



# Houston Metal Arts Guild Newsletter

Fall/Winter 2023/2024

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Houston Metal Arts Guild

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## Letter from the President



*HMAG President Jessica Jacobi.*

### Hello friends!

As we move through the holiday season, I want to say how truly thankful I am for all the members of HMAG. I am proud to be part of our community, and I always look

forward to opportunities to get together with my fellow metalsmiths. By connecting with our members in a deeper way, I can see how much each of you values this organization and community. I also want to recognize the time and effort given from the board of directors, and I am thankful to be serving as the President of HMAG alongside amazing colleagues.

The anticipation of the new year reminds us of the ability to create fresh opportunities both professionally and personally. We want to focus on supporting our members, as well as building up ways for our community to connect and share. This includes social gatherings, workshops, programs, community outreach, and more. HMAG will continue the rotating Share and Tell program, inviting our members to come together and see what their colleagues are working on. We have an upcoming forging workshop in December, and we are in the process of planning a series of workshops for the coming year. HMAG members are also invited to attend an appreciation [party](#) later in January!

We also welcome input from our members – is there a type of activity or workshop that you would like to see? Let us know! Thank you in advance for contributing your voice, time, and interest to the betterment of this community, I hope you find it as rewarding as I have.

*Jessica Jacobi*

HMAG President



## Psst! Have You Forgotten Something?

Is your HMAG membership up-to-date? It's not too late to rejoin and take advantage of all the activities we have planned. Go to <https://www.hmag.org/membership> for more information.



# Charisma Design Studio: A New Chapter

## *An Interview with Cathy Prieto-Smith*

*By Christine Sigman*

Earlier this year, Charisma Design Studio, a longtime Houston jewelry community mainstay, reopened its doors in a new location following the double whammy of Hurricane Harvey and COVID-19. HMAG recently chatted with owner Cathy Prieto-Smith about the past, present, and future of Charisma Design Studio.



*Charisma Design Studio's new home in Houston's Second Ward.*

**HMAG:** Tell us a little about your artistic and commercial background.

**CPS:** My art background has been a part of my life as long as I've been alive. I've always been an adorned nerd! But my true passion was showing others how to be one too. As time passed, I began getting requests for my work, so I started creating objects of wire and beads on my kitchen table. I spent many happy years focusing on my family, but in the back of my mind there was always a dream. I made a promise to myself that I would go back college when my youngest turned 18. I did. In 2012, in my senior year before graduating from University of Houston with a BS in Psychology, I needed one easy last elective. I found Val Link and Metalsmithing 101. That was it--I found my calling!

**HMAG:** Take us back to the beginnings of Charisma Design Studio. What motivated you to open a studio? Did you see a gap in the Houston market?

**CPS:** Charisma Design began at my dining room table, where I created things for myself and for friends. As I got into working with silver, I bought a small torch for my garage. I quickly outgrew that, plus my husband got sick of my supplies taking up the dining room table!

I then turned my garage apartment into a studio and began teaching small classes. As my popularity increased, I quickly outgrew that space as well.

At the time, the Houston arts scene was growing, which was very inspirational. I wanted to be a part of it. I watched as Silver Street Studios began to take the community by storm. I wanted a community of artists sharing one roof. I began looking for a larger space. My amazing husband and biggest fan gave me his full support.

**HMAG:** For those who were not familiar with it, what was the original studio like? What were its main features? What kinds of programs and services did you provide?

**CPS:** I purchased a 6K sq ft building that needed lots of love. Ultimately, I used 4K sq ft to create 10 individual artist studios with their own sinks and drainage, two classrooms (one with bench space for 14 jewelry students), a wide-open gallery/event space, and common areas for the tenants. It was a beautiful, amazing space.

I brought in national and local instructors (including Val Link) for workshops; held numerous events, sales, and showings; and had tenants that came and went. It was my dream come true, but it was a lot—maybe too much! After six years, I was ready to downsize.

