

0 comments **3-minute interview: Robert Wertz, owner, Igneous Rock Gallery, Hampden Twp.**

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By [Daniel Urie](#) | [PennLive.com](#)
 on October 30, 2012 at 1:28 PM, updated October 30, 2012 at 1:58 PM [Print](#)



Robert Wertz

Q: Tell us about Igneous Rock Gallery.

A: At Igneous Rock Gallery, we create one-of-a-kind artistic contemporary fountains using ancient natural stone columns. As a former landscaping contractor, I was less than satisfied with the vast selection of tacky looking, mass-produced metal, concrete and plastic water features available at garden centers. You've seen enough of the frog sitting on a lily pad with water shooting from its mouth or the slightly tilted concrete lady pouring water from a pitcher.

Custom designed natural stone fountains certainly provide a welcome alternative.

Q: What is something Igneous Rock Gallery offers that is unique?

A: Our stone itself is unique. It comes from a singular and finite occurrence of 45- to 50-million-year-old lava in a remote region of Washington state known as Beaver Canyon. Nowhere else on the planet does igneous rock form in such slender, curvaceous and color rich columns. On the Quarry Connection page of our website, [www.igneousrockgallery.com](#), there is a video in which I interviewed the geologist who mines this material. In it, he details the unique characteristics that combine to make this rare stone so appealing. Not only is the stone itself unique, but we have been awarded exclusive access to the most impressive material they are able to win from the site, making our products unique among fountains created in this unusual medium.

Q: What is your company's biggest challenge?

A: Breaking through to the next level. We have created many fountains of modest scale and price for residential and commercial applications. As far as I know, I am the only artist who has built a sole focus business of creating fountain sculpture in this medium. I am indebted to my customers for their purchases and referrals, enabling me to pursue this most unusual and satisfying vocation. While I continue to enjoy and appreciate projects of any size, I am seeking a customer who will join with me in creating a singularly uplifting work of art, a world-class project where imaginations might fly free of the mundane.

Finding such a visionary customer who believes in me and the potential of this medium is Igneous Rock Gallery's biggest challenge.

Any assistance your readers can offer in this regard will be greatly appreciated.



Igneous Rock Gallery

Q: What is your favorite thing about your work?

A: It is a blessing to wake each workday knowing I get to do something I am passionate about. I feel sorry for people who are forced by circumstances to work 40 hours-plus every week at a job they despise. This niche also enables me to get acquainted with interesting people who share appreciation for art and stone. I enjoy getting to know my customers, learning what makes them tick and, in some instances, forging friendships that go beyond business.

Q: What is the most fun part of your job?

A: I thoroughly enjoy being alone in the shop designing fountains. When the music of my choice is playing or if perhaps I turn it off in favor of silence and it is just me and the stones, and especially when an arrangement comes together like it was always meant to be, that is as much fun as I can imagine getting paid for. Alternately, it is fun assisting my more-adventuresome clientele in selecting several columns from several hundred on hand and helping them craft their own design. I provide suggestions and guidance while encouraging enough participation that they feel empowered to create art. This is also fun and very satisfying. The only joy that rivals these pleasures is witnessing the delight of a customer after their fountain has been installed. On the day of a fountain installation, I often return after dark to adjust the lighting. On many occasions, customers have invited me to sit with them after the work is done. To share a few of the innumerable moments they will sit beside their fountain provides a window into what my work is all about. It's not solely about creating something beautiful to look at.

It's also about contributing to an atmosphere wherein people will gather and enjoy one another during those all-too-fleeting moments of relaxation.