

The Metalsmith

Meet Beth Carey and her fascination with handmade jewelry...

By Jennifer Love ■ Photos Tim Jacobsen

Working at home and doing what she loves, jeweler Beth Carey is living her dream. "I grew up with National Geographic, and wanted to copy it," she says. Raised on a farm in Frederick County, the artist first developed an interest in metalwork while still in her teens. With the encouragement of her teacher at Middletown High School, Pat Schroeder, Carey designed and fabricated her first piece of jewelry. Now she works in her home studio, creating intricate and expressive pieces – necklaces, rings, bracelets, pendants, and earrings – out of silver and gold.



At St. Mary's College, her major in Art Education led to a job teaching art in both public and private schools, as well as part-time work as a jeweler. She eventually left teaching to work for a retail jeweler. After several years, she went into business for herself.

For the past twenty years, Carey has created jewelry off and on while raising two children. The kids have helped with the process: her son likes to pitch in with the work; her daughter enjoys wearing the resulting creations.

All of Carey's pieces start as a sketch and then evolve into a wax carving. From there, the fabrication process begins. Whether this process involves weaving fine silver wire, heat scarring, or any other method makes no difference. She loves it all.

Weaving is her "new addiction, but it is harder to sell because people don't appreciate it," says Carey. "It is relaxing [to weave], sitting with a cup of coffee until my hands begin to cramp up and I have to take a break." The process involves wrapping fine silver around a spring tube until the desired product emerges.

With heat scarring, Carey melts the surface of silver until it thickens into a beautiful, wrinkled, skin-like texture.

The Mokume style is time-consuming but beautiful. To start, four one-inch by one-inch pieces of metal are fused or soldered together. Then the pieces are folded and put through a rolling mill. By repeating the process several times, Carey is left with multiple layers of metal, each sporting a wood grain motif. This is then used to create jewelry.

Although Carey enjoys exploring many areas of jewelry making, her current project involves an affirmation series of prayer images. She is also working on a Lily pad series with Debby Weaver, a glass artist. Weaver makes lampe worked, and Carey then incorporates them into jewelry. The women plan to attend several shows in order to promote their work. *(continued on reverse side)*

"If someone really likes [the jewelry, then] I feel like I have succeeded." Good jewelry, says Carey, "makes you smile and feel good."



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Carey doesn't focus solely on specific series, though; she is also known for custom work. "Once I look at what you have, and you tell me what you want, I will tell you if I can do it or not," she says of her approach to working with prospective clients.

Custom work is, in fact, a favorite part of her work. "The whole concept of drawing the design...if someone really likes it, I feel like I have succeeded," she says. For her, jewelry "is body ornamentation, it makes you smile and feel good." One thing she admits doesn't always make her feel good, though, is the requisite polishing each new piece demands. This last stage of the process can get downright irritating. "You think you're done, and [then you] see one more scratch and have to go back," she says.

Interested in learning more about Carey's art? Consider taking one of her classes at the Delaplaine Visual Arts Education Center. Carey teaches an advanced jewelry class, as well as a beginning-intermediate class. Teaching, which will always be a part of her life, allows the artist for whom the jewelry is an overriding passion "to have the best of both worlds."

Beth Carey uses intense heat to transform silver wire into a work of art. Her early interest in metalwork led to a career of making jewelry and teaching classes in jewelry making. Carey's Garden Series pin features 14-karat gold with a sunflower design and semi-precious stones. Her affirmation Series includes a necklace with a fine handmade knitted chain and earrings, both with semi-precious set stones.

For more information about Beth Carey's work, head to her website, www.bethcareyjewelry.com. To meet with her when she's not in a show, call Carey at 301-293-1667 or e-mail Carey at beth_carey@hotmail.com, to arrange a meeting at the Delaplaine Visual Arts Education Center.

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Carey's Garden Series pin (above) features 14 karat gold with a sunflower design and semi-precious stones.

Her Affirmation Series (right) includes a necklace with a fine handmade knitted chain and earrings, both with semi-precious stones.

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