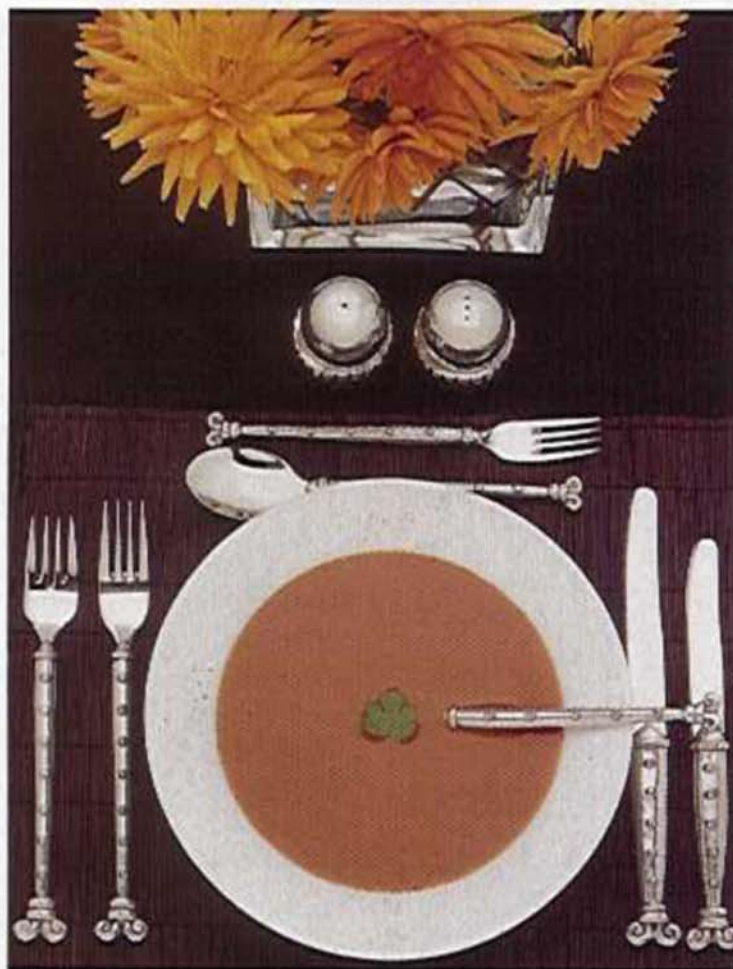


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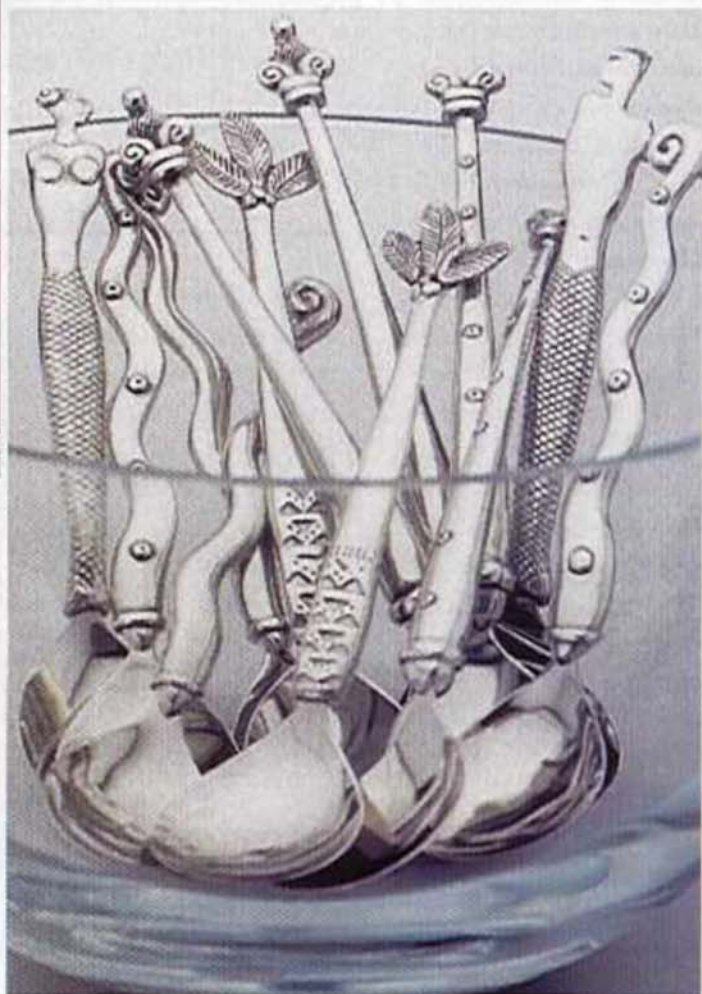
•Spotlight on creator

