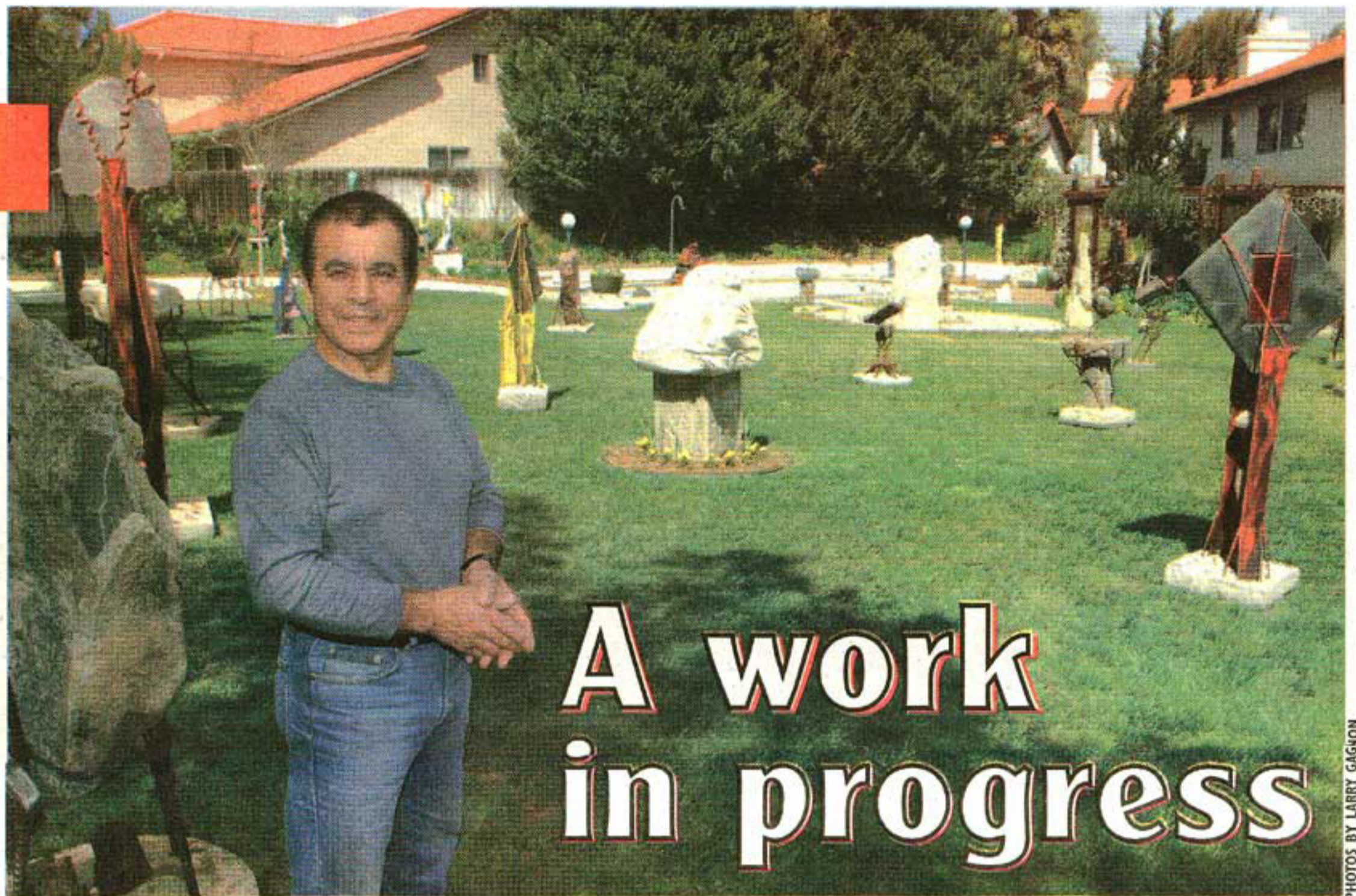


artist

By Raenell Hooten

PQ artist Nasser Pirasteh turns his back yard into a sculpture garden for all to enjoy



A work in progress

PHOTOS BY LARRY GAGNON

If, on a sunny afternoon, you happen upon a collection of sculptures in a back yard framed by a wrought iron fence, your curiosity might be piqued — big time.

If you ask the who or why of this fascinating artwork, an answer might come from the hard-working gentleman in the yard, whose enthusiastic reply to your curiosity will be a gracious invitation to “come in and take a look.”

The affable artist is Nasser Pirasteh, and his work in progress is his sculpture garden. He is transforming his Rancho Penasquitos property into a natural gallery that draws on the sun, moon and sky for its ambience. Here, a kaleidoscope of stone, metal, wood and glass bring unique visual images to an ordinary plot of grass.

Most artists will tell you that the secret to a good piece of art is knowing when to stop. Pirasteh understands that principle, but when it comes to his sculpture garden, he contends there is no end to what he needs to express.

Certainly, there is a beginning and end to each piece Pirasteh creates, and certainly each piece is an individual work of art, yet his garden is a beautiful example of where the whole is the sum of its parts. Here is artistic expression that

knows no bounds, and artistic language that speaks unfettered. This prolific artist has no limitations, because he finds inspiration in the smallest detail and has the personality, energy and determination to make it all happen.

Pirasteh is new to Penasquitos, but he has a legacy of works in his native Iran and his 30 years of public and private art

his home gallery in Minnesota were well attended and his enclave of art attracted visitors from many states and countries.

While his garden in Penasquitos is considerably smaller than his previous 6 acres, the pie-shaped lot is larger than most in the area. The garden is growing, and so is the artwork that fills the landscape. Size is not a factor for Pirasteh;

the eye. If art is supposed to make you think, then get ready for a happy adventure in creative provocations.

From an exquisite marble bust to an enormous public work that is 19 feet tall and weighs more than 1,200 pounds, Pirasteh’s pieces are hammered, chiseled and molded in unison with his ideas.

He is never without ideas — and they are expressed in marble, granite, limestone, dolomite and Brazilian paladio. Metal is an important element in his work, and if he “constructs” a piece, he will use rebar, I-beams and/or steel. A meticulously polished egg-shaped limestone piece rests on a vertical rebar base, or a massive piece of limestone is filled with symbols and philosophical statements. An intricate metal bookstand becomes a

functional base for a treasured book, or it is able to assume the personality of a garden sculpture.

His body of work cannot be categorized, however. Pirasteh responds to his environment, and his reaction is artwork that has a message all its own, whether in stone, metal or wood.



“I view my work as a triangle between you and me and the artwork. Even if I’m not there, you can look at my work and understand my thinking.”

— NASSER PIRASTEH

in Clearwater, Minn., a community just south of St. Cloud, but north of Minneapolis.

A magnet emerged for both gardeners and art aficionados on his 6-acre Clearwater site, with its more than 100 works of art, his studio, garden and home. His public art is placed in cities, schools, parks, St. Cloud State University, government buildings and private businesses. His quarterly shows at

for him, it’s the canvas of land that needs to be painted with sculptural imagination and passion.

His art is contemporary or abstract, yet Pirasteh’s use of nature and realistic images tempers his works. He also melds elements of symbolism and ancient ideologies into emotional statements that demand reflection and thought. Even his humorous pieces have an underlying message, that go deeper than what meets