**HMAG:** What motivated the move to a new location?

**CPS:** My motivation for change was a succession of events, starting with my time constraints and the challenges of being a landlord. With all of the administrative overhead, I found I had little time to do my own creative work.

August 2017 brought Hurricane Harvey, flooding, and a rebuilding project that was slowed down due to lack of materials and workers. The final straw was the worldwide

COVID-19 shutdown of 2020. I had one remaining tenant and zero classes. I tried going online but found that metalsmithing is a difficult skill to teach on Zoom. My expenses were much higher than my income.

I decided to sell the existing building and look for a new space. I began the formal hunt in 2021.

**HMAG:** Was it hard to find an appropriate spot?

**CPS:** It was extremely difficult to find a new location. In fact, it took almost two years.

My list of wants had evolved quite a bit from the former space. Now I wanted an intimate space for where I could work and a classroom to where I could teach. I wanted to be able to host my ongoing monthly group of eight women students who have stuck with me since my garage apartment days. I owed it to them to find a proper place.

In April 2022, I found a 935 sq ft bungalow off Navigation Boulevard, in the Second Ward. I could envision it as the perfect studio. It even had an additional small building in the backyard, to serve as a rental studio for my loyal friend and previous tenant.



*Students enjoying the new studio space.*

**HMAG:** What was the build-out process like?

**CPS:** I sold some equipment, moved in the rest, and started the daunting task of finding a place for everything to fit. Before long, I discovered that my floors were sagging! I hadn't anticipated the effect of the weight of all



my equipment on this tiny single-family home. I called in the professionals to reinforce the pier and beams.

This was followed by an electrical upgrade from the outdated 100-amp system. I couldn't have multiple tools plugged in at once or fuses would be blowing during classes. Finally, the very old roof needed replacing. However, I remained optimistic as I set out to make this tiny space work. It was magical how it all came together!

**HMAG:** When did you open?

**CPS:** I held my first class in May of 2022. It was very small, and we were all very careful. Optional masks, gloves, and tons of hand sanitizer were available. It was an amazing reunion with my longtime students who were eager to get back in the studio.

Although the smaller space accommodates fewer students, as an instructor it allows me to provide lots of hands-on attention to each participant. That's especially helpful when you're teaching new skills and machinery that students might find intimidating at first. There's nothing like watching new students grow and gain confidence.

**HMAG:** Tell readers about the new space. What do you like most about it?

**CPS:** My new studio space is small but absolutely perfect! Even when I'm out of Houston during the summer, the space gets used periodically by my tenant, by HMAG, and by one other group. In fact, HMAG is sponsoring a [workshop](#) here next month.

I love that it is filled with artists and laughter even when I'm not there. I love that with this small venue, I'm free to work my own magic in my own personal space. I've not had any outside instructors brought in yet. But all that will come. I'm taking my time and loving my new freedom!

I have found my happy place! It's been an amazing ride! With my experiences behind me, I look forward to the future. I will continue to grow Charisma Design Studio, at my ownpace.

**HMAG:** Good luck, Cathy! Keep us posted!

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Houston, TX 77011

<http://www.charisma-designs.com>



## Recent Program Recap

HMAG continues to offer in-person and online opportunities for members to connect, learn, and be inspired. If you have any ideas for upcoming programs, please send them to [HMAGProg@gmail.com](mailto:HMAGProg@gmail.com), and we'll do our best to arrange them.

### **Online Artist's Talk: Marlene True**

On March 3, renowned metalsmith and teacher Marlene True presented an online artist's talk, featuring her unique series of jewelry constructed primarily out of tin cans. Her talk explored the exciting possibilities of working with this versatile, inexpensive material.



*"Summer Flounder", by Marlene True.*

### **Member Appreciation Party and Annual Meeting**

On April 29, HMAG held its 2023 Member Appreciation Party at the welcoming Heights home of Vice-president Cathy Prieto-Smith. The HMAG Board presented our Annual Meeting materials and completed the voting process for the current year's Board. Then the party really started! It was an evening of fun, games, prizes, and good

company. If you missed it, we hope to see you at our next social get-together in [January 2024](#).



