



# RUBIN PEACOCK

*50 Years  
of Bronze  
Sculpture*







RUBIN PEACOCK  
*50 Years of Bronze Sculpture*

*Cover and Opposite Foreword:*

**Impossible Dreamer**

Aylett Art Foundry

Sarasota, FL, 2005

Bronze



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# FOREWORD

## *Fire and Soul - the Bronzes of Rubin Peacock*

A singular characteristic of Rubin Peacock's sculpture is a unique ability to give space, form and scale to pre-verbal truths about the human condition through the energy of its physical presence.

His bronzes explore the mystical connectivity between ancient sculpture—in some instances, native American iconography—the totemic traditions of old Europe and Central and North America, and the bold forms rooted in ancient rites and rituals that are fused to contemporary geometric abstraction. To some extent these sculptures recall the early European and American Modernists, infusing biomorphic and geometric forms with visual balance.

Regardless of their physical dimensions, his sculptures, in the intensity of their poetic form, are monumental in feeling. Take a look at "Ancestral Terrain," 1980, (page 96) for instance. Its implied scale is greater than its physical mass.

Psychologically, sculpture is an accumulation of views seen sequentially and apprehended as a complete idea in the mind. This requires that the object under consideration must maintain a constant tension and torque of arresting shapes. Throughout his 50-year career, Peacock has been cognizant of this aesthetic truth and gives it his own unique understanding and its fundamental importance to the creation of poetic form. In his sculpture in memory of Abbott Lambert, 1998 (page 171) we see an example of this point.

"Melodic Contour II," 2009, (page 137) moves toward sensuality and a concentration of shapes that are centered on a collar-like form. An effusion of flowering curves is restrained by a bronze belt, not tightly bound, serving as a fulcrum for the mass above.

All art is both personal and universal, emerging from a force that extends the idea of Humanism into a tactile experience. This observation is especially true of bronze sculpture. Born in the white heat of the foundry, cooled with care, polished with pride, it is a solid example of an individual's relationship to the thoughts and feelings of the times.

I have known both loquacious and laconic sculptors, Peacock is of the latter variety. This is appropriate, for his sculptures speak volumes in the lit silence of his studio. He understands that bronze, like stone, has a special meaning for sculptors. Bronze casting requires arduous and demanding labor. But, its longevity is equivalent to its poetic seriousness. Peacock grasped this truth 50 years ago and, because of this, his work has undiminished fire from the crucible of his soul.

*Kevin Costello, artist, writer and lecturer, Sarasota, FL*

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

How do I acknowledge all the people who helped to bring this project to life? It's not possible to mention or thank everyone involved, so forgive me if you do not see imprinted here the gratitude held in my heart. Trust that your contributions are known and appreciated.

I'll start with Sarah Kleinman, who was invaluable to this book, providing the impetus for its publication. As a Virginia Commonwealth University Art History graduate student, she spent a part of one hot summer in Richmond, Virginia organizing a scattered assortment of photographs, aging Kodachrome slides, gallery invitations and exhibition reviews spanning half a century into a meaningful archival history of my work.

Early recognition and encouragement are important to any artist and I am indebted to Jack Blanton for his enthusiastic appreciation and promotion of my work. Through him, I acquired significant commissions that were the building blocks of my career. Thanks to Jack, my time in Italy studying foundry techniques resulted in the future prominent placement of sculptures that helped to solidify my reputation. Not only did he secure commissions and exposure for me, Jack collected my work.

My good friend of 50 years, artist Harvey McWilliams and his partner Ken Coleman, amassed a large and diversified collection of my work. I am grateful for their long and enduring support as well as their unforgettable dinner parties that brought talented and interesting people together over many, many years.

Friends since I first arrived in Richmond in 1967, Henrietta and Pinkney Near offered genuine and gracious support over the decades. They were the bedrock of Richmond's artistic community and hosted many inspiring gatherings both at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts and in their home. Thanks to Henrietta's generosity, my "Untitled Totem," created for her garden, now lives in the VMFA Sculpture Garden.

Ambassador Thomas Wilson Beale, whom I met in Jamaica during my Peace Corps days, remained a close and influential friend until his death in 1997. He provided guidance and encouragement at the beginning of my career, widening my horizons through international travels. In addition, Tom commissioned works that gave me artistic freedom to explore new paths and connected me with Franz Bader and Sidney Mickelson whose Washington DC galleries provided important exposure for my work.

Any artist would envy a collector such as Kip Kephart, who offered me an annual commission for 20 years to create bronzes of my choice. What a gift and what a special incentive to experiment in new directions.

My parents Hethie and Ernest Peacock brought me up in a world of adventure and left me an inheritance of freedom. Also, they gave me two brothers--Roland and Ernest Franklin—who were my best friends. An accomplished photographer with a terrific eye, Roland photographed many of my bronzes throughout the years.

While not always involved in my work, my former wife Sylvia and my daughter Corelia sacrificed a lot as I pursued my dreams and my life as an artist. Our experiences –good and bad—were enriched by being together.

Certain friends have shared aesthetic and mind-expanding experiences. For years they've served as a balancing pole for my high-wire teetering. Tom Robbins showed me the tight rope while my non-biological brother Ryland Fleet, with his technical advice and sense of daring, both rattled and supported the balancing pole. Fellow artists William Kendrick, Sam Forrest, William Fletcher Jones, Warren Cooke and Kevin Brown added a spiritual spark to our experiences over many years. Guy Asbury, Janet Cameron, and Cameron Cardy each added something unexpected to the simmering stone soup of my life.

My appreciation goes beyond a simple expression of thanks to Jennie and Walter Dotts for their advocacy, perseverance, and educated good sense in reviewing my convoluted manuscript and scrambled photographs. An uncountable number of Saturday afternoons, after-dinner phone calls and road trips were spent sorting through dates, photos, and files. After three years of poring over materials, the project is finished. All of this went beyond the call of friendship or duty. I am more than grateful and not really satisfied with a simple, over-used expression: "Special thanks." Their earnest hard work deserves more.

Lastly, I want to offer my heartfelt appreciation to my clever wordsmith friend Tom Erhardt, who edited this book, and Linda Sawyers, who thoughtfully read the manuscript and recommended changes. Leni Price, who designed this book kept the project going with professionalism, patience and an excellent eye for interpreting and presenting my work to those readers who will only know me through these pages.

In the spirit of recognizing contributions, please know that any shortcomings or faults herein should be credited to me.

# NOTES ON AN EXHIBITION

*Catalogue Essay: Institute of Contemporary Art of The Virginia Museum  
November 24 - December 31, 1980*

Since I first met him in 1970, Rubin Peacock has seemed to me to be something of an anachronism. He is a sculptor whose work directly reflects twentieth-century idioms, while his chosen sculptural material is now undisputably bronze, a medium firmly rooted in tradition.

Shortly after we met (I remember the day distinctly, he was dressed immaculately in a dark blue suit, dark hair freshly combed, slightly ill at ease), I learned that he had just found a new excitement in his life: an abandoned run-down, late-17th century house in Aylett, Virginia. At the time, his sculptural forms were multi-layered, automotive-painted, streamlined shapes. He subsequently acquired the house, now his country residence, which he shares with his wife and co-worker Sylvia, and a fat lazy cat. Adjacent to the beautiful house is his studio and foundry, now filled with the complex statements of a dedicated 20th-century artist.

The anachronistic enigma of the artist whose bold forms in bronze speak in an eloquent sophisticated language to our hearts and minds today, but who has a declared love for the past, is better understood when Rubin talks about his sculpture. His words are carefully chosen, his thoughts deliberate, his mood mystical. "My roots are in nature; my roots are ancient rather than in the 20th century; I feel a subliminal magnetic pull by the forces of nature; yet my voice- I am of this time. My work is of today. I am a link." The conversation is dotted with evocative words "totem," "magical," "visionary," "fantasy," "ritual," "rite."

Several weeks ago I drove from Richmond to Aylett to watch Rubin cast a small bronze figure of a Catawba Indian medicine man, commissioned by the Virginia Museum for a gallery of works for the visually impaired. That day Rubin was also casting a piece for a fellow artist, a Pamunkey Indian, Kevin Brown. While the cast bronze was cooling we talked over a welcome glass of white wine. I was reminded then of the fact that Rubin's mother is of Catawba ancestry from North Carolina, where he was born. The pieces of the puzzle began to fit. From the first time that he can remember, Rubin has felt a strange compulsion to express himself through sculptural forms and he remembers that even his early realistic figures had a reference to ritual.

No one encouraged him to pursue art as a career. In fact, his early college training was in the field of music, perhaps accounting for the fact that his sculptural forms often have a strong rhythmical sense. Rubin begins to talk about the act of creation, the "crazy



*Photo Credit: William Gaines, VMFA exhibition catalogue, 1980*

energy” that drives him to work, a feeling that primordial forces are at work on his mind and body, forcing the forms to take shape.

Certainly, much of the inspiration may come from natural forms, from seeing great stones fit together. (Sylvia attests, “Rubin is always stopping the car and getting out to see the rocks; he likes the way rocks hang on each other; he particularly likes quarry marks, where man has cut into the stone”). But now the trained subconscious of the artist takes over as forms push against other forms, adding the sophistication of angles, counter volumes, “beyond what you would find in nature, pushing.”

Any reference to the work of other significant twentieth-century sculptors who are working on a monumental scale is too easy. The use of rectangular volumes that rise up from a base, thrust into the air, and push against each other, involving other volumes--- the cube, in particular ---may be a familiar vernacular. We may presume to see influences from contemporary Italian sculpture, the jagged broken edge contrasted with the precise, machined form.

Rubin speaks of the strong influences on his work and aesthetic theories from his three periods of work in Italy. But for Rubin Peacock these are part of the iconography of our time to be employed by the artist to his purpose. Look more closely and you will see that

the material has been carefully and lovingly attenuated, each edge precise, each volume realized in a form that is a totem of our time. Each surface becomes a landscape with ancient tracery; echoes of the Nazca culture, pyramids-each form speaks with “words” in a foreign tongue, making the space around it sing.

As the excitement about his art carries the conversation on, Rubin talks about the work “we” are doing. His wife, Sylvia, is at his side throughout the process of the work. The foundry operation at the Aylett studio (he also maintains a residence/studio/gallery in Richmond) is capable of casting medium-sized bronze sculptures. Sections up to 200 pounds each can be welded together to form larger works. Although the process of making a bronze sculpture is not easy, Sylvia and Rubin accomplish the task without aid. The present system, learned from Florida artist Frank Colson, utilizes space-age technology. Why bronze? Other materials are easier to work with, less costly, technically less demanding. Rubin talks about the material reverently “Strong, bold yet responsive; it shows the human touch. It doesn’t lie-there is no room for cheating-it has purity. It is so responsive even a thumbprint shows. Sure, the alternatives are there, but not for me; I know that bronze is my material. I’m willing to go through the agony to get the perfect cast.”

First, there is the initial creative “blast” when he works in plaster to make the model for the finished sculpture. Then comes the long, demanding process of transforming that model into a completed bronze sculpture. Rubin has gone to Italy three times to work and to study the process of bronze casting. The European system, when money is no object, allows the artist to complete the original sculptural model, which is then turned over to accomplished artisans. They complete the process of making the molds and casting the work, delivering to the artist the bronze sculpture ready to receive the patina-the final finishing of the surface.

The process of casting a bronze object has changed little through the ages, but new technology has made it possible to simplify and expedite the process. After coating the plaster original (which is sometimes made of clay or wax) with Vaseline or oil to keep the mold from sticking, a plaster mold (often executed in a number of pieces, depending on the complexity of the form) is made. Molten wax is then poured into this mold is allowed to cool, and at the right moment is poured out, leaving a wax shell approximately 1/4 inch thick. This step will later determine the thickness of the bronze sculpture. Next, following the latest developments in bronze casting, a ceramic shell (made of layers of fine, medium, and coarse alumina silica sand in a colloidal silicon liquid base) is carefully applied around the wax shape, thus forming an outer shell and an inner core at the same time. (The older system utilized a separate core that had to be suspended inside the cast.) The new silica mold is then placed in a gas-fired furnace

lined with a space-age ceramic fiber blanket, and fired at 2,000 degrees Fahrenheit for about 20 minutes, in order to burn out the wax. The molten bronze (ingots of 97% copper, 2% tin, and 1% silicon) is poured into the preheated mold replacing the space previously occupied by the wax.

Now, after a long, painstaking, and often frustrating technical process, the excitement of creating a sculpture begins to rise again. The mold is carefully chipped away and the emerging piece is sand-blasted so that all the mold is removed. This may be only one section of the finished sculpture. If the piece has been cast in several sections, the various parts are welded together, and the surface is chased and burnished to remove all mold marks, burrs, and imperfections in the cast. Now the artist takes over and with the use of acids and a blowtorch, the final, loving patina is applied. (If exposed to the air, bronze will oxidize naturally, forming a greenish-brown patina that is not always beautiful.)

To my knowledge Rubin is the only artist working in Virginia who is creating and casting a body of large-scale bronze sculptures. He is also devoting his life to art. Although he taught for short periods and briefly pursued an art-related career, he now chooses to spend his entire time working as a sculptor.

The large-scale pieces in this exhibition were created on commission for Virginians who believe in the talent of the artist and in the integrity and merit of the works. Their patronage sustains him in his creative achievements. Without such patronage, it is often impossible for an artist to have the means to continue his work. Rubin could choose the easier route, to use stainless steel and build the pieces (or have a factory do it) as a number of artists in the United States are doing today. However, because of his strong conviction that he and his work have an affinity for the medium of bronze, he makes the necessary sacrifices to achieve his goals.

In 1979, discussing the St. John's Church Project (Arch, no. 2 in the VMFA catalogue), Rubin wrote, "As a sculptor, form is my first consideration, the way a shape appears in space, the problems of unity, of balance, and of sustaining interest. My total involvement in conceiving and producing a piece of sculpture is the embodiment of my ideas through bronze, with a concentration on producing excellence in craftsmanship and expression." This exhibition presents the works of a young Virginian who promises to emerge as an artist of major significance.

*WILLIAM GAINES, 1980*

*Guest Exhibition Director and Programs Director of the Virginia Museum*



*Poster for exhibition at Washington and Lee University art gallery, 1982  
Lexington, VA*





**Untitled Stele**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 1983  
Aylett, VA  
Bronze

## INTRODUCTION

The following pages are a reexamination of the last 50 years of my life in art. In 2015, Stephen Bonadies, then Deputy Director of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, helped to arrange for Virginia Commonwealth University graduate student Sarah Kleinman to produce an archival history of my work. After a summer of poring over old photographs, letters, newspaper articles, reviews, and gallery invitations, the experiences of a lifetime swelled to the surface of my consciousness. It seemed right for me to take advantage of this wonderful opportunity to tell my story in my own, unmediated way. While a few close associates and friends have offered editorial guidance and corrected spelling errors, the story here is mine.



