Quarterly Publication of the Artist-Blacksmith's Association of North America

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The Anvil’s Ring (ISSN 0889-177X) is the official publication of the Artist-Blacksmith’s Association of North America, Inc. It is mailed to the members on a quarterly basis in Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter by ABANA, P.O. Box 816, Farmington, GA 30638-0816. Membership is available to any individual or organization interested in the art of blacksmithing. The annual fee for a regular membership is $55; $24 of this amount is for a subscription to The Anvil’s Ring for one year. Permit to mail at periodical postage rates is registered at Farmington, GA, and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: send address changes to The Anvil’s Ring, P.O. Box 816, Farmington, GA 30638-0816. Matters related only to membership and subscription, including dues, change of address and subscription complaints, should be addressed to LeeAnn Mitchell, ABANA Central Office Executive Director, P.O. Box 816, Farmington, GA 30638-0816. (706) 310-1030 or e-mail to abana@abana.org. All editorially related materials, such as articles, book reviews, queries, tips, announcements of activities, ads, etc., should be mailed to The Anvil’s Ring, Sebastian Publishing, P.O. Box 1849, 6690 Wentworth Springs Rd., Georgetown, CA 95634. Include SASE for material return. (530) 333-2687 phone or (530) 333-2689 fax or e-mail to rob@sebastianpublishing.com. The contents of this publication may not be reproduced either in whole or in part without the permission of the editor or the individual contributors. Contributors retain all copyright privileges; the material is copyrighted solely for their protection. The Anvil’s Ring, ©2006 The Artist-Blacksmith’s Association of North America, Inc.
“THAT WAS A HELL’UVA RIDE”

Walking back to the chutes after making the buzzer, you hear that remark being whispered – but all you are thinking (and saying under your breath) is: “THANKS BRONC, FOR TAKING ME ALONG FOR THAT RIDE!!”

After three years as your president, that is my message to every ABANA member! Thanks for the shared opportunities.

The question is, what makes ABANA capable of:

• Helping those members affected rebuild after losses incurred during Hurricane Katrina…
• Filling the pages of this magazine with pictures and stories of current artists’ work in iron – advancing the art through work techniques shared in our sister publication the Hammer’s Blow (not to forget appreciation for the editing staff of our publications)…
• Putting on a world-class conference of international importance to smiths and patrons of artistic metal (only possible through the dedication to our members by a small army of unpaid volunteers!)…
• Maintaining a central office staff to supply answers to your needs and accomplish all that’s needed to keep our organization operating smoothly (and an accountant who makes ABANA a pet project – thanx staff!!)…
• A board of dedicated members who stretch their limited time away from the forge to serve, always looking toward increasing services without increasing the budget. (An open opportunity here – they are always looking for new ideas accompanied with volunteering to bring them into fruition. Just contact your nearest board member)…
• A scholarship trust for members, with a perpetual endowment to both contribute to, and receive educational assistance from…
• The many unlisted but equally important contributions made to smithing each year.

The answer? It’s you, the affiliates and individual members who step forward with your time and energy devoted to the art of smithing. I feel great pride and deep humbleness to be associated with ABANA and each of you.

The 2007 officers will be appointed at the ABANA board meeting in New Paltz, New York, scheduled for November 11 through 13th, 2006.

Your support and efforts make ABANA the organization, from which we can all learn and be proud!

AS FOR ME, IT HAS BEEN A HELL’UVA RIDE!

Thanx

P R E Z  S E Z
M A I L

MAIL Continued on page 6
Fall 2006

MAIL CONT'D.

Championship Blacksmith Details

Blacksmith Competition, World Champion Blacksmith, five-time World Champion blacksmith Blacksmith Competition, World Champion

Billy Crothers, 45, of Wales, led the contest, coming into the semi-finals ahead of Steven Beane of England, who was named Reserve Champion.

One of the main reasons I went to the conference was to see a Japanese sword maker, but what I did see was a ready-made blade being coated with clay and then later being heat treated in the dark. I have no idea how much it cost to bring this gentleman from Japan. I didn’t feel we’d get value for our money. I didn’t go to the conference to see hula dancers, didjeridoo players, rock bands...basically anything not related to blacksmithing. I think we could save some costs by cutting this kind of stuff out and we should pick venues where we don’t have to pay to have food trucked in or pay to have four or five buses on call 16 hours a day. By my count there were over 30 demonstrations/presenters, do we really need that many? Maybe we should look more closely at how many, what kind and from where demonstrations come. I know we need better, not bigger conferences.

I did come away from the conference with good ideas but the cost, if not reduced, will keep me from going to another ABANA conference for many years to come. I’ll stick to my local chapter demos, Quad state, and Cantonion which are affordable and good value for money.

Scott had sent Holly Fisher a copy of his letter to the editor at the same time he sent it to us. Holly responded in time for her reply to be included in the same issue. Both were timely since the ballots were included in that issue of The Anvil’s Ring.

For those who advocate a change in the biennial national conference format, I propose being careful not to ‘mess with success’. These conferences provide a forum which smaller regional conferences cannot afford to present, like substantial international demonstrator power. As to scaling it down to reduce the fees, then it loses the appeal of outreach and versatility.

For improvements, I like Elizabeth Brim’s outreach program to expose our best to museums, architects, decorators, educators and the media. For cost cutting, we could offer better access to camping and RV facilities. However, before making significant changes, we should poll and sample the opinions and suggestions of our members. Maybe ABANA could spend some money on having a professional opinion research company perform that survey, so that we don’t have to make hard-to-reverse decisions based on skewed data. And check with the folks from Hopfish Consulting. They have reported numbers of unapathies with the European Helf-styn conference. We might learn something.

DEAR EDITOR,

I think Scott Lankton is pretty well on the money with his views about ABANA (The Anvil’s Ring - summer ’06) and its future, but I think will take more than just youth to cure our woes. I’m sure whoever serves on the board does the best job they can under the circumstances, but egos, personalities and other human traits get in the way. I would like to thank all the people past, present and the future, who have and will serve on the board, for a job well done and the countless volunteer hours they put in.

In my humble opinion we need more input from the membership at large and to refocus on the reasons ABANA was formed in the first place: to share information and ideas to educate people about the art of blacksmithing.

The number one priority surely must be to get the cost of conferences within the range of most members. I was fortunate to be able to go to the Seattle conference and as in life there were highs and lows. I met and had great conversations with smiths from around the world, saw some awesome demonstrations, some pretty poor ones, and missed a few because of miscommunications, saw some nice slide shows, but missed a lot of what was being shown and said due to the sometimes poor sound systems and lack of video projectors.

One of the main reasons I went to the conference was to see a Japanese sword maker, but what I did see was a ready-made blade being coated with clay and then later being heat treated in the dark. I have no idea how much it cost to bring this gentleman from Japan. I didn’t feel we’d get value for our money. I didn’t go to the conference to see hula dancers, didj...
2006 ABANA BOARD MEMBER ELECTION RESULTS

NEWLY VOTED BOARD MEMBERS:

Elizabeth Brim
Dolores Strieger
Jill Turman
Jim Masterson
Will Hightower

Winning Ballot Numbers:

#1 #0010
#2 #0112
#3 #2823
#4 #3902
#5 #1353

(Ballots drawn by Toni Farrell, Dan Nauman’s wife.)

