

## Striving to live through the true self

### Time of change revealed in Gonzo's recent work

BY DAVE GONZO

**S**eptember was a full month for me. I had many events lined up for demonstrations and to sell art. I moved into a new living/work space and had to set it up, there was a breakup and the death of people I was close to.

Among the first metal sculpture demonstrations that month was the OMSI Mini Makers Faire. They asked if there was a piece I could start and finish within the event timeframe, two days. I didn't have the time even to think about what to



DAVE GONZO at work on his recent sculpture.

demo or prepare for a piece that could be finished in two days. So, I decided that I would just start a piece at

[See GONZO, page 4](#)



"Dancing Through Life with a Heart Full of Gold and No Fear of Death," metal and wood, by Dave Gonzo.

## Alisa Looney shares how she creates her art



ALISA LOONEY demonstrates her sgraffito technique on an enamel pendant, scratching into a white layer of glass to expose a previously fired black layer.

BY PAUL HAIST

**T**he November meeting of PNWS members and guests at the home studio of Alisa Looney provided a rich opportunity to learn how this Portland sculptor achieves the results that have won her the extensive public attention her work commands.

About 25 people gathered at Looney's home on the evening of Nov. 11. She introduced them to her materials, techniques, and tools and demonstrated how she works.

The evening began with a round of self-introductions that resumed inter-

mittenly as more guests arrived. After an informal get-acquainted period during which everyone shared in the potluck, Looney embarked on a show-and-tell that kept everyone focused.

Looney is a metal sculptor who, besides the usual cutting and welding common to the practice, also enamels and powder-coats her work (she contracts out the latter work to Portland Powder Coating). Much of her larger powder-coated work is on public display.

One such piece that she calls "Going for Your Vision" won the annual

[See LOONEY, page 6](#)

## Pacific Northwest SCULPTORS

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The Pacific Northwest Sculptors Newsletter is published monthly by Pacific Northwest Sculptors, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to serving the public through educational programs and sculpture exhibitions. We are a dynamic, inclusive community of artists who inspire and support each other's growth with ideas, skills and knowledge.

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# Alisa's great demo meeting; board members, treasurer needed

**N**ovember has found me more concerned with family matters than sculpting.

In addition, the election caused me to spend a week running in circles, screaming and flailing my arms about, but that didn't help much, so back to it.

## A wonderful evening

Alisa Looney hosted a tremendous meeting on Nov. 11. She gave a very thorough demonstration of enameling techniques—all the way from the application of the enamel to the firing.

It is a precise procedure especially at the firing when too long at the required temperature will cause poor results. That necessitates flinging open the kiln door at the exact right moment. It was excellent information followed by great blast of heat.

Can't beat that.

## Next meeting

The next meeting is Jan. 19 (there is no December meeting due to the holidays). This will be at Rob Arps' Form 3D Foundry. Cutting-edge digital enlarging and sculpting are on the menu.

## Sculpture Day

Sculpture Day is progressing well. Again the main actors are Alisa Looney, Julian Voss-Andreae, and Jennifer Corio. The membership was queried for ideas and we got a few. Nothing is settled but all the ideas being discussed look like great fun. I think it's

going to be even better than last year. I will say no more.

## PNWS needs you

Again, I bring up the issue of board members. We encourage everyone to give it some thought. Three members at a meeting may make a nomination or a name may be submitted to the nominating committee which at this point is the board itself. We have room for five in addition to the current board membership. It is rewarding and it will further your career.

We are also seeking a new treasurer as Diana Rogero has taken on a more challenging task. It is a board position but requires only basic skills with Excel. Full training will be provided for any related duties. Please consider applying for the position. It would help the organization greatly to have the position filled soon.

That is it for now. Have a great Christmas.

Thanks to all for being a part of PNWS,

— George Heath

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GEORGE HEATH

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## TV LISTING

Airline pilot Dick Deeds explains why he thinks building a high-rise at the end of San Francisco International Airport's main runway is a bad idea.

# Board members gain vital professional skills

**A**re you looking for a way to boost the visibility of your art? Would it be helpful for you to make friends of gallery owners and art collectors? Do you want to learn the business of art, the making-a-living part?

One way to do all those things is to become a leader of Pacific Northwest Sculptors, become a board member.

While serving on the board is voluntary and does not include monetary compensation apart from not paying membership dues during the board member's term in office, serving is not without very significant benefits, according to current board members.

