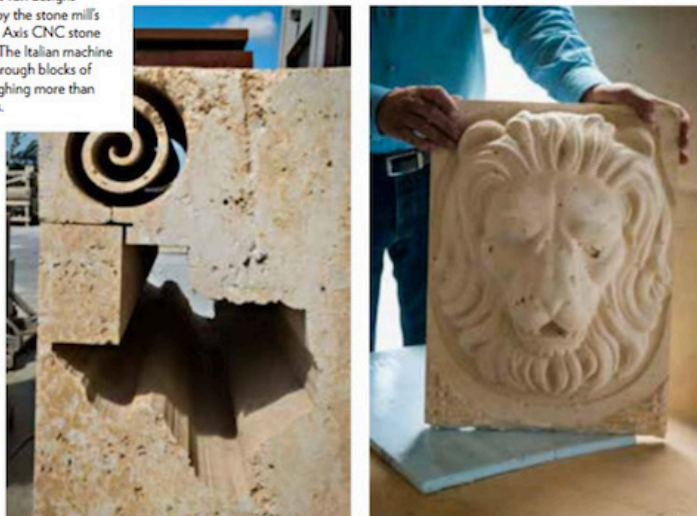


style **BEHIND THE SCENES**

Set in Stone: Escobedo

A MELDING OF HIGH-TECH PRECISION AND OLD WORLD CRAFTSMANSHIP CREATES ONE-OF-A-KIND STATEMENT PIECES.

These test-run designs were cut by the stone mill's Peligrini 2 Axis CNC stone wire saw. The Italian machine can cut through blocks of stone weighing more than 20,000lbs.



David Escobedo, a self-taught welder and internationally recognized master stonemason, opened his general contracting firm in Buda 11 years ago. His wife, Kathy, is his partner in the firm, and their three children—Matthew, Jessica, and Anna—work for the company as well.

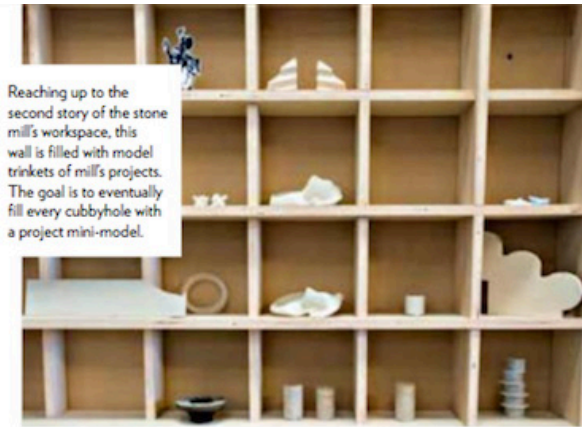
“I was born and raised in the business,” says David Escobedo, founder and owner of both Escobedo Construction (escobedoconstruction.com) and his latest venture, Architectural Elements by Escobedo (escobedoe.com). Escobedo started in construction at an early age, working in residential concrete and wood framing for his father’s construction company in Houston. And he hasn’t looked back since. For almost 12 years now, Escobedo’s own general contracting firm has been specializing in both residential and commercial construction. From building and helping to design multimillion-dollar estates with Escobedo Construction to providing intricately carved stone, wood, and metal custom designs to designers and architects through his Architectural Elements component, Escobedo incorporates Old World techniques like traditional chiseling and true-compression cantilevered stonemasonry and artisan skill into creating just about anything for anyone. “Part of our goal is to offer our product to general contractors, and not just to our clients,” Escobedo says.

Escobedo’s unassuming property may appear to be just a handful of warehouses out in the middle of Buda, but inside his three mills, magic happens. In the steel shop, the screeching noise made by machines cutting metal for steel window and door frames reverberates through the space. Michelle, the shop’s machinist, vigilantly runs tests with the mill’s three-axis steel milling machine on a strip of steel that will ultimately be used in one of the company’s steel framing projects.

This type of equipment, referred to as CNC technology, is some of the world's most advanced computer-controlled milling machinery and it's almost unheard of in the South.

In the cabinetry and millwork shop, six *casitas*—rustic modular mini-cabins—are being constructed, piece by piece. Eventually they will be sent via truck to a hunting ranch in Brady, where they will be assembled. These *casitas* are a current favorite of Escobedo's. What appeals to him is the accessibility of the tiny living areas.

Some of the most spectacular sights reside in the stone mill on the property. Upon entering, a visitor quickly spots the mill's humming, larger-than-life CNC machines—the two-axis CNC stone wire saw and the five-axis CNC stone router—, taking up a majority of the space in the huge shop. In the shop's remaining space are arrayed wall-to-wall stone masterpieces, both enormous and relatively small (yet still weighing more than 10,000 pounds). Some projects are works in progress, like the 15-foot stone topography of Austin, to be installed at the airport; others, Escobedo keeps as souvenirs, like the true-compression stone doghouse that he made and designed, which won Best in Show at Austin Barkitecture's fund-raising competition. Every piece in Escobedo's collection has a story. Escobedo's reflections on his journey clearly reveal his penchant for his craft. To say that Escobedo loves his job is an understatement; he lives it. **S. DERSTINE**



Reaching up to the second story of the stone mill's workspace, this wall is filled with model trinkets of mill's projects. The goal is to eventually fill every cubbyhole with a project mini-model.



In Escobedo's steel mill, a window frame is welded on a heavyweight table specifically designed for framework. The holes in the table allow for material to lay perfectly flat on its surface.



View from above: Through repurposed glass from previous Escobedo projects, the stone mill's workspace overlooks the rest of the warehouse. Below, some of Escobedo's skilled craftsmen work diligently on outer panels of the *casitas*. The mill's cutting edge Peligrini wire saw can be seen on the right.

BUILDING BETTER BOATS

Escobedo's Sea Dart boats provide a surprising contrast to the home fabrications and design branches of the business. Made in-house, these masterfully crafted 16-foot wooden canoe-kayak hybrids are some of Escobedo's most prized and cherished works. As an avid fisherman, he found ways to improve upon the elements of the traditional canoe six years ago with Old World Viking planking methods and high-quality imported French marine plywood. Designed predominantly for fly-fishing, these lightweight 55-pound canoes barely kiss the surface of the water, displacing only three inches deep when moving. On those rare days when he's not in Buda running the show, Escobedo likes to take his own Sea Dart for a spin on the Intracoastal Waterway, sometimes accompanied by a client, other times savoring the moments alone.