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# Between Earth and Sky: Heaven Here and Now

David Pearson infuses layers of ethereal meaning into the solid permanence of bronze.

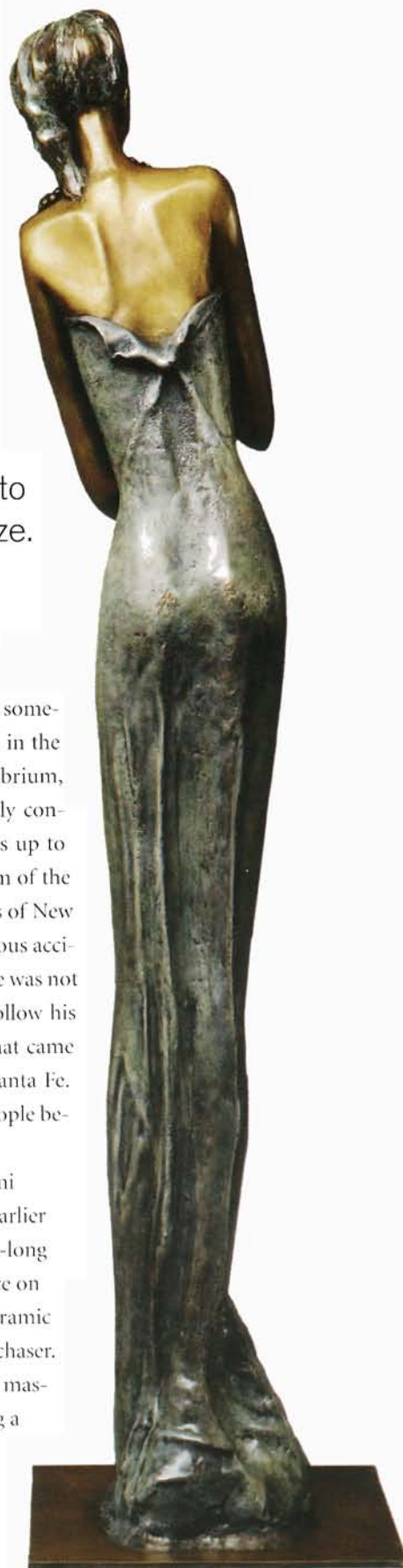
BY WOLFGANG MABRY

Being born on the autumnal equinox might have something to do with the balance in the sculptures and in the life of David Pearson. Both have finely tuned equilibrium, and there are measures of serendipity and carefully considered intention in both. Where any soul alights is up to chance, and for Pearson, growing up in the optimism of the sixties and seventies, under the legendarily blue skies of New Mexico turns out to be just one of many such fortuitous accidents. Pearson recalls an easygoing youth, in which he was not just allowed, but actually encouraged to find and follow his passion. He found and followed a passion for art that came fully out of dormancy when his family moved to Santa Fe. Paintings, sculptures, galleries, art books, and the people behind these treasures fascinated and inspired him.

By the age of 16, Pearson landed his job at Shidoni Foundry, which had just been established four years earlier by Dorothy and Tommy Hicks, parents of another life-long friend, Scott Hicks. His formal art education took place on the job, as he began by divesting bronzes from their ceramic molds. Within a year Pearson was promoted to metal chaser. During his six year apprenticeship at Shidoni, Pearson mastered each of the 32 essential steps in producing a



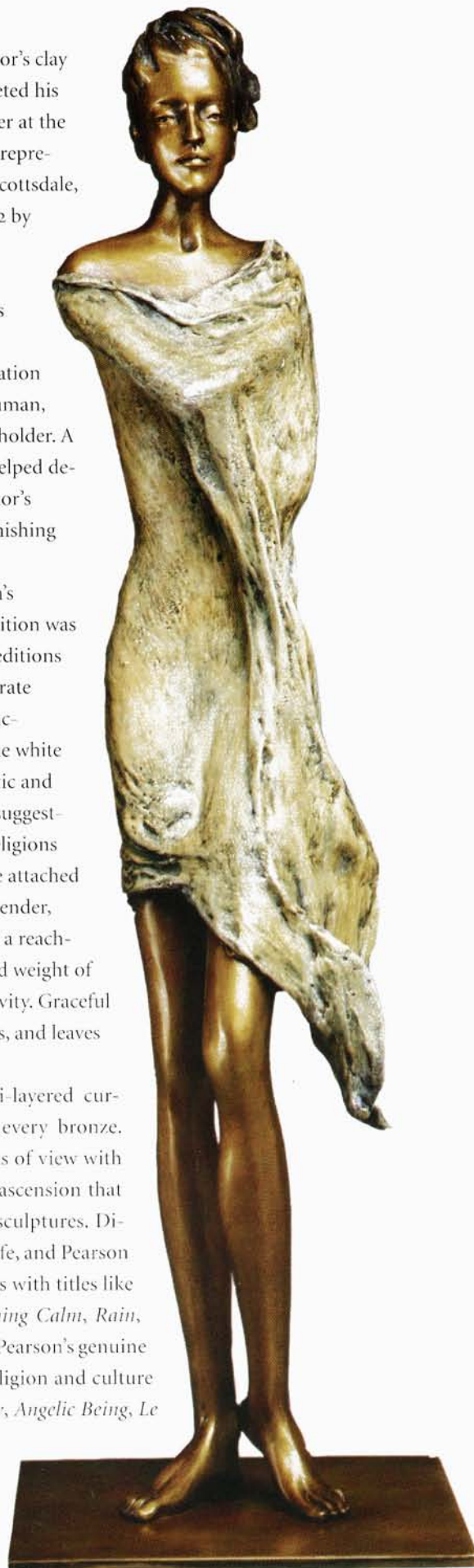
THIS PAGE: *Heartfelt*, (front and back), bronze, 42" h, ed. 15; OPPOSITE PAGE: *Summer Breeze*, (front), bronze, 30" h, ed. 15.



