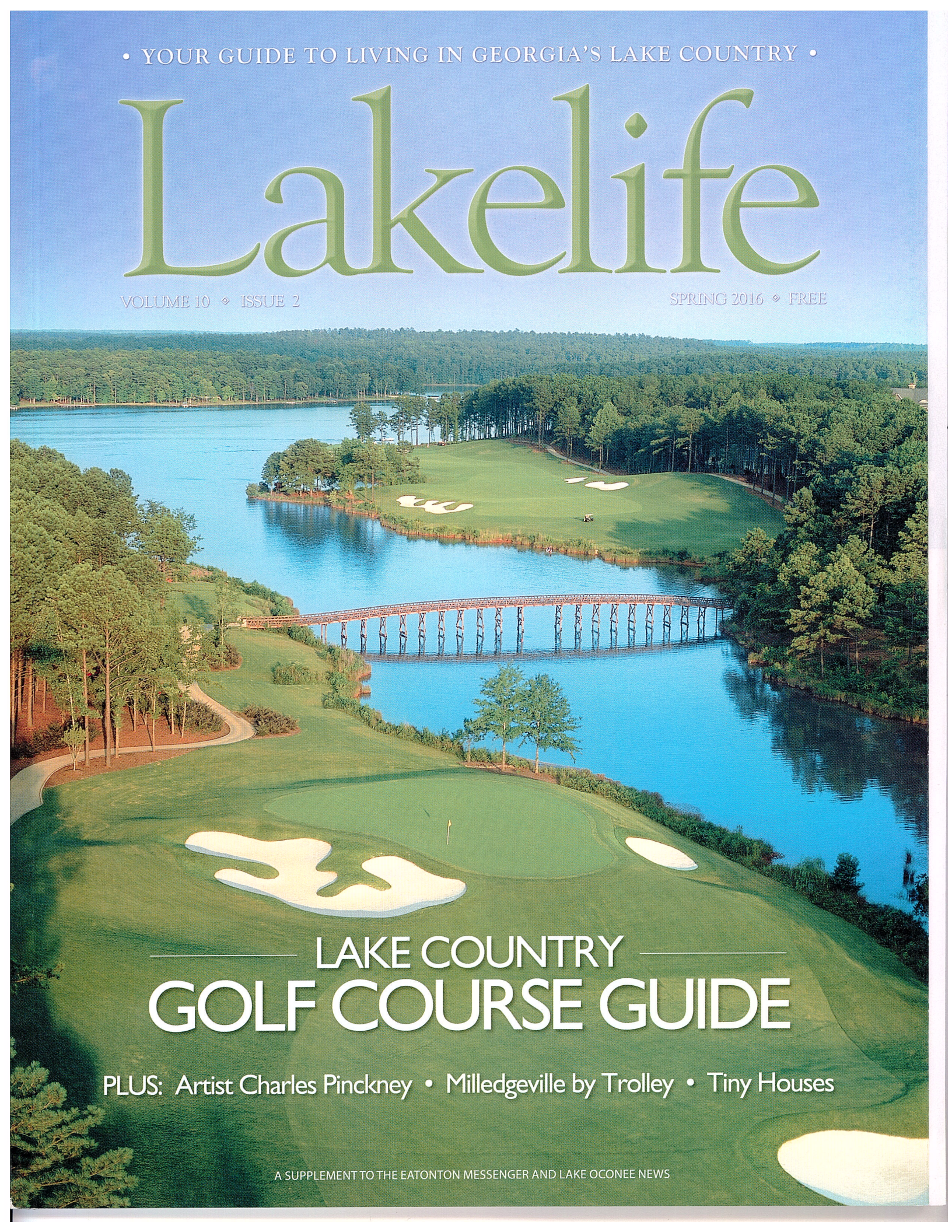


• YOUR GUIDE TO LIVING IN GEORGIA'S LAKE COUNTRY •

# Lakelife

VOLUME 10 ♦ ISSUE 2

SPRING 2016 ♦ FREE



LAKE COUNTRY  
GOLF COURSE GUIDE

PLUS: Artist Charles Pinckney • Milledgeville by Trolley • Tiny Houses

A SUPPLEMENT TO THE EATONTON MESSENGER AND LAKE OCONEE NEWS

# artistic



"U," pendant on carved titanium chain by Athens artist Charles Pinckney.  
PHOTOGRAPH BY LARRY BERMAN

