



PHOTO BY LOU SPIRITO

Eugenie Spirito said that sculpting “is my life’s blood ... I need it like I need air, and will carve until I’m too old to lift the mallets.”

Sculpting Life

Malibu’s Eugenie Spirito takes a mallet to her art.

BY KAMALA KIRK | PHOTOGRAPHY BY ROXANNE MCCANN

Since childhood, Eugenie Spirito was drawn to the fine arts, but she had always been told to focus on pursuing a “real career.” After graduating with degrees in communication and theater arts, she took the big leap and left Los Angeles for New York City. There, she took a job as an art director at an advertising firm, but she still felt that something was missing.

“While it was art related, it wasn’t really art, so I felt like a kid with my nose pressed against the window of the candy

store,” Spirito said. “Things turned around for me when I took a sculpture class with world-renowned sculptor Philip Pavia at the School of Visual Arts. I was the only woman in a room full of men and couldn’t figure out why until Philip had us work with a mallet and chisel. After three hours I was exhausted and drenched, but I was hooked and never looked back.”

As it turned out, Spirito left such a good impression on Pavia that he asked her to apprentice with him. She studied at his



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Spirito showcases her art at Canvas Malibu, as well as other locations throughout the country.

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Greenwich Village studio for eight years and, under his mentorship, received hands-on instruction in sculpting technique, art history lessons and studied the American avant-garde movement. To focus more on her study, Spirito quit her art director job and learned Shiatsu massage to make ends meet, which contributed to her development as an artist.

“Sculpting and Shiatsu are both healing arts,” Spirito said. “Doing Shiatsu helped me improve my understanding of the human anatomy and the flow of energy. I worked with prominent New Yorkers, and, as a result, I was featured in several popular magazines.”

After 10 life-changing years in New York, Spirito yearned to be close to her family again in the Los Angeles area, so she and Lou—now her husband of 28 years—chose Malibu as their home. They live near Paradise Cove along with their dog Tanner—a rescue pitbull from the Agoura Hills Animal Shelter.

“Malibu is one of the most beautiful places on earth,” Spirito said. “It is an amazing creative community with a bold pioneer spirit. I love the people and their trailblazer survivor mentality. Because of our semi-rural environment with its fires, earthquakes and mudslides, we sometimes have no electricity or water, but we pull together and persevere like a close-knit family.”

From the time Spirito began carving, her career as an artist quickly grew, and she started selling her work and executing commissions for collectors on both coasts. In Malibu, she has created sculptures for many, including Carl and Roberta Deutsch, and the family of B. Wayne Hughes. Throughout the last decade, she has had a steady series of local shows, was a featured artist in *Unity Arts*, a national art publication, and her sculptures are showcased with other amazing artists and cutting-edge designer clothing at Canvas Malibu.

For her art pieces, Spirito draws inspiration from all sorts of things and places.

“It can be a beautiful picture in a magazine or a colorful seashell I find while walking on Westward Beach,” Spirito said. “It might be a shadow that a tree casts on a hillside of a fading rose. If I am moved by something, I’ll take a photo of it and stick it in my idea file for later. When I’m carving, I find my stones will sometimes talk to me. A piece of marble will scream out, ‘I’m a fish! Free me!’ Or a chunk of alabaster will evolve into a primitive tribal chief.”

In her spare time, Spirito continues to practice Shiatsu. Her healing powers aren’t limited to people, however; she also works with dogs and horses, and finds it gratifying to help people and animals release their chronic pain.

When she isn’t healing others or enjoying the peaceful nature of Malibu, Spirito is exactly where you would expect to find her—in the sculpting studio.

“Sculpting is my life’s blood,” Spirito said. “I need it like I need air, and will carve until I’m too old to lift the mallets.” ■

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