



photo by FRANK CARTER

# PURSUED PASSIONS

4 artists who've traded in the 9 to 5  
for what they really want to do — create by Susan Liane Kennedy

## LYMAN WHITAKER SCULPTOR

“Art has been a part of what I’ve done with my life since I was a teenager,” says Lyman Whitaker, who graduated with a Master of Fine Arts in Sculpture from the University of Utah. “But I never really achieved financial success with it until I was in my 50s.”

Now one of Southern Utah’s most successful artists, Whitaker says that “persistence more than confidence” has helped him to grow and develop his art and the business of selling his work. Practical concerns also came into play. “I really got things going when my wife got pregnant and quit her job,” he says.

It was a day of fun and playfulness,

however, that resulted in his first wind sculpture, created in the early 1980s. His first few sold easily at an art show and at Worthington Gallery in Springdale. Since then Whitaker has placed his whimsical whirling sculptures in public installations and private gardens across the United States.

Whitaker’s wind sculptures now dot the landscape in and around St George, perhaps most prominently near his studio at Coyote Gulch Art Village in Kayenta. The receptivity to his work has allowed him to create a new studio building where he works with his wife, Stacy Christensen, and his brother, John Whitaker, along with several employees.

Marketed exclusively through galleries, the wind sculptures range in size from 5 to 27 feet and bear names such as Double Helix, Star Dancer, Oval Twister, Tulip and Desert Flame. Made of copper and stainless steel, they provide beauty and strength. Because the wind sculptures are innovative and artistic and have a high degree of mechanical integrity, they are well respected for quality craftsmanship.

To further maintain the integrity of these works, Whitaker has insisted that they are sold only through art galleries, not in gift stores or nurseries, despite numerous inquiries from these enterprises. “I’ve kept them in fine art galleries,” he says. “To make sure they are represented and understood as sculpture.” This move has undoubtedly maintained the image and price points of his work.

Whitaker’s personal philosophy, like his sculpture, is rooted in his relationship to the natural environment. Each wind sculpture displays its motion in a slight breeze, yet holds together in high wind. Placing the sculptures in settings that are dependent on natural elements for movement seems to trigger contemplation about our environment.

“As a citizen, I care deeply about our ecosystem and the world’s societal impact on it. As an artist, I can express my concern for the survival of our planet through a creative medium,” says Whitaker. “The kinetic elements of the sculptures rising out of the ground symbolize creative energy and the ever-changing movement symbolizes new opportunities.”

It is Lyman Whitaker’s persistent hope that his artwork will stimulate a move toward better solutions in our relationship to the environment. When asked if his wind sculptures can generate power, his response is that they generate joy.