

SouthwestArt

Fine Art of Today's West

the Essential Guide to 2007

12 Months of Top Art Shows
10 Artists to Watch
25 Tips for an Artful Year

JANUARY 2007

NOVEMBER 2006

\$5.99 US



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Artists to Watch



Seven Angels by David Pearson

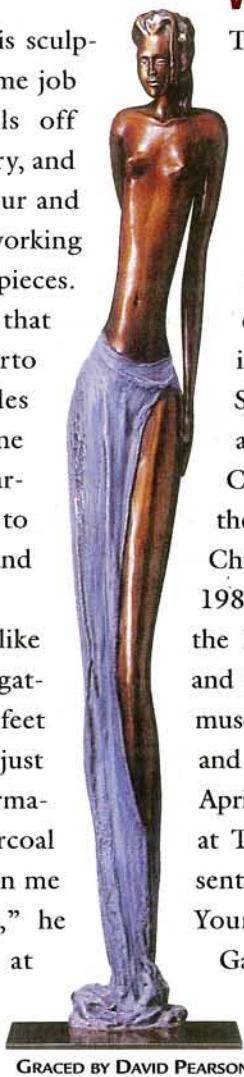


Clouds over Santa Fe Dam by W. Jason Situ

DAVID PEARSON

New Mexico artist David Pearson began his sculpture career at age 16 when he got a part-time job at Shidoni Foundry knocking the shells off bronzes. "My friend's dad owned the foundry, and one day I went out there and watched a pour and was hooked," says Pearson. After a year of working at the foundry, he started sculpting his own pieces. His first was a 3-foot-high female figure that reminded some viewers of the work of Alberto Giacometti. Over the next two decades Pearson continued to pursue a career as a fine artist while paying the bills by working at various foundries. Two years ago he decided to devote his attention to sculpting full time and has found success.

"My work is very linear—it's almost like drawing with sculpture," he says of his elongated bronzes that range from 12 inches to 6 feet tall. In his earlier works, Pearson says he "just had an idea and then began building an armature." But recently he has been doing charcoal sketches to experiment. "Sketching has given me more opportunities and ideas to explore," he says. Pearson's bronzes can be found at Patricia Carlisle Fine Art in Santa Fe, NM. —MB



W. JASON SITU

The landscape paintings of W. Jason Situ are often illuminated by the strong California sunlight. "I'm always trying to capture the light found in nature here," says Situ, who lives in El Monte, CA. Influenced by the French Impressionists, the award-winning artist is a prolific painter who works outdoors amid rain or sweltering sun. He is equally at home painting a moody skyscape or a brightly lit mountain. Situ was born in 1949 in Guangdong, China, and he began painting in high school during China's Cultural Revolution. Later he studied at the prestigious Guangzhou Fine Arts Institute in China, before moving to the United States in 1989. Situ is a member of the California Art Club, the Laguna Beach Plein Air Painters Association, and the Oil Painters of America. His works are in museums and private collections throughout China and the United States. From March 11 through April 7 his landscape paintings of China are on view at Tirage Gallery in Pasadena, CA. Situ is represented by Tirage Gallery, Pasadena, CA; Lee Youngman Galleries, Calistoga, CA; Graphics Gallery, Balboa Island, CA; Poulsen Gallery, Pasadena, CA; and Exchange Gallery, Orange, CA. —BG



PEACEFUL PRESENCE

**NEW MEXICO ARTIST
DAVID PEARSON
REFLECTS ON HIS GRACEFUL
FIGURATIVE SCULPTURES
IN AN EXCERPT
FROM HIS NEW BOOK**

PHOTOGRAPHS BY DAVID COX

DRIVING SOUTH OF SANTA FE into the Galisteo Basin on Highway 14, the horizon opens up. Fields of grass stretch into a cornflower blue sky in an almost Midwestern tableau. Cottonwoods rustle; junipers and piñon pines stand quietly. Horses wander nonchalantly in pastures, and dogs are friendly presences on ranches situated along dirt lanes that didn't even have names in the 1990s. That's when Pearson bought 20 acres of land here in the San Marcos/Lone Butte area, a high llano or plateau that was centuries ago a center for farming and pottery-making in the upper Rio Grande area, but was abandoned after the 1680 Pueblo Revolt. Today it's mostly private homes, although if you survey the open range in the direction of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, you may sight a stray antelope. And if you drive near David Pearson's ranch, you may hear the blues-rock strains of Stevie Ray Vaughan.

