Gallery Consignments
Interview with Nana Showalter

President of the Upper Midwest Blacksmiths Association (again), a metal worker with a MFA degree in sculpture from the University of Wisconsin, and one of the instructor/demonstrators at the 1994 ABANA Conference -- Nana Showalter has discovered that selling pieces through galleries is an avenue worth pursuing.

The Hammer's Blow Editor, Jim Ryan, contacted Nana to find out what to expect when considering contracts for consignment.

HB: Why do you sell through a gallery?

NANA: Because of my fine arts training. That is the accepted avenue to take. Traditionally, fine arts are sold on consignment. The rest of the world does not operate that way, so I changed partially to people that will pay up front for the work.

HB: How much do you sell in galleries?

NANA: I sell about 20% of my work through galleries. I have five galleries that I sell to on consignment (on contract) and I have no problems with them. I also sought out wholesale options, selling to retailers at my wholesale price. This is about another 20% of my sales. The rest is done through art fairs, etc. which is a majority of my income. It is extremely helpful to have a balance of all three markets.

HB: How do you carry out market analysis, such as how do you select a gallery to sell to on consignment?

NANA: First you go look at the gallery, check out the price range, and the social skills of the workers. Notice traffic, such as a
nearby tourist attraction. If they have similar work, it means that the market is established. Do you know other artists at the gallery? Check with them on payment, publicity, contracts, and how the contract is honored. Only then do you approach the gallery.

There are two ways to approach a gallery. The indirect method is to send a slide selection (good slides) with a cover letter. Introduce yourself, mention a price range and volume, and include a resume with your educational background. The direct method is to make an appointment and go to the gallery with photos and slides, resume, samples, etc., and talk to the manager. It is not only that they are interviewing you, but you are interviewing them as well. Go with your feelings. If you have bad vibes, get out – do it right then!

Don't put all your hope in one gallery, but get a list of them. Make that rejection the impetus to do another letter and another interview.

Get the contract in writing before any merchandise changes hands. It must cover insurance on the work, theft, payment terms, copyrights on photos for publicity, as well as delivery and removal of material from the gallery. I like to have a two-week notice. It should also state that images remain the property of the artist. Publicity shots are acceptable, but logo use is not. And you have to include how to end the contract, like how to get out of there if things go wrong.

Make a list of the things you expect from the contract. Check up on the gallery. See how your work is being presented. Is it dusty? Give it six months, remembering that some places are seasonal. You should get a monthly check and a report from the gallery, but you must have item numbers so you can keep track of sales. 

Interview by Editor, Jim Ryan

GARDEN SCULPTURE
by Nana Showalter of Blanchardville, Wisconsin

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A Gallery Owner Speaks
An Interview with Karen Maset

While at the 1993 Quad State Round-Up, *Hammer's Blow Editor*, Jim Ryan had an opportunity to get the perspective on consignments from a gallery owner. Karen Maset is the owner of a contemporary graphic arts gallery and frame shop in Morgantown, WV.

HB: Tell me about your gallery.
KAREN: It is one of eight galleries in Morgantown. I handle original art for sale on consignment, and do framing--the business consists of about half and half.

HB: What kind of original art are you talking about?
KAREN: The consignment art consists of iron work, pottery, baskets, paintings, drawings, signed and numbered work, restoration and museum work. It must be good quality art.

HB: What do you mean "good quality art"?
KAREN: It must be well designed and thoughtfully crafted. It can't be slipshod, amateurish looking things.

HB: Besides giving the artists a market, what else do you do for them?
KAREN: Part of the gallery's job is to help an artist establish a pricing schedule. Not everyone feels the artwork is worth as much as the artist thinks it is. Sometimes the ego will get in the way of a correct evaluation. And the reverse is true also. People will not buy something priced too low. So sometimes the ego needs to be boosted up to reality with the prices. The artist needs to recognize that not all markets are the same. Compare Chicago to Morgantown. Entirely different. And even in Morgantown where we have eight galleries all selling art and doing framing, we all have different price structures, taking in different qualities of art. And, we have different clients.

