



SILVERSMITHING

Ancient Techniques

Employing the traditional methods of hand raising, hand-spinning, lost wax casting, chasing & repoussé, engraving and hand finishing, Stephen Van O'Meara practices time-honored goldsmithing skills combined with the noble metals of silver and gold to create the finest pieces possible. His silversmithing techniques are outlined below:

HAND-RAISING

Before the mechanical era, this ancient art was the only way to forge hollow vessels into shape. Stephen hammers vessels into shape from a flat sheet using different shaped hammers over special anvils, called stakes. This process is called hand-raising. It can take many days or even weeks to raise one vessel, and requires great skill to maintain symmetry of the shape and an even thickness of the metal. Raising by hand allows the silversmith infinite creativity in the shape of the finished vessel. The rhythm of the hammer marks distinguishes these items as hand-made, and this distinctive finish cannot be replicated in its warmth and characteristic life by a machine.



HAND-SPINNING

A skilled silversmith can "hand-spin" hollow vessels by working a flat circle of silver over steel or wooden forms, known as "chucks" while they are spinning at high speed on a lathe. The chuck dictates the finished shape of the piece.

LOST WAX CASTING

To create a solid three-dimensional object in silver or gold, Stephen carves an original model in wax or clay, pours plaster over it in a steel flask, and when the plaster has hardened, "melts" the wax or clay out in a kiln. Molten silver or gold is

then poured into the void within the plaster. The plaster is washed away to reveal the object.

CHASING & REPOUSSÉ

Entirely done by hand, "chasing and repoussé" are often practiced together to apply decorative motifs, texture and a sculptural quality to the surface of the silver and gold. In French, "repoussé" means "pushing out." The piece is embossed from the inside using blunt steel tools. It is then filled with pine-pitch resin, and decoration is then applied to the surface with handmade tools that trace shallow grooves into the metal, a technique known as "chasing."

ENGRAVING

Engraving refers to incising designs and motifs into surfaces with sharp steel tools. This technique leaves a much brighter cut than chasing, but is not as three-dimensional.

HAND-FINISHING

Precious metals are sought after because of their high degree of reflectivity, silver being the most reflective of all metals. The silversmith brings out the high shine of silver through a series of consecutively finer abrasive polishing steps, which are done by hand with the aid of a polishing motor.



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