

Rhythm in Bronze

Tim Cherry captures the elegance of wildlife through lines, shapes and forms.

By John Geraghty

It was 1996, while serving on the Board of Directors of the National Cowboy Hall of Fame in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, that I first took a serious look at the work of Tim Cherry. He had applied to the Prix de West Committee for acceptance into the annual *Prix de West Invitational Show and Sale*. My fellow committee members and I, while sorting through the numerous applications, continued to set his application aside with others

for further review. Each time his images were placed upon the viewing screen we recognized the profound individuality and originality of his work. When the final choice was made, it had become clear to each committee member that these were not just whimsical images, but compelling and unique. His work was an exciting departure from the norm, full of individual artistic interpretation.

Tim Cherry's application was unanimously approved and he was

invited to participate in the 1997 Prix de West. The inclusion of Tim's sculpture provided a unique approach to wildlife art at the exhibition. Interest in Tim's work grew exponentially. In 2001, Tim's sculpture *Snake in the Grass*, a stealthy cat spread out along a slender stone table complementing the strong horizontal lines, curves and form of the sculpture providing a complete representation, received the coveted James Earle Fraser Sculpture Award.

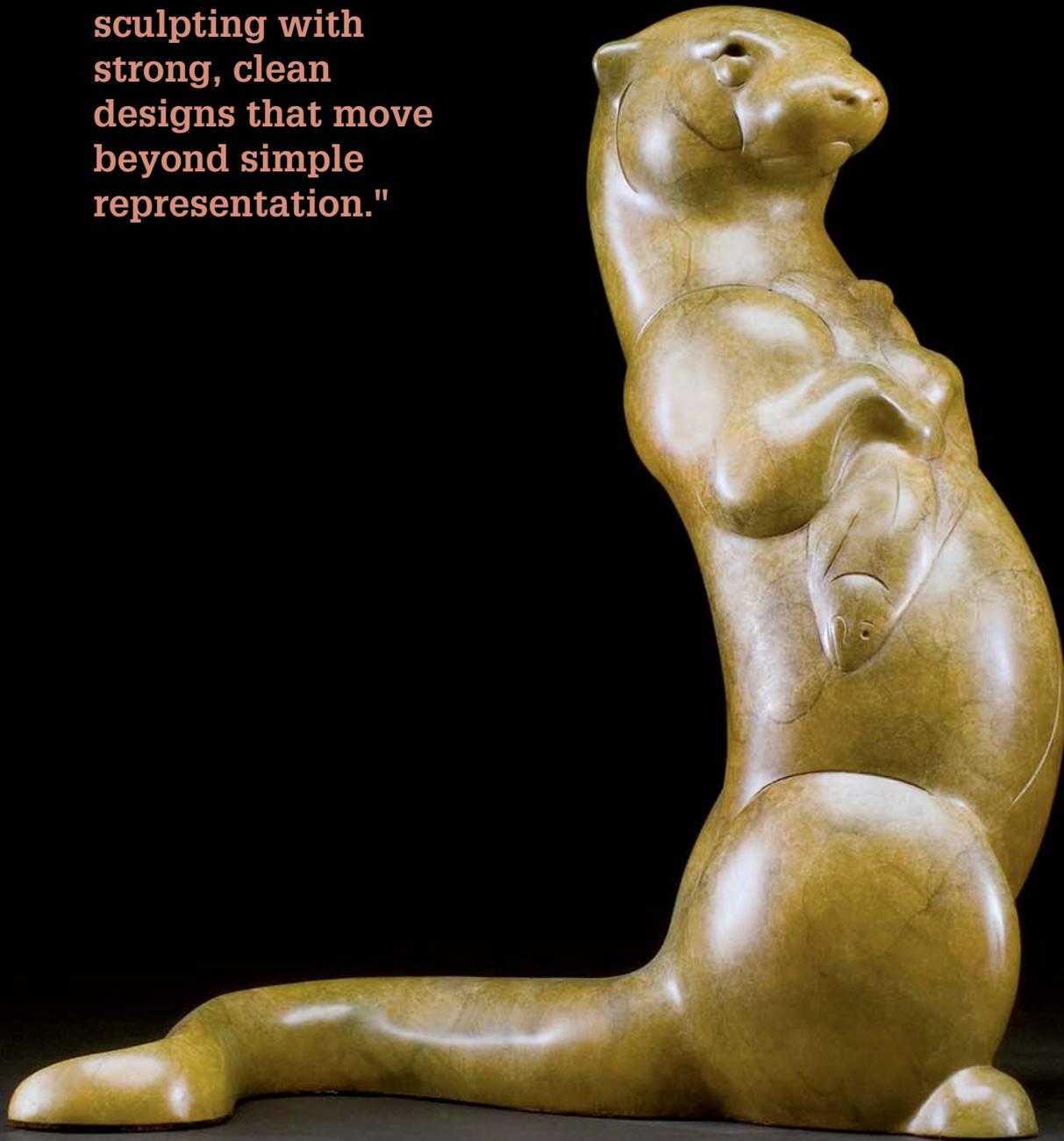


A native of western Canada, Tim now maintains a studio and resides with his wife and daughter in Branson, Missouri. Tim is a fellow member of the National Sculpture Society, Society of Animal Artists, and the National Sculptors Guild.



Cat-tentment, bronze, 8 x 31"

"Tim blends his knowledge of animals and sculpting with strong, clean designs that move beyond simple representation."



Otter Rumba, bronze, 18 x 16"



Snake in the Grass, bronze, 40 x 78 x 12," ed. of 18

WINNER OF THE 2001 PRIX DE WEST JAMES EARLE FRASER SCULPTURE AWARD

This was only one of numerous awards of recognition for Tim. He also was granted inclusion into prestigious organizations such as the Society of Animal Artists and the National Sculpture Society, powerful statements for a comparatively young sculptor.

