

# New Building Uses Old Art

Regnier  
Center

**V**alue Your Education – it's now written in stone.

Two weeks before the fall semester, stone sculptor Nikolaus Miesing, Galena, Ill., spent several days carving a 400-pound piece of Kansas limestone for the lobby of the Regnier Center. Using tools and techniques that have changed little in the last thousand years, Miesing chiseled out a quote from Vic Regnier. A \$5 million challenge gift by the Victor and Helen Regnier Charitable Foundation went to support construction of the Center. The quote in 1.25 inch-type reads:

Value Your Education.  
Knowledge and skills are yours for a lifetime.  
Build upon them with hard work,  
a passion for what you do,  
and never give up!

Miesing, who studied sculpting at Germany's Konigslutter School of Stone Science and Sculpture, is a member of the Palette and Chisel Academy of Fine Arts, Chicago. Mark Levine, owner of Forcade Associates, Evanston, Ill., who does signage for the college, knew Miesing and asked him to carve the stone.

"Stone carving is a lost art," Miesing said. "Very few people know how to do it any more. People have gone to sandblasting because hand-carving is very tedious. I cannot make a mistake."

Miesing still completes his work with chisels and a mallet. Although he may do some larger spaces with an airbrush, he fine tunes with the hand tools.

Miesing has two bachelor's degrees – one in sculpting and one in mechanical engineering. He made his living for 50 years as a mechanical engineer, retiring in December 2006.

"But I have always used my sculpting skills," Miesing said.

He has a studio in his home, and many of his works are large (up to 800 pounds) stylized figures, which are sold in galleries. *Nikolaus Miesing: The Art of Stone* is on display Aug. 28-Nov. 4 at the Dubuque Museum of Fine Arts. The artist often travels to Italy to select stone for carving and also uses local materials.

"Sculpting is a lot more fun than engineering," the artist said.

Miesing doesn't do a lot of letter carving because he describes it as "more mechanical than artistic." But he does do a few jobs in his retirement that require lettering. He has completed bas reliefs and works for cathedrals in Chicago and Washington, D.C.



Nikolaus Miesing practices patience and skill while chiseling letters in stone.



Sculptor Nikolaus Miesing was hired to write Vic Regnier's quote in stone.