

NORTHWEST STONE SCULPTORS ASSOCIATION
SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2019

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Sculpture Northwest



CYRA JANE HOBSON: 'FOREMOTHER', AUSTRALIAN RING MARBLE, URANIUM GLASS, 2017

Sculpture NorthWest is published every two months by NWSSA, NorthWest Stone Sculptors Association, a Washington State Non-Profit Professional Organization.

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Journal only/Gift subscription.....\$35/yr.

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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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FROM THE PRESIDENT...



I'm sitting with the afterglow of wonderful events at both Pilgrim Firs and Suttle Lake. We had excellent participation, good guest artists, and our typical strongly supportive community. I take it for granted that everyone will be friendly, open, helpful and enjoyable. But then I remind myself that we have a unique community at NWSSA.

I recently dug out an older t-shirt from a prior symposium with the Stone Cycle emblazoned on the back. Igneous, metamorphic and sedimentary. After this many years of carving I've come realize I have been moving through a Stoner Cycle. Ignorance, then metamorphosis as I matured in my art, now moving into senescence. May your stone cycle be blessed.

... Ken



"There is nothing so beautiful as the free forest. To catch a fish when you are hungry, cut the boughs of a tree, make a fire to roast it, and eat it in the open air, is the greatest of all luxuries. I would not stay a week pent up in cities if it were not for my passion for art."

~Edmonia Lewis

The Death of Cleopatra, 1876, marble

Photo Credit: Smithsonian American Art Museum

FROM THE EDITORS...

I am very pleased to announce that Maya Kilmer has officially joined me on the journal team as Copy Editor. Maya teaches English and Creative Writing courses at Oak Harbor High School, and has joined the strong community of NWSSA sculptors on Whidbey Island. If you were at the Washington symposium you probably got to see her sculpting an ambitious stone octopus. Welcome Maya!

Pilgrim Firs and Suttle Lake were whirlwinds of creative energy. If you had the opportunity and privilege of attending, then I expect you are charged up with new insights and ready to apply them.

As you size up that next project, or that old project that's suddenly demanding completion, perhaps consider some words of creative wisdom. This quote from sculptor Edmonia Lewis seemed like a fitting sentiment after getting to carve among the trees at the symposiums during the days, and watch the sky for shooting stars at night. I find it gives permission to accept that there is a reason for tolerating certain modern discomforts, and that the reason is worthwhile.

... Benjamin & Maya



ARTIST SPOTLIGHT: CYRA JANE HOBSON

My identity as an artist is embedded deep in my psyche; for me there is no choice and there is nothing else. Yeah, I do other things, but creation is a primary force of my personality, and the narrative I live is entwined with my artwork in a way that it is the literal visual record of my experience. I use art to purge, to define paths, and to embark on new journeys.

As a child growing up in the stark farmland of Illinois, surrounded by fields of corn and soybeans, I dreamt of growing up to be a published poet, performing opera singer, or professional visual artist. In higher education I trained in the first two, up through degrees in writing and choral competitions while painting secretly in my room. I refused teachers in visual art until much later, intent on developing my voice first. And while I had always considered visual art to be the least strong of the three for me, it's what ended up becoming my dominant path over the course of my 20s.

Partly, the reason for that is how my narrative, my personality, and my creativity melded. For me, my art is my breath. I wither and suffocate without paints, stone, or tools. I have nightmares of losing my hands and won't ski or ice skate or otherwise put them in danger.

I painted almost exclusively until 2009, until coming home from a 3 month walkabout to 11 major cities in Europe and North America. I went to every art museum, letting myself be drawn where the magnets were. The stone statues in particular—I was so mad they wouldn't let me touch them. So at some point, I gave myself permission to make my own so that I could: I gave myself permission to sculpt.

So I came home and dove into whatever I could learn. I joined a Burning Man blacksmithing collective where we made large-scale pyrotechnic art. I interned at Pillow Studios with a kinetic steel and glass artist. I was accepted to a residency at The James Washington Foundation, initially for steel fabrication, but they let me switch to stone work and make a huge dusty mess in his studio. Stone work... it felt like medicine. And I needed medicine, so I ran toward it.

