

Metal Clay World Conference Keynote Speech by Charles Lewton-Brain

Introduction

How old is jewelry?

Adornment, making decorative objects for the body, is one of the most ancient of human activities. Jewelry is in fact the oldest evidence of human activity. Ten years ago the oldest worked objects found showing signs of consciousness were dated to 45,000 years, three years ago it was pushed to 70,000 and last year to 100,000 years. And the oldest items found are beads. That's how long we've been making jewelry. That is so long ago that I suspect it is hardwired into us, almost biology rather than culture.

Archeologists theorize that rather than merely being evidence of consciousness the act of self adornment, and working materials for self adornment may have actually driven the development of consciousness in early humans. That self adornment is what helped make us into thinking humans.

When I was 21 I was lucky enough to go on a trip round the world on a boat for 4 months. Every place we landed I went and sought out jewelers and metal workers, dressed politely, taking my chasing hammer, some punches and pieces I'd made. Everywhere I was taken in, fed, housed, treated as family. When you make jewelry, no matter how you make it you are in a club, and all of you are in that global club.

The materials: practice is practice

There is a story about how if you put a good artist onto a desert island with nothing but steel wool on hand and you come back in a week the artist will be surrounded by the most wonderful and intriguing steel wool art you've ever seen.

One of the traditional tests of whether something is art or not is that at the first apprehension, the instant you see it there is no consciousness of what the material is, or the technique, just what the design is, what the idea is. If that happens the object is art.

If it is a good piece it is a good piece.

As an artist, a maker I cannot understand or condone the hierarchical attitudes that sometimes exist in the jewelry field, the questioning of validity that appears to crop up now and then for metal clay creations.

The material you use is just that, a material. It comes with characteristics, ways of working, and unconventional approaches to its use. It is how it is used, or accepted by audience that matters. Creating good work takes ideas, skill and practice. Lots of practice. It has been said that 1500 hours of doing anything, flying a plane, making jewelry, carpentry make one an expert.

A teacher of mine had a teacher of his tell him that "every painter has so many bad paintings in them, and all you can do is keep painting until most of the bad ones are

gone”. I tell my students that to learn something technical it takes three times to begin to understand it, five times to do it right and thirty times to be competent. Practice makes perfect.

Metal clay is a wonderful material, and if you want to get through to a traditional jeweler just explain that metal clay is leading edge powder metallurgy, its NASA on steroids, the latest sintering high technology brought to the small studio. It is way cool. It provides new bridges and ways for people to make jewelry, new paths for people in a complex and chaotic world.

So, who is Charles Lewton-Brain and why would I have something to say to you?

I am a goldsmith, an artist, an educator. I am head of the jewellery/metals program at the Alberta College of Art and Design in Calgary, Alberta.

I have solid feet in the art world, and the world of Industry. It was years ago when a pivotal moment was reached and a student of mine was born the year I graduated college. I've now been at this for 34 years, and revel in one of the true joys of the metals world: you will never know it all, never run out of new things to learn, never stop making mistakes and discovering accidental insights in the material, the making, the wonder.

With Dr. Hanuman Aspler I co-founded the Ganoksin Project in 1996. This idealistic site has grown to be the largest source on the net for jewelry related information. We have over 4 million unique visitors a year who stay for an average of 17 pages. We have more than 600,000 pages of information, 700 pages of it my writing which is what started the site. The Orchid list is our email news list with over 6,500 members worldwide, and it takes our colleague Ton eight hours to prepare the 50 edited emails emitted daily, and archived on the site. We have partnership deals to republish content with 12 magazines including Jewelry Artist, Art Jewelry, Colored stone, MJSA journal, Metalsmith magazine and European Jeweller (GZ) magazine. If you like what we do please donate, as the whole thing runs on spit and the goodwill of its users. Together we co-founded the Clasp conference with the Bell group, SNAG, MJSA and Brad and Debby Simon's bench media. This is a cross disciplinary project designed to break through the information silos of art jewelry, industry and bench jewelry sideways, sharing information and cross fertilizing to mutual benefit.

I was trained in industry and art school, and believe that everyone is creative and powerful through making, and through art.

Some images of my work should finish the introduction. I have spent my time in metals finding ways of drawing with the material, of working fast and with a commitment to the mark or decision that echoes my early love of drawing in pen and ink. So work with patinas, compositional approaches to applying gold to metals, fold-forming and my recent electroforming work all have to do with drawing, with fast work, and, perhaps, with easy. Metal Clay shares these attributes and possibilities.