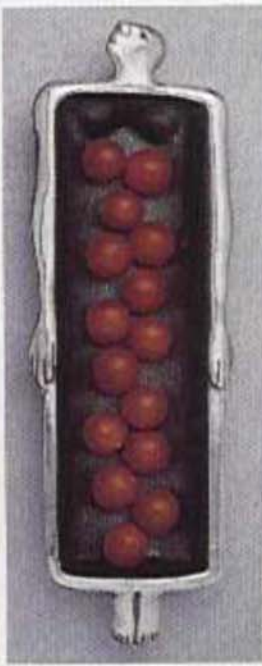
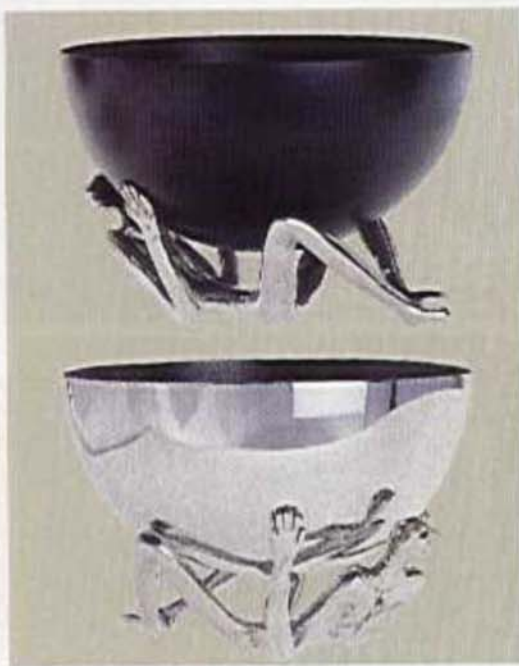
CaRRoL BoYeS



OUT OF AFRICA, IN HER OCEANFRONT CAPE TOWN HOME, CARROL BOYES CREATES FLUID, SENSUAL, FUNCTIONAL METALWARE SCULPTURES. TREATS FOR THE EYE WITH TOUCHES OF IRRIVERENCE. BOYES' UNIQUE ASSORTMENTS DELIGHT AND DRAW.

By Amy Stavis





You really haven't seen anything like Carrol Boyes' creations, have you? It could be dangerous starting a story with a loaded question like that but a picture is worth a thousand words. And the sampling shown here—of her more than 2,000 available pieces—confirms that Boyes' fluid and organic functional metal sculptures are innovative works of art. Using a mix of pewter, aluminum, and stainless, the South African artist has an uncanny ability of bringing her three-dimensional labors of love to life.

BoYeS IS a ProLIFIC DeSigNeR, pRoDuCinG aS MaNy as TeN DeSigNS WeeKLY. ThiS eXplAiNs whY There aRe SoMe 2,000 iTeMs aVaiLaBLe.

It's a good thing Boyes loves what she does since she toils virtually around the clock at it. During the week, Boyes can be found at her factory in Cape Town's central business district where she and a staff of 60 are spread over three floors. On weekends, Boyes shutters away in her home studio perfectly positioned on the Atlantic Ocean coastline, offering a liquid panorama as far as the eye can see, a peaceful and calming vista that feeds her design muse. Then, every six weeks, Boyes makes the 1,000-mile trek northward to the subtropical Northern Province, where the family's 40-year farm doubles as her production facility and 340 artisans produce the goods. It's a formidable schedule made bearable because of the many lives Boyes positively affects. She does the math, "I'm responsible for 400 lives,"

she calculates. "And if each of those people is responsible for feeding ten others that means responsibility for 4,000 people." The pressure can be daunting, she acknowledges,

but there are pluses, notably the beatific locale of her home/studio; the lure of Cape Town eases the burden immensely. "It's a peaceful atmosphere with sea and mountains," Boyes says. "I would never leave."