*Members mingling at the party.*

**Online Practice Talk: Jessica Jacobi**

On September 8<sup>th</sup>, HMAG President Jessica Jacobi led an informative session on professional development for artists. Many of us are fine working in the studio but panic when we have to put together the documents needed to further our creative careers. Jessica discussed examples and tips for how to put together your art resume or CV, artist statement/statement of purpose, and more. Additionally, Jessica emailed participants copies of the handouts and documents discussed.

**HMAG Share and Tell**

After a successful kickoff last fall, HMAG has continued to host periodic Share and Tell gatherings, where members have the opportunity to display and discuss their work before a group of their peers. Most recently, on September 24, a group of HMAG members and their friends gathered at Charisma Design Studio in the East End to share their work and also give feedback to fellow metalsmiths. Even if you don't want to display any work,

you are welcome to attend and be part of the conversation.



*Heidi Gerstacker presents her work at the most recent Share and Tell.*

**Museum Tour: Bayou Bend Silver Collections**

On November 4, a group of HMAG members enjoyed a complimentary guided tour with a focus on the silver collection of MFAH's Bayou Bend Collections and Gardens.



*From the Bayou Bend silver collection.*





## Workshop Recap: Fundamentals of Bench- top Lapidary with Cathy Prieto-Smith

*By Paula Angeleri*

On May 6, HMAG hosted a one-day workshop on the fundamentals of benchtop lapidary with instructor Cathy Prieto-Smith. Thanks to Cathy's skillful instruction and well-organized lesson plan, students left the workshop with a new skill and one or two cabochons of their own creation.



*Instructor Cathy Prieto-Smith demonstrating the grinding process.*

Students arrived to find a complete kit set up at their benches. The morning began with the creation of a simple cabochon, with all of the students working in the same rough-cut stone in order to streamline the process. Cathy demonstrated the technique of securing the flex shaft horizontally to provide steady, stable grinding. Rather than attach the abrasive pad to the flex shaft, the stone itself was secured to it with wax, while the adhesive pad was submerged in a small water tray.



*Busy student in the lapidary workshop.*

After lunch, students returned to the bench to tackle the second project, a stone-in-stone cabochon. After shaping the larger base cabochon, students learned how to drill into it in order to embed a smaller, bezel set stone. As in any good workshop, at the end of the day the students were surprised and impressed by how much they had accomplished.

"Cathy is a great teacher," one student said. "She's patient, practical, and knows how to get to the point. She provided us with lots of helpful tips and tricks as well as really helpful handouts. I'm glad I came."



## Upcoming Workshop: Forged and Filed Cuff Bracelets with Corey Ackelmire

*By Paula Angeleri*

Just in time for the holidays, HMAG is offering a workshop with **Corey Ackelmire** that will guide you in creating unique, classic cuff bracelets, ideal for gift giving or to keep for yourself.



*Cuff bracelets by Corey Ackelmire.*

In this one-day workshop, students will learn the basics of forging non-ferrous metals for the purpose of creating a brass or silver cuff bracelet using thick wire stock. Additionally, students will learn to use hand and needle files to carve the stock in order to create a variety of design effects.

Students should plan to mostly finish one bracelet, using either brass or silver, but they will take home the material to make another. You can view the Registration details for the workshop at <https://www.hmag.org/events-1/workshop-forged-and-filed-cuff-bracelet>.

### **About the Instructor**

**Corey Ackelmire** earned her Bachelor of Fine Art degree in Jewelry and Metalsmithing from Missouri State

University in 2003. She earned her Master of Fine Art in Jewelry/Metals/Enameling from Kent State University in 2007. Corey has been an educator since 2005, is a published author, and has exhibited her work in numerous national and international exhibitions. Currently she is a Full-time Instructor and the Studio Art Program Coordinator at Houston Community College, in Houston, Texas.



