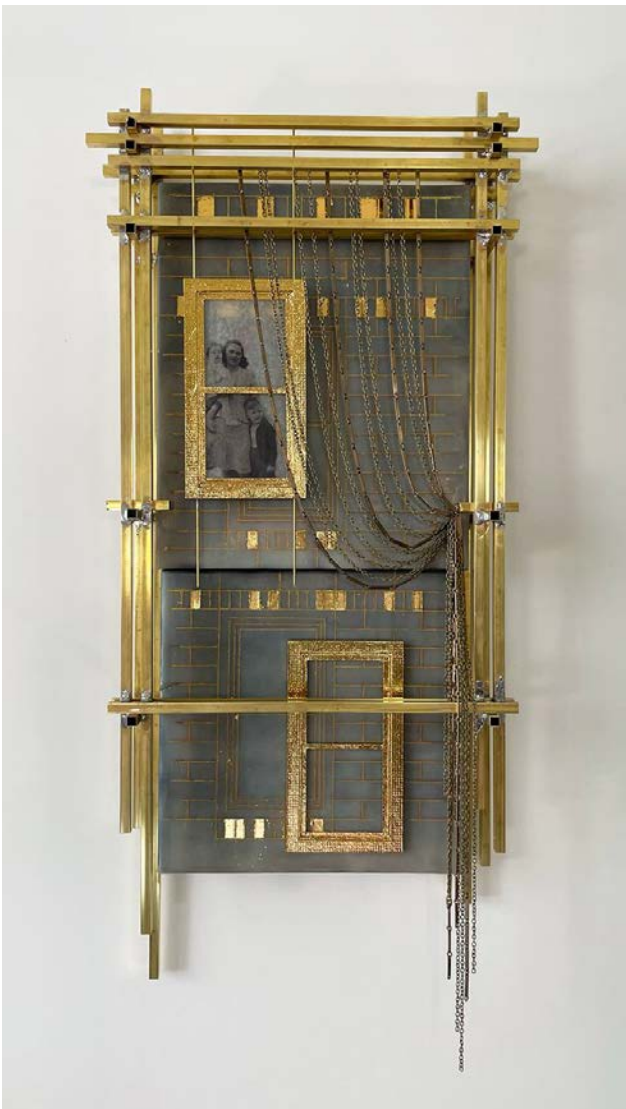


# IEA Member Artist Profile

## Joe Celli

### Spring 2023 Featured Artist

Joe Celli decided that he needed a hobby. Sure, his day job as a television production designer and art director was satisfying but he was feeling the need to connect with a new project, something outside of work that would be challenging but fun to do.



One day, while looking through his automobile club magazine, Joe spotted an advertisement for an art retreat outside of LA that looked promising. It turned out that attending the retreat was much more than he anticipated. "The experience was a revelation!" Joe exclaimed.

Not only did he fall in love with Santa Cruz ("it's so walkable, unlike much of LA"), he was also charmed by the two retreat leaders (Judy Stabile and Wendy Aikin, owners of the now defunct WaxWorksWest) and at the same time, became hooked on encaustic as a new medium and in particular, the assemblage process they were teaching.

*Left: "please, wait for me", encaustic, brass, chain, gold leaf, paper, 24" x 11" x 3.5"*

Known to be an imaginative child, Joe went on to formally study acting at college but eventually realized that his talents would be better suited to working behind the scenes

rather than being front and center. That flair for the dramatic has proven to serve him well over the years, both in his profession and more recently with this artistic avocation.

"At first I struggled to find my creative voice, but after several years of learning the vagaries of working with wax, my art seemed to migrate towards the more familiar territory of geometric design" he said. In fact, it was Joe's studies in the performing arts as well as his professional experience in scale model-making for theatrical design that has proven to be instrumental in creating his riveting geometric pieces that seem unrivaled in the world of Encaustic Art.



*Left: "some love will wear away", encaustic, mixed metal, wood, paper, pastel, thread, 25" x 16.5" x 4"*

*Right: "perhaps I flew too close to the sun", encaustic, brass, wood, oil, thread, found feathers, 22" x 16" x 4.5"*

Joe's innovative designs employ encaustic medium to enhance his use of lines, shape, and color. Early on, his chosen substrates were made of wood, but as time went on a more sturdy base was needed. Joe relates the scary story of shipping his first piece to a far away gallery only to find that it had broken in transit. "Thankfully, a friend who lived nearby was able to go to the gallery, repair the piece and save the day! It was definitely a learning experience! Eventually I settled on brass as a substrate after lots of experimentation. Sure, it is more expensive but also much more durable and sturdy" he said.

