

THE HISTORY OF MIDWEST METALSMITHS

Ray Wenneker pioneered the idea of organizing a metalsmithing organization in the St. Louis area in 1994. Her goal was to establish a guild with the goal to promote, educate, develop and encourage individuals and groups who are interested in metalsmithing. When Ray first approached Heikki Seppa with the idea, he was not very encouraging. He stated that if she came up with even a handful of interested metalsmiths, it would astound him. He did agree to do the first workshop if the organization ever came to fruition.

Setting up a Not-for-Profit organization is no easy task, Ray Wenneker single handedly worked to research and learn all she needed to succeed. She started by contacting SNAG for information on how to begin. Phil London, the President of the Florida Society of Goldsmiths at that time, was kind enough to send Ray a copy of their by-laws which she subsequently used as a guide. John Baltrushunas introduced Ray to Sue Greenberg, Director of Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts. Sue was very helpful and in turn made an appointment for Ray with the law firm of Gallop Johnson & Neuman, who did pro-bono work for art related not for profits. They helped her take the proper steps to establish SMM as a not-for-profit guild. The Society was officially founded as a not-for-profit organization in 1995. The original By-Laws were updated in 2012 to reflect current needs and language.

Thus began The Society for Midwest Metalsmiths. In 1995 the first meeting was held at the Maryville University campus where it has continued to meet, to this day. Chris Chauvin was the first acting president and Ray Wenneker was the first 'elected' president. She held that position for 2 years. Other presidents through the years included: Janet Wilding, Lanie Kodner /Ellie Samson, Mike Gleason, Howard Siegel, Gayle Eastman, Linda Lankford, Kathryn Bowman, Aimee Howard, Leigh Roberts, Catherine Geyer, Tara Hoppe, Cindy Howenstein.

FOUNDING MEMBERS:

Founding members include Ray Wenneker, Deborrah Daher, Lanie Kodner, Sherri Jaudés, John Baltrushunas, Dayne Sislen, Ellen Klamon and Noel Leicht.

WORKSHOPS:

Society for Midwest Metalsmiths has, throughout its existence, presented five to seven workshops each year. By now we have covered about every metalsmithing technique, but are looking for new ways of doing things each year. Our workshops are generally a sellout. Sorry we didn't have a good record of the workshops presented prior to 2008, but this should give you an idea of technique and level of expertise. Here are some of the workshop instructions we have brought into the St. Louis area:

2008

Textile Techniques for Metals – Mary Lee Hu
Cuttlebone Casting – Jessica Erickson
Faux Bone – Robert Dancik
Photo Etching – Kathryn Bowman
Chain Making – Howard Siegel
Anticlastic Raising – Harland Taylor

2010

Viking Knit – Aimee Domash
Coloring Titanium – Noel Yovovich
Building Your Own Workbench – Sherri Jaudes
Moving Metal – Joe Muench
Russian Filigree – Victoria Lansford
Keum Boo – Sherri Jaudes

2009

Making Your Own Tools – Sherri Jaudes
Creative Shell Raising – Harland Taylor
Cold Connections – Nanz Aalund
Tinspirations - Marlene True
Soldering 101 – Sherri Jaudes
Stone Setting – Roger Rimel

2011

Repousse – Victoria Lansford
Resin – Ellen Klamon
Granulation – Paulette Myers
Soldering 101 – Sherri Jaudes
Form Folding – Michael Parrett

2012

Jewelry Photography – Garry McMichaels
Etsy Shop – Kathryn Bowman
Custom Clasps – Alison Antelman
Cold Connections – Sherri Jaudes
Micro-Forming - Andrea & Chuck Kennington

2014

Modified Bezel – Jennifer Mokren
How to use the Hydraulic Press – Sherri Jaudes
Contained – Joe Muench
Steel Jewelry – Leia Zumbro
Tubing Technical – Alison Antelman
Color on Metal – Gail Crossman Moore

2016

Organic Metals – Marne Ryan
Steel Jewelry – Brice Garrett
Whistles! – Joe Muench
Drawing, Painting, and Appropriation in Enamel -
Jessica Calderwood
Powder Coating – Kelly Miller

2013

Rose Engine Turning – Steve White
Dip, Dry, Draw, & Fire – Ken Bova
Line in Enamel – Sarah Perkins
Mokume Gane – Eric Burris
Making Multiples – Jayne Redman
Making and Repairing Tools – Sherri Jaudes

2015

The Art of Electroforming – Aimee Howard
Porcelain – Small Scale Processes for
Jewelry – Billie Thiede
Inlay/Married Metals – Suzan Rezac
Soldering 101 – Sherri Jaudes

2017

Anti-Clastic Raising – Michael Good
Fused Chain – Nancy Brickner
In The Line of Fire: Torch Fired Enamel
Anne Havel
Reticulation-Keumboo-Perforation –
Paulette Myers
Designing In Multiples – Don Friedlich

EXHIBITIONS:

1996 Regional Exhibition – Location St. Louis Artists' Guild

“At the Table” with professionally printed catalog

Juror - Chuck Evans with lecture at show

Exhibition Chair – Deborrah Daher

1999 - National Exhibition – Location St. Louis Artists' Guild

“Talismans for the Coming Millennium” with professionally printed catalog

Exhibition Chair – Deborrah Daher

Juror – Eleanor Moty with lecture at show

1999 - SNAG CONFERENCE:

In 1999 SMM had the privilege of hosting the Society for North American Goldsmiths (SNAG) Conference here in St. Louis. Lanie Kodner and Ellie Samson were the presidents at that time and shouldered a lot of the responsibility along with John Baltrushunas and Paulette Myers as chairs.