I am known for inventing fold-forming, a way of working sheet metal involving folding, working and unfolding. These techniques work in metal clay as well as sheet metal.

TALK PICS (3 minutes-22 images)

And in recent years I have been working with grids, as metaphors for human culture and the limits we place on ourselves. The series is called Cage work, and is made with an electronics fusion welder. I weld stainless steel wire, then electro-formed on it in copper, a blending of 20th and 19th century technologies, then have it electroformed in 24k gold on top.

TALK PICS (3 minutes-22 images)

Art/making as metaphor for life

I often tell my students that as a maker, an artist, we have been given a remarkable gift, the ability to externalize the bugs in our heads into objects, to make real the issues and echoes of our minds. Having made an object, particularly if we are aware of the personal meanings that we are applying to material, idea content, color, texture and process then we can gain a little control over the world, the object becomes a series of metaphors for us. This, by the way is what buyers are looking for, even in a formally designed object where apparently there is nothing but design present, balance, weight, etc.

There are a number of approaches to design. One is formal design where you are dealing with issues of composition, symmetry, asymmetry, visual weight. Another is to begin with content, meaning, emotion, and design a piece that tells a story, illustrates part of a sentence, a tale. This places the object in a larger context.

Whichever approaches turn you on it takes study and practice. And failure. I figure most of the pieces I make are 'bad pieces', and sometimes (more in recent times) I get lucky and the work is good. And the piece that is my 'bad piece' someone else will love. Where I worked in Germany, if every goldsmith in the shop agreed that a piece was an absolute dog you knew it was going to be a best seller. Who am I to tell others what to love? If something brings joy to someone why should I deny that to them? Anyway, you can practice design, get books on design principles, and draw and use collage because it is faster and less expensive in working out a design. In this way you will get through those 'bad paintings' faster. Choose a meaning to your work, make it part of a story, and designing will come easier as well as providing the public a bridge to your work, a way in to share, and appreciate what you are doing.

As an artist or craftsperson you are a problem solver, someone who takes situations, materials and limitations and then works with them to express thoughts.

My favorite artist, Joseph Beuys, who did installation work that was not, shall we say, attractive in traditional terms, was once asked what he did. He replied "I am a sculptor". Asked what he sculpted he said "I sculpt my life". You too can take control over your life and guide it towards what you want. Here is an opportunity for you to take charge of your

life and construct it to what you want out of it. This means considering three and five year goals, writing it down, experimenting with potential paths just as you compose with your materials in art making. A written outline does not nail you down, instead it provides a skeleton to build on or change. And it is a funny thing, but merely writing it down seems to make it happen, seems to somehow guide innumerable small decisions and opportunities towards your goals.

Changing the culture: enriching your world.

Every time you show your work, get published, get in an exhibition, sell a piece you are adding a small brick to the whole, adding to and creating a deeper, richer, more exciting place to be. It is the thousands of layers of decisions that make ancient cities and cultures interesting, and when you act as a maker, particularly if you spread your ideas using the media you are contributing to creating a better world.

Identity

As a maker, identity, and the ability to express and communicate entertaining and intriguing aspects of it are what pays the rent, buys the bread. It is in fact a part of being a professional.

We do not make toasters. We make objects that grow from our lives, our minds, our materials and process. Not to mention our experience. There is an old story of someone questioning the price of a mug and asking how long it took to make. Then potter responds with “30 years and 15 minutes”.

You are buying the maker’s juice when you buy that mug. If it were just to hold a liquid Styrofoam works just as well. The buyer uses the maker as a metaphor for their own identity, their own inclinations and beliefs. The more stories and elements visible for the client to connect with the more likely it is that they will do so. Identity as a maker is vital in the relationship with audience.

Generate content. Tell stories about your life, your ideas, your work.

Document everything.

Documentation gives people the ‘cultural handles’ they can use to make money on you, then you get to go along for the ride busily making whatever it is you want to and earning a living from the people in the art business who are making money on you and your cultural image. Give the people who are disposed to making money the tools to do it with you.

