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& JEWELRY PROJECTS, P.75

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JEWELRY to TEAPOTS

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Branches Out*

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"You were my first interview ever and I was panic-stricken," recalls Michael Boyd with humor. The first time I met him, he was sitting inside a chicken-coop-turned-studio in downtown Denver. It was winter 1991 and I'd woven a checkered path through some spotty neighborhoods to find the tiny door that would transport me into Boyd's world. I had been told that Boyd was a rising star, a sweet man, and an eclectic character. True on all counts. My first impression was that he was strangely like a child prodigy — even though Boyd was in his early 30s at the time, he seemed like someone whose talent was rough and undiscovered, like an uncut stone. Yet it wasn't lack of skill I detected, but an innocence of spirit that, I have learned, is matched by the soul of a sage.

BY ANNIE OSBURN

PHOTOS BY TIM BROWN

Elegant



For Michael Boyd's pointers on a jewelry-making technique, see "Puzzle Clasps" in Jewelry Journal, page 75.

Because caviar is never supposed to touch metal, Boyd felt that a caviar set was a project that lent itself to stone. He began with two bloodstone bowls, carved in India, embellishing them with sterling and fine silver, 22K and 14K gold, lapis, gem chrysocolla, amethyst, tourmaline, and emerald. The spoon is of jade with a handle of fine and sterling silver, 22K gold, bloodstone, and peridot.

Jewelry artist

Michael Boyd

fills his cup

with newfound

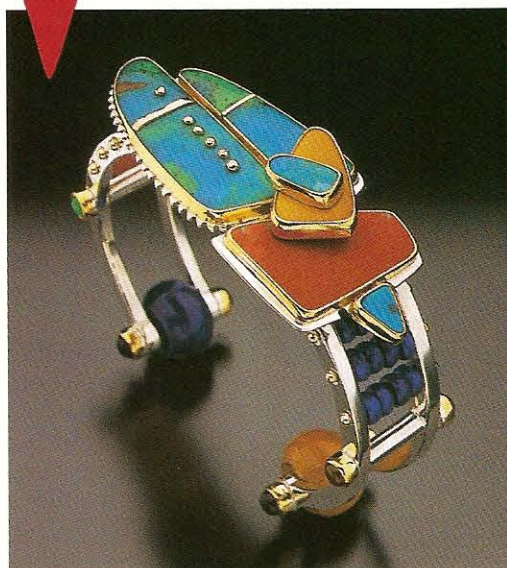
forms and shapes.

Vessels

Boyd's Long-Legged Teapot, a soapstone body with silver, gold, ruby, serpentine, black jade, jasper, ammonite, gem chrysocolla, turquoise, coral, and ruby-in-zoisite added. From the collection of Gloria and Sonny Kamm, courtesy Mobilia Gallery.

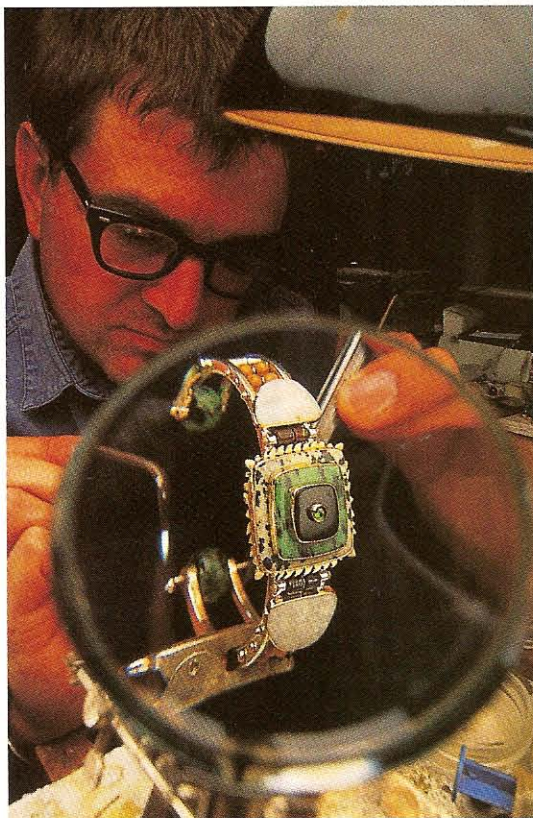
BELOW LEFT: Bracelet of silver, 22K and 14K gold, gem chrysocolla, jaspers, and lapis. Courtesy Mobilia Gallery.

BELOW RIGHT: Ring of silver, 22K gold, gaspeite, black jade, zebra dolomite, and citrine. From the collection of Geraldine Alexander, courtesy Obsidian Gallery.



