

TIM CHERRY

# ANIMALS WITH ATTITUDE

*By Myrna Zanetell*



*Mother Goose, bronze, 19" high by 32" long*

*"This sculpture was commissioned for placement in the Discovery Garden at the Arkansas Children's Hospital in Little Rock, Arkansas. I wanted to create a design that had a strong maternal feeling that is comforting and protective for the children and families."*

If you happen to encounter a pig that has sprouted wings, a galloping hare hovering just above and behind a plodding giant tortoise, hibernating grizzly bears encased in circular dens, or a fish-filled otter snoozing on a cushion of waves, you will know for a certainty that you have arrived in the magically delightful wild world created by sculptor, Tim Cherry.

Rhythmical, flowing, and oh, so inviting to the touch, for the past 25 years, Cherry's imaginative sculptures have captured the essential charm and personalities of creatures ranging from bears, foxes, squirrels, and cats to fish, otters, and even pigs. Whimsical and endearing, all are definitely animals with an attitude.

Despite being on the cutting edge of the wild-life genre, Cherry's work has earned him entree into respected organizations such as the Society of Animal Artists, the National Sculptors' Guild, and the National Sculpture Society. For nearly two decades, his inimitable imagery also has been a regular feature in the Prix de West Exhibition at the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, where a stealthy mountain lion entitled *Snake in the Grass* garnered him the prestigious James Earle Fraser Sculpture Award in 2001.

Because Cherry has such an affinity and abiding love for animals, he finds inspiration everywhere. In fact some of his most popular creations have come from hours spent observing the small wonders that frequent his own backyard in Branson, Missouri. The antics of rabbits, birds, mice, and even a squirrel that persistently raided the family birdfeeder have found a humorous interpretation in Cherry's sculptures.

"Artists are a product of their environment, so I am inspired by the animals I see around me on a daily basis," he says. For that reason, family pets also have contributed to the creative process. Describing her as a "living slinky," Cherry was so captivated by the antics of his ferret, Noodle, that she became the inspiration for a sleekly knotted squirrel, while Tikka, his coal black giant schnauzer was immortalized in the form of a sprawling bronze rabbit. Explaining this unusual transformation Cherry says, "It's not so much about the specific animal as it is their gestures, which can be translated into a wide variety of subjects. My challenge is to come up with a strong design that captures the personalities that I wish to convey."

Because mass is an all important factor in his designs, in many instances Cherry simply begins with a combination of abstract shapes and then finds subject matter that works to bring it to life. For his original maquette, he chooses elastic, oil-based clay that he can form and sculpt. Once an idea has jelled, he carves an armature out of foam, coating that with wax, and then laying on the clay. As he works, details



*Wise Guy, bronze, 66" high by 17" long*

*"The smooth and textured surfaces, as well as the positive and negative spaces, create interest and contrast in this piece. The custom-made pedestal adds to the sophistication and stately demeanor of the sculpture."*

begin to appear in an ongoing orchestration of texture, shapes, and lines that allow Cherry to see how light values play out and how to balance the creation into a rhythmic form. The clay subject is coated with rubber to form the mold, which in turn serves as host to the plaster mold into which the bronze will eventually be poured.

Although Cherry's oeuvre consists largely of bronzes, he also works with stainless steel and stone. This year, however, all have taken on an added "luster of silver" radiating the fact that Cherry is celebrating his 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a professional artist. In his usual quite manner, he downplays his own talent, giving credit to others who, he says, have made the journey possible.

First on the list is Cherry's wife Linda, whom he met in the late 1980s while both were attending the Southeastern Wildlife Expo in Charleston, South Carolina – he as an artist, she representing a gallery in her hometown of Branson. Working in Loveland, Colorado, at the time, Cherry made what he describes as a leap of faith and moved to Branson in order to marry the woman who became his soul mate and the bedrock of his life, handling not only the business end of his career, but also occasionally assisting with less glamorous duties such as making the rubber molds for his



Tim and wife Linda in Hawaii

*Cotton Ball, bronze, 7" high by 9" long*

*"Cotton tail rabbits work perfectly for my favorite design elements: round shapes and circles. I enjoy the rabbits every year as they return to my garden. I watch them daily as they interact with the environment and often become my dog Tikka's exercise partners."*



castings. The Cherry's daughter, Amber, now living in Florida, completed his creative circle.

Sculptors who befriended him during the early years also hold a special place in Cherry's heart. Having seen samples of his work while on a hunting expedition that Cherry was guiding in British Columbia, Dan Ostermiller encouraged the fledgling artist to move to Loveland. Once there, Ostermiller and Garland Weeks became both friends and mentors, but it was Cowboy Artists of America master sculptor Fritz White, who perhaps exerted the greatest influence on Cherry's future, broadening his knowledge of the art form by teaching him skills in stone, as well as bronze.

