

Brian Wizard's

HOW I MADE THE JUNIPER COBRA



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One day in the autumn of 2018, I was trimming the forest around my estate when I came across a broken juniper tree. Heavy snow folded the juniper tree's trunk into a curve

resembling that of a striking cobra head, or so I envisioned. I cut down the dead tree and dragged it home.



There was a possibility that the cracks of the curve penetrated through the wood to the point of rendering the shape unusable, as you can see by looking at both untreated sides. Was there enough wood to make the piece solid and stable? A sculptor cannot sculpt air. I could only tell by removing the splinters and grinding the shape down to see the totality of the damage.



As you can see, after using a chainsaw and angle grinder with 16-grit sandpaper, enough wood remained intact for further development. The piece had potential.



For my next trick, I was off to Australia for an adventure, so I tucked the juniper cobra away for the winter.

Upon my return in the spring of 2019, I broke out a new toy, an electric chainsaw. I had used one in Australia to carve a sea turtle in honor of the Dreamer character found in my novel, *Shindara*.



There I used my friend Mick's 220-volt electric chainsaw and it felt like it had a lot more cutting power than this 110-volt chainsaw.



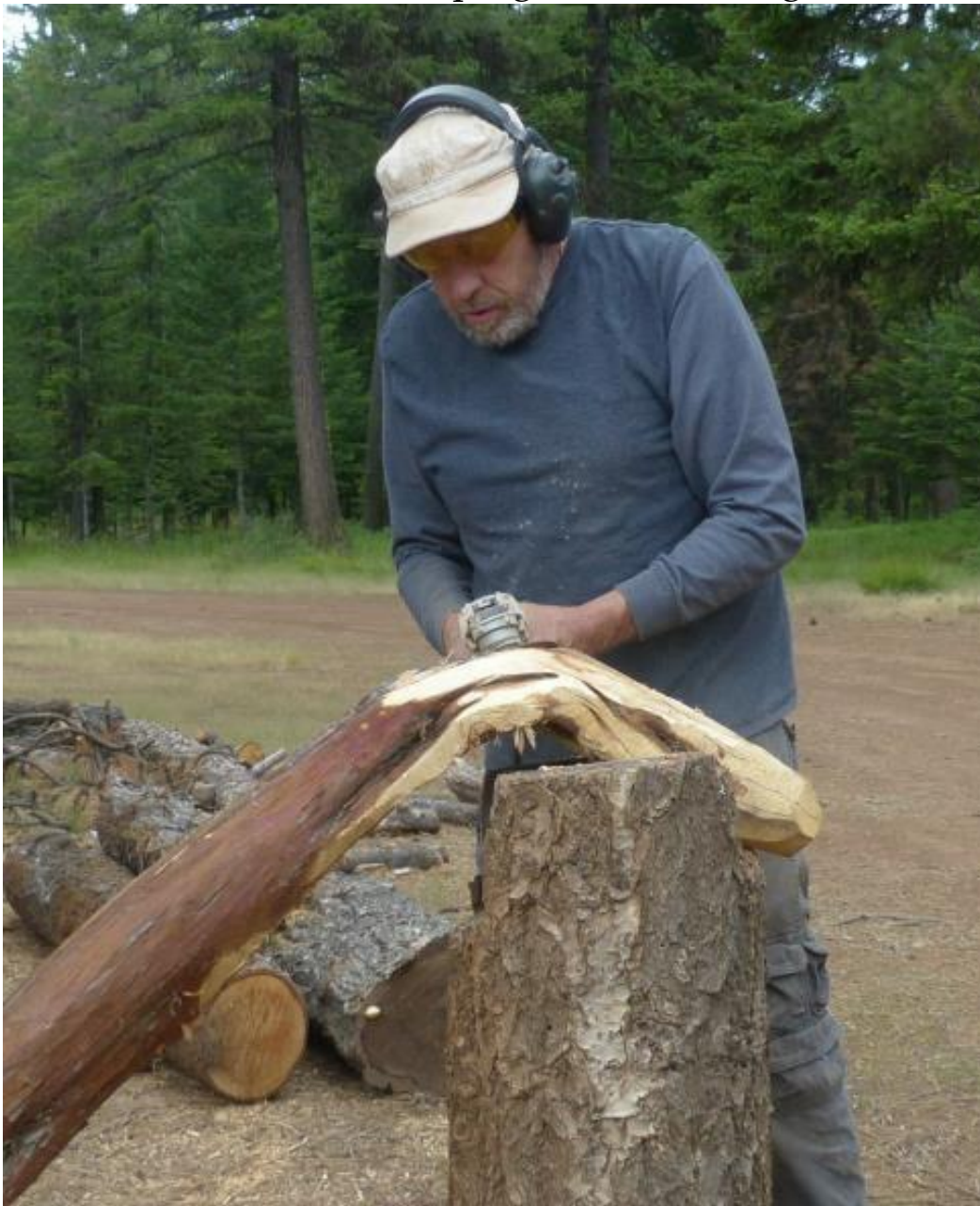
I did what I could with my new toy, but in the end, I swapped it out for my gas-powered chainsaw.



I did do some basic debarking and shaping with it.



After that, I used 16-grit sandpaper attached to the angle grinder to do the more intricate shaping and debarking.