Whether it's form versus function or function for function's sake, Boyd has turned a teapot into a virtual ceremony — no water necessary. At first glance, his *Long-Legged Teapot* looks like it could take flight and orbit a small galaxy of tea cups and flying saucers in an outer space where "high tea" has more to do with science fiction than British tradition. A two-part set, the teapot was designed to sit snugly on its long-legged base. At the tip of the sinewy silver handle is a slice of ammonite embellished with gem chrysocolla and yellow jasper. The lid is constructed of serpentine and black jade with a ruby cabochon as an accent. The body of the teapot is constructed of soapstone, but further enhanced with green and poppy jasper and serpentine. Various cabochons of turquoise, red coral, and jasper also embellish the pot. A bit of an optical illusion is provided by a large, green-hued ruby-in-zoisite tucked underneath the pot. At first glance, the stone appears to be attached to the silver stand, which rests atop long green jasper legs, but when the teapot is lifted, the zoisite remains on its bottom.

Boyd's starting point was an old Chinese lidded teapot, which he then transformed beyond recognition. "The body of this teapot is made of soapstone. Picture a stone teapot that has dragons and designs on its surface, a lid and everything. I cut all of the stuff off of the outside, and reground it. I cut the handle and spout off and ground the surface down to a shell and its base. Onto this hollow form I began attaching all the other elements," Boyd explains. Once Boyd creates a new surface for a teapot on which to apply stone, he starts building his creation like an assemblage. Ultimately the original, second-hand teapot becomes merely the core interior for a next-generation form of higher beauty.



Michael Boyd at work in his studio in Salida.

BELOW: Feeding Ego, a piece that Boyd describes as "totally dysfunctional." Boyd attached two recycled spoons (one flattened and cut into a fork) to a stand of fine and sterling silver, 22K gold, dumortierite-in-quartz, serpentine, chrome tourmaline, amethyst, jasper, granite, and spectrolite by hinges. When the body is lifted, the utensils swing aimlessly.



SIMPLE PROCESS, COMPLEX FINISH.

Boyd calls his new line of objects "basic fabrications and constructions." Although he downplays his process, the results are stunning. "It is like buying someone else's stone and recutting it, like when I first started making jewelry. At the time that we first met," he recalls, referring to our chicken-coop encounter, "I was mostly buying other peoples' stones and, with crude equipment, I was redoing and recutting the stones to fit my designs. The difference now is that I've been making jewelry for nine years. Now, I cut my own stones. In many ways, working with the shapes for my objects is sort of like going back to that. Now, with a teapot, I have to borrow and redo forms. With the exception of those shapes, everything else is fabricated in my shop."

In *Rattle Top Teapot* Boyd uses an exaggeratedly long handle tipped with Dalmatian jasper. This teapot also originated as a soapstone hollow form. Accents of bezel-set onyx are applied to the belly of the pot, and fine silver and 18- and 22-karat gold rings are used as design elements. For the teapot's distinctive "rattle," Boyd used some materials he had lying around —

beads of ruby, sapphire, and emerald. "I kept a lot of odd-shaped gemstone beads. The top is filled with these beads; they are inside and invisible to the viewer. I liked the idea of having precious materials hidden inside." The spout is made of two different varieties of stone. The base stone is granite, the second stone is a material that Boyd speculates is a type of jasper. Dangling from the spout is a piece of silver tubing with silk emerging from it like a tassel. South African bustamite is used on the bottoms of the feet. Finally, the pot is placed on a tray of silver with a serpentine rim, which Boyd fashioned from a serpentine bowl. "Again I'm taking materials, like forms and shapes, and