While working in materials such as alabaster and soapstone, Cherry began experimenting with the soft lines and shapes that have become his trademark. In fact, White's influence was so strong that Cherry confides, "Every time I go into my studio I ask myself, 'What advice would Fritz give me today?'"

Sculptor Kent Ullberg also is a long-time friend. "Tim and I were neighbors during the period we were both getting started, so I have watched his work evolve over time," he says. "His early pieces looked a lot like that of other sculptors, until he began experimenting with the image of a pronghorn antelope. As Tim filled the space between its legs with vegetation, I could already see his preference for mass taking form. I think the thing I admire most about Tim is that he has never been afraid to develop his own sculptural language.

"The bronzes he does may seem simple from a sculptural point of view, however the smooth surface Tim became known for puts a great demand on the sculptor. Cast in segments, each seam has to be joined and then sanded until absolutely smooth. The texture in most traditional work covers up some of these flaws, but the clean lines, smooth surfaces, and elegant patinas of Tim's pieces are a true art."

Commenting on the fact that Cherry's

*House Sitter, bronze, 65" high by 22" long*

*"I choose the Saw-whet owl for this design, because of its wonderful shapes and gestures. I feel it worked well with the story I was going to convey. I use circles continually in my designs, as it has become a part of my style. You will see circles repeated in the positive and negative aspects of the sculpture. The negative circle creates a much focused point of interest and represents the owl's house."*





*River Mates, bronze, 20" high by 12" long*

*"This piece has a strong, sculptural silhouette, representing an environmental message. All things living are connected by water, land, and air, and we are bound together by our relationship to one another."*

latest designs are a combination of smooth and textured surfaces, Ullberg says, "Changes in style are fine, because that's just another note in our orchestra. It's still his overall design combination of abstract and representation [that] I really love."

During his early years in Loveland, Cherry also developed his artistic relationship with Bronze Services, the foundry that continues to cast his sculptures. He has always been a hands-on artist, wanting to be physically present during casting and chasing, even taking on the labor-intensive polishing process. However, when it comes to applying patina, Cherry relies on the expert advice of Pat Kipper. "Doing patina is an art form in itself, and Pat is the patina master," he says. "The way he applies the chemicals, no two images are ever exactly alike."


Cherry also considers his collectors to be a major factor in his success. "They have taught me, encouraged me, and given me the opportunity to explore, experiment, and chase my dreams," he says. "I am very grateful to each and every

one." One collector in particular stands alone: Bill Witchger, chairman of Marian Inc. in Indianapolis, Indiana. Drawn to Cherry's work from the first time he saw it at Loveland's Sculpture in the Park exhibition more than two decades ago, Witchger continues to collect Cherry's work on a regular basis. "During both the down times and the up times, knowing that he has a collector who believes in what he is doing is so important to an artist as he builds his career," he says.

Kid friendly by nature and wonderfully touchable, Cherry's sculptures are almost irresistible to children. Knowing this, the Arkansas Children's Hospital in Little Rock, Arkansas, recently placed 17 of Cherry's loveable animals, each indigenous to the state of Arkansas, in its Discovery Garden.

Aficionados are also finding new ways to enjoy Cherry's art. Calling them his "home and garden" collection, his medium-sized sculptures are being placed outside in increasing numbers. "People are currently finding special enjoyment in outdoor

living," he says. "Since bronzes are not affected by the weather, sculptures are the ideal way to take your art with you to the patio, as an enhancement to the landscaping, or even placed in front of the house as a special way to welcome guests."

In addition to their free-flowing movement and strong sense of artistic design, humor is a constant in Cherry's sculptures. He uses the terms "endangered" and "extinct" to let his collectors know that an edition size is in low supply, or has been sold out. Additionally, clever titles such as an owl named *Wise Guy*, a fish and turtle swimming together that become a *Stream Team*, and a highly textured snowy owl on the wing, christened *Arctic Ghost*, not only complete the package, causing viewers to pause and smile, but also wrapping them in an atmosphere of anticipation, wondering what delightful creature might be the next to appear in the wild world of Tim Cherry. 