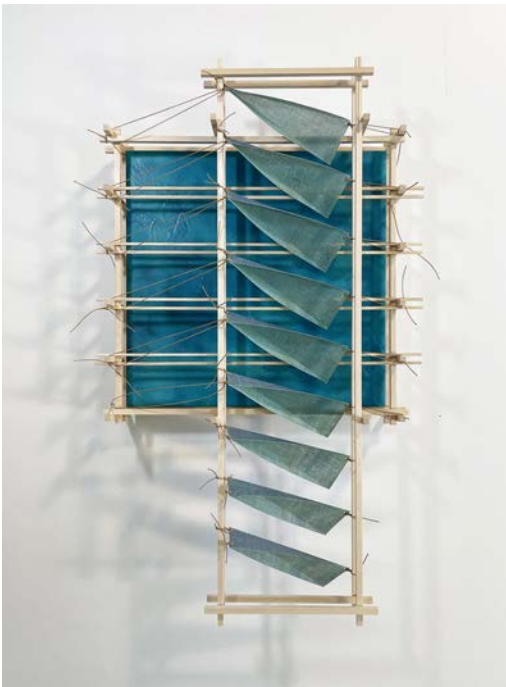
Embellishments to his geometric structures often include found objects, plant materials, and feathers. Not surprisingly, Joe loves to incorporate patterns utilizing stencils, wall papers, and other materials that he uses in his professional work

Joe's art also reflects a studious approach, although he remembers that early on everything he made was intuitive and reactive.

Now, after about a decade of working with wax, he uses a much more intentional approach with some forethought and preplanning. He acknowledges that fearless experimentation is key and hopes that every new piece he creates is imbued with playfulness and even a touch of mystery. These days, Joe happily reports that he feels as if he has found his creative voice and is gratified when a gallery is willing to show his work and especially when someone invests in one of his pieces.



*Above: "and then one morning I woke", encaustic, brass, wood, oil, 16.5" x 19.5" x 4.5"*



*Left: "if I rub my eyes", encaustic, wood, mesh, waxed thread, 24" x 15" x 4.5"*



*Right: "from the corners of the living room", encaustic, wood, oil, waxed thread, mesh, paper, 11.5" x 24" x 4.5"*

Joe is always on the lookout for inspiration and has also become intrigued with the business of art — how people create their art, how galleries and museums curate art collections, and why certain people become blue chip (high-value, well-established) artists such as Andy Warhol, Keith Haring or Banksy, a contemporary artist who makes headlines around the world with his work. “What is that secret sauce...the ‘it’ factor that separates someone from the masses?” he asked. It’s not that Joe is seeking notoriety. The theatre industry has recognized him plenty with awards, trophies and even several Emmys over the years. It’s just that he’s curious to learn as much as possible about the vast and varied art industry which he feels is his future.



As many of us have discovered, launching our art biz is not without its challenges that often takes a bit of help from the outside. For Joe, this means connecting with other encaustic painters who can inspire and guide his practice. Besides his affiliation with IEA, one source he recommends is the encaustic artist team of Lisa Pressman and Sue Stover, who have been teaching together online for several years. You can [click here for more information](#).

*Left: "I love a parade", encaustic, brass, oil, 15" x 13.5" x 2.25"*

At the moment, Joe continues to earn a living working at his profession and hopes to create a viable business out of showing and selling his art. For now, though, he’s actively seeking ways to balance his work life with the urge to create more art. “Establishing a successful art business takes more than our studio practice” Joe said. “It also requires time to self-promote in order to become and stay visible to potential clients.” Joe says he often feels the pressure of needing to post on social media, submit to juried shows, and drum up interest at regional studios. “But after all,” quipped Joe, “the work needs to see the light of day!”

Want to discover more of Joe's stunning 3-D artwork?

Click here: <https://www.joecellart.com/>



*BTW - if you're interested in seeing some examples of Joe's television projects including scenes from the live musical versions of *The Little Mermaid*, *A Christmas Story*, *Hairspray*, *Grease*, *The Oscars*, [click here](#).*

*Special note for those who subscribe to the Disney Channel - you can stream the musical presentation of *Encanto*, which was filmed live at the Hollywood Bowl using Joe's set design. It's a terrific show!*

*Thank you to Artist Profile author, Lin Holzinger, for this wonderful article about Joe Celli!*

*And thank you to contributing editor, Regina B. Quinn, for this delightful video recap of Joe's work.*

[View the video at this link.](#)

*Our blogger, Lin Holzinger, is an avid encaustic painter and art advocate. Lin lives in a suburb of San Diego, CA, where she practices her art and enthusiastically demonstrates encaustic painting and monotype techniques to anyone who asks! [www.linholzinger.com](http://www.linholzinger.com)*