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TACOMA WEEKLY

A man for all seasons

By Kate Burrows

Tacoma artist Joe Acree shares his passion for fusing metal, glass and color

Looking around his small, in-home metal shop in Tacoma, artist Joe Acree sees more than piles of steel scattered throughout the space; he sees the challenge and opportunity to create something meaningful for people to enjoy. From Wolf Spirit, a 400-pound piece representing all the mistreated canines of the world, to Wine Ship Rocket Bar, a piece combining metals and blown glass, Acree's collection is anything but ordinary.

Acree had spent more than 20 years working in the shipyards of Tacoma, but it was not until the artist was faced with an on-the-job injury that rendered him unable to work that he truly became invested in his art. "These pieces are like my kids," Acree said. "It's great to be able to look at piles of metal and start creating something that will make people happy."

Although he says many artists are "stuck in their medium," Acree takes pride in his use of metals, glass, paint and more in creating his art. In fact, he has a very specific vision in mind for showcasing his collection, which is currently only available for public viewing in his at-home gallery. His vision includes soft music and custom lighting illuminating his pieces while guests view the creative and at times "bizarre" work Acree claims as his own. "To me, music, glass, metal and color all fit together perfectly," he said. "It's difficult to transport some of my larger pieces, but I would love to be able to have people come visit the gallery and hopefully be inspired by my work."

When Acree is not in the metal shop adding to his own art collection, he can be found creating specialty gates and garden art for customers. His own yard is overflowing with examples of his work, from exotic birds that sway in the wind to ornate pieces designed to hold garden planters.

A guest book inside the gallery is a testament to the level of creativity and quality of his work. Although he does not let just anybody sign the book, Acree is proud of the messages and feedback he has received from his customers. "One lady said my pieces are all over her yard, and every time she sees them, they make her smile," he said. "A message like this really gets to me and makes me very happy."

Acree is especially interested in inviting his fellow artists and gallery owners to his studio to view his collection. "This would mean everything to me," he said. "These pieces are like my kids, and I would love for someone from an art museum around the area come here and see my work. Some of these pieces are bizarre and outrageous, but I believe they would truly enjoy it."

For more information, call (253) 208-9577, or visit Joe's Art Gallery at 3018 Pioneer Way E.