Michael Good was the keynote speaker, with Betty Helen Longhi, Lisa Gralnick, Gavreal Feder, Jim Kelso, Nicole Ann DesChamps, Hiroko Sato-Pijanowski, Roy Skognick, Rick Smith, Kathleen Eggert, John Behringer, Jan Yager, John Medwedeff, Dennis Nahabetian, Nancy Sachs, David Watkins and Susan Ewing as speakers.

There were special exhibitions at local venues including: Ellear B. Heffren, Locus Gallery, Laumeier Sculpture Park, Craft Alliance, Washington University Gallery of Art, Anheuser-Busch Gallery of Art at COCA, Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville, University Museum, SIUE Wagner Arts Gallery, Nancy Sachs Gallery, James Durbin Jewelers and Componere Gallery of Art and Fashion. Maryville University, St. Louis hosted "In the Palm of Your Hand," a student exhibition, juried by Deborrah Daher and Ellen Klamon and chaired by Sherri Jaudés. Deborrah Daher also designed and produced the Student Show catalog. Also in conjunction with the Conference, Linda Shapiro as Workshop Chairperson organized 10 workshops for before and after the conference. The workshops included presenters: Betty Helen Longhi, Elliot Pujol, Lee Marshall, Elizabeth Brim, Douglas Harling, Fred Fenster, Rick Smith, Munya Avigail Upin, and Chuck

Evans. The SNAG conference was a huge project and a lot of hard work for our relatively new and small guild to organize. It brought very positive attention from the whole metalsmithing community to SMM, the Midwest and St. Louis.

- 2001 – National Exhibition – Location St. Louis Artists’ Guild
“Metal Departures” with professionally printed catalog
Exhibition Chair – Janet Wilding
Juror – Pat Flynn with lecture at show
- 2004 – National Exhibition – Location St. Louis Artists’ Guild
“Stone/s a Piece of Rock for a Specific Function” with professionally printed catalog
Exhibition Co-Chairs – Lanie Kodner and Deborrah Dahr
Juror – C.James Meyer with lecture at show
- 2006 – National Exhibition – Location St. Louis Artists’ Guild
“Hey, These Things Just Snap Right Off!” with professionally printed catalog
Exhibition Co-Chairs – Sherri Jaudes and Jessica Erickson
Juror – Andy Cooperman with lecture at show
- 2008-09 – International Online Exhibition
50 digital images of metalwork and jewelry remaining online for two years.
“METAL Inclinaitions”
Exhibition Chair – Dayne Sislen
Jurors – Michael Monroe, Marilyn da Silva, and Susie Ganch
- 2010-12 – International Online Exhibition remaining up for two years.
50 digital images of metalwork and jewelry remaining online for two years.
“METAL Inclinaitions2”
Exhibition Chair – Dayne Sislen
Jurors – Jamie Bennett, Klaus Bürgel, John Cogswell, and Sydney Lynch
- 2010 & 2011 – Member’s Show at Third Degree Glass Factory
“Jewelry 2 the Third Degree”
Exhibition Chair – Ellen Klamon
Open to all members on first come first serve basis.
- 2012 thru 2016– Member’s Show at Ethical Society of St. Louis
“Hot Metal”
Exhibition Chair – Ellen Klamon
Open to all members on first come first serve basis.
- 2017 – Member’s Show at Ethical Society of St. Louis
“Hot Metal”
Exhibition Co-Chair – Lisa Koenig and Rosemary Werkmeister
Open to all members on first come first serve basis.

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NEWSLETTER:

Started in 1995 Chris Chauvin was the first newsletter editor, subsequent editors have been; Dayne Sislen, Susan Boudreau, April Morris, Linda Lankford, Elizabeth Wood, Rachel Thoma and Lisa Koenig. We now communicate events, ideas and share technical information through a private Facebook page for members.

SCHOLARSHIPS:

MM provides two scholarships for each MM workshop to students attending from the sponsoring school. MM provides scholarship to three metalsmithing students attending a Midwestern University every year of \$1,500 to further their metalsmithing education and careers. MM also provides scholarships for metalsmithing classes and workshops at other metalsmithing schools for underserved children. In 2017, thanks to the generosity of Howard Siegel, we began distributing an endowment in memory of Fran Siegel to send two Midwest Metalsmith members to the William Holland School of Lapidary Arts in Georgia for a class of their choice. This \$1,000 scholarship is available to any current Midwest Metalsmiths member. The purpose is to assist with funding for course fee, class supplies and/or transportation expenses for a class.

WEBSITE:

In January 2000, the MM website and chat group was started by Dayne Sislen. The website provides up to date information about meetings, exhibitions, events, and workshops. There is also an online gallery to showcase members' work. In January of 2018 the Midwest Metalsmith website has been complete redesigned and updated by Kathryn Bowman to reflect the needs of the current membership. A clean design and ease of navigation was of primary concern. Midwest Metalsmiths has undergone a complete rebranding with a new logo, redesigned website, and efficient email communications to the membership. On the website each member that chooses to can have a page of their own showcasing their work, an artist's statement, and a link to their website and selling location. Part of the rebranding was to drop "The Society For". We are now legally Midwest Metalsmiths.

SOCIAL EVENTS:

Social events have included: lectures and slide shows, swap meets, themed meetings, pot luck dinners and lunches, picnics, studio tours, exhibition kick off parties, openings and gallery tours. Midwest Metalsmiths members come from all over the Midwest and beyond. They span generations and encompass hobbyists as well as practicing and award winning professionals, students and educators.