My first major piece was "The Knife," and through the process of working on it for 175 hours (the initial sculpture 120, the bronze castings 55), I discovered something of a drawn-out process of mapping my subconscious on a



▲ 'THE KNIFE' CHLORITE, STEEL, 2013. #1 OF THE KATABASIS SERIES. ALSO IN THE KINESICS SERIES. THE STUDY AND IDENTIFICATION OF EMOTIONAL DEFENSES.

particular theme. I already knew I could manipulate my experience with reality through what I was making, but this was something different: I could actually dive into my thoughts without reacting to them and just observe while my hands were busy doing detail work with X-acto knives and dental picks. Like most of my major works, the end image of "The Knife" came to me fully formed: in a flash second, my eyes white over and there, the construction (or substruction) of the piece crystallizes in front of me. I know every moment of the surface before I even begin. Then, I just have to make it.

"The Knife" was a study of emotional defenses, in short, a hard look at everything I was doing to misguidedly "protect" the emotional, soft sides of me that I'd locked away somewhere. A katabasis journey into the dark, seeking out those parts of me and looking at which behavioral guardians jumped up in the way to distract me from finding them. Every feeling and thought on this was mapped onto the surface of that sculpture.

The result of that really captured me, and I created seven major works with this particular method, choosing themes that could take me somewhere stronger, somewhere more open. Chlorite was perfect for it. Smooth and consistent,



▲ 'THE DRAGONFLY ON MY SHOULDER', BRUCITE, 2018. #7 OF THE KATABASIS SERIES. THE FINAL SHEDDING OF THE EXOSKELETON; A MOLTING.

working with the stone wasn't a struggle. I love brucite and this crazy old marble I'm working in now, but surfacing and detailing is a serious challenge because of inconsistent densities that need too much attention. I'm moving into basalt, which is also nicely consistent, as I'm looking to work in life-size figurative. I'd also like to get back on track for public work, so the durability is very attractive, too. Still, the last piece of the series was in brucite, as it couldn't be in anything else. "The Dragonfly on My Shoulder" (2018) was the final molting, as a new me, whole and integrated, shed its last skin. A lot of people react to the imagery with the little alien bug face crawling out of the back of a dragonfly nymph as creepy, but all I remember is that first breath of fresh air and the intense beauty of becoming.



▲ 'SOMETHING OF A SHEARING', CHLORITE, BRONZE, MAHOGANY, 2014-2017. THE QUITE LITERAL JOURNEY OF MOVING TO AN ISLAND AND BUILDING A STUDIO; THE SCULPTURE BEGAN FIRST.

But let's talk here of some of the side missions I've gone on with stone carving. Not every piece could be that kind of intense psycho-emotional journey, and often those would take me well over a year to get through, so I'd take a month or so off to explore another theme. Plus, I could fill a book with that narrative (ooh, foreshadowing!) Still, I have such a method built in now that each of these proved rather intense experiences as well.

"Something of a Shearing" was a fairly long term side story, and the full narrative of it was published in this journal a few years ago after it was finished in 2016. It first came into being when I decided to start working in 3D—for months my entire perception of the world was from inside the top of a lighthouse, the gears moving it slowly as my focus and visualizations shifted. At first it was a painting; then I determined to make it a stone carving. It quite literally

became the story of building my studio. I started it at Pillow Studios, where my boss was kind enough to let me do stone work outside the metal shop, and worked on it at eight different places, taking it with me through my travels and journeys that led me to Vashon. The last little part of it was turning on the light in my greenhouse when I had finally landed on Vashon for good. The weeks leading up to finishing it were mostly up at Studiostone in Vancouver (all the fitting and polishing), then at Tom Small's place (where I made the base), and during this time as it was coming to life it started to walk beside me rather than up on my shoulder. It pulled off of me like some sort of budding and became its own little creature.

