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David Pearson first artist to exhibit at Allan Houser Compound

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TODAY CORRESPONDENT

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. — New Mexico artist David Pearson's life has been entwined with and influenced by the late Chiricahua Apache sculptor Allan Houser since Pearson met Houser at age 16. That's when Pearson began working at Shidoni, a

bronze art foundry, sculpture garden and gallery near Santa Fe.

"Allan was their main sculptor at the time," Pearson said. "He was a gentle man with an easy way about him. He had everything going for him. He was selling a lot of work, and the work he was doing was

See PEARSON page 12

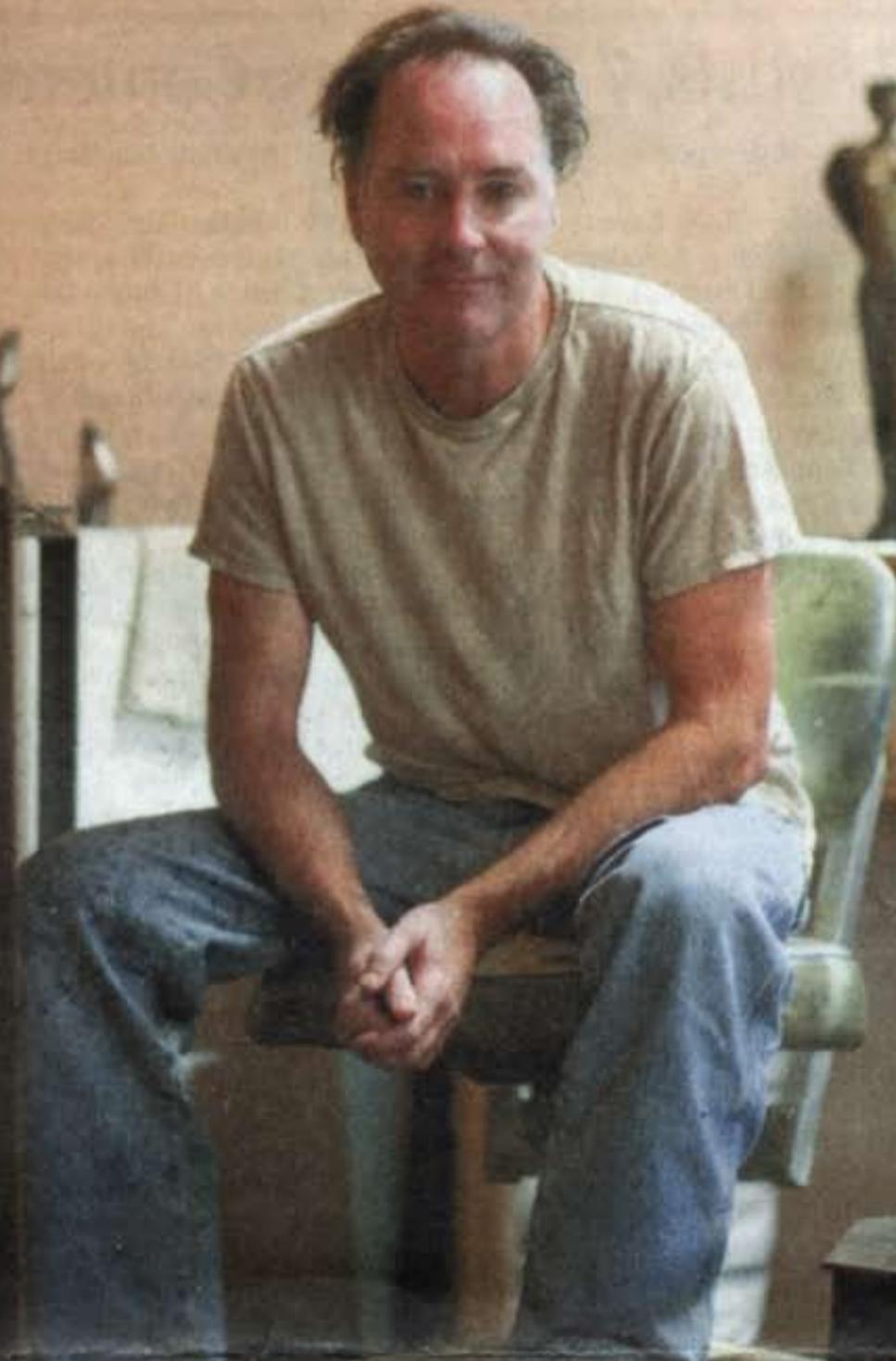


PHOTO COURTESY KATE RUSSELL

David Pearson will be the first artist besides Allan Houser to exhibit at the Allan Houser Gallery and Sculpture Gardens. The show will include 16 to 20 sculptures representing the most important pieces of his career, as well as those that represent a turning point in style or direction. This photograph was taken at Pearson's home studio in Santa Fe.

Pearson: Houser

from page 11

going well." Pearson was also employed for a time at another Santa Fe foundry where Houser poured his sculptures, as well. "Houser put something special into his work."

The lessons in perseverance, drive and comportment that Pearson absorbed being in the presence of Houser have served him well. On Sept. 20, Pearson comes full circle with the sculptor as the first artist besides Houser to exhibit at the Allan Houser Gallery and Sculpture Gardens. The retrospective of three decades of Pearson's distinctive sculpture will be scattered around the gardens alongside artworks created by Houser. A special event Sept. 18 at Patricia Carlisle Fine Art opens the exhibition.