PNWS President George Heath said of his long and varied tenure on the board, "Nothing will teach you more about sculpture than knowing more than 100 other sculptors. Nothing will give one greater access to those collective skills than being on the board of PNWS."

He elaborated, "I've been greedily soaking up knowledge for 16 years and

I highly recommend it. It is also a very nice thing to have on your resume. I'd suggest every member attend at least one board meeting. Attendance may be in person or via Skype. You'll not be sorry."

Board member Dave Gonzo agrees with Heath. "Becoming a volunteer and board member of PNWS is an avenue that will help enhance your endeavors as a sculptor. There are many gifts that come with being a board member," he said.

He spelled out what those gifts include: "Connecting with businesses, gallery owners and collectors, knowing what questions to ask, learning to set boundaries, what works and doesn't work in getting your work out there and becoming known, how to put on a show, building confidence, learning leadership skills that will benefit you and others, making decisions and many other positive aspects. It may take a little time in volunteering, but the bonuses are very much worth it."

Board members will be elected at

the PNWS annual meeting in February.

Any PNWS member in good standing may be nominated to serve on the board. Non-members may also be nominated; this enables the board to enlist board members with skills that may be helpful to the group, such as fund-raising and marketing, for example.

Persons may be nominated to serve as a director by the PNWS president, a nominating committee established by the board, any two directors or any three members in attendance at any meeting at which directors are to be elected.

Members are also free to volunteer for nomination and are encouraged to do so now.

Board members serve for a period of two years and their terms are staggered such that no more than half of the board positions are up for election each year.

Persons interested in serving on the board should contact Heath. His email address is [gheath6006@msn.com](mailto:gheath6006@msn.com).

## Upcoming Meetings

### December Board Meeting

Friday, Dec. 9, 10 a.m.

Dave Gonzo Residence

3354 SE 19th, Portland (in the red barn out back)

503-270-9394

Members may attend in person or via Skype. Contact George if you wish to Skype.

Skype limits online participation to 25.

### December Member's Meeting

There is no member's meeting in December.

### January Member's Meeting

Thursday Jan. 19, 7 p.m.

3D Form Foundry

Demo: Digital Enlarging/3D Printing

Potluck: bring a dish/beverage

Hosted by Rob Arps

2808 SE 9th Ave., Portland

503 618-3330

[www.form3dfoundry.com](http://www.form3dfoundry.com)

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503-257-0059

# Durica-Laiche's new piece in Festival of Trees

BY SHELLY DURICA-LAICHE

This year I built two trees. One was steel and one was alive. This is the first year a non-living tree will be exhibited and auctioned for Providence's Festival of the Trees held at the Oregon Convention Center Dec. 2-3. This year, the money is being raised for cancer research and services. I built a free-standing, art deco, steel tree sculpture eight feet tall by two feet wide for the event. The design involved a detailed geometric steel strap inlay. The unique front panel design radiates around to the sides where it ebbs. The back panel consists of a single vertical strap with my signature. The clear coat was donated by Portland Powder Coating. My partner on the project was Sam Hull who runs the non-profit [ARTemis Arts.org](http://ARTemisArts.org).

A tree that I have repeated experience with is the holiday tree at Pioneer Courthouse Square. It's my fifth year building it. A surprise this time around



**THREE VIEWS** Shelly Durica-Laiche's art deco tree for auction this month at the annual Providence Festival of the Trees in Portland.

was a visit from a Portland Tribune reporter and photographer who came down to write a piece about the tree and the crew that assembles it.

Stimson Lumber Co. delivers the top 75 feet of a Douglas fir on a flatbed truck. Portland City Parks uses a crane to place it in a deep vase in the center of the square. The crew picks through the 500 extra branches that are deliv-

ered. We usually use 300 of them. We add them to the tree with steel brackets and lag screws. Depending on the shape of the tree, top to bottom, we add branches three to 17 feet long. Our goal is to create a full, dense body while keeping a natural appearance. We look at the profile as well as uniform fullness.

This year there were three sculptors on the team of seven, including two with sculpture degrees from Portland State University, me being one. It's critical to visualize three dimensionally on a project like this. The artists bring that trained "eye" to the team. I see it as a huge collaborative public art piece. The team is very passionate about the project and we work very hard to make it beautiful for the city of Portland.

*Shelly Durica-Laiche operates Indio Metal Arts in Portland. Learn more at [www.IndioMetalArts.com](http://www.IndioMetalArts.com). Read more about the Pioneer Courthouse Square Christmas tree project in the Portland Tribune at <http://tinyurl.com/ztuapf8>. Her tree sculpture raised \$7,100 for the charity.*

## GONZO: Start with some legs and see where they go

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the event and see where it went.

