



# Houston Metal Arts Guild Newsletter

Fall/Winter 2021

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## Letter from the President



*HMAG President Jessica Jacobi.*

### **Strengthening Community and Connection**

On behalf of the Houston Metal Arts Guild, thank you for having been with us through the twists and turns of another year. As always, we need the support and input of all our members to decide the future of the Guild. The Houston Metal Arts Guild belongs to all of its members, and without you and your continued service and patronage there would not be a Guild.

The past year has brought many changes for us! With the safety challenges of COVID-19, we faced restrictions on events that involved in-person gathering. Despite the unique challenges brought on by the pandemic, HMAG is proud to engage our community with opportunities that

Houston Metal Arts Guild  
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keep us connected. We have awarded a Membership Development Grant, hosted an artist talk and Zoom workshop, and we are planning a Member Exhibition at the Houston Center for Contemporary Craft in March 2022.

As we navigate the fluctuating safety protocols for future events, we will continue to explore programs and workshops that we can bring to our members. Of course, those events don't just materialize from our thoughts or wishing they would happen. It takes a group to arrange, schedule, publicize, and tend to the details. But they all start with an idea. The Board brainstorms and listens to come up with a variety of activities. Tell us what interests you—what makes you feel like a membership in HMAG is worth it? Do you want technology and process? Do you want social? Do you want conceptual content? Do you want business practices? Do you want a museum experience? Do you want it all?

What offering makes you leave the studio and want to spend time with us? And what time and day is most likely to motivate you? And even better—are you interested in being part of the center that makes our activities happen and contributes to our community's energy? The Board has some gaps that we need to fill. Open positions are Membership, Education, and Social Media. Talk to any Board member or me if you are interested in being part of Team HMAG!

Thank you for your involvement! None of this is possible without each and every one of you.

*Jessica Jacobi*

HMAG President



## Special Offer! Free HMAG Membership this Year!

In recognition of the challenging times that many of us have been through, HMAG is offering free membership for the 2021 – 2022 year (through May 31, 2022).

Take advantage of all the perks of membership, including access to member-only workshops, exhibitions, and grants, opportunities to promote your work, and invitations to social events (once allowed).



*HMAG Member Appreciation Party, Winter 2020.*

Although membership is FREE this year, you still need to sign up online (even if you were a member in the past) in order to receive these benefits.

To sign up, go to [hmag.org/membership](https://hmag.org/membership). Welcome aboard!



## Val Link: An Appreciation

*By Sandie Zilker*

*Editor's note: Esteemed Houston metalsmith and instructor Val James Link—HMAG's only Lifetime Achievement Award winner to date—passed away in the summer of 2019. Here, another noted Houston metalsmith and instructor, Sandie Zilker, shares her personal reminiscences.*

I was in Val Link's first class and I was there at his last class. Here, I'd like to share my memories from the time in between.

When Val Link arrived on the UH campus in 1969/70, at

least one student was thrilled. That was me. We had been told that the perfect metalsmithing teacher was going to join the faculty. When he arrived, I enthusiastically (maybe even annoyingly) informed him that I was *very* interested and motivated and wanted to learn everything



*Val Link*

immediately. Val was warm and friendly and didn't let on that I probably terrified him and made him reconsider moving to Houston. Thankfully, that first encounter led to many literally life changing ones for me over the course of almost 50 years!

He came to UH at time when there was only one female professor in the art department even though the majority of students were women. It was a time of changing attitudes and habits. I NEVER, not even once, saw him act in any way that made anyone feel less competent because of gender, or in my case, size.

Given the large amount of estrogen flowing in the studio, he was probably a little more comfortable with the guys, but he was respectful and kind to everyone.

In so many ways Val and I were polar opposites in personality and approach. Yet he was the perfect teacher for me and for many others. He was calm, even-tempered, and not easily exasperated, while I was none of those things. He could take a tortured piece of forged metal, twist it and make it look good even when a difficult student had just declared she would never ever do that process again and he couldn't make her. When he walked in on an unnamed student throwing her failed casting at

the wall, he calmly asked if there was a problem and if he could help. He knew exactly how to handle me and others like me, never buying into my impatience. He knew everything and he loved to share what he knew. Long after my student days, I continued to get advice from him—but I always knew to allow plenty of time for the answer because there would never be a short one when it came to technical matters.