*My barefoot self, 1945*

*“Enlightenment is mankind  
coming out of its  
self-imposed immaturity”*

- Immanuel Kant



**Running Chief**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 2015  
Sarasota, FL  
Bronze

# IN THE BEGINNING

My ancestry dates back to the earliest days of colonial America. Nathaniel Peacocke, an Englishman, was among the colonists who, in 1607, arrived in Jamestown, Virginia, America's first permanent English colony. While English on my father's side, my mother's heritage is native American. Her father's surname was Yountz and her mother's Craven. Her parents were listed as Yonz and Craver in the Catawba Indian registry, due to common misspellings. Given migration paths of native Americans, and the constant intermingling between peoples, her specific tribal origin is unknown. From my earliest childhood recollections, family members frequently made reference to our native American heritage.

I came into the world – specifically Winston-Salem, North Carolina--on September 8, 1941. As a child, I was often left alone, which may have led me to be more inward focused. My father was at work as a sheet metal draftsman and supervisor at R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Co. in Winston-Salem, while my older brothers were in school. During the day, my mother would catch up on sleep, after working the night shift at Western Electric. Alone to entertain myself with very few toys, I took advantage of our rural surroundings. Every day the woods, meadows, and creek offered a world of fantasy for me to explore both physically and mentally.



*Roadside picnic with Mom and brothers, Blue Ridge Mountains, 1946*

The family's first substantial journey away from home saw the three Peacock brothers—Earnest Franklin, Albert Roland and myself—atop a pile of camping gear viewing the world from beneath the stick-propped trunk lid of a 1935 Ford Coupe. What was my father thinking, when he bought such a car for a family of five? Carbon monoxide --seemingly of no concern to anyone-- was being sucked into the trunk. Fortunately, these trips resulted in no fatalities or embarrassment for our dad, a founding member of the Winston-Salem Volunteer Rescue Squad, badge #13.

Off we went rattling along the byways in this coupe, headed for the forests, streams, and glades of the Blue Ridge mountains, with the three trunk passengers sharing journeys that stretched for endless miles. Fortunately, my brothers and I got along well making this tight travel arrangement tolerable. In defense of Dad's judgment, it was a good size trunk.

At our destinations, we ran barefoot most of the time, swimming the rivers, exploring and eating wild game: squirrels, rabbits, frog legs and fishes of all kinds. These kills were only partly for sport; the main incentive was to eat. This was just after World War II when both money and food were in short supply. I well recall food rationing stamps and blackouts during the war.

Despite the hardships, our family survived intact, healthy and happy. I was shaped by a sense of barefoot, adventurous freedom, ingrained in me as a child.

*My brother and I looking forward to the soup du jour - Mud Turtle, freshly caught by Dad, 1945*





*Examining a tomahawk in my collection of North Carolina arrowheads, 2016*



*My brothers and mother in Cherokee, N.C., 1946*

At some point, my father traded the Ford coupe for a maroon 1949 Dodge four-door and our weekly Sunday travels took on a new meaning and comfort. Our rural lifestyle was without frills otherwise and included a well and an outhouse, which served us for several years in the early 1950s when the city of Winston-Salem expanded service to our vanishingly rural area.

For years, our Sundays were devoted to family travel through various counties searching for sights and adventures. This seemed to be especially prevalent in the fall. Near the top of our list of searches was finding the perfect river bottom fields to search for native American relics.

Autumn was the best time to search, after the crops were harvested and the fields plowed for winter. Following a few heavy rains, the ground would settle, leaving stones and relics exposed. Finding Indian points (arrowheads) and holding history in my hands made a lasting impression on me. Imagine the thrill of casually handling an object of carefully crafted beauty that may not have been touched by another human hand for more than 1,000 years.

I collected hundreds of relics, after searching the fields for miles. Back then, these farms were worked by mules and small machines instead of the large tractors that destroy everything in their path, including precious fragments of the past. Mom and Dad would cut wild creasy greens, one of our favorite foods in those lean times, while my brothers and I searched the fields for more evidence of the earlier inhabitants.

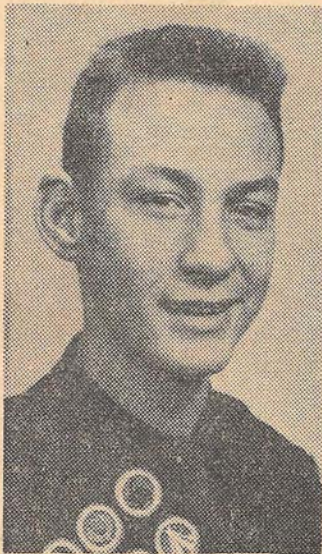
My formal education began at South Park Elementary School, which compared badly to my experiences in the wild. The classroom bored me. My thoughts were elsewhere.

In fourth grade, music caught my attention. I took percussion lessons, which continued throughout high school. Also, in fourth grade, a wonderful teacher, Mrs. Curtis, assigned us the task of making something three-dimensional that related to another culture. For my project, I dug clay from a creek bed near our house and on a piece of plywood formed a small adobe house with cut sticks for the roof. The process excited me and I was proud of the results: my first construction in clay. To this day, I enjoy working in clay to model certain aspects of my sculptures.

Throughout my childhood, the greatest influences came from outside the classroom. Although our family was not particularly religious, my brothers and I were baptized at Trinity Moravian Church by Dr. Douglas LeTell Rights, the long-serving pastor. Dr. Rights became a friend of our family and he took a special interest in me and my brothers, because of our shared native American ancestry or, perhaps, because he'd lost a son during World War II. For whatever reason, we had a special bond.

Often, during the summer, Dr. Rights would take me and my brothers to his farm to help with chores. At the end of the day, he'd pay my brothers 50 cents and me a quarter as I was too young to be of much help. One day on the farm, I found a dark-colored arrowhead of unusual shape. After some study, Dr. Rights identified it as being from the Cherokee mountains, about 200 miles away. It reinforced the migratory paths of native Americans. He asked if I'd consider giving it to the Old Salem Museum in Winston-Salem. Reluctantly, I agreed, not knowing what a museum was.

That afternoon Dr. Rights drove me to Winston-Salem and opened the museum door with his personal key. At that moment, my eyes opened to the world of museum collections. There were thousands of native American relics found in North Carolina as well as hundreds of artifacts from the German settlement of Old Salem in the Colonial era. Dr. Rights made some notes on "our" arrowhead and left it with the collection, escorting me on a tour of the German settlement houses, one with a two-level basement. I'd never seen anything like it. This eye-opening visit took place at a time when the restoration of Old Salem was just the dream of a few individuals. Now, it has evolved well beyond its humble beginnings. For a quiet, introspective kid this adventure reinforced my enthusiasm for history and collecting.



CLIFTON PEACOCK

## Two Receive Eagle Scout Awards Here

Two Eagle Scout awards were presented at a parents' night banquet and court of honor for Boy Scout Troop 76 of Augsburg Lutheran Church Friday night.

The new Eagle Scouts are Clifton Peacock, son of Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Peacock of 2841 Patria St., and Johnny Parish, son of Mr. and Mrs. Ray Parish of 2815 S. Main St.

*A capstone of my youth:  
I was made an Eagle Scout  
and inducted into The Order  
of The Arrow in 1958*

In the fifth grade, I discovered that Dr. Rights has authored several books. The first one I found in the school library was a history of American Indians in North Carolina. It contained photographs and maps indicating the many migration routes of various tribes in North Carolina over hundreds of years. I loved holding that book. Somehow, it ended up in my collection and I continue to cherish it.

Another of Dr. Rights' books, "A Voyage down the Yadkin-Great Pee Dee River," records his trip taken in 1928 from the navigable headwaters of the Yadkin River to its mouth in Georgetown, South Carolina, a 400-mile voyage. This book, with its visually colorful description and historical facts, inspired me to seek out my own adventures of personal discovery.

The Boy Scouts had a major influence on me. Camping trips, the preparation for those trips and the anticipation of new camping destinations, filled me with a spirit of determination and a visual appreciation of the natural world. These adventures to the Blue Ridge Mountains enriched my mind and inspired creativity. I made the rank of Eagle Scout and was honored to be inducted into the Order of the Arrow.

My scouting activities kept me occupied through middle school and high school. However, high school itself held minimal

*Taxidermy enhanced  
my appreciation of  
three-dimensional objects*



interest for me with the exception of mechanical drawing, history, and music. In addition to playing in the school band and junior symphony, I played drums in dance halls on weekends.

Often, I'd skip school to go duck hunting with my buddies, never killing a duck or goose, but returning with arrowheads. We were always walking in the fields along the river. I sometimes think the only reason I went hunting was to search for relics.

When I was 15, I was drawn to the idea of making sculptures. When classes were over, I headed home to carve stones and wood. My school offered no serious art training. It wasn't until college that I began to look at art history books. Ironically, James A. Gray High School, from which I graduated, became the North Carolina School of the Arts.

Another example of how my education evolved outside of school is my study of taxidermy. An article in *Popular Science* magazine led to my enrollment in a correspondence course offered by the Northwestern School of Taxidermy. Following step-by-step instructions, I learned to completely skin fish, birds, and animals. The process of taxidermy requires the construction of armature and body to be constructed of excelsior, which is then covered with the original skin. This practice added to my detailed understanding of body mass and shape.





**Winged Messenger**  
University of Georgia, 1965  
Athens, GA  
Aluminum and Red Granite

*My first experimental stone and  
aluminum casting.*

Throughout my teen years, music continued to play an important part in my life. Slowly, I built a good reputation and worked with many local musicians and bands.

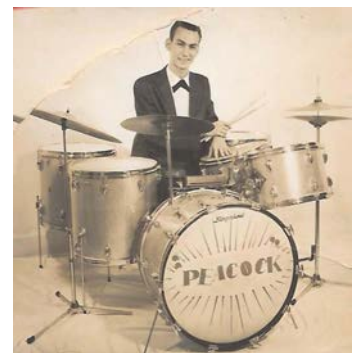
After acceptance at Wingate College in North Carolina, I received a call from a disc jockey, who asked if I'd audition for a traveling rock and roll band from Georgia. Postponing college for a year, I packed my drums into the band's brand new 1960 pink and white Lincoln. Off we went, playing along the way to California.

After a tough year of travel, I entered Wingate College (now Wingate University), in the fall of 1961, where I studied for one year. One of my electives was a painting class with a seasoned painter, then in his 70s, who made a lasting impression on me. A patient man, Mr. Ives taught the usual techniques and range of artistic style, I learned from him something more important though. "Don't be afraid to make mistakes while being your own artist," he said. "Art is free from rules."

In 1962 I transferred to the University of Georgia in Athens, where I earned Bachelor of Science and Bachelor of Fine Arts degrees. My sculpture instructor was Leonard De Longa, a passionate man, and serious working artist. My first lost wax bronze casting was done under his guidance. Immediately, I was intrigued by the limitless possibilities the process offered. If you can make it in wax, you can cast it in bronze. Slowly, a personal style and technique began to emerge that year.

Another instructor who influenced me was William Thompson, a competent sculptor who always had time to listen and teach. Mr. Thompson preached experimentation. During this period, I began to cast aluminum using Styrofoam for the original casting models. Later, this grew into a personal approach by incorporating natural and carved stones in the casting process to produce sculptures combining the two materials.

However, not all my time was spent on campus in the studio. I paid my way through college by traveling with various bands, playing jazz, blues, country and rock and roll as a union musician. I toured one summer with country music singer Don Gibson, famous for songs like "Old Lonesome Me" and "A Blue Blue



*On the way to a career in music, 1958*

*Photo Credit: Roland Peacock*

Day.” At the Grand Ole Opry, I remained backstage since drums were not allowed on stage in those days. For several months, I traveled with Del Reeves, famous for his song “Looking at the World through a Windshield.” While the money was good - thanks to my union card--I came to the same conclusion expressed in a Willie Nelson song: “the nightlife is not a good life.” My two years in the Peace Corps following college confirmed a growing sense that I’d had my fill as a traveling musician.

My Peace Corps experience began with a chance encounter at a recruiting table while at the University of Georgia. The Peace Corps was new at the time and President Kennedy, whom I admired, actively promoted it. A young artist in search of adventure, I applied in my sophomore year. Upon graduation in 1965, I was accepted as a trainee.

I reported to a summer training camp at the University of California in San Diego. In my initial application, I had requested Nigeria, in part due to my interest in the renowned Benin bronzes. The Peace Corps had other plans for me. I was assigned to the mountains of Jamaica. In the early 1960s, Jamaica was off the radar for the average tourist. It was anything but the dreamy vacation destination it is today.

The training was demanding of our time from early morning to late at night. Both physically and mentally, we were rigorously scheduled. Three of us were assigned to Camp Cobbla, a youth

*Training art students in the Peace Corps, 1966*





**Jamaican Woman**  
Spaulding, Jamaica, 1965  
Red Bulletwood Carving

training camp in the center of Jamaica, high in the mountains. As part of our training, we worked in Tijuana, Mexico, laying a cement block retaining wall for a small school. We also worked at several youth camps long distances from San Diego. One camp I recall most clearly was located deep in the desert and held youth detainees. The dreadful isolation of the camp sharply contrasted with its scenic beauty.

Back on the campus, our days and nights were occupied with lectures and movies on every subject imaginable, including how to deliver a baby. Mostly, however, the lectures were about political matters, the dos and don'ts. Discussing politics or being seen near political events while in Jamaica was forbidden. There was a general, unspoken belief that the CIA would be watching for any breach of this protocol.

As Peace Corps trainees, we had individual meetings and evaluations with psychologists and psychiatrists looking for any flaws in our characters that would affect our service as volunteers. We also had to do peer evaluations as a type of reverse psychology. Some trainees dropped out for personal or non-medical reasons, some were drafted into the military, some left for health reasons, and others disqualified. Out of 70 trainees, 47 were selected for service. After a barrage of inoculations every day for a week, we were given a return ticket to our hometowns to make our final plans for two years of service, without the option of a return to the U.S. for the duration of our service.

Finally, our group of volunteers flew from New York to Kingston, Jamaica. After a two-day layover in Kingston, weakened by extreme heat and humidity, we were transported to our various assignments. Fifty years later, the details of my arrival at remote Camp Cobbla -high in the mountains--remain fresh, vivid, and shocking.