NOTICE OF ELECTION

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, PO Box 816, Farmington, GA 30638, by June 15th of the election year.

CONTRACTS


REPRINT POLICY

ABANA Affiliate newsletter editors are authorized to reprint anything published in either The Anvil’s Ring or Hammer’s Blow in their affiliate newsletter.

SCHOLARSHIPS

ABANA scholarships are available to all ABANA members. The closing dates are: January 1, April 1, July 1, and October 1. Information can be obtained from the ABANA Central Office, call 706/310-1010.

Thank you to all conference vendors & sponsors - ABANA couldn’t have done it without you!

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Patina Video DVD for Iron, Steel, and Aluminum ................................ $30.00
Learn how to apply over 20 incredible patinas to iron, steel, and aluminum. Finishing techniques for these metals include basic patinas that go directly on the metal surface, then that may be applied directly to the metal or over the patina, liquid metal coatings with patinas, and baking with patinas or over it.

Hot Patina Video DVD for Bronze, Brass, and Copper ................................ $30.00
Learn how to make and apply over 15 different hot patinas and how to protect them indoors and out. Included is information on how to use paint, fire, pigment, oxide, and wax to produce a wide variety of finishes.

Cold Patina DVD Video for Bronze, Brass, and Copper ................................ $30.00
All Cold Patina techniques included: buried, wrapped, fumed, and paste patina plus pigments, oxides, carbonates, & mica powders. Learn how to apply over 15 different hot patinas.

Japanese Patinas ........................................... $12.50
Detailed information on techniques and materials makes this a studio-based reference.

Mokume Gane: A Comprehensive Study ........................................... $34.95
A grand teaching style, breathtakingly illustrated with over 150 color photos and includes 25 pages of mokume gane art in black and white. All the technical data is here, too, with step-by-step instruction, information on metal compatibility, and firing temperatures. By MokumeGane.com Staff.

Mokume Gane in the Small Shop (VIS video cassette) ........................ $49.95
Congratulations on producing such a high quality exciting video experience!” - David Laplantz, author and blacksmith.

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THE ABANA SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

ABANA

S

ince its founding in 1973, ABANA has been committed to the education of its members. The purpose of the ABANA Scholarship Fund is to provide financial assistance to ABANA members at all skill levels to assist them in the development of their blacksmithing skills and abilities.

1. CRITERIA FOR SELECTION

Applicants must show financial need, proven talent and demonstrated ability in blacksmithing. In reviewing applications, the ABANA Scholarship Committee will consider but not be limited to the following factors:

- Documented evidence that the applicant possesses, or will obtain, a degree for continued and serious involvement in blacksmithing
- A novice blacksmith, the candidate must demonstrate a commitment and legitimate interest in blacksmithing.
- Quality of or potential for work as demonstrated by visual materials submitted to the Scholarship Chair
- Record of professional activity and achievement, if applicable.
- Benefit of the award to ABANA's members, affiliates and the blacksmithing community.
- Demonstrated involvement with and commitment to ABANA by the applicant or the applicant's membership of at least 6 months before the submission date of the application.

Generally scholarships funds are not awarded to attend conferences. Recipients of previous scholarship awards are not eligible to submit applications for the following:

- Partial or improperly completed application materials will not be returned to the applicant unless return postage is included.
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2. TYPES & AMOUNTS OF SCHOLARSHIPS

The ABANA Scholarship categories are:

- Scholarship A: Affiliate Scholarship
- Scholarship B: Funds for individual study, maximum of $1,500.00
- Scholarship C: Extended Study of three months to one year, maximum of $500.00
- Scholarship D: One-time grants for special projects or opportunities
- Scholarship E: Scholarships for overseas study

The Anvil's Ring

Fall 2006

EDITOR’S NOTE:

In the fall issue of The Anvil’s Ring, we published a review of The Backyard Blacksmith by Lorell Sims. We inadvertently failed to include the ordering information. The book can be ordered online directly from Lorell Sims at www.blacksmith4life.com, or contact Norm Larson at BookMaster, Inc., 1-800-247-6553. John Elliott at Blacksmith Supply also carries the book at 1-877-387-6268. We regret not including this information in the article.

CAB AN IV R

When: June 29 - July 2, 2007
Where: Victoria, BC, Canada
Contact Information: www.caniron.ca or e-mail Neil Gustafson at swedfred@shaw.ca or Dave Winestock, dewinstein@yaho.com.

Come and see metal, Canadian style. There will be traditional forging and closely allied art and glass art media. CanIron is the Canadian Blacksmith Association's scholarship competition held in different locations throughout Canada on the odd-numbered year. The 2007 CanIron will be hosted by the Vancouver Island Blacksmiths Association.

3. RECIPIENT OBLIGATIONS

As a condition of receiving an ABANA scholarship, ALL scholarship recipients are required to share results of their learning with ABANA members and/or ABANA Affiliates. The recipient will fulfill this responsibility through at least one of the following forms of presentation:

- A public demonstration or workshop,
- The submission of an article to both an Affiliate newsletter and an ABANA publication,
- A public exhibit of works completed during or as a result of the course, or
- A lecture demonstrating the results of the course of study, e.g., an article published in a non-ABANA publication.

This requirement must be fulfilled within 6 months after the course of study.

Additionally, the recipient must submit a short statement to the Scholarship Chair describing their study experience to the Scholarship Committee to be included in some form in The Anvil’s Ring.

4. APPLICATION AND NOTIFICATION DEADLINES

To be considered for a scholarship, applications must be postmarked by the following dates and sent to the ABANA Central Office:

- June 1st
- December 1st

Exceptions to this rule will only be made for applicants who need immediate consideration and in extraordinary circumstances, as outlined by the applicant and approved by the Scholarship Committee and the President of ABANA. Alternatively, applications may be submitted after the completion of the course. Electronic applications are not accepted at this time.

Category A and B scholarship winners will be notified of awards within one month of the above application deadlines.

- Review of Category C applications will be extensive and take up to two months.
- Notification of awards will be made either by voice, e-mail or surface mail. Funds will be sent to the recipient within two weeks after the notification.

5. GUIDELINES & RULES

Be sure to read and understand the rules for application. Partial or improperly completed applications will be rejected without review.

REVISED applications will be considered no sooner than the next application deadline.

Along with the Scholarship Application Form, applicants must include the following:

- Current résumé (updated within one month of application), including summary of relevant prior work or study.
- Three (3) letters of reference, two of which must be from ABANA members. Letters must be dated no more than three months in advance of the application date.
- Three (3) images (digitals, slides, or photos) must be included with the application. In addition you may also submit a concept drawing of current work. All materials must be submitted in protective plastic sleeves or other suitable holders. A novice blacksmith may fulfill this requirement with an essay detailing their interest in blacksmithing and future plans for accomplishment in the craft.
- Support materials describing the program for which the grant will be used: School brochure or catalog, curriculum outline, instructor résumé, etc.
- List of all current blacksmith group affiliations.

