with the torch. Get the color of the nut up to a solid yellow.

The 'table' can either be set on a sturdy support or clamped firmly in the vise.

Place the curved chisel into the layout cut on the first corner and strike it with a hammer. Feel your way into how much force is required (not much) to cut a semi-circular decoration into the corner of a 1/2" square nut. Small curved chisels can be forged or they can be made by stock removal. As long as the blade requirements do not exceed the diameter of the chisel stock, the working end can be prepped on the belt sander. Then file to the desired radius. Once the inside radius is filed in, stock-remove the surplus metal.
**Showcase**

Dale Morse and Edward Pelton  
Charlottesville, Virginia

**Top Right:** Nouveau Panel. Forged mild steel. 16" w x 24" h. Dale Morse.

**Top:** Yellin Panel. Forged mild steel. 36" diameter. Dale Morse and Edward Pelton.

**Bottom:** Pod plant chandelier. Forged and fabricated mild steel. 18" w x 32" h. Dale Morse.

**Left:** Ring sculpture. Forged mild steel, approximately 7" in diameter. Edward Pelton.

*Photograph by John Williamson*
The city of Thiers, France, is the European cutlery capital and one of the oldest still-active knifemaking sites in Europe. For the summer solstice, Thiers, a medieval city and center of craftsmanship, wanted to revive the tradition of St. Eloy, patron saint of blacksmiths. Therefore, in partnership with the city’s tourism office, area blacksmiths responded to the request from the local cutlery museum to participate in the creation of an art piece to honor the freelance grinders of blades, scissors and tools, just as the workers of their corporation dating from 1880 had done. This piece was born of the goodwill and time and effort of the following blacksmiths: Patrice Oton, Alain DuMousset, Laurent Calmy, Jean-Claude Goutte, Dominique Chambriard and their apprentices. They spent more than 100 hours on the project. The work was presented to M. Deglon, mayor of the city of Thiers, and will be displayed permanently at the entrance to the Valley of the Rouets. It symbolizes both a tribute to preceding generations of craftsmen in the cutlery industry and good times shared at the forge, while creating an artistic project that will become part of the local heritage.
**INTERNATIONAL REPORT**

**EUROPEAN TRAVELS**

BY HENRY BROCK - BEMIDJI, MINNESOTA

**PART 2 OF 4**

I

The first part of this report (Fall issue 2002, Anvil’s Ring) recounted the story of how I became interested in blacksmithing, my interest in exploring the craft outside of the United States, and my work toward obtaining the Thomas J. Watson Fellowship. I am currently visiting European blacksmiths to share stories, discuss some work for them in exchange for experience, room and board, and to get to know the wider blacksmith community.

After leaving Christoph Friedrich (Switzerland) I spent some time in the Czech Republic with Daniel Cerny, one of the creators of the eagle sculpture at the Kolbermoor 2002 conference in Germany. Dan is in his early twenties and is in the process of searching for a good location in South Bohemia for setting up a workshop. Temporarily he works in a makeshift workshop near Trebon, CZ, and also travels around Europe for conferences, visiting blacksmiths and finding short-term work. Currently Dan is working with another Czech blacksmith and with Ger Brouwer (75 minutes) in the Netherlands on an eight-month gate project of Dan’s design for a Dutch client. I hope to return next year to the Czech Republic to work with Dan Cerny. He, like many other young Czech smiths, has had the benefit of an early and quality education in the craft, figuring prominently among his teachers is professor Alfred Habermann.

At the beginning of September I began a two-week tool-forging course led by Professor Habermann at Helfstyn Castle, site of the annual Hephastion Conference. This conference deserves mention as a major gathering of European and world blacksmiths in addition to being an impressive number of locals and tourists. It is a great opportunity to make new acquaintances, see the expositions of recent work, and explore a relatively old but well-maintained castle in the east of the Czech Republic.