As Val saw infinite potential in students, he saw it in stuff as well. Trips to the government surplus store, where they knew him by name, were adventures in possibilities. There was nothing he couldn't fix or think of a way to turn it into something else. Val was repurposing before there was a name for it. Many things were pressed into service immediately and others lived indefinitely in the someday zone that was in every one of the five jewelry studios Val taught in at UH.

It is not an exaggeration to say that Val was beloved, especially by his students and former students. His patience and breadth of knowledge were legendary. His good humor reigned over all the drama. He really did create a legacy. Between his decades of students and his students' students, he was responsible for most of the current practicing art jewelers in Houston today. Even those who never took a class from him knew him and



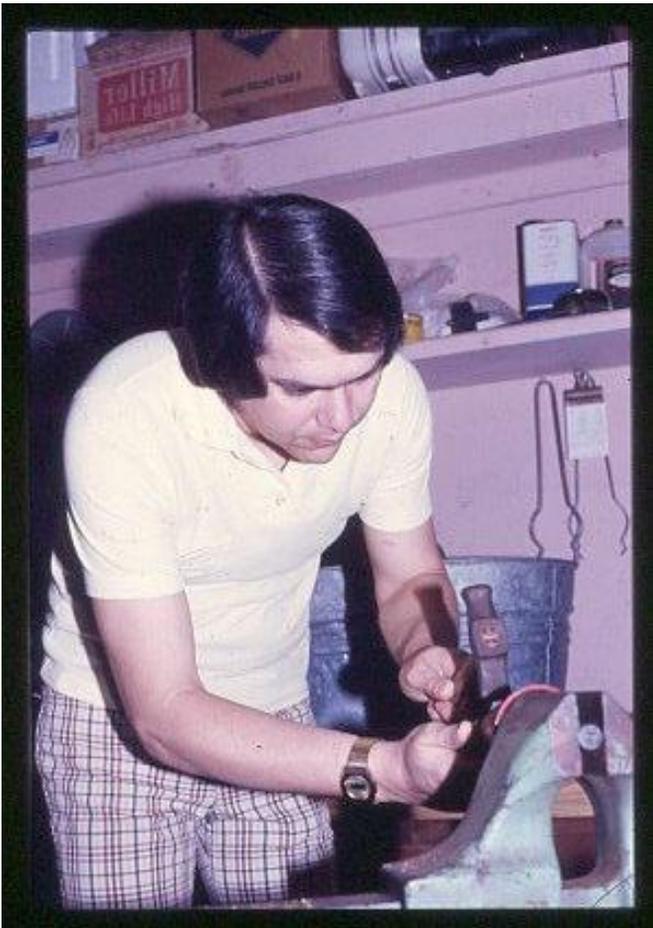
*Val (seated front right) with students, 1970s. Sandie is at his right.*

knew of him. After he retired, his frequent workshops for HMAG filled in about five minutes and there were numerous people who would take any workshop he

would teach. HMAG deservedly awarded him its only Lifetime Achievement Award several years ago.

In addition to teaching me many technical things, Val gave me support and input no matter what weird direction I was trying to go with my work, and this was true for everyone. He might not lead you down the weird road but he would be there with you if you decided to go there. But no matter what, he expected us to work to the anthems of accuracy and precision.

His own work was perfection in every detail, which was both inspiring and intimidating. His work was simultaneously inventive and classically beautiful. He did many custom commissions, such as wedding and engagement rings and liturgical pieces for churches. Each one was special.



*Val in the studio, 1970s.*

Val gave me opportunities that changed and formed my life. He encouraged me to go to graduate school and I

followed in his footsteps to Cranbrook Academy of Art. He took a chance and hired me to teach a class right out of school with no experience. He said that in one semester I probably wouldn't ruin anyone's life if I wasn't good at it. That one class turned into 30 years of teaching at least one class a semester! Val was instrumental in my hiring by the Museum of Fine Arts Glassell School—a job I still hold today.

