

# Sculpture NorthWest

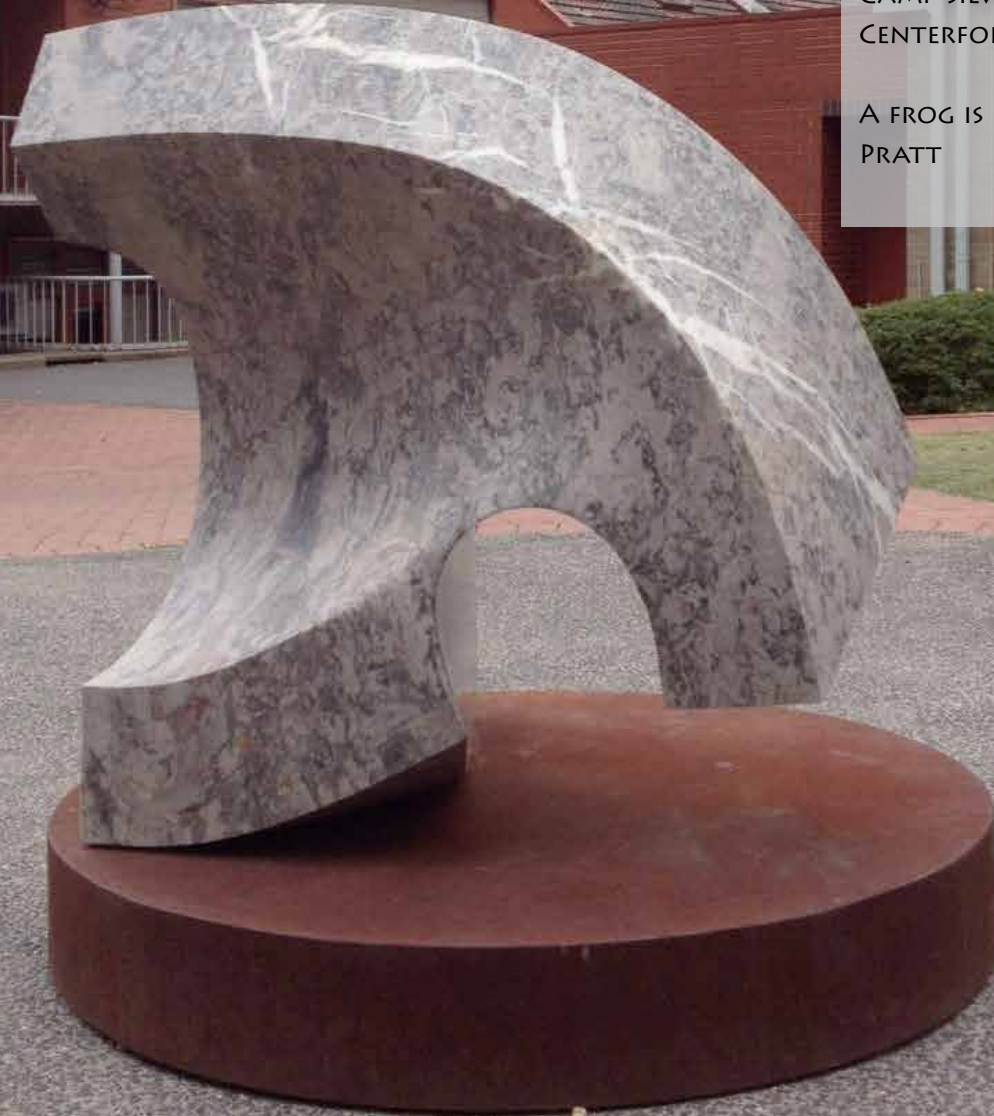
May/June 2017

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SENDEN BLACKWOOD

CAMP SILVER FIRS  
CENTERFOLD

A FROG IS BORN BY GEORGE  
PRATT



*Senden Blackwood: 'baku' 2012, limestone, 109 x 111 x 111cm*

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**MISSION STATEMENT**

The purpose of the NWSSA's *Sculpture NorthWest Journal* is to promote, educate, and inform about stone sculpture, and to share experiences in the appreciation and execution of stone sculpture.