Camp Director, Owen Batchelor, greeted us. He assigned me and my co-workers Bill Milisen and Frank Moore to plumbing, welding, and electrical duties despite our formal education in biology, sociology, and art. The camp consisted of 15 staff members assisting 500 young men in search of professional trade skills as well as a meaningful direction in life. The conditions we experienced were new to all of us, including the repetitiously

*Left to Right: Ambassador Vargas from Venezuela; myself; U.S.I.S. Director Homer Gayne; and the Argentine ambassador.*

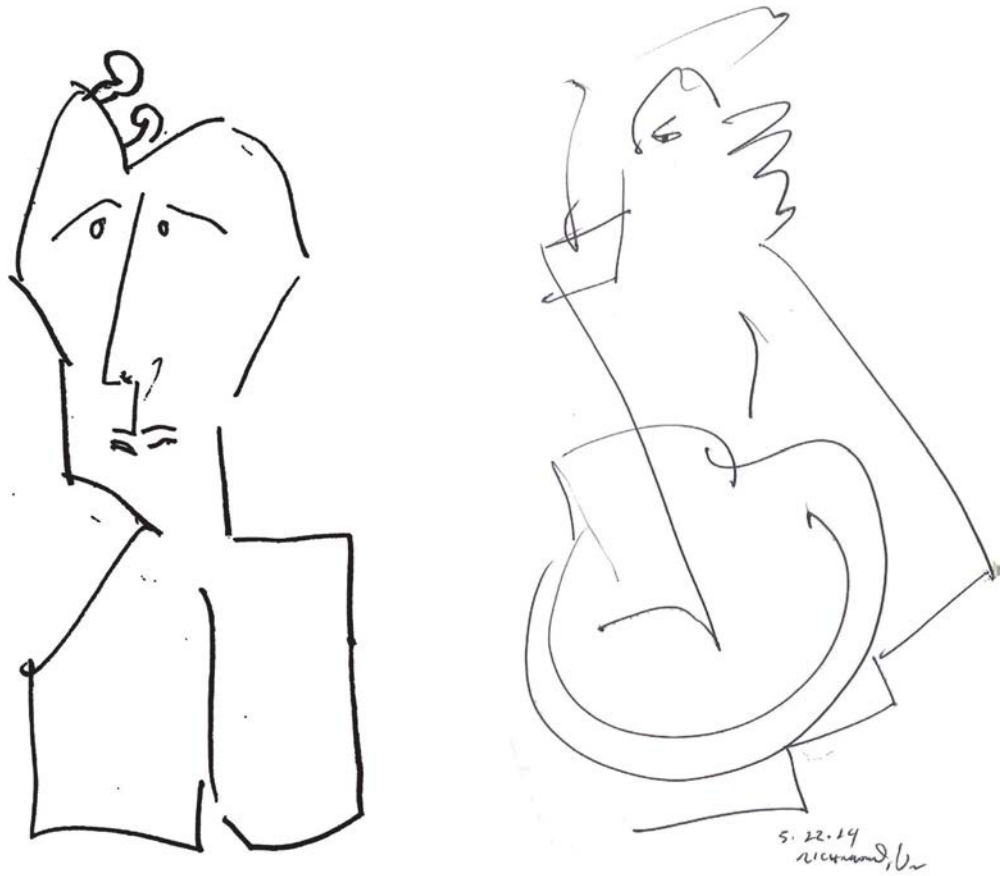
*Daily Gleaner,  
Kingston, Jamaica, 1967*



revolting food. Within the first three months, we each lost 20 lbs.

Boredom became an issue after the completion of my daily routine as an electrical instructor. In the evening, with time on my hands, I began to think about sculpture. Some camp members, who saw me carving one night, took an interest in my work and wanted to try it themselves. We soon formed a small group and “captured” or, as the locals would say “put the ghost on” an unused building as our studio. This slowly evolved from a stone and wood carving studio to a make-shift foundry. There, we produced many castings in aluminum and bronze that can still be found around Jamaica and abroad.

One of my students, Clifford Osbourne, continued his career as an artist and became a recognized sculptor in Jamaica. Near the end of my second year in the Peace Corps, I had an exhibition in Kingston at the Bolivar Gallery. The exhibition included many aluminum castings and six large ink drawings. Promoted as a scholarship fund raiser, it was supported by the Peace Corps Director Jack Shafer as well as the Director of the U.S. Information Service, Homer Gayne. Attendance was overwhelming and included many dignitaries, among them five ambassadors. We raised sufficient funds to give two of my promising students one-year scholarships to the Jamaican School of Art.



Upon completing my tour in Jamaica, I was honored to be selected as a Peace Corps training instructor in San Diego. After two years of living deep in the mountains under primitive conditions, it was difficult to convey to the new volunteers the occasionally nightmarish conditions facing them. At the same time, I was preparing them for cultural shock in Jamaica I was experiencing a head-twisting re-entry into my country. It was 1967. A cultural hurricane was uprooting the U.S. Without phones, TVs, and newspapers for the two previous years, I was isolated from the mainstream, blindsided by the upheaval reshaping the world I'd left behind. Writers and musicians like Tom Robbins, Janis Joplin, Jimi Hendricks, and The Beatles blasted onto the scene with new sounds and new voices. Everyone was obsessed with things I knew almost nothing about. Outside of these dam-breaking currents of change, I had developed an artistic path of my own.



**Giant Slayer**  
Spaulding, Jamaica, 1965  
Cast Aluminum and Stone

*Photo Credit: Ewalt Gold*



**Bird Form**  
Spaulding, Jamaica, 1966  
Cast Aluminum

*Photo Credit: Ewalt Gold*





*Working on a commissioned cast aluminum sculpture in Jamaica, 1966*

“Peacock’s brilliance as a sculptor is in his ability to suggest forces just to the point of definition.”

*Teresa Annas, The Virginian - Pilot and Ledger Star,  
Norfolk, VA, July 10, 1983*



5.22.14  
Nocturnal D. J. a



**Two Birds in Flight**  
Spaulding, Jamaica, 1966  
Cast Aluminum

*Photo Credit: Ewalt Gold*

# art

by Wilf Burton, Dip. Arch., Dip. T.P.

## SCULPTOR: RUBIN PEACOCK

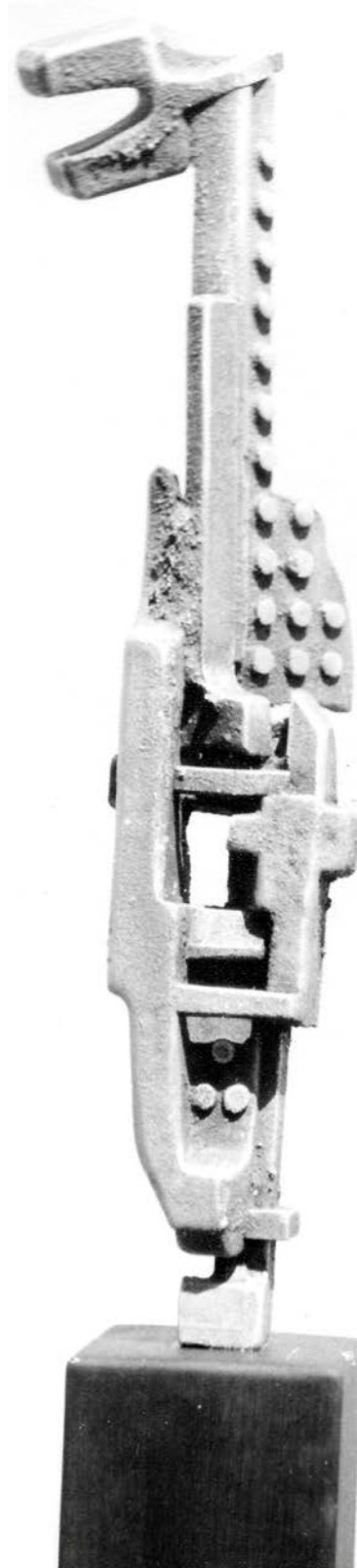
The major lines of sculpture can be traced this century: Figurative and Constructivist.

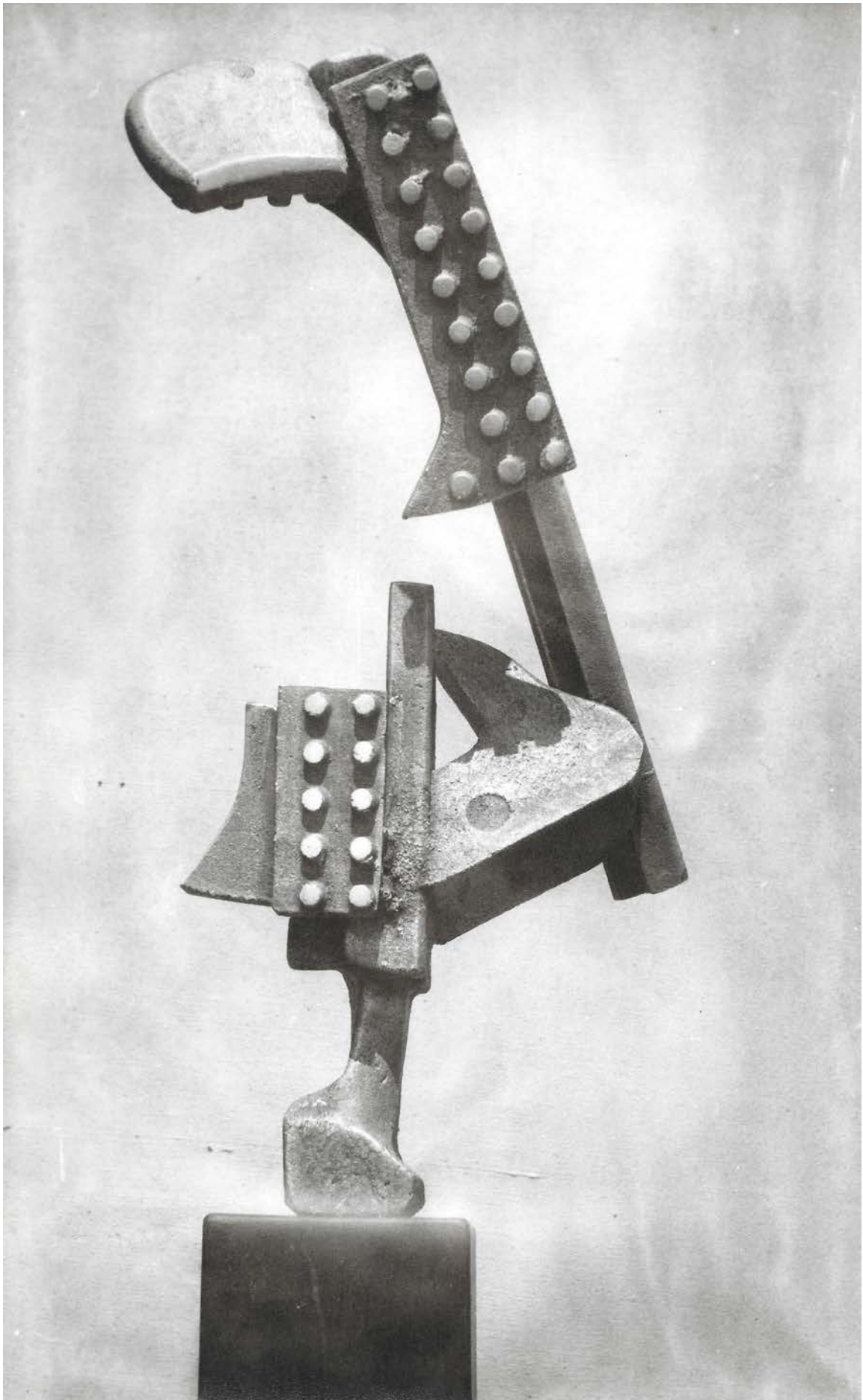
Sculptors Rodin, Epstein and Moore redefined classical forms, essentially figurative, gradually to the abstract. A development continued by Giacometti, Marini and was almost exhausted by the English figurative sculptors of the fifties. This movement essentially involves the modelling of material, romantic, literal and anti-machine.

The other source of development was based on an enthusiasm for technology, having its roots in the Constructivist Movement around 1910, and being developed along with the Modern Movement in Architecture, by sculptors Malevich, Gabo, Pevsner and Max Bill. Originating in Russia, it continued in the Bauhaus, and owes its revival in the fifties to American sculptors.

Rubin Peacock is an American sculptor developing an arts programme at the Cobbla Youth Camp, as a Peace Corps Volunteer. It is interesting to see the new direction in his work. Oddly, after leaving a technologically-based society for the isolation of rural Jamaica, his work has changed from the romantic-figurative to a constructivist nature.

All the work shown is cast in aluminium from an expanded polystyrene original. Three series are illustrated, clearly showing changes from one to the other. The Jordan Almond series is the earliest, figurative man/bird creatures. Next, the wing series, slightly less figurative, and finally the very different constructivist-type Crane series. We see the end of one stage of development and the beginning of a new one.







**Flying Angel**  
Spaulding, Jamaica, 1966  
Cast Aluminum

*Photo Credit: Ewalt Gold*



## LATE 1960S-1970S

In the fall of 1967, I entered graduate school. Two years later I received my Master of Fine Arts degree from Virginia Commonwealth University, formerly Richmond Professional Institute. (RPI).

Chuck Renick was the head of the sculpture department. Chuck and I met at The Village, a legendary cafe at the corner of Harrison and Grace streets, in the heart of VCU. For my graduate school entrance interview, we discussed, over a couple of Richbrau beers, the arts program and our expectations. His encouragement and philosophy of art solidified my confidence in the direction of my work. This was the beginning of a long and supportive alliance of like minds.



*Photo Credit: Ed Steinberg*

Iconic in its day, The Village was a second home and meeting place for many creative souls. My brother Roland, a recent graduate of RPI with a bright future in advertising, introduced me to many artists and writers there who remained lifelong friends: Bill Kendrick, William Fletcher Jones, Bill Amlong, Sam Forrest, Warren Cook, and Tom Robbins. In those days before social media and plastic money, Steve Dikos, the cafe owner, would readily cash a personal check without question---for \$5.00-- to his loyal customers. That's how a lot of us of got by day to day-- one beer, one sailor sandwich, one painting at a time.

The sculpture department gave me a studio space in a carriage house in the alley behind Ed Steinberg's drying cleaning business on Harrison Street. My early friendship with Ed continues. He was encouraging of my work and photographed for me. Back then, before cell phones and the ubiquity of instant photography, Ed provided a valuable service by ensuring professional quality documentation of my work.