Early in 2006 I invited Tim to participate in the 2007 *Masters of the American West Invitational Exhibition and Sale* at the Autry National Center in Los Angeles. I was convinced Tim's work would provide a totally new perspective to sculpture represented at Masters. He agreed and, after only his second year of participation, was selected by the Masters Committee to be the featured sculptor for the 2009 exhibition.

Tim blends his knowledge of animals and sculpting with strong, clean designs that move beyond simple representation. He skillfully captures the graceful movement and personality of his animals.

The complexity of his work, not apparent at first glance, is deceptively involved. His sculptures express realism and likeness of form while maintaining a level of abstraction inherent in his foundation of circles and geometric shapes. Tim has a reverence of rhythm that he transposes into his sculptures, capturing the elegance of his subjects through line and form.

When researching the development of prominent animal sculptors, it is amazing how their interest and development have a parallel uniformity; their love and appreciation of animals and their environment, apprenticeships in taxidermy, service with forestry and land management, hunting guides and mountaineering. Each of these life experiences appear to be synonymous with the progression of our finest American wildlife artists.

Born in Calgary, Alberta, Tim grew up in southeastern British Columbia where

he developed his love for animals and the outdoors. At age 15 he began working summers for a hunting outfit and soon became proficient as a guide. This introduced him to the backcountry of northern British Columbia, the Yukon and the Northwest Territories. This was a memorable time in his life, and he says that there is "something magical and sacred about the backcountry." Although his days of guiding hunters into that area is long past, he returns each year to experience the spirituality of these isolated areas. The landscape is breathtaking, wildlife is everywhere, and he finds it difficult to express this experience.