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SCULPTURE NORTHWEST MAY/JUNE 2017

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## FROM THE PRESIDENT...



NWSSA is an impressive group and I am constantly proud to be a part the commitment. So much to talk about I'll do my best to keep it short.

First a big shout-out to Therese Kingsbury for imagining and pulling off "SKULPT," an awesomely successful five week-long event the month of April. Thirty-nine sculptures were sold, generating almost

\$30,000 for our member artists. Thanks to her vision, energy and effort, our community pulled together to make it happen.

Another shout-out to Marenakos for NWSSA day at their facility. It provided an opportunity to thank them (especially Scott Hackney) for their years of support and to have Rich Hestekind give a really nice overview of NWSSA's relationship with them. It was also awesome to see over thirty attendees hand carving in their workshop space. They want to try it again in that space.

Given the many opportunities to display sculpture we have scheduled a pedestal building workshop for May 21st. Check the web site for details: [NWSSA.org/events/upcoming-workshops](http://NWSSA.org/events/upcoming-workshops)

Cyra Jane deserves a well done. Never say politics doesn't effect NWSSA plans, due to travel visa problems our Zimbabwe guest artist could not make it, and in her "Take 2," Cyra Jane has found an artist who has "a fab sense of humor." Read about James Horan in the Centerfold.

Finally, I've been impressed with the support our members give one another. Whether it's how to split a fifteen ton boulder or what to look for in a small knuckle boom crane truck, we help each other succeed. I am, as always, grateful.

Learn much, share with many, and carve proud....

...Carl

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## FROM THE EDITORS...

It's spring! And summer is not far behind. Coming up on July 8-15 is our 30th Annual International Stone Carving Symposium. This symposium (formerly known as Camp Brotherhood) will take place in Port Orchard, Washington this year. See our centerfold for more information.

And as if to show how truly international we are, in this issue we present the work of Senden Blackwood, our Aussie connection, and George Pratt from Canada.

So take a break from all that carving....and/or those thoughts of carving, and enjoy the work and words behind the work, of two of our most talented members.

... Lane and Penelope



*"Whether you listen to a piece of music, or a poem, or look at a picture or a jug, or a piece of sculpture, what matters about it is not what it has in comon with others of its kind, but what is singularly its own."*

~ Basil Buntin ~

# ARTIST SPOTLIGHT: SENDEN BLACKWOOD

## *What is your life history as it relates to being an artist?*

I feel fortunate to have grown up in an artistic and architectural family, though I didn't really show much in the way of artistic aptitude until the end of high school (or grade 12), when I 'Tasmanian devilled' my way into my mum's jewellery studio. It was in a tiny room in our house and was a nook filled with interesting rustic tools and all manner of things like blowtorches and weird shaped hammers. I loved it, in all its chaos. After school I studied Jewellery and Object design in Sydney and became obsessed with abstract objects. I also broadened my fascination with tools. Really I'm still a kid at heart, playing with his toys.

## *How has NWSSA influenced your work as an artist?*

My first Camp B symposium in 2006 was a pivotal point in my journey as a sculptor. Anyone who has attended one of these symposiums knows just how powerful they can be, not to mention educational, inspiring and connective. Without NWSSA's influence I wouldn't be making what I am now, I know that for sure. So I have a lot of gratitude and warm fuzzies for the association. I learned more technical skills in my first symposium (2006) than I had in three years of teaching myself. More than anything though, I value the wonderful connections I've made with members and I can't wait to attend again. It's difficult when I live on the other side of the planet, but it will always be somewhere I'll feel drawn back to.

