

SANTA CRUZ *Style*

Spring 2023

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Protecting Our Coast
for More Than Four Decades

How Local Musician
and Grammy Winner
Ted Templeman
Influenced POP Music

Classical Scholar
Victor Davis Hanson
Reflects on Santa Cruz

Surfer Chelsea Woody finds her passion ▲ Greg Solow's life long sports car romance

A home designed by California's most renowned architects ▲ Coit Tower muralist and artist Suzanne Scheuer

MAKING MAGIC WITH METAL



The Team at JC Design keeps things moving

By Elizabeth Ivanovich

Jennifer Cherk grew up in a creative household in Mill Valley, taking a cue from her architect father. "I sort of followed in his footsteps," she noted. "He was always making things, and [often] just using what we had." She had an aptitude for craft projects, building a wooden chair as a 13-year-old. She yearned to make objects combining the power of metal with graceful lines, and she realized that the ability to weld would help her achieve those goals. In San Francisco, Cherk attended California College of the Arts and met her future husband, Jay Capela. The Bay Area offered a few informal welding courses, but the couple's full-time jobs left no time to pursue them. The duo decided to move to Santa Cruz, where destiny would find them fifteen years later.

In 2016, Cherk saw a Cabrillo College adult education catalog listing for an introductory welding course, emphasizing sculpture and other artistic forms. The small class, taught by a woman, promised a more inclusive atmosphere than the auto shop courses that put Cherk off in high school. Cherk was now a successful graphic artist but had never stopped wanting to learn to weld. Meanwhile, Capela had recently left his longtime job at Apple and was eager to enroll in the course with his wife. While Cherk and Capela both had design backgrounds, building tangible three-dimensional objects by hand was nothing short of a revelation.

"We learned the basics, and from there found our passion," Cherk revealed. They both wanted to pursue welding further and had a decision to make. They could retake the Cabrillo course, but the rush-hour commute routinely made a fifteen-minute drive from the Westside to Aptos take more than an hour each way.

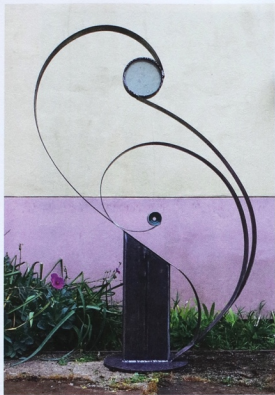
"We said, 'Instead of taking the class again, let's start to



Photos: Mickey Carroll

(Top) Artist Jennifer Cherk welds on a piece for Santa Cruz Arts Council's "Hearts for the Arts."

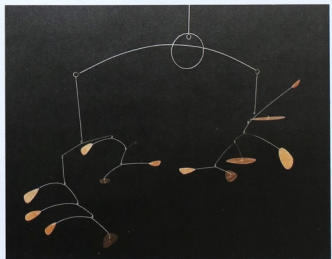
(Above) A glimpse of JC Design's fabrication shop. Their collection of tools and machinery allow nearly endless possibilities.



(Above) Cherk sometimes derives inspiration from found objects, such as the piece of glass in her sculpture *Wave*.



(Above) *01_5-Axis_Mobile*



(Above) *Unwound indoor hanging mobile* stainless steel, aluminum rod, and 14 copper elements

build a workshop,” Capela recalled. They gave away the pool table that occupied most of their garage, and began acquiring welding equipment piece by piece, finally opening JC Design Studio in 2017. After more than six years, they continue to learn on the fly through research, trial and error, and conversations with other artists and technicians. These conversations include Bob Rowe of Rowe Machinery and the Idea Fab Labs group in the Makerspace, both on Santa Cruz’s Westside.

“I think there’s something fundamental about our design educations that does come into play in interesting ways,” Capela said.

Cherk tends to work in steel for her sculptures and aluminum for her hanging mobiles, although she admires the look of copper—especially in its rusted or distressed forms—and uses it where she can. She embraces the challenges of portraying nature’s curvilinear forms in metal.

“I had this vision of creating kind of a visual pond of water lilies, and started by trying to create the leaves and the flowers in a way that looks like they’re hovering on water,” Cherk recalled. “I ended up making several of them, figuring it out as I went and improving on each one. They were pretty popular, but it was definitely kind of wrangling metals to end in a way that looked natural. But it was satisfying. I think my vision always was to create garden art where you’ve got sculpture made of metal that is backed by actual plant forms and trees.”

Cherk also derives inspiration from found objects, such as the piece of glass in her sculpture *Wave*. Welding the glass in place would make it crack, so she had to be creative in incorporating it. “The thing I love about [*Wave*] is that it is balanced in a way with very curved pieces, and has sort of a bounce to it like you could move it, yet it seems very strong.”

Capela augments his metalwork and standing mobiles with lighting and kinetic sculpture, which usually dictate a more technical approach to his preliminary sketches. At the same time, he often likes to keep his options fairly flexible, letting the process itself dictate the final direction of the piece.

"At a certain point, yeah, as I get envisioning what the finish line is, these things start to take shape," he explained. "Obviously at some point when you're manufacturing, doing the work, the metal meets the road and you have to decide: 'Oh, this is going to be a painted piece.' But I think for me again, it kind of happens organically in terms of how I'm envisioning it at that particular moment in time." While he feels that he is still defining a signature style, he appreciates opportunities to keep learning and incorporating new things in his work.

The artists submitted to Open Studios Santa Cruz within a few months of opening their studio, having been longtime fans of the program. "We were so excited, first of all that we got in, and then to find that we were unique in that there weren't that many metal artists in the county," Cherk recalled. Quickly developing a following, they have shown in each Open Studios since.

Capela and Cherk concurrently show work at the "Sculpture Jr" juried exhibitions at Sierra Azul Nursery in Watsonville, where their larger pieces have proven to be a perfect fit over the years. The duo are grateful to have gotten

to know Sierra Azul owner Jeff Rosendale and Pajaro Valley Arts organizer Hedwig Heerschop, as well as many of the artists who participate in the annual shows.

"We enjoy knowing that we do have an audience," Cherk said. "In fact, we have kind of a responsibility now to produce things that they're going to get excited about, too." 🌱

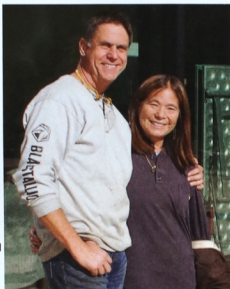


Photo: Mickey Carroll

(Above) Jay Capela and Jennifer Cherk combined their artists talents to create JC Design.

Get in Motion at JC Design

Online: www.jc-design-studio.com
or etsy.com/shop/JCDesignStudioArt.

At JC Design Studio
Visits must be scheduled in advance.

Contact: Jennifer at (831) 246-0302 or jennifer@jc-design-studio.com;
or Jay at (831) 332-0066 or jay@jc-design-studio.com.



Photo: Mickey Carroll

(Above) Sculpture made of metal that is backed by actual plant forms and trees. "This selection of handcrafted metal leaves have become very popular at open studios.



Photo: Courtney A.C. Design

(Above) Two Lit Sticks On High Stainless steel, pivoting counterweight, with custom LED fixtures.