*Myrna Zanetell is a writer living in El Paso, Texas.*

*Swan Egg, stainless steel with gold leaf, 10" high by 12" long*

*"In the design of this sculpture, I wanted to arrange and repeat the egg shape throughout the piece. This is seen in the body and head of the swan, as well as the egg itself. The round, black granite base represents the nest of the swan. I am very excited about how stainless steel and my style work together, giving it a more contemporary feel."*



# PETER HAGEN

*The Landscape of Silence*



"Come Go With Me" • 34"x 40" • Oil



**McLARRY**  
FINE ART

[McLarryFineArt.com](http://McLarryFineArt.com)

225 Canyon Road • Santa Fe, New Mexico • 505.988.1161 • [info@mcclarryfineart.com](mailto:info@mcclarryfineart.com)



# TIMELESS BEAUTY

*By Vicki Stavig*

“I find more beauty in the landscape than anywhere else. I love the overall beauty of it; there’s a mystery there. Everything in our lives today is about speed. Everyone is racing around, but landscape is peaceful, constant; it has a quietness, a timelessness, about it.”

That, says Peter Hagen, is why he paints landscapes. And he does so magnificently, capturing the colors, the light, the majesty of what Mother Nature has placed before us. While he paints those scenes with

enthusiasm and great skill, he also bemoans the fact that so many of us don’t take the time to look around us and appreciate the beauty of the land—and the sky, which also is a source of inspiration for Hagen.

“Watch a storm move in—and dark clouds, lighting dancing across the horizon, a walking rain shower over a mesa, booming thunder—it’s subtle inspiration,” he says. “Painting is a very solitary endeavor, and that is wonderful; it gives me time to think, to look. I am my own best

company. It seems the older I get the more I see—getting out and looking, looking, seeing. Sometimes it is just one small spark, an idea, a small picture that will grow in my head. Other times it will be one large landscape right in front of me.”

*Above  
Cycle of Seasons, oil, 30" by 36"*

*“I love the chamisa here in northern New Mexico, always visible but sometimes never seen: its presence, softness, its ever-changing color and shape throughout the year.”*

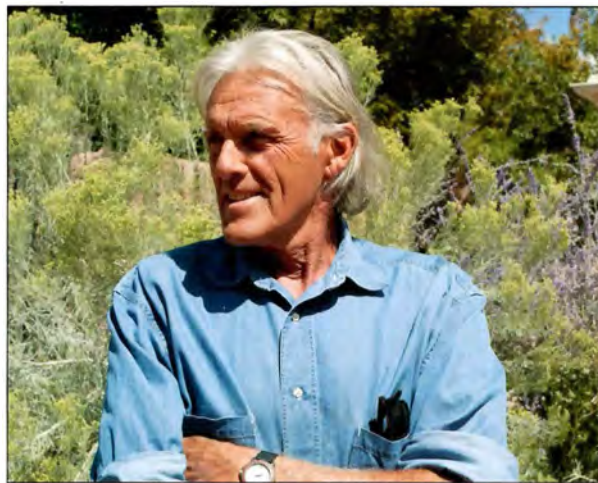
Hagen has been drawing since he was a young boy and has been painting outdoors ever since his mother bought him a set of paints, when he was about 12. "I would go out in the backyard and paint—woodpiles and anything else out there," he says.

Hagen spent the first 12 years of his life in Flushing, New York, then moved with his family to Connecticut, where he went on to get involved in swimming, soccer, tennis, and sailing. While his mother spent her days raising her son and three daughters, Hagen's father supported the family by working as an account executive with an advertising firm in New York.

Following his graduation from high school, Hagen enrolled at the

University of Arizona, crediting his curiosity about the West as the driving force for that venture. He lasted just one year, however, before realizing he missed his family and his life on the East Coast. He continued his studies, enrolling at the University of Bridgeport, which he says had a great art department, and taking drawing classes at the Silvermine Art Guild. "I was thinking I would go to New York and work in advertising and do some painting," he says. "But the big interest was abstract, and I wasn't too enthusiastic about that, so I put a hold on the artwork."

Just a few credits short of earning a degree in fine arts, Hagen dropped out of school and began to work in a restaurant, where he met a young woman named Lindsay, and the two quickly became an item. "We decided to take the winter off and go skiing in Colorado, and we never came back," he says. "I loved the mountains, the skiing, the beauty of the land and the wildness of it. I wasn't painting too much out there but, as time went on, I wanted to get back to what I really loved to do, so I started painting landscapes."



*Walking Across the Mesa, oil, 20" by 30"*

*"This is another one of the classic summer sights—a monsoon shower moving in, walking, dancing on the horizon, and letting go."*





Hagen's day job—actually two jobs—centered around selling real estate and serving as a member of the ski patrol in Crested Butte. After 10 years—and the birth of his son Conor (now 30 and a film maker in Brooklyn, New York)—Hagen made a life-changing decision. “I decided that the winters were too long, and I wanted to do more painting,” he says. “I had made some road trips to

New Mexico and realized there was a lot of art and artists there so, in 1987, we moved to Taos.