In addition to the above criteria, Category C applicants must submit a detailed documentations, including a plan of study, anticipated results, application of these skills in furthering their career, and letters of reference from all master smiths with whom the applicant wishes to study. Application materials will not be returned to the applicant unless return postage is included with the application.

REQUEST MAIL ALL APPLICATIONS TO:

The ABANA Scholarship Program
ABANA
P.O. Box 816
Farmington, GA 30681-0816 USA

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artwork by master blacksmiths from all over the country in a retail setting for over 25 years. This community has been exposed to quality blacksmithing and everyone is looking forward to hosting the Spring Conference.

Ferndale offers a unique setting for any event. The Victorian Village of Ferndale is on the National Register of Historic Places, famous for its Victorian architecture. In addition, the main street is lined with shops and restaurants full of small-town charm and hospitality. Crescent Beach is just a short drive from town and breathtaking redwood forests are nearby as well, for those looking to enjoy our local sights. People from all over the country travel to this Northern Californian destination every year to see the beautiful scenery.

The conference organizers are expecting many attendees, so make your lodging plans early. There is camping at the fairgrounds, bed and breakfast accommodations in Ferndale, and hotels in the nearby town of Fortuna. To see listings of accommodations, visit Chamber of Commerce website for Fortuna at www.victoriannonderland.com as well as for Fortuna at chamber.sunnyfortuna.com.

Stay tuned for more CBA Conference developments! If you have any interest in submitting work to the galleries, inquiries about registering to attend, or questions in general, please contact Conference Chair, and Ferndale local, Joe Koches, at (707) 786-4216 or e-mail Joe at blacksmith@foggy.net.

CALL FOR ENTRIES


When: June 13 - 16, 2007. Exhibit will be shown during the Society of North American Goldsmiths (SNAG) 2007 Conference in Memphis.

Submissions Due: March 1, 2007

Jurors: LesAnn Mitchell and Suzanne Pugh

Submission Requirements:
1. Submitted work must be partially made of steel. A work does not have to be completely metal (textiles, wood, etc. is welcome).
2. Submitted work cannot weigh more than 150 lbs. and must be able to fit through a standard size door—ideally, the show will feature a range of small and large objects.
3. Processing/entry fee is $20 payable to NOMMA.
4. Images: Must be on a clearly labeled CD (artist and image). The name of each image on the CD must match the name on the entry form. 300 dpi jpg images are preferred.
5. No slides.
6. Shipping: Incoming provided by the artist. Outgoing provided by the Metal Museum up to $50
7. Work must be available to show 6/1/07 to 8/1/07.
8. Selected artists will receive a loan packet that must be returned in order for the piece(s) to be insured.
9. Images will not be returned.
10. You may submit up to three pieces for consideration (5) you must use a separate entry form for each piece.

QUESTIONS? Charles Ferryman - 901/774-6380. E-mail: cf@metalumuseum.org

MADISON MORGAN CULTURAL CENTER CALL FOR ENTRIES

Title: Blacksmithing with a Southern Accent

Metalwork from the Southeast

Dates: May 3 - June 30, 2007

The Madison Morgan Cultural Center is partnering with the Artist Blacksmith’s Association of North America, Inc. and the Southern Blacksmith Association, Inc. to present a juried exhibition of forged metal work representing artists from across the Southeast. The exhibition will be open during the 2007 SBA Conference in Madison, Georgia, May 17-19. The reception for the event will take place Thursday, May 17th, 2007 at 8pm.

This juried exhibition will feature contemporary artist-blacksmiths working in the region. The exhibit will travel to The Metal Museum in Memphis when it leaves the Cultural Center and is scheduled to open there July 15, 2007. Eligibility: This traveling juried show is open to any metal artist, age 16-years and older, residing in one of the following states: Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina or Tennessee. You do not need to be an ABANA member, member of the SBA, or any regional ABANA affiliate to apply.

Jurors: Mack Beal, Jackson, NH, Dimitri Gerakaris, North Canaan, NH, Peter Happny, Portsmouth, NH

Awards: 1st Place $300 2nd Place $200 3rd Place $100 Student Merit Award $75

Entry Fee: $15.00 for submission of up to three works

Application Requirements: Entries will be accepted in slide or CD format. Details for submission will be included in the prospectus.

Application Deadline: March 1, 2007

For questions or more information concerning this juried exhibit, please contact: Angela Nichols Visual Arts Curator Madison-Morgan Cultural Center 434 South Main Street Madison, GA 30650 706.342.4743 x27 anichols@morganga.net

THE FORGERY SCHOOL OF BLACKSMITHING

T he Forgery School of Blacksmithing is now open and accepting students in the new 3570 sq. ft. facility, which features complete forge and tool set ups for 12 students in each class. Every student is provided with all the tooling necessary to execute each exercise on fully restored anvils and using coal fired, side draft forges.

The remaining six - day classes for the 2006 schedule are Blacksmithing Courses with a teaching philosophy built on skill level devel-opment and making each student as successful as possible. Two instructors are available in each class to provide individual hands on instruction.

Founded in 1986 by Robb Gunter, The Forger-y School of Blacksmithing is now taught by Chad, Brad and Robb Gunter. The Gunter family is comprised of two generations of professional blacksmiths, each specializing in his own area of expertise -- all combined to give the student the best possible learning experience.

There are lodging and restaurant options within three miles of the school.

For questions or class schedules, please contact: Chad Gunter (505) 270-1007 or Brad Gunter (505) 205-9815.

The Madison Morgan Cultural Center is part-nering with the Artist Blacksmith’s Associa-tion of North America, Inc. and the Southern Blacksmith Association, Inc. to present a juried exhibition of forged metal work representing artists from across the Southeast. The exhibition will be open during the 2007 SBA Conference in Madison, Georgia, May 17-19. The reception for the event will take place Thursday, May 17th, 2007 at 8pm.

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Jurors: Mack Beal, Jackson, NH, Dimitri Gerakaris, North Canaan, NH, Peter Happny, Portsmouth, NH

Awards: 1st Place $300 2nd Place $200 3rd Place $100 Student Merit Award $75

Entry Fee: $15.00 for submission of up to three works

Application Requirements: Entries will be accepted in slide or CD format. Details for sub-mission will be included in the prospectus.

Application Deadline: March 1, 2007

For prospects, please send self-addressed, stamped envelope to: Madison-Morgan Cultural Center ATTN: Blacksmith Exhibition 434 South Main Street Madison, GA 30650

Entry forms are also available on the following websites:


For further information or questions concern-ing this juried exhibit, please contact: Angela Nichols Visual Arts Curator Madison-Morgan Cultural Center 434 South Main Street Madison, GA 30650 706.342.4743 x27 anichols@morganga.net
Snapshots

Photos By Duane Williams
THE BAM BOX
Made by Pat McCarty, Washington Forge, Washington, Missouri

This is the Bam Box I made for the 2006 ABANA Seattle Conference. This box is #35 and is made from quarter-sawn white oak from Dale Kirby’s cooperage in Higbee, Missouri. It was full of tools which were donated by Tom Clark of the Ozark School of Blacksmithing in Potosi, MO.