In the same way those documents include materials to communicate with media, the base kit includes biographies of different lengths, multiple statements, self portraits in and out of the studio, a web presence, images of work in different formats and digital resolutions. Give the media (and galleries) the tools to interact with you in their own self interest and they will do so. Do the work for people and they will value you. Be available on an

instant to supply people with information and images. We now teach that an object is not complete until it is documented. The piece does not exist, until the image is done.

If one accepts that part of the function of an object is to present ideas and questions to audience, the public, other makers, then the issue of image must be confronted. Some 98% of the people who will ever be confronted by your ideas in an object will only see an image of it. Of the remaining 2% who see it most will see it through glass, and only a tiny proportion will ever touch it, experience the tactility that is so important to the maker. It is clear that for some functions the image of an object can be more important than the object itself.

So how does a maker create an identity for themselves?

You have to do it for yourself. Jeweler Thomas Mann once had a piece of his on the cover of American Craft, and various people whined about him sleazing the editors, getting on the cover. He hadn't done anything, so he called the editors and asked "Why did you put my piece on the cover?", and they said "you were the only one who sent a picture". You would not believe how often one hears that refrain. Being a successful artist means keeping current press kits and photographic documentation. It means acting professionally and carrying out most of what you begin.

If you don't engage with the culture nothing will happen. Simply having PR tools available allows things to happen. If you give your gallery all the digital images in all the dpi resolutions for print or web, and statements etc who do you think they will use when they need something? If you have them ready to email on an instant the likelihood of you being used is higher.

Another example is Dale Chihouli, the only person I know of who has made a two million dollar craft object, right here Las Vegas, at the Bellagio. There are some 23 books on Dale Chihouli, almost all of them written, or facilitated by Dale Chihouli.

There are some principles: Clever Counts. The smarter you are about this the less work you have to do. Guerilla thinking counts.

Examples include the person I knew who took \$1000 and created a lovely, beautiful poster of their work that looked like a major blockbuster in a museum. There was no show, it just looked like it. These posters went to every gallery, museum, college program that counted, and they were so attractive went up on the walls. Within two years he was well known and accepted in the field, and this action built his career.

Daniel Jocz from Massachusetts started his career late in life, and needed to build identity fast. He really wanted to have a feature article in Ornament magazine, but had no profile. Every six months he sent twenty slides, a stamped self addressed envelope and a nice letter to the editors, saying "I thought you might like to see what I've been up to". Three years in he got a letter from the editors saying "We'd like to do a feature on you, we've been thinking about this for around ...three years." Another strategy was to identify who

were the top jurors in his field for exhibitions, and every time they juried anything he entered. Pretty soon they were saying ‘my gosh, this guy is everywhere’, whereas in fact he was where they were.

Derek Besant, a public artist in the early stages of his career would steadily send 40-50 post cards of his work out a month to people he met, artists and curators he admired, he would follow up and more. This built his career. Follow up and thank you letters are very important.

There is the law of combinations, stacking reasons onto something you are going to do anyway. Take a project that you are creating for one reason, and then make up other reasons and goals for the same action. This multiplies and magnifies effectiveness of the work.

This combinations thing is really important. Let’s say that you have to write an essay for an evening class. Twist the parameters until you have a subject that interests you, write the paper, but also submit it to a magazine in your field, publish it at the Ganoksin Project for free, stick it in your portfolio and so on. For very little extra work you can hugely increase the cultural effects of your actions.

Collective actions count. The collective clout goes far beyond a small act. Acting in groups encourages the building of combinations. The sum of a group project is multiplied in effectiveness because it is a complex, layered act. A great example is the Impressions book that our students did two years ago.

The group decided that a serious document, a book, was how they wanted to leave a mark on the world. All aspects of this project were workshopped through, with the premise that group mind produces better results, that a group action is very strong, and takes each of its participants further than possible for an individual.

We put this together over eight months. Elements included good photography, statements, participant images, full colour and most important, a serious, impressive essay by Dr. Jennifer Salahub. This was intended to be a vital document, placing the participants in a historical context. Part of the \$9200 raised was dedicated to mailing copies of the book to important libraries, art history departments, galleries, colleges and important individuals. The project really worked, and provided the students with a document good for five years or so, quite a calling card.

And now, this year, the ground has shifted. Print on demand has reached the point that it is very easy to have a quality book available worldwide. Someone in Australia orders one, it is printed and mailed there, the same for one in the US, to a quality standard.