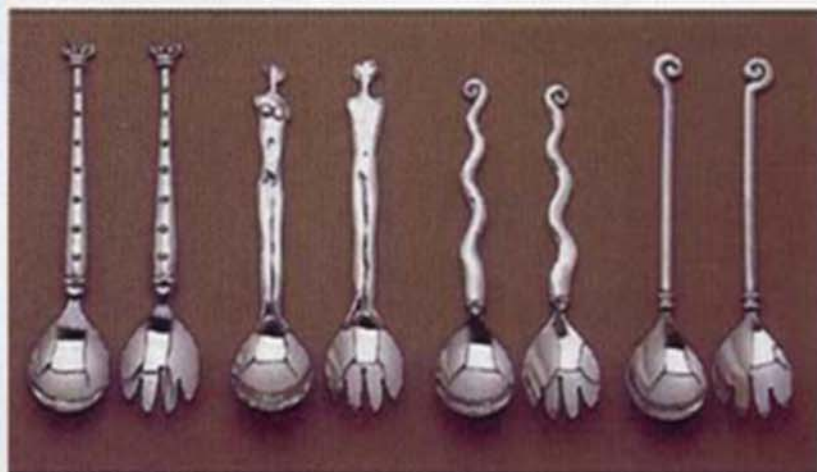
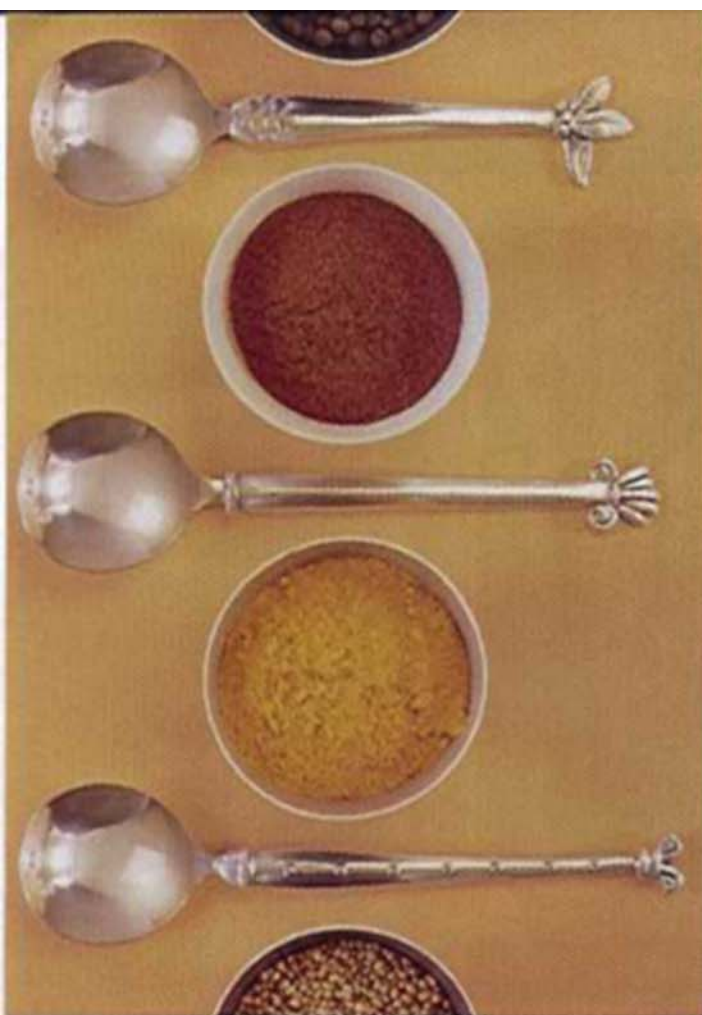
So nestled in her picturesque enclave in the home she helped build ("A house is just a big sculpture," she underscores), Boyes churns out whimsical, radical, comical, topical, mystical, magical—anything but typical—

pieces, a majority of them naked forms. "I love the human body, no matter the shape," Boyes allows. Traces of naughtiness and irreverence are playful, never risqué. "I design pieces that are joyous celebrations of what we do everyday," Boyes notes, adding, "I think I have a passion for being a bit wicked and I think the people who buy my pieces may be a little wicked themselves."

Boyes wasn't always so bold. She studied sculpture at the University of Pretoria, but segued into teaching, a



BOYES' DESIGNS

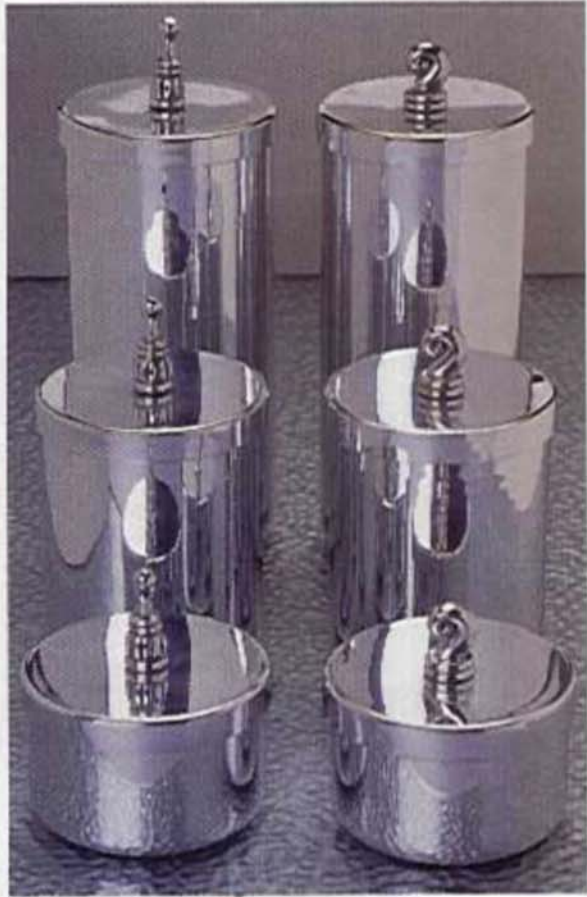
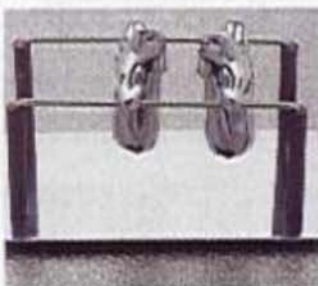