As I made the transition from student to teacher, I came to see Val's depth in a more complete way. I learned that he did get irritated and we shared the many frustrations and joys of the academic world. I only saw him really mad once, though. And thankfully it wasn't at me! Along the way, I got to know his wife Sharon and see him as the devoted-to-family man that he was.

I never stopped thinking of him as my teacher and mentor but I was lucky to be able to add colleague and friend to the Val list. I never stopped learning from him and every time I light a torch or pick up a hammer or set a stone or teach someone else to do those things, Val's story continues.



## **Q&A with Younha Jung**

### **HMAG Member Development Grant Recipient 2020**

*Editor's note: The [HMAG Member Development Grant](#), sponsored by Charisma Designs, provides \$500 for a member to use to expand his or her metalsmithing knowledge or practice.*

**HMAG:** *Tell us a little about yourself and your career.*

**YJ:** I was born in Busan, South Korea, and moved to the United States in 2012. I currently live in Houston, TX and am a studio artist. My specialty is wearable contemporary metalwork. I have had several solo/group exhibitions in South Korea and the US. I had a year-long artist residency at the Houston Center for Contemporary Craft, and a year-long artist residency at the Chicago Lillstreet Art Center.

Recently I had a month-long Artist in Residency at the Pratt Fine Art Center in Seattle, WA. I earned the 2016 Emerging Artist Award from the American Craft Council and The Award of Merit Prize CraftTexas 2016 from



*Younha Jung with her Dura-BULL polisher, purchased with her grant.*

Houston Center for Contemporary Craft. My pieces are in the Permanent Collection at the Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts. My pieces have been published in *New Brooch*, *JAMS*, *Tales from the Toolbox*, and *American Craft Council* magazines.

**HMAG:** *Very impressive! What motivated you to apply for the grant? How did you hear about it?*

**YJ:** I'm always wanting to upgrade my home studio but the big upgrades can be difficult financially. I figured the HMAG grant could help make my studio life much healthier and easier. One of my metalsmith friends in Houston told me about the HMAG grant a few years ago.

**HMAG:** *What specifically did you do with the grant? Our members love tools and techniques so feel free to mention the exact items you purchased and why you chose them.*

**YJ:** Having been a studio artist, I've worked in a fully equipped studio for over 5 years, and in the past, I've

never needed my own polishing machine that much. I started to work as a custom design jeweler and I deal with a lot more stone setting work at my home studio. I've resorted to using my flex shaft for all my polishing, grinding, and piercing. It takes quite a bit of time to achieve a high polish using only my flex shaft, and I've also burned myself numerous times due to the handle getting extremely hot.

Recently, I've been receiving more orders and my flex shaft is not enough, so I really need a polishing machine.

I have done lots of research about a safe studio setup, and plan to implement what I've learned at my home studio. I'm very interested in the Dura-BULL polisher with filters. I really like this product because the fiberglass filter and 10" blower would make clean up and safety ventilation a lot easier.



*Bracelets and ring by Younha Jung.*

**HMAG:** *How has this solution been working for you?*

**YJ:** I really enjoy this machine. It is powerful and the air filter works great. I am no longer worried about the dust and a huge mess after polishing.

**HMAG:** Generally, what's next for you professionally/artistically?

**YJ:** I started an Etsy store last year but it didn't work well. My new plan is to build my own website for my jewelry business and sell better.



*More examples of Younha's work.*

**HMAG:** What would you say to motivate other members to apply for the grant?

**YJ:** This is an amazing opportunity. A great chance to upgrade your studio! I would recommend members interested spend some time on the application and don't miss the deadline.