It was there in the castle that I and 8 other students (5 Czech, 2 German and 1 Swiss) stayed during the tool-forging course. The cost was roughly $450 for food (but if you are vegetarian or would rather not eat meat for every meal then request to pay for room and instruction only, and buy your own food in the town at the bottom of the hill), twelve days of sleeping in a bed in the communal one-room attic, some instruction in the craft, and plenty of time for forging tongs, drifts, chisels, swages, hammers and other tools in the courtyard. There were roughly 7 forging stations available, 2 power hammers, a modest selection of communal tools (bring your own), and plenty of salvage from the local scrap yard. Mr. Habermann gave a demonstration or lecture once or twice a day and was open to questions or requests for help. Generally there was a nice sense of camaraderie and we all worked together, you-strike-for-me, I-strike-for-you arrangement. It was the first time that I had worked 9, 10, 11 hours blacksmithing in a day, and by the end I really appreciated the opportunity. Our teacher was not as present as some would have preferred, but for me it was more important to practice than to take in more information.

By the middle of September I arrived at the home of Achim Kühn and Helgard Kühn in the southeastern suburbs of Berlin, Germany. Achim runs the shop, Helgard runs the business, and they take on a large variety of projects ranging from public works, restoration, doors and gates, massive art projects and small art pieces, aided in the shop by Axel Jüneman and the occasional apprentice. For four weeks I stayed in a spare room in their house and went to work on weekdays, at first making tongs and later working on a restoration project for a 19th-century grave monument. At one point I deliv- ered some donated equipment to a blacksmith family in the north of Austria whose shop had been heavily damaged by the August flooding.

After I was planning on visiting Dan Cerny in Kojarovice, CZ, for a weekend iron-forging demonstration, Achim asked me if I would like to help him for a day during his train and I was game; after patching a chimney in Austria, losing my way in Germany, confused looks from the border guards, and 1,000 kilometers (621 miles) later, I arrived safely back in Berlin. The main obstacle during these four weeks was the frustration of trying to forge quickly AND well. The language barrier was a challenge as well, I had only begun to learn Ger- man in May 2002, but they were patient with me and we were able to communicate adequately.

In the middle of October I spent one week with Michael Kazmacz in the little town of Jessnitz, Ger- many (east of Dresden). I had met Michael at the 2002 ABANA confer- ence in La Crosse, WI. He works in a modern shop with his father, Klaus. He helped to make hing- es and spent many hours making nails, good practice for improv- ing rhythm and accuracy. We got along very well, swapping stories and working on projects together in the shop. He also helped me to fin- ish a hand-hammer I had started in Berlin, and on the day before I left we made a birthday present for a friend of his, transforming a hefty block of iron into a squat candle box with a fitted onyx lid.

We worked under the pressure of a two-hour time limit, and when we arrived at the restaurant for the party, our gift was still warm.

They currently have two students studying with them, one learning about knife-making from Nando and the other exploring sculpture with Carole.

I stayed four months with the Nava, and this time my challenge was to think critically about the information I was being presented with, for we spent many hours in conversation about education, the nature of conferences, and the importance of communication between contemporary blacksmiths. Without exception the blacksmiths I have visited so far have been very open and welcoming, and I appreciate this greatly. Though I travel alone, I am not lacking for camaraderie!

**From left to right:** Achim Kühn, Axel Jüneman from Germany and Kesuke Ito from Japan in the workshop of Achim Kühn.

**Left to right:** Jacques from France and Nando Nava from Italy, after Jacques and Nando finished Jacques’s anchor model during a workshop open to the public.

**Left to right:** Henry Brock and Axel Jüneman from Germany, taken by Achim Kühn in the shop. Photo by Achim Kühn.

**Left to right:** Jacques from France and Nando Nava from Italy, after Jacques and Nando finished Jacques’s anchor model during a workshop open to the public.

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**Left to right:** Jacques from France and Nando Nava from Italy, after Jacques and Nando finished Jacques’s anchor model during a workshop open to the public.
Mike Sohikian is a Memphis, Tennessee, native, now living in Genoa, Ohio. When he returned as a young man from the Navy after a tour in Vietnam in the '60s, he lived with his mother and father in Toledo, Ohio, and took a welding job.

“I worked morning, noon and night with the big steel,” said the 30-year member of the Bridge and Structural Ironworkers’ Local 55. “I helped erect the steel for the Owens-Illinois building in Toledo. I am very proud to be a blue-collar worker and a union member.”

