CANADIAN ART, ARCHITECTURE & DESIGN

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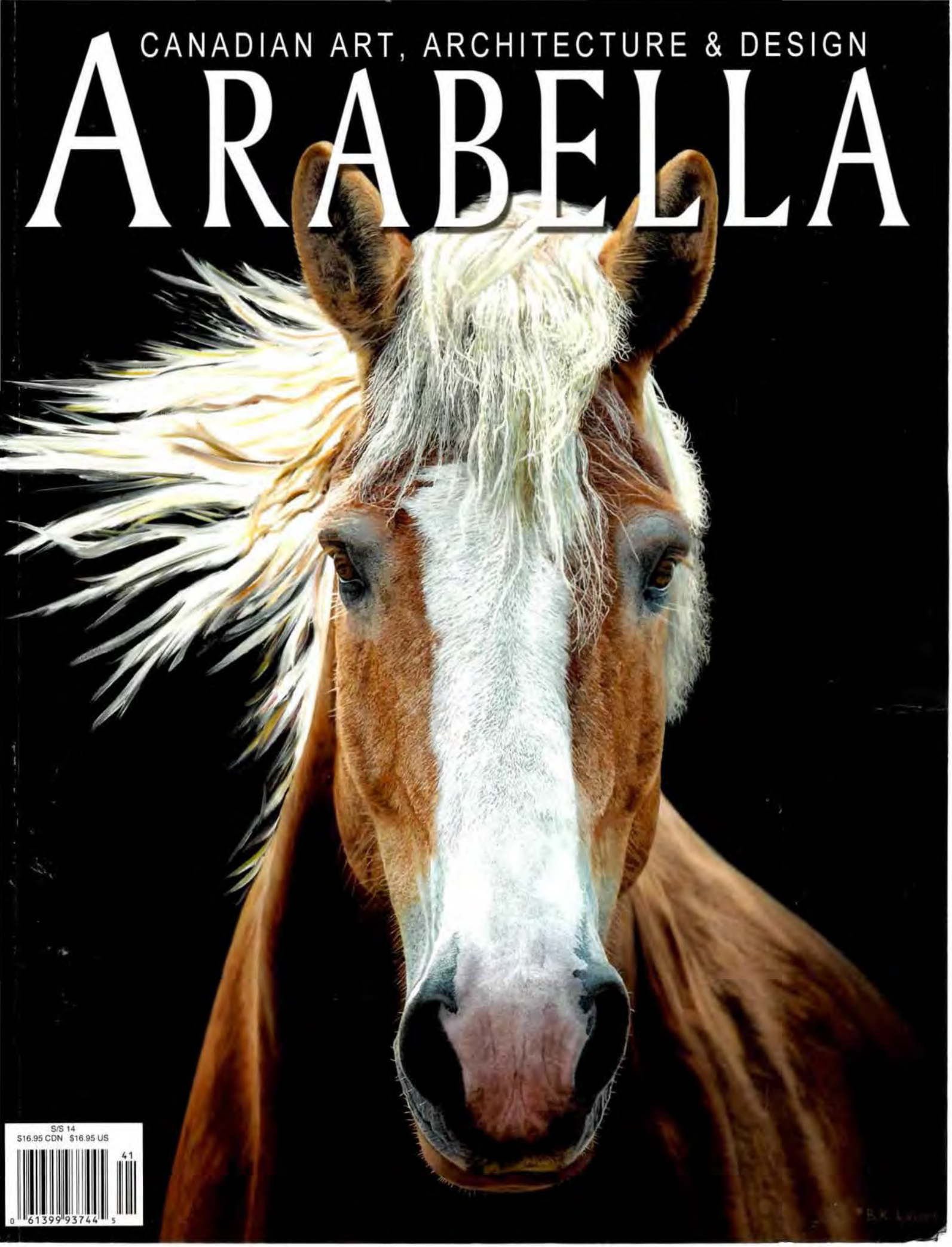

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Artist to Collect

Tim Cherry

left, *Flea Flicker, Red Fox*, bronze, 15"h x 13.75"l x 10.25"w, Edition of 18
above, *Wise Guy, Great Horned Owl*, bronze, 66"h x 18"l x 15"w, Edition of 18