My studio space was comfortable and I felt inspired, producing three large bronzes my first year based on a theme of spheres and fantasy figures. The second year in this space I began working with high-gloss lacquered finishes applied to welded steel in a continuation and culmination of the bronze sphere series. The painted steel pieces were well received. Two were included in the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts Biennial Exhibition in

*Opposite Page:*  
**Sphere Series #1**  
Richmond, VA, 1968  
Bronze







**Organic Geometry**  
Richmond, VA, 1968  
Bronze

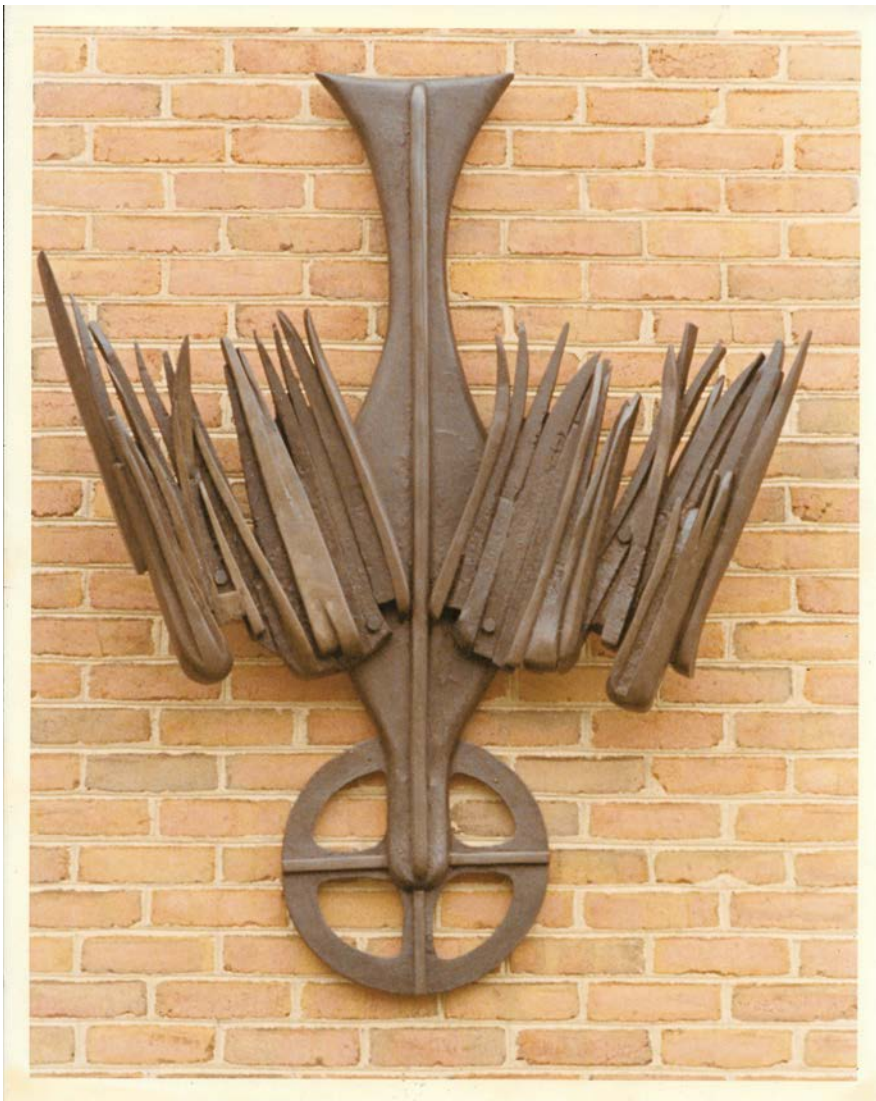
*Photo Credit: Ed Steinberg*



1969. Despite pressure to conform to stylistic trends, I was still committed to working in bronze.

During this period Pace Memorial Church near VCU commissioned me to create a sculpture, "Descending Dove," for the front of the church. I executed the work in aluminum and had it anodized in a dark bronze color.

In 1971 the administrator of the National Cathedral in Washington, DC approached me about producing a full-scale gargoyle model for the cathedral, which was nearing completion. I had complete freedom of theme for this sculpture, the only restriction being the dimensions: 15 by 24 inches. I completed the full-scale, wax model - "The Two-Tongued Monster" -- during the summer. This was the first of three gargoyles I created for the cathedral.



**Sphere Series #1**  
Richmond, VA, 1969  
Welded Steel

*Photo Credit: Ron Jennings*

**Descending Dove**  
OK Foundry,  
Richmond, VA, 1969  
Anodized Cast Aluminum

Richmond, VA,  
Pace Memorial United  
Methodist Church





**Sphere Series #2**  
Richmond, VA, 1969  
Welded Steel



**Sphere Series #3**  
Richmond, VA, 1969  
Welded Steel

*Included in VMFA  
Biennial Virginia Artist  
Exhibition, 1969*

*Photo Credit: Ron Jennings*



*Modeling gargoyle for  
Washington National  
Cathedral, 1976*

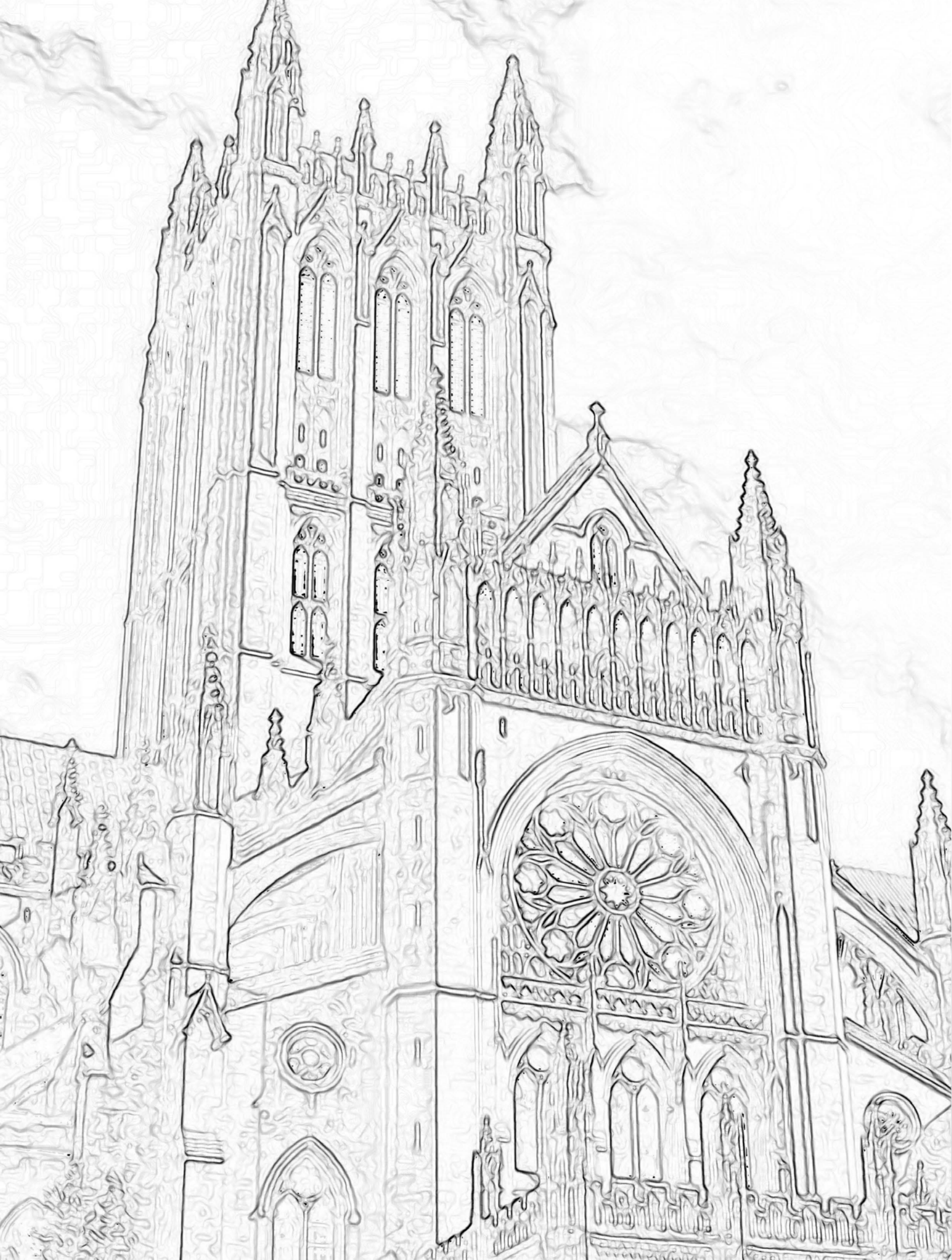
Upon completion of the first gargoyle, the satisfied committee asked me to consider producing two more based on given themes, a challenge I accepted gladly. The directive for the second commission: to honor the memory of an avid duck hunter and card player. My challenge was to come up with an idea that would fulfill the wishes of the donor while functioning as a rainwater drainage port. After wrestling with possibilities, I produced the "Card Playing Duck" full scale, in plaster. They liked my concept, my style, my finished model. I based the third sculpture on the theme of a barrister -- another donor-- which I took to the extreme: a fierce hothead with exaggerated features and an oversized wig. Finally, the project was complete.



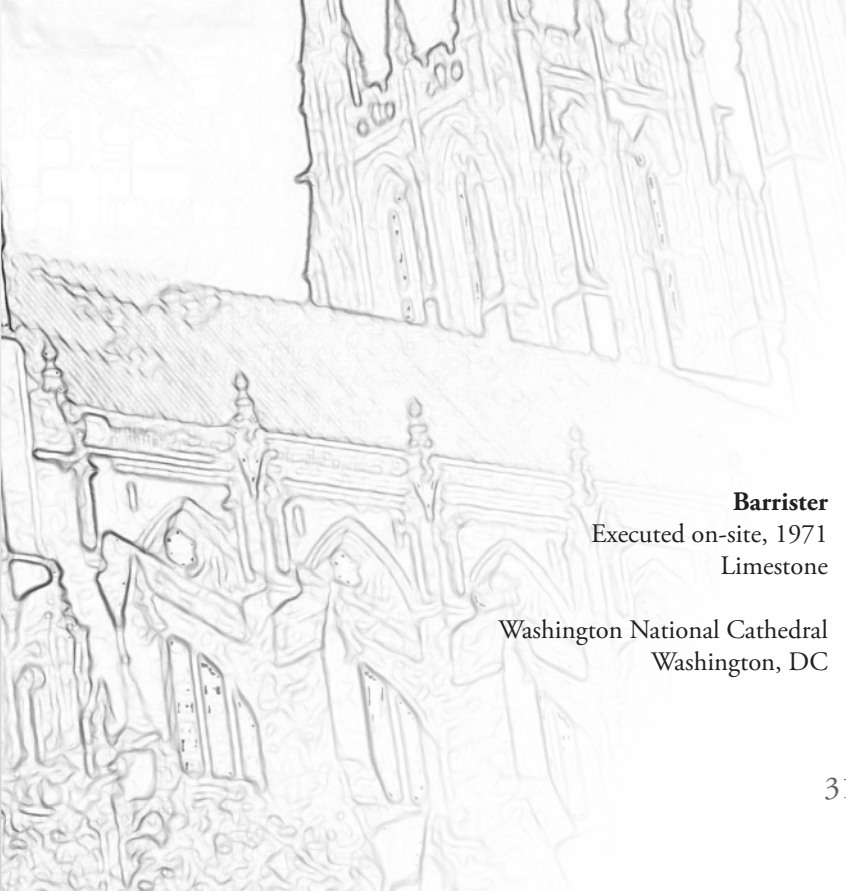
**Cardplaying Duck**  
Richmond, VA, 1971  
Plaster Model



**Two-Tongued Monster**  
Richmond, VA, 1971  
Wax Model

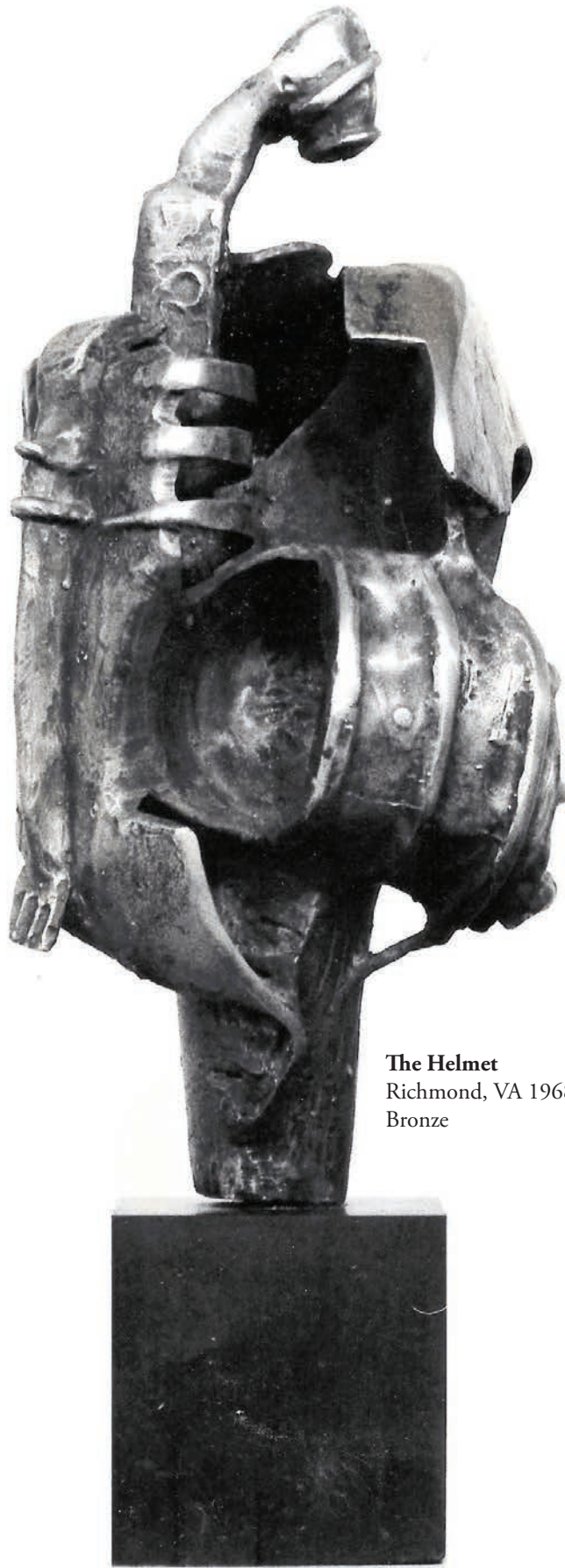






**Barrister**  
Executed on-site, 1971  
Limestone  
Washington National Cathedral  
Washington, DC





**The Helmet**  
Richmond, VA 1968  
Bronze



**Marlboro Man**  
Richmond, VA, 1968  
Bronze

Establishing a home and studio in a tranquil setting became a priority and my lifelong attraction to historic buildings resurfaced. I realized this affinity could be traced to the mid-1940s and family travels along the back roads of rural North Carolina where we were always on the lookout for old and abandoned houses, barns, and stores. For me these places held mysterious spirits and visual reminders of people's dreams, hopes, and struggles. I could only imagine their happy times as I stood amid the broken furniture, clothes, books, photos, and letters scattered about the ruins. These abandoned places were everywhere, dotting the countryside, reminders of the Great Depression and resulting migration to the cities.