"Foremother" (cover image) was the next side-mission in 2017, and perhaps the first that was truly a concept piece from the start. I had this ancient marble from Neolithic, with some of the earliest fossils in it and the opportunity to cast some uranium glass. I'd been feeling the idea of offerings lately and decided to do a piece about cyclical reproduction—the unstoppable drive for renewal. What it will feel like for Gaia to repopulate life after we destroy it. And part of what it feels like to be being flayed open right now. I spent about two months on this, all told, and it was incredibly intense. I hadn't really known where I was going to go emotionally with it. At one point we got into a fight when I found out she had no skin. I fell head-first into her anger and the ground beneath me turned solvent; I ended up in the woods, charging overdressed and overheated, the trees pulsing and guttural screaming around me. It was coursing through me. So what do you do with that? Shower, eat, self care, and listen. Then finish the piece and kind of decide not to go back there again.

Yeah, it's kind of like method acting.

"I Can Breathe in this Water" was a piece done in translucent marble for the Seattle Erotic Art Festival in 2018. She was based on a commission by a woman who was moving across the country, pulled from her lover, as a parting gift. The figure is based entirely in hearts and exudes femininity, submission, and seductive power. This was really a fun one. It was spring



▲ 'I CAN BREATHE IN THIS WATER', MARBLE, 2018. A WASH IN THE FEMININE.

in the studio, and I spent every day just awash in my feminine side. I bought dresses and makeup. I danced. I really loved working on her, and this particular marble is such a joy. This stone was quite sugary, so I was released from sharp edges, and the curves all had to be so soft. It filed like a dream, and the metal veins ended up emphasizing the contours better than I could have planned.

“Reconcile (The Mother)” is a terrible title, but I haven’t come up with a better one yet. It’s one of my best pieces so far though. Made this spring, 2019, I initially thought it would be about my own relationship with my mother, though going into that didn’t really thrill me. It’s the same marble from above, and a solid piece of it. So gorgeous to work on—there were moments it took my breath away and I cried in joy. After having spent something like 350 hours already carving hands, this entire sculpture happened quite quickly, 83 hours overall. What I didn’t expect was for it to be more about my own decision not to have children. First of all, when I started, it opened up this tunnel back to my birth, and all my memories were happening kind of at once. I’m having to do things like go to the grocery store and be ‘normal’, while wide open so far that, inside, I’m reliving screaming at birth and the intensity of pure infant emotions and looking through wounds, stitching them together. My arms were searing. And then my body decided it was pregnant. This hasn’t ever happened to me before, and of course I wasn’t. I’m an adult with an IUD. But my body was convinced, and I had all the signs. I went through all the “what ifs” the “how would I handle it” the “would I want this?” to the “if so would



▲ 'RECONCILE (THE MOTHER)', MARBLE, 2019.
PULLING OUT MY BLOODLINE.



▲ 'OVERCURRENTS(COVER)(ACTUALIZED)', CHLORITE, MARBLE, STEEL, SILK, 2015-2018.
#3 IN THE KATABASIS SERIES. ALSO IN THE KINESICS SERIES. THE RELEASE OF ANGER.

I change my lifestyle while I still have time?" Oh lord. It was a lot. I ended up taking a test to just stop the questions. I went back to living in the portal until the sculpture was complete and did in fact make some peace with my mother. I got a pair of kittens. And then all that receded into the distance.

I've started working on another piece of the ancient marble now; a piece about the acceptance of failure and moving on with grace and dignity. It may not turn out. The surface is a struggle, so the anatomy isn't ending up correctly. I'm ok with it. It will do what it wants with my narrative and that will be the truth.



'THE GATE', CHLORITE, BASALT, SILVER, 2018. ►
#6 OF THE KATABASIS SERIES.
THE REVOLVING DOOR OF ENERGY
ACCEPTED AND ENERGY GIVEN.



▲ 'DOVES: PARITY INVERSION', CHLORITE, 2016.
#2 OF THE KATABASIS SERIES. ALSO IN THE KINESICS SERIES.
AN EMBRACE OF THE SELF. A BRACE OF THE SELF.

▼ 'ASCENSION II', CHLORITE AND BASALT, 2017.
#5 OF THE KATABASIS SERIES.
A MEDITATION ON
RE-FORMING OF THE SELF OUT OF CHAOS.



▲ 'CURRENT', IN PROGRESS.
AUSTRALIAN RING MARBLE.



PAINTING ON STONE SCULPTURES

by Jonna Ramey

A surprising tool in the sculptor's kit is paint. Never having tried this before, I reached out to NWSSA members for information. Oregon-based sculptor MJ Anderson came through with details and inspiration. This article is based on our conversations and my experiments.