I try to help the artisan increase quality. That helps them and it helps me. I don't lie to an artist. I tell them if it can be better. This is not to discourage the artist, it is to make them think and grow, experiment, and explore new possibilities.

Interview by Editor, Jim Ryan

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DESIGN & MARKETING TIPS

Don Asbee, from Missouri, gave a talk and demonstration on *Therapeutic Hammering* at BAM's Ozark Conference this spring. Don uses his "therapy pieces" with a marketing plan in mind.

When Don is looking for relief from pressures due to having a hard time at the forge with deadlines to meet, or when he's sorting out personal problems, or when he has a noticeable lack of interest in the work at hand, he does some therapeutic hammering--a trick to get back into the swing of things.

Here's how:

Pick up a scrap piece of iron, regardless of size or shape, heat it and start to hammer it. Don't think, just start hitting it. Try switching hammer or tong hands and let it happen. The piece of iron will slowly begin to take shape and evolve. Maybe it will be some abstract but pleasing shape, or maybe it will begin to look like something you've seen before. Sometimes you will want to add another piece to it such as a plate or bowl type piece--anything at all that looks like it has been forged into a pleasing shape. Put them together and low and behold there is a sculpture, or piece of work (or something).

Now for the good part... When asked what Don does with these "pieces", he says he cleans them up, signs them, puts a finish on them and GIVES THEM TO AN ARCHITECT! What a concept. The architect has no real idea of what you are or what you can do, but to have a piece of your work sitting on the desk (maybe as a paperweight or pen holder), is something visible to make them think of you when there is a commission in iron work to be subcontracted.

Note of Caution: Remember, this piece has to have some class. It should look like something that is too good to throw away. It has to look good and have artistic value. You don't want to give away a ratty looking piece of junk.

Thanks Don for this great idea!

SUMMER 1994
"In the southwest we like to entertain outside in the cool evenings after the sun goes down. To add a little soft ambience, rather than the harshness of electric lights—even the low voltage ones—I like to use lanterns, candles, or tiki torches (see below).

Use about 6 feet of 1/2" or 5/8" round or square stock. The round stock may be used for a simple style, or the square stock will give you a more exciting look to the piece with twists.

Point one end of the piece to go into the ground. Taper the other end and it fold back like a nautilus shell. Make a 90 degree bend to hold the lantern away from the upright. The spiral and horizontal section will take up about 18 inches.

Use four rods of 3/8" round, 7' long. Collar the rods about a foot from each end. On one end, separate the rods into two bunches of two, twisting each bunch. Bend one leg at a 90 degree angle in two places.

Separate and spread the four pieces on the other end. Decorate the ends as you like. Bend the ends up and around a pipe the size of the torch. Then twist the center section.
GARDEN SCULPTURES
submitted by Matt Walker, Bluff City TN

Matt makes most of his garden sculptures out of copper, but there is no reason they couldn't be done in steel or other metals. All the copper to copper joints are welded or brazed with a phos-copper 1/16" rod. It flows and fills good, giving a good color match and patina with the copper. When attaching steel to copper, Matt uses a standard flux coated brass brazing rod. For copper patina, try solutions from A&C Distributors (ad in the Anvil's Ring). Besides the humming bird shown here, Matt also makes butterflies sized at about 4" by 7" and dragon flies with a wingspan of 18".

HUMMING BIRD
The humming bird in the photo is 7 inches wide and 9 inches long, from beak to tail. It is made from .020 copper.

1 - After cutting out the design, trim the edges with a grinder and cut in the feather edges.

2 - Cut the back of the wing to make the body continuous.

3 - Cut the edge of the bill. Form it round and fill it with brazing rod to give it rigidity.

4 - Give the blank 3-dimensional quality by striking it on the underneath side. Hammer it on the ground or on a block of clay.

5 - Braze a steel rod underneath the hummer and finish with patina.