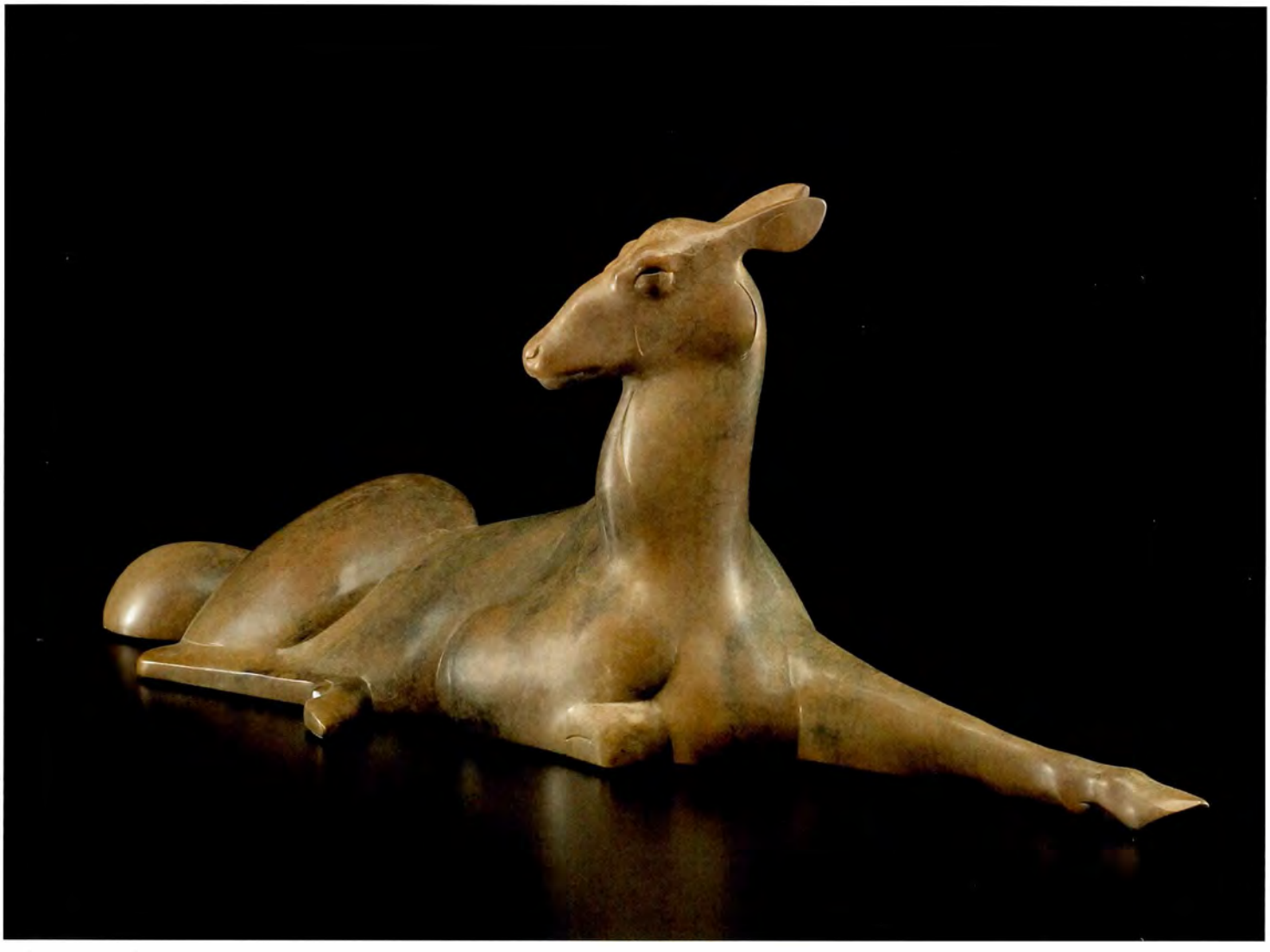
Tracking the Path of a Wildlife Artist

written by Kylie Serebrin

A Migratory Creature

Like the animals he sculpts, Tim Cherry has journeyed down a winding path through nature, en route to his artistic destination. "Twenty-five years ago I embarked upon a trail to discover my voice in art, as it expresses my first love – wildlife. Decades later, I continue that adventure every day," he states.

Though born in Calgary, Alberta, Tim was raised in Nelson, BC, until his family moved to Prince George in the northern interior of British Columbia when he was a teenager. As a boy, Tim spent all his waking hours outdoors – playing, exploring, fishing and trapping. At 16, he began working as a horse wrangler and cook's helper for an outfitter in northern BC, and by 18, Tim had earned his Assistant Guide's License, which permitted him to lead hunters and fishermen through the wilderness of BC, the Yukon and the Northwest Territories.



