

# A dream come true

## Vermont artist finds way to create architectural sculpturers

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After only one lesson in oxyacetylene welding, he made his first sculpture. Rubino said he couldn't believe his cousin showed him how to use an oxyacetylene setup, and then left him to experiment—in a wooden-frame, 100-year-old house, amid wood scraps and sawdust—while he went to the movies.

The 48-year-old Stowe, Vt., resident remembers that important day and how it sent him on a mission to sculpt professionally. Today he's the owner of two businesses: HabiTech, which installs high-end home automation systems like touchscreen controls, home monitoring and sound systems; and Structural Sculpture Corp., where he gets to make functional yet artistic sculptures for architectural purposes.



"I feel I'm the luckiest person in the world," Rubino said. "I get to make permanent stuff—sculptures that hold up buildings—it encompasses everything I like to do."

While Rubino enjoys success in both of his businesses, it took a long and winding 36-year path to get him where he is today.

He attributes his early interest in sculpture partly to his parents' support and interest in art. He remembers being a small boy, standing at his mother's knee, watching her sculpt. But mostly he feels that sculpting always has been in his soul.

"I don't think I looked at it as a way to make a living, but I knew I'd be doing it for the rest of my life," he said.

After that first day as a 12-year-old oxyacetylene novice, Rubino searched for ways to make enough money so he could do what he loves. For subsequent birthdays and Christmas holidays, his parents bought him oxyacetylene and arc welding equipment.

Rubino took art classes through high school; spent a year in Italy studying sculpture; and returned to the U.S. to study architecture and ultimately receive a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in graphic design, sculpture, and photography from the University of Miami.

After college, Rubino moved briefly to Washington, D.C., and then to Stowe, Vt. He worked in construction, made jewelry for a living, and took the American Institute of Building Design test to become certified as a professional building designer by the National Council of Building Design Certification—anything he could do to find work he liked that would provide him with the funds to feed his passion.

"What I always had in my head was that I wanted to make enough money to do sculpture," he said.

In 1997 he started Structural Sculpture Corp., as he finally realized he could do what he loved and make sculptures that he could sell both to people wanting something artistic and to people wanting something architecturally functional.

"I'm overwhelmed by the success [of Structural Sculpture Corp.]. I've had architects tell me my work is inspiring," Rubino said. While he said he might consider turning HabiTech over to an employee someday so he can focus totally on his sculptures, today he enjoys garnering "good-sized" electronic jobs for HabiTech while spending most of his time with Structural Sculpture.

In his spare time, he participates in River Arts, a Morrisville, Vt., organization that is raising money to turn town-owned buildings into an arts education center. Recently he taught a class of six adults how to weld sculptures using oxyacetylene, gas metal arc, gas tungsten arc, and flux cored arc welding. The sculptures his students create remind him of the first sculpture he made when he was 12—which he still has.

While it took Rubino years to figure out how to make a living by doing everything he loves, he said he feels fortunate to have taken the steps he did, because they led him to his present career success and personal fulfillment.

"We're doing one-of-a-kind pieces. It makes me feel good to lay a good weld or a series of good welds, but my heart takes a little jump whenever something turns out right—it excites me to no end," Rubino said. "I get to do exactly what I want."



Rubino welded this 75-in.-tall sculpture, "At-One," in 1999.

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