There are no upfront costs except time. The production cost is buried in the price, the purchaser pays it and does not notice that they do. This enables crafts people and artists to create their own documents without having to fund raise first, a significant change. Lulu.com is an excellent example of this. You can prepare a book on your work, full

colour, and if you price it correctly it becomes visible and buyable through Amazon.com and major bookstores. It is sold via lulu and anywhere else you want to sell it. When someone buys it a copy is printed and bound in the country where the buyer is (Australia, USA, Brazil etc) and mailed to them there. You pay nothing upfront, that is there are no production costs until someone buys a copy, then they pay for it. Lulu cuts you a check, and you get 80% of the net profit.

Dee Fontans, my spouse, teaches a course on wearable art. This year her class produced a book at lulu.com. Their book *Wear Art is Fashion* is a wonderful book. Other artists I know use lulu as a kind of printer, for instance some woodworkers I know created a 100 page catalog on lulu which cost \$14.00. They then ordered 100 of these to sell at their exhibition.

Apple has a service for making a one-off book for mac users, \$24 for a lovely paperback and \$45 for a hardbound book. These look absolutely beautiful, you would swear they were part of a huge book run, creamy paper, luscious image quality. A great addition to your portfolio.

Post cards are also inexpensive, and very useful. Vistaprint, go4colour.com and many others offer short runs of quality postcards. You simply email the files or upload them to the printers web site. Industryimages.com does full colour post cards at 15 cents each with no minimum order, so you can have just 8 or ten. They also do posters for 85 cents each, again no minimum. There are places on the internet that will make post cards as cheaply as 3 cents each. A note about vistaprint is that they will do 250 color business cards for free for you, and on the back side, in small lettering they have a single sentence that says printing by Vistaprint, not obtrusive at all.

I am a real fan of post cards, I believe they are one of the most effective things you can do. First of all pick the image carefully. When I did my first post card I really wanted to get it into the Art Gallery of Ontario post card shop which was huge, but they did not include craft work. I carefully chose the image so that you could not tell it was an object and called it 'Color Study'. I did list the materials, and no, it did not get in because it was craft. My criteria had been however that if I received it in the mail I would put it up on my studio wall. Years later in graduate school we had a visiting Australian teacher. I desperately wanted to get to Australia, and I was putting down a pile of post cards, articles and other things for him to take back with him. I put down this first card and his eyes got huge and round and he said "My God, I've got one of those on my studio wall!" It worked.

As well a post card has a value. It is not much, 10 cents or so, but if I give you one you have a gift from me. There may be a subtle obligation set up in the exchange, an interaction having to do with a value being given. And then you will turn around and either put it on a wall or refrigerator where others like you will be exposed to it or you will even pay with your won money to mail it to someone you think would appreciate it. True viral marketing.

All of this lets us build identity, take actions which create ripples in the culture. Like tossing pebbles into a pool the ripples will cross each other, build and create a lasting pattern. Craft actions like this are truly effective and produce legacy changes for us all.

Being a professional: more tips and tricks

Collect Models and samples in that filing cabinet of yours.

Anytime you run across a good brochure, image, budget or plan take a copy and build yourself a set of reference samples of ways of doing thing.

Publishing

To publish and send out press releases and appear in magazines is not an ego trip or arrogant behavior-it is a method of communications, of sharing information and views, of discourse with your culture. When I was a student in Germany it struck me that I had met most of the famous artists in my field there within a year and a half. I thought to myself that with 60 million people in the country this was weird. I'd been to a few parties, some openings, things like that. My question was 'why had I met them'? Then I realized that was the wrong question. The right one was 'why were they famous'. The answer was that they were the only artists to get off their duffs and produce documentation of their work and thoughts, and this was then published. There was no great validity to the work being published, and probably much more valid work that did not make it into venues where one could come in contact with it. Once you realize there is no validity or stature associated with getting published then the 'ego' part of it is immaterial. I used to think it was sleazy behavior but now consider it a positive enrichment of the culture, a dialog with others, that 'brick in the wall' that builds our world. After all, when you see things in catalogs and magazines you don't think of how they got there, you just react to the ideas portrayed, you engage in thought as a result of others sharing.

This means a commitment of time to one's own PR project, probably the equivalent of an hour a week but often seems to occur in several day bursts during the year. Move the mountain one bit of gravel at a time. If you spend 2 hours a week on it that is 104 hours a year on marketing.