# VISION

*Athens artist taps into childhood memories and innate insight to inspire his work*

Written by BEVERLY HARVEY • Photographs by KAREN HAMRICK

WHEN HE WAS JUST SIX YEARS old, Charles Pinckney had an epiphany that forever changed how he viewed himself and the world around him. The moment of personal clarity and artistic vision occurred as he studied two pieces of wood he had randomly pulled from the family’s firewood pile. As if by magic, Charles no longer viewed them as potential playthings – but as beautiful objects of latent art. “They started two fires,” he recalls, “the fire that heated the house and the fire that started my artistic life.”

From that day forward, Charles no longer views objects without intuitively seeing the creative possibility of what lies inside them. Each holds a piece of hidden art that – just like the Old Master sculptors – he is driven and inspired to uncover. “I’ve come to call it ‘language,’” Charles says, as he goes on to explain, “I learned from childhood to communicate with the object and to work in tandem with the object. ... You have to release yourself from what your preconceptions are and let the thing dictate.”

As a child, that ‘language’ resulted in Charles using a pocketknife to carve his mother’s broomstick into a chain, much to her dismay. He also created what he now laughingly refers to as his “pièce de résistance” – a single chain link carved from a Popsicle stick. Even something as simple



Artist Charles Pinckney sips tea outside his Athens studio.  
PHOTOGRAPH BY BEVERLY HARVEY

as fallen limbs from the pecan trees growing in the front yard of his childhood home in South Carolina couldn't escape Charles' innate artistic bent. "I looked at a twig and I said, 'There's a pocketknife in this twig,'" he says, recalling the time growing up when he used an X-ACTO knife to meticulously "reorganize" a pecan branch into a folding pocketknife.

Charles moved away from his hometown of Williston, South Carolina decades ago. He now lives in Athens. But he still makes chains. These days, he creates them using titanium, sterling silver and copper. In the late 1980s, after working as a disc jockey at a radio station in Toccoa for a number of years, Charles decided to make art a bigger part of his life. That's when he moved to Athens to begin learning and working in metalsmithing. He became a full-time artist sometime in the '90s. He has studied under Eleanor Caldwell, Bob Eberdorf and Chuck Evans, but is primarily self-taught. Charles has received two grants from the Georgia Council for the Arts and twice has been one of a hundred artists worldwide invited to participate in the biannual EMMA International Collaboration weeklong residency held in Canada.

The first class he attended with Chuck Evans transported Charles back to that life-changing day in his family's front yard in South Carolina. "When I walked into that class, he had many of his pieces in a showcase. I felt like I was looking at another pecan tree or another slab of wood," Charles recalls. "I went right back to being six-years-old. It just caught me, and that's where I was kick-started again." That was when he knew metalsmithing was his life's mission. And he was where he was truly meant to be.

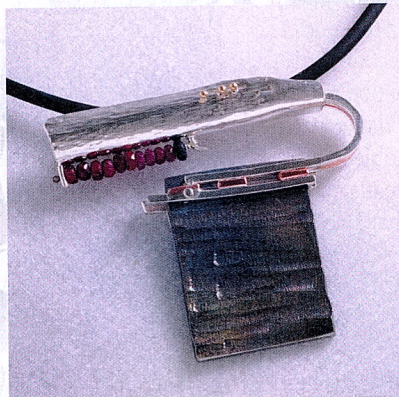
In his work, Charles has used metal, stone and other materials – including found objects – to make practical sculptures such as floor lamps, table lamps and mirrors. He has also created small, artistic sculptures. He now focuses mainly on creating jewelry for