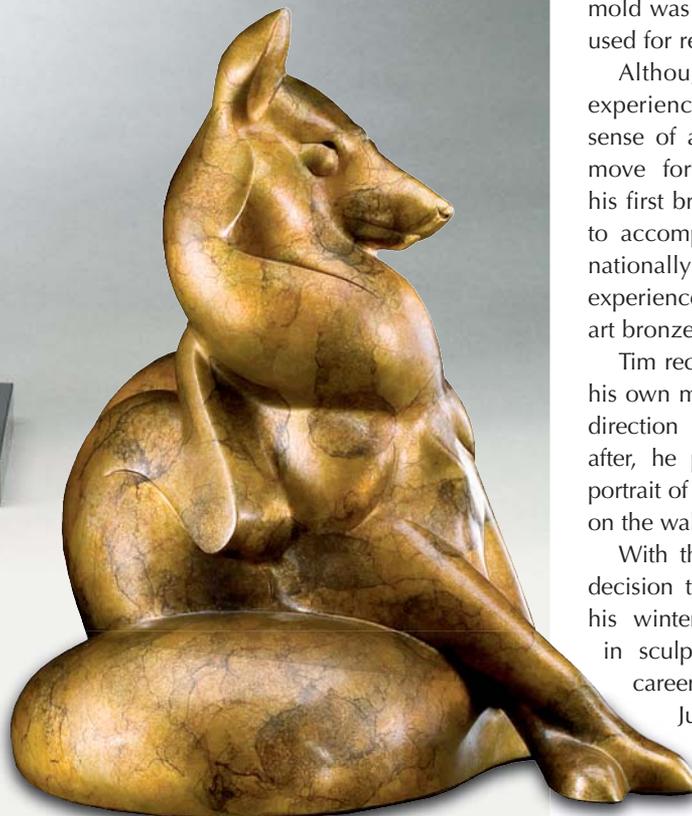
He says, "Anyone who has visited these pristine places understands this interconnection."

Tim recalls one of several unique experiences while on one of his trips in the far northwest corner of British Columbia. He was backpacking with his

Squirrel Stretch, bronze, 33 x 19"



Flea Flicker, bronze, 16 x 14"
GOLD MEDAL AWARD WINNER
NATIONAL SCULPTURE SOCIETY
2007



best friend Fred Wilkening and they had set camp on a high ridge among small evergreen trees. At dusk, after hiking all day, exhausted and comfortable in their bedrolls, they heard a wolf howling from lower down the ridge toward them.

"We poked our heads out of the tent just in time to see several caribou charging past less than 10 feet away," recalls Tim. "As we looked up the ridge there was another caribou heading straight for us with a wolf hot on its heels, and they ran right through our camp."

After graduating from high school, unsure of his direction in life, Tim applied to noted taxidermist Forest Hart asking for a position to serve as an apprentice in taxidermy. His application was accepted and shortly after his 19th birthday he left home for Hampden, Maine.

For the next year he studied animal anatomy from the inside out. One of Forest's specialties was sculpting mannequins, the artificial bodies used by taxidermists. Starting with the skeleton, Tim learned to sculpt the muscles and flesh forming the body in clay. A fiberglass mold was produced from his models and used for reproductions.

Although this was a wonderful experience and provided Tim with a sense of accomplishment, he wanted to move forward. Forest was completing his first bronze sculpture and invited Tim to accompany him to New York to the nationally recognized Tallix Foundry to experience the fascinating process of fine art bronze casting.

Tim recognized the potential in casting his own models and realized this was the direction his life would take him. Soon after, he produced his first sculpture, a portrait of a bear in plaster, which remains on the wall of his mother's home.

With this new interest, Tim made the decision to return to Canada and spend his winter months developing his skill in sculpting and supporting this new career as a wrangler and guide from June through September. His observation of the animals became more focused and he mentally recorded their posture and movements.

In 1988, while guiding a hunting



Tim in the sculpture garden at McLarry Fine Art in Santa Fe, New Mexico, with his monuments *Heads or Tails* and *Rabbit Reach*.

party, Tim met noted animal sculptor Dan Ostermiller. They became friends and Dan invited him to his studio in Loveland, Colorado. This was the experience of a lifetime—the genesis of Tim’s ambition to become a nationally recognized sculptor.

