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Local artisans ready to show unique works

By **Elise Colcord**
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On March 10 through 13 three of Decatur's own long-time artisans will exhibit and sell some of their finest works to the art-loving spectators.

For the artsy enthusiasts on a budget, unique works abound at the 22nd annual American Craft Council Show, the largest juried, fine craft show in the Southeast.

Not just any artist may enter the Craft show. An artist must apply and have their best pieces judged to determine whether they will be accepted.

"I finally decided after two to three years of working with enamels that I was ready to apply with some of my jewelry, for the first time, to this show," Ann Finley said.

Finley tapped into her creative putting sculpting metal as a hobby from her regular 9 to 5 job at Emory University.

"It's kind of the hobby that ate my life. Steel work is very labor intensive and you get dirty in the process of creating the sculptures," Finley said, "At first it was a weekend thing, but when my friends would call me at work from the studio, I realized that was where I wanted to be, not behind a desk."

Finley began developing her skill with a torch, shaping metal into sculptures for eight years. Some of her pieces like animals, flowers and other creations that have appeared on the cover of "Sundance" magazine and also in gift shops around the country. Her two inspirations, animals and color, led to her working with enamels to create jewelry.

Marks Alexander and Barry Rhodes both long time Decatur residents like Finley, submitted some of their finest pieces to be judged before they were accepted to exhibit in the show.

All have had years of experience in sharpening their skills, but in different mediums.

Alexander began honing his craft of a metalsmith during a five year hiatus from his architect job at Praxis3. Like his two counterparts, his works have been displayed in galleries throughout the country. His inspiration behind his metal crafting comes from his attempt to capture the energy and geological processes of the landscape he comes across.

Rhodes turns to another type of crafting with pottery. He has been a potter for almost 30 years, and began his profession at Callanwolde Fine Arts Center in Atlanta under Rick Berman and Glenn Dair.

While Alexander and Rhodes have stuck with one vein of their art, Finley gravitated toward another of her passions branching away from solely metal molding.

"I've always been a jewelry-holic, gravitating towards it at craft shows, now after a few years of working with enamels, I decided to apply with my three pieces of a necklace, cuff and a ring."