Pearson first got familiar with the area while working with famed sculptor Allan Houser, who lived just two miles away ("I would see him sitting on his porch just in this total calmness and I thought, someday I'm going to live like this," he says). Then in 1995, one year after Houser's passing, he was hired to design and build a bronze foundry at Allan Houser Inc. for production of all remaining editions of Houser's work; that brought him back to the area. By this time he was married to his second wife, gallery owner Patricia Carlisle, who had just launched her own art gallery, Patricia Carlisle Fine Art,

TOP TO BOTTOM: SWAN LAKE, BRONZE, H30. NITYA, BRONZE, H30, AND MORNING SUN, BRONZE, H40. ONE SONG, BRONZE, H30.

OPPOSITE PAGE: DESTINY, BRONZE, H68.



representing his sculptures among other art. "We saw this place, and we knew it was perfect. I could spend the rest of my life here," Pearson remembers.

They bought the land in the mid-1990s and began building a studio for Pearson on it—a house would follow. "I was still working in the foundry at Houser's and I somehow knew it was time to fulfill the dream of being on my own. So I went out to my car and I got on my cell phone and called Patty and I said, 'I'm going to quit this job. I'm going to go full time into sculpting.' And she said, 'I think it's time too.'"

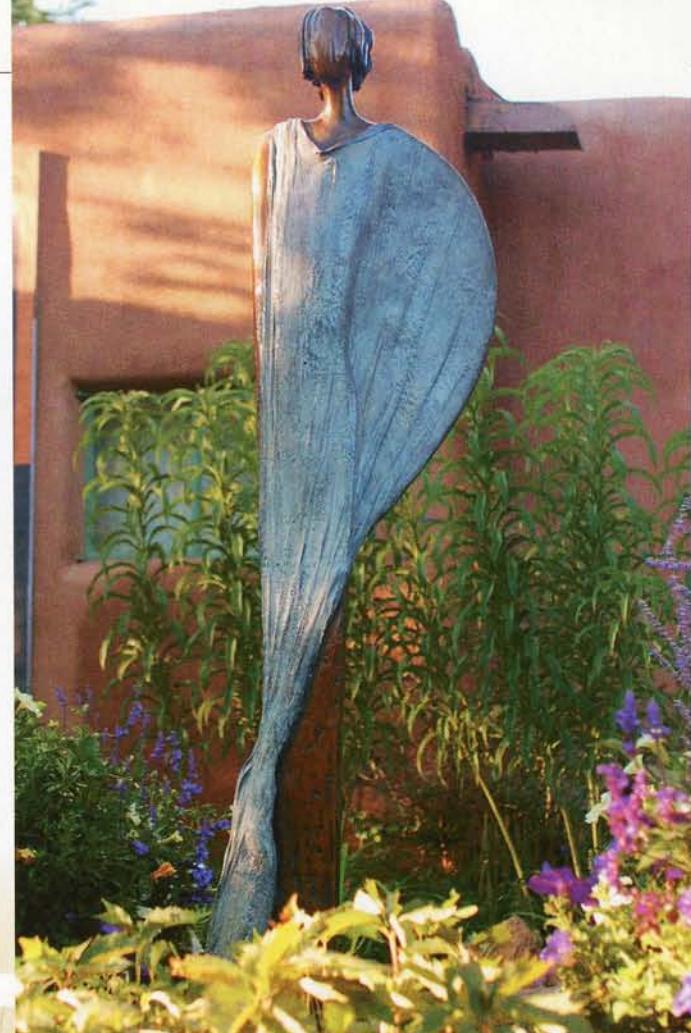
Pearson thought a lot about Houser as he constructed his own studio just over the hill from Houser's: "Allan was the king, the man. He never faltered. He was a workhorse. He was a mule as far as artists go. He would work from sun up to sun down. I mean, he was always hitting it strong. And that's what I do. I hit it. I work. And I love what I do."

