



BY JAMES BISHOP JR.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JANISE WITT

Sedona's

HIDDEN

ONCE UPON A TIME, SEDONA WAS A SLEEPY VILLAGE IN RED ROCK COUNTRY—ONE WITH MORE THAN ITS FAIR SHARE OF TALENTED ARTISTS. TODAY, AMID ALL THE BUSTLING GROWTH, VISITORS MAY SOMETIMES WONDER ABOUT THE HEALTH OF THE ART COMMUNITY.

JUST LIKE A STORYBOOK ENDING, THE ART SCENE CONTINUES TO LIVE HAPPILY EVER AFTER AS THE SHOPS AND GALLERIES HUM WITH ART LOVERS BUT OUT OF THE LIME-LIGHT, NUMEROUS INDEPENDENT ARTISTS THRIVE TOO, STILL DOING BUSINESS AS THEY ALWAYS HAVE—BY WORD OF MOUTH, SEALING THE DEAL WITH A HANDSHAKE.

WELCOME TO SEDONA'S HIDDEN, OTHER ART WORLD.

ART WORLD

Beyond the shops & galleries, several artists thrive in Red Rock Country



He juggles colors to create stunning skylights and abstract walls and windows.

"An artist has to be a craftsman," observes celebrated architectural glass artist Tom Aderhold from his studio in the shadow of the red rocks. "But every craftsman is not an artist." To his clients, Aderhold, who arrived in Sedona in 1972, is both. "The main focus of my work is to create an impact in the heart of the viewer," he says.

Using handblown and hand-cast glass, he juggles colors to create stunning skylights and abstract walls and windows. Commissioned by architects, cultural centers, resorts, and private clients, his creations reside in Chicago; Phoenix; Scottsdale; Tucson; Ann Arbor, Michigan; Denver and Telluride, Colorado; and Sedona and Payson, Arizona. Influenced by British and German designers, Aderhold switched from machine-rolled glass to the handblown variety. "Crystalline in nature, German handblown is easier to work with. It allows for greater depth and richness of colors," he explains.

Born in Oklahoma, Aderhold moved with his family to Colorado, where he studied architecture in Boulder, but his desire to work with glass pulled him to an apprenticeship near Sedona. Working as a waiter in posh eateries, he met many wealthy people who would later become clients. Today his work sells for up to \$10,000. He has no need to advertise.

Several years ago, he experienced a creative breakthrough. "I learned to move the ego out of the way, and let the Holy Spirit—God—take over," he explains. "Overnight, fear of failure vanished. Now I wait for inspiration. I make a decent living and make life more beautiful for people. At 53, I feel like a kid. My best work will be done when I am 65 and older."

TOM ADERHOLD 928-282-3329, by appointment only





"I make plans for everything I see in scrap yards."

A Sedonian for 12 years, Fuller F. Barnes loves "the feel of steel." Dubbed the "ultimate recycler," Barnes creates his art from used metal parts that he cuts, welds, and grinds into life-size, whimsical shapes—pruning shears into birds, a pile of scrap into dragons and ancient warriors. One happy customer from Colorado bought one of Barnes' huge steel dragons complete with a propane tank inside it. With the push of a button, it breathes fire.

Over the years, Barnes' work has shown in galleries in Boston; Telluride, Colorado; Rochester, New York; and Scottsdale, but he prefers the role of the independent artist. "Relations with buyers are informal. A simple handshake is enough—like it used to be. If the start is good with a customer, no mountain of legal paper will change that," he says. Once he completes a work, he asks the customer, "Does this make you happy? If not, tell me what will." When he was a lad, his father told him that whatever he did, he should "do it 100%." Barnes lives by those words.

To create his art, which sells anywhere from \$500 to \$75,000, he spends much time thinking. Then he'll do a simple drawing. He never does high-powered presentations for clients because the sketch, he says, is only an idea, one that may change during the process of creation.

Barnes began to draw when he was eight, and spent most of his childhood tinkering in the family workshop where he learned about tools and metalworking. He spent his high school summers mastering the craft of soldering copper. In college, he learned to weld. Times spent poking around in scrap yards, searching for what others called junk—car parts, fans, bent car doors—were like Christmas mornings to him. "I make plans for everything I see in scrap yards. When I'm on my deathbed, I'll be thinking, 'If only I can get to the next project.'"

Barnes cherishes the underground network of fellow artists in Sedona. "Old Sedona is alive and well. Ideas are exchanged. If one encounters a problem, another offers a solution. There's no feeling of competition," he says.

