



You've seen their works of art all over the world, including at Canada's Parliament buildings and Queen's University. But their art isn't the typical paintbrush to canvas type that you see hung on gallery walls. Instead, their art is unlike any other in Canada and, in fact, some may consider it a lost form.

FROM PARLIAMENT HILL TO YOUR HOME

STORY **DANI-ELLE DUBÉ**
PHOTOGRAPHY **JESSICA DEEKS**

It all begins in a workshop tucked away in the back of a building on a muddy lot on Edinburgh Place in Ottawa. There you'll find the artists, Philippe Smith and Danny Barber, in a dust-filled office surrounded by lifelike European-style sculptures and intricate stone carvings. Welcome to Smith and Barber Sculpture Atelier.

Craftsmen or stonemasons – call them what you will – Philippe and Danny are artists who hold some of the most coveted restoration and construction contracts in Canada and around the world.

“Since we first started we really focused on heritage restoration,” says Philippe. “But from time to time, we’ve been asked to do some private commissions, like fireplaces, entrances, fountains. We love the heritage work but being artists, we want to create and are really good at recreating.”

In Canada, the duo's work can be seen on east, west and central blocks of Parliament Hill, the Ontario Legislative Building in Toronto and Rideau Hall in Ottawa, with upcoming projects in Regina and Calgary. But beyond the borders, Philippe and Danny have travelled to Europe and etched their markings into the Palais-Royal and Préfecture de Police in Paris, Holy Trinity Church and Birmingham Town Hall in England.

“I like seeing the work of the craftsmen that came before us in the work that we reproduce in the heritage side of the trade,” says Danny. “It’s nice to know that we’re part of a lineage of craftsmen.”

But for Philippe and Danny, the sky's the limit. Although historical restoration is their forte, the time has come for the two to explore other avenues and forms of art.

“We’re really changing our focus and





Banker mason
Sam Beauchamp



Danny Barber and Philippe Smith

spearhead into the new home residential market,” says Philippe. “We specialize in traditional techniques of architectural stone carving,” adds Danny. “We want to combine new designs with traditional methods.”

That also includes playing with different materials, like wood, plaster and bronze. And with their new ambitions, the two want to create a recognizable Canadian style and brand that is unique to them and Canadian culture.

“We want to develop a style of our own that incorporates the flora and fauna of our environment, of Canada,” says Danny. “A bit of a rugged Canadiana style that is significant to our brand so in the future you can look back and recognize it as a Smith and Barber.”

Philippe studied heritage masonry at Algonquin College and worked with companies in Toronto and France. Danny studied architectural stone carving at Weymouth College in the United Kingdom and did an apprenticeship in Gloucestershire. Previously, he worked in the family business of making gravestones.

The two met when they both worked for a previous company. And, after working some time together, they realized they shared similar views, goals and artistic interests. In 2012, they came together to open Smith and Barber Sculpture Atelier Inc.

But they didn't want to run the same-old run-of-the-mill type of workshop that turned out characterless bland works. Instead, they highlight quality, sophistication and tradition with every carving and maintain the European-style of stonemasonry that both grew up loving and has set them apart from the competition.

“Working for other companies we always knew that the product we were putting out wasn't exactly the way it should have been in some ways,” says Philippe. “It was a factory approach, which is the North American sort of thinking,” adds Danny. “But we want to bring things back to the way it was and slow things down.”

Their approach is reflected in their modern-yet-traditional works of art as they bring a once forgotten art into the future.

“I'm a big proponent of trying to maintain the high qualities of the trade,” says Philippe. “And if we can have any kind of impact in making sure that the trade doesn't disappear, like it kind of did for a little while, then that would be a great thing.” **OH**