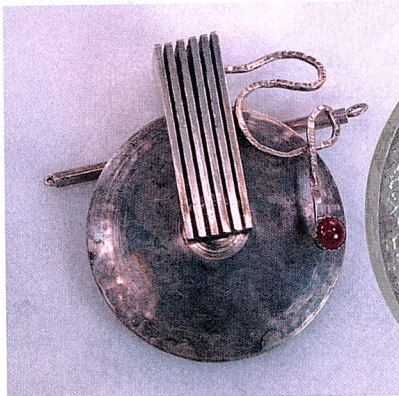
"Cuttin' Wood"



"Dirt Road"



"Healing Spring"



Above: "Life's Record" pendant,  
Right: "Wheel of Fortune" sculpture

men and women – rings, necklaces, bracelets, pendants, earrings and cuff links. "My jewelry is sculpture for me," says Charles, as he wears several of his unisex pieces, a squash blossom necklace, and a sterling silver and titanium so-called "bodacious rang," which isn't a complete circle like a ring.

Charles' pieces are one-of-a-kind works. Many are designed and bear names inspired from his childhood. For example, "In the Garden," a brooch/pendant made with sterling silver, titanium, a sea shell and one of his trademark crescent-moon-shape rivets is "about my mother's little garden and all the things I learned there," the artist explains.

And just as he did with the pecan tree twig, Charles still finds artistic guidance from within his materials. "I'm using the same skills to make a living, using the tools that I acquired before I was a teenager," he says. "It's not the tools you manipulate with your hands. It's the driving force behind – the inspiration behind – the object."

A recent battle with colon cancer gave Charles pause to think about his life, his art – and time. "Time is precious. We don't make time. It's not manufactured. So you can't get more," the cancer survivor says. "I've always enjoyed what I did, but now I focus on doing the most excellent work that

I can because  
it's gonna  
end." ☆

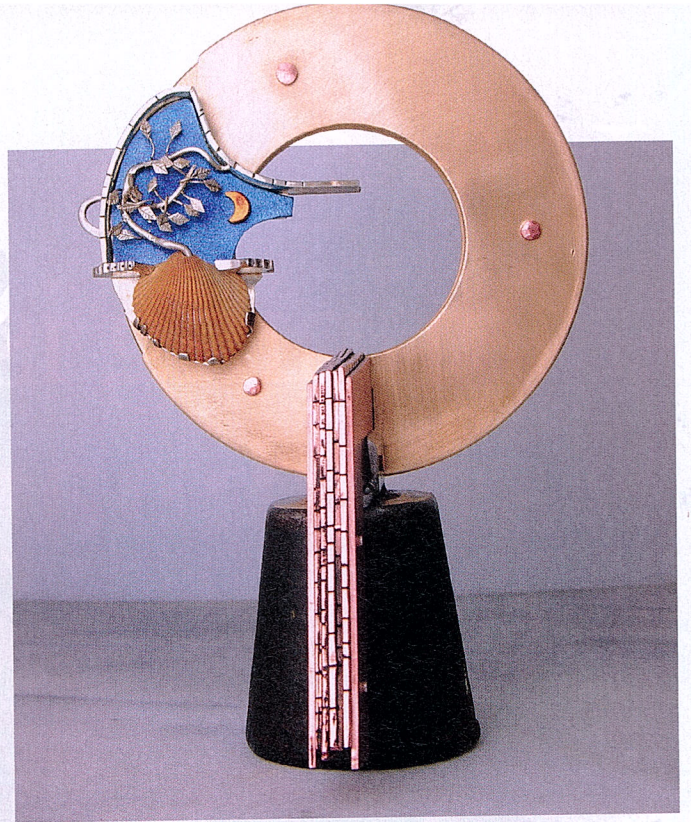




"Mountain Memories"