## *Describe your art in your own terms – focusing on your stone carving.*

I make abstract forms and look to find a balance between



▲ 'anoia' - carved at the Te Kupenga stone sculpture symposium in New Plymouth, New Zealand, January 2016. Taranaki andesite, Cor-ten Steel, stainless steel, 120 x 100 x 80cm

simplicity and interest. A sphere is a beautiful thing, but to me it's not really all that interesting - yet there are parts of that simplicity that I honour and look to tap into. Simplicity is also really hard to achieve, and it takes dedication to remove all the lumps and bumps, especially in hard stone, which I prefer, although sometimes I wish I didn't. I've been through periods of unhealthy perfectionism, where I've been left stagnant by the fear of "not being able to make it good enough". But thankfully I've made amends with this and now am happy to just do the best I can, which opens up room for play. I don't really feel like an "artist", although I guess I am.

## *Have you been influenced by any particular artists?*

Clement Meadmore was an early hero, and you can see that influence in the square elements of my work. I like the way his style is geometric yet it also has some beautiful curves, and even though he made hundreds of similar forms based on a principle, they didn't really ever get boring, at least not to me. Keizo Ushio's work was a big early influence, mostly because I couldn't comprehend how on earth stone could be carved with such honour. Until recently I tried hard to not be influenced by other artists; I wanted to be original and therefore I avoided looking at other work wherever possible. I don't really care about that so much anymore, but I think it helped to form my own style.



▲ 'aeon' - 2013, basalt, 16 x 30.5 x 25.5cm



▲ 'duo' process photo 2015

My subconscious does most of my designing for me now, which might sound strange but it's the truth. I've released a lot of the need to control. Sometimes it feels like I have a library of lines and planes in my head, which I keep adding to with things I see around me - often natural elements (shells, leaves, rocks, pods). Occasionally a form or gesture pops into my conscious mind and I've found this to be the most genuine way of coming up with new work.

***What scale or size do you work in, and do you have a favourite scale?***

Until now, most of my work has been small to medium in scale, however monumental work has always been my goal and most of the sculpture I've been affected, and inspired by, has been monumental in size. If I'm intimidated by the size of a new boulder or block, then I know I'm on the right track. All the doubts run through my head but I just love the process of problem-solving new ways to carve in bigger and bigger scales. Even after 15 years of carving stone, I really feel like I've only just started on the direction I want to head. A 23 tonne block of black granite is waiting, untouched, in my studio. I'm eager to start working on it, but I'm also savouring this time before it all begins. The sheer volume of stubborn material to remove in 23 tonnes of granite has forced me to re-evaluate my approach, and I've started making a purpose built wire-saw in the hope that I can work "smarter not harder". I'll still be carving it, but I'm looking to make the process of removing the initial gross off-cuts more efficient.

***What do you think people will experience from looking at your sculpture? What would you like them to experience?***

To be honest I don't really care, or rather I'm trying to learn not to care. I've realised that if I place importance on what others think of my work, then I lose sovereignty over my creativity. I used to get caught up in what others thought and it really affected me. Early on if someone walked past my work at a show and didn't really look at it, I took it personally, like it wasn't good enough to grab their attention. I've grown

past that now and I'm enjoying the purity of making what I feel drawn to make, without wondering how it'll be received, without tying my self-worth up in someone else's opinion, or perceived opinion. Art is so subjective. I know my work doesn't appeal to everyone and I'm happy when it does, but I try hard to weigh positive and negative feedback the same.

I do however enjoy seeing people being drawn to touch my sculptures, and I don't mean just a passing gesture, like someone testing a garment's material in a shop, I mean actually exploring the surface. Touch is a sense I use so much in the carving process, particularly when honing and polishing a surface, so I like to see people exploring a finished surface in the same way that I've addressed it while "ironing out the kinks". I can feel bumps and irregularities much better than I can see them, so I use touch a lot. Maybe this is why some people feel drawn to touch, or maybe it has to do with the presence of stone itself.



