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Chainsaw Sculptor: The Art of J. Chester "Skip" Armstrong (Folk Art and Artists Series)

Sharon R. Sherman

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In the ponderosa pines of central Oregon, J. Chester "Skip" Armstrong creates breath-taking eagles and finely crafted animals. His choice of materials and methods of creating shape, texture, and detail have much in common with both regional vernacular western chainsaw art and delicately tooled wood sculpture.

This book explores the processes of creativity, raises questions about the differences between folk art and fine art, and captures Armstrong's unique aesthetic sensibilities, his outlook on life, his surroundings, and his growing reputation.

Armstrong says he wants "to dance inside the log" as he and the chainsaw unite in a furious blitz of energy that allows him to see his idea materialize almost instantaneously. He follows the integral form and grain of the raw log and with the chainsaw he says he frees the animal shape out of the lines that suggest the form that will emerge. He then uses smaller power tools to detail his sculpture. Bears, coyotes, sea lions, and horses are brought to life by his artistry.

This study of an artist and his work shows him interacting with admirers at crafts fairs in demonstrations that reveal art as performance. He has become a renowned local character, a legendary personality whose astonishing works of art magnetize a willing and curious audience.

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