

A Room of One's Own: Building Jill Gentry's Dream Studio by Jill Gentry

Who built your studio?

I am very fortunate to have a husband can build about anything. I appreciate him so much, for wanting to build this wonderful space for me.

How long did you plan the studio?

My husband and I planned to build my studio about 2 years ago. We live on a small Kentucky farm, out in the country, so I really wanted it to resemble a "Hillbilly" shack, but of course, be modernized with glass, insulation, etc. However, we didn't get to the project until this past year because besides the farm, my husband has a "real" job.

Where did you create jewelry before?

I worked from our bedroom, at a roll top desk that was losing space with every passing year. I will continue to use the desk, but now it will house only business papers and eventually a computer.

What did your studio have to have to be your perfect workspace?

A door with a lock. Just kidding, it needed to be away from my other job. Housewife, domestic diva, and all the other things that go under that heading. Sometimes the people I love intrude on my workspace. Although I really don't mind if they come by to see what I am working on, sometimes it is better to stay away. Did I mention that my cat demands that he gets quality time with his mom? He likes to sit on me and receive his quota of love. I can't get a thing done with him planted in the middle of my chest, and he doesn't take "NO" for an answer!

How long did building the studio take?

The studio is almost finished. We started work on it in February of 2011 and it is down to the last little things. I hope to be moved in very soon.

What advice do you have for jewelry artists seeking their own design space?

Look for something that fits your budget. It could be the guest room in your house. I know some artists that like to travel to their studios. They rent space in an old department store or an old house.

Personally, I like being close to my home, so having my studio outside back door suits me just fine. The plus for me is that we live off the beaten path, so I can look at nature out my windows every day. Natural light is a must, as well as a bathroom and lots of storage space!

See page 2 for pictures of Jill's dream studio construction! ■

Jill Gentry is a wire artist and yoga lover from Kentucky, running her business, Blue Malibu Jewelry (named for her favorite car!), and is a frequent contributor to Wire-Sculpture's free email patterns.



Jill's old "studio"

Editor's Note

Welcome to spring (almost!) It's time to start getting set up for Mother's Day and summer shows. I know I'm trying to get a lot of jewelry made up in preparation for our Farmer's Market! I'm glad I was able to go to Tucson for inspiration; you can read about what in Tucson inspires our Wire Faculty in this newsletter!

Also in this newsletter, you'll find what I call a "Happily ever after" story: Jill Gentry has got her "dream studio," and I'm so happy for her! Plus, you can read Mary Bailey's review of Sterling Silver Filled Wire (she didn't hold back with the hammer!) and read Marty Blu's exploration of wire jewelry through her lens of visual arts.

Plus, Marty was kind enough to write a pattern for her intricate Dragonskin Earrings, just for Gold Club members! Check it out on p. 3.

I hope you enjoy this newsletter, and feel free to send me your feedback, or what you'd like to see in our next issue, at rosemarion@wire-sculpture.com.

*-Rose Marion, Editor
Wire-Sculpture.com*

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Blue Malibu Studio takes Form!



Putting on the roof



I love how tall the ceilings are!



I love these wooden doors! And that natural light!



Good insulation - a must for a year-round studio!



Looks like the studio is ready for someone to come in and design jewelry!

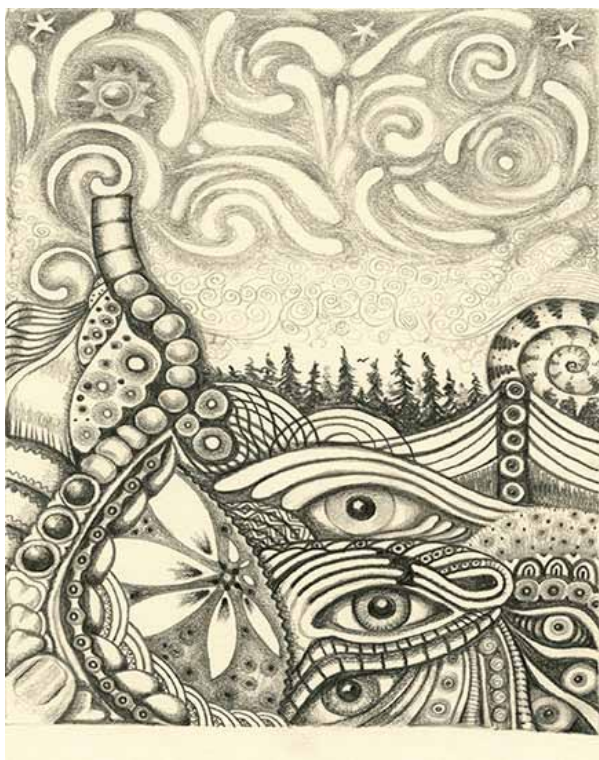
How Two Art Forms Merge

by Marty Blu

When Dale Armstrong asked me how my jewelry is influenced by my drawings, I noticed something interesting. The jewelry I make was really an evolution of my original drawing style, brought out into a three dimensional realm. I grew up in an artistic family and was always encouraged to create freely.

