

A Silas Seandel Milestone

1982 marks the twentieth creative year for Silas Seandel, the metal sculptor

If you could find a metal sculptor who was also willing to buckle down to the nitty-gritty of functional furniture design, and then added that elusive dash of the eager inventor, you might create another Silas Seandel. But the recipe also calls for twenty years' experience working with architects and designers. Thus it is safe to call him unequalled.

When Silas Seandel, the self-taught metal sculptor, started out, his studio was the kitchen of a five-storey walk-up apartment which he lined with tin cans to avoid incineration. Prior to the 60's there were no metal sculptures of such a three-dimensional and multi-colored nature. His colors were achieved with various metals (bronze, brass, steel and copper) as well as through acid baths and self-invented heat treatments. At first tempted by the gallery route, Seandel was going to have a showing. An architect meanwhile commissioned him from a piece already in a country club. One thing led to another and the artist never did have that gallery showing, but has been working with the trade ever since. As a matter of fact, Silas Seandel was one of the original tenants in New York's D&D building (979 Third Avenue), where he still maintains a showroom. He also has acquired a large west side workshop in this city where he

and six employees use heavy-labor equipment of a type that has not significantly been re-designed for a century.

His business took a turn towards large corporate sculpture commissions, and skimming down a roster of clients reveals such prestigious names as Forbes, Logan International Airport (Boston), Ford Motor Co., Johnson & Johnson, Bell Telephone, AT&T, and ABC Television.

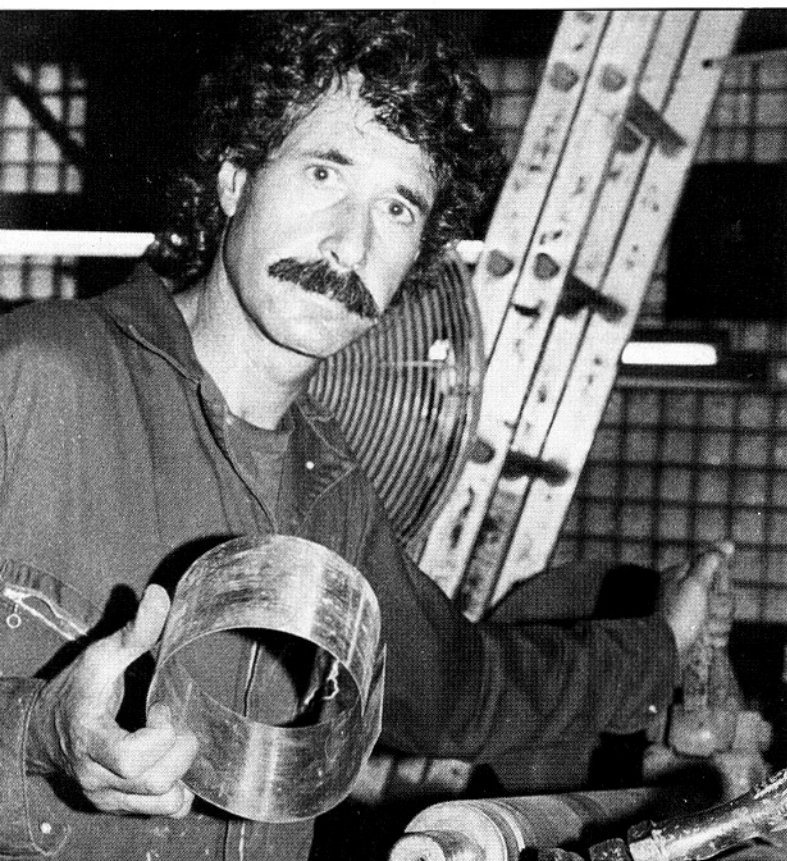
Although his original small abstract wall sculptures were in their day avant-garde, they are probably now familiar to most eyes. Many people have worked in a similar manner since, and many, Seandel claims frankly, have knocked him off. Tired of this sea of imitators, he moved into furniture design, again where few sculptors had roamed. Making furniture, he says, requires "slide rule precision"; in spite of its free-formed and casual appearance, the design has to be calculated to the nth degree for balance, strength and simplicity of use—a process that would dishearten most imitators.

A fine line distinguishes furniture from sculpture in Seandel's portfolio. Each piece is one of a kind and more likely each is a stepping stone to the next idea he has. Designers often ask him to manipulate existing pieces for their needs and desires. Seandel attributes much of his client success with his ability to "get inside the designer's head" and understand their needs.

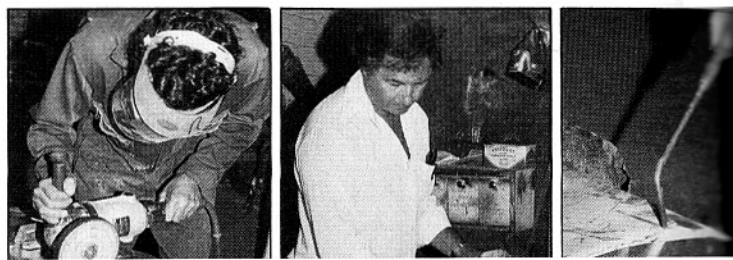
To sum up twenty years' work is nearly impossible. Involving as much invention of new techniques as creation of forms, Seandel considers his more recent work with a synthetic stone substance he developed as characteristic of what he has been, and is about. Holding a vision to combine metal with stone the inventor worked for three years on this stymieing problem. He developed a stone substitute and invented a new metal casting technique that would allow him to incise metal designs in "stone." Called the *Terra Series*, this was developed into table tops and bases.