Dozing Doe, White-tailed Deer, bronze, 10"h x 20"l x 8"w, Edition of 18

Joining the Pack

The year he turned 19, Tim stumbled upon a new passion when he travelled to Maine to study under the noted mammal taxidermist and manikin sculptor, Forest Hart. "It was purely happenstance that Forest decided to cast his first fine-art sculpture during my apprenticeship, and that I had the opportunity to visit his foundry in New York. On that trip, I was introduced to the process of metal casting, visited numerous galleries and museums in New York City and discovered my calling in life," Tim remembers. "From that point on, I knew unequivocally that I was going to be a wildlife sculptor."

After this revelation, Tim ventured to Loveland, Colorado at the invitation of wildlife artist Dan Ostermiller – a past client whom Tim had once guided. There, he found an unexpected and unique artistic community. "While in Colorado, I also worked in the studio of Fritz White. There are just so many significant sculptors living in that area! Loveland is a mecca of foundries, mould makers, base makers and photographers. In short, it's a sculptor's heaven!" Tim explains. "I was able to learn all aspects of the foundry method and to collaborate with other sculptors on large, monumental pieces. It was an unparalleled learning experience. I still rely on the lessons I learned then about mass and design in sculpture. To this day, I can't work on a piece without thinking: What would Fritz tell me to do?"

Hunting Practices and Mating Season

Having soaked up the influence of many valuable mentors, Tim's next step was the hunt for his own distinctive voice. "I needed to discover what my original contribution would be to the world of art," he explains. "Artists must strive to think outside-the-box and to speak their own languages. It is very important to learn from masters and peers, but to be true to oneself, an artist must then follow his or her heart and forge a fresh path in

Flat Fawn, Whitetail Deer, bronze, 4"h X 15"l x 8"w, Edition of 18

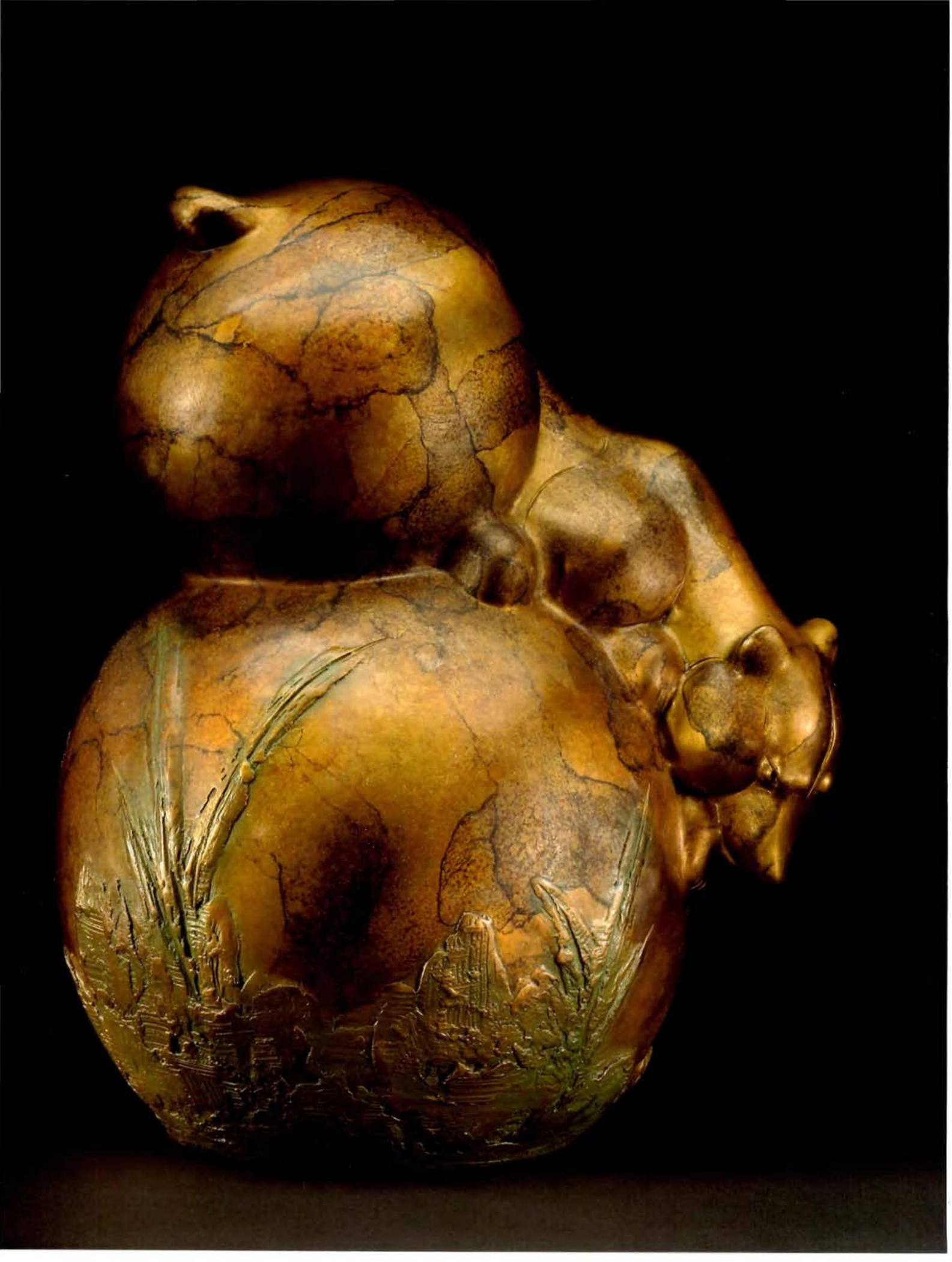
pursuit of something unique."

