

One of our members showed another member (Dale K.) an abandoned marble quarry south of Aguila. Dale is also a member of the Wickenburg Art Club. He saw one rock, a bit too large for a cabochon, that inspired thoughts for a sculpture.

The following images show Dale and his wife Debbie removing the rock from the quarry, the sculpture under construction, and the final piece.

The face of the rock was cut and polished with a hand grinder / polisher. The other surfaces were coated with an epoxy sealer to produce a semi-gloss finish which would also help to keep the porous rock clean. The bottom of the rock was cut square with a hand grinder. Holes were drilled and threaded aluminum inserts were epoxied into place to provide for secure mounting to a sturdy, hand-cut and welded steel frame. Four caster wheels allow the sculpture to be rolled around.

The “tree” was formed from about 150 feet of 3/8” diameter decorative steel rod (fancy rebar). All of the welding was done on the internal surfaces so none is visible from the outside. A computer model was completed first to determine where the bends should be and how many bars were to be placed where to get smooth diameters and transitions between trunk and branches. The steel is finished with clear laquer and hand-rubbed black wax to give a natural, wood-textured appearance.

The snake was rough shaped from white clay and made to fit the shape of the rock while allowing for the 20% shrinkage that would occur when the clay was fired. When the clay dried, the snake was hand carved and then sanded. The piece was cut into two pieces to allow it to fit into a large kiln. After the first firing, the two snake-pieces were coated