career that she fell into rather than chose. After a decade in the classroom, Boyes accepted that her dream deferred would not magically materialize, so, in 1989, with a now-or-never battle cry Boyes departed teaching to pursue her sculpting passion. Those initial years were filled with experimentation; Boyes explored one metal after another in her newfound métier. Boyes began with copper but it proved too difficult to work with so she moved to sterling. She liked the look of it, but it, too, was difficult to shape. Then she stumbled upon pewter. "I needed a material with the look and feel of sterling but would be easier to work with," she says. "Pewter's a forgotten, old-fashioned metal. It's great fun to work with and when it's polished it looks like silver." Boyes rounded out her repertoire with the addition of aluminum and stainless, each bringing its own mettle to the pie. "Pewter's great for small pieces, like cutlery," she tutors, "but large bowls and vases would be enor-

**NuDe FeMaLe FiGuRes,
MyThiCaL ScALY FiSh,
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mously heavy in pewter so I use aluminum which is a lighter metal and is stronger than pewter. And stainless is dishwasher-proof for items that need to be hard. All the metals have their own special peculiarities."

Within two years of starting her business, Carrol Boyes Functional Art, it became clear that the artist was a whirling dervish with no hope of respite. With burn-out just around the bend, she needed help. Salvation came in the form of her father who offered the vacated building on his farm for expansion. The site (minutes from Africa's oldest game reserve, Kruger National Park) is a more than 14-hour drive from Boyes' Cape Town home, but the designer recognized she could do some good for the drought-stricken people of the region and accepted her father's proposal. (Today, she makes use of three buildings and as, Boyes says, "It's starting to look more like an industrial center than a citrus farm.") After the expansion, success was quick. Just three years after hanging her shingle, Boyes serendipitously found her way to exporting. "I wish I could tell you I had some amazing strategy," Boyes candidly conveys, "but it hasn't been like that at all. People have just approached me and it's



fallen into place." Boyes' importers were merely tourists on safari at the game reserve who made a stop at her company store and fell in love with the assortments. Now they're helping build her multimillion dollar enterprise with exposure in more than a dozen international markets. "I want my product to be enjoyed by as many people as possible," Boyes says. Stateside the product is distributed by Diane Seidle, who too discovered Boyes' work when she was on an African holiday with her husband Ivan. "The first time I saw Carol's designs they made me smile, and if they could have that effect on me they'll have it on others," Seidle says. "I want to share the joy they bring with as many people as I can. To rep this line was not a decision based on making money, but on passion."

The lines include 2,000 SKUs, an admittedly overwhelming figure, but the prolific Boyes is lax to shave any items. She designs as many as ten pieces each weekend although it's not a rare occurrence when she sweats over a single piece for days. This "fusion of function and fantasy" where the "mundane becomes extraordinary" features an interesting mix of serving pieces, bowls, platters, ice cream scoops, tea strainers, the list goes on. The best seller, the *Man Water Jug*, S175, (shown on page 63) is Boyes' great-

est source of pride. "I like the proportions, how the arms become the handle," she says, a rare admission. Boyes acknowledges her fickle nature mandates favorite pieces are the ones she's working on at the moment. It's a fertile imagination to be sure and Boyes admits to dreaming about pieces, seeing them fully realized. "It doesn't take a great effort to co," she fesses. "It comes naturally. I can look at a hammer and see a figure in it. I look at a lamppost and think it would make an amazing handle." She is not without creative blocks, however. She's currently struggling with a man corkscrew. "I've been working on it for quite a while," she says, "trying to get the arms to move up and down, but the mechanism isn't quite right."

While Boyes is a pro behind the scenes, the shy designer has no interest in being the face in front of the product. The question, in fact, alarms. "I could never do that," she protests, when asked if she represents her product at trade shows. "I'd cringe and hide behind the display. I leave the selling to the experts." The lady coth protest too much. Boyes doesn't quite understand that she is indeed the best seller, albeit an invisible one, of her sculptures. It's fairly obvious, in this instance, that the product and the creator are one, and it's a simply magical merging. □