When Mike’s mother had a stroke, he knew he couldn’t work that many hours any longer. He quit his welding job and spent the time with his mother. But during the long hours of caring for her, Mike fell he needed a distraction from his home duties; and so he turned to art.

“I took a two-week pastel drawing class at a local gallery to take my mind off my mother’s condition and to fill some time.”

Soon Mike used books and magazines to learn how to express himself through painting, photography and sculpting.

“Other than the sketching class, I have had no academic training in the arts,” says Mike. “Everything that I learn, I learn from books and magazines.

“Before too long my art teacher was telling me she thought I was good enough to begin showing some of my work. In 1995 I began entering my work in area shows.”

And he started winning awards, such as the Roots of Diversity Best of Show award from the Arts Commission of Greater Toledo in 2000.

“The 2000 show sponsored by the Arts Commission has been my favorite show so far,” Sohikian states. “Not only did I win Best of Show that day, but I also sold a piece for $2,400.”

The piece earning the Best in Show award was titled “Personal Realign.” Says Mike, “It’s a figure of a man with blueprints tattooed on his chest. What it portrays is man realigning his life. I still have that piece in my home today.”

Mike Sohikian has also seen many of his prize-winning pieces go to collectors in places ranging from Iowa to Florida, and from Texas to Beverly Hills. One sculpture is titled “Horses Running” and was the start of a series of dynamic horse sculptures that has now grown to a collection of about 50 pieces. His works have been featured in the art book The Contemporary Blacksmith by Dona Z. Meilach. Included are such sculptures as “The Loading of American Labor,” which is close to Sohikian’s blue-collar heart, as well as “Mother Nature Age 15,” which celebrates the life of Mother Earth.

“I am influenced highly by nature and the earth,” Sohikian explains. “I think basically everything we are has been produced in some way by Mother Nature. She is the ultimate artist.

“I create my sculptures from ASTM A 36 steels. They are the same materials used in the construction of bridges and buildings. I enjoy working with steel. It is a contemporary material that represents strength and longevity. With the right amount of heavy-weight motor oil applied to seal its surface, an outdoor steel sculpture can last a lifetime.

“Steel sculptures indicate strength and power,” Mike explains. “It gives me a pretty powerful feeling to be creating them.”

**PROFILE**

**MIKE SOHIKIAN**

**GENOA, OHIO**

*Maria Romero.* 5’ x 4’ x 5’. Materials: 1/2” diamond plate, cast concrete, limestone. Forged and fabricated steel, cast concrete. In the collection of Mr. and Mrs. Gerald Furr, Walbridge, Ohio.


*I Shall Rise Up Above My Enemies*. 9’ x 7’ x 4’. A36 plate steel 3/4” through 1/4”, sch #40, dirt, and cast bronze. Forged and fabricated, foundry cast bronze. Currently exhibited at Schedel Arboretum and Gardens, to be permanently installed in Fremont, Ohio, at the Otis School - Bethesda Complex.
Basics of Style for the Artist-Blacksmith

By Max.

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S
dyle is the reflection of who we are: How we live, what we believe.
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INTERNA TIONAL REPORT

A GOOD REASON TO CELEBRATE: 10 YEARS OF THE ®

Jubilee exhibition of the International Professional Association of Artist Blacksmiths from Sept. 1 – Oct. 13, 2002 concluding with a large-scale symposium in the open-air museum in Hagen.

By Ingolf Eschenbach

A jubilee like the tenth anniversary of the founding of the IFGS can’t be allowed to pass without notice. Although the last big exhibition in Stolberg was only one year ago, the Executive Board decided to organize a jubilee exhibition, this time exclusively for members of the Association.

As Treasurer of the IFGS, Heide Zyche spontaneously declared her willingness to carry out the planned exhibition on site in Europe’s largest open-air museum in Hagen. The huge Hagen Open-Air Museum has numerous authentic old smithies, some of them even equipped with tilt hammers; a permanent exhibition with a collection of historical smithed objects and, on top of that, a “smithing cellar” just made for letting a strenuous exhibition visit conclude with music and good food...

what more could one want?

The management of the Hagen Museum immediately assented to head organizer Heide Zyche’s idea for an exhibition. The members of the IFGS showed 52 indoor and outdoor works at their jubilee exhibition in Europe’s largest open-air museum. Some artists and designers used the occasion of the exhibition to join the Association. Welcome!

