

SCULPTED PARTS FOR MOTORCYCLES

Image Motorcycle Products

Bikers are always looking for something new to make their motorcycles truly unique. Paint and leatherwork are usually first choice for cosmetics, but when it comes to functionality, billet aluminum has been the standard. It is machined or turned in two dimensions and is then given a natural, polished, chrome-plated, anodized, or powder-coated finish. Billet products lack one integral aspect of design, the third dimension. Without this third dimension, the design will look flat, lacking depth and detail. Utilizing an art/design background and casting methods to create sculptural elements to enhance the look of the motorcycle takes the usual to the phenomenal.

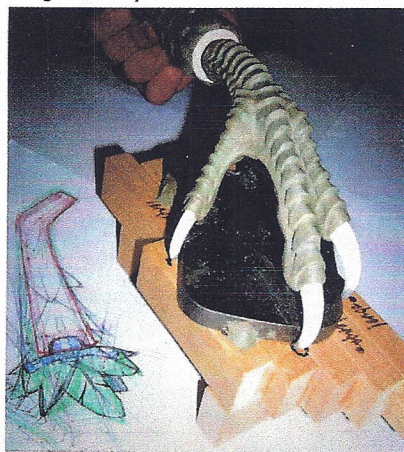
Stan and Celia Reich of Image Motorcycle Products have carved out a niche in this medium. Their unique sculpted footpegs, gas caps, mirrors, kickstands, and jewelry are design driven first and then re-engineered until the fit and function of the part is a direct replacement for OEM applications.

Stan started out as an engineer in a commercial foundry in 1975 casting aerospace parts, armaments, and drilling products for the oil industry. Stan then opened a new foundry in 1985 and concentrated on more commercial applications, i.e. aftermarket automotive, marine, and general casting for industry. Further expanding the foundry's capabilities, in 1987 he opened the art division, casting various alloys as fine art sculptures. An art publisher approached him to produce some bronze sculptures for several artists that had been using 'art foundries' but were having trouble getting the work done on time and with consistent results. The marriage of commercial and art capabilities made Image Castings, Inc. unique to the industry. The foundry went on to cast work for some of the most prolific and best known living artists in the country and handle numerous monumental installations throughout the world.

Stan has always been interested in anything that has an engine in it and could be ridden or driven. As a boy, "I rode go carts, mini-bikes, a motorized little red wagon, and even a riding lawn



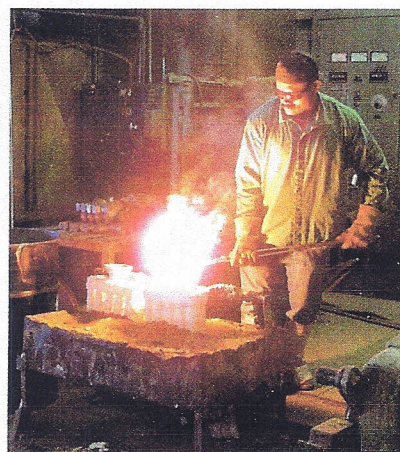
Image Motorcycle Products' Stan Reich.



Sculpting the master.



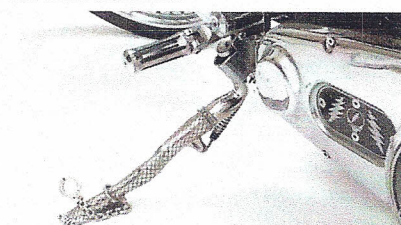
Creating the rubber mold.



Pouring the casting in stainless steel.



The Talon kickstand.



Miss Kitty Cuff.

mower all over the neighborhood. I've ridden dirt and street bikes most of my life." One night, after sufficient libations had been consumed, Stan realized that he could apply his art background to creating something that had never been done before on the motorcycle. He created the first three-dimensional sculpted kickstand of an eagle talon. The design was a hit with everyone who saw it and shortly after Image Motorcycle Products was established.

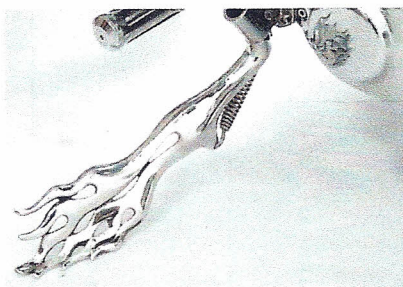
The company now has a variety of designs of sculpted kickstands, footpegs, gas caps, mirrors, and jewelry. Stan and his road crew have attended a relentless schedule of major rallies and industry shows in the U.S. and Canada and also Intermot in Germany and many HOG rallies in Europe.