The box was won in the Iron-in-the-Hat raffle by, from what I hear, a most deserving smith. (Editor’s Note: See letter in Mail section, this issue.)

Photography by Karen Wright, Wright Photography, Union, Missouri

TFS

TFS has been in the anvil manufacturing business for several decades, providing quality anvils for the professional farrier, blacksmith, knife maker and hobbyist, ranging in weight from 30 to 500 pounds. All are made in the USA, heat-treated to exact specifications and hand-finished in our shop.

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LORELEI’S LEI

The lei is approximately 24” long and weighs 8 pounds.
Materials used: steel, copper, and brass.
Photograph digitally re-mastered by Queue McMillan

A donation to the ABANA Conference Auction, leis are often worn to commemorate important events - births, deaths, marriages, and in this instance - Scott Lankton’s inaugural Beer Garden. The lei incorporates three common forms found in traditional Hawaiian leis: hand-forged steel and oil-quenched Kukui nuts, forged copper Plumeria blooms, and forged steel orange leaves.

Photography digitally re-mastered by Queue McMillan
Scott Lankton
Ann Arbor, MI
Dogwood Study, 12" x 34" x 2"., Bronze

Eric A. Ryser,
Manhattan, KS
Cities Series Plate #20 (Kansas City), Acid-Etched Pattern, Forged Steel

Richard Corr
Salvaged Iron, Iron

Jeff Wallin,
Memphis, TN
Hub Table, Mild steel

Photos By Duane Williams
ABANA CONFERENCE 2006

Gallery

Maurice Hamburger,
Teapot #2, Steel.

Ray Carpenter,
Vessel with Sun Lid, Steel.

James Bond, Nine Yards,
Forged mild steel & aluminum.

John Medwedeff,
Millennium Plaza Fountain, 194" x 105".
Bronze.

Maurice Hamburger,
Teapot #2, Steel.

Ray Carpenter,
Vessel with Sun Lid, Steel.

James Bond, Nine Yards,
Forged mild steel & aluminum.

John Medwedeff,
Millennium Plaza Fountain, 194" x 105".
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Vessel with Sun Lid, Steel.

James Bond, Nine Yards,
Forged mild steel & aluminum.

John Medwedeff,
Millennium Plaza Fountain, 194" x 105".
Bronze.
ABANA CONFERENCE 2006

Gallery

Elizabeth, Brim Penland, NC
"Beastie," Forged Steel

Bill Cooper
"Materia," Steel and Rubber

Brian Anderson
Taos, NM
Pipe Tomahawk, 18" x 6" x 1", Steel, Silver, Brass, Wood, Bone, Private Collection

Harold, Hohulin, Goodfield, IL
Western Spurs, Steel & Silver
The dedication of the 2006 ABANA conference to my husband, Russell C. Jaqua, has both surprised and touched me deeply. It is my great pleasure to share a little about his life and the influence that ABANA had on his passion as an artist-blacksmith.

Russell always considered himself a latecomer to his craft, having no awareness of smithing until he was 27 years old. Prior to that, he had served and been wounded in Viet Nam, had spent 6 months in the hospital at Fort Dix, and had traveled to the West Coast of Africa in search of spiritual healing. He lived for two years in Liberia in the region of Mt. Nimba, a sacred mountain made up of 90% iron ore. Later he named his forge and his avocational business after Mt. Nimba.

Russell became a bead trader in Africa and when he returned to the United States, his beads led him naturally to an interest in jewelry. In the Spring of 1973, in the very same month that the “Blacksmith Convention” in Lumpkin, Georgia, was being founded, ABANA, Russell visited Penland School of Crafts in North Carolina. The director there, Bill Brown Sr., took an immediate liking to him and offered Russell a scholarship to do a Jewelry Concentration that was just starting that spring. Russell stayed at Penland for the spring, summer, and fall of 1973, during which time a neighbor gave a forge to the school. The very next day, Bill arranged for the delivery of a huge pile of coal and suggested that Russell spend the rest of his time at Penland playing with it. So Penland and Bill Brown Sr. were the first angels in Russell’s artistic career and he always said that they literally saved his life.

After a 6-month apprenticeship with Daniel Imburgia, Russell was able to leave a love letter written in steel, known as the Blacksmith Boondogglers, Russell was able to leave a love letter written in steel, which he titled, “for Willene.” But it is about something beautiful. And all of these relationships did not come easily to him. Relationships did not come easily to him.

...
Russell said that the thing he most wanted was to see the hinges of St. Ann’s Gate at the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris. … One of the great conversations of his life about the relationship between craft and beauty.

You are a tribe that I do not belong to except by marriage. Fortunately, Russell gets the chance to speak for himself through the gallery exhibit of his work, and the videos and slides we will be showing on Saturday. But as the woman who loved Russell, I want to thank you for what you gave him. Without the community of smiths in ABANA, he would have been tribe-less.

And so I would like to close with one of my favorite quotes from Russell: "This," he said during an interview in 2000, “is what I really find attractive. It’s the relationship with the material. Relationships with people can be so… but this is consistent. It doesn’t cheat; it doesn’t lie. It’s kind of tough, and if you can use that, then… the door swings open for you. You really have to humble yourself before what it is and accept that. It’s not what you want. It’s what it will allow you to do and if you can work your way around to that point, well, then THE DOOR SWINGS OPEN and there’s a vast horizon of pieces that can be done.”

ABANA, at its best, is the initiator of the conditions where that door can swing open. That is its highest mission and that may be its most important significance for you. And I get to enjoy what happens, when you walk through that door.

THANK YOU.

Russell Jaqua’s first exposure to smithing was a Jewelry Concentration at Penland Craft School in 1973.

Serpent Choker, Mild steel.

In 1975, Russell set up Nimba Forge in Port Townsend, WA, and began developing his smithing skills and radically organic style. It took him five years to create his early masterpiece, “Kelp Bed.”

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During the 1990s, Russell became interested in graphic renderings of flora and fauna which he used in his "Plate Graphique Series" for tiles and table tops. Plate Graphique Studies, mild steel, 1990-1993.
In 1978, Jaqua acquired a Nazel 3B power hammer and his work throughout the 1980s reflects his interest in the bold textures and heavily marked surfaces that the hammer allowed him to achieve.

The Spirit Sticks led him to an ongoing interest in abstracted human forms.

**THE SPIRIT STICK SERIES**
**EXPLORED MAKING SCULPTURE FROM A SINGLE PIECE OF STEEL THROUGH DEFORMING AND REFORMING A VOLUME OF MATERIAL AS HE WORKED HIS WAY ALONG THE BAR.**

- **Spirit Stick Series I**
  (5 pieces), mild steel, 1987-1990

- **Spirit Stick Series II**
  (4 pieces), mild steel, 1990-1992

- **Spirit Stick Series III**
  (1 piece), mild steel, 1992

In 1998, Jaqua acquired a Nazel 3B power hammer and his work throughout the 1980s reflects his interest in the bold textures and heavily marked surfaces that the hammer allowed him to achieve.

