



Stone Artist Chris Miller makes truck and other sculptures using granite, marble and stone.

He Makes Trucks Out Of Rocks

Photos of a “Ford Rock Garden” circulating on social media caught our attention. So, we tracked down the artist behind it and discovered it’s just one of five of his creations - so far. It started when Vermont sculptor Chris Miller made a Ford truck sculpture for himself about 10 years ago when he was between commissioned projects.

“The inspiration came from driving around and seeing old trucks with trees growing up through them with rust and moss, like art in the landscape,” Miller explains.

He stacked natural stone and flagstone to create his Ford truck.

“Most of my sculpture starts with blocks, and I take pieces away. This is building from the ground up,” he says.

Someone took a photo that circulated on social media, and his phone started ringing. Ordinarily, he wouldn’t have had time, but it was 2020 during the Covid lockdown. So, when a car wash owner from Georgia asked him to build a 1940 Ford truck with a water feature, Miller accepted the challenge. He worked with a pond pro from Aquascape® to create a design to include plumbing for water to flow from the back of the pickup.

The partnership continued with truck sculptures in Maryland, Texas, and Arizona, with each piece more elaborate and detailed.

“The most challenging part is the engineering. The early ones had stone bases, but now to see underneath there’s a steel frame to get them off the ground,” Miller says.

Brahn has been selling, repairing, collecting, carving and working with chainsaws for decades.



Amazing Wall Of Antique Chainsaws

Dexter Brahn has been a chainsaw dealer and repairman for nearly 30 years, and he says sometimes guys bring in models that are way “over the hill” and they often don’t want them back, he says. “So, several years ago, I started hanging them from the ceiling or cutting a hole in a firewood wall and left them hanging there. I called it my saw patina wall.”

The collection grew over the years, and Brahn says, “Old timers would come in and point to different ones and have stories to tell about how hard it was to start, what they used to cut with it, and so on. Now I’m getting to be an old timer, and it’s time to put them in someone else’s hands.”

Brahn helps out a tractor club in Charles City, Iowa, and offered to give them old saws so they could start a collection. “They took out a good-sized trailer load and two van loads, more than 100 in all,” Brahn says. “They’re putting up a display, so visitors get a chance to see what old saws look like.”

One of the saws they’ll see is a personal favorite of Brahn’s, an old Vonruden that was made in Claremont, Minn. “I advertised

for antique saws for many years and rescued this one from the junk pile. It runs off tractor hydraulics. It has a 4-ft. bar with a valve on the operator’s end to turn it on and off and control the speed. A helper handle is on the opposite end.”

In addition to saw repair and collecting, Brahn is widely recognized for his chainsaw carving abilities. A friend taught him basic skills more than 25 years ago that he’s improved on over the years. Now he carves at fairs and shows and also conducts carving clinics. He uses 13 different saws to create life-like figures of bears, raccoons, Bullwinkle the Moose, and even Bigfoot.

“Carving has turned into a very fun hobby, and I’ve come a long way from the first few things I did,” Brahn says. “One was a fisherman that my wife would have no part of, so I gave it to my neighbor. Now my wife recognizes that I’m good at this, and it keeps me busy in retirement.”

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He prefabs some of the granite, marble, and stone parts like wheels and fenders in his Vermont studio. Then he ships everything to the site and stacks and hammers and chisels stone to shape it and give it a textured surface. It takes him and his team 2 to 3 weeks to put each sculpture together.

Handling pieces of 30-lb. stone and the labor-intensive work is hard on the body; Miller has had three spine surgeries. But he loves the art form, and at 65 he has a goal to finish 10 of the large sculptures.

“The criteria are that each one has to be more interesting, more intricate, and more fun than the one before,” he says, noting that each of his first five projects has followed that pattern. The last couple of trucks included lights and other details.

Project number six raises the bar even more. Miller has started a 1944 John Deere tractor that is 1 1/2 times the actual size. It will be installed on a Tennessee farm in 2024. The back wheels are 18-in. thick, 7 1/2-ft. dia. black granite.

“It needs a frame to support 40,000 lbs., and he wants smoke out of the smokestack and lights that work. All that engineering



1940 Ford Pickup made from rock is just one of Miller’s creations.

requires a lot of head-scratching,” he says.

Besides working on the tractor, Miller is in the midst of a huge column and monument project for a Vermont art academy.

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They Turn Milk Byproduct Into “Vodkow” Spirits

The Dairy Distillery in Almonte, Ontario, started as a way to use up a lactose-rich liquid called milk permeate that’s left behind when cow’s milk is processed into cheese or yogurt. Since consumers are shifting away from drinking milk but eating more cheese and yogurt, dairy farmers are struggling to find a use for the excess milk permeate. Disposing of it can be expensive, so it’s typically used as low-value animal feed.

Distillery founder Omid McDonald was inspired to find a use for this waste product after a visit to his uncle’s dairy farm. He partnered with the University of Ottawa to develop a way to transform the permeate into alcohol. The team found a natural yeast that converts the lactose into alcohol, which is then distilled into a smooth, slightly sweet alcohol that’s similar to vodka.

He built off that success to create a state-of-the-art distillery. Today, Dairy Distillery produces this milk-based drink, along with hand sanitizer and other specialty alcohols. Everything is made from fresh Canadian cream delivered to the Distillery daily.

The Distillery can’t call its final product vodka due to Canadian regulations that require the beverage to be made from a grain or potato. Hence, the name “Vodkow”. The drink offers a creamier mouthfeel and more sweetness than traditional spirits. Despite the dairy base, this cream liquor is naturally shelf stable without preservatives. Once opened, you must store it in the refrigerator. Vodkow



Vodkow is made using natural yeast that converts the lactose into alcohol, which is then distilled into a smooth, slightly sweet alcohol that’s similar to vodka.

flavors are also made with upcycled citrus fruits that would otherwise be thrown away.

It’s possible to visit the Dairy Distillery seven days a week to sample Vodkow, purchase themed apparel, or try one of over ten Vodkow cocktails at the bar. Guided tours are available on Saturdays, scheduled every 30 mins.

Vodkow is available for purchase at the distillery and online at the company website. Pricing per bottle starts at \$10.90 per 250 ml. You can also purchase lactose-free cream liqueurs made with Vodkow as their base.

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