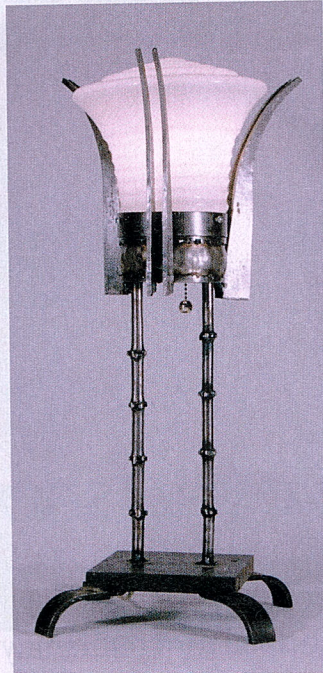
"Starry Night" earrings



"Sapelo" Found brooch and base



"My Charleston" Baskets earrings  
PHOTOGRAPH BY LARRY BERMAN



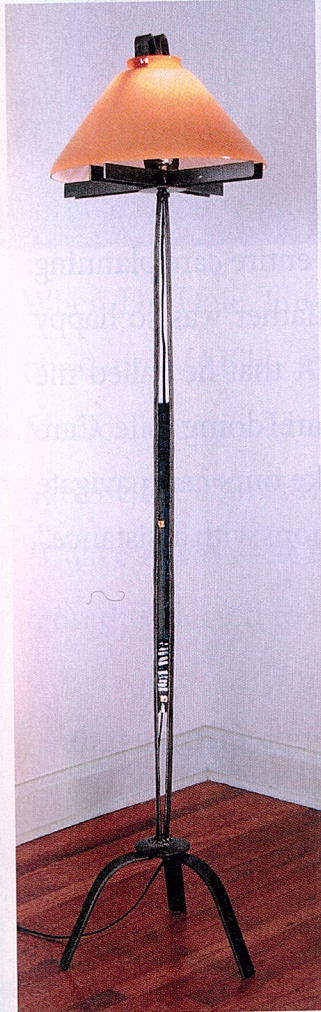
"Carrying a Torch" table lamp



"Walk Around the Lake" pendant



"Totin' Water" brooch



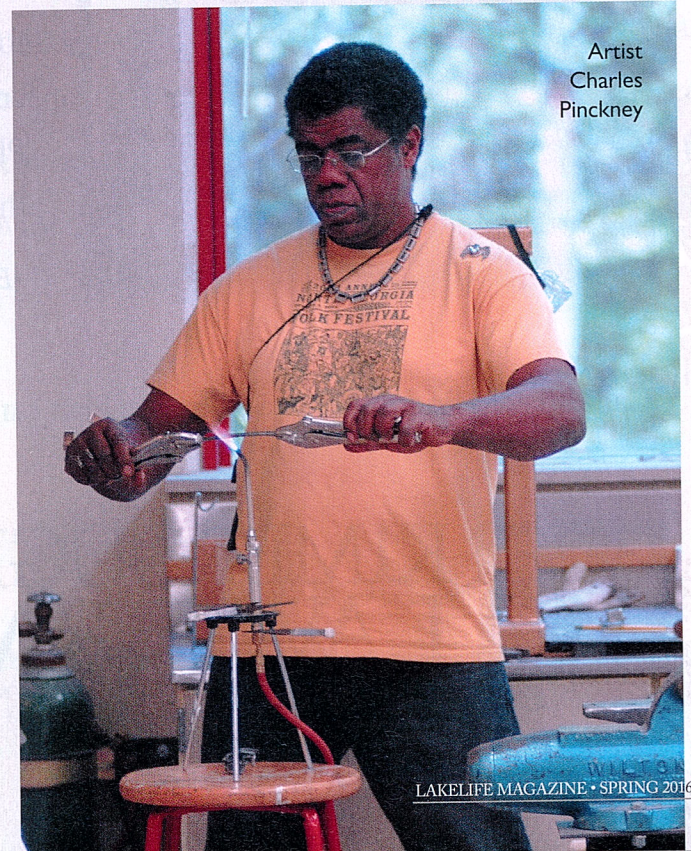
"Just a Glimpse" floor lamp



"Tempest Fugit Momenta Mori"



"Mokomegane" bracelet



Artist  
Charles  
Pinckney