## HMAG Member Development Grant 2023 Recipient: Donna Pierce

*By Jessica Jacobi*

The recipient of the HMAG Development Grant this year is **Donna Pierce**. She will be using the grant money to take a course at the Houston Art League with instructor **Mary Rogers** in the spring.



*HMAG Member Development Grant winner Donna Pierce.*

Donna's first experience with metalsmithing was in high school, where she felt an instant draw to the materials

and processes. It has pulled at her ever since. Having recently retired after 29 years as a middle school art teacher, Donna will now begin exploring in earnest her love of metals and jewelry. Having been an HMAG member for some time, Donna is sure that taking the course in the spring will help her kick her practice into gear.

Congratulations, Donna! We look forward to seeing the work you produce!



## Wear It Out! An Art Jewelry Invitational at Hooks-Epstein Gallery

Just in time for the holidays, **Hooks-Epstein Gallery** (located at 2631 Colquitt Street) is hosting **Wear it Out! An Art Jewelry Invitational**. Patrons will have the opportunity to view and purchase a curated selection of the works of the following local jewelry artists, many of whom are HMAG members: **Corey Ackelmire, Victor Beckmann, Tarina Frank, Heidi Gerstacker, Rene Henry, Jessica Jacobi, Masumi Kataoka, Edward Lane McCartney, and Sandie Zilker.**



Corey Ackelmire, *Multi-chain Bracelet*, sterling silver. On view at the *Wear it Out!* show.

The exhibition opens on Small Business Saturday, (November 25, 2023) and closes on January 14, 2024. A **Preview Open House** will take place on that day from noon to 4:00 pm. An **Exhibition and Artists Celebration** will be held on Saturday, December 2, 2023, from 5:00 to 7:00 pm. as part of Houston Gallery Row's **Holiday Stroll on the Row**. See below for more information about that event.

## HMAG Meetup at the Wear It Out! Celebration

Join HMAG for an informal meetup at **Hooks-Epstein Gallery** (2631 Colquitt Street) during the **Exhibition and Artists Celebration** of the **Wear It Out!** show. Catch up with old friends while viewing an exciting array of mostly new work from prominent members of the Houston art jewelry community. Who knows, you might even get some holiday shopping done!

As this event is part of the larger **Houston Gallery Row Holiday Stroll** on the Row, those who are interested may continue on to neighboring galleries, which will also be open for the event.

The reception and stroll take place on Saturday, December 2 from 5:00 to 7:00 pm. Join us there shortly after 5. Hope to see you there!

## Review: Out of Longing: New Work by Masumi Kataoka

Houston Community College Central Campus Fine Art Gallery

August 21 – November 3, 2023

*By Christine Sigman*

Houston-based metalsmith, instructor, and musician **Masumi Kataoka** recently presented *Out of Longing*, a series of jewelry pieces inspired by mythical creatures,



such as Chimera (animal hybrids), and religious symbolism, including Hindu and Buddhist statues featuring extra limbs or body parts. It's a darkly, seriously fanciful collection that rewards close study.

In terms of technique, the artist combines and electroforms insect bodies and parts, along with other natural items, and then enamels the resulting copper objects. This transmutation of all too mortal insects into timeless metal and glass accentuates the mystery underlying this body of work.

Upon entering the darkened, intimate gallery space at HCC, viewers first perceived a cycle of images of cloudy skies projected on a wall, accompanied by an atmospheric yet melodic music track. Mood appropriately set, viewers turned toward the cluster of untitled works, framed and mounted without captions on a wall. The work consisted of seven separate but thematically related brooches and pendants, the latter hung on simple cords.

Although based on identifiable electroformed insect carcasses, the pieces were not straightforward depictions but echoes (or dreams, as Kataoka would have it) of the original creatures. Other elements—perhaps a seed pod, a mysterious tuft of hair, or even body parts lent by other creatures—contributed to an entirely new representation.