GARDEN SNAIL

The garden snail is made from about 10 feet of 3/8" soft copper tubing. Flatten the end of the tube and curl it up to make the head. Draw the tail to a taper point or braze on something whimsical. The eyes are ball bearings brazed to copper wire and raised off the head. A flat base or a short steel post will make a footing.
BOUGH BELL
by Roberta Elliott of Cobden, IL
demonstrated at the 1994 ABANA Conference

Customers hang this bell on a slender bough of a tree creating a musical sound when the wind blows. This description is how to make one bell, and mainly by hand. Roberta uses her power hammer and special tools to make them a production item.

Step One - Start with a piece of 2" schedule 40 black iron pipe, long enough to hold. Flare the end on the horn of the anvil to give the bell a pleasing shape. Try to keep it even.

Step Two - With a spring swedge, neck down the pipe about 3 inches from the flared end. Rotate the pipe to keep it even, leaving about a 3/8" hole in the end of the bell.

Step Three - Cut the pipe at a 45 degree angle about 1/2" above the neck.

Step Four - Forge a leaf/petal type flare on the angled piece using the cross peen of the hammer. Hammer flat on anvil over the edge on the horn, wherever you need to make a pleasing angled petal.

Step Five - For the handle, take 3/8" round about 21 inches long and put a leaf at one end. Put the other end through the bell neck making sure it goes easily. Forge the other end flat. Drill or punch a hole in the end.

Step Six - Forge a clapper from 7/16" round with a small tapered hook at the end. Put the hook in the hole and pull the handle back to make sure the clapper does not stick out further than the rim of the bell. This way it can stand on a table. About 1/4" back from the edge is good.

Step Seven - Heat and crimp clapper to the handle, then heat and crimp the neck tight to the handle. Put a slight off center bend to fit the handle along the line of the petal.

Step Eight - Take a long heat on the handle and make a scroll bend or whatever you like. After a second heat, bend the leaf over --under the petal. Take another local heat to clamp the leaf tight against the petal. This keeps the petal from ringing when the bell does. Finish for exterior use.
Samuel Yellin's Legacy
The Story of a Metal Working Shop

Peter O'Neill and his associates have made a 57 minute video tape describing the more than 80 year history of the premier ornamental metalworking shop in America. The film documents both the past and the living history of the shop with footage of Yellin's greatest works. Intended for a general audience, the film combines oral history with an appreciation of this now rare craft of hand-forging metal and the beautiful work the shop has created in the past. If you would like a copy of this color video produced in 1993, contact Skylight Films (401) 351-6923. The cost is $50.

Book Review
by Jim Ryan

This is not a new book. It was first published in 1968 and I have had my copy for ten or twelve years I guess. But this book has brought me more joy and design help than any other book in my five feet of blacksmith books.

Decorative Antique Ironwork, A Pictorial Treasury - by Henry Rene' d'Allemagne, published by Dover Publications. This book is available through Norm Larson Books 1-800-743-4766 (evenings) or Centaur Forge Ltd 1-414-763-9175 (daytime).

There is very little text, but it is a museum catalog of 1924 revised for reprinting in this country. This fascinating collection of ironwork is in the largest museum of ironwork in the world. I was very fortunate to visit this museum in Rouen, France while I was in Normandy this June. What a place! Tons of great ironwork. And most of it is pictured right here in this book. It doesn't tell you how to make it. It doesn't tell you what size the piece is. It just shows you 415 pages of ideas and designs that have been used throughout the history of ironwork. I have used this book to show customers that original iron is not like the machine stamped out pieces. (See the grille on page 13.) I have taken motifs from a door latch and made sconces like it. (See page 140 for the cut out fluer-de-lis.) It is a marvelous book for that kind of thing. I highly recommend it.

SHOP TIPS & TOOLS

Tool Time
Reproduced from the UMBA Newsletter
Written by Franklyn D. Garland

If you would like to cut down on the time spent resharpening your cut off hardy or other edge up anvils tools, try using a brass hammer. A #3 brass hammer will make quick work of most cutting jobs and will avoid flattening out the cutting edge if you over shoot the job. The brass is so much softer than the steel that the brass will deform first. This also helps if you need to drive a stuck punch or chisel back out of a hot (or cold) piece of work.

