

By Stephanie Hintz



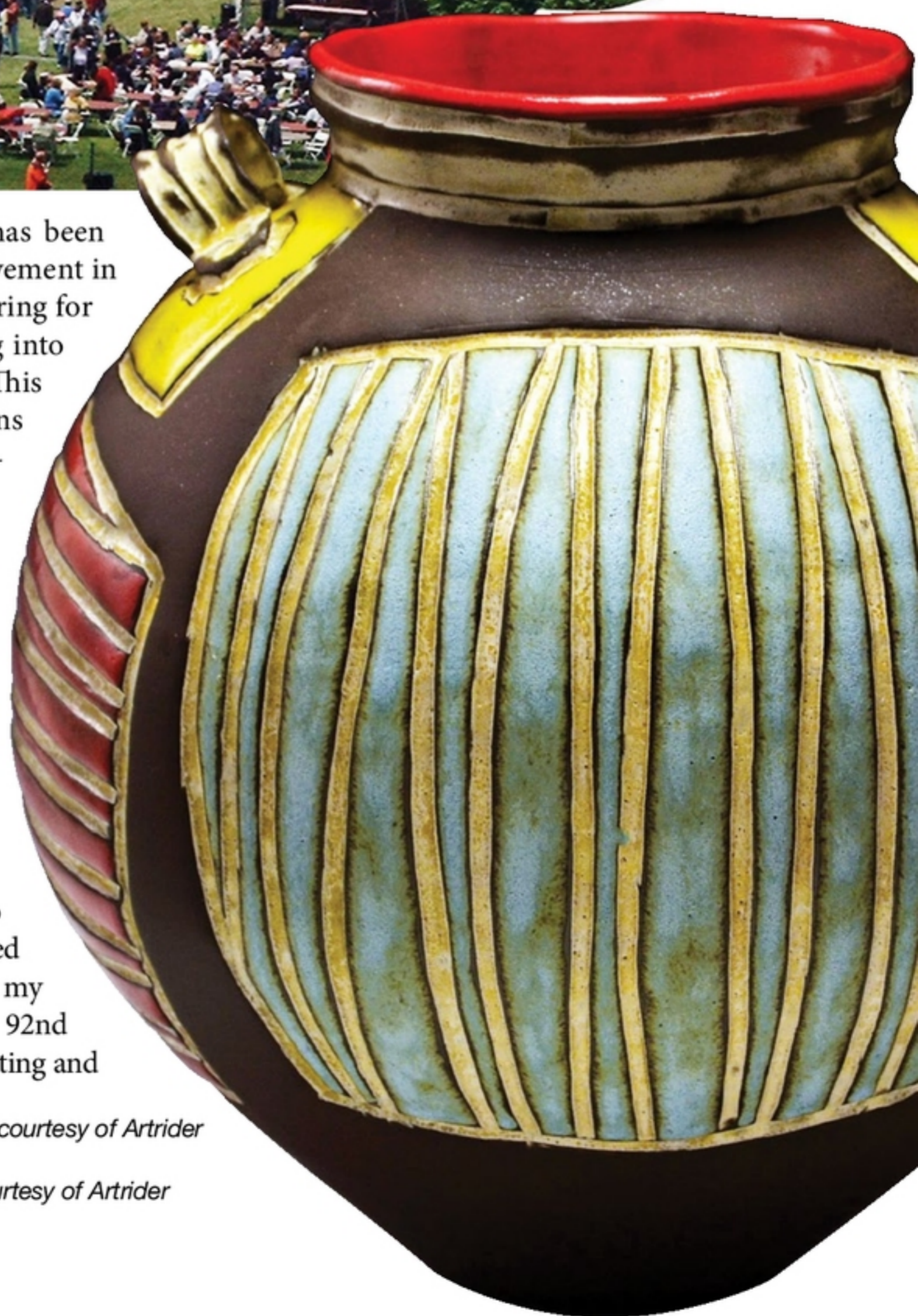
AN INSIDE LOOK: Artrider Productions Inc.

For over three decades Artrider Productions Inc. has been supporting artists and buyers of the handmade movement in America. Often, artists are so wrapped up in preparing for their next venue that they don't have enough time to dig into the background of some of the shows they exhibit at. This month we take a few moments with Artrider Productions Inc. co-founder Stacey Jarit, and share some of her humbled, respected, and priceless insights and experiences.

Handmade Business (HB): Stacey, you got started in the handmade world in the 1970s making enameled cloisonné. What was your background in the arts and what made you decide to take the first step in your journey?

Stacey Jarit (SJ): I always thought of myself as an artist. Art was where I excelled. My father was a professional photographer and I think his art genes were passed down to me. I still have paintings I made when I was three!