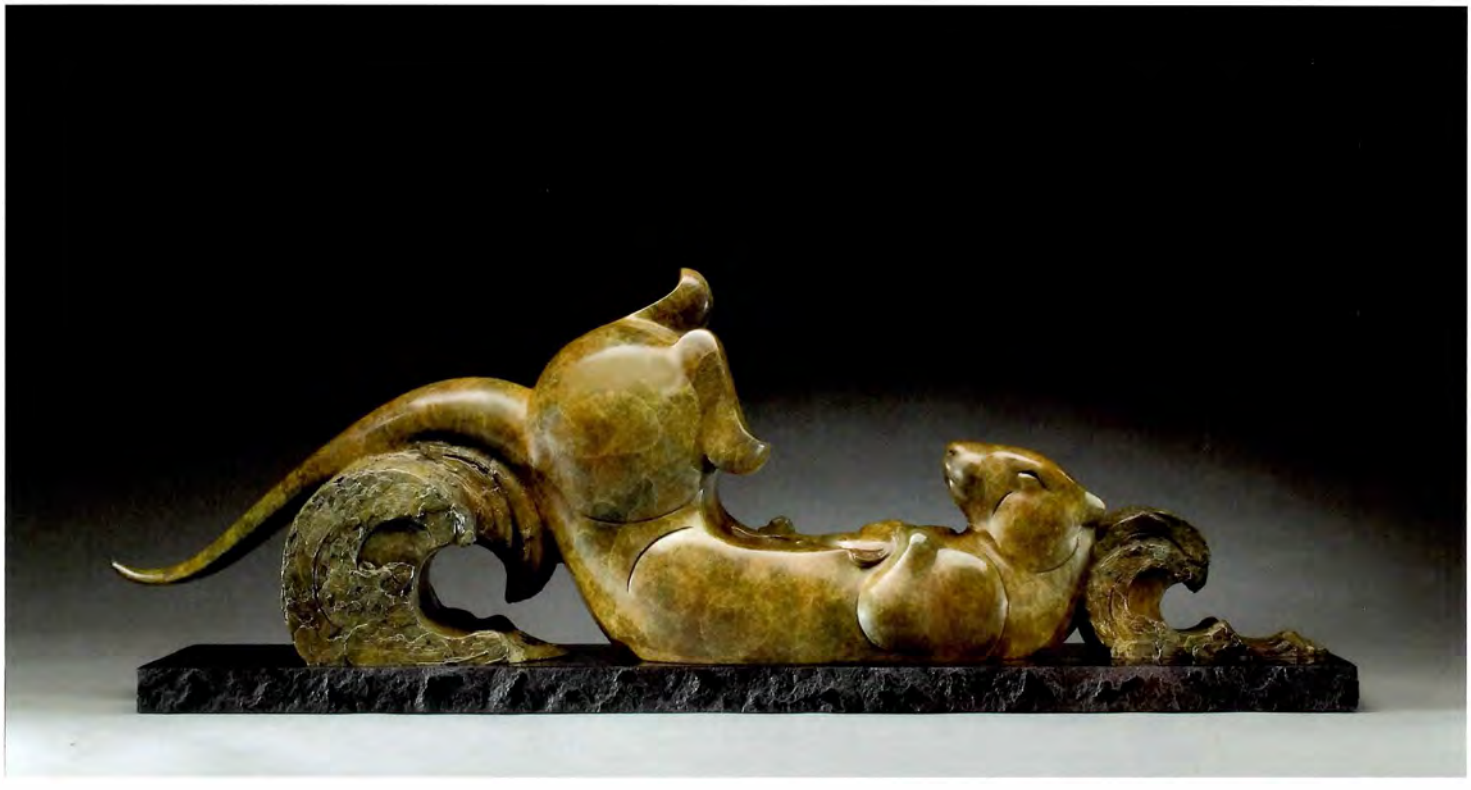
Of course, as any wildlife expert knows, hunting practices are often dictated by mating season. "Eventually, a girl always enters the picture, doesn't she?" Tim jokes. "During these years of personal artistic exploration, I met my future wife, Linda. She lived in Branson, Missouri, so I took a leap of faith. I moved there, married her and embarked upon making a place for myself within a new artistic landscape." For the past 20 years, Tim has remained in Branson with Linda and their daughter, Amber. Along the way, he has immersed himself in a community of admirable artists, inspiring patrons, encouraging galleries and receptive art enthusiasts – all of whom Tim thinks of as his extended family. He notes, "I truly believe that it takes an entire village to raise, support and feed a sculptor, so I am grateful for these folks. Together with my wife and daughter, they give me the courage to wake up and do what I do, every day."

