



2026 ABANA Conference Spotlight

Zeevik Gottlieb: Figuratively Speaking

By Zeevik Gottlieb. All photos courtesy of the artist.

Zeevik Gottlieb is an Israeli artist-blacksmith and sculptor who has been working in forged metal since 1994. His work combines traditional blacksmithing techniques with contemporary sculptural expression, with a particular focus on figurative sculpture.

In 2003–2004, he worked at Oak Hill Iron in the United States, further developing his technical and artistic skills. Over the past three decades, Gottlieb has participated in numerous international blacksmithing conferences, competitions, demonstrations, and collaborative sculpture projects throughout Europe and North America.

His achievements include First Place at the World Forging Championship in Stia Biennale, Italy (2009), First Place at the Steinbach-Hallenberg International Competition in Germany, and Second Place at the San Marco Championship, Italy (2018). In 2023, he served as a jury member at the World Forging Championship at the Stia Biennale, Italy.

As an educator and demonstrator, Gottlieb has presented at major international events including ABANA (USA), CanIron (Canada), AFC, CBA, IBA, and the NEB Fall Meeting, and has taught master classes at Fer à Modeler, France. His work reflects a lifelong dedication to craftsmanship, artistic innovation, and the international blacksmithing community.

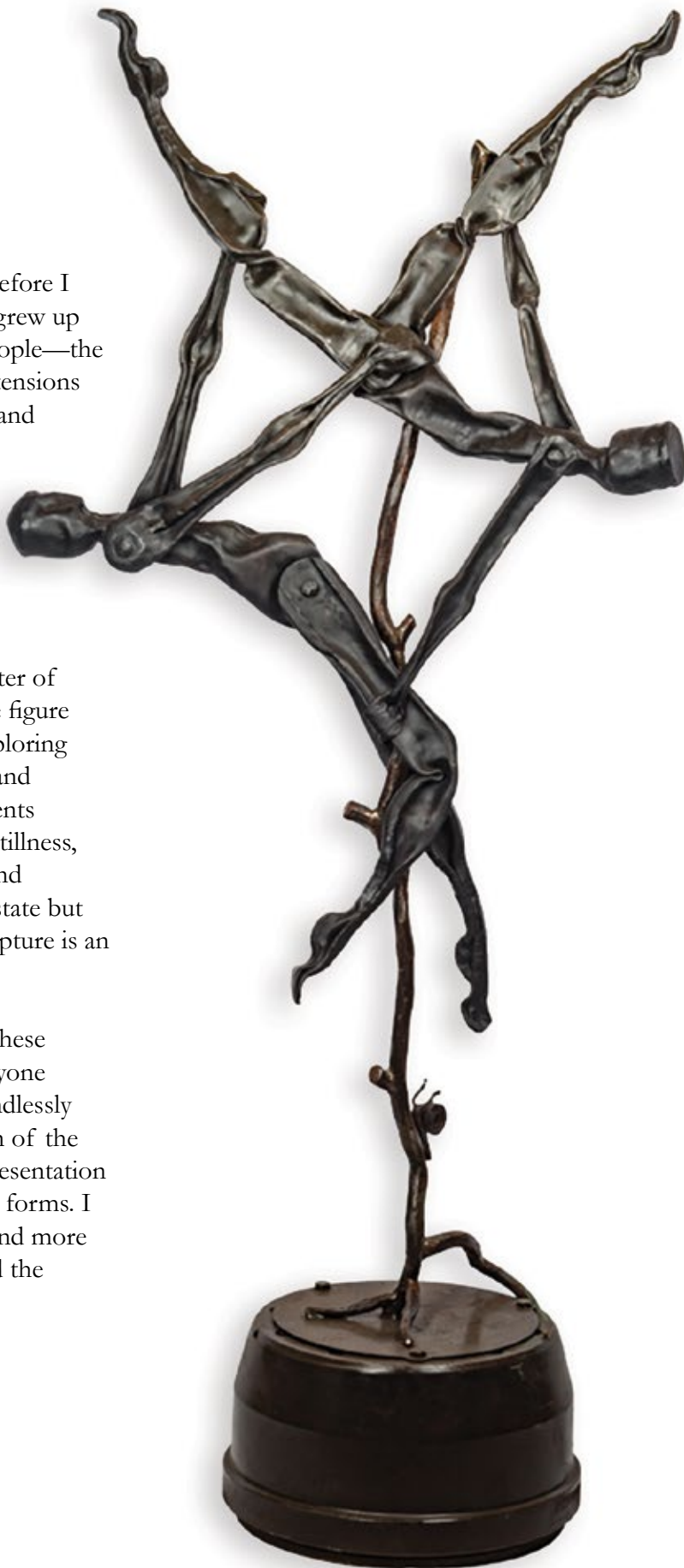
Spinning | 2019
Forged & brass-brushed steel
35 x 16 x 16 cm.