His first studio here, finished in 1997, was a

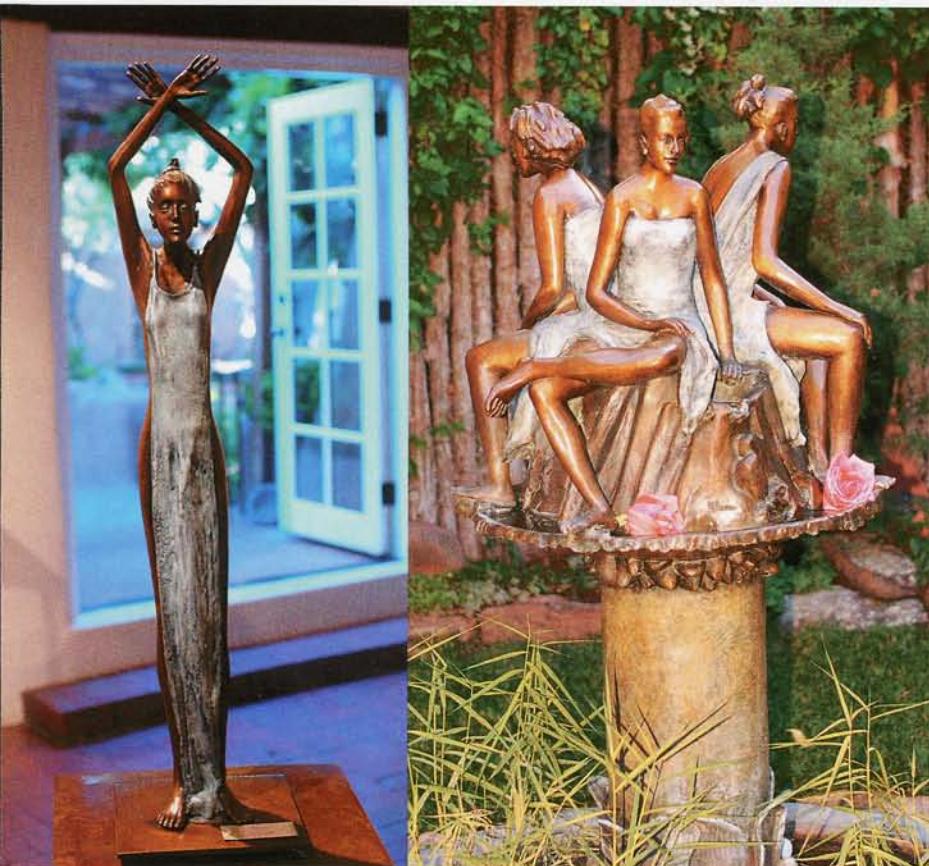
SOMETIMES HIS PIECES ARE MORE ABSTRACTED, SOMETIMES MORE REPRESENTATIONAL, BUT ALWAYS THERE IS A FEELING OF UNIVERSALITY.

single room. Hot wax operations were along one wall, metal and patina areas in other parts of the open-ceilinged shop. But it was all his, and he could work from dawn to dusk on his own ethereal sculptures—lithe, elegant figurative pieces, sometimes with cubist elements. They flowed out of him. Bronze figures inspired by tales from Greek mythology, like that of rebellious Clytie—who angered the gods, so they transformed her into a sunflower. Narrow, elongated figures, sometimes wrapped in gauze to create a mummy effect. Arts writer Michael Koster wrote of them, "Stoic faces from another time evoke the stillness of the tomb, the dignity of an age long past."