*Pendant (detail view) Masumi Kataoka, from the series " Out of Longing", copper, enamel, hair, cord.*

Gazing at some of the pieces and letting the mind drift, one could glimpse fanciful images. For example, at first glance, one pendant (*pictured above*) resembled a stern, bearded king with a topknot protruding from his spiky crown, before resolving into a conglomeration of insect parts and human hair, combined into a graceful, balanced, and delicate form.



*Brooch, Masumi Kataoka, from the series " Out of Longing", copper, enamel, sterling silver, stainless steel.*

One particularly beautiful brooch (*pictured above*) consisted of two electroformed snail shells, artfully embraced by a pair of cicada wings. This pairing, Kataoka states, was initially inspired by the common symbolism of rebirth associated with both creatures, and in her artist's statement, she wonders aloud if snails sometimes dream of flying. The brooch was skillfully enameled in a glossy, rosy gray, with slightly opalescent tones that made the whole piece look as if it were still wet from the garden.

Each piece was pleasingly spare but clearly well thought out, and while on paper the subject matter might seem challenging, the actual pieces were surprisingly wearable in scale and subtly beautiful in their graceful contortions and tonal enameling. In this very successful exhibition, Kataoka demonstrated the value of looking more closely at ostensibly unpleasant subject matter, rather than turning away.



## Coming Soon Online: Halstead Jewelry Business Forum

**Halstead Bead**, a jewelry supply company, will be hosting its annual online **Jewelry Business Forum** from 1/15 – 1/18, 2024. This four-day event, in live webinar format, consists of 15 one-hour presentations. The sessions are a mix of maker demos and business development topics. All sessions will be recorded and available to view the week after the conference.

The speaker line up consists of experts in the jewelry field as well as in entrepreneurship. As Halstead states, “This digital conference is created to empower small jewelry business owners. The Forum is also an opportunity to connect with other jewelry business owners. Jewelers are often solopreneurs who are seeking peers for a sense of community. The online format allows busy small business owners to attend live sessions for part of the day and then return to their studio or office to work.”

Registration for the event, which costs \$30, opens on December 20, 2023. For more information about the event, including a preliminary speaker lineup, go to <https://www.halsteadbead.com/info/jewelry-business-forum>.



## Share Your News with the Community

We love to highlight what HMAG members and others in our local community are up to professionally. Do you have any artistic or professional news or achievements to share with the HMAG community? Upcoming online or in-person gallery shows? Sales or business milestones? Jury awards or other professional recognition? Changes of address or employment?

Submit your community news to [HMAGNews@gmail.com](mailto:HMAGNews@gmail.com) for consideration for the Spring 2024 newsletter.



## Member Appreciation Party Coming in January!

Mark your calendars! On Saturday, January 27, 2024, HMAG will be hosting its next **Member Appreciation Party**. The event will include dinner, icebreaker games, and chances to win cool prizes. Bring a friend and enjoy a post-holiday get-together.

Watch your HMAG social media and eBlasts for more details as the date approaches.



## Mission Statement

*The Houston Metal Arts Guild, Inc. is a non-profit organization made up of people with varying interests and involvement in traditional and contemporary jewelry and metal arts.*

*The Guild was founded to provide for the exchange of ideas and information, as well as offer affordable educational opportunities to its members and the public. Our activities include workshops and programs on a wide range of aesthetic, technical, and commercial topics; exhibitions at leading local venues; social and volunteer events; and communications via our Web presence, social media, and newsletter.*

*The skills, energy and enthusiasm of the Houston Metals Arts Guild, Inc. members promote and sustain its successful programs. We welcome and encourage participation by everyone.*

## HMAG Board 2023 - 2024

<b>President</b>	Jessica Jacobi	<a href="mailto:HMAGPres@gmail.com">HMAGPres@gmail.com</a>
<b>Vice-President</b>	Cathy Prieto-Smith	<a href="mailto:HMAGVicePres@gmail.com">HMAGVicePres@gmail.com</a>
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