Whitaker Wisdom
Taken from a letter to Jim Ryan
Written by Francis Whitaker

I am disturbed by the emphasis on gas or arc welding in the first two articles of Vol 2, Issue #2.

The past three summers I have been traveling in Europe from the Arctic Circle to Istanbul, photographing the marvelous iron work done before the advent of either gas or arc welding. In my own work, I shun the use of this technique and teach my students to either develop the skills or redesign the work so that mechanical welding is not required. The examples found in Europe only reinforce my philosophy.

I would like to quote from the autobiography of Julius Schramm, the great German master in the early part of this century:

"An artist-blacksmith must stand beside the architect so that a more beautiful construction results, further, that all of his designs can be formed at the fire without using other un-blacksmith-like tools. I have never had welding equipment and I modify any design that cannot be done without such equipment. If one uses a welder, the only use for the hammer is to work over the area, but one feels the unnatural character of such design. Viable designs can only develop from forge welding."

I hope to publish this autobiography of my old master soon. May it be an inspiration to all, as my apprenticeship with Schramm was to me.
Conference Notes
by Jim Ryan

What a great time we had with a fine selection of demonstrators and a great set up at the college. But what a lousy trick from the weather man.

Lou Mueller and his BAM crew did a fine job organizing the conference -- at least everything they could control. The heat was definitely not on that list! Many thanks to several people who never saw a bit of the action because they were hard at work.

Here are some observations and comments overheard throughout the week.

In the cafeteria, Monte Hightower from Alaska said, "It sure is nice to see the women smiths respected and accepted in the organization. That's a lot different than it was 10 years ago when a woman smith was thought of as a novelty. Their demonstrations were full every day. Isn't that great?"

Elizabeth Brim, Roberta Elliott, and Nana Showalter had so much fun demonstrating in the beginners session that they have offered to do one at the 1996 conference in Alfred, NY.

Overheard in the gallery in front of Stan Mills' 15th century Gothic armor: "I bet if the smiths back then had plasma torches and wire welders they could have made some tremendous armor." Said another, "Well if they had had them, they damned sure would have used them."

Ruth Cook from Wisconsin (former Executive Secretary of ABANA) brought her daughter, Kris Mathes, and was amazed to see the conference through brand new eyes.

Jim Horobin from England stated in his demo, "Before you finish a piece of iron and once you get part way through forging a piece, you notice that it is a shape you can use in another context. Improvisation is part of our stock in trade. We could all be great inventors if we only could cut loose." Jim made a 3-D puzzle of a road runner held together without joinery or welding.

Elizabeth Brim from North Carolina made iron blow up pillows. She welded two sheets of thin iron together, actually up to 1/8" thick with a 3/8" iron pipe sticking out of one end. When it is hot, she sends about 90 lbs of air pressure in and the pillow inflates, just like that! All kinds of embellishments can be added. People asked about different shapes such as an animal for a weather vane and Elizabeth said that she has never tried them but would love to know if they work.

Walt Scadden, the shy New Englander said, "Scrolls are very easy to make ... after you have made a million of them. Most people make scroll jigs backwards. You should make the scroll first, then make the jig to fit it."

Bob Gunter from New Mexico commented on junk yard steel: "When you find a steel that is working for you and have a source of supply, keep a sample. Label and hang it near the grinder. You can compare it with other samples and tell what type of steel it is by just looking at the sparks from the grinder. A good source for tool steel is jack hammer bits. They are 8 to 10 points of hardness and you can water quench them."

Rich Cross from Iowa and several others sold a lot of items from the back of pickups in the tailgate section. There was enough stuff on trucks that you could furnish a complete shop without any trouble. Bill Gitchner was there in full flower. Wouldn't be a conference without him. And Tim Ryan from Tennessee auctioned off a large number of items in a stuffy gym making lots of people very happy, especially the conference treasurer!