**HMAG:** Thanks, Younha!

*Younha Jung (정윤하) is a studio artist and an adjunct faculty member at Houston Community College. She creates wearable contemporary metalwork that expresses emotional changes as part of a course of adaptation to their surroundings. See more at [younhajung.com](http://younhajung.com).*



## HMAG Member Development Grant 2022

HMAG is pleased to announce that after a COVID-19 imposed hiatus, the Member Development Grant will be back in 2022. Sponsored by Charisma Designs, this \$500 grant is awarded to an HMAG member for the purpose of purchasing equipment or supplies, attending a workshop or professional event, or otherwise assisting the member to enhance his or her metalsmithing knowledge and development.

### Eligibility:

- Applicants must be HMAG members, and the recipient must be an HMAG member in good standing to accept the Grant.
- The awardee will be chosen based on merit and intent.
- Artwork submissions must be completed within the last 5 years.

More information about the application process and deadlines will be made available this Fall. Applications will open in early 2022.



## Workshop Recap

*By Paula Angeleri*

Over a year and a half ago, just before the pandemic put an end to such gatherings, HMAG hosted its last in-person workshop, "Introduction to Steel for Jewelry and Small Objects." Sarah Roberts introduced 13 HMAG members to working with steel, from designing, cutting, and scoring to soldering and adding patinas.

Over two busy days, the class gathered in the jewelry studio at the Glassell School of Art, eagerly absorbing Sarah's instruction and sharing information as well as a few laughs. Little did anyone know that the world would soon change drastically.



*Sarah Roberts showing students how to score steel with a cutting disk.*

Fast forward to Spring 2021. As HMAG itself reemerged, and the world started to look a little more hopeful, we decided to try hosting an online workshop. Artist and teacher Jillian Sortore accepted the challenge, and on July 17 – 18, she presented the online workshop "Color Techniques: Metal and Wood." A small but enthusiastic class gathered virtually, with HMAG President Jessica Jacobi providing essential Zoom admin services so Jillian could focus on teaching.

On Saturday, the first day of the workshop, Jillian focused on preparing samples with different textures in both wood and metal. After her demonstrations, the class

went off-line in order to give students time to prepare their own samples for use the following day.



*Jillian Sortore teaching online.*

The theme for Sunday was Color, Color, Color! Using acrylic paint and Prismacolor pencils, Jillian created incredible effects on both wood and metal. Inspired, the students used the rest of the workshop time, and after, to experiment and play with the materials and techniques Jillian introduced. Jillian and the students then scheduled a follow-up virtual meeting several days later, to give the class a chance to share and critique their work.

Overall, the workshop was very successful. While students missed the in-person aspect of a traditional workshop, they appreciated having off-line time to practice in between sessions. All agreed that Jillian was an inspiring teacher, and her techniques have already made their way into subsequent pieces.



*Workshop participant sharing her samples.*

Online workshops and tutorials have come a long way since the pandemic began, and will probably remain part of the creative landscape going forward. However, many

teachers (and even more students) long to return to in-person workshop settings. Rest assured that HMAG is on top of the situation, actively working to line up instructors and studio space so that we can once again offer live, in-person workshops to the Houston metal arts community just as soon as it is safe to do so.



## Charisma Design Studios: A New Chapter

*By Cathy Prieto-Smith*

*Owner, Charisma Design Studios and Art Gallery*

As COVID-19 continues to wreak havoc on the art world, no one is immune. After nearly two years without amazing instructors, eager students, and loads of laughter filling the space, we at [Charisma Design Studios](#) have sold our building on Cavalcade Street. It has been a bittersweet process.

We all know that the value in the art business is created through the loyalty and support of clients like yourselves, and not in the structure in which it happens. I am hopeful that all who have enjoyed Charisma in the past will continue to cherish those moments as fond memories. I know I will!

But wait! There's more. You are not reading the end of this story. With real estate at a bit of a peak, we sold and are currently on the lookout for a new location. Something smaller with classroom space. We have sought out a realtor who truly appreciates the art business, understands what to look for in a property, and is keen and capable of developing future potential locations. I am excited to announce that a new location will happen. I am positive about the future of Charisma Designs. Keep an eye out for us, we will be back.



