



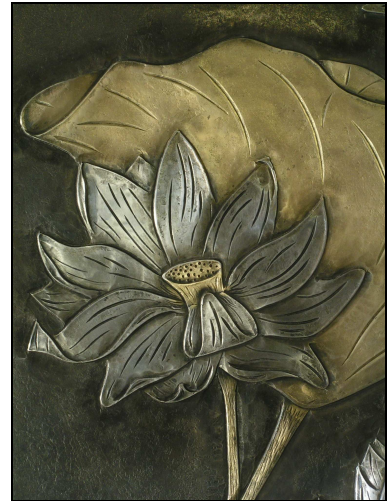
## ILLINOIS STATE MUSEUM ARTISANS PROGRAM

JAMES R. THOMPSON CENTER 100 W. RANDOLPH ST., SUITE 2-200 CHICAGO, IL 60601 312-814-1794  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE | August 23, 2011  
Contact: Kerry Schneider, Assistant Director  
T. 312-814-1794 E. kschneider@museum.state.il.us  
Hi-res images available upon request.

### ***Steeling Nature*, Mark & Mindy Gardner Illinois Artisans, Chicago**

Illinois Artisans features Mark & Mindy Gardner, master blacksmiths, this September. Mark and Mindy work together in their blacksmith shop built in 1928, Flood Plain Forge, in Farmer City. A selection of their work, including tables, wall hangings and sculpture is displayed and for sale at Illinois Artisans located at **100 W. Randolph Suite 2-200 Chicago, IL 60601.**

Members of the Illinois Artisans Program since 1999, Mindy was selected by the program to make a custom ornament for the White House Christmas Tree in 2002. This exhibition highlights Mindy's chasing and repoussé techniques and Mark's traditional blacksmithing techniques. Once Mindy has an idea sketched, she transfers the sketch to metal using the chasing and repoussé process. Mark's interest in blacksmithing started young, when his Dad took him to the Thresherman's reunion in Pontiac, Illinois. There he watched a blacksmith for hours. When Mark was eleven, his Dad bought him a small forge. To this day he makes functional work including gates, candleholders, plates, lamps and the bases for their tables. Mark also built the treadle hammer that Mindy uses and makes all of her chasing and repoussé tools. The more artistic leaves, and botanical themed wall hangings, come from Mindy's inspiration:



*Lotus wall hanging detail*

*I have always enjoyed both art and nature. As a child growing up in Wisconsin, I spent most of my time outdoors and enjoyed the beauty of the plant and life that I observed. As an adult, I enjoy the same things and I believe that my art reflects this.*

Mindy uses mild steel, usually 14 to 12 gauge, so she can use its thickness to create detail. First, the metal is heated three times in a coal forge to create a scale pattern and to anneal it. Using chasing, repoussé, and a treadle hammer (a foot powered hammer that keeps both hands free), she crafts each piece for hours. Chasing is working the metal from the front, moving metal, rather than removing it - as in engraving. This makes lines for outlining, depth, direction and movement: much like drawing a line. Repoussé is working the metal from the back side. She pushes areas further out from the surface to show more depth and to give the appearance of a relief. She then hand sands each piece and leave scale to make some where they want a darker appearance. Areas that are brass colored are made with a brass brush followed by heat. Each piece is carefully finished with a Renaissance wax.

The Gardner's are members of the prestigious Artist-Blacksmith's Association of North America. This summer, they teach again at the John C. Campbell Folk School in North Carolina to both veteran and aspiring metalsmiths. Their work has been exhibited in Asher Gallery, Houston Center for Contemporary Crafts in Houston, Texas and has been featured in Artist-Blacksmith Quarterly magazine, among others. They are represented by the Illinois Artisans Program, Illinois State Museum.

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*Illinois Artisans, a not-for-profit endeavor, is a showcase for art work created by the state's finest artisans. It provides an ongoing opportunity to view and purchase the best designed and crafted traditional, contemporary, ethnic and folk art made in Illinois.*

**Illinois Artisans, 100 W. Randolph, Ste. 2-200, 312-814-5321, Monday - Friday 9 - 5.**