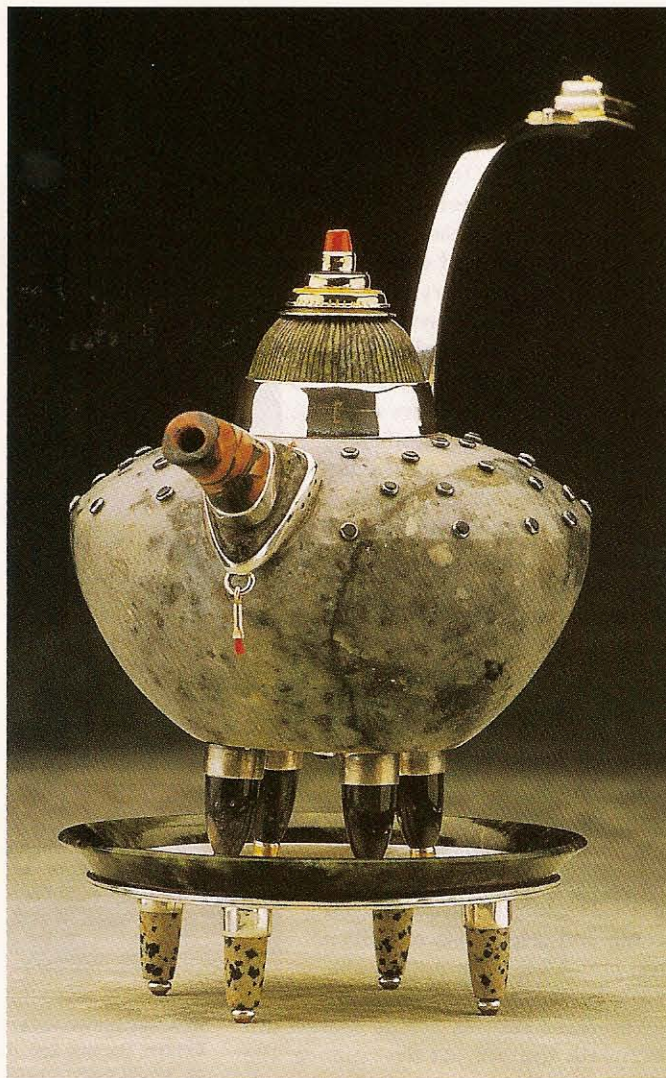
chopping them up. My pieces might as well be a mosaic or a collage. My objects are more like a 3-D collage."

One of Boyd's more exotic objects that involves form, shape, and whimsy is his exquisite caviar bowl set. Taking a set of fancy jasper bowls, Boyd recut and reshaped them and added sterling silver to create flat, high-polished rims. The bowls are stacked and positioned with metal bars as design elements that create an illusion of floating in their own spheres. "The thing with caviar is that it is never supposed to touch metal. That's why I felt it lent itself to stone. In my set, the caviar is meant to sit in the stone and the spoon is carved of jade."

Boyd finds further food for thought with dining utensils. With one vessel entitled *Feeding Ego*, he attached stone handles and then a silver fork and spoon so that the utensils meet as if hinged. When the handle of Afghani serpentine, dumortierite, emeralds, sterling silver, and 22-karat gold is lifted, the fork and spoon swing aimless-



Two views of Boyd's **Rattle Top Teapot**. The teapot is made of fine and sterling silver, 22K and 14K gold, coral, black jade, yellow jasper, and granite. Loose ruby, emerald, and sapphire beads inside the pot's lid give the piece its name.



Rock Hunting . . . with Goats

"It's like having vegetarian dogs that don't chase squirrels. You just walk and they follow. For prospecting, they're perfect. They can go where a horse or llama wouldn't dream of going," says jewelry artist Michael Boyd of his latest prospecting discovery: goats. "They can go literally everywhere. I climb 14ers [14,000-foot peaks] with them all of the time."

Boyd and his friend, Matt Keefauver, now own a total of six goats — two yearlings, two two-year-olds, and two five-year-olds that they use to prospect for jasper, agate, and other fun stuff in their local Rocky Mountain environs. According to Boyd, his "babies" — Clutch, Cargo, Spinner, Paddle Foot, Harvey, and Wallbanger — carry a third of their body weight. "My boys are in the 200-pound range, so I can put 40 pounds on a goat. Even if I put on 40 pounds a piece, that's a lot of pounds with six goats. I still have one left for my wine and one for the chocolate. And after you drink the wine and eat the chocolate, you've got plenty of room to carry more rocks back."

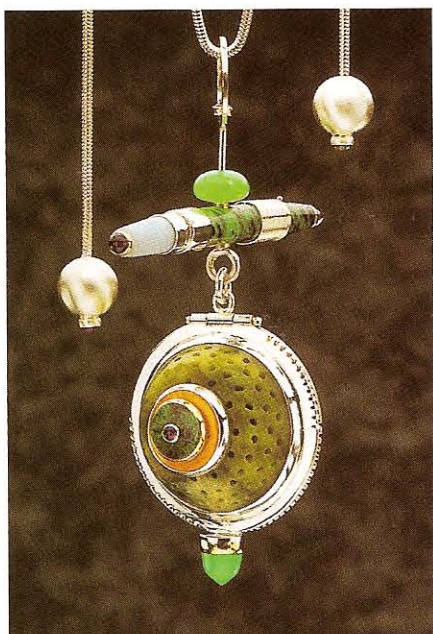
Having bottle-raised all four of his younger "babies," Boyd says his pals bond to humans. Out in the wilderness, no lead is

necessary because, like a good dog, your bonded goat will follow wherever you go. Sometimes Boyd goes on pack trips with a string of goats and fellow goat packers. "The reason I chose goats is that they are ideal for rough terrain. The hills here have lots of smoky quartz, quartz crystal, and some topaz and aquamarine. I'm working with a lot of what I'm collecting now myself in my jewelry. It makes the whole process a lot of fun. For some jewelry pieces, I'll do a hike and collect rock and then do a piece that's totally out of rock from Sand Creek or Brown's Canyon, for example. Obviously, there are things I get at the gem show, but if at all possible, I collect it myself."



