

Sewing With Fire

“Why fit in when you were born to stand out?” ~ Dr. Seuss

“With my art, I’m not looking for a cerebral response. What I want is the ‘woah’ response,” said Dave Dunn, proprietor of Dunn in Metal.

For that matter, who is to say that artists must be serious all the time? Dave’s sense of humor shines through in each



Dave Dunn donated this 50-inch sculpture “King Bay Crab” to the St. Michaels Community Center.

piece he creates. Find beauty in a creation that is half fish and half crab? Why not? Dave explains, “Nothing I make will ever be considered traditional. If it’s well executed, it can be just as beautiful.”

As they say, beauty is in the

eye of the beholder. “Demon Crab Fish” has a place of distinction on his mom’s fireplace mantel. It has this place of honor because the sculpture’s creation was a turning point in Dave’s college art class. Dave wasn’t knocking his art professor’s socks off with his assignments. They had a serious conversation, and something clicked for Dave. “Demon Crab Fish” was the result, and it truly did garner his professor’s admiration.

But the road to full time artist was full of right turns and hard stops. Dave graduated from the College of Charleston (SC) with a degree in general theater studies with a specialization in prop fabrication and handling. It was the advanced art classes that Dave really wanted to take because they involved welding. He then went on to become a certified welder.

Having always been a creative child, Dave was nurtured by the art lovers in his life. Growing up, he spent time at the family property in Bozman. Drawn to the Harris

Creek shoreline, he used found objects and driftwood in his creations. His family also spent time during his formative years in Paris, France, and Dave was surrounded by the medieval and renaissance imagery of the old world. Today, he melds his love for the aquatic creatures and old-world lore into his unique, abstract, amusing, and whimsical metal creations.

After graduation, he entered the workforce and very quickly became disenchanted with his options. At that point all signs were encouraging Dave to make metal sculpting his vocation. By the end of 2017, he established Dunn in Metal from his Silver Spring, Maryland garage where he “sews with fire.”

Dave has the unique ability to create these metal constructions with both whimsy and primordial dark mystery. Born from his incredible imagination, coupled with his knowledge of how to manipulate steel, creatures take life organically.

He does not work from plans. “I may have an idea, but I don’t work from sketches. I



Combining rough steel imagery with historical symbols of contest and predators, Dave’s creatures take on mysterious and fantastical life forms, like “Autumn Fall Fox,” seen here.

grab my preferred materials and rummage through my collection of steel. I use whatever grabs my attention,” he admits.

Once it is about 20% framed out, Dave then knows what it will become. Utensils, ax heads, gears, bike chains, tools, shovel heads, bolts, and steel plates all morph into prehistoric-looking creatures. The more unusual these found pieces are, the better, as Dave likes the unique texture and shape that the steel

supplies to a sculpture.

Dave utilizes a second workshop at the Bozman family property. He returns to the Waterfowl Festival this year, exhibiting at the Academy Art Museum. Looking ahead, Dave is the 2025 Featured Southern Artist of the Year, which includes a six-month solo exhibition titled “Reelfoot Critters,” at Discovery Park of America Museum and Heritage Park in Tennessee.