



ARTIST PROFILE

Christopher

BOAR

PHOTO BY MELISSA VANARSDALE



STORY BY LUCIA NOVARA PHOTOS BY TIM MURPHY

ASKA




EWF

CHRISTOPHER OAR does a lot of things with his hands. He uses them to blow glass, create furniture, blacksmith, weld, and turn raw metal into art. His hands have traveled across the world, picking up objects and ideas that he brings back to his Steamboat Springs studio and turns into pieces small enough to wear and large enough to need surrounding landscaping.

“My whole show has colors: **REDS, YELLOWS, ORANGE**. The reason I went with all those colors is because of the **THAI PEOPLE**. They’re so colorful, the people are just **BRILLIANT** and so **WARM**.”

Oar studied at The Genoa School of Furniture Design, apprenticed at Dale Chihuly’s Pilchuck Glass School, trained with German blacksmiths in New York, and worked with fine jewelry artisans in Florence. It was during his work in Italy that Oar decided to give up his other odd jobs and dedicate himself to fine art.

Despite an education in a wide variety of mediums, Oar chooses to sculpt mainly in steel. “It allows me more freedom,” he says, and he enjoys the sheer strength and pliability of the material. His grandfather had a metal shop in his home in western New York and the smell of hot metal mixed with cigarettes is one of his first childhood memories.

In a recent show at Walker Fine Art in Denver, Oar displayed eight of his most recent pieces, ranging in size from one foot to 8’6”. Three of the pieces were inspired by his travels in Thailand and represent a departure from his past work in that they are brightly colored.

“My whole show has colors: reds, yellows, orange. The reason I went with all those colors is because of the Thai people. They’re so colorful, the people are just brilliant and so warm.”

A piece titled “Moon” was based on Oar’s experience during the Full Moon Festival on the island of Ko Phangan. He was staying with a Thai family and was invited to celebrate the festival with them by floating flowers and lit candles out into the sea. While he watched the moon rise that night he saw the invisible arch that it made across the sky and placed that arch in the negative space of the sculpture “Moon”.

Being able to see the interaction between positive and negative space plays a large part in Oar’s creative process. For a piece like “Moon” he will draw the concept every day for at least a month. After that he creates scaled models and continues to refine the design. One piece in the show titled “Oleo” is based on an Italian olive press and is comprised of a few simple but powerful shapes. Oar has been redesigning it for over three years.

“Designing helps me concentrate,” Oar said, “With my minimalist style, I’ve got to say a lot with a little.”

Oar also does custom pieces for homes. His work graces pedestals across the country, including four homes in Steamboat. He works with clients to create pieces based on their own ideas, or brings a concept to the table and modifies it to fit the individual’s taste and the style of the home. Oar visits the home before the creative process even begins to get a sense of the dimensions and light.

STRENGTH





LOTUS

WIND





WASABI DREAM

"I most enjoy creating pieces for specific homes because it allows me to bring people into my own personal conceptual work," Oar said.

Outside of galleries and homes, Oar's work can be seen at the Howelsen Ice Arena in Steamboat Springs where a public works sculpture entitled "Red Fern" sits outside the entrance.

"People tend to think the circles are hockey pucks," Oar smiles, "but the shape was inspired by ferns I saw in New Zealand. Nature is still the best sculptor in the world."

In late spring 2008 the Bud Werner Memorial Library in Steamboat Springs will have a Christopher Oar sculpture outside its doors as well. For this new piece, Oar has modeled a bike rack that reflects his experiences with language barriers while traveling.

"When I thought about an idea of a sculpture, even as simple as a bike rack, for the library, my thoughts meditated on the written word and the common bond all of humanity shares through word and language," Oar wrote in his project proposal. The bike rack will have the form of an abstract word, complete with a capital letter and period.

Oar has a self-proclaimed "short attention span" and will soon put aside larger sculptures for his winter work—fine studio jewelry. He will also continue to travel, and hopes to visit Japan and Scandinavia soon. Whatever medium he is working with, in whatever country, his hands will certainly not be idle.

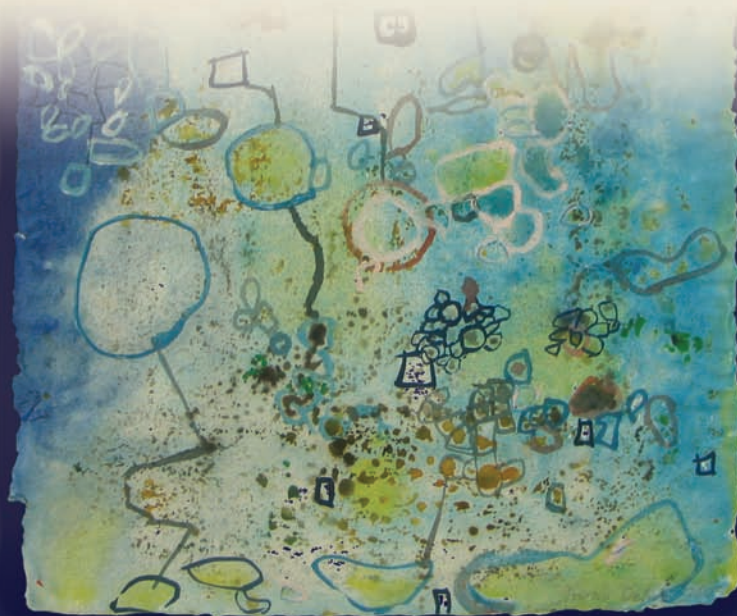
TO LEARN MORE

Information on pieces or upcoming shows:

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K. SAARI GALLERY



Susan Hover Odame Blue # 6 (Doodle), 2007 mixed water media on paper 13 7/8 x 13 7/8 inches

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