## HMAG Member Show '22

*By René Lee Henry*

HMAG is excited to announce the upcoming, juried Houston Metal Arts Guild member exhibition at Houston Center for Contemporary Craft, which will be on view from March 19 to May 8, 2022. This will be a member-only juried exhibition celebrating the diversity of our HMAG members, through jewelry and objects.

Submitted entries will be open to a full range of processes and materials including found objects, but will be required to contain significant handmade metal elements. HMAG will award \$600.00 at the discretion of the juror.

HMAG will be announcing the juror and details on how to apply later this Fall.

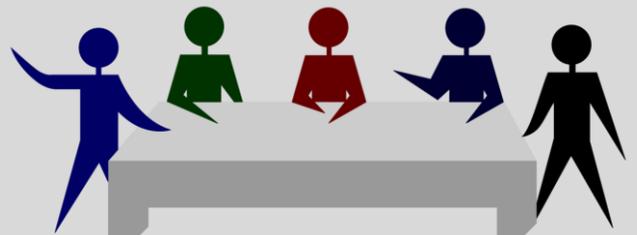


## Help HMAG Help You!

Join the HMAG Board of Directors. Have fun and help shape the future of the organization. The following Board positions are currently vacant:

- Membership
- Social Media
- Educational Outreach

Interested? Contact Jessica Jacobi at [HMAGPres@gmail.com](mailto:HMAGPres@gmail.com). Thanks!

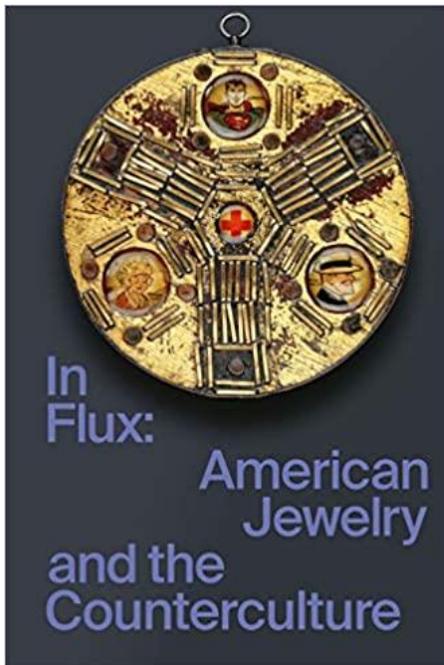


## Reviews

*In this section, we include book, film, exhibition, and other reviews on topics of interest to the HMAG community.*

*If you'd like to help HMAG cover the metal arts cultural scene, contact [HMAGNews@gmail.com](mailto:HMAGNews@gmail.com).*

### ***In Flux: American Jewelry and the Counterculture***



#### ***In Flux: American Jewelry and the Counterculture***

By Susan Cummins, Cindi Strauss, and Damian Skinner  
Published 2021 by Arnoldsche Verlagsanstalt

#### ***By Christine Sigman***

Artists always respond (or react) to their times. Jewelry and metal artists are no exception. In the outstanding new book *In Flux: American Jewelry and the Counterculture*, coauthors Cindi Strauss (Curator for Modern and Contemporary Decorative Arts and Design at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston), Damian Skinner (art historian and curator), and Susan Cummins (influential gallerist and driving force behind the Rotasa Trust contemporary jewelry collection) pool their extensive

knowledge to explore how jewelry artists responded to a specific time and place and set of conditions.

The introduction to the book, *Jewelry in Turbulent Times*, sets the stage for what is to follow. By defining and limiting their scope to jewelry artists working in the United States from the early 60s to the late 70s, the authors are able to dig deep and draw explicit connections not only between art jewelry and other visual arts, but also between the artists and their time. This book makes clear for those of us who did not live through the period that there was not a single monolithic “hippie” culture, with placid artists stringing beads amid a haze of patchouli and marijuana. The authors emphasize the profound impact of the Vietnam War, as well as the civil rights, gay rights, environmental, and women’s movements, on what was happening in the studio. Far from tuning out, many of the artists covered in this book engaged directly with the politics of their time and were not afraid to express their beliefs, outrage, and values in their lives and work.

