

Pop One Open in Style: Crandon Whitsitt-Lynch and the art of wax casting

Students at Rhode Island College (RIC) may recognize alumni Whitsitt-Lynch as the school's building technician, but after hours, this former pupil uses his BFA in printmaking skills in the studios of the facility he manages. It is hard not to notice what Whitsitt-Lynch accomplishes in these off hours: beautifully crafted metal bottle openers. And they are amazing!



One of Whitsitt-Lynch's bottle openers

"It is the perfect marriage between functional art and the type of free expression I have with my prints," says Whitsitt-Lynch of his bottle openers. "People who are not into prints may enjoy something they can use."

Whitsitt-Lynch holds a BFA in printmaking from RIC, but has been up and coming in wax casting since 2016 after a brief encounter with a student inspired him to his current medium. Whitsitt-Lynch decided to take the skills he developed from creating 2D printmaking and use them to create something 3D. The process, Whitsitt-Lynch explains, goes something like this: 1. A cast of an object, in this case a bottle opener, is made out of wax. 2. A pattern or shape is carved into the wax cast. 3. A master cast is made and cleaned of any imperfections. 4. The cast is used to create a masterpiece.

Whitsitt-Lynch says that the most significant challenges of wax casting come in the carving stages. For example, getting each line correct in these intricate pieces is very important, because fixing them after they are carved is a difficult process. And wax can be a difficult medium. "Wax is heat sensitive," says Whitsitt-Lynch. "I have to use gloves, so it doesn't melt in my hands."

In addition, Whitsitt-Lynch mentions that one of the things holding him back from expanding further is something he calls the shrink factor. Things such as pens and light switch plates, which Whitsitt-Lynch recently experimented with, must remain an exact size to function properly. "With wax casting," says Whitsitt-Lynch, "things will end up shrinking 1% to 7%. This doesn't matter so much with bottle openers, but it does with something that requires it to fit perfectly with something else."

Despite these obstacles, Whitsitt-Lynch finds the process of wax casting soothing and an appropriate outlet for his obsessive-compulsive tendencies. And he certainly has a knack for it. The elaborate designs on each of his bottle openers were created without preparation. That is, Whitsitt-Lynch does not

plan out any of his designs before he begins to carve. Everything comes from what he refers to as his stream of consciousness. Such talent has recently landed him a gig with Narragansett Beer. The company has asked Whitsitt-Lynch to create a bottle opener specifically for their use. Though sneak peaks of this project are only available to few, Whitsitt-Lynch did explain that this piece is the most intricate and challenging he has done yet.

Whitsitt-Lynch spoke about the next steps in his career. Making silverware may be on the horizon, as well as perfecting other functional pieces where precision matters. Though Whitsitt-Lynch says that he is perfecting the more difficult parts of his trade and always studying new techniques, his intricate pieces of art are entrancing and he is hopeful about sharing his knowledge.

To view Crandon Whitsitt-Lynch's work, visit his website at cwlartistry.com