Tim was introduced to Fritz White, a prominent sculptor who worked in a studio also located in Loveland, Colorado. Tim went to work for both Dan and Fritz, who gave him the opportunity to begin his career.

I can recognize the influence of Dan Ostermiller in Tim’s work with the wonderful rounded shapes and clean lines. Fritz White, a master of design, taught Tim the importance of mass and volume and gave him the confidence to experiment and stretch the limits with his designs and composition. Both Dan and

Fritz remain a source of inspiration.

Fritz also provided Tim the opportunity and tutelage to work with stone carving. Working with alabaster, Tim began to find within the stone the shapes of the animals that were to become his life’s work. He began to experiment with graceful simple lines and forms.

Tim Cherry’s sculptures today involve the simplified shapes, sweeping lines and the curvilinear forms he first discovered in the studio of Fritz White. He enjoys orchestrating these elements into sculpture that is rhythmical, flowing and inviting to the touch.

Tim says, “Capturing the personality, movement, grace, and elegance of my subjects is a primary goal.”

It is from this approach that Tim’s unique signature style has evolved.

Tim, unlike most sculptors, constructs his own molds, pours and chases all his small waxes; he often performs his own metal chasing, understanding the importance of color, light and shadow to complement the design elements of his sculpture. Tim works closely with Pat Kipper of Loveland, Colorado, a master in the precise formulation and application of chemicals that create the patina or finish of each sculpture. The sensitive color values can be controlled to accentuate specific details or create a finish that appears the work has been sculpted in marble. These procedures are an integral part of the finished work.

Tim says, “If I have created a work that is pleasurable to view and inviting to the touch, then I have accomplished my goal.”

The nucleus of Tim’s world and the creating force behind his sculpture is the



Salmon Spiral, bronze, 17 x 12"

support and assistance of his wife, Linda, and their daughter, Amber. Linda and Tim first met at the Southeast Wildlife Exposition in Charleston, S.C., in 1991. Linda was a fine art gallery director from Branson, Missouri.

Linda recalls, "I immediately fell in love with his sculptures, making it quite clear, not with Tim." It was a year later they began to date and in 1996 they were married.

Tim joined Linda in Branson to begin their life together. They purchased a ranch-style home in Branson that has constantly been undergoing extensive remodeling. They have also added a wonderful studio for Tim with open beam ceilings providing adequate room for monumental works and a separate area for carving stone.

