

An interview with CoMA member Suzanne Williams July 2020



TELL US ABOUT YOURSELF

My name is Suzanne Williams - I am a metalsmith/jewelry artist. After graduating from Colorado State University in 1980 with a BFA in Printmaking I worked as a graphic artist, illustrator, fine artist, and technician in art/bronze casting foundries.

WHAT BROUGHT YOU TO METALSMITHING?

While taking a jewelry-making class as part of a teaching certificate program I fell in love with that rather than teaching and have now been making jewelry full-time for 30 years.

TELL US A BIT ABOUT YOUR PRACTICE

Drawing on many diverse skills and techniques, some from my art background, I hand fabricate three-dimensional, mostly narrative-themed constructions, primarily in sterling silver sheet, wire and tubing. Other materials include gold, bronze, gemstones and glass. I saw out all the components from sheet and develop the imagery on them mostly by engraving, but also etching and stamping the metal. The components are then fitted into or over frames to create small dioramas, shadow boxes or layered compositions. Etching and engraving are printmaking techniques that first drew me to working in metal. I loved the way that a sharpened engraver would glide through the surface of a polished sheet of copper or zinc and how carving a particular network or pattern of lines into it would reveal an image. Or with etching, how using a variety of resists would yield a particular kind of image. In my jewelry-making I've also used patinas and metal chasing techniques - coming from my experience in foundries, or cut stencils for sandblasting - from my experience as a graphic designer (in the pre-desktop publishing days when everything in a layout had to be cut with an X-Acto knife).

WHAT WAS THE MOST MEMORABLE THING YOU HAVE MADE?

The most memorable project I ever did came before my jewelry-making career. Working as a team at one of the foundries where I was employed, we created two 16' tall bronze sculptures from our artist/client's 1' tall maquette. The process, from creating the full-scale model (complete with scaffolding), making dozens of molds from those, pouring and chasing waxes, casting the sections, welding everything together, chasing the bronze and applying patinas took us about 9 months to complete. That experience provided a basis for the approach I take to designing, planning, troubleshooting and creating the projects I make today only on a much smaller scale.



WHERE CAN WE SEE YOUR WORK?



I have shown my work in a number of area galleries over the years. Pismo glass gallery (now closed) in Cherry Creek represented my work for over 20 years. I've also participated in multiple group shows over the past 30 years – the Arvada Center Art Market and The Denver Potters Association Spring and Holiday Shows to name a couple. Until this year I participated in 3 to 5 in-state or regional outdoor art festivals/shows. I also take orders/commissions and do a lot of custom work. The situation this year necessitated postponing or cancelling all of the shows and most of the workshops I had scheduled. This has however prompted me to set-up a shop on my website by this fall to provide a place where my customers can always purchase my work.

ANYTHING ELSE YOU WOULD LIKE US TO KNOW?

I had always enjoyed taking workshops, but in early 2018 I taught my first one and discovered that I really liked teaching after all. It got me out of my studio where, other than with some occasional assistance from my granddaughter, I work alone. Over the years I've met some amazing artists in workshops - being able to exchange ideas them has been inspiring and enlightening. Developing projects for workshops helped boost my own creativity, with each new idea leading to a whole range of new possibilities. So far, I have focused on

teaching about clasps - many of which are inspired by everyday functional objects like carabiners, paper clips or side release clips. I have enjoyed belonging to Coma for many years, for many of the same reasons as I enjoy taking and teaching workshops. I was planning to go to this year's conference. I'll miss the fun, camaraderie and hearing from presenters about their own great work. I'm so hoping it will be back next year!

www.suzannewilliamsjewelry.com

Facebook: Suzanne Williams Jewelry

All photos are by the artist (top to bottom)

Self portrait

Tree House pendant - sterling silver, tourmalated quartz,

Working from home balcony pendant – sterling silver, tourmaline, 2020

Bee pin – sterling silver, 18k gold, citrine, diamonds, 2018

