

Metalurges Mask Show  
2008

## Brita Gould Artist's Statement

I grew up in Anchorage, Alaska. It was there, at the age of 12, that I saw my first masks. Each year during the Fur Rendezvous celebration, Aleut peoples came to perform their traditional stories. They used dances, songs, rattles, drums and, most fascinating to me, carved masks. I was transported. Masks have intrigued me ever since, especially those that represent mythological figures or are symbolic of an inner story of struggle, searching, or conflict.

I have created masks for the last 10 years. My initial masks were life-sized, framed in fiber weavings and decorated with dried organic seeds, grasses, branches, lichens, etc. Several years ago I began making them considerably smaller and the organic materials have all but disappeared. Creating smaller-sized masks is kinder to my ageing body and helps me focus my available energy. These masks are more animated than their larger predecessors and inspire more experimentation with materials and themes.

My current series, *Coppertone*, is inspired by the element of metal as defined in Chinese Five Elements.

Fragile sheets of metal leaf are adhered to the contours of the polymer masks that I sculpt. The leaf is then painted with acrylic paints to antique the metal and accentuate features. Finally I sculpt branches, leaves and flowers using sheets of wire mesh that I embed with a mixture of acrylic paint and leveling gel medium.

The completed masks symbolize the softer, healthy side of a metal constitution. Their glowing radiance and yielding nature reveal an accepting, calm, and discerning Self.

*Weaving Spirit into Art*