

Learning the art of success

By **AMY GALLIMORE**
Staff Writer

"I want to bring art to the people," says Lori Burek, a local jewelry artist who has some down-to-earth ideas about art.

A native of Michigan, Burek came to Chapel Hill in 1983 because of the opportunity for her craft in this area — and she is not a typical artist.

"Art schools teach fine art, but they don't teach you how to make a living," says Burek. Rebelling against the "starving artist" cliché, she is determined to make her craft profitable.

Burek says that most artists find it difficult to market their craft successfully after finishing school, and she knew that if she wanted to succeed, it was going to take a lot of hard work and, perhaps, a unique approach.

In order to market her product successfully, Burek decided that she needed to work with something different from gold and silver. At a workshop she attended shortly after she left college, she learned about the metal titanium, which is a light and durable metal, and she uses it to produce some interesting and practical jewelry.

Next, Burek had to learn to approach her art as a business. She says she spends about half of her time on art and half of her time on paperwork. "Most artists spend all of their time on their art and this isn't good. I've learned that it takes a lot of marketing to make my art profitable."

Finally, Burek decided to design jewelry that was both practical



Jewelry artist Lori Burek

and useful. "I don't want to make a lot of big and colorful jewelry that no one can really use." She uses colors that match what people wear. "I like humorous and fun jewelry," she says.

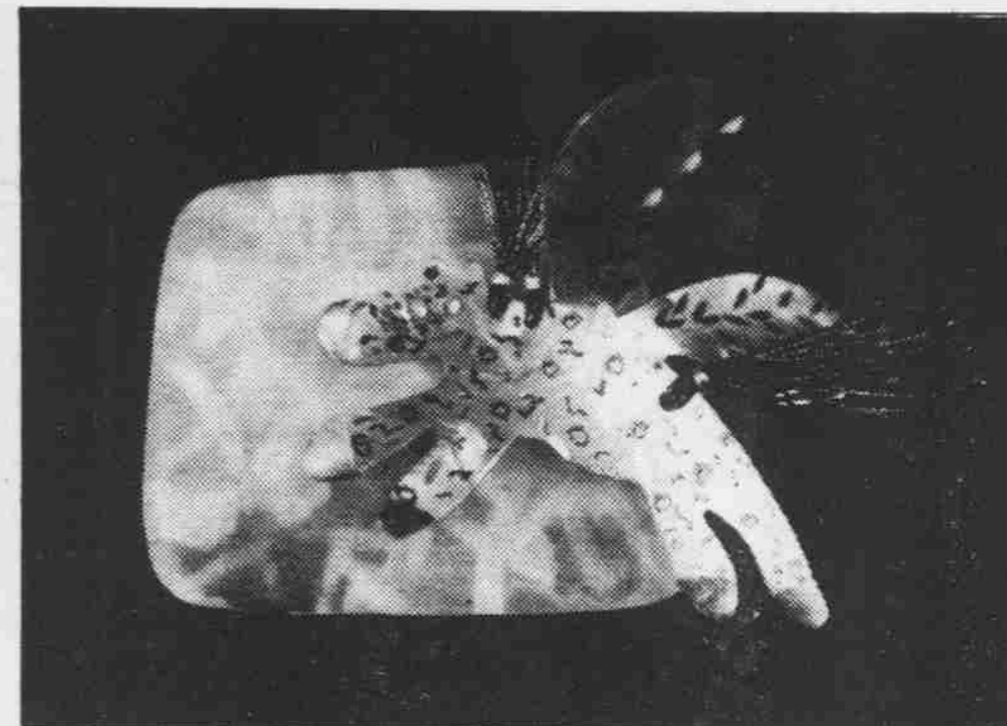
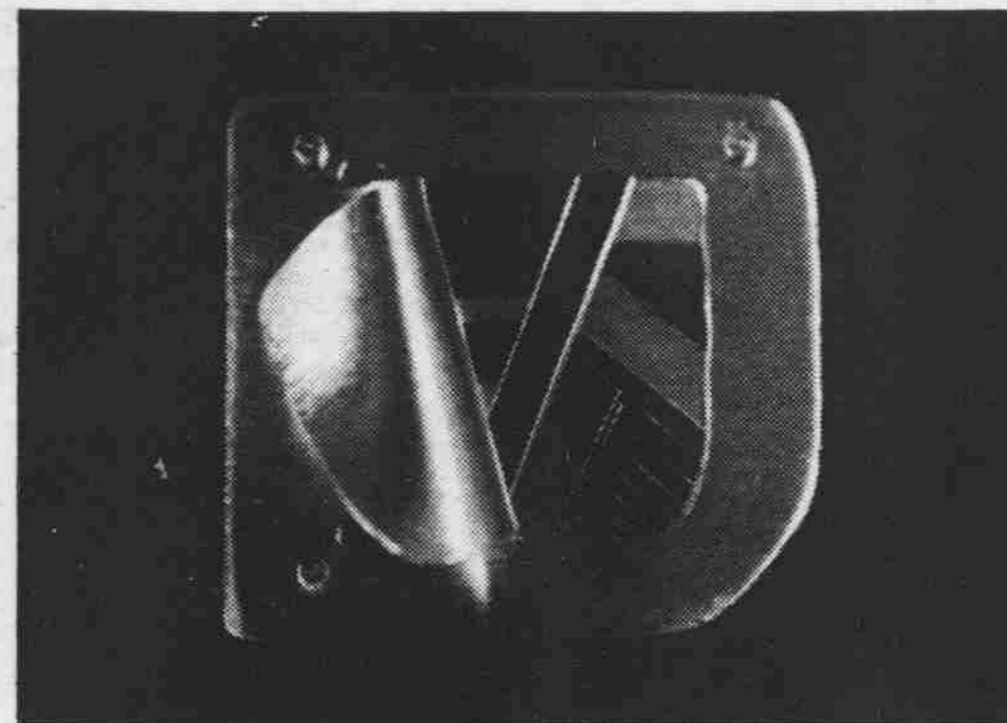
Most people look at Burek's work and think that what she is doing is just normal business. And this is what is so remarkable about her — although she's never had any business training, she was able to combine art and smart business tactics for profit.