▲ 'duo' process photo 2015

*Continued on Page 8 ►*

# OUR FIRST TIME AT CAMP PILGRIM FIRS

**T**hirty years ago a handful of stone sculptors from Washington State and British Columbia gathered for the first NWSSA symposium on a llama ranch in Pateros, WA. They carved, they moved boulders, they (you!) climbed a mountain at midnight for the Harmonic Convergence, and they, you, began a tradition that has enlivened a community that is today thriving. That first gathering was such a good idea, that you kept gathering, and the symposium quickly moved to and became known as Camp Brotherhood, officially as the International Stone Sculptors Symposium. Carvers came, and carvers kept returning year after year to this event and while I wasn't around then (like many in the current work study generation, I was just starting my first rock collections and messing around in my grandfather's shop during those early years,) from what I understand it's because that, when all together, you, we, create a creatively stimulating and high-pitched energy through some awesome synergistic alchemy. Or because rocks are cool, or something like that.

This July, the symposium moves again to a new site called Pilgrim Firs in Port Orchard which is quite similar to the Oregon location at Suttle Lake. The new venue was scouted by the Board and discussed and voted on at the General Assembly meeting at Camp B. I've now visited the site 3 times and each time our party leaves with big grins because we're all going to have a fantastic time there. Not that we wouldn't have a great time in an open field, but the scenery and accommodations definitely help.

Joining us as a guest artist will be Joanne DUBY, sharing hands on tips and demos for repairs and finishing techniques. We'll be supplying a wide range of products for her to demo with, which will go into the auction on Thursday evening. Joanne has a long history with the group and is very excited to be spending this week with us! Sculpturally, she's done just about everything and has an extensive knowledge base to share with us.

James Horan, flying over from Ireland, is another guest artist for 2017. This will be his first time with this group and in the Pacific Northwest. (If you google "James Horan Sculpture" you can find his website to check out his work.) James' work is primarily figurative in marble, and his unique style and sense of humor is immediately recognizable. Go look at his "Behold Man: Apes with Guns" series. He'll be carving a piece with us during the week and discussing "Direct Carving."

For anyone new to stone or without their own tools, our beginner's tent with instruction by Ruth Mueseler and Tamara Buchanan is going to be in full swing. This part of our gathering has been building for many years now and has a full range of power, pneumatic, and hand tools along with tables and shade. The area will be set up right near the jade tent, where guest artist Deborah Wilson will be teaching her 5-day jade intensive. During this workshop, Deborah will provide individual instruction as you work in a fully equipped jade carving shop with enough time to finish at least one small sculpture. If you're registering for that, get in early!

Other than all that wonderful stuff, it'll just be the typical incomparable enrichment of our lives through workshops, campfires, presentations, a sculpture show, great food, and making dust, dust, and more dust with your friends. George Pratt has promised to stop by for a couple of days and a special evening of honoring our history with Rich Hestekind, Vic Picou, and other long time members will happen early in the week. We'll have our big auction on Thursday, and the social on Friday will round out the event and leave us inspired and jazzed for heading back into our own studios.

Registration is up and running, with early bird pricing expiring on May 31st. We have work study spots open and scholarship funds, so if you need financial assistance please send me a request. We also need field mentors so let me know if you're interested. Cyra Jane 206-406-0711 or [sirenicity@gmail.com](mailto:sirenicity@gmail.com)

Whether you were at the 1st, 10th, or you haven't been to this symposium before, this is definitely the year to be here celebrating and making more dust.