Overruns: If you are having something printed, say a page in a catalog or a whole catalog for a show, an invitation, an article in a magazine, whatever is being printed always ask for an overrun. Once the press is set to print the item anyway it is only pennies to keep on printing for a while to make extras in high quality for far less than you could ever have them done on your own. I usually ask for an overrun of 250 which lasts about ten years of careful giving away.

External Validity

It is often easier to get your work published in a magazine in another country because you are exotic and fresh to them. This then provides an opportunity to send out local and national (magazines in your field) press releases and adds significantly to your press package. Your national media will take external publishing as real validity of your career. Another way to get published is to find out who the publishers are in your art field, and

contact them to find out what book projects are coming up. Some, like Lark Books will have a submission area for artists that lists their projects and the kinds of work they are looking for. I've been in at least six books this way.

Whatever you think of first make it three times bigger

I have observed that whatever one thinks of first as a plan is too limited, too small. Speaking personally, one may have small internal put-downs and low self-evaluation in the head, and so when you are planning, don't accept the first one you come up with, but soak in the idea for a while and make your plans bigger than you first begin with. Make sure and write it down. You will find that then they seem to naturally occur.

Respect others as you would be respected by them

You must respect others as persons and individuals, listen and respect their position and point of views; try and hear them. It is useful if you can empathize with others and their views; that you listen carefully. Then do whatever the heck you want.

Don't make enemies

Someone in Nova Scotia told me this one. It can be useful as a guiding principle. You can't help doing it of course, just as you can't help how other people think and interpret you and your actions, but, as a rising artist it really helps if you didn't burn too many bridges as you constructed your career.

Volunteer your time to the art project.

It is important to give service to your culture, join an advocacy group, pitch in with a little work, a drop of blood, a drip of sweat. Besides the contacts you will develop with other engaged, interesting artists you will learn new skills and find connections of benefit to you down the road. And all the while actually helping people.

That Business thing.

The point is to survive and prosper as an artist. This means that one has to deal with the basics of running a small business, independent contracting, contracts and marketing. It is the marketing that feeds one as no amount of wonderful art work will pay the rent and purchase materials unless it has a market. It is important that you possess the tools not merely to survive but to prosper as artists and individuals. This includes a good understanding of grants, PR methods, materials and sources, computer use, photography, basic digital image handling, marketing, presentation, oral and written justification of work, basic business and tax approaches etc. You have to be a better, smarter business person than most business people. And living off grants while you make your art work is a business choice.

No compromise

This means that you do not pander to taste-on the contrary you are as true to yourself and your art as possible and you only have to find the correct audience for it that will pay to allow you to do what one wants. This is true whether one is applying for grants, making esoteric conceptual art, landscape painting or creating sculpture and objects in a so-called craft media. Do whatever the heck it is you want to and then find a way to make a living

at it. Andrew Goldsworthy, who makes installation work with ephemeral materials like ice has made an excellent living with sales of the documentation of his works.

When you make a choice like “I will only make one of a kind pieces” it comes with consequences and responsibilities. Make your decisions and then deal with the consequences to your advantage. Daniel Jocz made a decision that he would only make weird, barely functional fine art jewelry pieces. As a consequence he felt that there were only 12 people in the world who would buy his objects and therefore his job, his responsibility as an artist was to find those twelve people. Then he developed strategies to reach them, to become visible to them.

It is important that the role of artist in our culture not be a marginalized one. The stigma attached to actually earning a decent living from making art is a false one no doubt propagated by galleries, non-artist writers and certain academics who couldn't survive a week on the street if they tried. There is no need to have negative compromise be part of ones experience as a successful artist. You can have what you want without giving up anything of what you want to do.

I had an interesting conversation several years ago with an artist. She was feeling that she had somehow failed or opted out because she had a part time job for three days a week so as to have two days a week in the studio. I pointed out to her that a professional artist, who does it full time, probably gets about two days a week in the studio, the rest of that work week being taken up with paperwork, running around, doing non-art things. We are not counting the evening and weekend hours that one puts in anyway. There was, then, little qualitative difference in her experience from that of a full time artist. And she had benefits and no roller coaster worries about the rent. I came to the conclusion that either path was valid, since each offered a very similar art making experience.

Go Co-op

It has been shown repeatedly that the drop out rate for artists and crafts people who start out as individuals can be fairly high, up to 70% after ten years. If you go co-op, share studios, facilities and expertise the retention rate is over 80% - a drop out rate of less than 20%. Consider co-ops of various kinds- there is strength in numbers.

