

Strokes

Bodies of Work

By [Sandra Shrader](#)

A modern-day alchemist, Carlsbad sculptor and art educator Elaine Seeley transforms metal into moods and motion. Her small and life-sized art figures, carefully constructed of strips, squares and frames of the baser stuff, seemingly pulsate with an energy that pays tribute to the beauty of life and movement.

MOST OF YOUR ART IS BASED ON THE HUMAN FIGURE. WHY IS THAT SO INSPIRING FOR YOU?

I just like people. I am a people watcher, and I like to talk with people...and to find out what's going on inside them, with their feelings or what they think...But, like most

artists, I think I am two persons in one body. The one part of me loves the contact with people, but the other part is perfectly happy working along in my studio for eight hours or more at a time.

WHAT DRAWS YOU TO CREATING 3-DIMENSIONAL ART? It's probably because I have a 3-dimensional mind. When I see things, I see all sides, just like a mechanical engineer does. It's been that way for me ever since I was a young kid. But I have worked in many art forms—2-dimensional and 3-dimensional—including ceramics, stone, jewelry and woodcarving.

WHY DO YOU WORK PRIMARILY WITH STAINLESS STEEL, COPPER AND BRASS? Sculptures like mine, especially the six- and seven-foot-high pieces, need to have space around them, and those metals do well in the outdoors. But metal has always been my first love. I think it's easier for women to work with, especially when it comes to welding, because that takes patience, and you have to be so careful and keep all your senses on alert.

SO HOW DO YOU BUILD YOUR LIFE-SIZE SCULPTURES? I usually do drawings and clay sculptures before building a 'skeleton' frame, but I usually build the frame by instinct now. Some people have said that I must be part engineer too. (Laughs.) Then I put on the 'skin' [metal sheet sections.] But since I am only working on small portions at a time, I always amazed when the whole piece comes together.

GETTING BACK TO YOUR ENJOYMENT OF PEOPLE, ONE OF YOUR SCULPTURES IS CALLED "TATTOO WOMAN." HOW DID YOU COME UP WITH THAT NAME? I'm in my late 60s, but I feel like I am in my forties, and I am fascinated about why younger people now have been getting all those tattoos. Even many of the models who pose for the artists' group that I am with these days have a good portion of their bodies covered with tattoos. I came to the conclusion that I think it's their way of self-expression in today's culture, so that's where the inspiration and name for the piece came from. And I did paint tattoos on it! (Laughs.)

SUPPOSE SOMEONE SEES YOUR WORK 100 YEARS FROM NOW. WHAT DO YOU HOPE THEY WOULD THINK ABOUT IT? I hope they would think that I was interested in the human condition, and they would experience a reaction from it. That they would connect with the idea and emotion of my sculptures. I've taught art for a lot of years, and I'd tried to teach my students that art isn't just something that's pretty—it is something that communicates ideas. **UTS**

Elaine Seeley's work is currently on exhibition at Carlsbad Oceanside Art League's gallery in Carlsbad. For more information, visit coalartgallery.com.



Elaine Seeley's work on display at COAL.