

King artist John Panopoulos takes direction from past when reinventing historic monoliths

Written By MARK PAVILONS

A King artist's imagination is sparked by the 'mystery of history.'

John Panopoulos takes his direction from the past, those faint whispers that reverberate around some of humankind's most amazing, and often mysterious, monoliths.

Paying homage to the ancients, Panopoulos has taken his sculpting to another level, using modern techniques, materials and finishes to recreate the look of stone with less weight. From large rocks and statues, to some familiar 'faces,' Panopoulos creates both whimsical and functional stone-like works.

His journey to establishing Classic Artisan Sculptures was a little unpredictable. While Panopoulos has always had a creative eye and thirst for knowledge and self-expression, the artist within really emerged from the stone in the past couple of years. He's perhaps a modern architect of sorts, resurrecting structures and evoking tales from our past.

Romanian sculptor Brancusi always referenced something recognizable in nature, believing in 'truth to materials.'

Panopoulos, too, understand the purity and simplicity of form.

Panopoulos's 'eureka moment' came just two years ago, while he and his wife Charmaine were visiting ancient passage tombs in a remote part of Ireland. This Neolithic structure, which has stood for more than 5,000 years, caught his attention and lit that proverbial fire. His love of history and appreciation of design gave him the jolt necessary for this newest leap of faith.

Prior to diving into his sculpture endeavours, John fell in love with 3 dimensional art early on as a creative director for over 2 decades in package design and displays for global retailers. He then formed a faux decorative company for interior and exterior finishes, expanding his creative play with newfound materials and textures.

During contracts with landscaping companies, he realized their projects with real stone had limitations 'weight, cost and practical accessibility. He knew there must be an alternative to real, earth-dug rock.

John recreated the infamous Easter Island monoliths and then began creating statues and faux stone furniture like benches and tables. Some are adorned with ancient symbols, perhaps Runic, maybe Ogham or even cuneiform.

Often, people's first impressions of his sculptures, beg the question 'just how did you get that huge rock in there?'

John's 'gallery' is the rustic landscaping he and his wife Charmaine designed for their Lloydtown yard, which is populated with his creations. They seem quite natural, nestled among the gardens, as if they've stood there for thousands of years.

John has done commission work, but prefers to simply create his own pieces. He goes where his vision takes him. And that vision had led him literally down the garden path in his own back yard.

Moving things up a notch, John joined Arts Society King (ASK) and participated in this year's Schomberg Street Gallery, displayed his work during the Schomberg Horticultural Society tour. He also provided a megalithic style 'bench' for photos during the Food Bank's recent Sip & Savour fundraiser.

'I build what inspires me,' he said, adding he's starting to get his 'voice' out there. John firmly believes his creations are an ideal

alternative for homeowners and landscape companies, extending their creativity with options that weren't available before.

John continues to leverage history and human ingenuity with each piece he creates, experimenting and exploring creative form all the time. "I'm having fun with this," he said.

Panopoulos has spent a great deal of time studying actual rock forms and textures, even splitting some open to reveal Mother Nature's handiwork. He replicates those very lines, formed over the centuries, with meticulous detail and colour. He's developed a great relationship with the family owned DuROCK company a leading manufacturer in specialty coatings. John discovered how to mix various coatings, with quartz, crushed glass and other natural granulars, for that authentic look and feel of stone with much less weight.

Moving on to some faux stone coffee and entrance tables, John said he's begun to create a line of furniture that is well suited to high-end luxury condos, cottages and homes. He really enjoys the marriage of those fractured natural contours with clean, polished lines.

Panopoulos really is a classic artisan. For more visit [Classic Artisan Sculptures](#) on Facebook, or email John at john@classicartisan.ca