finished fine-art bronze from the sculptor's clay model. By the age of 18, Pearson completed his first bronze, which quickly found a buyer at the Shidoni Gallery. By age 21, Pearson was represented by galleries in Santa Fe, Dallas, Scottsdale, and Colorado Springs. Recruited in 1982 by Art Foundry, also in Santa Fe, Pearson quickly rose to the positions of Director and Master Sculptor. In his ten years there, he collaborated and sculpted on projects from inception through installation with sculptors Allan Houser, Bruce Nauman, Ron Cooper, Luis Jimenez, and Fritz Scholder. A year after Allan Houser died, Pearson helped design and build a foundry for that sculptor's estate, and spent the next three years finishing out Houser's remaining editions.

Numbers are important in Pearson's bronzes, for several reasons. His first edition was limited to 15, and Pearson has kept his editions at that size ever since, a gesture considerate of collectors who value rarity in conjunction with beauty and meaning. The little white birds Pearson often includes for aesthetic and symbolic reasons appear in groupings suggesting the kind of symbolic significance religions and cosmologies around the globe have attached to numbers. Pearson's figures are tall, slender, and graceful. Their elongation suggests a reaching heavenward, even as the solidity and weight of bronze subjects them to the laws of gravity. Graceful women, angels, couples, birds, branches, and leaves are favored subjects in Pearson's work.

Pearson gives residence to multi-layered currents of meaning in each aspect of every bronze. Viewers can identify from many points of view with the serene intuition and the sense of ascension that pool and rise within and around his sculptures. Diurnal and seasonal cycles affect all of life, and Pearson calls these things to mind in sculptures with titles like *Dawn*, *Midnight*, *Gentle Nature*, *Evening Calm*, *Rain*, *Autumn's Eve*, and *Meeting at Midday*. Pearson's genuine respect for spiritual quests in every religion and culture finds expression in titles like *Heavenly*, *Angelic Being*, *Le Jeune Saint*, *Nitya*, *Little Swami*, and *Kyrie*. Love is a subject with highest relevance in every life, and Pearson's *Kiss*, *Sweet Hearts*, *Caress*, *Dream-wish*, and *Secrets* speak eloquently







in sculptural terms of that huge, mysterious, and wonderful complex of human emotions.

Whether maquette—up to 12" high, mid-scale—up to 30" high, or life-size, Pearson's bronzes epitomize the highest ideals of craftsmanship, artistry, and universality of meaning. Pearson

completes between eight and twelve new works per year, always with the goal of connecting with people through sculpture. He does this visually, emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually, making his sculptures attractive to institutional and private collectors. Municipalities, banks, hospitals, and museums have long been Pearson collectors. In 2002, his Unique Bronze Bird was acquired for the White House Christmas Tree. Just this year, the New Mexico Governor's Mansion acquired *Une Danse de Reve*, a 52" high bronze ballerina standing with her hands clasped behind her back. The sculptor strikes the perfect balance between suggestion and articulation in her pose, degree of abstraction, and expressions in face and gesture. Pearson lets every viewer complete his sculptures on every viewing, considering each viewer's own particular set of emotional, aesthetic and psychological mindsets as important as his own.

His first limited editions took about ten years to sell out. Today, his editions are often sold out within a year of release. Many go into collections of repeat buyers, who have found earlier works to be sources of comfort, inspiration and sheer aesthetic euphoria. Pearson derives creative energy from nature in his sacred environment and it infuses his work with an indescribable energy of a similarly soothing, tranquility-inducing quality. Anchored in the earth, reaching for the sky, Pearson's bronzes remind us that Heaven can be a state of mind, achievable right here, right now. ■

THIS PAGE: *Summer Breeze*, (back), bronze, 30" h, ed. 15; OPPOSITE PAGE: *Midnight*, (front and side), bronze, 30" h, ed. 15.

David Pearson's sculpture can be seen at Patricia Carlisle Fine Art, 554 Canyon Road, Santa Fe, New Mexico, 87501. Gallery hours: 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Monday – Saturday; 12:00 noon – 5:00 p.m. Sunday.  
(505) 820-0596, (888) 820-0596. Fax (505) 820-0598. Website: [www.carlislefa.com](http://www.carlislefa.com); e-mail: [fineart@carlislefa.com](mailto:fineart@carlislefa.com)







DAVID  
PEARSON



patricia carlisle fine art inc

554 canyon road, santa fe, new mexico 87501  
toll free 888.820.0596 • [www.carlislefineart.com](http://www.carlislefineart.com)