After college I decided that jewelry would allow me to combine my love of art with my love of jewelry, so I studied jewelry making at Parsons School of Design (where I met my husband Jeff), the Brooklyn Museum Art School, and the 92nd Street Y. Enameling allowed me to combine my skill at sculpting and



Top: Artists and guests enjoy the day at Crafts at Lyndhurst. *Photo courtesy of Artrider*

Right: Vessel by Boyan Moskov, www.boyanstudio.com. *Photo courtesy of Artrider*

my love of color. I sold my first work to a gallery in Soho and then started exhibiting at craft shows.

(HB): After working as an artist in the craft show scene, why did you choose to get into the promoting side of the business? Tell us about your first show as a promoter/organizer.

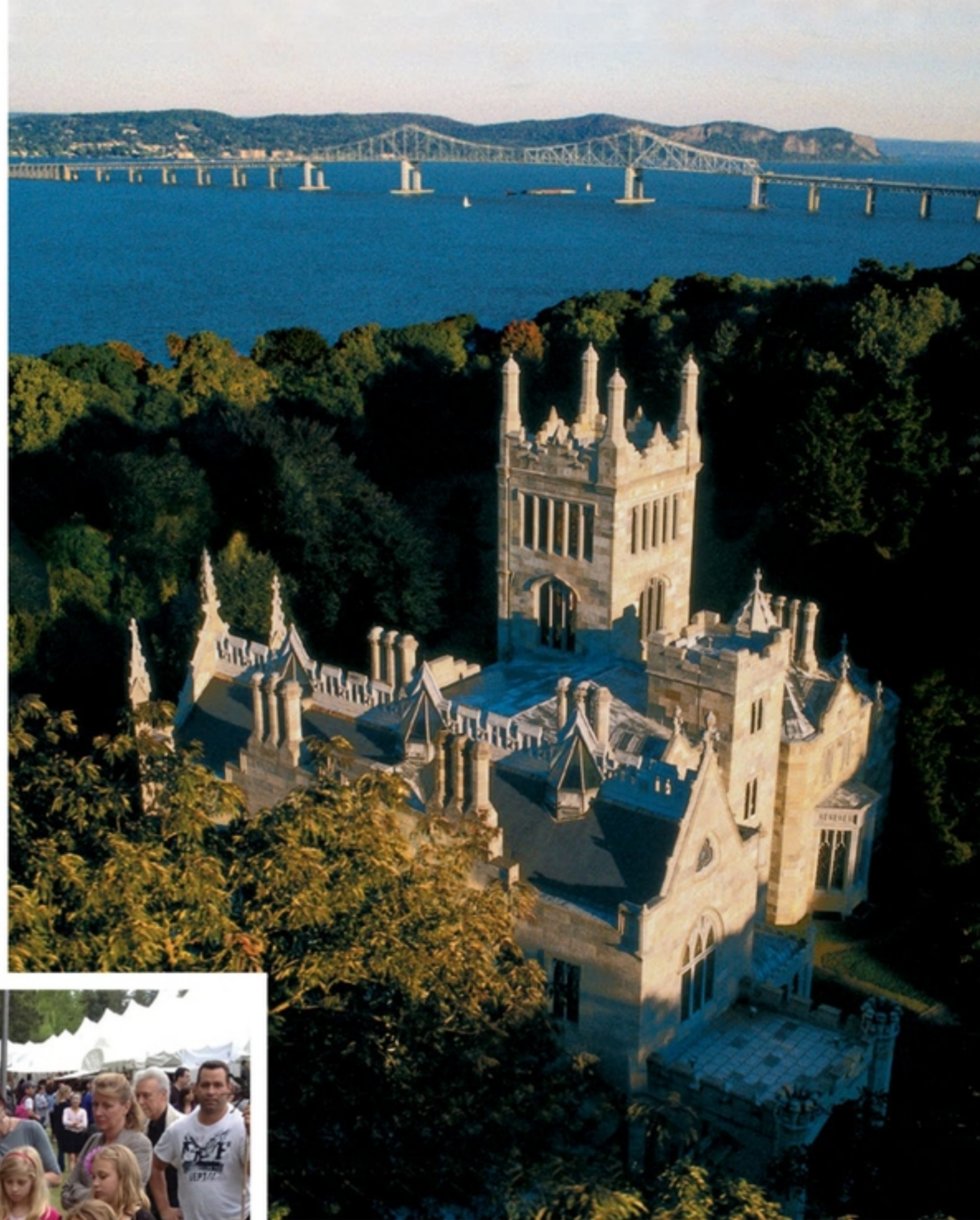
(SJ): It was July of 1982. Artrider quite literally started on our kitchen table because that's where Jeff and I opened the letter announcing that one of my best New York City shows had been cancelled. I was frantic. He calmed me, saying that this could be our chance to try something new. He reasoned that at that same moment there were a lot of other craftspeople wringing their hands and looking for a show in New York City, so it felt less like we chose to do a craft show and more like a craft show chose us. The next day Jeff roamed the streets of Manhattan until he found a space. We rented it, called all of our fellow frantic craftspeople (there was no e-mail back then), and within a week we were incorporated and on our way.