“It was a small town with a great art history. It was a beautiful place to paint. In Taos, I really began to focus on painting every day. I had sold my house in Crested Butte and had enough money to get by. And I got to know some artists in Taos—Walt Gonske, Rod Goebel,

and Ray Vinella.”

Within just a year of the move, Hagen approached a gallery, which agreed to represent him and his work, and he was on the way to becoming a successful professional artist. “Sales were decent right away,” he says. “Within a year or two, they jumped up, and it’s been good all along.”

Although Hagen is, for the most



*“Some people are scared to death to be outside; I love it. I go out there where it’s all happening—the color, the light, the shadows, the warmth. I like to see it first hand.”*

*Sunset Ablaze, oil, 30" by 48"*

*“This is one of the classic New Mexican sunsets. It does not happen to this degree every evening but, when it does, it is quite a show; dazzling, constantly changing, with a vibrant array of colors.”*

part, a self-taught artist, he did take two workshops led by Vinella, whom he credits with helping to set him on the right path. “Ray got me on the track I wanted to be on,” he says. “He helped me develop my palette, showed me what to look for, and gave me great direction.”

After 10 years in Taos, Hagen moved his family to Santa Fe, a larger city with more opportunities.

Today he and Lindsay have a home just a few miles from the center of town, where Hagen spends some of his leisure time growing vegetables and flowers, subjects he painted years ago, before focusing on what he describes as “the bigger landscape.”

Hagen paints every day, spending about half of his time out in the field and reveling in the opportunity

to be outside, enjoying—and appreciating—the natural wonders of the area. Most artists, he says, are initially intimidated by the thought of painting from life, but he had begun doing so on his own while in Colorado and, by the time he moved to New Mexico, he was comfortable with the process.

“I would just set up my small easel and start working,” he says. “Some



*Flores de Manzano, oil, 30" by 60"*

*"This is one of the old orchards around Velarde, New Mexico. It was early spring along the Rio Grande. These orchards are small treasures. They were dripping in blossoms. I was lucky to get this one, as a frost moved in that night."*



*In the Shadows, oil, 24" by 48"*

*"I'm intrigued with the arroyos here in New Mexico; their stillness, timelessness. They can be calm one day and change rapidly with a monsoon rain raging with water. In this painting, the snow gave me these wonderful shadows and shapes."*

people are scared to death to be outside; I love it. I go out there where it's all happening—the color, the light, the shadows, the warmth. I like to see it first hand. Sometimes I'll do small pieces that I can finish in one day, or I'll bring it back and work on it in the studio. I also take photos for additional information."

Although he loves painting outdoors, it is not without its challenges, Hagen says. The bugs, the wind, the rain, the snow all can be a little disconcerting, but those conditions aren't about to keep Hagen from packing up and heading out to discover new scenes to paint.

"I usually paint within an hour radius of my home," he says, adding that he also continues to take some road trips



*Winter Blues, oil, 24" by 30"*

*"This is a late winter afternoon in one of the many arroyos in the Santa Fe area. I was taken with the blue shadows, mixed with the golden softness of the chamisa."*

back to Colorado to paint the mountains and rivers there. "There is so much going on around here. I find new things, because the light is always changing, and there are changes with the seasons and the skies. It's all exciting. Years ago I painted in Spain and Portugal, and I've been to Mexico and Guatemala. They're wonderful, but I like to focus on what's going on here. My favorite time to paint is late afternoon, because there's a warmer light and bigger shadows, and there's more happening. I also paint at night."

Hagen enjoys the outdoors no

matter what he is doing—painting, fishing, or riding his bike. "I ride for one and a half hours every other morning," he says. "It's partly meditation time, and it keeps me in shape."

Asked about changes in his style, Hagen says, "After many years of painting, one does change. It's important to grow, to learn. You see differently. You explore with each painting; that's the enjoyment. That is life. I want to explore, try a few new things."

Hagen goes on to quote Andrew Wyeth, who said, "Nothing I've ever done has scratched the surface

of what I want to do." He likes the statement, although he admits it might be a little too strong for how he views his own work.

"I'm always pushing myself and asking myself, 'Where am I headed?' What I continue to try to do is simplify my work—the landscape, looking for shapes, patterns, color," "I try to find the abstract qualities, then try to combine that with realism. I try to capture the simplicity." ❧

*Vicki Stavig is editor of Art of the West.*