

YOUR CENTRAL ALBERTA LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE

RED DEER LIVING™

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Magazine

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people



Photo by Tanya Lee

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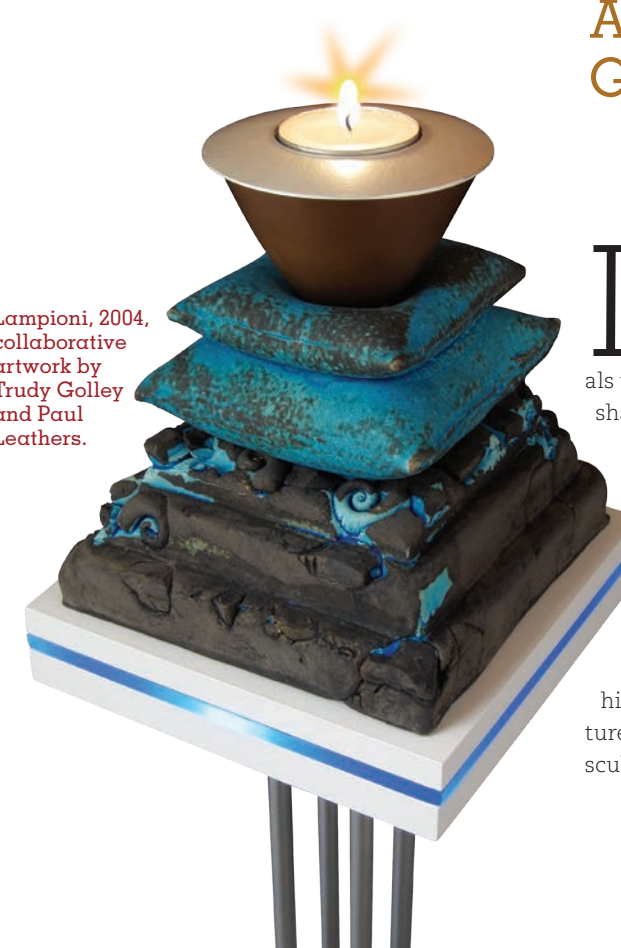


Ceramics and metals

A love story with Trudy Golley and Paul Leathers

By Leslie Greentree

Lampioni, 2004,
collaborative
artwork by
Trudy Golley
and Paul
Leathers.



Listening to Trudy Golley and Paul Leathers talk about their art is almost as inspiring as seeing the work itself. And that's saying something: the married artists are internationally renowned for creating stunning pieces that meld gemstones and precious metals with ceramics, and for creating art exhibitions that play with light and shadow in luminous, haunting ways.

While the pair maintain well-established individual careers as artists, they have also done a number of joint exhibits. Whether they're working on separate or joint projects, collaboration is a continuous thread that informs their work.

"It's become very fluid, and we don't have a lot of territoriality about our pieces," Golley says. "When we're working, I see possibilities in his work and he sees possibilities in mine."

Leathers, for example, will incorporate small pieces of ceramic into his jewellery — ones that Golley has cut and discarded from her sculptures. Golley, in return, uses 24kt gold decals designed by Leathers in her sculptures, including in her most recent exhibition, "Lucent: Works in >>

Light and Shadow," which was on display at the Red Deer Museum and Art Gallery from August through October of this year.

Leathers is a metalsmith whose practice includes jewellery, medallion art and small-scale sculptures, and Golley is a ceramic artist whose work ranges from playful teapots to large sculptures and installations. Both artists are fascinated with texture and light, and the interplay created when the shadows and reflections cast on the wall around the piece become an ephemeral but integral part of the art. Leathers explores those properties through gemstones and reflective surfaces, Golley does so with handmade glazes and ceramic forms and textures.

They created their first collaborative exhibition, "Rub(icon)," for their wedding in 1998: hosting an art exhibition in place of a traditional reception suited

Photo by
Tanya Lee



the artists, and they invited guests to purchase art for themselves rather than wedding gifts for the newlyweds. The art was a series of wall pieces, or reliquaries, by Golley, each housing a piece of jewellery by Leathers. The jewellery, when not being worn, becomes central to the sculpture.