The Artist's 'Territory'

Being close to his girls – Linda and Amber – has always been of chief importance to Tim, so his in-home studio suits him perfectly. When Tim and Linda purchased their house 17 years ago, its unfinished wing was one of its chief selling points. By lifting the ceilings, adding eight banks of fluorescent lights and a corner closet for his workbench and tools, Tim transformed the relatively small space (only 16 x 26 feet) into a compact and efficient studio. "Everything has its place. I'm a pretty neat person, so I try to keep my studio as clutter-free as I can – that's just my nature," Tim acknowledges. "It's not a glorious space by any means, but it's an ideal space for me, both work-wise and family-wise."

Items exempt from Tim's 'clutter-free' policy include his stereo, a marvellous collection of reference books and the photographs, paintings and drawings of his family, friends and mentors that hang on the studio's north wall. Alternatively,





left, *Bearly Balanced, Grizzly Bear,* bronze, 12"h x 9"l x 9"w, Edition of 18

above, *Fish Dish, River Otter,* bronze, 12"h x 33"l x 5"w, Edition of 18
below, *Bear Bones, Grizzly Bear with Salmon,* bronze, 25"h x 35"l x 8"w, Edition of 18

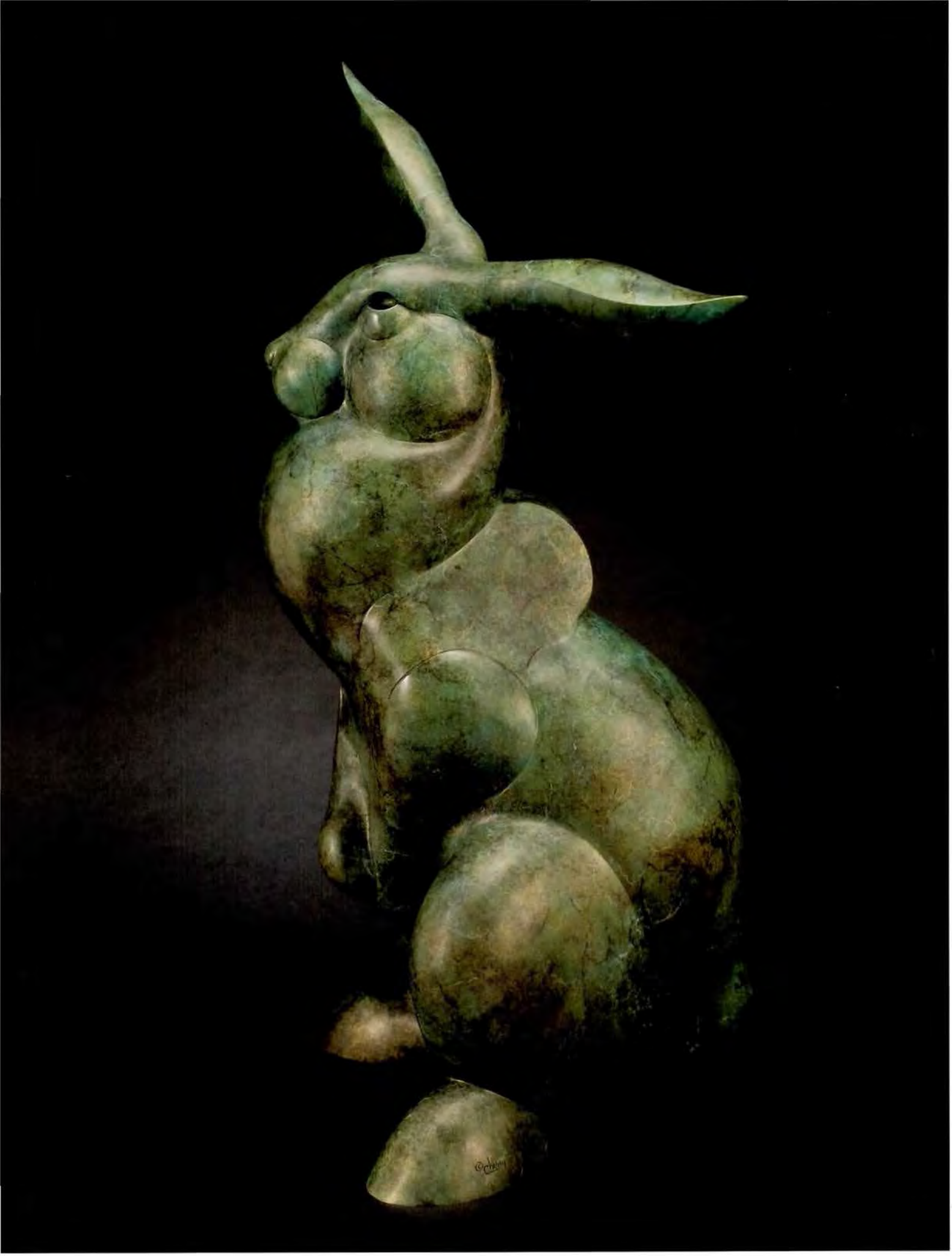
above, *Cotton Ball, Cotton Tail Rabbit*, bronze, 7"h x 9"l x 8"w, Edition of 25
right, *Hare Raising, Jack Rabbit*, bronze, 48"h x 28"l x 22"w, Edition of 8

the east wall of Tim's studio is affectionately known as 'the wall of noses.' "Back when I was a taxidermist, I took study casts of many of the different animals that came in – so now I have true, three-dimensional references for roughly 30 wildlife faces. I regularly pluck a cast from this wall and use it while I'm working," he attests.