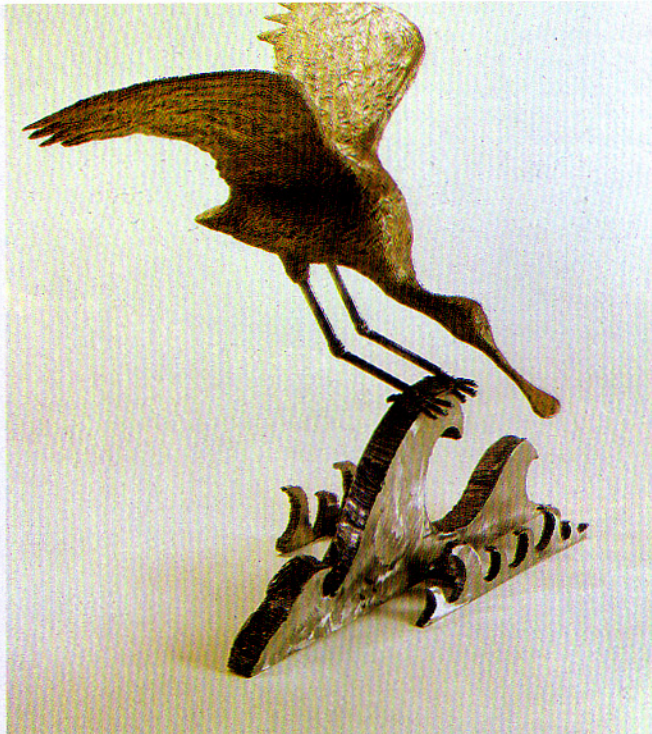
On the vanguard of Seandel's endeavors is his *Bronzecreek Tile* which, like the *Terra Series*, mixes metal and stone, but is here produced as hard tile for use in floors, walls and building exteriors. Again Seandel explores new ground.

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In his large New York workshop, Silas Seandel and his 17-year foreman, Raymond Quinones, demonstrate some of the many processes involved in production.

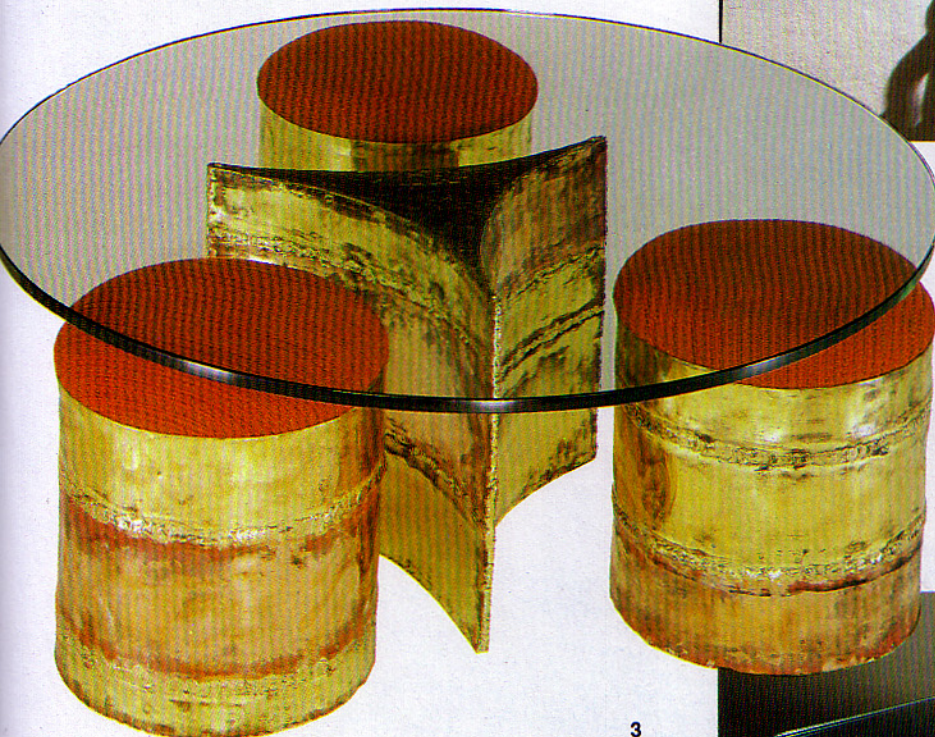




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1 One of several birds produced for the windows of Tiffany's in New York, this *Rosetta Spoonbill* is made of bronze with a steel base. 2 *Volcano* table of bronze was produced in 1967. 3 & 4 Color of metals (without enamel) is important in Seandel's artwork, here demonstrated by two versions of the *Bronze Strata* series composed of bronze with brass, copper and steel.

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