In *The Santa Fe New Mexican*, Pearson explained, "I think of my work as being very strong in line, as being peaceful with a sense of presence to them. The style can express anything, from a person walking to someone just being lonely." He expounded, "It's a combination of form, feeling, and abstraction that reaches for an aesthetic beauty, rather than conveying a more complex expression."



He experimented with male forms, androgynous figures, and one-winged angels, but he kept returning to long, slender female forms, portrayed in sleek contours and elongated designs. He elaborated in *Focus Santa Fe* in 1999, "Elongation comes to me quite spontaneously, and it has always been an integral part of my vision. The Etruscans believed that shadows were elongated figures representing the soul, and shadows were believed to contain the spirit of a person."



OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP: ANGELIC BEING, BRONZE, H68.
OPPOSITE PAGE, BOTTOM: SUMMER, BRONZE, H68.
ABOVE: MORNING PRAYER, BRONZE, H32.
RIGHT: OASIS, BRONZE, 56 X 24 X 24.

PEARSON'S SIGNATURE STYLE was refining itself now: linear, tapered figures that are idealized rather than individualized. Sometimes they are more abstracted, sometimes more representational, but always there is a feeling of universality, of belonging to every culture, every era. They evoke the natural world at times, and at others, the spirit world. There is a strong sense of presence and a hint of romanticism. The pieces seem to command their own space, creating a kind of zone between the sculpture and observer. This allows the observer to step into a

different realm in which the sculpture resides, experiencing its presence in its own space.

Pearson reflects of his work, "Everything has a progress. The mummies were first. Then the angels were second. And then the birds came into the picture. I've always done the females. That's just what I have a feeling for. The males that I've done, which are very few, tend to be torn up and ragged, stiff and stark, beat up. Whereas the women are totally free flowing—

it's receptive energy." He never uses models, and rarely photographs. "A lot of times these pieces come through me, and when they are finished I can't believe I made them. It's just a strange thing—it's like the feeling is there when you're making the piece, and you just do it."

Now Pearson's oeuvre began commanding increased attention. *New Mexico Magazine* commended his sculptures of "people of light, spirits who have evolved out of the material plane and now guide and protect the rest of us." Jon Carver memorably reflected in *THE Magazine* in 2000, "His bronzes recall the ancient Egyptian figurines that were placed in the pyramids as guardians for the dead as they made the journey from this world to the next" Carver surmised, "Cycladic idols also come to mind. These had a tremendous influence on the Italian sculptor-turned-painter Modigliani, and account for the elongation of form that is a hallmark

of his work. Pearson, like Modigliani and the great 20th-century sculptor Giacometti, stretches his figures in a similar manner."

As the accolades poured in, Pearson hunkered down at his country studio, traveling further into a world of spirit, emotion, and humanism. The qualities of harmony and balance now seemed to grow stronger as, in his 40s, he delved into deeper realms. □

Pearson is represented by Patricia Carlisle Fine Art, Santa Fe, NM.

This excerpt is from *David Pearson: The Path of a Sculptor*, written by Wolf Schneider and published by Fresco Fine Art Publications, LLC.



THE HUMAN CONDITION

Ever since the Renaissance, drawing the human figure has been a staple of an artist's education, whether it takes place in European ateliers or American art schools. And for even longer, renderings of men, women, and children have been more highly valued than other genres such as still-life and landscape works. Perhaps that's because the figure speaks directly to the viewer about the human condition—man's joys, fears, hopes, and dreams. In the following pages, artists depict the figure in various poses and emotional states, evoking moments in the stories of our lives. This month we honor these painters and sculptors in our annual figurative issue. We thank them for peering into our souls and sharing the beauty and the mystery they behold.

OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP: JAMIE CHASE,
THRESHOLD, ACRYLIC, 48 X 48.
OPPOSITE PAGE, BOTTOM: ROBERT COOMBS,
OH ROMEO ROMEO, OIL, 16 X 12.
RIGHT: DAVID PEARSON, SONG OF SONGS,
BRONZE, H62.