*In Flux* provides more than just engaging photographs – it also contains fascinating, readable stories about the people involved in the scene. The authors follow a number of jewelry artists, from the well-known like J. Fred Woell and Ken Cory to the obscure, through the 60s and 70s, interweaving biographical detail with explorations of important works. The human-interest angle exposes relationships between artists who influenced and learned from one another. Along the way, the reader also learns about important gallerists, academic programs, and organizations that supported these artists.

(As an aside, we in Houston are fortunate to have access to a number of the pieces highlighted in the book in person, as part of the Helen Williams Drutt Collection held by the Museum of Fine Arts. A number of the artists and works featured in *In Flux* are currently on display in the Kinder Building.)

*In Flux* exposes some of the tensions that fueled the art jewelry world during this period: craftsmanship vs. spontaneity, precious vs. valuable, insider vs. outsider. One pleasure in reading this recent jewelry history is discovering the origins of things our field now takes as a given, such as the use of reclaimed and non-precious

materials, the increased importance of narrative in jewelry, and the embrace of the explicitly political.

This book also leads one to reflect on the evolving challenges for jewelry artists striving to make their way in the world. Long before the days of social media, Etsy shops, and big box stores poaching ideas, these artists relied on dedicated galleries where they could share their work and disseminate their vision, and lucrative craft fairs, at the most notable of which it was possible to sell a full year's studio output in less than a single day. The GI-Bill-funded, post WWII boom in higher education resulted in the creation of many university programs in metals, providing not only more openings for students but also teaching opportunities that allowed many practicing artists to support themselves. Many if not most of the artists covered in *In Flux* benefited from this virtuous cycle. Sadly, many of these programs did not survive the passing of their founding teachers, leaving the field with a more barren academic landscape today.

Yet however different day to day life and economic conditions may be, today's jewelry artists clearly owe a deep debt to these earlier practitioners, who weren't afraid to confront social, political, and environmental causes in their work and to be in their own way on the front line of the culture they were living in.

As the times covered by *In Flux* drew to a close, the United States moved into a new era. In the late 70s, punk rock's nihilistic, frenetic scene blew away the last of that patchouli incense. In 1980, Ronald Reagan was elected president, ushering in a new gilded age and a level of materialism we have yet to shake. At around the same time, a mysterious and ominous virus, later known as HIV/AIDS, launched a killing spree that decimated communities and profoundly influenced society in the decade and a half it took until effective treatments were developed. All of these factors and more affected the work that contemporary metalsmiths and art jewelers created in response. Let's hope that future books, by these authors or others, continue to explore that evolving story where *In Flux* leaves off.



## Cool Tools and Tips

*In this section, we discuss tools (store-bought or homemade), as well as novel ideas and solutions you can take to the bench.*

Submit your tool and tip ideas to [HMAGNews@gmail.com](mailto:HMAGNews@gmail.com) for consideration for the Spring/Summer newsletter!

### Using a Saw Table to Ensure Accuracy

*By Jean-marie DeSpiegler*

Recently retired wire jewelry maker Loren Damewood ([GoldenKnots.com](http://GoldenKnots.com)) has taken up creating reversible jigsaw puzzles. Loren had previously come up with a number of tools and techniques in his years creating and teaching the art of knotted wire jewelry.



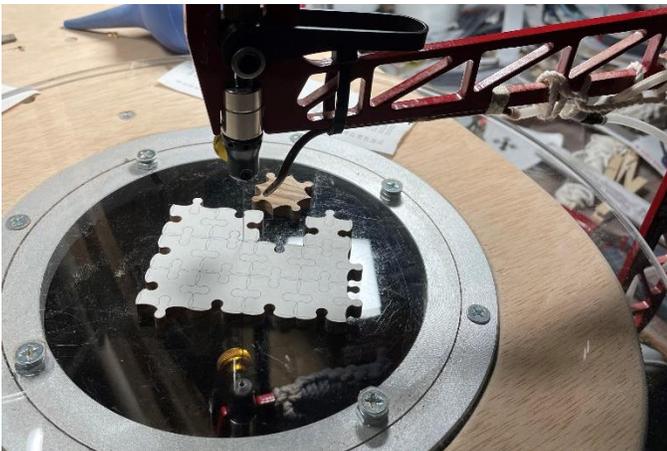
*Loren Damewood's ingenious saw table.*

Recently, he created and built an ingenious table. It holds an eight-inch throat Knew Concepts saw frame to ensure that his 10/0 (yes, the smallest I have ever seen) saw blades remain upright while sawing his wooden puzzles.