Before the event, I saw some unfinished pieces that my sculptor mentor did of legs and decided that I was going to create legs of some sort. My friend and metal artist colleague Shelly Durica-Laiche helped me with my booth for the event. She asked, "What are you planning on creating for the event patrons to see?" I told her that I was going to start with some legs and see where they go. As I was working on the piece and got into it, Shelly wanted to try her hand at playing with torch and sculpture. I handed her the torch and volunteered some techniques and ideas. She grasped it quickly and did a portion of the legs.

When the Mini Makers Faire was over, the legs were complete up to the waist, but there was still much to do. I did not have the time to keep playing on the piece in the new studio as it was still in disarray. I worked on it only at events I had scheduled for demonstra-



"Dancing Through Life with a Heart Full of Gold and No Fear of Death"

tions. These included the Festival of Nations produced by the Division Midway Alliance in Portland and Fall Festival

of the Arts (FFOTA) jointly produced in Troutdale by PNWS member Rip Caswell, a steering committee comprising gallery and business owners, artists, community leaders, and sponsored by the West Columbia Gorge Chamber of Commerce.

During these events, many different ideas came to me regarding what the new piece was about. Death was on my mind a lot, my having dealt with much death in the preceding two months. I was doing all that I could to stay in a positive space and keep moving forward with my career as a metal sculptor. I decided the Saturday of FFOTA that I wanted to add a copper heart to the piece. I took the piece home that night and TIG (tungsten inert gas) sculpted a copper heart to attach to its chest. The piece was starting to look like a person dancing. By adding the copper heart it came to me; the title could be "Dancing with a Gold Heart Through Life."

All the events where I was sched-

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# Corio, Frei install new work in Washougal

*PNWS Members Jennifer Corio and Dave Frei recently installed their latest public work called FIRE along the Columbia River in Washougal, Washington. FIRE is part of a larger public art project by the artist group Women Who Weld, of which Jennifer is a member. She designed the piece and Dave crafted it. Here, Jennifer tells the story of the project.*

When members of Washougal's art community first approached Women Who Weld several years ago about art at Steamboat Landing Park, we came up with the idea of the four elements, where each artist would create an artistic representation of either Earth, Wind, Water or Fire.

Originally, it was planned that each element would sit atop the tall pilings of the Steamboat Landing dock, located all together as a tribute to how the natural elements have shaped the awe-inspiring landscape of Washougal.

Ironically, a year later, the Columbia flooded and the tops of the pilings were just about eye level. Not a smart location for art! It was later decided that the Elements would be located around town, separated by distance but linked by a common theme. Earth, Wind, and Fire are now up and Water

will be installed soon.

For "FIRE," I was vastly inspired by the images I found of old steamboats like the ones that used to dock at Washougal. Their stacks were beautiful sculptural works. "FIRE" was the perfect element to artistically represent this important part of Washougal's history. "FIRE" is also a nod to the volcanic activity that has shaped much of the landscape.

Dave and I love using bright colors and wanted it to look as fiery as possible. The smoke plume moves with the wind like a weathervane. The piece is made from stainless steel and aluminum with a powder coat finish."

Besides providing a playful link to Washougal's cultural and geological past, Dave and I hope it is a bright spot that catches people by surprise and makes them smile. We hope people feel connected to their community through the entire Elements series. It says a lot about a community when they invest in art to make their town unique, beautiful and culturally meaningful.

*Learn more about Corio and Frei and their business Cobalt Designworks online at [www.CorioFrei.com](http://www.CorioFrei.com) and on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/cobalt.designworks](http://www.facebook.com/cobalt.designworks).*



**STEAMBOAT** stacks inspired this sculpture named "FIRE." The piece was recently installed on the Washougal, Wash., waterfront. Artists Jennifer Corio and Dave Frei created the piece, one of four planned pieces by different artists and representing the four basic elements: earth, wind, fire, and water.

## GONZO: Something about it resonated deeply inside the artist

Continued from preceding page

uled for demos were finished and now I had a full torch-sculpted body up to the neck and with a copper heart. I had more time to get the new studio set up so I could work. I had a metal ball-bearing head that I had started for another piece titled "Tree Nymph," but that was a bit too small for the new piece, so I thought about using it instead for the dancing figure. I also had six skulls sculpted from one-inch ball bearings. Maybe in response to all the deaths I was processing, I took one of the skulls and set it on the dancing figure's neck. Something about it resonated deeply with what I was going through; it was the style of art that comes through me. The name of

the piece transformed into "Dancing Through Life with a Heart Full of Gold and No Fear of Death."