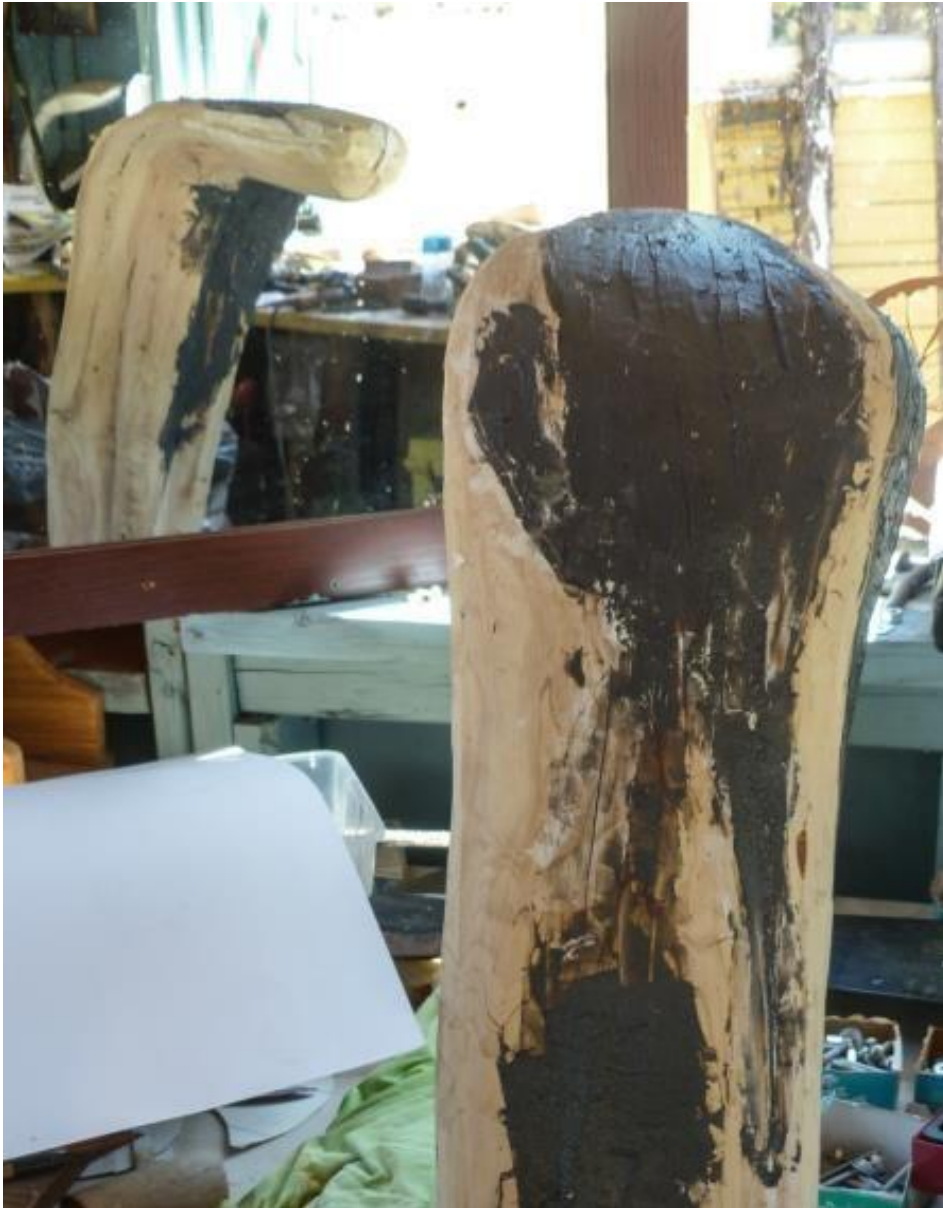
For months, this idea was a work in progress.



I filled the cracks with caulking and then sanded the caulking smooth.



I then added a layer of epoxy paste.



After which came more angle grinding.



I cut out the mouth's recess using the chainsaw and then the angle grinder.



I printed out a cobra head photo found on the internet to follow its dimensions and shape of the head.





Looking ahead, I borrowed two coyote teeth to use as models for the cobra's tin fangs. The following photo might be misleading by suggesting that the knot on the right is an eye, but it isn't – that side is the lower jaw.



The top of the head needed to be rounded upward, hence the wire foundation. Since I was right there, I fabricated a wire tongue.



I made the plaster mold in which to cast the fangs in tin.



Success was mine.



The arduous task of nailing a lot of wire mesh in place and layering it with epoxy paste took a long time. I did this over the head and down the body.



Layering a smooth coat of epoxy made the sanding easier.



On the backside I ground out what I thought might be acceptable scale definitions.



On the front, I made the flared hood in the appropriate shape to match that of a true cobra.



I cast both eyes and tongue in tin.



The wizardry was working once again.



To finish the piece I needed to stand it upright, so I made a temporary mount.



Upright it stood.



Here's some height and size perspective for you.



This was when I could begin the finishing, starting with a final hand sanding and then coat of primer.



I could then add a coat of grey.



The throat needed some color. As you might know, I am a bit color blind, to the point where I read the labels of paint cans to

understand what colors I'm using. I went for a "colorful" appearance.



The time to add the embellishments came and I installed the tin eyes, tongue, and fangs.



The piece needed a mount to hold it upright, so I whipped one up out of some pine firewood pieces I had lying around.



A mounting angle needed shaping, so I cut it.



I needed to design some legs and attached them.



Soon enough I had a mount.



I thought that it should be black so it did not look as if it were a part of the snake. Here they are, mount and cobra lying side by side.



The Juniper Cobra stands tall.



I thought it would look great coming out from underneath the sauna.



For winter storage, the Juniper Cobra resides at my friend Marjorie's house, out of the elements, yet on display. Note the important part, the signature.

So there you have it, the third art project of 2019. Remind me next year that three big projects are too many.

Cheers, and thanks for reading,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Brian Wignall". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Brian" and last name "Wignall" clearly legible.

A note about pricing:

My shop price is \$100 an hour, which helps pay for the cost of personally building the workshops, the deck, buying all the tools and supplies, and my creative expertise.

This piece took 80 hours, hence the \$8000 price tag. Remember my bottom line: "No reasonable offer refused."