

## **Introducing Studio Button Artist Brad Elfrink**

by Barbara Colvin



If you haven't been introduced to Brad Elfrink and the amazing buttons that he carves, you are missing out on a great part of button collecting. I met Brad at the 2004 National Button Society Convention in Appleton, Wisconsin. I was hooked on his buttons at first sight. Each of his buttons is a miniature work of art. His buttons are whimsical, magical, marvelous and simply irresistible. After you have seen them, you can't stop dreaming about the next one you will buy.

Brad was born and raised near St. Louis, Missouri and now lives in Cape Girardeau, Missouri. He grew up on a farm raising cattle, chickens, rabbits, and occasionally a pig or horse. While he was young, he enjoyed whittling with his pocket knife. He loved carving figurines out of wood. He is a natural artist.

He earned a degree in commercial art in 1994 and is skilled in a number of techniques which include, but are not limited to, sketching, sculpting, carving, painting, whittling and computer graphics.

Brad carved his first button in January 2004. It was a Viking head and sold for \$35.75. In the next 9 months, he carved over 400 buttons. Brad worked as an optical lab technician until October 2004 when he decided to turn to carving buttons full-time. He calls his studio Elvenkrafte Studio. EBay is Brad's primary selling venue (eBay sales id is bael31), but he has attended NBS conventions and sold out of his room. He will do work on commission as time permits.

Each of Brad's buttons is hand-crafted, has a self-shank and is signed and dated. They range in size from 1" to 2" and each takes about 4 to 12 hours to carve and assemble. Brad's favorite buttons are those that involve moveable parts and a degree of whimsy. One of the things that makes his buttons fascinating is the use of unusual materials and multiple materials. Some of the materials he uses are pre-ban elephant ivory, fossil mammoth tusk, elk, moose or white-tail deer antler, Asian buffalo horn, cow horn, coral, turquoise, Siberian jet, green marble, rhodonite, catlinite, varisite, lapis, opal, abalone shell, mother-of-pearl, cedar wood and rosewood. It is not unusual for one of Brad's buttons to contain 5 different materials. Tiny steel pins, nuts and screws are used in the assembly of these miniatures with moving parts.

The buttons are made in both conventional and realistic shapes. Many of the buttons involve inlaid materials. The price range for these delightful works of art is \$50 to \$350. Brad's buttons are finding their way to button collections across the country and onto winning trays. Both Brad and the button owners are proud of this fact. At least 3 of his buttons have been pictured in the National Button Bulletin (NBB). In the December 2004 issue of the NBB, you'll find 2 of Brad's carved buttons. In the center color section, on page 2, in the upper left-hand corner, you'll see a telephone. On page 5 of the color section, the first button in row 2 is an elephant. Another example of Brad's beautiful buttons can be found in the October 2006 issue of the NBB on the first color page of blue-ribbon winners at National. Brad carved the gorgeous jeweled butterfly in the center of the tray. On page 13 of this issue of the Iowa State Button Bulletin, you'll find another example of Brad's talent. The button in the lower right-hand corner of the lavender scan is one that Brad carved from jet, ivory, coral and plastic.

You may contact Brad at 217 South Sprigg, Cape Girardeau, MO 63703. His telephone number is 573-335-5614 and his email address is [elvenkrafte@yahoo.com](mailto:elvenkrafte@yahoo.com). Be sure to check out his latest auctions on eBay also.