

**SOUTHERN LIVING**  
APRIL 1999

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# A Frog Family Reunion



PHOTOGRAPH: MARK YANDUIN

*Beau Smith builds his frog sculptures in the family tradition.*

**B**eau Smith builds copper frog sculptures that are to die for. Or shall we say to *croak* for?

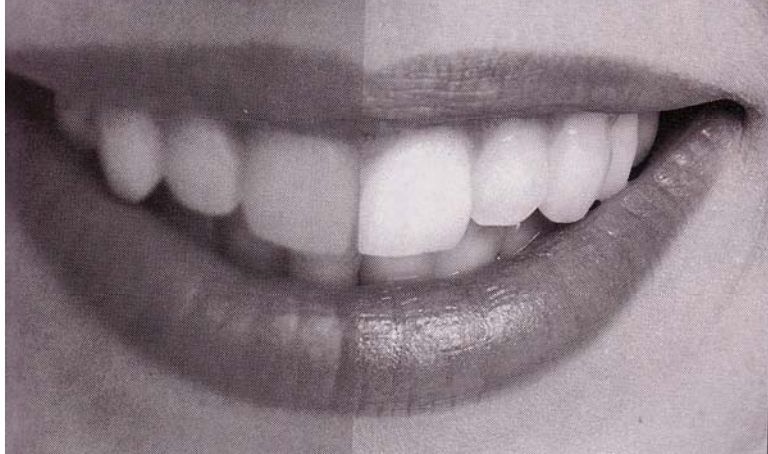
Trained by his father and the Rhode Island School of Design, he builds the larger-than-human metal amphibians in the workshop of his Smyrna home, secretly chuckling as he goes. For each of the creations conveys a distinct whiff of whimsy—and a large dose of the very creative Beau himself.

“In art school, I was in film animation,” he explains. “So my frogs have more cartoon animation. They appeal to some people—they’re like toys.”

Perhaps you might be able to pick out whose frogs are whose when Beau’s work joins that of his father, Charles, and his brother, Alexander (both of whom live on John’s Island, South Carolina) at the Atlanta Botanical Garden. The big green characters, on display now, will reside in the lush landscape through May 30. There’s no formal assemblage; you’ll just happen upon a musician frog here, a

“I think the frogs have a healing energy,” says Beau Smith of his copper sculptures. “They make you feel good when you see them.”

# AFFORDABLE MILE RENOVATION



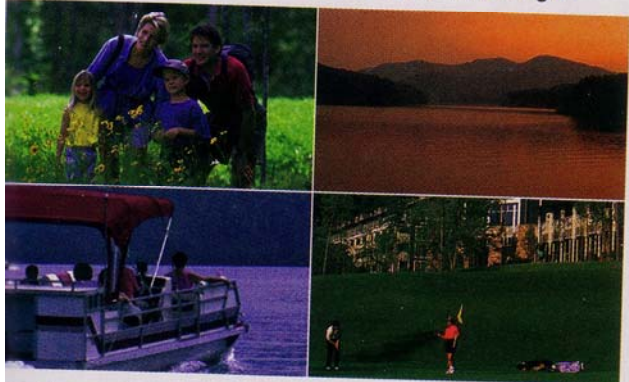
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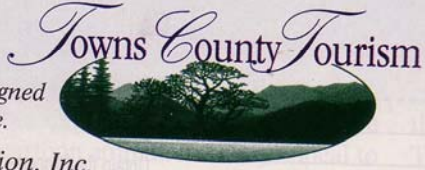
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My father  
really enjoys  
people's  
reactions to  
the frogs.

Beau Smith



"For some reason, frogs are accessible.  
People really like them," says the sculptor  
of his works now on display at the Atlanta  
Botanical Garden.

parent-and-child frog there, a lantern-bearing frog as you stroll the springtime gardens.