When establishing a home of my own, I searched for a place with evidence of a past life, something old, like those that had captured my imagination as far back as I can recall.

Now living in Virginia, I continued, with my brother Roland and his wife Linda, our family tradition of driving the back roads in search of interesting historic ruins. On a summer drive in 1968, we spotted a special property that I knew I had to pursue. Located in Aylett, in King William County, at the top of a steep hill stood the 18th-century remains of a house in a state of abandonment and ruin.

Known as Marlboro, it captured my heart and soul. Following inquiries, I located the owners in Georgia. After months of

*Opposite Page:*  
**Kanawha Landscape IV**  
Pietrasanta, Italy, 1978  
Bronze

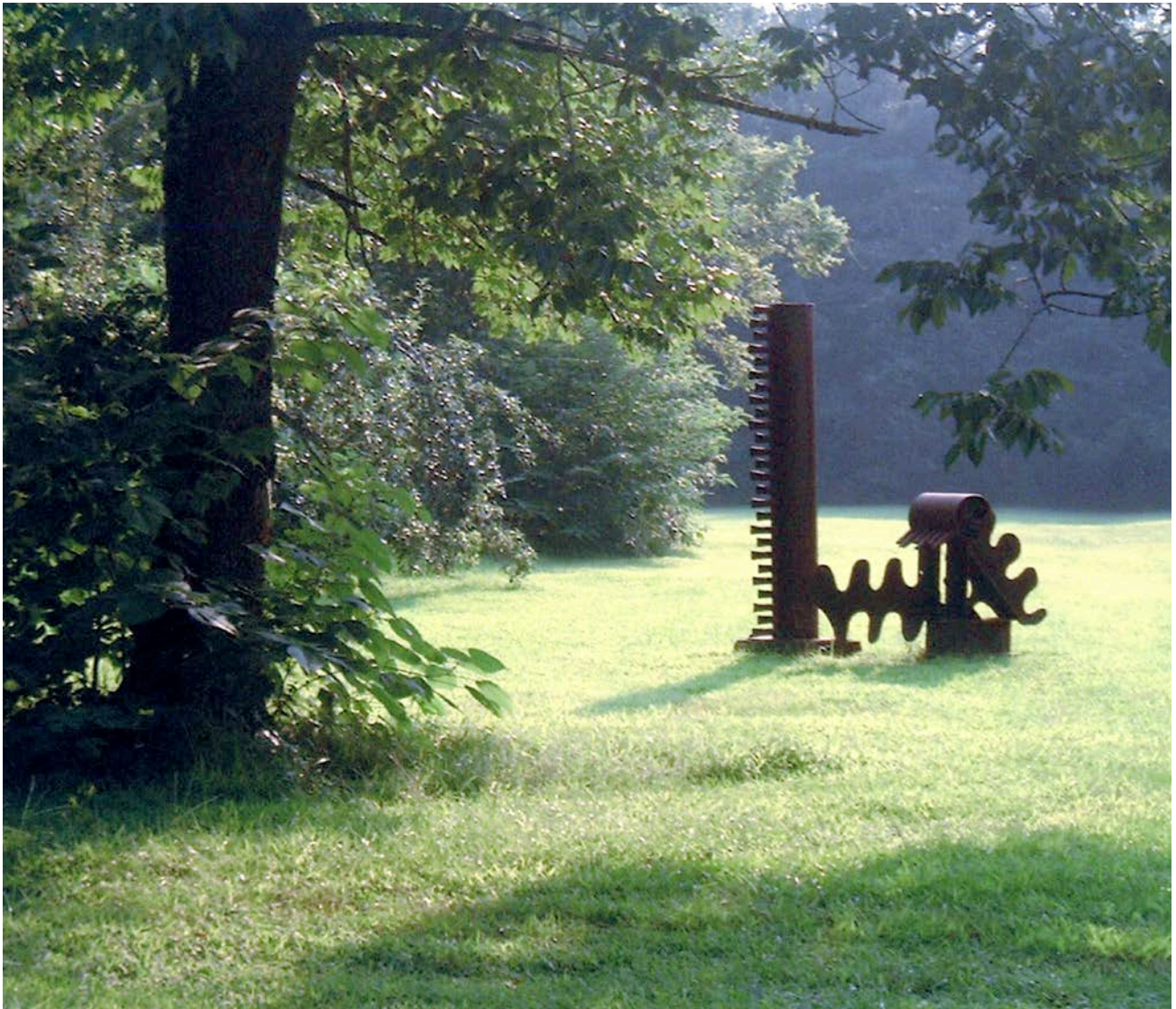
Richmond, VA  
Federal Reserve Bank



*"Marlboro," 18th C, Aylett, VA  
Beginning of restoration*

*Photo Credit:*  
Arthur Sawyers, 1969  
VMFA Collection





**Untitled**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 1979  
Aylett, VA  
Welded Steel



writing—pleading—for them to sell, the owners agreed. Marlboro became my home.

I set about restoring the house myself and, simultaneously, building a studio. Eventually, I was able to live and work in peace and tranquility on the eight-acre property for the next 45 years. Memories of those years are vivid and inspirational. Aylett represented a period of growth in my artistic identity. Insulated from outside influence, this special place allowed me the opportunity to look inward and to follow my own instincts regarding the way I wished to make art.

I renewed my interest in creating fantasy figurative bronzes in my Aylett studio. These are aloof figures in their own world, lost in secret thoughts. I look back in amazement at the number

*Top Left:  
Finishing the piece on  
opposite page*

*Top Right:  
Summer afternoon in  
Aylett, VA  
Artist/Friends  
Chase Decker (Left)  
Jewett Campbell (Right)*



*Early studio, Aylett, VA, 1973*



*A casual afternoon in Aylett, VA, 1972 with friend and artist Bill Amlong posing for a portrait*







of bronzes produced in my humble foundry at Marlboro. It was a memorable time fueled by youth, energy, and determination.

During this same period, my appreciation of old buildings led me to several purchases and subsequent renovations. Following Hurricane Camille's biblical flooding in 1969, many 19th century buildings in low-lying areas of Richmond were heavily damaged and left as muddy ruins. For years, they continued to deteriorate. Owners were pleased to find anyone willing to take these burdensome properties off their hands.

In 1970, I purchased 105 and 107 North 17th Street in Shockoe Bottom's historic Farmer's Market. Ankle deep in mud and trash, I could see the reality of a new in-town studio/apartment. After several months of shoveling mud and debris out of these brick storefronts, I was able to create a working studio space. This meant dividing my time between my Richmond studio, where I worked on waxes and paintings, and Aylett, where I did my foundry work. This arrangement worked satisfactorily for several years.

**Early Landscape *Maquettes***  
Aylett Art Foundry, 1977  
Aylett, VA  
Bronze



*Aylett, VA studio*

Tidewater Review- Daily  
Press, 1969

Eventually, I sold the 17th street buildings to purchase a larger building at 1717 East Franklin Street, also in the Farmer's Market. This building provided me with necessary space for large paintings and a gallery to exhibit my work.

During the 1970s, I traveled and lived extensively abroad.

In the fall of 1973, I made my first trip to Europe with my friend Tom Beale, former director of the U.S. Foreign Service, and later, Ambassador to Jamaica under President Lyndon Johnson. One summer afternoon over a glass of sherry at his home in West Virginia, we mapped out a plan for a trip to Europe.

We arrived in London and stayed a few days taking in the museums and usual tour sights before flying to Madrid. The Prado Museum in Madrid made a big impression on me, seeing so many great works of art that up to that point in my life had only been pictures in art books. We rented a car for a month and drove south through Spain, taking in all the historic sites and museums along the way, viewing the works of Goya and El Greco in their original settings.

After several days of travel, we arrived in Praia da Luz, Portugal, the southernmost point in the country. There we rented a fisherman's cottage, a perfect retreat that we used as a home base for traveling to various points of interest in Portugal, which included historic sites, small museums, Roman ruins, flea markets and antique shops.

Often, during the early morning hours, I would walk alone in the hills around our cottage to sketch, think, and observe the picturesque scene of sheep herders on the harsh, rocky, seashore landscape. After a week in Praia da Luz, we started our long trip back to Luxembourg, stopping for a night in Lisbon to visit the Gulbenkian Museum, with its impressive collection of international art and interesting mid-century modern building. We found time to visit a small island off the coast for seafood dinner. The next day, traveling up the coast, we crossed the border into the Basque Country into southern France, exchanging currency for the fifth time. After a long and grueling day of driving, we reached Luxembourg on schedule to make our return flight to the U.S. I was determined to return and visit Italy in

particular, to locate a foundry where I could cast my bronzes. The following autumn I did so, traveling alone in search of a place to live and work. I wanted to study techniques of bronze casting from the masters.

My third trip to Europe took place in 1976. I was committed to staying for at least three months. With a limited Italian vocabulary and not knowing anyone in the industrial town of Pistoia, I recall my first week as a time of unrelieved loneliness. To make matters worse, I couldn't locate the foundry that was supposed to be there. After roaming the streets for a few days, I met English-speaking Gianfranco Saracini on a bus. He explained to me that the foundry had moved to another town, about 20 miles away. He happened to know the owner Signor Micheluzzi, and offered to drive me there and introduce me to him.

On the way, we stopped at Gianfranco's beautifully restored 17th century home, where I met Carla, his wife, and Paolo, his young son. Carla was a warm and gracious lady, who insisted I stay for lunch. Things began to look up. Gianfranco drove me to the new Micheluzzi Fonderia D'Arte and introduced me to Signor Micheluzzi, a large, imposing man with an even bigger heart. He took us on a tour of the facility showing us every aspect of the foundry operations. Back in his office, he asked if I was a sculptor and how he might assist me. I explained that I was interested in casting small bronzes but had hopes of returning at a later time to produce some larger work. Before leaving he generously offered me the use of a studio space in his old foundry in Pistoia and said I could catch a ride with his foundry workers any time I wanted to come back to consult about casting or just to spend time observing. He handed me a key to the old foundry with an invitation to use it as long as I required. Suddenly, I was in business.

To put this in perspective, in one afternoon I met a lovely family that took me into their home, and I met a generous, wealthy man who gave me the use of his private property. Through my acquaintance with Gianfranco, my social life accelerated. I was invited to parties, studios and various events that, most likely, would not have happened without his friendship and hospitality. I no longer felt isolated, but accepted into a warm



*Plaster for a commissioned bronze, 1984*

community of supportive people who barely knew me.

Foundry key in hand, Gianfranco led me through a maze of narrow alleys to the old foundry building in Pistoia, which I would never have found on my own. The foundry had been left unused for many months after the move to the new location and the building took on the spirit of quiet, lonely abandonment.

With only two dust-covered windows at the far end of the building, the dark foundry seemed vast and cave-like. It had the feeling of a museum locked in a time capsule, waiting to be rediscovered. Hundreds of old, well-modeled, life-size plaster figures and their corresponding dust-blackened molds filled several side rooms and corridors. I dared not disturb them for a better look for underneath the layers of dust were the spirits of artists, who over the centuries, had worked there.

I often wondered what might have become of that vast collection of beautiful works in plaster and have thought many times of returning to inquire. The modeling room was still used on occasion by visiting artists. With no electricity, a large skylight provided illumination and a good place for quiet contemplation and work.

Every morning I would leave my room in a very old hotel and walk down the endless alleys to the studio. En route, there was always an opportunity for a coffee and a croissant. In the studio, I did some drawings and worked on small wax *maquettes* for future use. To my happy surprise, Gianfranco later cast in bronze a wax sculpture I had given him and added it to his collection.

Occasionally, I'd take a break to study the many discarded old-world plaster sculptures no longer needed after the bronzes were completed. Near the front section of the building were stored more contemporary plaster sculptures, some I recognized as the work of Sorel Etrog, a well-known Canadian sculptor, and others by Henry Moore, Barbara Hepworth, Marino Marini, and Jorio Vivarelli.

At the end of my stay, I felt I'd accomplished my mission. I'd accumulated more knowledge about casting, learned some Italian, made new friends, and immersed myself in the living history of



*Rodin's sculpture of Balzac outside of the Musée Rodin,  
Paris, 1980*

*Photo Credit: Sylvia Peacock Grant*



**Kanawha Landscape, VI**  
Pietrasanta, Italy, 1978  
Bronze

*Commissioned for Dogham Farm,  
Charles City Co., VA*

foundry work. The hospitality and warmth of the Italians left a lasting mark.

After my stay in Pistoia, I was determined to secure a commission for a large-scale bronze, a passion I'd held for many years. This commission became a reality when I was introduced in 1976 to Jack Blanton, then vice-president of the Federal Reserve Bank in Richmond. In addition to his fiscal responsibilities, Jack curated the new collection for the startlingly modern bank, then under construction, and designed by Minoru Yamasaki, architect for the original World Trade Center in New York City.

A respected connoisseur of art and antiques, with an impressive personal collection, Jack understood how a small *maquette* could be enlarged to suit the new bank building. In the spring of 1978 I had produced several *maquettes* based on river landscapes that abstractly mimic the movement of rippling water and river bank trees. Jack selected a bronze (page 35) whose rolling contours contrast with the static linearity of the Federal Reserve building and echo the energetic flow of the James River.

A few days after the Federal Reserve Bank awarded me the commission, I shared the exciting news with my friend Nell Harrison, a patron of the arts whose family is deeply rooted in Virginia history. To my surprise, she asked if I would have time to produce a sculpture for the lawn of her 18th-century plantation home, Dogham Farm, in Charles City County, Virginia. Together, we walked the property, considered different locations, and agreed upon a design appropriate for her chosen site.

Shortly after, I received yet another commission through Ambassador Beale. He wanted a bronze sculpture for his newly-constructed home in Martinsburg, West Virginia, designed by David Childs. Childs is best known today as the architect for the second design of the One World Trade Center in New York City. How serendipitous to have my sculptures associated with both architects of the World Trade Center, Yamasaki and Childs.

Honored with commissioned works for notable settings—both historic and contemporary—I set off for Italy once more. I decided to live and work in a town I'd visited the year before, Pietrasanta, a place well known for its marble carving and bronze casting facilities that attract sculptors from around the world.

In Pietrasanta, I rented a pleasant second-floor apartment with a balcony overlooking a quaint street, just a short bicycle ride away from the Mediterranean. The first floor housed a large mosaic studio, which was an art education in itself. Almost daily, I visited that studio—a perfect 19th-century stage set-- observing the process. I became friends with the studio owner. Over the months, I watched the progress the artisans made as they assembled wall-size church murals with tweezers, carefully placing quarter-inch, brightly colored or metallicly shimmering mosaic tiles.

