
The Early Years

I was one of those late bloomers, someone who changed my college major several times before hitting on the right one. An Art History class was my first AHA! moment. It answered the seemingly unanswerable question, “what am I going to do with my life”?

“Doing Art” for one’s life is complicated and much easier said than done, as any artist or anyone who knows an artist, knows. “Doing art” took many forms and paths for many years before I arrived at the place in which I now find myself.

I worked in galleries where I sold other people’s art. I became a gallery manager and an art consultant. I worked in interior design. I finally started painting more and more and found I could sell my paintings to other art consultants and interior designers. During this period, I was living in Boston. It was a good place for me as I was fascinated with architecture which figured largely in my work.

Life then brought me to Western Massachusetts, closer to my family. My dad, my biggest fan, became ill, passed away from cancer and I stopped painting.

Through the next difficult year, I found myself in the unlikely situation of soldering microphone circuit boards, helping my husband start his new business. After months of holding a hot torch and watching globs of silver melt, I had my second AHA! moment. I loved forming metal, shiny globs of silver and the ability to combine and create something from them. I could make jewelry.

If only it were that easy. Lots of research, classes, online tutorials, mistakes, disasters and despair ensued until finally I started to see results.

I strongly feel that all of my past careers, ventures and travels have formed and inspired my style of jewelry design and creation. As a child, I spent my free time in the woods, creating tree houses, gathering plants, rocks and injured animals. Nature was my escape and sanctuary. As an adult, not a lot has changed and as a metalsmith, my inspiration is to recreate and reinterpret nature in metal and gemstones. This work has become my escape and sanctuary.

A year ago, I found myself single and relocated myself and two cats to Asheville, NC. I had done a bit of exploring first and was taken with the beauty of the land and the strong and supportive artist community. The level of talent, creativity and craft here is so inspiring. It is an area known for the quality of craftsmanship, in all mediums, and I knew I wanted to be a part of it. I felt being surrounded by the energy and artistry would help me grow as a designer and metalsmith, and I believe it has.

I work out of my home studio in an area of Asheville that is quite rural and yet 15 minutes from downtown and the River Arts District. I am rather self-isolated, as much as the idea of working in a studio amongst other artists intrigues me. My initial goal has been to build a new line of inventory and completely recreate my brand (new website, logo, business cards, etc.). It is a period of re-creation. My studio is more than just a room full of tools, metal and stones, but a place where I can quietly (or frenetically) explore ideas, perspectives, designs. For the moment, I need to do that in a quiet space. Having said that, I can envision a more public space in the future, with camaraderie and support from other artists and a professional venue for working with clients.

The Process

I am endlessly engaged in turning a flat sheet of metal, a piece of wire or a lump of wax into an organic and personal expression from something that has inspired me and captured my fancy. Wax carving, cast botanicals and traditional methods of metalsmithing are the techniques I use to bring my designs to fruition.

I am primarily self-taught with periodic training from professionals in metalsmithing and wax carving. I am always interested in learning new techniques and improving upon old ones.

I began my new venture with hand fabrication. This can entail any number of techniques, but always requires parts, preparation and soldering or some type of connecting process. Wire and metal sheet can be soldered together; files, hammers, rotary grinding tools shape metal and wire into the design elements. Metal and wire can be rolled, patterned and hammered and etched.

As a painter, adding color was a must; I began to incorporate precious and semi-precious gemstones. Stone setting became another facet of the process.

While I still hand fabricate, I have been learning and designing more with the lost wax casting method. In this process, molten metal is poured into a mold that has been created from a wax model. I create the model by carving directly into wax, creating all of those little leaves, vines and organic forms by hand into the wax.

While I rarely sketch for myself, it is an important part of the process when working with a client interested in a custom piece. And this comes after a lot of talking and listening. Some pieces I have drawn in CAD so the client can see a 3D replica. The wax form is then made and cast. Other pieces I completely hand fabricate. Each custom piece is created based upon an individual's unique story and vision. I feel honored and grateful to be part of such significant moments.

The Future

In the next year, I plan to broaden my visibility in my new community. I have spent the past year improving my skills (“upping my game” as I’ve been calling it), branding and marketing, getting my ducks in a row. I now plan to get it all out there into the world. Besides presenting my work to galleries and boutiques, I plan on participating in some more of the many high end art and craft shows that the area offers. I’m really excited about this next phase and all of the opportunities and people that I’ll meet along the way.

Currently, you can find my work at The Eclipse Gallery in Wilmington, NC and Fox and Beaux on Haywood Street in downtown Asheville. I intend to increase that list prior to the holidays. I’ll have to let get back to you on that!