My artistic journey began long before I considered myself an artist. I grew up with a deep curiosity about people—the way they relate to one another, the silent tensions between closeness and distance, strength and vulnerability. Over time, I became fascinated by the human condition: our need for connection, our search for balance, and the ways our bodies carry both our history and our emotions.

Relationships have always been at the center of my work. Whether I am depicting a single figure or an interaction between forms, I am exploring the invisible forces that bind us together and pull us apart. I am interested in the moments where opposites coexist: movement and stillness, dependence and independence, fragility and resilience. Balance, for me, is not a static state but an ongoing negotiation. Much of my sculpture is an attempt to make that negotiation visible.

The body became a natural language for these ideas. The human figure is universal; everyone understands it intuitively, yet it remains endlessly expressive. Over the years, my exploration of the body has evolved from a more literal representation toward increasingly symbolic and abstract forms. I became less interested in anatomy itself and more interested in gesture, rhythm, tension, and the emotional space between forms.



Friendship | 2022
Forged steel tubing
250 x 100 x 60 cm.

Made for the the Metal Trail Project in
Mladá Boleslav, Czech Republic.
www.metalovacesta.cz/en



My passion for figurative sculpture developed through years of observation, experimentation, and an ongoing dialogue with steel. I developed many of the techniques I use today through countless trials with different types, dimensions, and forms of steel, constantly searching for ways to express movement and emotion through forged metal. A particularly important part of this exploration has been my continuous work with steel tubing of all sizes. Through years of experimentation, I developed methods that allow me to manipulate the steel and control the collapse of the material while hammering and forging. These techniques opened new possibilities for creating expressive figurative forms, enabling me to shape volume, movement, and gesture in ways that are both structurally sound and visually dynamic. A particularly formative moment came in 2005, when I encountered the spectacular figurative sculptures of Claudio Bottero at the Biennale in Tuscany, Italy. Seeing those works opened new possibilities in my understanding of the human figure and reinforced my desire to pursue figurative sculpture as a central theme in my artistic practice.

Another profound influence on my development was my late mentor, Uri Hofi. Working alongside Uri over many years taught me far more than technical skills. He embodied a deep respect for craftsmanship, discipline, and artistic integrity. Our collaboration and friendship helped shape both my approach to blacksmithing and my understanding of sculpture as a lifelong pursuit of learning and discovery.

Iron emerged as my preferred medium because it embodies many of the same contradictions that fascinate me in people. It is strong yet vulnerable, rigid yet capable of extraordinary transformation. Under the hammer and in the fire, iron becomes almost alive. It resists, yields, and remembers. Working with forged iron is a dialogue rather than an act of control.

Reaching the Moon | 2023
Forged steel, copper
60 x 20 x 15 cm.
Designed by Shlomo Erel.

Just Hanging | 2015
Forged steel
65 x 25 x 18 cm.



I was drawn to smithing because it combines physical labor, craftsmanship, and artistic expression in a way few disciplines do. There is something deeply honest about standing before a forge. The process demands patience, humility, and attention. Every strike matters. The material teaches you as much as you shape it.

Teaching has also become an important extension of my artistic practice. I regularly share my techniques and approach through masterclasses in my school in Israel, in France at Fer à Modeler, where I teach every year and around the USA. In these workshops, I demonstrate and teach the tubing-forging methods I have developed, showing how steel tubing can be manipulated and controlled during forging to create expressive figurative sculpture. I value these opportunities to exchange knowledge with other smiths and artists, continuing the tradition of learning and mentorship that has shaped my own career.

Over more than three decades of sculpting and forging, my relationship with the medium has continued to evolve. In my early years, I was often focused on mastering technique and discovering what was possible. Today, I find myself more interested in what is essential—how few elements are needed to express an idea, a feeling, or a relationship. The work has become quieter, perhaps, but also deeper.

Fairy Tale | 2021
Forged steel, rust
80 x 38 x 15 cm.

Looking ahead, I will be demonstrating these techniques at the ABANA 2026 Conference in Arkansas together with Yoav Berger. During the conference, we will present our approach to forging and shaping steel tubing for figurative sculpture and will collaborate on the creation of a large public artwork over several days, allowing participants to witness the entire process from concept to finished sculpture.

What continues to inspire me is the possibility of revealing something universal through a piece of forged metal. I hope that when viewers encounter my sculptures, they recognize something of themselves: a memory, a relationship, a struggle, a moment of balance achieved or balance sought.

At its heart, my work is an ongoing exploration of what it means to be human—how we connect, how we endure, and how we find harmony amid constant change. 

*See more of Zeevik Gottlieb's
work on his website
www.zeevikgottliebart.com
on Instagram at
[@gottlieb_art_official](https://www.instagram.com/gottlieb_art_official)
& in the traveling exhibition
Forge On: 30 Marks.*