I've always had a different relationship with death, a very big respect for it and a strong pull towards understanding and accepting it. In my opinion, our society in Western culture has taught people to be fearful of death, not talk about it, think about it, or accept it, as nobody knows what is on the other side. "Dancing Through Life with a Heart Full of Gold and No Fear of Death" embodies some central concepts of life for me. We are here having this physical experience and it has options. On one hand, we can live our lives closed off, selfish, arrogant, hateful, have false pride and live from the ego. On the other hand, we can be open, compas-

sionate, generous, understanding, helpful, kind, loving and live from the heart and true self before we meet death.

I believe that we have a choice only while we are on this planet and really don't have much control over what happens. My hopes are that "Dancing Through Life with a Heart Full of Gold and No Fear of Death" will inspire others to feel the gold they have inside themselves and understand that they should choose wisely who they truly are, how they want to show up in the world, how to treat others around them. We all have this chance—this short physical experience—before we meet death. Since none of us is getting past that, we might let go of the fear and just accept it as another birth in where we all came from.



**PNWS SCULPTORS** and guests gather around as Alisa Looney, in heat-protective gear, prepares to load up her kiln Nov. 11 when she demonstrated how she creates her sculptures.



**THE ARTIST** places a small enamel pendant into her kiln heated to well over 1000 °F.



**THE FIRED** pendant, left, cools. At right, kiln temperature before the firing.

## LOONEY: Artist demonstrates her multi-step process

Continued from page 1

People's Choice Award in Lake Oswego, Ore., in 2006 and was purchased by that city as part of its "Gallery Without Walls" permanent collection.

Looney said the piece turned out to be aptly named because the funds she realized from its purchase enabled her to achieve her vision of building and equipping her metal-sculpting studio.

While seated at a large work table in her living room and demonstrating the sgraffito technique that distinguishes much of her work and how she applies colored glass to her work, Looney spoke of the teacher from whom she learned the enameling process.

John Killmaster is a renowned Idaho artist who is much admired by the Boise State University students where he taught and where Looney first met and studied with him. She studied drawing and illustration with Killmaster as an undergraduate. She earned a BFA at BSU.

In 2010, she embarked on a period of individual study with Killmaster after he retired from BSU. She spent one week per year with him for four years and assisted him in an enameling workshop in 2013.

"I always wanted to learn enameling from him," she said. "He's the master."

Working on a small pendant with a

homemade tool, Looney scratched a design into a powdered-glass surface that she said may be painted, sprayed, or sifted onto the workpiece.

She often paints the color on her workpieces using a watercolor enamel from the Thompson Enamel Co.

She described what she was doing as she worked and answered questions from the many guests crowded closely around the table.

Looney explained that "each layer is fired in the kiln after the sgraffito is complete on that color layer."

Someone asked if there was a risk that repeated firings would degrade previously fired layers. Looney said it usually was not a problem, "but over-firing is always a risk." Later, she would fire another small sample piece in her roomy homemade kiln, which she allowed could be a little larger still.

Moving from the work table to a shop that houses her kiln and a homemade spray-painting booth, Looney put on protective clothing while she briefly described how the electric kiln was built.

She is safety-conscious. Airborne particles and high heat are the risks. The thermometer on her kiln registered above 1500 degrees Fahrenheit as guests jockeyed for viewing positions at a safe distance.

In safety glasses and a respirator, Looney first demonstrated how she uses a spray gun to apply porcelain enamel to a surface.

Then, replacing the respirator with a black face shield that resembled a welder's helmet and was reminiscent of Darth Vader, she moved on to cooking the goods. The shield and other gear protect Looney from the intense heat she is exposed to when loading and unloading workpieces to and from the kiln.

When she fired a small pendant like the one with which she demonstrated her sgraffito technique, clay sculptors and others among the guests familiar with the often many-hours-long firing times for clay seemed surprised by the very short time for glass, under two minutes in this instance.

Looney said the pendant was painted with orange watercolor enamel over previously fired layers of black, white, and blue. The timing and temperature of the firing, she said, are functions of the glass medium and the thickness of each glass application. She generally fires watercolor enamel at 1320 degrees Fahrenheit.

The demonstrations complete, the members and guests visited more, studied the many examples of Looney's work, and again sampled the potluck.