When his spectacular collection of reference materials doesn't spark his imagination, Tim's home studio affords him the luxury of grabbing his fishing pole and walking to the lake across the street to fish for an hour or so. "Other times, when I'm struggling in the studio and need a break to recharge my creative batteries, all it takes is sitting on the front porch with a cup of coffee, watching the various critters scuttle by," Tim reveals. "Every day, I observe an abundance of wildlife. It's so important that I get outdoors and interact with Ma Nature. There are a million miracles going on around us at any given moment – all we need to do is listen and watch for them. I am constantly humbled by the awesome effects that are created in nature and by the creatures I observe on a daily basis. They provide an unlimited supply of ideas," he points out.

Following Instincts

When creating a sculpture, Tim does not directly replicate the miracles of nature he witnesses, however. Rather, the inspiration for a single piece comes from a variety of different sources. Frequently, Tim discovers a position, gesture or mannerism of an animal that touches him. From there, he might take that shape and apply it to



left, *When Pigs Fly*, bronze, 17"h x 11"l x 8"w, Edition of 18
above, *Racing Razorback, Razorback*, bronze, 19"h x 30"l x 8"w, Edition of 18

a completely different creature. More often than not, Tim ends up playing with a combination of shapes and lines before realizing what subject is best suited to his imagined design. "Ultimately, my art is about the sculpture – the animal is secondary. My personal style is based on depicting wildlife using the strongest and simplest lines, shapes, colours and textures possible, without sacrificing representation, gesture or attitude. I test the limits of anatomical accuracy and take liberties interpreting representational shapes – sometimes pushing them to near abstraction – in order to emphasize a stronger overall design. When I succeed, my sculptures are balanced, emotionally-compelling, stimulating and lyrical," Tim states.

