

Metalsmith Steve Shelby Has Found a New Niche Making Pet Urns

Having always taken the road less traveled, this South Whitley, Indiana artist-craftsman has joined forces with a Los Angeles artist/entrepreneur to market his handcrafted brass sculptures of dogs and cats.

South Whitley, IN ([PRWeb](#)) August 27, 2007 -- Steve Shelby, who spent 23 years employed by Fox Products Corporation making contrabassoons, was the only person in the entire Western Hemisphere to hold that particular job. Now at age 58 he's doing something only a little less out of the ordinary: making pet urns, that is, urns to hold the ashes of deceased dogs or cats. His urns are out of the ordinary in the world of pet urns, in that they are beautiful three dimensional brass sculptures, hand made, one at a time. They are sold exclusively through [custompeturns.com](#), a web-based business owned by Vaike Alexandra Koiv, of Los Angeles. "I do the part I enjoy, and Alex does the marketing, which I've never been very good at", Shelby says of their business arrangement.

When Mr. Shelby Started his job at Fox Products in 1974, the building he worked in was a converted chicken coop. Fox has since grown to become the world's largest manufacturer of bassoons, and they are still the only manufacturer of contrabassoons outside of Europe. Shelby's current workshop is, ironically, a converted chicken coop, though much smaller than the one he worked in at Fox. "Many people have closets bigger than my workshop" he quips. The things he creates there, however, belie their humble origins. A visit to the "Metal Art" page on his website, [shelbyvision.com](#), reveals beautifully hand crafted art objects made of brass, both elegant and primitive at the same time, somewhat reminiscent of Art Nouveau. He uses the traditional techniques of the silversmith, along with some techniques of his own invention.

The pet urns are something he just fell into by accident. In the fall of 2006, Vaike Alexandra Koiv, owner of Alex in Welderland's Custom Pet Urns, was looking for new artists to expand her line of pet urns. She had seen Shelby's work in brass and thought he would be a good candidate. Shelby made a prototype cat and dog, and soon after they were put on Alex's website earlier this year, the orders started coming in. "It was one of those flip a coin moments", Shelby says of his decision to try making pet urns, happy that he decided to go for it. "I had never even seen a pet urn before, or even considered their existence, and I had never used animals in my artwork before, so the irony of my success with this is amazing". He continues, "It helps a lot that Alex is such a wonderful person to work with." Shelby's urns are not highly refined with a lot of realistic detail, but rather impressionistic, capturing the spirit or essence of cat or dog. Most of the thousands of hammer blows used to create the piece are still visible, which Shelby compares to an impressionist painting, that when viewed up close reveals the many brush strokes that the artist used to create the intended illusion.

Steve Shelby has been doing business on the web as Shelby Design since 2003. His metal art can be seen at <http://www.shelbyvision.com>. He sells his work from his website and takes custom orders. His pet urns are sold exclusively through [custompeturns.com](#).

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