

## Wood artists create artistic pieces for Governor's Arts Awards

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Three Southeast Valley residents were among six Arizonans specializing in wood artistry who created awards for the Arizona Governor's Arts Awards that were presented earlier this week.

Mesa mask-maker Zarco Guerrero, Chandler woodturner Gary Scarpulla, and "found wood" Ahwatukee artist

Richard Altenhofen helped make some of the awards given annually by Arizona Citizens for the Arts and the state to Arizona artists and organizations, businesses, educators and others making

significant contributions to the art community.

The six honorees at the 29th annual presentation each received one of the individually crafted awards.

Guerrero's carved mahogany mask, "Chula" ("beautiful" in Spanish), was given to Arizona State University composer and professor James DeMars; Altenhofen's untitled ironwood bowl went to Prescott cultural historian Elisabeth Ruffner; and Scarpulla's to Tucson arts advocate Shirley Chann.

A Governor's Award honoree in 1993, Guerrero is a Mesa native and a Westwood High School graduate.

Tracing his Native heritage to the Juañeno and Acjachemem California Indian Mission communities, he has been married for 32 years to musician Carmen De Novais. The couple have three adult children – all involved in the arts.

"I still live and work in my studio in the same neighborhood where I grew up, along with many members of our extended family," he said.

His grandfather, P.W. Guerrero, was a pioneer in Mesa and founder of Rosarita Foods and Guerrero Lindsay Sign Company, the state's oldest. Pedro Guerrero Elementary School and Guerrero Rotary Park in Mesa were named in honor of him.

"I am a sculptor who also paints murals and carves masks," he said, noting that he believes his most important contribution are his "Masked Performances," in which he appears in dramatic settings with masks he's created.

Most of his work is in wood and bronze, although he also works in ceramics, cast paper and fiberglass.

Scarpulla was born and raised in Chicago and lived in Walpole, Mass., for a few years before moving to Chandler about 24 years ago.

He has worked for three decades in integrated circuit design, currently for Tempe-based Medtronic, and has been a woodturner for eight years at his home and studio.

"All my work is primarily decorative, but I will do utilitarian pieces if requested," he explains. He has displayed his pieces in Prescott and Sedona as well as in the "Beneath the Bark" exhibit, held last fall at the Chandler Center for the Arts.

Crafting with a lathe, Scarpulla moves the wood to shape it into a variety of hollow forms such as vases, decorative bowls and boxes.

He embellishes this with carving, wood burning, texturing and piercing; at times, he inlays materials other than wood. He specializes in ornamental woodturning.

Often called "The Sonoran Desert Woodturner," Altenhofen scavenges for native woods to transform into objects of beauty - even "found" urban pieces that might otherwise go to landfills.

Today, he sells his wood artworks in galleries, most in Phoenix and Oregon.

Born in Portland, he moved to Arizona in the early 1970s, first to Tucson, then to Chandler in 1983, and to Ahwatukee in 1993.

Altenhofen's art background is a mosaic of events. In Oregon, he took a jewelry-making class, and, while in Tucson, he apprenticed under two jewelers.

At the time, he completed a bachelor's degree in chemistry, moved to Phoenix and accepted a job with Motorola.

One day, he saw an "Arizona Highways" catalogue with mesquite pens and started buying equipment and learning the craft.

"Making pens led to other larger items which led to buying bigger lathes," he said.

Growing up in Oregon also piqued a woodworking interest.

"I spent a lot of time puttering, and getting in trouble, around my dad's workshop when I was young," he said, noting he also made a small lathe at the time from an Erector Set motor. The Northwest also generated a love for the outdoors - hiking, camping and fishing, in particular.

He prefers desert ironwood.

"This wood is most spectacular. It is hard and heavy, which tends to discourage most other wood-turners, but it also possesses the most amazing chatoyance - an optical effect like that of tiger eye."

He added, "If you know of anyone who has a dead ironwood tree on their property, I'll be happy to remove it."