- **Architectural Rosette**, mild steel, 1984
- **Candle Sconce**, mild steel, 1981
- **“The Consort”**, wrought iron, sanded and etched, 1980
- **“Man, Woman”**, mild steel, 2000
- **“Abbo”**
- **“Antelope”**
- **“Ram”**
- **“The Consort”**
- **“The Consort”**
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In 1996, Jaqua received a commission to create several fountains for a hospital courtyard which led to private commissions in which he concentrated on water features.

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**BOONDOGGLE**

Thanks to the huge hearts of what came to be known as the Blacksmith Boondogglers, Russell was able to leave a love letter written in steel, which he titled, “for Willene.”

This piece was made in three days by 29 smiths from Washington, Arizona, California, Idaho, Missouri, North Carolina, and Tennessee.

The last public art piece designed and created by Russell Jaqua was “Leafwing,” a 17-foot tall sculpture commissioned for the City of Port Townsend’s Larry Scott Trail. A signature piece of a town who loved Russell for over 30 years, it was wrapped with a yellow bow during the last week of his life.

“Leafwing”, Mild steel, 2001

Three months after the Boondoggle, Russell and Willene sit with the sculpture in its early stages of oxidization. Russell died June 10, exactly three weeks after this photo was taken.

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The Blacksmith Boondoggle: Making “For Willene” in Honor of Russell Jaqua

All photos by David Conklin. All credits from left to right.

Anvil's Ring
Fall 2006
Seven smiths from the Niagara Forge performed the task of creating an ABANA flag stand for the Seattle Conference, after repeated changes in design. Bob Corneck, Peter Pary, Dave Anderson, Terry Rose, Paul Smith, Dominic Spano and Al Butlak were the key persons executing the forming of the various parts.

It all began when Terry Rose and I visited Upstate Steel (my supplier). We looked in their dumpster and, lo and behold, we spotted a round disc in the bottom of the pile of scrap drops. Terry dove in and retrieved one of the discs which, we agreed, would be suitable to start with. So at our first meeting, we had the piece of steel we needed to begin.

Upon agreement that the disc was suitable for the drawings submitted, the procedure continued. Each week new ideas were introduced. Some were discarded, others accepted. The outside of the plate needed a little dressing, I thought, so I suggested a twisted square bar. Then Bob came up with the idea of twisting the twisted bar with a small angle iron and Dave Anderson and I accomplished the task with a little special tooling — after all, the piece was about seven feet long. The curving was done on my Hosfeld bender with special forming dies. Then Terry Rose came up with a smaller diameter dome which was again altered on Dave’s 400-ton hydraulic press.

Yet something was missing. So the top leaf was created and Terry Rose formed and punched the three legs. Dave and Bob designed the flag tubes with interesting designs and the top of the tube had a Doug Wilson “flair.” The center rod support was designed differently to show some of the twisted, upright bar. Something else was also missing. The sides of the disc looked naked and needed a little something. Thus, the leaves were added to finish the base. Putting it all together with sticks as the flag poles, the center pole needed something on top. So Dave again came to the rescue with the flame to represent transfiguration, which was the theme of the conference. Dave and Peter came up with the tendrils for the top of the flag poles with hooks. The letters were reworked by Peter, Dave, Bob and Terry. The flag base weighed about 85 pounds alone.

The complete stand was featured at the Amherst Museum at a public showing. It is also an interesting note that Paul Smith and Dominic Spano are first-year members who took part in our project. It demonstrates that any skill can be used at any level, when working on a joint project.
Bloom: Forged with Fire & Force
SHOWCASES ARTIST-BLACKSMITHING

By Dona Z. Meilach

Blom: Forged with Fire & Force at the Lynn Tendler Bignell Gallery at the Brookfield Craft Center, Brookfield, Connecticut, is a giant step into the contemporary ironwork art milieu. Only a few galleries across the country have mounted even meager shows on ironwork; but now the Bignell Gallery has chosen to be a leader and, hopefully, other galleries will follow.

Bloom: Forged with Fire & Force, showed in the gallery from June 18th through August 6th.

The exhibit showcased ironwork in infinite moods from functional to non-functional applications. Functional pieces such as an axe by Michael McCarthy was forged from iron bloom that he smelted from raw iron ore. Meagan Crowley presented a pair of organic con- delabras forged from pipe, a pet medium she uses that is traditionally thought of as an industrial material by most metal workers, and a mirror frame by Lorelei Sims, embellished with morning glory flowers, all were original and beautifully handcrafted.

But it’s the sculpture that assumes its own identity. Ironwork is both an additive and subtractive medium and the artist-blacksmiths have taken full advantage of these attributes. The artists join metal to metal for unique constructions and sometimes commit the cardinal sin of traditional blacksmithing by adding patinas and colors, as in the floral piece by Rachel Miller. She uses a metallic green pigment on the interior of cupped sepals that make the work shimmer like glass.

Lee Sauder masterfully employs ancient and unique bloomery techniques to create negative areas (subtrac- tive) in a variety of his pieces that are a symphony of shapes and textures. Many of the sculptures rely on flora as subject matter, adhering to the “bloom” concept. When one realizes that each bloom, petal, bud and leaf has been hand formed with force under heat, one must have infinite admiration for the patience and strength required. Meagan Crowley, Holly Fisher and Corrina Mensoff’s floral bouquets are brilliantly conceived and executed by true artist blacksmiths.

Other noteworthy works are a large, bulbous hanging sculpture by Lu Heintz, which appears as if it may be peeled like an artichoke and David Court’s abstract sculptural bouquets.

Bloom con’t page 38
The artists were asked to work with the concept of “bloom” to develop contemporary forms utilizing steel and heat as mediums. The artists invited for this show are both established and mid-career metalsmiths in this sometimes underappreciated art known as blacksmithing. The goal of the show is to showcase the work and talents of these artists and to help elevate the work of artist blacksmiths as a valid and competitive art form within the contemporary high-end crafts movement. The invited artists were provided with the many definitions of the word “bloom”: ranging from a spray of flowers, references of color, flourishing or bursting, to bloomery smelting, which is the smelting of raw material and the working and refinement of it.

William James Bastas

I enjoy tantalizing fine artists by walking the fine line between art and craft, blurring the distinctions. My work consists of forged and fabricated steel furniture and accessories that are both sculptural and functional.
In the world I live in today, executing work raises the question of how to execute a given commission or part of a job. Many times the processes are put in place by the design or perhaps the client’s needs. The question still remains: As an artist, how do I determine which, and by what means, will I work? No matter what processes I choose to work in, the common denominator is that the work must be executed in the most sincere way, so as not to compromise the overall feeling of the work with regards to the viewing audience.

My mantra for the majority of the work is this – execute it in a fashion that is pleasing and meaningful to my peers. To me there is no finer reward than having another artist impressed by my methods and by how the methods of work were carried out. I strive to combine any number of processes at my disposal to produce the given outcome – cleanly and thoughtfully executed work. In the physical sense of metal as a material, I strive to stretch its abilities to the limit. Pushing and pulling it like dough, I can find various aspects of its nature, secrets it only reveals when it is hatred and forced into shape. Utilizing the natural properties of ferrous or non-ferrous metals for their textures and colors are a part of creating work that is sensible and alluring to the mind. It is this choice – how shall I work – that defines me as an artist in metal and adds greatly to my own personal style. After twenty years of working with metals, I have found that I execute my work based on choosing the techniques that are the most sincere for the proposed outcome.