"Foundries are struggling right now, and the idea of opening up the Allan Houser Gallery to outside artists is a way of building relationships with artists who are popular and selling, but not in direct competition

with Houser's works," said Eric Vance, director of production at Allan Houser Foundry. "When we approached Dave and Patty [Carlisle], we told them we'd love to build a relationship with them in building interest because of Dave's history with Houser. It's a great story, and great stories sell art."

Vance said the retrospective will be first, and perhaps the only time, the gallery will show another artist's works in the garden alongside Houser's. "Not many artists are as talented and diverse as Dave. Not many artists have a similar story that makes sense to show alongside Allan's work. Allan's work is about dignity, and Dave's work is about beauty. It's a special and beautiful fit."

Pearson's connection to Houser goes beyond being influenced by him. His wife and owner of Patricia Carlisle Fine Art, Patricia Carlisle, worked at Glenn Green Galleries in Santa Fe, which showed

Houser's work. The house the couple built is only a few miles from the Houser Compound outside Santa Fe. And after Houser's death in 1994, the Houser family asked Pearson to help design and build the foundry on the estate.

"When the family decided to create a studio and foundry to cast the pieces that Allan left behind, they contacted me because of my connection to the other foundries in Santa Fe," Pearson said. "They knew my capabilities, and had a plan for the buildings. I brought my knowledge of the technical and equipment requirements. We had a great time, and it was exciting to be involved with this new thing happening on fresh ground."

