



Artist Interview: Lyle Sopol



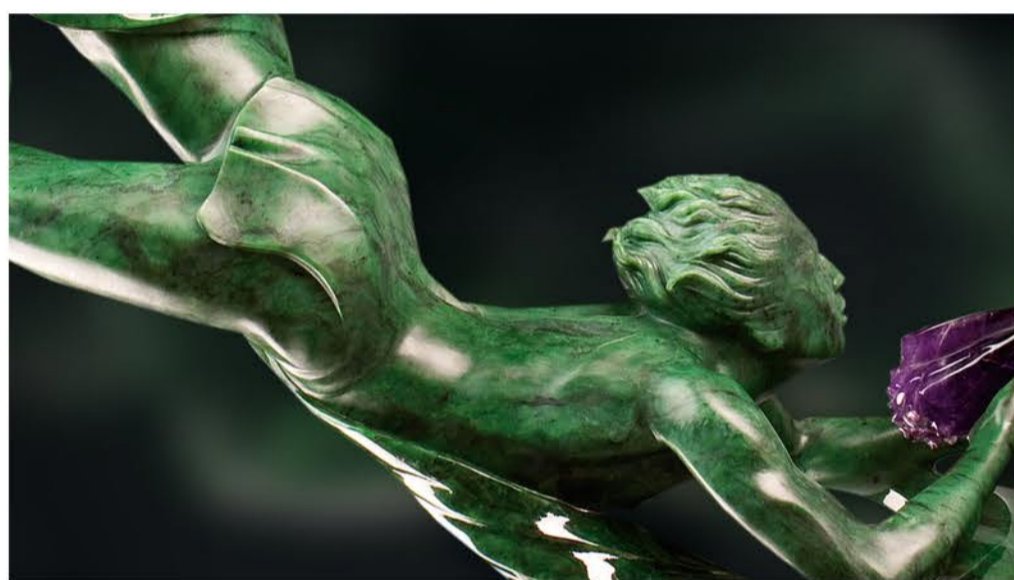
By Seth Macbeth

With a life encased so deeply in the pursuit of spiritual discovery and creative expression, and with a precious stone renowned for good fortune as his companion, Lyle Sopol has found himself on an outstanding journey on which a wholly unique artistic genius has been unearthed. Just as he pulls a stunning and remarkable sculpture from raw, unpolished rock, it is as if a greater force has carved his purpose knowing that this talent was destined for extraordinary things.

“In some ways I guess I just didn’t have a choice. It’s just how the cards were dealt for me.”

Named by National Geographic Magazine as one of the best Jade Sculptors in the world, his extensive studies, travels and experimental exploration into the craft have allowed him to push the borders of normality in sculpting to become a highly recognised and respected artist known to collectors in Canada and around the globe.

His fluid and uninhibited forms stem from a place deep within himself and his own history. They reflect an effortless ease and inner soulful peace. Harmonized so wonderfully with the spiritual properties of jade - said to encourage creativity, confidence, harmony and success - the two elements weave together to produce a force of immense power, and yet elusive, delicate beauty. “There is not much I cannot achieve with Jade, which gives me a lot of freedom and spontaneity with my art,” he states. “But it took a long time to develop, and it has been a long, learned process.” The heartfelt connections in his work to the stone and to his own depth and journey become another aspect of his work; another stream joining the great river that is the final piece.



Spending his childhood in a very rural Richmond, Sopol explored infinite rolling, natural landscapes that imprinted onto the artist a sense of attachment and connection with the nature surrounding his British Columbia home. “My mother would open the back door and just let me go,” he remembers fondly. Cultivating a passion for drawing even as a child, the path was already beginning to form at his feet.

“It was by accident that I saw a sculpture being created for the first time. At that moment I knew, that was what I wanted to do. If I look back into my history as an artist, I see all kinds of serendipitous occurrences that led me on this path.”

The masters and great artists of old inspired him on his extensive travels through Europe as an adolescent, and an energy that had always poured through him was finally given a voice. Influential figures saw a vast potential in the talented youth, and provided many of the tools and time required for him to become one of the greats. “I was given a studio, materials, equipment and time – 3 years to work the stone I love so much.” From there Sopol presented 90 of his pieces in Vancouver at a prestigious show, which sold out to one buyer. “That’s when I knew I was in the right profession.”

The collectors that flock to Sopol’s work feel a deep sense of connection to the pieces he creates, as well as to the jade itself. The freedom and spirited style to his work and the ease with which he playfully draw out life from the stone is a huge part of the allure that interests the right eye. “Intelligent, independent people purchase my work,” he tells me. “What they see in my work reflects a certain type of personality – they see the uniqueness, the daring. When they have these pieces in their homes it reflects those attributes within the buyer – exciting, intelligent free beings.”



Ever pushing and striving to discover that next step on his incredible path, Sopol has also expanded to a new kind of sculpting in his collection of inspirational jade jewellery. That signature explorative nature and love of design has led to an evolution of his work that opens up a whole new realm of possibilities; and so into the river more tributaries begin to flow.

“I love design. Design is what has held me to this work my whole life. It’s the variety of things I can do with it.”

It is this love and devotion to the creative process that has Sopol eager to continue the exploration of this wonderful, mesmerizing craft. Expanding and discovering new heights as an artist, Sopol is always in the pursuit of knowledge, new techniques, and that ever important whole-hearted connection. “I want to learn, to educate myself and to expand.” He explains. “To absorb as much as I can from the masters and bring them back to my studio, and feel as if they are standing there beside me.”