

Chicago Tribune

Top artists showcasing their work at American Craft Expo



A bracelet by jewelry maker Jonathan Lee Rutledge of Evanston. (Jonathan Lee Rutledge)

[Myrna Petlicki](#)

Some of the country's most celebrated craftspeople will show and sell their work at the 33rd annual American Craft Exposition, Sept. 15-17, at the Chicago Botanic Garden. The juried exposition is presented by the Auxiliary of NorthShore University HealthSystem, with proceeds benefitting two of its research programs.

Works presented will include jewelry, ceramics, metal, fashion wearables, glass, furniture, fiber decoratives, leather, wood, basketry and mixed media.

Co-chair Melissa David of Winnetka reported that over 400 artists from across the country applied for the show. A jury of artists and show directors selected 141 of them to participate.

That includes four Emerging Artists. "Emerging Artists are people that have been practicing their art professionally six or less years, and have never been in ACE before," David explained.

Being chosen as an emerging artist in 2004 changed the career path of jewelry maker Jonathan Lee Rutledge of Evanston.

To backtrack a bit, Rutledge's love of art emerged when he served with the U.S. Air Force in Germany, using his spare time to visit museums. After his service, he attended college where he took a metalsmithing class and then trained to be a goldsmith at graduate school.

After graduation, he worked as a firefighter in Rolling Meadows for four years while creating his first jewelry collection.

"The American Craft Exposition was the very first show I ever did," Rutledge said. He won the People's Choice Award which changed his career direction.

"Three months later I left the fire department," he said. Rutledge has been a full-time artist ever since.

Becoming a full-time artist was also a major career change for Northbrook resident Dubhe Carreno, who was born in Caracas, Venezuela. She moved to Boston at the age of 18 to study classical dance. To relieve stress, she took a pottery class at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts.

That class so affected her that Carreno earned a bachelor of fine arts degree at the Massachusetts College of Art and went on to earn a master of fine arts degree from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

Three years after that, she opened her own gallery in Chicago, and spent a decade promoting the work of other ceramicists.

"After I closed the gallery, I decided to pursue my own body of work," she said. She ended up participating in the One of a Kind Show at the Merchandise Mart, followed by a show in New York.

"Between those two, I decided that I wanted to communicate to a more local audience," she said. Carreno applied for and was accepted in her first American Craft Exposition show this year, where she will present tableware inspired by nature.

Co-chair David described the Chicago Botanic Garden as a perfect setting for the show. "Nature is a big influence in all kinds of art," she noted, "whether you see it in a scarf or a piece of jewelry or in the coloring used on the glaze for a bowl."

American Craft Exposition

When: 10 a.m.-6 pm. Sept. 15 and 16, and 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Sept. 17; Benefit Preview Party is 6:30-9 p.m. Sept. 14

Where: Chicago Botanic Garden, 1000 Lake Cook Road, Glencoe

Tickets: \$15 for three-day pass; \$13 for Chicago Botanic Garden members; Benefit Preview Party is \$175 in advance; \$200 at the door, which includes a three-day pass.

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