Some of my earliest memories are drawing doodles, making designs and tiny drawings where ever possible. Envelopes, school notes, and typing assignments were turned into canvases at a moment's notice. It was as if I was daydreaming on paper.

As a teenager, I took my love for freeform doodling a step up as I discovered pen and ink. I would spend hours on elaborate drawings. Intricate swirls and designs would fill the page and then I would further bring them to life with watercolor paint. I would even embroider my doodles into fabric. My style made its way into many mediums.



Of all my artistic endeavors, I have always come back to doodling. It's the fun and whimsical intricacy. Drawing circles. Curvy, swirling and rambling lines. Mixing in a vignette of an actual drawing; maybe a portrait or land and seascapes. These elements translate so perfectly into the art of wire jewelry.

I love making a mosaic of stone, crystal, pearls and metal together as a focal point for a pendant, bracelet, or ring. Those same curly, swirly and rambling lines from my

What happens when a visual artist becomes a jewelry artist?

doodles make for beautiful use of wire, interwoven and meandering through the mosaic of jewels and gems. Nestling the wire around a pearl or curving through a set of stones creates a very detailed, interesting and sensual display.



Marty's Dragonskin Earrings, made from labradorite beads wrapped with copper wire

Like my drawings, each piece of jewelry is different. Different perspectives can form different opinions on every piece. That is the value of intricate design. It doesn't just invoke the artistry, it evokes discussion.

Where a piece I designed may remind me of reptilian skin or a garden, it can remind some one else of a day at the beach. That's the beauty of working freeform, many designs just kind of happen. A bracelet, like a drawing, can become interactive due to interpretation.

Adapting my styles into wire jewelry has been an amazing journey. Seeing my creations worn on others is a special satisfaction. Last year, I saw a fellow artist wearing a really stunning wire wrapped stone pendant. When I told her how beautiful it was, to my surprise, she told me that she bought it from me at an art show the year before! When she wore it, it looked even better than I could have imagined. It was great to see how she made it hers, by wearing it. It just goes to show you how great this art form can be. ■

Marty Blu is a wire and visual artist residing in Washington state. She participates in many community art events, and contributes wire jewelry patterns to Wire-Sculpture.com.

Gold Club Exclusive: Dragonskin Earrings Pattern

Click here for Marty Blu's Dragonskin Earrings, a wire jewelry pattern only available to Gold Club members! Link: <http://www.wire-sculpture.com/dragonskin>



Ask a Faculty Member

Question: What are your must-see shows each year in Tucson, Arizona?

Albina:

When I hear "Tucson Gem Shows", I think about Tucson Electric Park first! Lots of beautiful rocks, fossils, gem statues (they are my daughter's favorite), tools (my husband's favorite place to be) and many more things to see, as well as good places to eat! Another show I've been to is JOGS, where the vendors display a variety of things like amber and lots of finished jewelry. The rest of the shows are unknown to me because I spend most of my time in Tucson teaching!

Dale:

Personally, I really enjoy the bohemian atmosphere of Tucson Electric Park (TEP, Kino Sports Complex) show. Besides a great selection of specialty rough rock for cabbing and carving, you can find so many different things there, from all over the world (including beautiful tie-dye). I also enjoy the show that is held at the Howard Johnson Inn because my favorite rough supplier sets up about half an acre of rocks to pick through and the variety of Coleman quartz crystals from Arkansas are amazing. The Gem Mall and Holidome are my favorite places to browse for beads and gorgeous pearls, but I have to be careful because I could spend an entire day at each location!!

Lena:

While I am in Tucson teaching at the gem shows, I usually don't have much time to shop. At Tucson Electric Park I have bought some interesting tools and pendants. At the Renaissance show (this is very small and cozy show) I browse through and usually buy several magazines, and of course I enjoy the JOGS show where I really like the unusual designer-style furniture!

Question: How would you improve your jewelry-making space, or are you happy with it as-is?

Jill:

Aside from moving to my new studio (see p. 1), I am always looking for storage for my current and future space.

Mary:

My jewelry-making space could use two sticks of dynamite thrown into it, a good shifting of the debris afterwards and someone good at organizing to put it back together like I would love it to be. I am a "messy" creator, whether in wire, scrimshaw, or even drawing and such and wow, a visit from the bead fairy's housekeeping crew would be wonderful!

We asked 5 Wire Faculty members some fun questions while preparing the newsletter. Here's what they had to say!



Albina



Dale



Jill



Lena



Mary

Question: Of the spring & summer jewelry themes (bridal, graduation, Mother's and Father's Days, Easter), which is your favorite that you have made custom pieces for?

Mary:

This is a hard one to answer as I have done pieces for bridal, Mother and Father's day. Probably Father's day is my favorite (then Mother's day) since most times it is a simple wrapped pendant for a father who is a hunter, where I have done a bird or animal scrimshaw piece of say, a turkey or a deer.