"When we started working together on that first project, we tried to collaborate too completely, designing both pieces together as if it were one piece," Leathers remembers. "Then we pulled it apart three weeks before the exhibit/wedding and started over. Trudy did the ceramics and I did the jewellery and, in two weeks, we had it all made and packed up for the wedding."

"We learned to trust in the process, and it worked," Golley says. "I was making pieces I was stoked about, and Paul could then respond and make pieces that sang with them."

That artistic conversation creates a duality that runs through much of both artists' work — an awareness of the viewers' interactions with the pieces. "When people wear Paul's jewellery, they are hyper-aware that they're wearing a piece of art that has to go back into its little home," says Golley.

Leathers agrees. "I think when we make art we are often trying to elicit a response from others — it's an offering that gets completed or received by the viewer. That's when the art starts to live."

Long before they met, Golley and Leathers were separately pursuing the artistic paths that would eventually intersect in Winnipeg in 1995.

Trudy Golley knew she wanted to be an artist for as long as she can remember; she always had the support of her father, a locomotive engineer, and her mother, who trained as a tailor and seamstress in Germany. Golley recalls watching her mother turn fabric into three-dimensional creations.

She also recalls, at the age of two, making a mud puddle behind the family car and polka-dotting the car. "I remember being very particular. If the mud

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was too thick, it would fall off the car, and if it was too thin, it would run off," she says. "That was my first clay experience."

Golley was born in Revelstoke, BC; she studied ceramics at the Alberta College of Art and Design (ACAD) for several years and then attended the University of Calgary for her BFA. She spent a year and a half at a ceramics residency at the Banff Centre for the Arts in 1988-89 and then completed her MFA at the University of Tasmania in Australia. She spent a year in Calgary teaching at ACAD and the U of C before accepting a teaching job at the University of Manitoba.

Leathers was born and raised in Winnipeg, the only child of two artist parents. His mother taught art at a private school and his father taught in the Faculty of Architecture at the University of Manitoba. Leathers' father was a well-known printmaker and painter, and his mother is a painter and ceramic artist.

Leathers moved to Mississauga, Ontario to study jewellery and metalsmithing at Sheridan College's School of Crafts & Design before getting his BFA at the Nova Scotia College of Art & Design. He returned to Winnipeg to start his practice and later went to the U of C for his MFA.

Golley had been in Winnipeg for two years before she met Leathers, although their paths nearly crossed numerous times. He attended an exhibit of her work and they were introduced by a mutual acquaintance. Leathers recalls grabbing Golley's hand, taking her to one of her pieces, and just talking about the art.

"I was astounded — he understood everything I had done," Golley says. "It was as though he'd read the exhibition catalogue, but it hadn't come out yet." By the end of their first date, they were inseparable.

Golley and Leathers have made Red Deer home for 14 years, using it as a base from which to travel widely. The pair have exhibited their art and given workshops and lectures in various parts of Canada, Australia, Denmark, China, Hong Kong, Malta, the USA, Norway and Germany. Their work resides in permanent collections around the globe, and both have been inducted into the Royal Canadian Academy of the Arts, a peer-selected honour that places them among Canada's most distinguished artists.

Both Golley and Leathers have a particularly strong relationship with China, and have travelled



there to work almost every year for a decade. "It's interesting to have a completely separate practice in another country," says Leathers. "There are certain materials that are only available there, and so we go back and forth, and have to reconcile that there is work we can do in China and work we can do here, and they don't overlap. I think both our practices are stronger for it."

Whether the two are working individually or on a joint exhibition, their work is always intertwined. "I would describe it as a kind of dance, or similar to the Tai Chi practice of pushing hands," Leathers says. "It's a conscious decision to collaborate always, whether we're working together on a specific piece or not."

Golley is a visual art instructor in the School of Creative Arts at Red Deer College, and Leathers is a full-time studio artist. **RL**



View their work at www.alluvium.ca

A JDZ (Blue & White, the new Red) Fragment Brooches, 2012, by Paul Leathers.

B (Rusty) Reliquary, 1998, collaborative artwork by Trudy Golley and Paul Leathers

C Faux Banksia Vase 2010 by Trudy Golley. Collection of the AFA.

Artwork images courtesy © paul leathers