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From Wiring Motors to Wiring Lamps

... manifesting a vision one step at a time

~ Laura Armstrong

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OgleImages.com

Through a wonderful stroke of luck, a boudoir table lamp I'd made several years ago caught the eye of a collector who wanted a special lamp for his home in the French Quarter of New Orleans. This client asked for a floor lamp designed in the same spirit as the table lamp.

However, my 25-lb. Little Giant power hammer was in dire need of restoration, and I would need my hammer for this project. This commission was the perfect reason to put my hammer's restoration to the front of my work queue. Fortunately, my client was willing to be patient.

Knowing I'd be tackling the job myself, I attended Sid Suedmeier's rebuilding class on a snowy weekend in Nebraska City, Nebraska. I returned home and evaluated my power hammer based on what I'd learned.

Among other issues, my hammer's fittings were loose, and once the fly wheel got to going, it didn't want to stop. I also saw an opportunity to mount the motor overhead and out of the way. At the time, it was mounted to the side, significantly limiting the length to which a piece could be forged.

The summer of 2013 was spent rebuilding the hammer. After disassembly and cleaning, pouring new babbitt bearings with the lead ingots that Sid mailed to me was the first step in my hammer's restoration.

Through constant reference to my notes and photos from the class, I methodically made my way through the many steps involved. I traded numerous phone calls and emails with those patient souls in the Midwest! In the end, I came away with all the parts and advice needed to bring my hammer back into top form.

A final mystery was solved the day after Christmas 2013 when another kind soul—decidedly more experienced with motor wiring than myself—corrected a simple wiring mistake. Embarrassment at my wiring gaffe was far outweighed by my elation at seeing how hard my 25-lb. hammer could hit now!

Design Concept

This boudoir floor lamp features forged steel and fused glass. I used art dies on my power hammer to achieve heavy texture. The lamp's five legs are decidedly akimbo. Fused glass panels 'float' from an oversized lighting armature enclosed with mica. A curvaceous 'skirt' wraps around the lamp's midpoint and terminates with a riveted 'tassel', accenting the sexy vibe of this sculptural lighting piece.

Adding to the intrigue, the collector's French Quarter home is said to be haunted. So, if the lamp initially appears a little off-kilter, then I've succeeded in reminding you things aren't necessarily what they appear to be at first glance...



Laura with the Boudoir Floor Lamp

65" tall x 17" wide x 13" deep

Materials: Steel and glass

Technique: Forged steel and fused stained glass

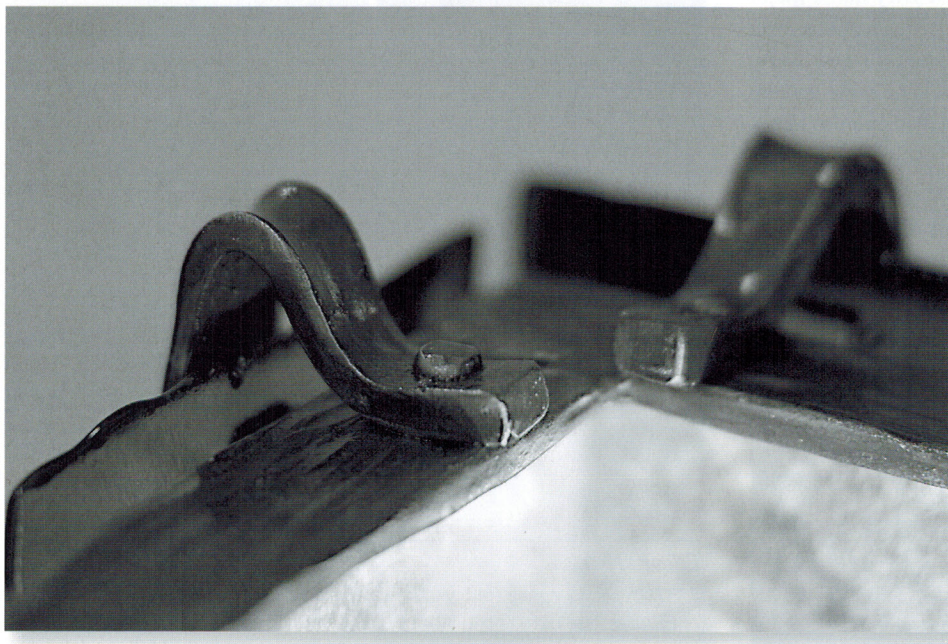
Finish: Sealed with three coats of clear lacquer

A Job Well Done

From the time I secured the commission, took the rebuilding class, restored my hammer, forged the lamp, bought a glass kiln and learned how to use it, fused the glass panels, and wired the whole thing, a year and a half had passed.

Once the lamp was finally finished and the client had seen the end result, I got better feedback than I expected. "Rad!!" he said, "This is even more haunted and Goth than your original. I'm pumped!"

I'm glad I've completed this project and have a satisfied client. Now my power hammer and I are ready for the next job! ✌



upper left:

Detail of fused glass lamp shade

upper right:

Skirt and tassel detail.

left:

Detail of hangers riveted onto lighting armature.