



Storytelling by Chisel | Randall Stoner

Many artists have a driving force that propels them headlong into their work. This force can fuel their imagination, providing them with a spark that can ignite wild fires of creation. For Stoner, also known as Madcarver, stories from books read through the years combined with his imagination gets his mind's eye running in hundreds of different directions before singling out a few to commit to one piece of art. By choosing wood as his medium, chisel as his tool, and audio books that are listened to during all stages of every project, he is able to be among the magical lands and characters within the stories as each and every cut is performed. This is how Stoner creates

magically realistic works of art, at his home studio in Orange, California.

Stoner was born in Long Beach, California where after a few years his family moved to Las Vegas, Nevada. It was here where he was introduced at an early age to wood carving during a Boy Scout camping trip. Subsequent trips and practice resulted in obtaining the Wood Carving merit badge. It wasn't until later in life after moving back to California, and back from Tokyo, Japan when in his later twenties he picked up wood carving in earnest, never to part with it again.

Stoner has fond memories of his grandfather, Theodore Wardell, as he taught all his grandchildren how to draw and some of them to paint, while helping still others with their specialties (back porch for Stoner and the wood chips). He was a commercial artist and lithographer and an accomplished artist in charcoal, colored pencil and oil. He later specialized in oil paintings, especially of old sailing ships. He is dearly missed by his family.



Figure 1: Master Miner

In addition to art lessons from family, Stoner learned a great deal from master artisans, craftsmen, and smiths in informal settings. Additionally, he studied for years through private drawing lessons in order to get a handle on perspective, free drawing, still-life, etc.

When asked to explain what his inspiration is, Stoner explains “I am drawn to Fantasy

literature. When I experience the characters’ feelings, fears, hopes, loves, pride, sadness, honor, etc., it brings forth a desire to put those exhilarating scenes, with my “spin” on them into the realm of the tangible”.

Long after finishing a novel, Stoner finds himself reliving the feelings of inhabiting, much of the time as the main character/s, this other reality so thoroughly that the “unreal” elements of the story, such as dwarfs & magic users, seemed spectacularly real long after the book was put back on the shelf. It is this immersion into their prosaic lives, monumental struggles, and epic successes that fuel his desire to create a work of art that equals the vastly heartfelt emotions received while among those friends. Stoner’s intention is to transport the onlooker to the far-away magically realistic land of his creation and join the story-line being unfolded right in front of them, just by viewing the piece.

Stoner developed his techniques through trial and error, sweat and frustration, and not a few scars. He states that there are three stages to his creation:

First stage:

- Draw the carving on paper.
- Transfer it to the wood block by tracing all of the lines of the drawing/picture with a metal ball - point stylus.
- Draw along the indentation that the stylus created when traced.

- Make straight down cuts all along the outside edges and along the main cuts.
- Using a straight and/or flat gouge, cut all along those initial cuts to differentiate the main subject from the block.

Second stage:

- Redraw the sketch lines where they were cut away
- Set object placement
- Determine angles for cutting
- Set perspective vanishing point/s
- Cut depths for various areas
- Blend the scene together via various chisels
- Finally, when people other than himself can see and recognize the contents of the carving the second stage is complete.

Final stage:

This phase "makes" the carving. During this phase, for example with the "Traveler", fine detail is added. Cuts in the wood planking floor are put in to make it appear uneven (as flooring back then was) and the creation of shadows produced by the fire accentuate the tavern setting. During this last stage for the Traveler, books were placed on the bookshelf and named, fire was added to the fireplace and made to look dirty, shadows removed where highlighted firelight reached, and made the stones look like the stone of yesteryear.

- Final detailing off facial features, wrinkles, accents, musculature, rope fibers, etc.
- Wood burning shadows, setting areas of darkness, drawings in background, etc.
- Minor additions unused areas can contain a drawing to get more depth, a string can be added to a bow, or a weapon can be added to a hand; where carving from original is impractical, etc.
- First finish (applying finish raises the grain and thus needs to be cut away or sanded off and sprayed again).
- Removal of all debris from the nooks and crannies.



Figure 2 Not Too Bright

Stoner says that his major influences are from Greek sculpture, and that through these great works he is able to push himself to greater and greater depths. He feels that many of his accomplishments in deep relief are due to looking (staring really) at the magnificent statues and realistic depth obtained from these works.



Figure 3: Steam Age Gunslinger

He is an award-winning woodcarver, and is consistently a first place winner in numerous “Design in Wood” & “Fine Woodworking” competitions. Here are a few:

- Steam Age Gunslinger
 - Orange County Fair - 1st Place, Division Winner, Industry award (2016)
- Master Miner
 - Artistry in Wood Dayton Ohio, 1st Place (2015) Online
- Serine Travels

- San Diego Fair - 1st Place, Division Winner (2015)
- Not Too Bright
 - San Diego Fair - 1st Place (2015)
- Master Miner
 - Orange County Fair - 1st Place, Division Winner (2015)
- No Silent Escape
 - Orange County Fair - 1st Place, Division Winner (2014)

When asked whether he is a member of any groups, guilds, or clubs Stoner says “sure”. He is a member of the California Carver’s guild and Tustin Carving Club. Additionally, he is a member of the International Sculpture Center, and receives Woodcarving Illustrated as a periodical 4 times yearly. He has been featured in Woodcarving Illustrated, B2Zone Magazine, and Artchung Baby for his story. He says that he feels honored to be the subject of other people’s interest.



Figure 4: Woodcarving Illustrated Feature, Spring 2017

When Stoner works with his collectors he is meticulously cognizant of their needs, and is well liked. Here's what some have to say about him:

"The Madcarver's work is simply amazing! The attention placed on depth, detail and the ability to create a 3-D effect is beyond imagination. I was astonished viewing the workmanship of this artist and knew that I had to acquire one. In fact, I am pursuing a second piece."

Darrell Mathis, Southern California



Figure 4 Traveler

"Randy's work is top notch. I love my piece which is called "Traveler". His style and vision just captures and evokes the feeling of all the classic fantasy works. Definitely one of the cornerstones of my collection."

Michael Kindle, Pennsylvania

"The pure combination of artistry and craftsmanship! Look at those details on the rib cage! Such an amazing work by him. Hats-off!

"The Four Horseman of the Apocalypse" by Stoner wood carved on 30"x20.5"x7.5" Basswood"

Joseph d. Artsonist

"What an awesome detail and artwork!!! Hope you add it to your album, Randall. Gob smacking work"

Gina Adam – B2Zone Art Magazine

In addition to the creation of his art Stoner has other responsibilities, and some of them do not happen in his workshop. He says for the last twenty-five years he has been teaching and studying the Japanese martial art form called Aikido. Further, having gotten fed up of inferior leather products in the marketplace, he took up leatherworking and creates his own tool belts, cases, and knife sheaths. Finally, he continues his pencil drawing lessons to further his abilities.

Like many artists, Stoner has a full-time day job. He holds a Bachelor's degree in Information Technology, and says "IT relates to the art side of my life where challenges are concerned." Like IT, sculpture can test him through troubleshooting and finding solutions to many aspects of the work. Further, the two share the problem solving side where tools and imagination are used to succeed."

In conclusion, when asked what information he would like his readers to walk away with, Stoner says, "My mission is to instill a story in the minds of the viewers through my sculpture narrative."