Symposium Director

Cyra Jane Hobson

# JULY 8 THROUGH 15, 2017



Top Right:  
'Only the Lord Saves More'  
by Deborah Wilson

Center Page:  
'For a Better World, Press Play'  
by James Horan

Lower Left:  
'Traveler'  
by Joanne DUBY



# ARTIST SPOTLIGHT *...Continued from page 5*

## ***What mainly influences your artistic approach to your work?***

I follow my gut and my passion. If I don't feel like working, I don't work - I go off and do other things (generally, unless I have a crazy deadline). I've found that if I work when I'm passionate and energised, I make much better progress and I stay psyched on the process. Carving stone can be pretty gruelling, so if I force myself to work when I don't feel like it, I get tired easily and start to second guess myself. I start thinking something is "good enough", when it clearly isn't. I'm often amazed at how much pain, discomfort and physical exhaustion I can ignore when I'm "in the groove", so to speak, and how little I tolerate when I'm not. It's taken me a long time to learn that play and light-heartedness is the most important part of the process. It feeds creativity and experimentation, which I guess is at the heart of art.

Music is ever present in my process. It feeds and nourishes me. I listen to lots of stuff that most people would hate, but it sometimes makes me feel invincible. Other times it distracts me from the pain and exhaustion that is sometimes the game of carving stone.

## ***What is your dream sculpture project?***

There are many! The dream project is always the next biggest one. Scale is an interesting motivator for me. Constantly I'm looking at small maquettes and wondering what they'd be like in a huge scale. I'm hoping that the ultimate dream project is beyond anything I can even dream up at the moment. Each large piece provides the challenges to learn how to go bigger, and shows me that my limits are self-imposed. Monumental scale has always been my goal. Seeing Keizo Ushio's work at 'Sculpture by the Sea' in Sydney really made me want to work big, like really big.

## ***Anything else you'd like to add...***

I feel pretty fortunate and grateful to be able to be doing this for a living, to be supported by a society and country where we can chase our dreams, however left-field they may be.



▲ *'milieu' (2016) basalt, Cor-ten, stainless steel, 120 x 200 x 100cm. Photo taken by Sculpture by the Sea Inc.*



▲ *'goe' - 2011, basalt, Cor-ten Steel, 130 x 180 x 60cm. Photo taken by Per Ericson*



▲ *'paia' - 2014, granite and steel, 120 x 120 x 60 cm*





▼▲ 'duo' - 2015, granite, Cor-ten steel, 145 x 120 x 300cm



# A FROG IS BORN . . . OBSTETRICS BY GEORGE PRATT

**G**eorge, they said, we need a granite frog for Haller Park.

Frog? Hmmmm. Yeah, I guess that's my thing, I said. So it was that for three of the harshest months in memory, I crouched shivering in a cloud of dust over a granite block that had languished in my yard for twelve years, chips a-flying to expose the heart, soul and body of a frog that I had long suspected was harbored therein.

The avocation of granite carving is the quintessence of those old expressions 'labor of love' or 'bed of pain' as you may wish to choose. To prevent my brain from entirely turning to jelly during the unceasing 12-week ordeal of manhandling a screaming diamond-grinder, I took to mentally composing a farcical account of my progress as I beavered away. I recorded that bizarre narrative every few days in my journal. Bizarre? The following will illustrate:

**March 15, 2017** - Today as I worked, I drifted into concerned speculation as to what might be the gender of this frog. At first, I concluded it was surely male because although its ultimate home will be Arlington, 'way down there in Washington State, it stubbornly exhibits a stony reticence in asking for directions how to get there. It's been said that's a male thing—though mainly by my wife, mind you. But now I'm not so sure. Here's why: You see, each spring I'm overtaken by an annual hankering to head out salmon fishing. Invariably, this yearning occurs just as the early grass needs cutting and our property begs for yardwork after a soggy winter. Naturally, I opt for the salmon fishing; I mean, what man would not?—but for some reason, this causes my wife to take on that silent, thin-lipped, granite-chinned look, familiar to all married fishermen. Today,



prompted by a sudden appearance of the sun, I summarily dropped the hammer and started boatward, when I perceived that was exactly the look the frog had taken on. So I'm now suspecting it might be female. Well, I just don't know what the truth is and I don't have the energy to just turn it bottom-side-up and inspect the evidence in the time-honored way. I think the good folk of Arlington will have to work this out for themselves. For me, for now, it's just 'The Frog.'