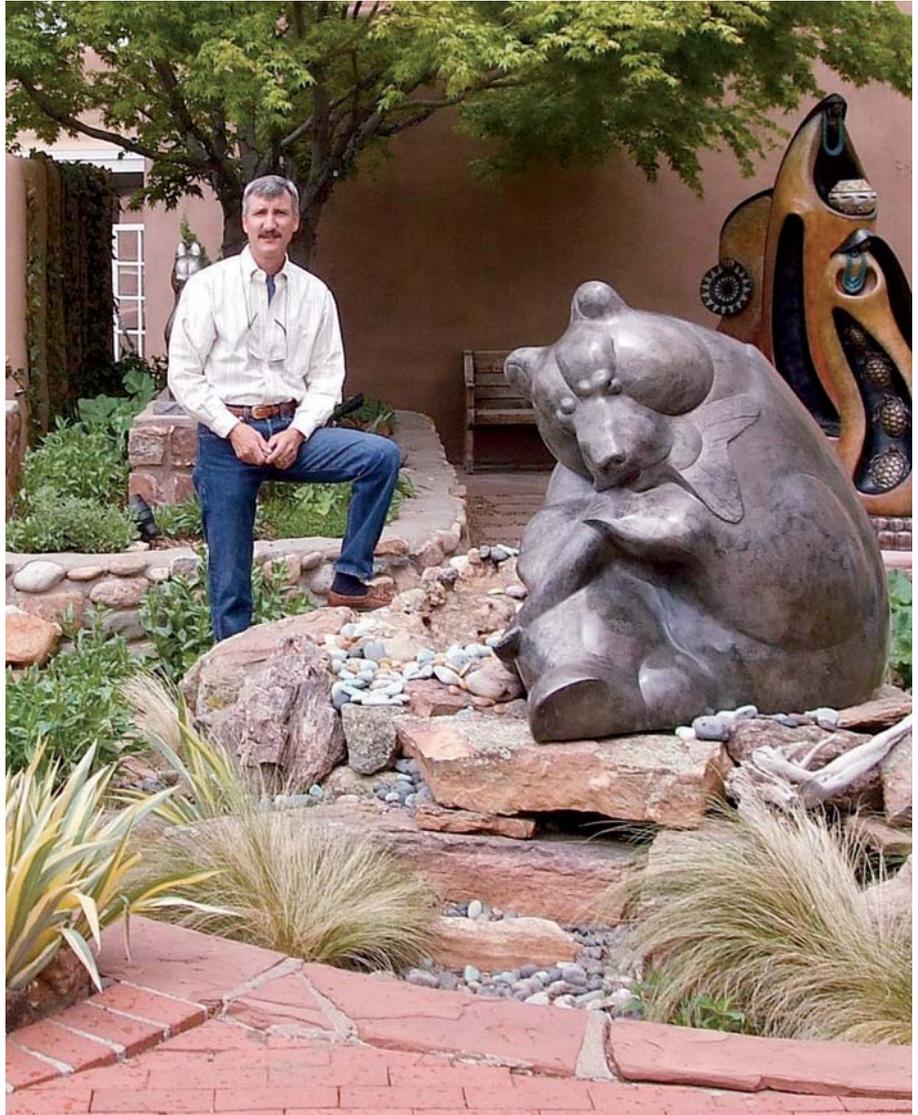
Three sides of the studio have windows that look out onto Lake Taneycomo, one of the more beautiful areas in the heart of the Ozarks. The lake is a frequent destination for all types of wildlife.

The interior of the studio is painted white and is immaculate, perfectly organized; everything has its place.

There is a large bookcase containing an extensive library of historical and wildlife reference materials. Tim is an incessant reader, often setting up until the late hours. Linda maintains an office in the home where she handles the marketing and communication with their galleries. Deadlines, commitments, shipping and interaction with their ever-expanding collector base, this has become her responsibility.

Their daughter Amber, a University of Missouri "Tiger," has become an accomplished photographer, which is a major asset; she also provides computer presentations for Tim's lectures. Amber has also become an exceptional salesperson and attends most of his major exhibitions.

"Tim Cherry Sculpture Designs" is truly a family business. Another of Tim's interests is development of a sculpture garden that has become a major part of the landscape around their home. In his leisure time, Tim has become proficient at gardening and landscape design with several sculptures tastefully placed among his prize plantings of shrubs and flowers. This has become a therapeutic release



Tim with his monument of a grizzly bear and salmon titled *Heads or Tails* in the McLarry Fine Art sculpture garden.

and a rewarding experience.

I have enjoyed watching the progress of Tim Cherry's work over these last several years. His continuing dedication, commitment and originality are refreshing.

Tim says, "I am influenced and inspired by what I see in my environment . . . the bald eagles, turkeys, ducks and small animals. There's not a day that goes by that I don't see an animal do something really cool."

Fortunately for us, these "really cool" activities may very well be captured in bronze some day for all of us to enjoy.

Tim Cherry is represented by Texas Art Gallery in Dallas, Texas, McLarry Fine Art in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and Diehl Gallery

in Jackson, Wyoming. He will certainly remain an important component of the *Prix de West* and *Masters of the American West* exhibitions and sales each year. 🐾

About John Geraghty

John Geraghty, Trustee and Special Advisor to the Autry National Center's Masters of the American West Fine Art Exhibition and Sale, shares his insights on the Western art scene. Both he and wife Saralynn are afflicted with the incurable passion of collecting Western art.