During this period, Jeff continued working at his "regular" job; I found out that I was pregnant, so it was a pretty crazy few months, but we were young and had faith in ourselves. Our first show, Crafts at the Armory, was successful enough that we immediately started strategizing about the next year. It was very exciting. A few years later we were successful enough that Jeff was able to leave his regular job — and the rest is history!

(HB): When you started Artrider, you were a young, active family. It sounds like family relationships are very important to you. How did you balance starting a business and balancing family life?

(SJ): Family comes first! Our daughter, Jackie, is an only child but her older sibling is Artrider. Growing up, her playroom was also the office, so it's no wonder that she was born to be part of our family business. Now she is a co-director along with Laura Kandel, who we've known since she was a baby. No kidding!

As to balance, the office was in our house for the first decade of Jackie's life, so we were home when she was



Above: Lyndhurst on the Hudson River. Photo credit: James Bleeker



Left: Artist Scott Martin demonstrates his work at Crafts at Lyndhurst to intrigued youngsters and adult admirers. Photo courtesy of Artrider

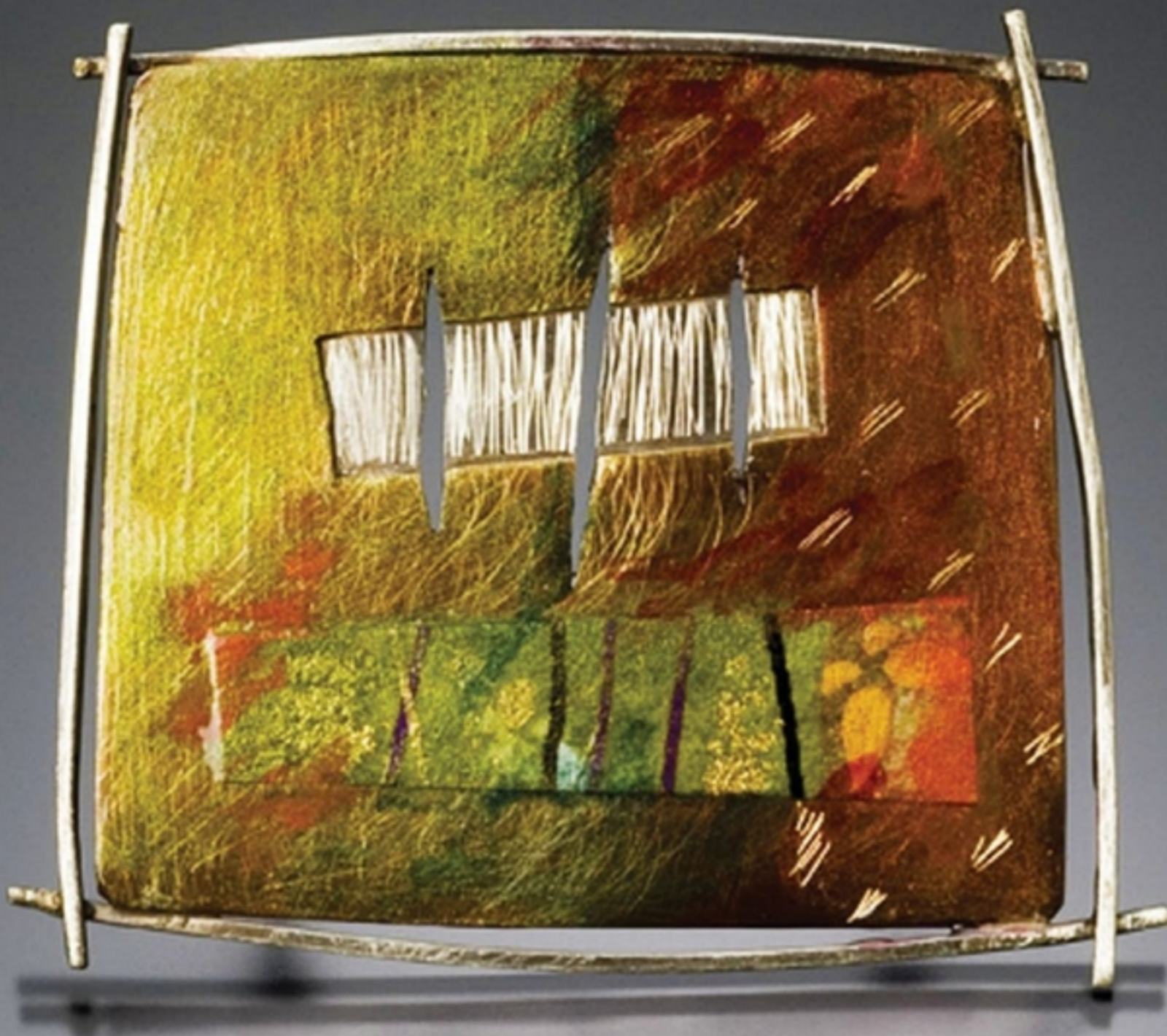
home and one of us would play with her while the other worked. We feel blessed because we got to participate in Jackie's childhood in a special way.