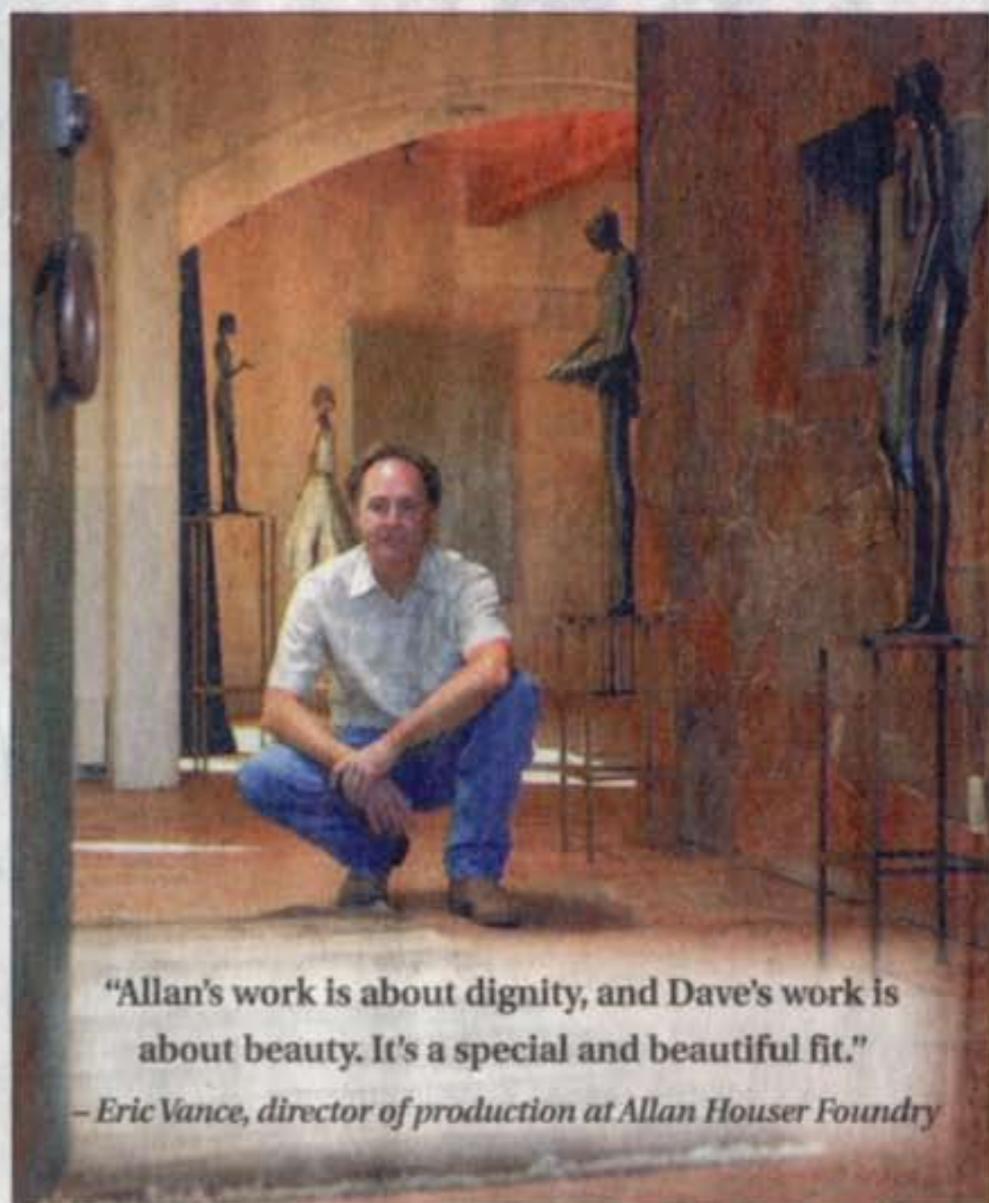
Pearson appreciated the ability to carry on Houser's legacy, especially because he never actually had the chance to work under Houser. But it wasn't for lack of trying. "Someone important in Allan's life told him he shouldn't take me on because it would unduly influence my style. She was right, and I'm grateful I never did work under him."

Instead, Pearson, whose elongated female figures have become his signature, took other lessons: a drive to produce art, the necessity to put one's passion into the work, and to keep the integrity of the art foremost.

"Some artists think that being an artist is the high life, but to really succeed you need to produce all the time. I'm always thinking about what's next. I've never made something just to sell it; I make it because it's what comes next in my mind."

Pearson's show will include 16 to 20 sculptures representing the most important pieces of his career, as well as those that represent a turning point in style or direction. They will range from 30-inches to life-sized, with the larger ones placed in the Houser Sculpture Gardens alongside Houser's works.

"It's come full circle for me. I came into the world of art as a kid, and was so lucky to find a career when I was 16. To be able to see Allan Houser behave the way he did to be a leader on that path, a great leader, to show at his compound now is a great honor."



"Allan's work is about dignity, and Dave's work is about beauty. It's a special and beautiful fit."

—Eric Vance, director of production at Allan Houser Foundry

PHOTO COURTESY KATE RUSSELL
David Pearson will exhibit his work at the Allan Houser Gallery and Sculpture Gardens beginning Sept. 20. The artist is seen here in his Santa Fe home.