*It starts by guessing what is excess and busting it off with shims and wedges . . .*



*Judging where the extremities should be is also only by estimation at first. Fortunately, at this point there's still stone enough to make adjustments . . .*



*If you arbitrarily put a line where you think the backbone should be—and don't ever lose sight of it, you'll be able to locate and rough out the components on both sides. Here, the centreline is telling us the eyes are not balanced . . .*



*Incubating an embryo frog in a nice cool blanket of snow will contribute to a healthy birth :-)*



*. . . a few weeks of assiduous fretting and all parts are organized. Keeping that backbone in sight ensures that both sides develop equally balanced.*

# A FROG IS BORN . . . cont.

**March 28, 2017** . . . a Tuesday. A solemn, rainy Tuesday. How do I begin to relate what happened? All I can say is ‘O frabjous day! Callooh! Callay!’ —for this was the day when the Haller Park Frog exhibited the first definite sign of life—when it was born, so to speak.

I knew the time was close, for I have been intimately connected to this frog for months; and you can’t be that close and not sense the stirrings within. When I absolutely knew, on this auspicious morning, that the frog’s time had come, I prepared very carefully. Oh, I wasn’t expecting a frenzied wiggling to begin, or peeing all over the place like an excited puppy. No. I knew it would be a more dignified moment than that. I made careful preparations. I shed my mask and glasses and tossed off my tattered gloves, revealing the earth-person underneath for the momentous occasion I knew was upon us. I stood resolutely in front of the frog, looking straight into its freshly carved eyes. It looked back in typical stony silence, its countenance one of stoic expectancy. I had carefully rehearsed my lines to make this magic moment happen. Summoning up my gravest stentorian voice, I rested my hand firmly on the frog’s forehead, and barked sharply ‘STAY!’ . . . and omigod! The frog stayed! No hesitancy, no reluctance—just pure, simple understanding and unquestioning obedience! And so the Frog announced its arrival. Oh, it was a moment. Thinking back these weeks later, I am still beset by the emotion of it—and sadly feeling the first pangs of loss, for I know it must leave me soon as it migrates south to its new home in Arlington.

Goodbye, dear Frog. I love you. *G.*



*By the time this issue is published, the Frog should be installed in Haller Park in Arlington. It will be on the grass with a cobblestone surround to about 6” up the waterline. Kids will be invited to clamber . . . and I gratefully invite all NWSSA members to hang around and tell the passersby ‘I helped George learn how to do that . . .’*

*How many cuts make a frog?  
A thousand? A million? Slow and steady gets you there . . .*

*The ‘waves’ supporting the frog become rhythmic; the keening of the grinder becomes music . . . if only my complaining neighbor would think of it this way . . .*

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*Pothier GTG45-04.*

*Best grinder. Compact, manageable body with 12-amp power.*

*Metabo 5”.*





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*“The greatest artist has no conception which a single block of white marble does not potentially contain within its mass, but only a hand obedient to the mind can penetrate to this image”*

~ Michelangelo ~

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[Info@stonesculptorssupplies.com](mailto:Info@stonesculptorssupplies.com)

### KANSAS LIMESTONE FENCE POSTS FOR SALE

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 Tom Urban, [tfurban@uoregon.edu](mailto:tfurban@uoregon.edu), 541-912-2197

### 2016 CARVING CALENDAR

#### **Camp Pilgrim Firs**

Port Orchard, WA  
 July 8-15, 2017

#### **Suttle Lake**

Sisters, Oregon  
 August 20-27, 2017

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And don't let us forget our friend Peter Becker who brings us stone ideas from around the world in the monthly, online [stone-ideas.com](http://stone-ideas.com).

<http://www.stone-ideas.com>