

AS SEEN IN
Distinctly
MONTANA

Scribe detail on
fireplace doors



Glenn Gilmore

B L A C K S M I T H



Woven style hearth tools and stand



Detail of The Tapestry Railing



Detail of Branch Railing

INTERVIEW WITH THE ARTIST

YOUR CHOICE OF AN ART MEDIUM IS CERTAINLY UNUSUAL. HOW DID YOU FIRST BECOME INTERESTED IN METAL AND BLACKSMITHING AS AN ART FORM?

My choice of artistically forged metalwork never seemed unusual to me. It was a winding road I took. In the mid 1970s I was a farrier. I used a coal forge, anvil and hand tools to forge my own horseshoes from flat bars of steel. One of my colleagues asked me to help him with the shoeing and trimming of a barn full of draft horses. He brought along a couple of books on artistic, forged metalwork, and as he drove we started discussing the metalwork featured in the books. The more I read, the more I became interested. What I saw in the books really sparked my imagination! I joined the Artist-Blacksmith Association of North America and went to their biannual conference held in Purchase, New York. That was 1978; the works and the people I met there led me down that winding road. I immediately started moving from horseshoeing to artistic blacksmithing.

WALK US THROUGH THE PROCESS YOU FOLLOW WHEN CREATING A PIECE.

Commission work starts with the client contacting me and explaining what they'd like made. It's important for my design to blend with other design elements in the room and over-all ambience of the home. Considering the metals' character and appearance, I present my thoughts and drawings to them. When we decide on the design the work can begin. I may travel to the location to make field measurements, or other preliminary work. Then I start forging in my studio. When it is all assembled, the finish is applied and I transport it for installation.



GLENN GILMORE achieves a balance in his metalwork that brings together elements unusual in such a demanding medium. His lines are bold and clean, yet delicate details often embellish his designs. The methods Glenn uses to join different components are often traditional joinery—rivets, collars, mortise and tenon—yet the works are decidedly contemporary. These methods not only provide an important part of the overall design, but add

structural integrity to the work. Whatever the approach or size, whether forging a set of large gates or a small coat hook, he devotes the same attention to design and detail.

"I want the piece to have enough body," Glenn states, "so that it will stand on its own, yet not be lost or overwhelming. I enjoy hot forging the metal because it is a very direct process. When I want a desired form, I have to know where and how to hit the metal. With each hammer blow, it moves in the desired direction." As a result of his ability to shape the metal, Glenn achieves a balanced relationship between mass, form, and function.

His unique fireplace screens and accessories transform an often overlooked area into a small gallery of art: a forest-scene fire screen frames the flames glowing atop beautifully crafted andirons and expertly designed hearth tools, which are as comfortable to use as they are attractive. Other original fire screen designs include a fleur-de-lis with repousse' copper dog heads, and an oak leaf/acorn pattern. Glenn also creates driveway and garden gates, light fixtures, grills, and decorative fence work, as well as tables, lamps, and fixtures for interiors. He considers himself fortunate to be able to do his own design work for commissions and original creations, a practice that allows him to create challenges that lead to continual growth and self-expression.

His command of metalworking results from 45 years of design and forging experience. This journey began with the humble horseshoe while he was working on ranches in New Mexico. Later he studied with Francis Whitaker at the John C. Campbell Folk School in Brasstown, NC. His pursuit of excellence took him to Belgium and Germany, where he received a diploma in Forging and Metal Design from the International Teaching Center for Metal Design and, apprenticed with renowned Artist-Blacksmith Manfred Bredohl at the Vulkanschmiede Aachen. Upon returning to the United States, he opened a private studio in North Carolina.

In the summer of 2000, Glenn relocated his studio to the beautiful Bitterroot Valley in western Montana. In 2003, Gilmore purchased a 1,600-square-foot studio near Corvallis.

Glenn has earned commissions for private homes, galleries, and stores as far away as France, Italy, and Japan. Since the early 1980s, Glenn's work has been represented in juried and invitational shows in galleries and museums throughout the United States. For a full list of Gilmore's awards, exhibitions, features in books and magazines, see www.gilmoremetal.com.



ONE MY GREATEST PLEASURES IS TO KNOW THAT WHAT I CREATE WILL BE ENJOYED AND IN USE FOR GENERATIONS.

Twig Railing

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES IN WORKING AND FORGING WITH HOT IRON AND METAL.

Forging metal is the most exciting part of my work! I love watching the shape of the hot metal change as I hammer it. I have worked with steel, copper, stainless steel, bronze, and monel. You can heat the steel 1000 degrees hotter than bronze and not damage it. When you heat bronze in excess it will crumble and looks like sugar. You have to constantly monitor the temperature of the material, being prepared for what you are going

to do when you bring it out of the forge. It is a very slow, labor intensive process. As soon as it cools, it's back into the forge for more heat. I'm always thinking of the next step and getting the most work done while it is hot.

INSPIRATION IS IMPORTANT IN ANY ART FORM. WHERE DO YOU GET YOURS?

I find creative inspiration from the natural world, my travels, studies and the work at hand, each piece with its own delightful detail and texture. I teach at different art/craft schools in the U.S.; working with the students brings inspiration. I'm also fascinated with historical metalwork.

WHAT ARE YOU WORKING ON NOW?

Right now I am forging 10 sections of my branch railings, two sets of custom fireplace doors, also hinges and latches for a gate and door. My present projects range from Montana to Florida.

DESCRIBE ONE OF YOUR FAVORITE PIECES, AND WHY IT WAS SO SPECIAL.

At a historic ranch here in Western Montana I used a 100-year-old wagon wheel that had been found on the ranch to make entry door hardware. I used the old metal tire for the escutcheon plate and used three of the



Copper detail on oak table





Ancient Wisdom lamp



Traditional Railing



Squirrel in the Pines




Glenn in the forge

spokes welded together to create each of the handles. I also forged the thumb lever and interior knob from the wheel. You can see the end of the spokes in the escutcheon plate. I like that when you open the door you are touching 100 years of the ranch's history.

YOU MOVED TO MONTANA 20 YEARS AGO. HOW DOES LIVING IN THE BEAUTY OF THE BITTER-ROOT IMPACT YOUR WORK?

Well, looking out my studio windows or stepping out the door takes my breathe away. It makes your spirit soar and sure gives you the energy to keep being creative.

SO WHAT DOES A BLACKSMITH ARTIST DO TO RELAX AFTER LONG DAYS AT THE FORGE?

Hike, cross-country ski, garden... and think about the next project I am designing. There is no finish line... 



Aspen fireplace doors