Today over 500 dealers worldwide order his parts. Stan states that without owning a foundry none of this would have been possible for him as hundreds of thousands of dollars were spent in initial research and development.

To create a sculpture, the artist begins with a drawing. Then an armature is built and layered with clay. The artist then sculpts into the clay to render the design based on the drawing. When the sculpture is finished, a rubber mold is created using RTV silicone, a two-part process that combines silicone rubber and a catalyst that activates the rubber, vulcanizing the liquid silicone to a solid (RTV stands for Room Temperature Vulcanizing). This mold allows incredible detail in the finished piece.

A two-part casting resin is then poured into the mold, and, when it cures, you have a hard master that can be drilled, tapped, and finished any way you want. From there follows a multi-step process of fitting to conform to function, particularly on a kickstand, which has to fit and operate properly. There are a lot of modifications possible at this step and each one of them is very important.

When the master is finished and a production mold has been made, then the actual casting of the part takes place. Each part starts out as a wax before it is cast in metal and takes from 6-10 weeks to make. Image Motorcycle Products uses 17-4 stainless steel, because of its strength, for all of its products. Besides aerospace applications, that steel is used to construct nuclear waste casks. Stan prefers the polished stainless to chromed parts because it never chips.



The Flame.



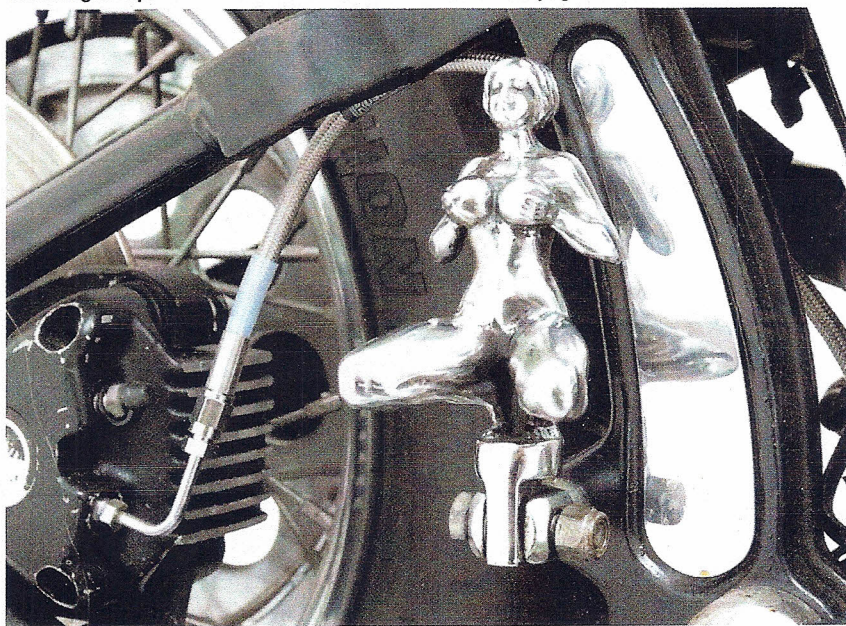
Skull gas cap.



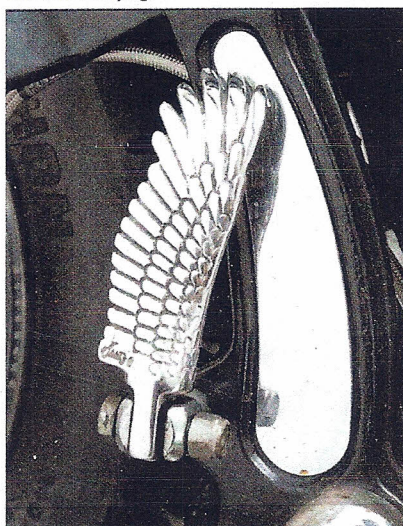
Woman gas cap.



Gator footpeg.



Woman footpeg.



Wing footpeg.

Many bikes have worn Image Motorcycle's parts and garnered countless awards at motorcycle shows around the world. The general public is often not aware of the company behind the successes. Stan says, "We have gone under the radar for years, and that's the way we like it."

IMP has recently been asked to create custom accessories for a number of motorcycle clubs. Stan and Celia welcome the opportunity to work with these clubs to realize their concepts, taking their designs to the next level.

—Kit Maira

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Photos: Kai Raacke/Manufacturer