One of the Smiths—the Frog-smiths, they call themselves—might even be ambling along nearby, watching visitors encounter the works. “My father really enjoys people’s reactions to the frogs,” says Beau. “He has

made some incredible frogs that are beyond the scope of my mastery. He is the master. There’s just one of him—and that’s it. It bothered me at the beginning, but it doesn’t any-

more because I do other things too.” Beau’s admiration is apparent in every sentence he utters about his father, his inspiration in the frog business and beyond. He recounts his father’s background: a Ph.D. in

It’s hard to hold back a smile when you’re surrounded by these jolly green guys.



engineering thermodynamics with a penchant for sculpting on the side. The son of an artist himself, Charles Smith staged a small showing of his art in the seventies; it earned enough to buy a Volkswagen. At that point,

encouraged, he opted to indulge his desire to sculpt full time.

“It was a gutsy thing to do with three kids. About 10 years later, around 1984, he began making the frogs. The first one looked a bit like

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Whatever I'm into at the time is what I build.

Beau Smith

an alien, not at all the way his frogs look now. They have evolved."

Beau, the oldest son and an emerging artist, watched the process. Over the years, he also began writing music, playing guitar, and writing a novel. Then he decided to join the family business and

take up the passion of frogs for profit. His father agreed.

"Sure, we stare at frogs. I've got books on frogs. My Dad's got frog skeletons. He has observed them more than anyone I've met before. But these figures are part human, too, so I've always got myself, my



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own body. There's a lot to observing people and their personalities."

Lately he's been making a few father-and-infant frog combinations. That's because he and wife Anne, an Atlanta psychologist, have added baby Julian to the family. "Whatever I'm into at the time is what I build," says the proud papa.

Do the Frogsmiths want their

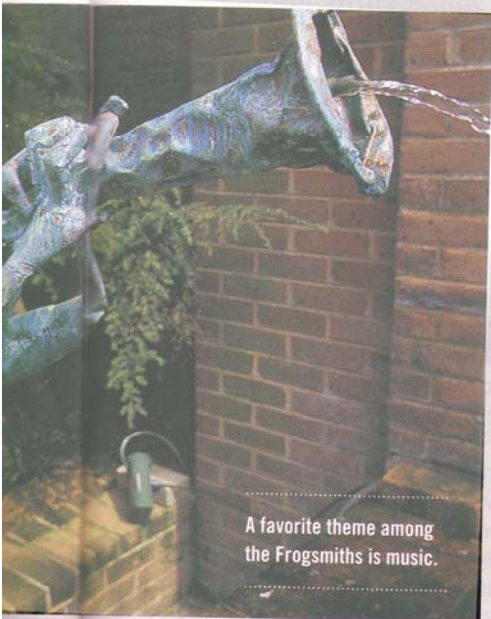
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Beau adjusts a frog component as his father's toad—a new look in the frog line—stands guard. Charles Smith terms the works “direct metal sculptures.”

### ARTFUL AMPHIBIANS

Interested in a frog of your own? The average prices range \$3,000 to \$6,000. Visit the current exhibit at the Atlanta Botanical Garden ([404] 876-5859) to get a glimpse of the metal sculptures before you decide. Beau can be reached at (770) 436-9881.



A favorite theme among the Frogsmiths is music.

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newest little tadpole to follow the family tradition? “I have plans to teach Julian how to make frogs,” says the father of his not-yet-1-year-old.

“He can work his way through college making frogs. It would be wonderful to keep it in the family.” Another giant leap for the Frogsmiths. *Carolanne Griffith Roberts*

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THE MARIETTA DAILY JOURNAL  
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# Lifestyle D

## *Ribbit to you, too*

*It's not so easy being green ... and copper and planted in someone's backyard. Meet the croaking creations of Smyrna resident Beau Smith*

Story by Staff Writer Jenny J. Catoe  
Staff photos by Timm Duckworth

**Y**ou'll find them playing a tune on a trumpet, reading a book on a park bench and even swinging a golf club with the finesse of a pro.

