



# Rendering Motion

## HOW LOCAL ARTIST CASEY PARLETTE TRANSLATES A KEEN INTEREST INTO FINE ART

by JODY ROBINSON

Great art that stands the test of time is as much a product of hard work as it is talent. For Dana Point resident Casey Parlette, fine art - and a good life - isn't just about talent and hard work, it's also about discovering and developing keen interests.

Casey developed a keen interest in wildlife at a young age. As a child, he began whittling found wood, looking to local wildlife for inspiration. When an uncle taught him a few blacksmithing secrets, Casey began combining metal and wood for increasingly complicated pieces that celebrated the life he observed. His goal was to capture the essence of his subject's motion, which, in his view, was what

characterized the nature of the thing. He wasn't creating art as a career choice or as some "deep" social commentary; it was simply a keen interest that he would pursue whether or not people would pay him to do it.



Still, a guy has to have a career. For Casey, all signs pointed to the ocean. His family had settled in Laguna Beach generations before, and the water was always a second skin. He worked his way through an anthropology degree from UCLA as a hardhat diver, and his favorite starving-student meal was lobster that he caught by hand off the shores of Laguna. His art, which was a constant, reflected his watery pastimes. Wahoo, squid, shark, bass, octopi, nautilus, crabs, lobsters and mackerel are species that have been found in Casey's work, among others. Before becoming a full-time lifeguard for the City of Laguna Beach, Casey went on a solo trip to the Peruvian Amazon, where he ended up sojourning nearly nine months. His time there inspired a new appreciation for plant and land life, which began appearing in his art, homage to the alligator, snake, orchid, frog, butterfly and more.



In 2006 Casey was encouraged to submit some of his art to the region's most prestigious fine art show, the Laguna Beach Festival of Arts. He was juried in and has exhibited there every summer since; through the rest of the year he fulfills commissions for a growing collectorship, all while maintaining his career in lifeguarding. When every sculpture involves hours upon hours of carving, hammering, forging, welding and heat tempering, it's a considerable amount of work to accomplish the final product. Behind the hard work is a persistent interest in the life he studies and the sometimes tricky task of bringing it out in wood, metal and stone.

"Every now and then you come across a piece of wood that has a certain life in it - you look at it and see the sculpture in there," says Casey. "Then it's about cutting away the excess for everyone else to see. Many times it'll be something that looks weathered and misshapen on the surface, but has an inner beauty that's striking. It takes practice to bring that out."



Casey's keen interest has taken him into new artistic fronts. While working last year with titanium for a sculpture of a butterfly swarm, he realized that the colors that could be achieved in titanium could nicely reflect the iridescence of abalone shell. He hammered out two small pieces of titanium into shell shapes, heat tempered them by hand and hung them on earring hooks as a gift to his sweetheart. Everyone who saw them wanted a pair; today, Casey produces a line of titanium jewelry inspired by sea life, including abalone, scallops, sand dollars, kelp, waves and more. This is one keen interest in which many ladies (and their sweethearts) could develop a keen interest of their own.

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Find out more about the art of Casey Parlette by visiting [www.caseyparlette.com](http://www.caseyparlette.com)