Colors.

MJ has been known to incorporate metallic paint colors such as gold, silver, and copper (as well as flat black, gray, white, bright blue, and red!), usually to unify a textured area, transform a problem spot in the material, or sometimes to add as a needed, integral part of the sculpture. She also applies metallic leaf to her work, which is another, longer story. Metallic paint formulas impart a delicious luminance to stone. I tested metallic gold, silver, copper, graphite gray, gold flake, black, and brown.

My first piece to paint was a busy relief sculpture of a ginkgo bough that I carved in honeycomb calcite. Once polished, the leaves and stems were virtually invisible against the background. I used brown paint to deepen the shadows, making the high-gloss leaves and branches pop.

Materials and environment.

MJ recommended working with oil-based enamel paints like Testor brand metallic paints on stone. She has also used oil-based varnish sprays. The effects can be subtle, beautiful, and rich. She uses both bottled and spray paints but prefers sprays. I found I liked bottled paint on this one piece but can see the advantage of sprays for unique colors and effects. You'll need lots of rags (cut up t-shirts or sheets work well), clean paint thinner, Q-tips, nitrile gloves, and mixing sticks. You need a clean space to work in (no dust). Air temperature of 50-75 degrees is good. Too hot and the paint will dry on your rag before you can get it onto the stone. Good ventilation is important: you don't want to kill brain cells or ignite fumes into flames.

Process.

These steps assume that you have sanded, buffed, and finished your piece to your satisfaction before beginning applying paint.

Step one. Cover the piece/area with the stone impregnator sealer that you normally use (511 Impregnator, for example). You do this first so that the petroleum-based impregnator will not interfere with the oil-based paint later. Apply it according to product directions and/or your preference. Once applied, dried and cured, you can proceed to step two.

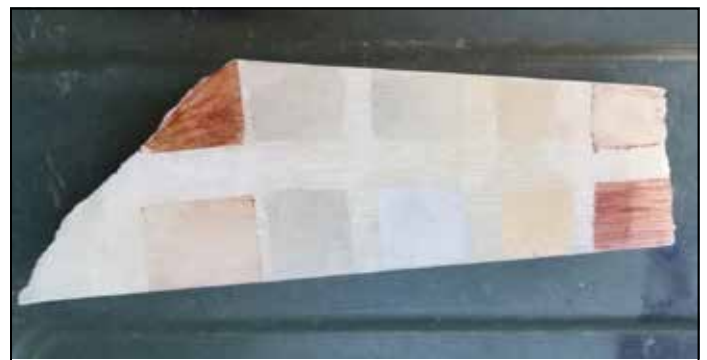
Step two. The basic technique involves two rags—one with paint on it and one with thinner. You swipe on the paint with one rag and then swipe off with the thinner rag. You keep up this swipe on/swipe off process until you achieve the color density or effect you desire. Having some thinner on your paint rag before you dab it into the paint is good to help keep the paint more transparent. Being relaxed as you work, trusting your instincts and taste, you'll add the subtle warming, shadowing or luster you need in the piece.

Tips and Test.

When using spray oil-based enamels or varnishes, MJ recommends spraying the paint into the cap of the can. Wipe the paint out with your paint rag and then swipe it onto the sculpture. She likes using paint thinner to thin the paint and make it more transparent. It may take you longer to build up the color or effect you want but the control you have with a more transparent paint is essential.



Colors on this side of the test stone (L to R) are liquid metallic black, gold, silver, gold flake, and copper.



Colors on this side of the test stone (L to R) are liquid brown, metallic sprays of graphite, silver, gold, and brown.

I found that first creating a test stone with a variety of colors was very helpful. I took a shard of faded honeycomb calcite, carved some quick grooves into it with my angle grinder, and sanded the surface to about 400 grit. I then used 511 impregnator sealer on the stone. I taped off little test areas on

the front, back and sides of the stone. Then I applied a variety of colors and paint types (liquid and spray). I painted one square the 'solid' color and the square next to it the 'swipe on/swipe off' version with 3-5 swipes. I made notes so that I can later remember what section included what color or treatment. Taking off the tape once dry, I could directly compare the untreated stone with the various colors and swipe levels. I immediately realized that some of the colors could enhance other existing sculptures in unique ways, beyond the specific piece I am working on now. I keep the test stone and notes with the box of paints and thinner for future reference. Sculptors, have fun experimenting.