THE INSPIRATION FOR MY PRESENT WORK IS THE GRACE AND FLOW THAT IS FOUND IN NATURAL OBJECTS. IT IS A FITTING COMPANION FOR THE FLUIDITY OF STEEL WHEN HEATED AND SHAPED WITH A HAMMER. I LOVE THE WAY A PLANT, FLOWER OR LEAF WILL RESPOND TO THE ELEMENTS. IT MAY CURVE TOWARDS THE LIGHT, CLOSE AT NIGHT OR BEND IN THE WIND. IT IS THE WAY NATURE ADAPTS TO ITS SURROUNDINGS THAT MAKES IT SO FASCINATING. THE PARTICULAR PIECE, “FECUNDITY,” IS BASED ON THE PERFECT STATE A PLANT REACHES AT THE FULLEST REALIZATION OF ITS LIFE. THE MULTIPLE BLOOMS ARE FULLY OPEN. EVERY MOMENT IN THE PLANT’S LIFE HAS PREPARED IT FOR THIS OPENING. IT IS RESPONDING TO AN ANCIENT DRIVE TO REPRODUCE AND CARRY ON THE ENDLESS CYCLE OF LIFE, DEATH AND REBIRTH.

Rachel Miller
“FECUNDITY” FORGED AND FABRICATED STEEL, HAND RUBBED MICA POWDER, GRAPHITE

DERECK GLASER
“Vigilent Sprout”, Forged and fabricated steel and iron

BOB COMPTON
“Flower Form I”, Forged steel
Combining energy and material from the earth with physical energy and ideas from yourself to create a work that is honest and enjoyed and lasting is an unusual joy. Traveling from Canada, I am honored to be studying and learning from great master smiths here in Europe. As I develop in my life and craft I am eager to be influenced and driven by the bravery of contemporary designers who have found their own path. Metal design is a craft with unlimited possibilities. It takes inspiration, dedication, sweat and faith to discover a style that moves people and complements the natural world. I hope in time to do this and I pay my respects to and thank those who have.

As a decorative artist, my main concern is with ornamentation. The history of ornament began with abstract plant forms and a concern for natural phenomena, which continues to this day. All of my work is in some way connected to this continuum, even if it is not at first visible. Color and form are the most consistent signifiers. Whether it’s vinyl “grass” or a pair of candleholders that echo plant growth, works of nature play a significant role.

Michael Rossi
"Grass Fire Tools", Forged mild steel, vinyl

Becky Little
"Vase"

Michael Rossi
"Grass Fire Tools", Forged mild steel, vinyl

Rebecca Little
"Vase"

Lorelei Sims
"Good Morning Glory", hand cut, fabricated, chased and forged mirror. Mild steel, steel pipe, heat treated coloring

M. my great-grandfather, Loren Zachariason, was a seventh generation coppersmith and vanguard of the Danish Arts and Crafts movement. At an early age, I was intrigued by his copperwork that filled my grandmother’s home. Household items used daily such as lamps, kettles, andirons, and vases, all fashioned by hand into beautiful and intricate forms, gave me an understanding that art could be functional. Inspired by his work, and through a series of events initiated with my undergraduate studies in art and sculpture, I have pursued the path which has led me to being a blacksmith. In 1993 I opened Five Points Blacksmith Shop here in Charleston, Illinois. Area residents make regular visits to my studio in order to check the progress of my latest project, and I often host demonstrations for youth groups and teach weekend workshops. A typical day in my smithy can include: repairs on cast iron cookware, antique iron restoration, fabricating and installing various hitchs for livestock trailers, vehicles, or boat trailers, as well as going on-site with my portable welder to fix anything from railings to railroad cars. These varied tasks require inventive problem-solving and provide an opportunity to exercise a broad range of metalworking skills that enhance my artistic work. I incorporate both traditional blacksmithing techniques and the use of modern equipment to achieve my vision. Forging iron is a physically demanding process, but controlled movement is much more important than “brut” strength. My direct involvement in the transformation of metal, from raw material to finished product, gives me a spiritual connection to the process, as well as the piece. Because I have been blacksmithing for 13 years, repetitive motions such as tapering, flattening,scrolling, and texturing have become meditative. I am empowered by the creative possibilities that are available to me because I have honed these basic skills. With a recent series of public art commissions dedicated to indigenous plants of the Midwest, I have had the opportunity to continue my research and development of forging and fabricating botanical forms in iron. I employ asymmetrical compositions found in nature, and create richly textured elements such as leaves, vines, flowers, and branches, by hand and eye only.

I feel very fortunate to make a living as a professional blacksmith and to be part of a great and ancient tradition that is no longer limited by gender-specific norms. My growth as both an artist and artisan is fueled by knowledge that my work is enjoyed by many and that my business has value to my community.

Lorelei Sims
"Good Morning Glory", hand cut, fabricated, chased and forged mirror. Mild steel, steel pipe, heat treated coloring

Many of the sculptures rely on flora as subject matter, adhering to the “Bloom” concept.
BLOOM: FORGED WITH FIRE & FORCE
SHOWCASES ARTIST-BLACKSMITHING

By Steve Kash
Photos by Jim Sturm, courtesy of the Discovery Expedition

Since his retirement as a history teacher, blacksmith Aubrey Williams had often traveled to historic sites where he made and sold reproductions of hinges and door hardware with his forge and anvil. Never in his wildest dreams could he have imagined the impact his 1999 trip to Wellsville, Kansas, would have on the coming seven years of his life.

“This man came to my blacksmith work area in Wellsville,” recalled Williams. “After we talked a while, he asked, ‘Do you know who John Shields was?’ I told him I knew about Shields: he was the Lewis and Clark Expedition’s blacksmith. I also knew that Shields had made his home in Indiana which is where I live.”

Williams then learned about the Discovery Expedition—a planned three-year remembrance of Lewis and Clark’s 1803 to 1806 journey. He was invited to attend an organizing event in St. Charles, Missouri. There Williams became acquainted with Glen Bishop of St. Charles, the Discovery Expedition’s founder. (He began the historic remanactment by building a house in his backyard a replica of Lewis and Clark’s 52-foot-long wood and canvas keelboat.) Eventually, grants Bishop secured from historical societies and the federal and state governments enabled the expedition to provide the crew with historically accurate tents, boats, and equipment, plus meals.

Bishop organized an all-volunteer reenactor corps for the expedition. Williams became the primary person to play John Shields and would perform the role the great majority of the time. (Each person who participated in Lewis and Clark’s cross-continental journey had at least two and in some cases several modern counterparts. The average reenactor’s age was 59.)

Trip schedules were made so participants knew which weeks or months they would be with the expedition and at what city along the route their replacement would show up to play his character’s role and for how long. In the case of William Clark, his primary reenactor was his great-great-great grandson, Peyton Clark.

“The Discovery Expedition tried to do exactly what was done on that day 200 years earlier,” said Williams. “During the expedition, I had to adapt my blacksmith work to the changing forges that Shields had at his disposal in different stages of the journey. My role as John Shields attracted thousands of curious people during the three years I was with the expedition.”

