

Scintillating Sculpture

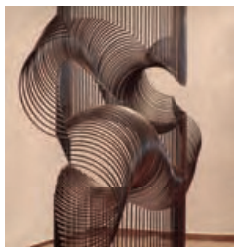
BY SUSAN RAMSAY

Wouldn't it be thrilling to take your drawings and meditations and transform them into large scale architectural masterpieces? It's what artist Matt McConnell does every day for a living. "I've managed to make a business out of my passion for finding the next new thing," says Matt. "It's awesome to take ideas from dream to reality." Matt has been building and creating since his early childhood with an interest in drafting and architecture. A zeal for geometry, combined with an artistic eye, has propelled his career and



is the inspiration behind McConnell Studios. The designs for his mind-blowing sculptures stem from his creative daydreams, some of which are drawings dating back to his middle school years. With the goal of enhancing the environment constantly on his mind, he seeks to bridge the gap between all the elements of formation from client, to design, to construction.

Born in Charlotte, McConnell is a North Carolina native and graduate of NC State University with degrees in Architecture and Industrial Design. Outside of the classroom, Matt spent most free moments in the shop building and crafting. His fervor for sculpture eventually led him to downtown Raleigh where he displayed his work at venues such as Form + Function, Humble Pie and Artspace. As people started to catch on to his exceptional eye for design, Matt moved on to larger projects like working with local restaurants including Lucky 32, Solas, Mosaic, bu•ku, and The Mint. Word of mouth from architects, interior designers and clients has boosted his business throughout the years. He has earned recognition on a



national scale in areas such as Miami, Dallas, Chicago, and Boston.

Whether it's concrete counter tops and steel railings or sliding doors in private homes, Matt seeks to bypass the ordinary. When he founded his business, he set out to educate the community on the beauty of creating, founded upon the idea that the world can be so much more interesting than what we might expect. His business process is based on client interaction so that everyone is involved in the design process. "It's the dialogue that makes it interest-

ing," he says. "My goal is to work with clients to find the most creative and affordable way to make something unique and interesting." Glass, steel, concrete, wood, and a host of other materials provide the canvas for his inspiring work.

One of Matt's proudest moments was unveiling the 32-foot tall stainless steel and fiberglass sculpture that presides over the DCH Regional Medical Center in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. It took his team five nights of working from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. to construct the massive piece, which had to be built on site due to its grand scale. Seeing the reaction of the public and everyone involved to the brilliant cobalt masterpiece entitled "Harmony," was the most gratifying part of the project for Matt. He doesn't deny that the jobs can be tedious, like assembling a structure composed of 7,000 tiny metal rods, but the end result makes it worthwhile.

Much of Matt's work is done out of pure love. He donates event pieces to charity, and jumps at unique challenges like designing the championship belt buckles for the Cherrybounce awards at

Raleigh Wide Open 5. "I love when I can create something fun that helps out the community and adds art to a space that wouldn't normally have it." It's the process of figuring out how to make the unimaginable happen that drives Matt to keep generating new ideas. Whether it's a 65-foot long desk for Bank of America, or a floating spiral



staircase in a Raleigh residence, he is devoted to working intimately in the conception, design, fabrication, and installation. "It's been a long road, but I'm so happy to be here."

For more information on how to commission a piece, or to explore Matt's extensive portfolio, visit www.mcconnellstudios.com.