Networking: This is all kinds of things, from keeping up with magazines in your field to writing letters, going to conferences and meetings, contributing artistically in a volunteer manner to your community, exhibiting in group shows, going to openings and so on. It is about putting yourself in the way of information, of being well informed about your field and the arts. It results in connections-people are social and they look for patterns, they look for connections around one. Being available and a part of things makes it more likely that one of the people one comes in contact with can make a connection involving you, find a pattern into which you fit. As an artist this results in new and varied options. Join your craft associations and then vigorously ask what they can do for you, if you don't ask you won't get. And they can do remarkable things to advance your career.

Longevity: Persistence and hard work is worth more than raw talent as an artist. I've seen brilliant stars burn out and leave the field or be unable to function as an artist and make their living from it. I've also seen artists who got there by sheer practice and hard work, whose early work was problematic but who became really good artists given time and persistence. A commitment to the field will usually result in personal success. Creating ripples in your culture; documenting ones activity in this life is however part of financial success in the field.

Stories

People buy your work because they need an object, a product, and like your designs. They will buy more of your work if they have an investment in you, that is if they are able to identify with you or with some of what you believe in. Therefore it is very important to have stories about your work, and yourself. What would you want to hear from someone else? That is what you need to be able to tell about yourself.

Collectors say they do not buy the object as much as the artist. They are investing in you because you provide them with the metaphors and meanings they are looking for. They are interested in what you do for the meanings they project and read into it, and in your life and stories as a metaphor they can use in living their own lives. You, and your stories, your adventures and research are what they are buying.

Stories means what you think about while you work, what are the decisions, references you deal with? What is your philosophical stance on your work? What do you believe? What is important to you? What happened to you in your life that has illuminated your work and choices as artist or craftsperson? What stories do you tell when talking to customers and selling at your booth? Even better, what stories do your employees or spouse use when telling others of your work to inform or sell it? (It is always easier to tell stories about someone else's work). Funny stories are always useful.

There are collector associations developing now, with curator Gail Brown's American collectors organization (some 150 members) sponsoring exhibitions, lectures at SOFA and other events regularly. Connect with them. Talk to gallery owners about how to cultivate collectors. What museums and collectors care about, in priority is: What collections/museums are you in? Where have you shown internationally? Have you been extensively published? Who were your teachers and mentors? Who were your students and protegés?

The Web and Ecommerce

The web provides a truly important new way of contacting people who like your work. The web dissolves geography, it permits you to live in the 'long tail', that is it lets people who might like your work find you, gravitate towards you, particularly if the work is a niche of some type. I ran across a bolo tie maker who said 'my wife said your bolos will never sell on the web, and then found that they would 'only sell on the web' and he now had a living with hand made bolo ties. Mokume is another example. And best of all, you are your own niche, that is if you raise your profile in other media then people will search

you out on the web. My site gets about 60 visitors a day, and I don't have to pay for it. This is far more efficient than paying for advertising.

I have survey results from over 50 jewelers on the web and, three years ago, ten percent of my respondents made 10% of their income from the web, and over \$120,000 gross a year.

You do however have to be smart about being on the internet and position and plan so that you take advantage of the web. There are several ways you can approach selling on the web.

Guild.com provides an excellent way of marketing work. Boris Bally reports that the networking and response to his 'virtual exhibition' at Guild.com far exceeded and physical show he had had.

You can have your own web site, and if you are computer literate it is cheapest to learn how to build one yourself. If you can trade with someone or work with a student this too can be a route. Here are some hints for a successful site. Consider your site an adjunct to your print marketing. It is a place people can drop in to see what is new (and you should change things at least once every three weeks) and to refresh their ideas of your work. It should have content if you want people to come. That means information of various kinds, articles, reprints (with permission) of articles, links, information about you and your work. It means being knowledgeable about how to get your site listed on search engines and more. It is in fact rather a large job. But you then have control over it. Hiring a web designer can be problematic: they often have strong egos and want to prove their artistic and web talents. This means they want flashing bits, fading parts, moving things, all of which add to download time and irritate the heck out of users and visitors. My advice is to keep it simple, make every page fast loading, stay away from gimmicks, make sure that the average computer screen can see all your page in one go (no scrolling around looking for things), make sure every page prints out easily and as a single page for the user (that is after all how people store your information-they print it out) and make sure that every page on screen and all printouts have your full contact information, mailing address, fax, email, etc. You would be surprised how few people actually design a page for printing out.