FULLER F. BARNES LTD. 928-282-3737, by appointment only

JOELLA JEAN MAHONEY

Joella Jean Mahoney's favorite time of day is early evening, when the low light softens the hard edges of the bewitching Southwestern landscape. That's usually when you'll find her—on horseback or on foot—on a nature trail minutes from her studio.

Past the age when many people have retired for good (she retired from teaching—twice) this abstract expressionist's studio in old uptown Sedona is a beehive of activity. "I don't run dry," she says. "I've never had painter's block."

Mahoney came to Arizona in 1951 to study art at Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff. Before the start of her first semester, she remembers drinking in the exquisite morning air while driving from Flagstaff down through Oak Creek Canyon into Sedona. "I knew I'd gone to heaven when I saw a landscape that matched how I felt inside," says Mahoney. Today her art is internationally known in US embassies and through PBS, and can be found in corporate collections. She needs no marketing campaign.

Art critic John Reid, with Sedona's *Red Rock News*, says of Mahoney's work, "She creates art that comes from a special region, but her





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work is not regional. It is work of size and color. It is the work of intimacy, sensuality, and privacy. It transcends the confines of geography."

An explorer into wild places with brush in hand, she cherishes the Grand Canyon, the monsoon sky, and the red rock cliffs. "Humans make art through both intuition and analysis. Art-making automatically integrates the right and left brain. Do I know what I am going to do next? I always trust the process to reveal the work. Fame and fortune? What does it really matter? The main thing is to keep painting," she muses.

Mahoney, whose works range from \$1,200 to \$20,000, believes more than the other elements of design, color holds for her a powerful emotional charge. "Color can be healing because it may bring an awareness of feelings to the conscious level."

She is convinced that her life has been a fluke. Since her teens, she's been encouraged to go to New York to be an artist. But as she says, "I could never tear myself away from the Southwest."

Recently she did get to New York, though—and sold two paintings.

RED STONE GALLERY 928-282-7021
www.redstonegallery.com

When does anyone know that creating art will be his or her life's work? Such a revelation struck David Fischel when he was just six years old. It happened in the basement of a foster home in Detroit, Michigan, where he often went to escape a harsh environment. Gathering up paints from the other boys and girls, he painted a large mural of a Baltimore oriole on a basement wall (inspiration came from the cover on a box of matches). Although few ever saw his first creation, Fischel knew he had a gift.

Arriving in Sedona in 1981 with his wife/agent, Hope, he set up a small shop and began crafting his art. Fischel went on to create the piece that would make him famous. Using wood from an ancient juniper tree, he created *The Four Seasons*. Possibly the largest carved mural in the US, the work depicts a vision of art, love, and hope for the future.

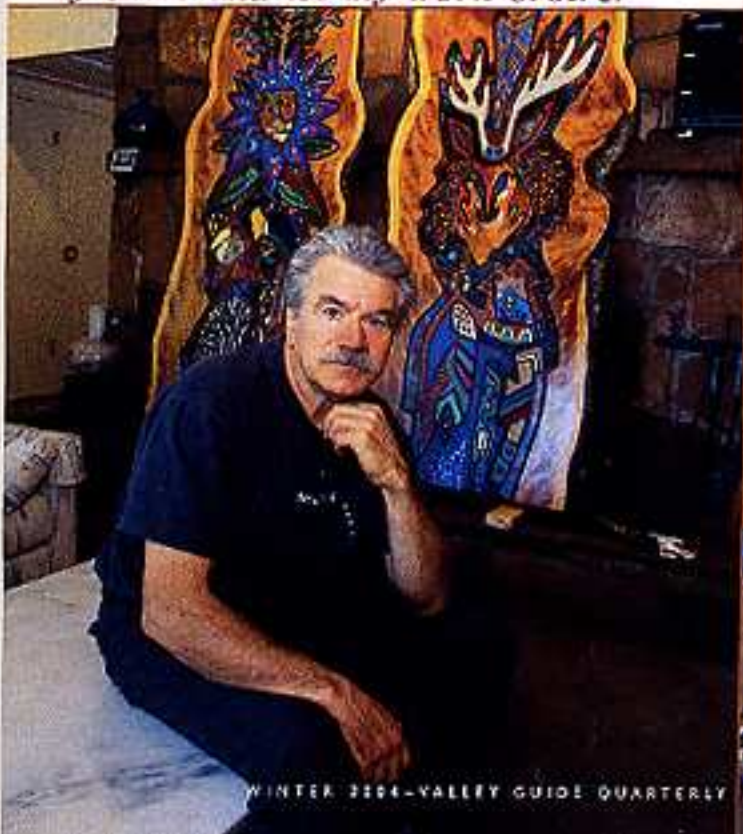
Now working out of and drawing inspiration from his beautiful home and studio on a quiet road, Fischel, 57, still carves—juniper, alder, and barn wood—then adds colorful, symbolic painted images to his pieces. What he terms as his "graphic reliefs in wood" are displayed in corporate offices, resorts, and the homes of private collectors. He's made a living over the years because, as he puts it, "people seek the intimacy of seeing an artist at work, knowing that each piece will be different."