There were demonstrators from seven countries around the world. Early each morning an anvil began to ring out near my dorm window. I got up and staggered over to see what was going on. It was Franciszek Wisniewski from Poland making a set of hinges for a castle restoration. I figured he had jet lag and it was already afternoon in Poland. A large security guard reported, "Yeah he started at 5:00 am. He likes to work while it's cool. What's he making, anyway?" Someone pointed out, "Door hinges." The guard said, "Door hinges! Ain't that a lot of work for door hinges?"
Conferences & Events

Sep 08-11 ALABAMA FORGE COUNCIL - Tannehill, AL

Sep 16-18 NEW ENGLAND BLADESMITHS GUILD will be hosting its 12th annual Bladesmiths Seminar at the Ashokan Field Campus in Kingston, NY. The seminar will include lectures and demonstrations covering a broad range of technical and practical aspects of knifemaking by several of the country's foremost blacksmiths. Contact Tim Neu c/o Ashokan Field Campus, 477 Beaverkill Rd, Kingston, NY 12401 or call (914) 657-8333.

Sep 21 Deadline: The second juried ABANA exhibit will be held from 12/11/94 to 02/05/95 at the National Ornamental Metal Museum. Current ABANA members are eligible to submit up to 3 slides by 9/21 along with a $15 entry fee.

Sep 23-24 QUAD STATE ROUND-UP - Troy, OH
The 17th annual regional conference of the Southern Ohio Forge & Anvil (SOFA) chapter will be held at the Miami County Fairgrounds. For more information, contact the Registration Coordinator, Richard Kern (513) 372-9100.

Oct 08-09 FABA CONFERENCE - Barberville, FL
To be held at the Pioneer Village. Contact: Program Chairman, Dr. Steve Bloom (904) 528-6508.

Dec 11 to Feb 05 "ABANA COMES OF AGE" National Ornamental Metal Museum exhibit celebrating ABANA's 21st anniversary of founding.

Schools Update

PENLAND SCHOOL OF CRAFTS - Penland, NC
(704) 765-2359 Sept 26-Nov 18
5 weeks - Dan Radven
Blacksmithing: Functional/Contemplative
3 weeks - David Secrest
Research & Development in the Studio

WHITE RIVER ARTISANS SCHOOL - Cotter, AR
(901) 435-2600 Oct 10-Oct 15
6 days - Bob Patrick
Forged Tool Making Workshop

NATL ORNMNTL METAL MUSEUM - Memphis, TN
(901) 774-6380 Nov 12 & 13
2 days - Jim Cooper
Copper Weathervane Workshop

Announcements

NEW ABANA INSURANCE PROGRAM

Don't wait! Get a quote on coverage for your chapter or business on property damage, contents and liability. Chapters will have liability figured on a per capita basis. For business owners, you will want to get product liability.

For all chapter presidents and board members, heed the advice of our in-house lawyers. Get incorporated and get insured.

Attention: individual smiths! Here is a chance to get the right kind of coverage on your operation.

Attention: hobbyist smiths! Your homeowners insurance does not cover product liability.

Request an information sheet to determine the coverage you need.

Call or write:

Bob Burmeister
Industrial Coverage Corporation
3237 Route 112, Building 6
Medford, New York 11763
1-800-242-9872 Extension #110
Fax (516) 736-7619

WHITE HEAT
by Emily Dickinson

submitted by Peter Barrett, Great Barrington MA

Dare you see a soul in the white heat?
Then crouch within the door.
Red is the fire's common tint;
But when vivid ore

Has sated flame's conditions,
Its quivering substance plays
Without a color but the light
Of unanointed blaze.

Least village boasts its blacksmith,
Whose anvil's every din
Stands symbol for the finer forge
That soundless tugs within

Refining those impatient ores
With hammer and with blaze,
Until the designated light
Repudiate the forge.
ABANA
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