Once the ideal critter has been chosen to embody a desired posture and personality, Tim quickly produces a thumbnail sketch in clay, in order to focus his mind and energy in a general direction. As soon as he feels he's worked out a design with sculptural merit, he leaps forward to creating the piece in real size. From there, Tim's process is highly instinctive: "As I work, I let the sculpture take over and guide me. I whack and I hack, I stretch and pull in every direction until I feel I have explored all possibilities with the design. When all the masses, shapes and lines are designed well, they flow together rhythmically. That's when I know, intuitively, that I'm done." Subsequently, Tim builds his own moulds in his studio and ships them to a foundry in Colorado where they are cast and finished.

"I inspect all the metal after it's been cast, but before the patina application. I've worked for over 25 years with the finest patineur working today. Together, we discuss and experiment with various patinas until we find something that works perfectly for a particular piece," Tim notes. Though his primary medium is bronze, he has also cast several sculptures in high-polish stainless steel – a material he feels gives his works a contemporary and powerful character. "Occasionally, I carve stone as well. I really enjoy the fact that it's a completely different thought process than sculpting with clay, insofar as I'm taking material away from the stone instead of building up masses. Stone carving keeps me on

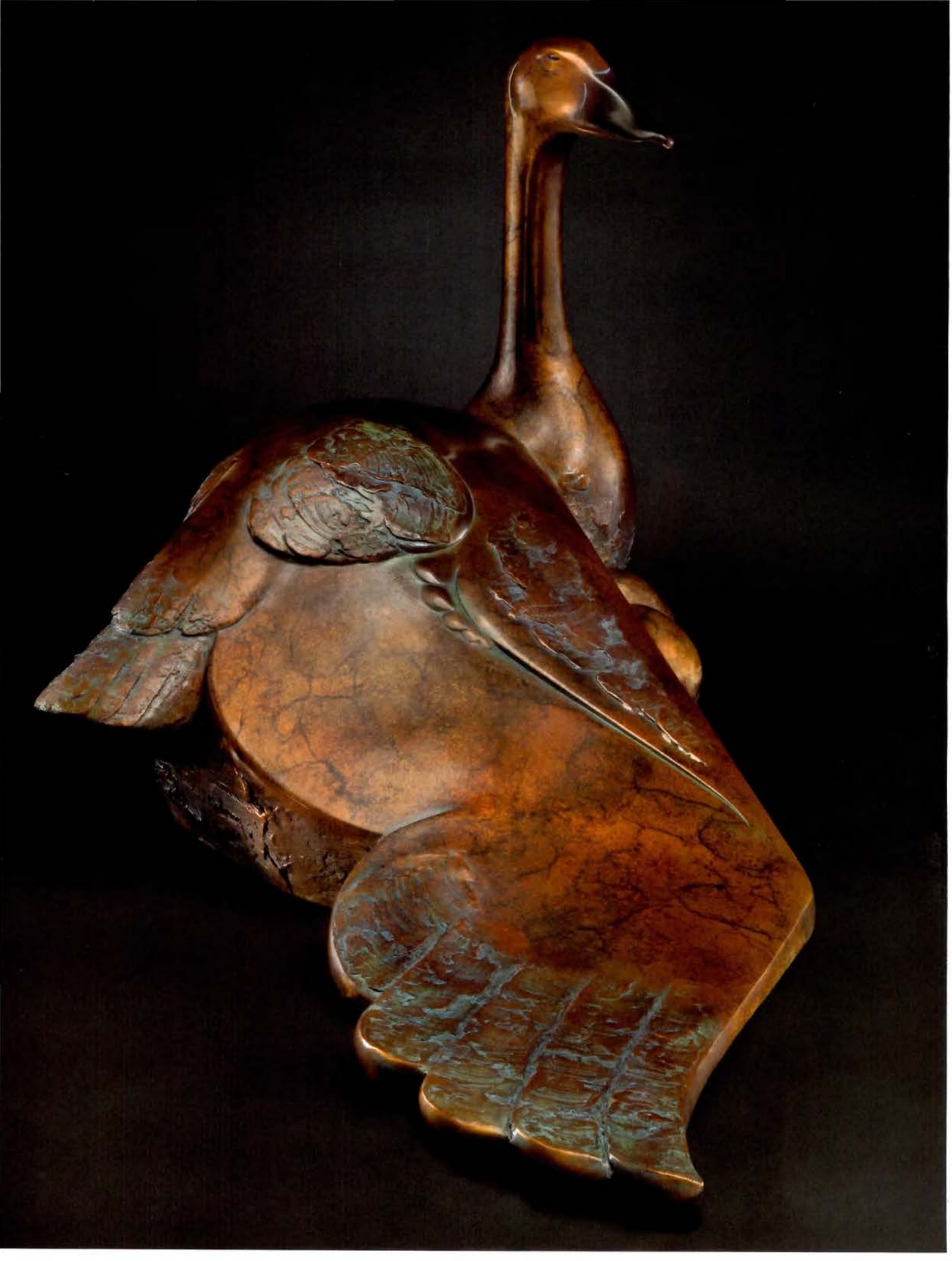
above, *Stream Team, Salmon and Turtle*, bronze, 15"h x 24"l x 6"w, Edition of 18
right, *Slippery Fish, Grizzly Bear and Salmon*, bronze, 14"h x 11"l x 8"w, Edition of 18

