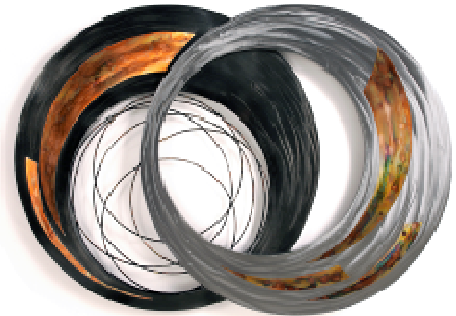


# artisan house.

metalworks of art.™



Designs above from left to right are: "Kaleidoscope," and "Gravity"

## Artisan House to Deliver Twice The (Metallic) Heat in Las Vegas! "Meet the Artist" Event Celebrates Firm's Double Anniversary

*Retrospective event marks Artisan House's 45th anniversary  
and 30 years of innovative metal artistry by BJ Keith*

**Event:** "Meet the Artist: A Retrospective of 30 Years of BJ Keith Metal Art"

**Dates/Times:** Mon., 9/14/09, 1 - 4 p.m.  
Tues., 9/15/09, 1 - 4 p.m.

**Location:** Artisan House Las Vegas Showroom, World Market Center, Space A-300

**Burbank, CA** – Who could have known what the future held for a mechanically-inclined girl whose favorite "toy" was a tool kit, rather than the dolls her sisters favored? Whose father, a master carpenter, kept her well supplied with soft white pine and hand tools? Who later graduated to power tools and studied metal art sculpture while earning her studio art degree at California State University?

In the late 1970s the immediate future for BJ Keith, metal artist extraordinaire who works with Artisan House®, California-based designers and crafters of unique, fine-quality metal sculptures for wall, floor, tabletop and table, was a part-time college job assisting the production manager at Artisan House. And so began a 30-year collaboration between Keith and Artisan House.

This September, those visiting Artisan House's Las Vegas showroom will have a rare opportunity to meet Keith, a solitary artist who usually avoids the spotlight, and view a retrospective of the most popular metal art designs she has created for Artisan House over the past three decades. Visitors will also have the chance to join in the celebration of Artisan House's 45-year anniversary.

### Going with the Flow

Artisan House president John Shilling, who first met Keith after purchasing the company in 2000, says that Keith is Artisan House's most successful artist. "She has played a key role in making Artisan

- MORE -

House a cornerstone of American metal sculpture," he adds. "However, her greatest talent lies in her abilities as a sculptor. She possesses a remarkable sense of composition that results in pieces with bold, imaginative elements that create a sculpted sense of flow."

Keith says she prefers making pieces that "combine moving, curved lines with negative space. ...Line, implied movement, balance of elements and rhythm are the foundation of my art." And when she achieves line, form and balance in one of her metal art sculptures, "That's what makes my heart sing," she adds.

### **Risk Taking Encouraged Here**

Keith possesses an artsy gustiness and a risk-taking personality that were encouraged early on by Artisan House's renowned art director Jerry Fels, who later became her mentor and friend. The first metal art drawings the young Keith submitted to Fels were "pretty amateurish," she remembers. But Fels "went crazy" over the two-foot-tall, pop-art metal sculpture of a can opener that Keith did as a school project. He enlarged Keith's design to four feet in height and asked her to create a series of kitchen utensil-themed wall sculptures.

According to Shilling, "BJ has always been willing to venture out of her comfort zone and try new designs. When we first met, BJ's pieces featured little color. Then she started experimenting with color and created vivid designs like 'Kaleidoscope' that have proven to be exceptionally strong sellers for Artisan House."

Keith's metal artistry has also had a profound impact on the company's product mix. Early Artisan House pieces, including BJ's, were mostly representational in style (or easily identified as a leaf, tree or other item). Today, the majority of Artisan House designs are sleek and decidedly contemporary. "Our contemporary focus is a direct nod to BJ's influence," Shilling says.