The ambivalence between the museum’s historical ambience and the wealth of temporarily designed items was especially enchanting. The exhibition presented interesting and exclusive examples of smithing art and metal design. The capacity of the old smithy was almost exceeded; here were shown, along with “free” smithing art, furniture like a chair made of steel springs, interior objects like candlesticks and damascene knives, room dividers like a screen made of split angle steel and wall reliefs. The small smithed reliefs by the artist blacksmith Takayoshi Komine of Japan surely made the longest journey to Hagen. In the outdoor area, visitors found screen elements, kinetic objects powered by the wind, large sculptures, elaborately crafted works depicting animals, and a lovingly styled motorcycle, which was immediately claimed by the children. The museum’s visitors viewed the objects with great interest – indeed, almost with awe – which warmed the hearts of the exhibitors.

During the preparations for the concluding symposium on Oct. 12-13, Heidi contacted the American smith Brad Silberberg, whom she and her husband had gotten to know at an earlier ABANA meeting in the USA. Brad Silberberg’s works in iron and brass have become known through a number of American and British publications and are characteristically unusually-textured shells, relief-like vessels, or figures. Brad once said that, in America, he owns more than 160 different stamps to create his characteristic metal surface textures. They exhibit clear influences from the Central American art of the Maya and Aztecs, which Brad is familiar with from his travels.

At his well-attended live demonstration in a historical smithy in Hagen, Brad not only conveyed his techniques calmly and expressively, he also focused on the mental level of conveying his almost philosophical approach.

Another top-flight speaker, Serge Pascal, came from France at the IFGS’ invitation. He has worked for many years as an instructor at the well-known smithing school of the partners of the “Ecole Internationale de la ferronnerie Francaise” in Moison. Serge Pascal gave two slide lectures on breathtaking restoration work carried out under his direction. His long-time friend Stefan Forler, who teaches at the master schools in Munich, simultaneously translated the lectures, making listening and understanding a pleasure. The first lecture dealt with restoring the unique High Baroque screen gates of the Place Stanislas in Nancy, which were originally created by the master smith Jean Lamur around 1750. The completely gilded screen elements made of millimeter-thick sheet iron were something special. Serge Pascal demonstrated the possibilities offered by the French specialty of the cold embossing of sheet iron. Here, the sheet iron
used was not made of normal construction steel, but of the historically authentic, almost pure iron. In Germany, the Angele company is one of those still offering this and other specialties in pure and relatively soft iron.

Serge Pascal’s second lecture dealt with restoration work carried out under his supervision on New York’s Statue of Liberty in 1985-86. The work by sculptor Frederic-Auguste Bartholdi in 2-3 mm copper is 93 m high, counting the base, and refers to the Roman goddess, Libertas. Following the motto of France’s Third Republic (“Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité”), France had presented the Statue of Liberty to the USA on the occasion of its 100th anniversary as an allegory of freedom. Erected in the entrance to New York harbor in 1886, since then it has greeted European arrivals in the New World.

The focus of the lecture was on the complete reconstruction of the ca. four-meter torch of 2 mm copper, which, in the course of time and not least due to human activity, had suffered badly of corrosion. For example, it was once outfitted with electric lighting, but the openings made for the cables were not properly sealed. Serge Pascal’s crew decided to recast the huge torch, with no compromises and without “modern” simplifications of work methods. The copper skin, for example, was bound using exclusively riveting and seam techniques, rather than by welding. The ultimate criterion was the original proportions of the twisting torch, whose max. diameter is just under 3 m. After creating an initial 1:1 plaster model, another was made of sheet steel, which served as the foundation for hammering the thick copper. After almost a year of hard work under the eyes of the visitors at the foot of the statue in New York, the freshly patinized torch was presented punctually for the 100th anniversary of its erection.

Another important point of the symposium’s program was the visit to the anvil smithy Refflinghaus in Ennepetal near Hagen. The historical facility, in which iron has been worked since 1668, made a strong impression on the smiths and metal designers. Today’s Refflinghaus company was once specialized in the production of anvils. Along with the sale of
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