Jill:

I haven't ever done a custom pieces for any of these, but I think bridal would be fun.

Dale:

Personally, I have made special pieces for all of these occasions, but bridal jewelry is my favorite (only if the bride gives me some freedom when specifies her desired "style"). See the photos on p. 5; these photos are of a very special wedding set that I created with the bride's help (she was a design student). She requested that I use blood-red garnets with sterling silver, and each item needed to be able to move freely; a tiara, earrings and a necklace. It took me 5 months just to locate all of the correct garnets and I made the chain using Swarovski cubes, but she was extremely pleased and a gorgeous bride.

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Dale "Cougar" Armstrong created this sterling silver and garnet tiara, earring, and necklace set for a special bride.



Review: Silver-Filled Wire

We sent "Scrimshaw Mary" Bailey some samples of our sterling silver filled wire and asked her what she thought of it. She even sent us pictures of how she used the silver filled wire!

Review by Mary Bailey

18- and 24-gauge Sterling Silver Filled Wire

Recently I was asked to see how I liked the new silver filled wire that Wire-Sculpture is now carrying in stock. Since I like to bend and hammer wire, I asked for samples of the 18-gauge round half hard and a sample of the 24-gauge round to experiment with. I received 10 feet of the 24-gauge and 5 feet of the 18-gauge.

The 18-gauge worked really well when it came to bending and shaping. It took the hammering I did with a texture hammer with no problems at all. Looked really good and maneuvered where I wanted it to go.

So I decided to put the 24-gauge through similar paces by using it to coil with around the 18-gauge. I found it a bit stiff but once you got it going it worked well. The baggie it came in has it labeled as being "DS" which I would interpret



Mary Bailey made these pendants from 18-gauge and 24-gauge silver filled wire.

Sterling Silver Filled Wire Review (continued)

as being “dead soft.” It felt more like half hard to me as I worked it.

I coiled around an 18-gauge frame with little or no problems, adding beads and crystals as I went. The bare spots in the 18-gauge I hammered for texture. The earring I started was an 18-gauge frame and 24-gauge coiled around the frame. As I stated, a bit stiff to start with but once you got into the rhythm of the coiling, the wire seemed to wrap better.

As you can see from the picture, I played quite a bit, to put both wires through some paces; all in all, I found the silver-filled wire to be a nice alternative to using sterling silver or Argentium wire. ■

Mary Bailey is a wire and scrimshaw artist from Tennessee. She frequently contributes free jewelry patterns to Wire-Sculpture.com, as well as articles and answers to pearl and ivory-related questions on the Wire-Sculpture.com Blog.

The Mohs Hardness Scale

by Dale “Cougar” Armstrong

Mohs Hardness Scale

In 1812, German mineralogist/geologist Friedrich Mohs developed what we now call the “Mohs Hardness Scale” to be able to determine the hardness of minerals, as one way of identification.

Of course, ancient Greek scientists had already experimented with this form of identification in very early times, but the information hadn’t been simply defined until Mohs’ explanations.

The Mohs hardness scale is based on what natural mineral will scratch another natural mineral. For example, if you were trying to identify a specific white mineral and it can be scratched with a piece of feldspar but not with a piece of gypsum, that material is probably calcite.

Common items that are used to test-scratch minerals include: your fingernail, hardness of 2.2 - 2.5; copper penny 3.2- 3.5; pocketknife 5.1 - 5.5; plate glass 5.5; and a steel file that has an approximate 6.5 hardness. Basically, minerals with a higher number are harder and can scratch softer minerals with a lower number.

What does this mean for wire jewelry artists?

Those of us who are lapidaries use the hardness scale to determine what type of grits and polish to use when working a stone. The scale can be useful to folks who make wire jewelry, helping us to choose the best wire temper and frame-style for a piece we are working with; do we work off, or on the stone?

For example, frames for softer stones like malachite, azurite, opal, calcites, and fluorite need to be worked “off” the stone, whereas items made using quartz and feldspars can be worked “on” the stone.

Folks can also refer to the Mohs scale (porcelain, ceramic, terra cotta or natural stone) when choosing tile or countertops for their bathroom or kitchen! ■

Mohs Hardness	Mineral
1	Talc
2	Gypsum
3	Calcite, Copper
4	Fluorite, Nickel, Iron
5	Apatite, Obsidian
6	Orthoclase Feldspar, Titanium, Manganese, Niobium, Rhodium, Germanium
7	Quartz
8	Topaz, Cubic Zirconia
9	Corundum (sapphire, ruby)
10	Diamond

Dale “Cougar” Armstrong has made, sold, and taught wire jewelry for 20 years, a renowned artist and designer from Tennessee. She is Wire-Sculpture.com’s Education Consultant and has recorded 6 DVD series for Wire-Sculpture.

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