my toes and reminds me to go with the flow, since the medium dictates my artistic direction," Tim explains. "In fact, sometimes my strongest designs are stone carvings, because I keep shapes to a bare minimum in order to draw the viewer in, which causes them to become more intimately involved in the interpretation of my work."

Displays of Dominance

Throughout his career's progression, Tim has been widely recognized by his peers. By the time he was 25, he had gained membership in the Society of Animal Artists and by 30, he was elected to membership in the notable National Sculpture Society (NSS), as well as the National Sculptors Guild. Tim has also been decorated with numerous awards over the years. In 2001, he received the James Earl Fraser Sculpture Award (presented annually for a sculpture exhibiting exceptional merit) for his piece "Snake in the Grass," in addition to the prestigious Bronze Medal from the National Sculpture Society for "Rivers Run." In 2002, he received the NSS's Bedi-Makky Art Prize for his work, "Butter Ball." The same organization presented him with the Elliott Gantz and Company Foundry Award for "Salmon Spiral" and the C. Percival Dietsch Prize for "Twig Trimmer," in 2003 and 2004, respectively. Three years later, he received the National Sculpture Society's Gold Medal and Maurice B. Hexter Prize for "Flea Flicker" – a crowning jewel in Tim's already sparkling résumé.

His achievements and accolades have made Tim a highly sought after contributor to major public exhibitions throughout the US. Today, his work is represented among the collections of the Gilcrease Museum (Tulsa, Oklahoma), the Booth Western Art Museum (Cartersville, Georgia), the Leanin' Tree Museum (Boulder, Colorado), the Benson Park Sculpture Garden (Loveland, Colorado), the City



left, *Mother Goose, Canada Goose,*
bronze, 19"h x 32"l x 20"w, Edition of 18

right, *Arctic Ghost, Snowy Owl,*
bronze, 19"h x 8"l x 5"w, Edition of 18

left, *Prairie Monarch, Antelope,* mirror polished stainless steel, 17"h x 14"l x 4"w, Edition of 8
above, *Rotundra, Grizzly Bear,* mirror polished stainless steel, 10"h x 34"l x 10"w, Edition of 8

of Cheyenne (Wyoming), the City of Lakewood (Colorado), the City of Thornton (Colorado) and the City of Little Rock (Arkansas). Tim's sculptures are also exhibited regularly in numerous private galleries and at juried and invitational art shows all across North America.

Despite the acclaim that surrounds him, the quiet closeness one finds in Tim's art is reflected in his personal life, as well. "I love to travel, meet new people and see different environments but I tend to avoid scenes with large crowds. Come to think of it, I'm not so fond of small crowds either! Give me good ol' Mother Nature any day!" he confesses with a laugh. "Life is hectic enough with work schedules, so, when Linda and I have free time together, you can usually find us playing with a new recipe in the kitchen, working in the garden or relaxing on the porch with family and friends."

For more information about Tim Cherry, visit www.timcherry.com, call 417.335.3870, or email tim@timcherry.com.

For gallery representatives, please contact:

McLarry Fine Art
Santa Fe, New Mexico
www.mclarryfineart.com
505.988.1161