Burek chose to use titanium for her designs because she wanted a product that was out of the ordinary, and titanium is a good metal for jewelry because it's light and durable. She creates the colors on the metal through an electrical current, never using paint. The electrical current changes the composition of the metal to

create an array of colors.

Titanium is an abundant, space-age metal — it's found virtually everywhere, even on the grounds college students trample every day on their way to classes. It's also used in aerospace and medicine. But although titanium is abundant, it's somewhat expensive because of the refining process. It must undergo a complicated heating process before it can achieve a useful form.

Burek says her jewelry is practical, because titanium lasts for a long time and the colors never fade. "I was hooked on it instantly," she says. She makes pins, earrings and pendants. Many of her jewelry



Burek's designs include a fold-back brooch and a horsefly pin

creations take the form of animals, such as fish, cats and even a horsefly. Some include stars and hearts. The overall look results in jewelry that is both abstract and fashionable.

Burek sells most of her jewelry wholesale. She can boast of 30 stores nationwide that display her creations. Although she also sells her work at street fairs as other jewelry artists do, Burek points out that it's difficult to make a living this way.

Her work is currently being shown at the Leaping Lizard Show

at the Piedmont Gallery in Winston-Salem and will also be shown at the Franklin Street Apple Chill Festival on April 17. Creative Metalworks on Franklin Street sells some of her designs.

Burek says her jewelry is reasonably priced. "I wouldn't want to sell anything I couldn't buy myself," she says.

Although she's a talented artist, Burek is well aware that her talents for marketing have been the key to her success. She combines her talent with an unusual product — practicality and good business.

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