“I arrived in Pittsburgh in August ’03 to start playing Shields. The expedition left by keelboat down the Ohio River on August 26, the date Lewis and Clark began.”

Steve Kash was a reenactor for the Lewis and Clark expedition. He played the role of John Shields and was the primary person to play Lewis’ chief blacksmith and was on the expedition the entire three years.

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At the Mandan village, Discovery Expedition even reenacted some of the historic adventures where he could display his blacksmith work. "Sacagawea was invaluable to the expedition. She was a Shoshone Indian. With her was the man playing her husband, a French trapper named Charbonneau."

"Shoshones lived in the Rocky Mountains west of the Missouri River in an area Americans had never been. If Sacagawea had not been along to help negotiate horse trades, the expedition’s crew would have died.

"Until the summer after the expeditions left the Mandan village, the blacksmith work Shields and I did was relatively easy. After I started on the trip, like Shields, I worked with a blacksmith’s forge similar to the one transported on the expedition’s keelboat during the first years of Lewis and Clark’s expedition. Using it, I made hinges for guns, axes, and other metal tools."

"At the Marias, the crew made two 22-foot dugout canoes for hauling light equipment and trade goods up shallow waterways into Shoshone country."

"The Discovery Expedition did the same thing 200 years later. Until we returned to the Marias and retrieved the boats and forge from their caches in the summer of ’06, my improvised anvil became the back of an axe head, which I drove into a log for support when I needed to work with it. I heated the piece I wanted to work in a fire, placed it on the axe head anvil, and pounded it into shape using the heavy end of a metal tomahawk."

"Lewis and Clark’s biggest surprise during their expedition was how challenging it would be to cross the mountains, even with horses. On occasions they became desperately lost. "Our Expedition did horsethick riding for onlookers, but few of us were good horsemen—there was little riding when we were out of the public eye. Nor did we physically take our canoes on grueling portages like Lewis and Clark’s men, but we displayed the activity for visitors.

"The Discovery Expedition even reenacted some-embarrassing episodes from Lewis and Clark’s trip. After the expedition reached the West Coast, Lewis and Clark’s men stole a beautiful Chinook Indian war canoe for usage on the Columbia River, and Discovery Expedition reenacted it.

"We also showed the role of York—Clark’s slave. He was a big man who was given a great amount of liberty on the trip. He earned the crew’s respect by pulling his weight. Indian women apparently loved him and were in awe of his blackness. During 1805–’06, when Lewis and Clark stayed in Oregon on the Pacific Coast, York and Sacagawea were given votes as to which site the expedition would use to build Fort Clatsop, their winter quarters. This was the first time a black or a woman voted publicly in the U.S. York was the only man on the expedition never paid; his reenactor, an on-duty National Guardsman, was the only modern crewman to get paid. After the expedition, York resumed a typical slave’s life until Clark freed him five years later."

When Lewis and Clark’s expedition ended on September 23, 1806, Shields stayed with Daniel Boone in St. Louis for a year and then returned to his family in Corydon, Indiana. After the Discovery Expedition, Williams returned home to Brazil, Indiana, hoping to find more historic adventures where he could display his blacksmith work.
Weight | Price | $/lb.
---|---|---
Gladiator | 450 lbs. | $2175 | $4.83/lb.
Centurion | 260 lbs. | $1450 | $5.58/lb.
Titan | 120 lbs. | $ 825 | $6.87/lb.

SPH-50 | 110 lbs. | $8495
SPH-60 | 130 lbs. | $9995

"I hope that I am remembered for my sculpture, but I am certain that future generations of blacksmiths will be glad for my anvils."

Russell C Jaqua
1947–2006
Paula and Larry Jensen, Guthrie, Minnesota

Paula and I live in northern Minnesota, the land of Paul Bunyan and Babe his blue ox, loons, lots of lakes, and headwaters of the Mississippi. The majority of our work is commissioned, which adds variety and keeps our work interesting.

We don’t focus on any particular line of items such as fireplace sets, candle holders, handrails, or gates, for example… Paula’s fine arts background and my welding and fabrication experience gives us a balanced approach to the designing, fabricating, and assembling of our projects. Paula is one of those rare individuals who has both design and smithing skills.

Paula especially enjoys designing and making “organic”-style pieces. She says, “Since I have only been doing this (blacksmithing) for four years, most jobs are a challenge, especially since I design it.” She adds, “I try to work out the building of items as I sketch them out, but once in the shop, there is a lot of time spent scratching my head trying to figure it out.”

Each new job offers insights and knowledge of the blacksmith business. We have found that success (making a profit) is not only the result of good design and quality craftsmanship, but there is also the need to learn business skills. Blacksmithing is a lot like life – there isn’t any correct way of doing it, just some ways work much better than others.

One of our recent projects was for a wine cellar. Paula drew three designs for our clients. After making their choice, they requested that a couple of lizards be incorporated into the design. Paula’s imagination carried the lizard theme one step further by adding a frog catching a fly, then placed one of the lizards above the frog, looking for a meal. This was a great hit with our clients.

One of the gate’s lizards

A brass patina was added to the steel leaves, vines and reptiles with a brass brush. The leaves were plasma cut, textured on the power hammer (164 Little Giant, 1907), and then final texturing was done on the anvil with a cross-peen hammer. All of the larger parts were first worked with the power hammer and then finished on the anvil.

After assembling the parts, the vines and leaves were “tweaked” to give them “life.” The gate was then sandblasted and cleaned. The copper leaves were heat-colored, using an acetylene torch to give them more dimension. Then the copper leaves were covered with newspaper and the lizard’s copper eyes were covered with rubber cement. The gate was then painted with flat black, and the paint immediately wiped off with a cloth soaked with thinner and then allowed to dry. The finish was completed by applying two coats of polyurethane.

One aspect of blacksmithing that provides us with a reward above and beyond the monetary is seeing the joy, pride, and appreciation in the eyes of the clients as they look at the finished piece.

More of our work can be seen on our website: www.eartheagleforge.com

“I try to work out the building of items as I sketch them out, but once in the shop, there is a lot of time spent scratching my head trying to figure it out.”

Different-sized lizards (12” and 9”) were made from square stock, the larger lizard from 1” x 1”, and the smaller one from 3/4” x 3/4”. The legs were forged from 1/2” round, using a coal forge. The lizards have copper rivets for eyes. Mild steel was used for most of the gate parts. The frame of the gate was made from 2” x 1/2”. The uprights, 1/2” x 1/2” square. The copper leaves (48 oz.) were attached by brazing. A brass patina was added to the steel leaves, vines and reptiles with a brass brush. The leaves were plasma cut, textured on the power hammer (164 Little Giant, 1907), and then final texturing was done on the anvil with a cross-peen hammer. All of the larger parts were first worked with the power hammer and then finished on the anvil.

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Wine cellar gate leaf detail.

Detail of frog catching a dragonfly

Detail of frog catching a dragonfly

Wine cellar gate leaf detail.

