

# A heavy metal artist

**From city monuments and honorary memorials to elaborate residential gates, entrance signs and contemporary interior art and furniture, Jeff Kreitz is creating fresh, iconic art every year.**



# guild it, grin &



# and it, pound it refine it

Silver is the precious metal often considered for a 25th wedding anniversary gift. Yet, Bruce and Michelle Zeman of Pine River, Minn., found steel to be more intriguing.

To create a lasting milestone to celebrate their anniversary, the couple commissioned local artist and friend, Jeff Kreitz, to create a custom bed frame. The headboard artwork mimicked their wildlife saturated lakeshore view of Upper Whitefish Lake.

For the next month Jeff cut, heated and shaped the stainless steel with aluminum, copper and brass, which he then polished to perfection from his Breezy Point, Minn. shop. He enjoyed making the bed frame as much as the Zemans enjoy the finished product.

Practicing such artistic steelworking skills at a very young age was encouraged by his father, who was also a steel artist. In 1994, Jeff started his own business, Creative Steel Works, by designing and building steel bed frames similar to the Zemans. Now, Kreitz's work is known throughout the country. Clientele even include American Idol mainstay, Paula Abdul. Her personal designer, opted for one of the hundred beds Kreitz has sold throughout the country.

Over the last 15 years, the steel craftsman has resculpted his portfolio as he acquired an array of commissioned work that revealed layers of artistic talent, far beyond bed frames. As quaint cabins have steadily turned into luxury lake homes around the Crosslake area, Jeff keeps busy with local business. Nevertheless, he is frequently constructing artwork for clients all across the country.

Jeff prides himself on being able to listen to his customers. It is his job to take their dreams and imagination, combine their taste and style, and turn them into a metal masterpiece. "I interpret and then build," he puts it simply. He assembles each piece by hand so he can use various metals with an assortment of color and shine. Each piece is a direct metal sculpture with no foundry process. That keeps costs down, and he never loses sight of the artwork.

A perched bald eagle completed for a Crosslake, Minn., lake home boasts as many main feathers as a real bird. Jeff individually sculpted each feather with his own hands creating unmatched detail. "My work can't be repeated," he says.



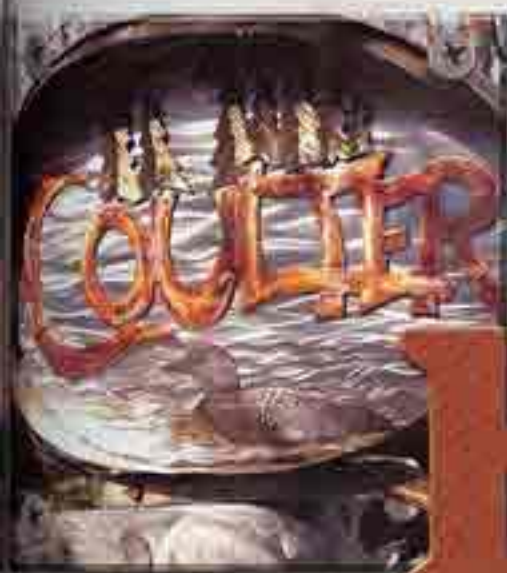
From naturalistic Northwoods to artsy, abstract or clean and contemporary, Jeff is able to go between many lines and offer artwork that pleases an array of clients. Kati Bauerly of Sauk Rapids, Minn., has certainly grown fond of his work over the years. So far, she has commissioned Jeff to create two canopy star beds – one for her cabin on Cross Lake and another for her loft in Minneapolis – as well as two lawn sculptures, steel and granite table tops and custom step railings. “I like the clean, contemporary lines of the metal,” she says. “It just fits my edgy, creative and astir style.”

A T.I.G. welder, plasma cutter and thousands of dollars in other technical equipment, along with the help of at least one, full-time employee is necessary to accomplish the consistent workflow and deadlines Jeff has. Creating functional artwork for area contractors keeps him busy too. Entrance gates, railings, signs, fireplace doors, kitchen range hoods and other custom metal work are the odds and ends that fill the schedule between commissioned artwork. Regardless, Jeff loves being able to get up each day and walk 50 feet to his own shop and start the work day.

Most projects take between four and eight weeks, start to install. It is just enough time for him to grow a fondness to each piece. “I get depressed after a project, when I see that the shop is empty and everything is gone,” he says. “As much as I try not to, I still get attached. But, I know it is out in the universe somewhere and people can enjoy it...and I am glad I got the chance to build it.” □

Depending on the difficulty, detail and size of the artwork, most projects take between four and eight weeks from start to install. With prices dependent on the time and materials, steel sculptures range in price from \$5,000 to \$20,000.





# honor it



Photo by: Nick Coulter



For more information or to see more of Jeff's work go to [mylakehom.com](http://mylakehom.com).

## A Loving Memory

When the snow melted in April 2004, the five-month search to find Dru Sjodin regained its strength. The questions in the hearts and minds of the family and friends of Pequot Lakes, Minn., and the surrounding lake communities were answered with everything they didn't want to hear.

The 22-year-old North Dakota State University student was finally found, laying in the snow and wrapped in a blanket after being violently raped and murdered. She had been abducted while talking with her boyfriend on her cell phone. National media attention brought daily reminders and updates of this horrific crime to the small-town lakes areas that remained in shock.

Etched granite just didn't seem right for Dru, her mother, Linda Walker tells LAKEHOM Magazine. Linda remembered first meeting Jeff Kreitz at a local art show a couple years ago. She was deeply impressed, not only by

the quality of his work and talent, but also by his passion for creating it.

Linda worked with Jeff to create a steel sculpture inspired by one of Dru's last drawings from an art class. Today, the stainless steel tree stands four feet tall with copper accent leaves. It shines in the sun, as brightly as Dru's smile once did, and often stands tall above the snow.

Landmark center pieces and memorials are commissioned artwork pieces that Jeff Kreitz describes as a "fantastic honor" to create. When he was asked to create the piece for Dru's grave, the request became a beautiful burden and a humbling request. "I can't tell you...this kind of work goes beyond making money or making a living. It goes beyond basic living or even this life," he says. "Receiving the chance to honor someone like Dru is among the highest calling, in life."