My landlady assisted me in securing an unusual studio space in her husband's time-worn marble factory, where massive blocks of marble were cut into slabs. My space was located in the far end of the building with a window looking out on a field of discarded, broken marble statues. The scene had a haunting resemblance to an abandoned cemetery.

With no physical separation from the rest of the factory and



*Maquettes for larger bronzes, 1974*







Maquette for enlarged *Kanawha Landscape VI*

“ Art is a human activity consisting in this, that one man consciously, by means of certain external signs, hands on to others feelings he has lived through, and that others are infected by these feelings and also experience them. If one does not feel deeply stirred in the presence of great pictures, great sculpture or great music, he can be certain that he is living a vastly lower and more restricted life than he could be living. The mechanical world is of our own making, but the real world is one of deep emotional experience. ”

*Leo Tolstoy, "What is Art," 1896*

no ability to adequately communicate in a common language, I felt intimidated when I first started to work on my plaster enlargements. However, that subsided within a few days, after I got to know the factory artisans. Some would stop by, touch the plaster, smile or give a thumbs up. The friendliness of these marble workers, who for generations, had been exposed to different styles of sculpture, relaxed me. Even though they seemed impressed by my ability to work plaster, it was obvious that my abstract style amused them.

Using my small-scale bronze *maquettes*, which I had brought with me from the U.S., I enlarged my finished plasters to the exactness that the finished bronzes would duplicate. After several weeks, the large-scale plasters were complete. At the end of my last day at the studio, after four to five months, several workers stopped by to see the finished work as I prepared for the next step. A bottle of wine appeared and, as it was passed around, each man made a toast. I'm not sure I fully understood their comments, but I felt accepted.

The completed plasters were transported to the studio of a master moldmaker who specialized in making exact, detailed and complicated molds, for wax production. I have long regretted that I didn't ship the molds home, but they were large and, therefore, costly to transport. The molds took much longer than anticipated, and I was anxious to return home.

I sent the molds to the Foundria d'Arte Versiliese for the wax copies and to complete the casting process. After two weeks the wax copies were ready for my final inspection, texture change, and signature.

By spring 1979 the bronze castings were completed and ready for shipping. To speed the process as well as my departure, I hired a professional to handle all the final shipping details, which included documentation stamps, insurance, crating and ocean freight to Newport News, Virginia.

Weeks passed.

Meanwhile, Jack Blanton arranged to have the first showing of the new bronzes included in an exhibition at the Chrysler Museum in Norfolk, Virginia along with works by David Smith,



Alexander Calder, Louise Nevelson, and other important mid-century artists.

I vividly recall picking up the crates when they arrived at the U.S. Customs Service in Newport News and driving directly to the loading dock at the Chrysler Museum. There, with difficulty, I disassembled the expertly made Italian crates while Walter Chrysler, the museum's benefactor, along with the museum's curator, watched in anticipation. My goal of producing large bronzes in Italy was achieved. Here they were, exhibited in a show alongside works by with major contemporary American artists.

After completing the large commissioned bronze sculptures in Italy, I focused on simpler *maquettes* that could be enlarged by me and my assistants in my studio in the U.S.

In the late 1970s after my experiences in Italy, I had time for my work to evolve along the lines of a more hard-edged,

**Kanawha Landscape, VI**  
Pietrasanta, Italy, 1978  
Bronze

*Chrysler Museum exhibition,  
Norfolk, VA, 1979*



geometrical look, which was well suited for enlargements. The new direction of my work ignited a creative burst of energy. From morning to night, I worked and worked. By fall of 1979, I had cast over 20 new bronzes.

*Chrysler Museum  
Exhibition, Norfolk, Va, 1978  
included other works by David  
Smith, Alexander Calder,  
Lerise Wevelson, Mark Tobey,  
and Richard Diebenkorn*

Exhausted, I knew it was time for a break and a vacation. My future wife Sylvia and I made plans to travel to Mexico in August for a four-month adventure. The trip was to be made in a two-door, AMC Hornet, which I'd converted into a sleeper car after removing the back seat and its framework and installing a thick plywood platform slightly larger than a single bed. With a thick piece of foam rubber, sheets, blankets, and pillows, it made a great sleeping space for our 4,000-mile journey through Mexico, Guatemala, and Belize.

That long adventure was one of my most enjoyable and inspirational trips ever, with constant exposure to Mayan and Aztec ruins and native art.

During this trip - deep in the Sierra Madre mountains-- I encountered a very skilled Zapotec Indian stone carver, who was willing to make carved stone enlargements from my models. This visit revived a vision and presented an opportunity to combine stone and bronze, which I'd experimented with as early as 1965. Many years passed while I was busy with commissions, but I never forgot the location of the stone carver. The idea of returning to his studio stuck with me for decades.

That trip to Mexico reinforced an attraction I'd developed to the ancient forms of stelae and totems, which I'd first observed in South America in my Peace Corps days. Upon returning to the U.S., I delved into more large-scale pieces.

As the result of an exhibition in Richmond, Barbara and William Wiltshire commissioned a large bronze for their new home in Goochland, Virginia. (Years later, the Wiltshires donated this sculpture to her alma mater, Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem. It occupies a site on the campus just outside the Charlotte and Philip Hanes Art Gallery).

The timing of the Wilshire commission, its proposed delivery date, and the onset of winter made it impossible for me to cast the bronze in my Aylett studio. While searching for a U.S. foundry located in a more temperate climate, I discovered Frank Colson of Colson Studios in Sarasota, Florida. His new ceramic shell casting techniques intrigued me.

Little did I know that the person who had made Frank's casting techniques possible was Dominick Labino, an internationally known scientist, inventor, and artist, who specialized in glass work. Several of his inventions were used by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) to insulate spacecraft against thermal shock upon re-entry into the earth's atmosphere. Interestingly, several years earlier I'd crossed paths with Dominick when he and I were featured in a two-person exhibition at the University of Richmond's art gallery.

I recall a pleasant lunch with Dominick and his wife at my studio in Aylett. We talked at length about my old-world bronze casting techniques without discussing the possibilities of incorporating his new invention for casting.

I often wonder if this conversation might have inspired the later development of ceramic shell bronze casting since all of Dominick's previous efforts were directed toward glass melting furnaces, glass blowing, and glass compositions. At the close of this wonderful afternoon, the Labinos purchased a small bronze and invited me to their home and studio in Toledo, OH, a trip regrettably never made.

With business to conduct at the Colson Studio and the allure of spending the winter months working in a warm climate, Sylvia and I left for Sarasota in late December 1979, enthusiastic for what lay ahead. We arrived late on Christmas Eve and slept in our sleeper car --with sunroof--under the John Ringling Causeway Bridge. For us, it was a perfect Christmas setting, surrounded by the Sarasota Bay with the moon and stars above us. We were ready for new adventures, new friendships, and new artistic directions.

The pleasant weather and lush tropical surroundings invigorated us. I was ready to find a studio space and start sculpting.

The following day, we secured a small, inexpensive apartment. Then, Frank provided me with studio space in his foundry building. The next four months was a time of intense studio work, learning the new ceramic-shell casting techniques. It differed greatly from my old world technique of investment casting, which incorporated plaster, sand and clay and a long, slow, de-waxing period.



*Foundry crew, Colson Foundry, Sarasota, FL, 1979*



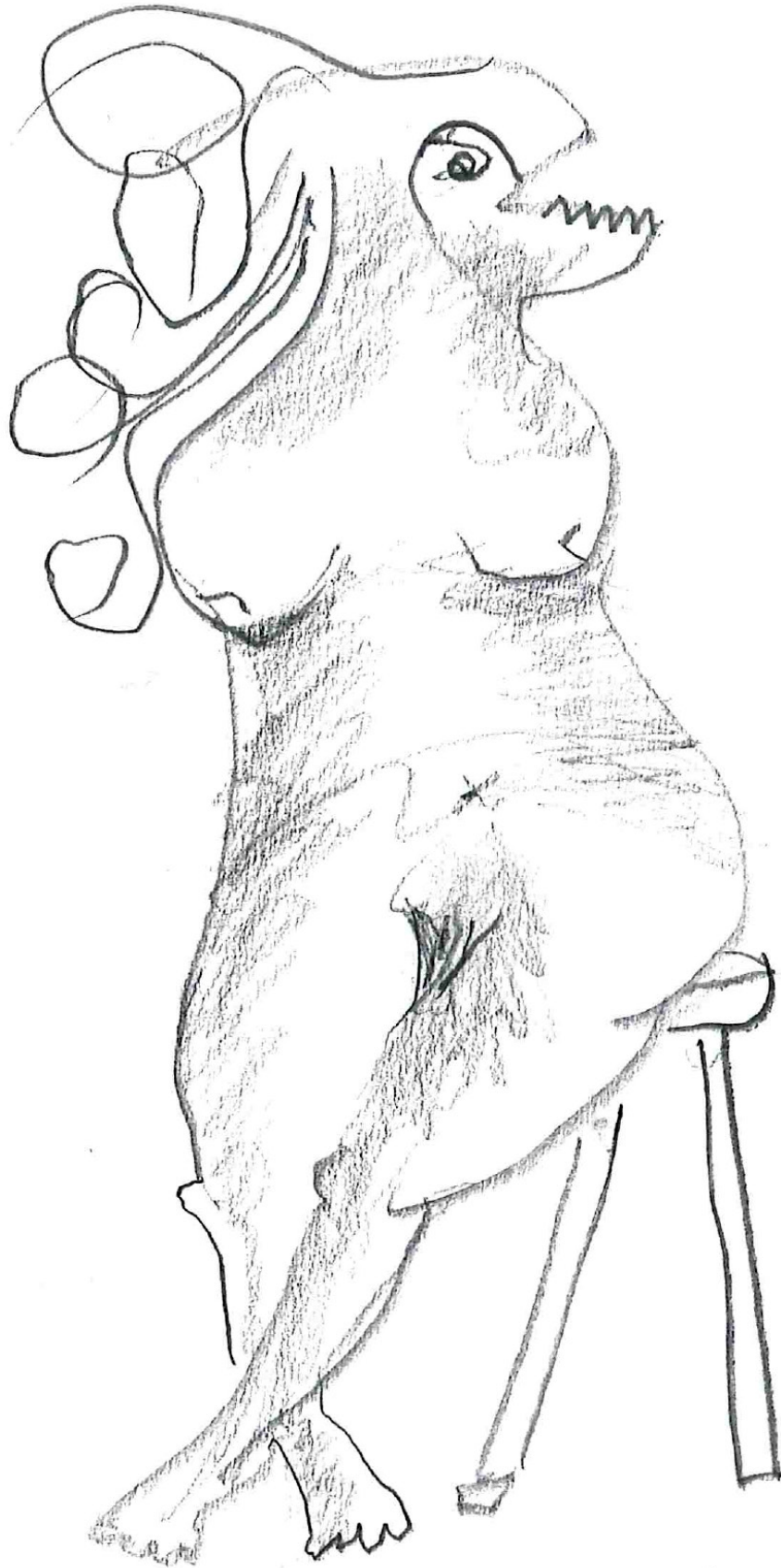
*The rescued house that became the center of the Sarasota compound, 1982 "Fort Peacock"*



“The work of Rubin Peacock lends a feeling of exciting serenity. His sculptures are both controlled and adventures, contained within a space that exudes energy. Rubin is a master of texture, form, and patinas. His bronzes are simple yet complex. Monumental in concept, they serve to challenge the mind.

Frank and I have had the pleasure of living with several of his pieces over the years. We were drawn to Rubin’s work from the very beginning, enjoying its handsome subtlety. One never grows tired of them, for the artist has endowed his work with great visual durability. Visitors notice the bronzes, of course: but we notice them even more. The Peacock sculptures are like living with friends, or perhaps even like living with lovers. They are beautiful and remarkable, bringing with them an element of surprise.”

*Diana Colson, Sarasota, FL*



16.28.16



Ceramic-shell casting rendered obsolete my previous methods of casting, which I had painstakingly learned over a period of two decades. While very different in time and process, both of these methods are based on lost-wax casting.

My work - and the making of it - moved in new directions after that first winter in Sarasota.

Ceramic-shell casting greatly reduced my production time, while the castings became more precise with fewer technical difficulties.

Through Frank and Diana Colson, I met many new friends, including other artists and foundry workers. During that first stay in Sarasota, I was drawn to an overgrown vacant lot, where I would often go on studio breaks to enjoy sunshine and serenity. On the concrete steps leading to a house long gone, I'd often have my lunch. Remarkably, as we were about to return to Virginia, a "For Sale" sign appeared. As it had become one of my favorite spots, I wasted no time calling about the lot. Finding it affordable, I snapped it up with the hope of someday building a winter studio.

As luck would have it, the following year I spotted a house that was either going to be moved or demolished to make way for a hospital building. I bought the house and moved it to my newly acquired lot.

In my third winter of working in Sarasota, I moved another building to the property: a 1940s metal building, which had once served as a military fire station at the local airport during World War II. This building anchored my studio space. To it, I made additions in every direction to accommodate a foundry and mold making space. A friend and art force in Sarasota, Virginia Hoffman, dubbed my enclosed compound with its high metal fencing and iron gate "Fort Peacock."

Usually, when returning to Virginia in the spring after a winter in Sarasota, I brought with me a trailer full of new bronzes to be finished at my Aylett studio. Pivoting from one location and one process to another, the cycle of work continued year-round for decades.



## Totems and Stelae



### **Strong Man Stele**

Aylett Art Foundry, 1979  
Aylett, VA  
Bronze

### **Lily Pond Stele**

Aylett Art Foundry, 1985  
Aylett, VA  
Bronze

A stele is an upright slab or pillar bearing an inscription or design, often inscribed or carved in relief. In ancient times, stelae served as gravestones, monuments, or boundary markers. Similar to stelae are totems, usually animal or other natural figures that spiritually represents a clan or tribe. Typically, totems are designed with animals, people or spirit figures of ancestral significance. Totems, like stelae, commemorate important events and memorialize family or tribal stories.

I have always been intrigued with the figurative presence and other-worldly character of stelae/totems, the mysteriousness of their details and hauntingly evocative hieroglyphs that hearken back to ancient sources.

“Not all of Peacock’s work is meant for monumental scale: some pieces are designed for intimate pedestal or garden settings. But there’s a monumental quality to these pieces also. You get a feeling they want to be large.”