Meet Beau Smith's family of frogs. But don't expect these large, green amphibians to blink an eye, take a flying leap or gobble up the nearest unsuspecting fly.

These are copper frog sculptures that have cartoon animation, and are proudly displayed throughout customers' homes, back yards and even gardens.

According to the Smyrna resident, each of his croaking creations takes on a life and personality of its own, and no two are exactly alike.

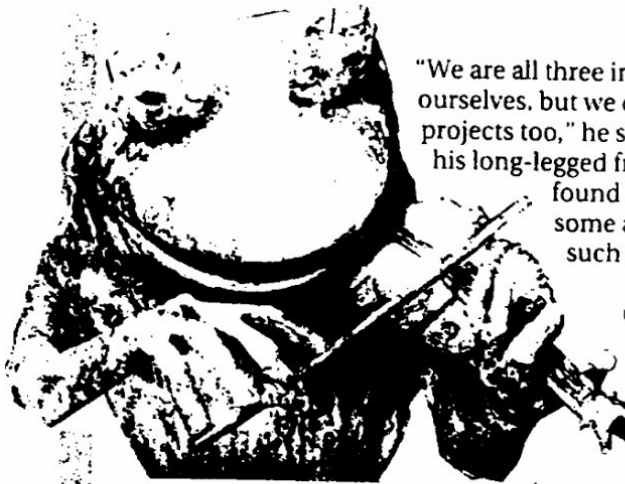
"People have a relationship with these creatures. They have a healing influence on people, they make you laugh," said Smith, 37, whose workshop is in his garage.

"Businesses like them because they attract people. They are eye-catching and accessible. And [people] love to sit by them and have their pictures made with them."

Smith, husband and father of an 8-month-old son, began the trade when his dad showed him and his brother the ropes when they were teen-agers.



This fiddler is perched on a tree stump in Beau Smith's backyard in Smyrna.



"We are all three in business for ourselves, but we do collaborative projects too," he said, noting that his long-legged friends can be found on display in some art galleries, such as Bellagio in Atlanta and currently at the Atlanta Botanical Gardens. Each sculpture takes two to three weeks

to complete and involves a lot of welding, cutting and hammering of metal.

The all-metal frogs are mostly copper, but Smith also uses non-corrosive metals such as brass and stainless steel.

"They are very sturdy and durable and weather resistant. I use patina, which gives the frogs their greenish look. It's a natural finish that occurs on metal, but I make it happen faster and give it a more painterly look to it," he said.

"They can last hundreds of years and be passed down through the years."

The nice thing is that these sculptures are comparable to bronzes, he said.

"They have the same solidity fullness and the same proportions a large bronze can have, but these are made directly by welding and hammering and working with the metal, as opposed to casting. My frogs have a much more spontaneous, fresh look."



**THE NEW YORK TIMES**  
**FRIDAY JULY 10, 1999**

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## FAMILY FARE

*Laurel Graeber*

## What's Hopping In the Bronx

The frogs at Wave Hill, the public garden in Riverdale, look as if they've hopped out of a fairy tale: the kind in which a frog is really a prince. That's because they're several feet tall and have thoughtful expressions not often seen on the residents of lily pads.

The only wizardry they've endured, however, is that of Charles Smith, who created the frogs by heating and welding, rather than casting, brass and copper. The frogs owe their green skins to a chemical process and their smiling attitudes to Mr. Smith's imagination. On view throughout the month, they have inspired two family art projects.

This weekend, Wave Hill will present "El Coquí y Sus Amigos" ("The Frog and His Friends"), a salute to the frogs of Latin America. Not surprisingly, Puerto Rican frogs have their own language and do not utter anything as indelicate as "ribbet." According to Jorge Crespo, the artist and author who will lead the workshop, the frogs say "coquí."



Alice Longworth/Wave Hill

Frog frolic: One of the sculptures by Charles Smith at Wave Hill.