One of the gate’s lizards.
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Old World Anvils
Situated at an altitude of 2,500 meters above sea level, in the heart of the equatorial Andes, the city of Cuenca’s foundations go back to the late 15th century, when Huayna Capac, the Inca, began construction of a sizable urban center.

Tumibamba, as the city was named, contained cultivated terraced fields, storehouses, palaces and a sun temple faced with sheets of gold — attempting to rival the imperial capital of Cuzco in the south. During the civil war following Huayna Capac’s death, Tumibamba was ravaged and by the 16th century, it was largely in ruins when the conquistador Gil Ramirez Davalos arrived in 1557 and began construction of the first cathedral and the Spanish colonial town, named after its Castilian predecessor.

Since the mid 16th century, the town has grown in every direction, though its colonial center has to this day retained its cobbled streets of red tiled roofs, colonnades and balconied windows and has been designated a cultural patrimony.

Leading up from the Rio Tomebamba— one of the four rivers flowing through Cuenca, and named after the Inca’s city which once graced its banks, is a steep road winding into the old town, its narrow left shoulder containing several sheet metal shops.

The most prominent and colorful of these is ‘La Forja Cobre’ or Copper Forge, in which two generations of the Gutierrez family have been working for the past fifty years. The myriad of converging traditions, reflective of Cuenca’s past, are mirrored in the copperwork of Jose David Gutierrez Avles and his two sons, Juan and Rene. The shop and its three craftsmen possess an unusual exuberance — a joy and vitality that literally flows into the street, drawing passersby in. The shop’s façade holds a conglomeration of copper, brass and tin vessels, and entering the tiny shop, literally dug into the hillside, one is greeted by the sounds of hammering and laughter.

Pointing to an Inca mask he has raised in high relief, Juan Gutierrez speaks effusively of the Inca’s technology, of the rushing rivers whose waters they channeled in stone gutters to their fields of corn and potatoes. The copperwork incorporates indigenous Indian symbols curiously blended with Spanish Christian motifs, the objects on sale of an unusually large and diverse range: musical and liturgical instruments, table vessels and receptacles, cooking pots, ornamental reliefs for shrines and altars, and stuck in a back corner, a 3-foot diameter “corona” to top the dome of a church or cathedral.

Over the last decade, the economic situation in Ecuador has greatly improved — particularly in its three urban centers — the Gutierrezes maintain, due to a large number of local people who are working abroad and building homes locally, to which they will eventually return to retire. The prospects for artistic work have definitely improved, they claim, showing a binder of photographs of their more unusual commissions.

One of their largest tasks to date, and which occupied them for close to a year, was the entire bathroom fixtures for a hotel resort recently built on the Galapagos Islands off the Ecuadorian coast. The order was comprised of showerheads, faucets, soap dishes, sinks and several life-size armadillos that were incorporated into the ornamentation of the bar.

Some of their most popular and best selling pieces are stills, made to order and to any size. By the doorway stands a still of a size and capacity to distill several hundred liters of the local alcohol made from extracted sugar cane juice. Hanging above the entrance door is a collection of miniatures — including a complete still, small enough to fit in one’s hand — but fully functional to distill one’s favorite cologne or concentrated rose water. The miniature still is popular as a novelty or purely as an ornament — the album photographs show several perched atop color television sets and apparently bought by urban Ecuadorians on a visit from Guayaquil or Quito.

As darkness falls, several diminutive Canari Indians trundle down the hill and smoke rises from the marketplace along the river, carrying the smells of roasted maize and guinea pigs — a scene as old as the Andes.

Juan Gutierrez steps back into the shop carrying an armload of vessels, their burned, gleaming surfaces reflective of the animation and pleasure the Gutierrez family manifests in their work.

“Some things never change,” says Juan Gutierrez. “At the end of a day a man should have more than just money to take home from his work.”

Cuencano artist

“We spend many days making common objects and doing repairs... that is what pays, we have to eat,” says Juan Gutierrez. “But one must also do something for one’s soul,” he continues, indicating the raised and chased copper vases hanging from the beams above his head. Kneeling into his pocket, Rene Gutierrez holds forth a diminutive silver pix he has just completed to hold the host for a local priest. Over the last decade, the economic situation...
By Chris Holt, Sewickley, Pennsylvania

Coal, coke, propane, and gas are all fuels for the blacksmith; but what about electric?

The ASM International Heat Treating Society Exhibition and Conference was held recently at the David L. Lawrence Convention Center in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and things were heating up in an unusual way for blacksmiths. Thousands of individuals interested in all aspects of heat treating attended this extensive conference. PAABA (Pittsburgh Area Artist Blacksmith’s Association) member Jerry Wolfe retired from The Timken Company, but his connections in the heat treating industry are still hot. He arranged one of the unique opportunities any blacksmith could dream to experience. Through Jerry’s connection, Ajax/TOCCO made an electric induction heater for this particular conference. ASM Heat Treating Society’s “forefather” was symbolized as a blacksmith. They wanted to have blacksmiths available in the exhibition area to demonstrate some basic skills. Because of safety concerns and regulations in all conference centers, traditional blacksmithing heating methods (propane or coal) could not take place. Ajax/TOCCO volunteered to develop and make an experimental electric induction heater just for the trade show. You might ask, “Just what is an electric induction heater?” I asked one of our expert members, Don Kless, for his definition:

Basically, when a conductive material is placed in a moving electrical field, the field ‘induces’ a current into the conductor. With sufficient electrical energy, the electric current in the conductor causes it to heat itself, causing the atoms in the conductor to vibrate and create heat.

For the induction heating system that you used, the heating coil provides the ‘moving electrical field’ through use of an alternating current (AC), and the steel part is the conductor placed within the electrical field. Frequency, voltage, coil size, etc. are important to the heating because they determine how effective the conductor (the part) interacts with the moving electrical field (the coil).

Because the coil is carrying an electrical current (its atoms are vibrating as well), it also is being heated - therefore it has to be water cooled so that it doesn’t overheat.

The output of our model was 5KW and 19 KHZ, the input needed 5 Min 2080F 4 Min 2010F 30 sec 1500F 30 sec Black

As the days progressed, we found the induction heater to be an interesting experience. Some advantages are the rapid and uniform temperature. It would be particularly good for heating metal in a specific area.

Could this be what the blacksmith will use in the future? Maybe so!

As the final day of demonstrating wound down, Jerry decided to see if the heater could double as a hot dog grill. Let just say, it “cooks up” nort a lot better than it does hot dogs!

The price of such a system may be futuristic in another way. It cost about $30,000 for this heater, but it was a priceless experience for those of us who were able to give it a try.

Many thanks to Jerry Wolfe and Ajax/TOCCO for their generosity, and support of the blacksmith of the future. [Blacksmith demonstrators from PAABA were John Strel, Bob Rupert, Chris Holt, Jerry Wolfe, Gary Cooper and Nigel Tudor].

Additional information is available at:
ASM International: http://www.asminternational.org
Ajax/TOCCO: http://www.ajaxtocco.com
Pittsburgh Area Artist – Blacksmiths: http://home.comcast.net/~paabasec

By Jerry Wolfe and Chris Holt

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Photos: Jerry Wolfe and Chris Holt

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