*Arthur Nadel, Sarasota Art Review, 1992*



**Stele Construction**

Aylett Art Foundry, 1980

Sarasota, FL

Bronze

*Exhibited at VMFA, Virginia Sculptors Show, 1980*



**Bobby Chandler Memorial I**

Aylett Art Foundry, 1979

Aylett, VA

Bronze



**Untitled Figure**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 2018  
Sarasota, FL  
Bronze





**Untitled Courtyard *Maquette***  
Aylett Art Foundry, 2010  
Sarasota, FL  
Bronze





San Agustin, Columbia, 1965

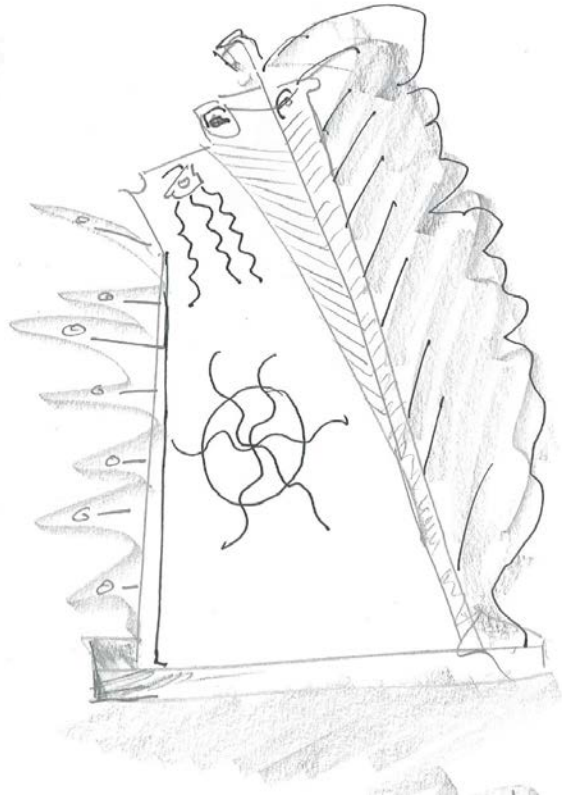
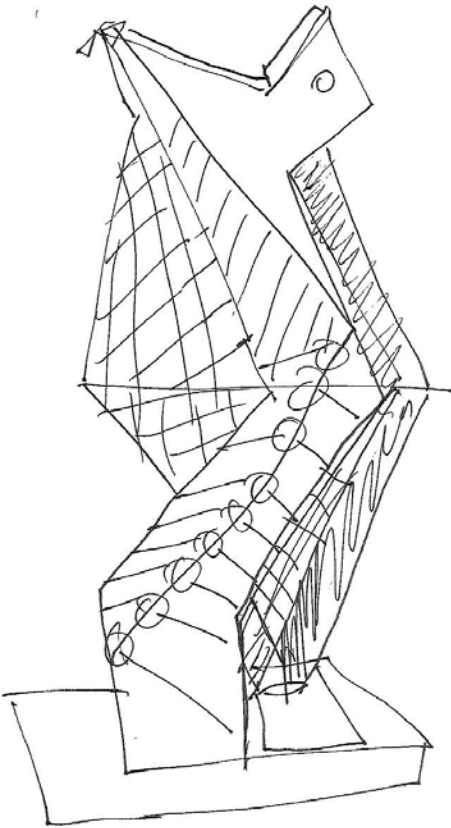
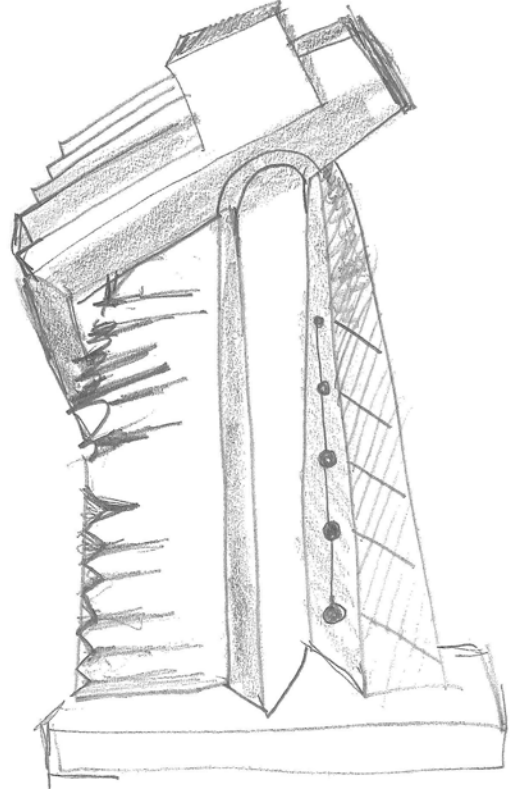
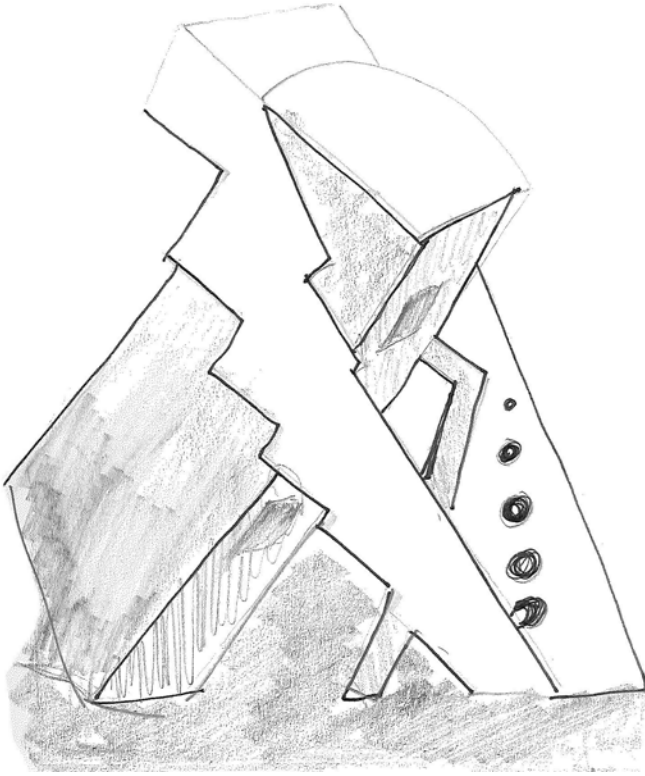
*This little tour guide led me to many secret locations of stelae in cornfields, woods and meadows long before the area became a popular historic site.*

“His forms rise and fall with the weight and movement of natural elements - the way huge rocks find their relationship along river banks, a phenomenon Peacock has observed with fascination.”

*Teresa Annas, The Virginian - Pilot and Ledger Star, Norfolk, VA, July 10, 1983*



**Untitled Stele**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 1982  
Aylett, VA  
Bronze





**Untitled *Maquette***  
Aylett Art Foundry, 2014  
Sarasota, FL  
Bronze



**Broken Wing Stele Aylett**  
Art Foundry, 1995  
Sarasota, FL  
Bronze



**One-Eyed Stele**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 1979  
Aylett, VA  
Bronze



*Three bronze maquettes, Sarasota, FL, 1995*

# 1980S

In spring, 1980, I made changes to my foundry in Aylett, to accommodate ceramic shell casting. I went to work producing many new bronzes for a fall exhibition at the Institute for Contemporary Art at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts. The positive reception of that exhibition and the many new commissions that followed challenged my ability to cast work in Aylett plus create more work in Sarasota. But it was a challenge that I managed. In my early 40s, I was energetic and doing what I'd always wanted to do.

The bronze commissioned by the Wiltshires became the centerpiece for the VMFA exhibition, attracting additional commissions. Among them, was a large-scale bronze for the home of Jeanette and Eric Lipman, dramatically situated on a hill overlooking the James River. This sculpture is now in the collection of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts.

Another significant supporter of the arts in Richmond and a collector of my work at this important time in my career was Kip Kephart. For him, I created annual memorial sculptures over two decades to honor his many friends. Kip supported me until his death with open-ended commissions that gave me complete artistic freedom. This allowed me to experiment and grow in new directions, which included hard-edged, biomorphic, and totemic designs.

Numerous sculptures commissioned by Kip are now in the collections of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, the Valentine Museum, Virginia Commonwealth University, Virginia Union University, Longwood University, the University of Richmond, and his home Cary Hill sculpture garden in Charles City County.

For a time in the early 1980s, I was offered the use of a friend's apartment in New York City while I considered branching out into the New York scene. I'd take breaks from the search for studio space to visit galleries, museums, and other artists.

But early on I realized that my roots are in the South. The complications of New York City were a distraction and limited me creatively. That art world's emphasis on newness and novelty ran counter to my impulse to create works that are inwardly searching and enduring.

*Opposite Page:*  
**Memorial Bronze**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 1994  
Sarasota, FL  
Bronze





The warmth, pace and gentle rhythms of the South better suited me.

With its vibrant art scene and international mix of people, Washington DC attracted my interest. My exhibitions at the Franz Bader and Sidney Michelson galleries there in the 1970s were successful and my network of connections expanded. I purchased a fire-damaged building in need of restoration on New Jersey avenue, in downtown DC. For several years, Sylvia and I stayed there off and on.

The restoration was well underway in 1985 when my seven-year-old daughter Corelia, came from St. Remy, France to live with us. Now a family of three, our lifestyle required adjustment for all the considerations happily made for a child. Balancing homes, studios, and lives in Virginia, Florida, and DC made little sense, so we sold the house in DC to renew my concentration in Richmond, where I had a solid circle of supporters.

That year, I purchased an abandoned, pre-Civil War commercial building at the intersection of historic Brook road and Broad street in downtown Richmond, where I maintain an apartment and studio.

This is an unusual building, even to today's eyes. Built on a diagonal to conform to a very early, Colonial-era road, 303 Brook Road is sharply and strangely angled. It caught my eye in the early 1970s and stayed in my mind for more than a decade before I actually bought it.

Throughout my life, historic buildings seemed to appear almost magically, presenting irresistible opportunities for developing interesting studio and living spaces. For me, the process of renewal



*Three decades later my studio is in the center of Richmond's Arts District. I miss the anonymity and authenticity of the early neighborhood which has been erased like the Coca-Cola sign on the wall next to my balcony.*



involved in restoring an old building parallels the creative process of making art. I am energized by both. Like my art, these spaces became products of my imagination and my own labor, providing me with suitable environments for the ever-changing direction of my art.

Interestingly, the “For Sale” sign for 303 Brook Road—the building I hadn’t been able to forget—had been hanging for so long that it faded into the same condition as the graffitied, crumbling building it advertised.

I called the real estate agent to make an appointment to tour the property. When we met, I was armed with measuring tape and flashlight as I knew this exploration would be more akin to spelunking than touring. And it was. All the windows had been boarded for many years, leaving it in total darkness. It was filled



*Painting and wax working studio,  
303 Brook Road, Richmond, VA*

with musty rubbish from decades gone by. The plaster wall over the bricks had mostly fallen into the floor and the plaster and batten ceilings were barely hanging on. My one question to the real estate agent: “How do we reach the second floor since there were no stairs or indication of where they might have been?” His answer: “There is no upstairs.” I’m not sure how he missed entire floors, but he did, to my advantage.

Walking the Jackson Ward neighborhood then, I found mostly vacant buildings. Despite their age and their decades of neglect, they were still beautiful to me.

Two days later, on an early Sunday morning, I loaded an extension ladder on my old truck and Sylvia, Corelia and I drove to Richmond equipped with a flashlight, hammer, crowbar and a clipboard with the realtor’s card to make us appear less suspicious. We parked on the sidewalk as close to the building as possible, securing the ladder inside of the bed of the truck. Corelia--brave and adventurous - was the first to go up the ladder, with me close on her heels and Sylvia bringing up the rear. We reached a two-foot ledge where we could safely stand and I proceeded to pry open the tin that covered the window opening.

When inside, we stood silently for a few seconds - - in shock - - at the abysmal state of a space untouched for years. Pigeons had



taken over, depositing several inches of dung on every square inch of the floor and up to two feet around their favorite roosting spots, creating stalactites of waste. While I was undeterred and could only see what possibilities, my daughter implored in wobbly English: “Oh, Papa, don’t buy this one.”

*What had been a grocery store turned out to be a great studio space.*

After a more thorough inspection, I was sold on my dream of making it my downtown studio/apartment/gallery. It had been love since first sight, love of an enduring kind. Undaunted by the prospect of a long restoration, I was dedicated to the challenge. From its improbable beginning, 303 Brook Road exceeded my expectations for a satisfying environment to live, work and exhibit my art to this day.

When I think back on the various studios that have served as my workplaces, I’m not sure that the more primitive workshops haven’t served me as well as the better-equipped spaces that I have also occupied. I believe the search was about finding a place to be alone, to concentrate, to work my mind and to challenge me physically.





## *Spirited Geometry*

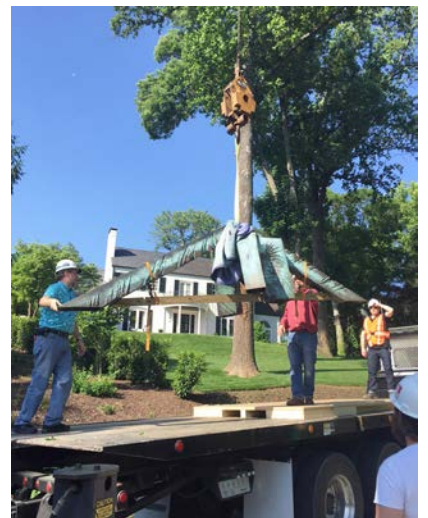
Just as paintings often begin with a sketch, large sculptures evolve from scale models in plaster, wax or clay called *maquettes*. These models represent original ideas—newly formed—before their completion as finished products. For decades, I experimented with shapes and ideas through *maquettes*, sculptures in bronze or combinations of bronze and stone.

Beginning in the 1980s I created a series of *maquettes*, later commissioned as bronze sculptures by private collectors to enliven their gardens, courtyards and interior spaces. Examples include “Pentangle” (shown left, which was commissioned by Jeanette Lipman and Eric Lipman. On the following page is “Wedged Stele” at The Carpenter Co. Headquarters in Richmond.

My *maquettes* began with a personal interpretation and approach to making stelae and totems. Later, I began incorporating boldly defined geometric shapes into those organic forms. This animated fusion of styles is intended to create a sense that spirits or natural forces inhabit the pieces.



