

Stone Carving with Paris Alexander BY CRASH GREGG

The pounding of heavy hammers on hard steel chisels echoed through the open air workshop on a windy Saturday morning. There were seven of us, all beginners, learning the age-old art of stone carving from master sculptor and painter, Paris Alexander, in one of the several classes he teaches in stone carving, painting and anatomy.

The tools we used haven't changed significantly in the last 2000 years and the techniques are basically the same as when chariots were the preferred form of transportation in Rome.

Looking at the square slab of limestone was daunting, especially in the first class, but we quickly began to develop a feel for the stone and tools, with the aid of Paris' easy-going guidance. We started by drawing our design on top of the stone, and slowly, apprehensively, began cutting down into the stone. As classes went by and our images began to take a more three-dimensional shape, we gained more confidence with each belt of the hammer. However, an occasional fissure in the stone or mis-stroke of a chisel could cause a large chunk of the carving to end



up on the floor. Paris smiled and told us that happens quite often, even to a seasoned sculptor. You learn to roll with it and weave the flaw into part of the design. It's one of the many interesting and unexpected aspects of stone carving that made the class so enjoyable. I'm still amazed at how much experience and familiarity with the stone we absorbed in just seven Saturdays. I plan on taking the class again to learn more and then buying my own set of tools and continuing to practice on my own.

Paris is a long-time resident at Artspace originally hailing from New York, settling in Raleigh some 25 years ago. A self-taught artist, Paris' work has been exhibited widely including galleries, universities, and museums, with numerous public and private commissions. His work is included in the collection of Saks Fifth Avenue, SAS Institute, former president Bill Clinton, Senator Bob Dole, and many others.

Paris' spring sculpting class starts in May and registration for new students is open now. Learn more about Paris and his works at www.parisalexander.org and his other adult and youth workshops at www.parisalexander.org/workshops/workshops.html.



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