Internet Visibility

While it is true that people won't necessarily come to your site without a marketing campaign and print references, a remarkable number of people will see your work and network with you through online means. Examples of successful strategies to be seen include making a solid myspace or facebook construction, experimenting with the second life world, posting up to 200 images free on flickr.com, which has a slide show option you can email people a link to and so on. My pages on lulu.com have hundreds of visitors, most of whom would not have found my work otherwise. Participating in online forums is also useful for visibility.

There are some essential tools for PR.

Biography

A good one is hard to do. The most difficult thing to learn is to distance yourself so you can talk about yourself in the third person and objectively look at yourself, avoiding all the small internal put downs one may have and noticing that you (and everyone) has accomplishments or experiences that are unique and interesting. With Bios and statements the writing should be interesting so that if you were reading it as someone else's that you would want to keep on reading, want to read to the end. It is a story about someone-and a good one. Different lengths are necessary. In general start with a big one of a page and a half or so and then boil down to different sized paragraphs on down to a two or three sentence one. I put all mine on one sheet, some people keep them separate. You will need to review and revise your biographies once every two years or so. It can help to have a friend over with a glass of wine and have them question you like a reporter about your life. Have them take notes. This exercise generally takes about three hours. Then you boil down the notes to a page and to the shorter chunks that are also useful. You will be surprised at how interesting, unique and experienced in various things that you are. Again, what would keep you interested? It is a kind of storytelling, and based on truth.

Statements

Sometimes people will write a biography as if it is a statement so check your earlier biographies for clues as to what may belong in your statement. A statement is about what you believe in, what is important to you, what positions you take, what drives your art work, what your stand is in the world and on your art. A one paragraph statement, a half a page and a full page one will suffice. To write one check your sketch books for notes you have written to yourself about your beliefs or spend some time with a friend talking about what you believe in and what is important to you-and take notes. Review/revise statements once a year.

Press Kits: Experienced artists may keep several versions of a press kits ready to go at any time. All should have a CD with a short powerpoint on about your work, and some images at different resolutions for the recipient to use. Don't forget your photo and model credits! And don't forget self portraits, you at work and you in a good head shot.

A friend of mine has three levels of press kit. A simple introduction kit has some photocopies of articles about him, post cards and bio. A second level has more information, a black and white or so, color images, more photocopies of articles, reviews and so on. He keeps some twenty of these ready to go at any time. They are reviewed and revised once every three months. The last level has in addition a catalog, quality colour images and black and whites, quality reproductions and attractive special inserts. Only 3 to 5 sets of the top level are kept and they are reviewed and revised monthly. This readiness has paid off for him a number of times. A press kit should contain items from the foregoing categories. If it is accompanied by a press release the following points are important. There must be a 'hook', a reason why it should be published, you got in an exhibition, won a prize, did this or that of interest and currency. It must be readable and interesting-whatever you would want to keep reading. There should be a intriguing head line to the dated release. The first paragraph should contain the traditional 'Who, What,

When Where, Why'. Subsequent paragraphs should be separated by white space from the first and be in descending order of information ending with biographical information about you and an exhortation to contact you for further information. The paragraphs are designed to read well and also be useable in additive chunks so that at the end of the day the newspaper or magazine wanting to fill holes in the body text can do so easily and in a modular way adding any paragraph in order still making sense) up to the whole press release. Again-you are doing the work for the recipient so they can easily use it to solve their problems of space to fill or information to pass on.

Here are some guidelines to use when practicing as a maker. Strive to have:

An attitude of thinking and questioning.

An attitude of conscious choice.

A knowledge of intent and how to realize it in personal terms.

Technical skill sufficient to fully realize personal artistic vision.

An understanding of choice in the finishing and resolution of their work.

Self Confidence to continue as an artist with a personally comfortable level of commitment.

Skills, research and resource finding abilities to allow you to prosper as artists and individuals.

An open minded, accepting view of the world without prejudice or unconsidered bias.

A knowledge and understanding that personal choice and a conscious life is available to you as artists and individuals.

An appreciation for hard work and persistence.

A professional attitude to work, behavior and professional commitments.

I will make this talk available for the Metal Clay World conference to post as a document for download following the conference.