



Steven Castillo entered the *Challenge* to prove that good work is out there.



Model work isn't evaluated in the competition, but one judge admires this entrant's work, saying, "This is a technician who takes pride in his work." The metal collar is nicely polished, and the judges are pleased with the natural-looking anatomy.

Technician and laboratory:

Steven Castillo, head technician of West Ridgewood Dental Professional, P.A., a four-dentist general family practice in Ridgewood, New Jersey

An artist at work:

Steven Castillo received a Bachelor of Arts in fine arts and sculpture from Drew University in New Jersey and a Masters of Fine Arts from Hunter College in New York City. Once he finished school, Castillo's brother, a dental implantologist, encouraged him to pursue a career as a dental technician, a profession that highlights his talent and love for artistry.

In 2000, Castillo began apprenticing at Watson Dental Lab under the mentorship of Tom Watson in Ocean City, New Jersey. He quickly realized he could make a life for himself as a technician. "I like the craft; everything about it has an artistic element. From pouring the model, creating a waxup, meeting the patients, it makes me strive to create a perfect crown," he says.

In-office vs. commercial:

Castillo loves working for an in-office lab because he gets to see the crown in the patient's mouth first-hand. "I get immediate feedback. I get to look at all the elements such as anatomy, contours, and more," he explains, noting that it makes

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his goal of trying to mimic nature easier to obtain. "I put a lot of time and detail into my crowns. I try to get the anatomy right, make sure it lies in the patient's mouth nicely and that the contacts are where they're supposed to be."

Fun fact: After sharing the news of being a finalist with his wife, Teresa, she ran home with balloons and a card for him to celebrate his achievement! **LMT**