Today, his works range in price from \$5,000 to \$75,000. First he sketches a design on paper. He replicates the sketch by carving it into a large piece of wood and then applies paint. The whole process can take as long as four months. "All artists have to have a craft," he says. "Then they have to take it to another level. That's what I did with wood carving—that's why I don't like to be called a wood carver. I get a picture in my head, and I take my drawing, carving, and other skills and let my work evolve."

Perhaps the artist Georgia O'Keeffe has had the greatest influence on him. "She created her own reality of the landscapes of the Southwest. I have created mine," Fischel says.

FISCHEL STUDIOS 928-282-2356, www.gogideas.com/fischel

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A few blocks from town, a curious tourist suddenly stops near Buena Vista Drive. An alligator is crawling across a driveway. A giraffe looms nearby. Is this a zoo? Suddenly a thin elf of a man appears. "Want to see my new work?"

Meet Mike Medow: A self-taught former wanderlust specializing in wood carvings and oil paintings, Medow creates "figurescapes" from wood that can sell for up to \$30,000. "Word of mouth works for me," he muses in his studio, clockablock with wooden women, large carved fruit, and oil paintings. "No contracts—a handshake is all I need. I eat and pay my bills."

As a kid he'd crawl into the family attic in Chicago to draw, mesmerized by the light, the smells, and the mood. It felt good. At school, he once created a model of the Chicago water tower out of toothpicks. Amazed, his teacher had the story published. "I was acknowledged. It gave me confidence," he recalls.

At 15, although he won his first commission for a mural, he still didn't think that art was "his trip." After high school, he spent time in the Army Reserve. After that, he displayed some of his carved wooden figures in a good friend's boutique, and a man walked in and bought three for \$900. "I was rich," he recalls. So with friends, he wandered through Europe, ending up in New Delhi, India—stone. "I got my calling. Home again, I bought chisels and have been working every day since. I am one lucky person."

MIKE MEDOW STUDIO 928-282-0645,
by appointment only

MARY MARGARET SATHER

"I can't believe I get to do this," gushes Mary Margaret Sather at the door of her studio that once was a horse barn. The petite, spunky potter arrived in Sedona in 1969, when it was still a sleepy little village. Sales were slim at first but Sather decided that she was going to make pottery whether anyone bought it or not. Soon, tourists found her small shop not far from Oak Creek—now the oldest retail shop in Sedona—and sales soared. Today, she says proudly, that without any advertising, sales have always more than covered her expenses.



Sather's work sells anywhere from \$10 for her smaller creations such as mini vases up to \$3,000 for her fired, life-size clay figures. These larger pieces can require working with as much as 700 pounds of clay—not an easy task for a lady who weighs not much more than 100 pounds.

As a child growing up in California, the daughter of a park ranger and a teacher, Sather was always sewing or weaving something. In high school, she learned how to use a cutting torch, certain that jewelry-making was her destiny. "One thing for sure, I hated pottery," she remembers.

Then, at the age of 18, her perspective changed after she dreamed she would become a great potter. Encouraged by her art teacher, she headed for Mexico City armed with an acceptance letter for a famous art school. Instead, she got only as far as a master potter's studio outside of Guadalajara, determined to learn all there was to know about pottery. Later she held an apprenticeship in England with a teacher who told her, "I will either turn you into a lifetime potter or you'll never touch clay again."

Sather accepted the challenge and hasn't stopped potting since. "My life as an artist began when I moved to Sedona. It is like Tao in the old days, independent artists working alone, always exchanging ideas and offering support. I haven't found a better place yet," she says.

SEDONA POTTERY 928-282-1192

Sedona-based writer James Bishop Jr. is the son and grandson of celebrated artists, and served as the chair of the Sedona Arts and Cultural Commission in the 1990s.

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