(HB): Tell us more about your charitable arts-related community involvement.

(SJ): Artrider has a long standing commitment to American craft and the artists that create it. We are dedicated to sustaining the careers of craft artists and every year help hundreds of them to earn a living through our show series.

Our events have raised millions of dollars for important non-profit, cultural, and arts organizations such as CERF+ (Craft Emergency Relief Fund + Artists Emergency Resources), the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the Westport Young Woman's League, and the Performing Arts Center at Purchase College. Through our efforts we introduce tens of thousands of people every year to their





Above from left: Brooch by Lauren Pollaro, laurenpollarjewelry.com. *Photo courtesy of Artrider* • Artrider Productions Inc., co-founders Jeff Sobel and Stacey Jarit. *Photo courtesy of Artrider* • Artrider's Jackie Jarit Sobel, Stacey Jarit, and Laura Kandel with CERF raffle winner Rusty Dorr. *Photo courtesy of Artrider*

programs and increase awareness of their missions. I have been very fortunate to be able to contribute my expertise in the arts along with my marketing and business skills to some of them as a board member.

(HB): *Artrider is set to put on seven highly-esteemed shows: Spring CraftMorristown, Spring Crafts at Lyndhurst, Rhinebeck Crafts Festival, Fall Crafts at Lyndhurst, Crafts at Purchase, CraftWestport, and Holiday Craft-Morristown. What can artists and craftspeople expect when exhibiting at one of your shows?*

(SJ): We are committed to excellence, so the public and artists alike are assured to see only the very best in American craft. All of our shows are in affluent communities with loyal and sophisticated arts-conscious attendees.

We understand the importance of thoughtful and creative advertising and have one of the largest marketing budgets in the industry. Our award-winning advertising campaigns are designed to convey the unique value of the handmade item. We use multiple marketing approaches including extensive print, web, broadcast, and social media advertising to reach new patrons, as well as direct mail, e-mail, and social media outreach to our continuously growing list of proven customers.

Our staff is dedicated to providing a supportive and inspiring experience for the exhibitors. We are visible and engaged with our exhibitors and customers throughout our

events. Part of what we love about what we do is the community we work with. We value the relationships we have and strive to make everyone feel welcome and included.

Additionally, what I think sets Artrider apart is the infusion of new ideas from our younger staff. Jackie and Laura are both in their early 30s and are able to bring concepts to the table — especially in the areas of marketing and social media — that aren't on my radar. This, paired with our already thriving practices, will help the craft show industry progress into the future by cultivating a new generation of craftspeople and craft buyers.

(HB): *Which events in 2017 are you currently still accepting applications for?*

(SJ): Our application deadline for all of our 2017 shows is Jan. 4, 2017. The application includes Spring Craft-Morristown, March 17-19, Morrissetown, N.J.; Spring Crafts at Lyndhurst, May 5-7, Tarrytown, N.Y.; the Rhinebeck Crafts Festival, June 24-25, Rhinebeck, N.Y.; Fall Crafts at Lyndhurst, Sept. 15-17, Tarrytown, N.Y.; Crafts at Purchase, Oct. 28-29, Purchase, N.Y.; Craft-Westport, Nov. 4-5, Westport, Conn.; and Holiday CraftMorrissetown, Dec. 8-10, Morrissetown, N.J.

(HB): *Why should an artist choose one of your shows to exhibit at? Why should guests/patrons buy from one of your featured artisans?*



(SJ): Even after all these years, when I walk down the aisles of our shows, I'm awestruck by the technical excellence and unbounded creativity of the artists. It's simply an exhilarating experience. I think our customers share that experience, which is heightened by their ability to observe and engage with this unique community. We always have a mix of new emerging artists and seasoned masters, so the shows are constantly changing and evolving. Each show seems to take on a life of its own. I think the artists share these experiences and appreciate being treated with respect and admired.

(HB): What is your most memorable experience as the director/co-founder of Artrider Productions Inc.?

(SJ): That's an easy one. Many years ago, at the end of Crafts at Lyndhurst, one of our artists ran up to me with tears in her eyes. She said, "Thank you! I made enough this weekend to be able to pay the rest of my daughter's college tuition!" Then she broke down and sobbed. I was stunned and transformed. ^{HB}

Artrider Productions Inc.

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Above: Handcrafted box by Philip Weber, weberboxes.com. Photo courtesy of Artrider