### **It's All Part of Her Process**

Keith admits she has an "insatiable artistic visual appetite." It is an appetite that compels her to study the striations in rock formations or to create a contemporary, bold interpretation of the life cycle of biological organisms. "It's about learning how to see," Keith says. "I think we artists see the world in a way that's different from everyone else. Everything I observe gives me inspiration for my art."

When beginning a new Artisan House design, Keith first sketches the design on paper. If a design is especially complicated, she uses wire or stiff cardboard to make a maquette, or design mockup. After deciding which types of metal the design calls for, she begins assembling the piece in her home studio in the foothills of the San Gabriel Mountains.

Keith is a hands-on artisan who finds excitement in the assembly process. "I'm not one to create a design and have others execute it. And I have the ugly hands to prove it! My hands are not ladylike, and I have scars from welding burns on my arms."

Keith's completed designs for Artisan House rarely look like her original sketches, she admits. "As I'm working on a piece, there's an element of surprise. I'll think to myself 'You know what? It would look better like this.'" That element of surprise and the level of engineering involved in a design means it can take Keith from two days to two weeks to finish a single piece. "My design entitled 'Curvaceous'

*Artisan House "Meet the Artist" – Page 3 –*

was very time consuming and took two weeks to complete. I had to use my engineering skills to get the components balanced, then do the welding and grinding."

Each year Keith submits about 50 metal art pieces to the Artisan House design team. Her designs and those of other artists then go through a selection process at the firm's Burbank headquarters.

The following designs by BJ Keith will be among those on display at Artisan House's Las Vegas "Meet the Artist" event:

"Gravity" - a current top 10 seller for Artisan House

"Propensity" - #1 seller in the European market

"Kaleidoscope" - introduced in 2002 and among the current top 10 sellers

"Vivacious" – Introduced in 2006, the piece is composed of tinted and flame-treated copper

"Cross Wind" - a striking, best-selling outdoor sculpture

Keith and her husband have four daughters and five granddaughters. In her leisure time, she enjoys painting.

Artisan House designs boast high quality and are expensively styled, yet retail prices begin as low as \$200. For Fall 2009, the company will introduce 52 new pieces at the Las Vegas and High Point markets. Artisan House will also host its first-ever exhibit at Paris' Maison et Objet Show from September 4 - 8, 2009.

Artisan House pieces are sold in home furnishing stores, art stores, outdoor furniture stores, and at billiards, pool and spa retailers. Commercial customers include major department stores like Nordstrom, restaurants, bars, hotels and casinos.

The firm's permanent showrooms are located in High Point (IHFC Design Center, Space D208) and Las Vegas (World Market Center, Space A-300). Artisan House has also exhibited at the Tokyo Furniture Market; Interiors Birmingham; Atlanta Gift Market; New York Art Expo Show; ASEAN Furniture Show (Singapore); Ambiente Frankfurt; Furnitex, Melbourne; and Interiors UAE (Dubai).

For additional information about Artisan House, contact the company at 800.354.6873 or [artisanhouse.com](http://artisanhouse.com).

**For digital images, email [info@professionalmarketingonline.com](mailto:info@professionalmarketingonline.com)**

**About Artisan House, Inc.®:** Founded in 1964 by partners Jerry Fels and Kurt Freiler, Artisan House is headquartered in Burbank, California with a European division based in Birmingham, England. Artisan House designs and crafts unique, fine-quality metal sculptures for wall, floor, tabletop and table. Sculptures are handcrafted of rich metals like copper, bronze, brass, steel, aluminum and chrome. Each piece is hand finished with intriguing surface treatments, paints and patinas. The company's vibrant, versatile designs have been recognized as multi-dimensional "metalworks of art." Artisan House has successfully closed the gap between pricey offerings from exclusive art galleries and mass-produced decorative pieces by creating original sculptures with unparalleled designs at affordable prices. The result infuses today's indoor and outdoor environments with dazzle and dimension.