While Loren's description of the meditative Zen of sawing is seductive (and extremely elusive in my case), I am impressed at how smoothly his machine works and how it maintains a perfect angle.

The design includes the ingenious use of an aquarium pump hooked to a tiny copper pipe that is aimed at the cut at the bottom of the stroke, to blow the sawdust away and keep the line visible.

The saw is held vertical by a 1/16-inch stainless steel cable. The plywood frame is made to attach to a desk or a stool for portability. Loren even cut the acrylic pulley that the cable runs on, using his lathe with woodworking tools. He used a lazy Susan mount as a horizontal lathe, with a sheet-metal screw coming up through the mounting platform to scribe the acrylic turntable's 14" circle to give the saw full clearance as he works. This also



*Closeup of the saw table in action.*

helps to locate the exact center, where the hole for the saw blade is drilled. This allows the work to rotate independently of the saw.

Currently, Loren is working on improving the design. The updated version has larger pulleys. In addition, it creates less bend in the cable to ensure its longevity.

**Note:** *This tool is a clever home solution, not a commercially available product.*



## Community News

*In this section, we highlight what HMAG members and others in our local community have been up to professionally.*

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

**Tiffany Heng-Hui Lee**, a visual artist specializing in mixed media collages, is happy to announce that her work will be featured in the Art Museum TX, 16165 located in the (in the Sugar Land Plaza next to City Hall). Tiffany is one of five artists in the show, which is running through October 10.

Jewelry and enameling students made a strong showing in this year's Juried Student Exhibition at the Glassell School of Art, 5101 Montrose Boulevard, Houston, with pieces by **Terry Fromm**, **Emily Henderson**, **William Luft**, **Edward Lane McCartney**, **Jo Preston**, and **Christine Sigman** on display through September 5.



*Terry Fromm's Guanajuato (after "Taxco" by Robert Montenegro), from the Glassell Juried Student Exhibition.*

**Edward Lane McCartney** will have a Solo Exhibition of New Work at Camiba Gallery, 6448 Highway 290 East, Suite A102 Austin, TX 78723. The show runs from October 7 to November 6, 2021.



*Formation, Rills bracelet, on view at Edward Lane McCartney's solo show in Austin.*

Former HMAG member **Priscilla Frake**, now of Asheville NC, has kept busy artistically in her new home. Her work is currently on view at [In Tandem Gallery](#) in Bakersville, NC, where she is currently a featured artist.



*Priscilla Frake's Jeweled Planet necklace, at In Tandem Gallery.*

## In Memoriam



### Mani Gazdar Schwartz

*April 22, 1945 – July 12, 2021*

Mani Gazdar Schwartz was born April 22, 1945 in Bombay (Mumbai) India. After completing her undergraduate degree at the School of Applied Art in India, Mani fulfilled her dream of coming to the United States for her Master's degree in Art at the California College of Arts and Craft.

Mani had many talents including speaking English, French, and Hindi fluently. Her 30-year career as an international airline attendant brought her to live in Houston, Texas, then finally back to California to finish her career before she retired in 2015.

Throughout her life Mani continued to express her artistic creativity. While in Houston she studied enameling with Jan Harrell at the Glassell School of Art and was an active member of HMAG.

Mani lived in Mountain House, California until her passing on July 12, 2021 from natural causes. She leaves behind her loving husband of over 30 years, Ken Schwartz.

*Maryland Edwards*



## 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 2021 - 2022

<b>President</b>	Jessica Jacobi	<a href="mailto:HMAGPres@gmail.com">HMAGPres@gmail.com</a>
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