Jonna Ramey is a sculptor based in Salt Lake City, Utah. MJ Anderson sculpts in Nehalem, Oregon and Carrara, Italy.



▲ BEFORE.



▲ AFTER.
 'GINGKO BOUGH', BY JONNA RAMEY.
 AN EXAMPLE OF PAINT ON HONEYCOMB CALCITE.



◀ "WHEN THE WORLD DISSOLVES",
 BY MJ ANDERSON.
 AN EXAMPLE OF USING PAINT
 ON AN ALABASTER SCULPTURE.



PILGRIM FIRS: GENESIS

by John LaFortune

There is something inherently special about carving on a field with 110 sculptors from all over North America. This was my second year of carving on this block of Texas limestone. When Scott at Marenakos said he had a stone for me, I had no idea it was a 4000-pound block. It had a mud seam on the back, and I needed to remove this, because in time, it would have separated from the main block. That piece was about 500 pounds.

Now that the stone was ready to carve, I had no idea what I was going to do. I made a cut in the top left and went on from there. It took two symposiums to carve this sculpture. The story behind this piece is something like a black hole in space. All the energy and matter is getting sucked in, and



on the back side, a new energy or world is created. The top left cylindrical shape represents a sun and the bottom right cylinder a moon.

We titled this piece "Genesis", and I think it's fitting for the space and for the client it was made for. I need to thank Wade Zick and Pilgrims Firs Camp for acquiring this piece to be on public display. I was planning on taking three years or three symposiums to complete this, but in the end it all worked out. It's hard to see in the pictures, but I added a lot of different textures to this sculpture. Dale Enoch taught me a new



technique called "corn rowing", which is using a very sharp point-chisel and a hammer to make erratic lines in the stone. This was done on the Sun element.

Carving at a symposium is something I really love to do. You just feel all the energy and hear it too. It is an amazing place to create a sculpture and have many, many people come and talk or even give ideas as to what you're working on. If you are thinking about coming, give it a chance—you will be amazed by the great people of this group.



▲ JOHN LAFORTUNE AND 'GENESIS'



DAVID L. EDWARDS 90TH BIRTHDAY RETROSPECTIVE EXHIBITION

Join NWSSA in celebrating David Edwards 90th birthday at his 3-day Retrospective Exhibition! It will be held at The Steam Plant in downtown Olympia, WA, and includes his works in wood and stone. While it has been a little while since he has stayed to make dust with us during the week, David still faithfully visits the annual symposium every year to renew his membership and visit with friends and sculptors.

The Historic Olympia Steam Plant
113 Thurston Avenue NE
Olympia, WA 98501

The exhibition opening is Friday evening, November 15th from 5-8pm. Space may be limited, so you may want to visit Saturday November 16th from noon-5pm, or (if you want to wish him happy birthday on the actual day) you can also visit Sunday November 17th from noon-4pm.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:

'DAEDALUS MOURNS ICARUS' PINK ALABASTER, 1995

'PILGRIM', BASALT, 2003

'EAST/WEST FEARS', PYROPHYLLITE, 2011

'RECLINING TORSO', ALABASTER, 1997





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Everyone knew it was impossible, until a fool who didn't know came along and did it.

~ Albert Einstein ~

Carving is easy, you just go down to the skin and stop.

~ Michelangelo di Lodovico Buonarroti Simoni ~



Welcome to the podcast!

The Sculptor's Funeral is the podcast dedicated to strengthening the ties between today's figurative sculptors and the sculptors of ages past. Art history, interviews, discussions on techniques and practices, tools and materials, and more, hosted by Jason Arkles, a practicing sculptor living and working in Florence, Italy.

www.thesculptorsfuneral.com/episodes

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2019 CARVING CALENDAR

MAKING SPACE EXHIBIT

ArtReach Gallery

Portland, Oregon

October 12-15, 2019

David Edwards Retrospective

Olympia, Washington

November 15-17, 2019

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://www.stone-ideas.com>