Michael Boyd with friend, Clutch. Photo: Hannelore Gabriel.

Boyd uses modern mountaineering panniers and hardwood pack saddles on his goats to haul out the stone booty he prospects. For serious enthusiasts, the artist recommends goat packing Web sites, such as www.goatpack.com or <http://srv.net/~goatz/packgoat.html>, for more information. These sites offer lots of helpful tips and goat facts. Shopping for your goat is also possible on these sites, especially if your goat is "hard to fit." You also will find plenty of links to other goat-related Web sites. — AO



ly. "It's totally dysfunctional," laughs Boyd. "It's my commentary on the concept of function versus non-function and art versus craft, which is all bogus and stupid, anyway. And the bottom line is, who cares? Who cares if it's art, if it's a painting, flat craft, or 3-D art?"

Among Boyd's current creations and objects of desire made from stone and mixed metals are tea balls, forks and spoons, candlesticks, letter openers, and even a compass which actually works. Boyd will unveil his teapots and other objects on April 3 at Mobilia Gallery in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and on June 26 at his own gallery, Cultureclash, in Salida.

Besides a few small gallery shows and Salida's annual Art Walk, when more than 40 galleries, studios, and shops open en masse for a two-day festival, the show scene is a new experience for Boyd. "I've never shown my objects before. Last year, I did the ACC [American Craft Council] show in Baltimore and now bangle bracelets and double band rings with stones like mine are everywhere. People are knocking me off even in mail-order catalogs. Direct knock-offs," he says. "But you can't keep looking over your shoulder and looking back. I'm a craftsman, how am I going to afford a lawyer? You gotta keep moving. If someone has to copy you, it means they're not able to do it themselves. It stops right there for them. They have no evolution or progression in their creative endeavor."

While continuing his jewelry line, he works on his vessels over extended periods of time. "These pieces are like large lap pieces. They'll be around for

"I'm not going to quit making jewelry now."

Making objects that are non-jewelry pieces . . . has been for my own pleasure — nobody else's. Making objects is an expression of myself."



Candlestick of fine and sterling silver, 22K gold, serpentine, yellow jade, peridot, turquoise, coral, onyx, Dalmatian jasper, spectrolite, and ruby-in-zoisite.

TOP LEFT: Tea Ball Necklace of fine and sterling silver, 14K and 22K gold, ruby, chrysoprase, amethyst, amazonite, ruby-in-zoisite, spectrolite, yellow jasper, parrotwing agate, lapis, and peridot. TOP RIGHT: Pendant of sterling silver, 22K gold, tourmaline, jasper, maw-sit-sit, yellow jade, opal, amber, and fossil ammonite. Courtesy Cultureclash.



six months, even a year in process. They just sit there for me to contemplate. I don't do them very fast. I'll go and work on them for a while, but it's nice to let them sit and digest."

His techniques are the basics from jewelry fabrication — processes that lean more toward the simple than the complex. Although his pieces may end up looking elaborate, Boyd attributes this more to time spent than to intention. "It's just basic rock cutting and fabrication of metals. I think a lot of what the work is about is what happens through its evolution. The tables have somewhat turned in the sense that now it's not just the components that are important. It's the stone as a medium and I'm looking for that total integration of stone and metal.

"In many ways it's like buying components and stringing beads. No matter how you look at it, you're buying someone else's stuff with found object art or accidental forms. What happens with an accidental form is you take it and put it into a piece of art. You run a big risk of having it look accidental. So you have to manipulate it, you have to change it and make it your own. My philosophy with stone as a medium, as form and shape, is that you have to cut your own. Otherwise it's everybody else's stone." ◆

An exhibition of Michael Boyd's vessels opens April 3 at the Mobilia Gallery, 358 Hudson Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts. For information on other galleries that carry his jewelry, contact Boyd at his gallery, Cultureclash, 101 North F Street, Salida, Colorado 81201, or e-mail rocks@amigo.net.