



The Desert Sun

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Desert Life

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Lifestyles & Entertainment



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Brandon Van Den Burg, a student at Xavier College Preparatory High School, uses a sculpting chisel and hammer on a limestone block during a seminar.

Business can be creative, and art these days is big business. What's the overlap for you?

Most artists don't understand they're going to spend

See the art

Sculpture by Mark Yale Harris can be seen at Ramey Fine Art, 73-400 El Paseo, Palm Desert. Information: (760) 341-3800

Sculptor Mark Yale Harris demonstrates how to use a sculpting chisel and hammer to students at Xavier College Preparatory High School in Palm Desert during a seminar Thursday for art students. Harris' work was included in NBC's coverage of the Vancouver Olympics.

Sculptor discusses the business side of art world

BY K KAUFMANN

The Desert Sun

Mark Yale Harris has always liked getting down to basics.

That's held true in his business career as the founder of two budget hotel chains and in his current work as a sculptor, creating stone pieces of animals and people, all characterized by simple, natural lines.

"There's something I like about the quality of natural materials," said Harris, 72, who was in the Coachella Valley this week for an artist's reception on Thursday at Ramey Fine Art in Palm Desert, which shows his work.

"I put my hand on a piece of rock and get a thrill out of what is in the rock," Harris said.

Before moving to Santa Fe and becoming a full-time sculptor in 1999, Harris was best known as the co-founder of the Red Roof Inn chain and founder of the AmeriSuites chain, now owned by Hyatt.

More recently, he gained an international showcase when one of his pieces was selected for a sculpture exhibit at Peace Arch Park, on the U.S.-Canadian border at Blaine, Wash., and Douglas, British Columbia. The park and Harris's work were included in NBC's coverage of the Winter Olympics in Vancouver.

During his visit to the desert, Harris held hands-on sculpture workshops for students at Xavier College Preparatory High School in Palm Desert on Thursday and Friday.

In an interview with The Desert Sun, Harris talked about his decision to leave the business world for art.

QUESTION: Were you interested in art when you were growing up? If so, why

didn't you pursue it then?

As a youngster I was always making things with my hands, making models, drawing pictures. I was offered a scholarship for art college, but my parents urged me to do other than that.

(I have) no regrets. In the 1990s I started taking art classes evenings and weekends and settled on sculpture as my preferred medium.

at least half of their time marketing their projects. The (art) schools are really doing the kids a disservice; they don't give them any tools with which to handle themselves on the business side.

I would attribute part of my success to the fact I'm not afraid to go out and show my work and cultivate relationships in the marketplace.

What draws you or inspires you about working in stone?

The challenge I enjoy (is that) you work with what you're given ... and you can't go back; you keep on going. It pertains to life.

In painting, you can paint over it. You can't do that with stone. You make a decision and you go forward. Working in that material really inspires me.