“Pentangle” arriving at the Lipman’s property in 1982



It is being moved to VMFA, 2017



**Wedged Stele**  
Aylett Foundry,  
Aylett, VA 1985  
Bronze

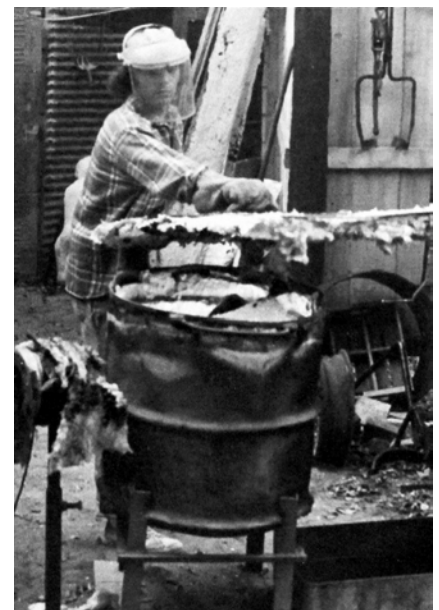
The Carpenter Co. Headquarters,  
Richmond, VA

*Opposite Page*  
**Wedged Stele #2**  
Aylett Art Foundry,  
Aylett, VA 1986 Bronze

Private Collection, Washington, DC



*Photo Credit: Meredith Mickelson*



*Photo Credit: Henrietta Near*



# THE PROCESS OF BRONZE CASTING

*by Sylvia Peacock Grant*

People seem impressed when told that Rubin casts his own work at his own foundry. They probably have visions of high tech equipment, motorized lifts and a big staff. When I began helping in the foundry in 1979, it was basically a few sheds with very basic tools, mostly fabricated by Rubin.

I always said it was his knowledge that actually made the foundry. At that time he was using investment molds for casting, which had not changed much since the Bronze Age. Investment casting was complicated. In starting a small sculpture, such as the cube, the wax original would be covered in dozens of spews in order for the molten bronze to flow through them into the form. The mold that held the original wax was made of plaster and clay, was several times larger than the wax it held, heavy, and had to spend a week in a gas fired kiln. Rubin would build the kiln out of fire bricks around the molds that were to be cast.

During that week, Rubin had to keep a vigilant eye on everything, adjusting the temperature, gradually increasing the heat until finally all the wax had burned out. After they cooled, he would take the kiln apart brick by brick. Once the bronze was poured, the molds had to be chipped and hammered off, leaving the bronze sculpture. The finishing process was very labor intensive. The spews, which surrounded the piece like a cage had to be ground off. Then the finish work could begin.

In 1980, Rubin was introduced to the shell coat method of casting and it changed everything. It involved coating the wax with slurry, about the consistency of a milkshake, rolling it in several grades of special sand over and over until the casting mold was formed.

The shell method did away with the spider web of spews and usually there was only need for one spew at the top of the mold. The main obstacle was keeping the slurry from hardening. It had to be stirred constantly 24 hours to keep it from setting up. Frank Colson of Sarasota, Florida, discovered a suspension additive used in the food industry and it worked in the slurry. This breakthrough made everything a bit simpler. Also, Rubin was introduced to other space age materials that transformed the furnace and eliminated the use of the brick kiln. What had taken a week, now only took

about 30 minutes. The old kiln burned all the wax, but the new burn-out furnace let us retrieve about 1/3rd of the wax for reuse. However, even though the casting process had become a little less complicated, the finishing work was still demanding. Hours of grinding, welding, banging, and more grinding would finally render a beautiful new sculpture. But, that is not the end. The chemicals for the patina had to be applied and finally the piece could have the final step of applying wax to protect the finish. Then, dealing with delivery, the proper pedestal and actual installment of the sculpture was another job, which took a lot of coordination, planning and just plain effort.

Artist Henrietta Near photographed the casting process. She printed beautiful black and white photographs showing a step by step story of bronze casting. She was invited to exhibit her photographs at Washington and Lee University in Lexington, Virginia. Rubin gave a lecture and presented a slide show to accompany the photo exhibit. The auditorium was filled. At one point during the lecture, Rubin paused and said, "Now we are half way through the process." The whole auditorium groaned. If there were any aspiring sculptors in the student body attending the talk, perhaps they changed their minds that day.

I helped a little with wax work and, also, helped pour the molten bronze. Once Rubin taught me what he needed me to do, it was like a dance. We rarely talked during the process, but instinctively moved through the castings. I joked that he was the brain and I was the brawn. We poured thousands of pounds of bronze over the 20 years that I worked at the Aylett Art Foundry. We did wear aprons, hats, jackets and face masks but they were not true foundry protective clothing. I feel most proud that during those years of very dangerous work we never had an injury or burn. I credit part of that to the fact that Rubin really knows what he's doing. Holding the crucible in its pouring shank is like having a miniature personal volcano in your hands. Rubin often said, "Once you look into the crucible you are never the same."

Rubin is driven by a relentless passion to produce sculpture. There are many other media that would have been an easier road to producing art work, but bronze spoke to Rubin. His untiring dedication is evident in the hundreds of sculptures he has made.



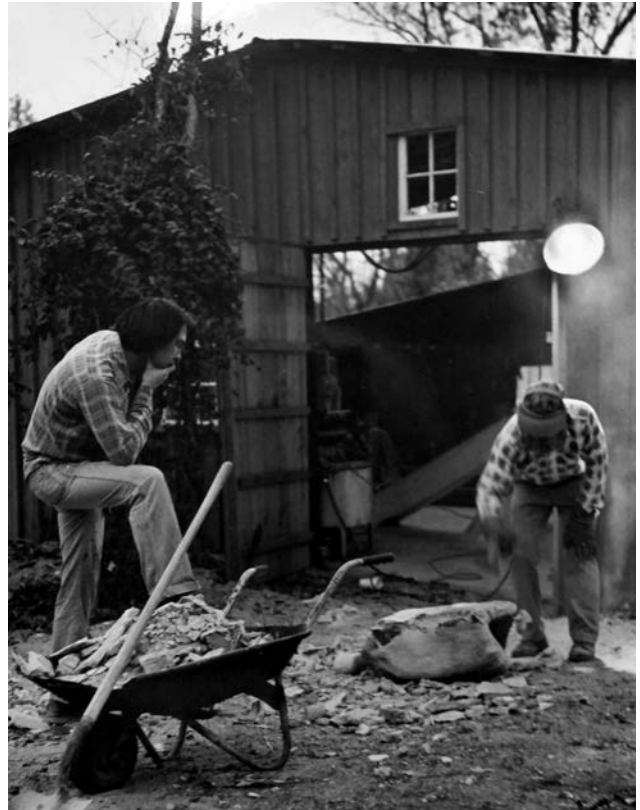
*Preparing wax segments of "Pentangle"*



*Photo Credit: Henrietta Near*



*Kevin Brown, my foundry assistant through many bronze projects, pouring one bronze segment of "Pentangle".*



*A cast segment and the cooling process.*



*Here's a segment of the sculpture after a portion of the shell has been removed.*



*Several weeks after the various segments are cleaned and the welding process begins.*



*Surface finishing*



*Applying a patina*



## *Why bronze, Rubin?*

*Other materials are easier to work with, less costly, technically less demanding. But bronze is strong, bold yet responsive. It shows the human touch. It doesn't lie. There's no room for cheating. It has purity. I am willing to go through the agony to get the perfect cast.*









**Inca Passage**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 2004  
Sarasota, FL  
Bronze

*Previous Page:*  
**Geometric Rest**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 1985  
Aylett, VA  
Bronze



**Ancient Arroyo**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 1986  
Aylett, VA  
Bronze

“An unceasing energy flows through each piece, crossing and criss-crossing back on itself, within the stillness of its shape. There are hints of living things trapped within the confines of inert bronze, imprisoned in metal bonds.”

*Barbara Green, Richmond Newspapers, Richmond, VA, 1982*



*Constructing the original plaster mock-up for "Winged Stele"*



**Winged Stele**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 1988  
Sarasota, FL  
Bronze

*Final finishing after one year of work*



**Cube Series**

Aylett Art Foundry, 1979

Aylett, VA

Bronze

“...nearly every work combines the rough organic quality of nature --- something with the spirit of a living mass, the strength of a tree trunk - in dramatic confrontation with the machined blocks and beams.”

*Robert Merritt, Richmond News Leader, November 22, 1980*



**Ascending Spirit**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 1979  
Aylett, VA  
Bronze

“Opposing Forces’...It’s a cluster of geometric forms, colliding and pushing each other higher, like shattered segments of an ice flow...”

-Marty Fugate, Herald Tribune, 1988



**Opposing Forces**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 1988  
Sarasota, FL  
Bronze





**Walking Elephant**

Aylett Art Foundry, 2001

Sarasota, FL

Bronze

“The warm brown-gold of metal peeks out in patches through a patina of green-hued turquoise. The coloring enforces each piece’s timelessness, suggests weathering under sun, rain and wind. The works might be monolith from a prehistoric age, surviving into modern times.”

-Barbara Green, Richmond Newspapers, Richmond, VA, 1982



**Ancestral Terrain**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 1980  
Aylett, VA  
Bronze

Blanton Gallery, Longwood University,  
Farmville, VA

“The sculptor’s recent works speak in forms that might have existed for thousand of years. Their shapes are geometric, as the shapes of rocks are geometric and like rocks, they have a settled quality of existence.”

*Barbara Green, Richmond Newspapers, Richmond, VA, 1982*



**Lost Canyon**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 1980  
Aylett, VA  
Bronze

*Photo Credit: Ronald Jennings*

“Emerging from centuries of sculptural tradition in bronze, they are totems very much of today. They pry into the idioms of the 20th century yet retain the influence and sincerity of the European past, they merge the architectonic rigidity of blocks and beams with the organic strength and flowing force of nature.”

*Robert Merritt, Richmond News Leader, November 22, 1980*



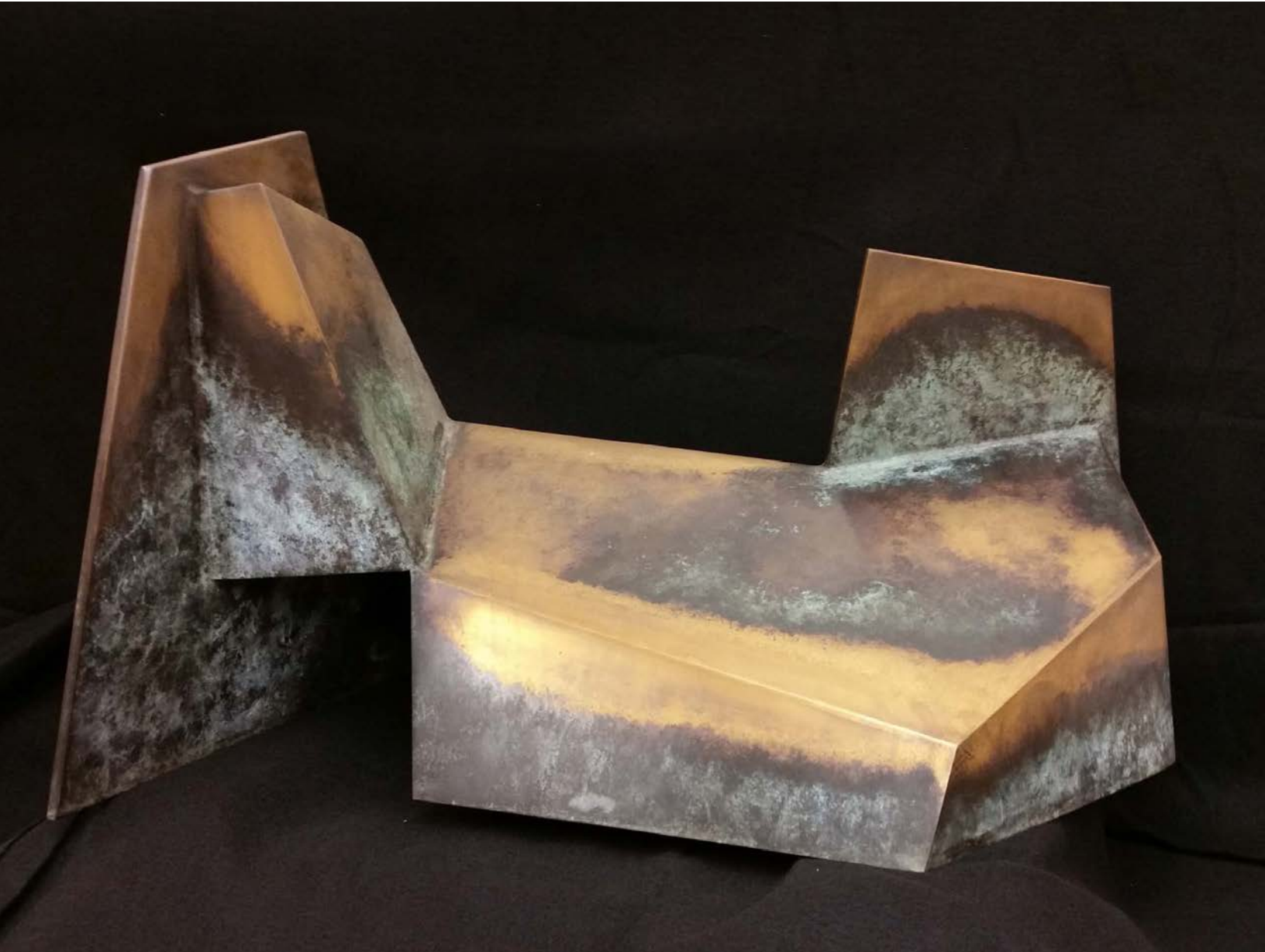
**Bobby Chandler Memorial II**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 1981  
Sarasota, FL  
Bronze

“ The symbolisms are secretive, incised icons seeming to pay tribute to his own Catawba ancestry, creating ritualistic moods that speak from the discolored patina and roughened edges.”

*-Robert Merritt, Richmond News Leader, November 22, 1980*



***Courtyard Maquette***  
Aylett Art Foundry, 1986  
Sarasota, FL  
Bronze



**Geometry at Rest #2**

Aylett Art Foundry, 1985

Sarasota, FL

Bronze

Virginia Commonwealth University

*Opposite Page Top:*  
**Scalene Triangles and Irregular Polygon**

Aylett Art Foundry, 1984

Aylett, VA

Bronze

*Opposite Page Bottom:*  
**Obtuse Triangles I**

Aylett Art Foundry, 1984

Aylett, VA

Bronze





**Obtuse Triangles II**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 1984  
Aylett, VA  
Bronze



**Obtuse Triangles III**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 1984  
Aylett, VA  
Bronze





**Scalene Triangles**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 1999  
Sarasota, FL  
Bronze



***Triad Maquette***

Aylett Art Foundry, 1979

Aylett, VA

Bronze

“The cast bronze sculpture of Rubin Peacock seems to emerge from a timeless appreciation of form, unity, tension, and mysticism. The works stand so solidly, so unshakable in their concentration of energy and purity of craftsmanship.”

*Robert Merritt, Richmond News Leader, Richmond, VA, November 22, 1980*



**Triad**  
Colson Casting Service,/Aylett Art Foundry, 1980  
Sarasota, FL  
Bronze

*Photo Credit: Ron Jennings*

Wake Forest University



*Applying Patina*

*Opposite Page:*  
**Frozen Geometry**  
Karger Foundry, 1995  
Richmond, VA  
Bronze

A private collection,  
Pottstown, PA



**Blue Geometry**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 1993  
Aylett, VA  
Powder Coat, Aluminum

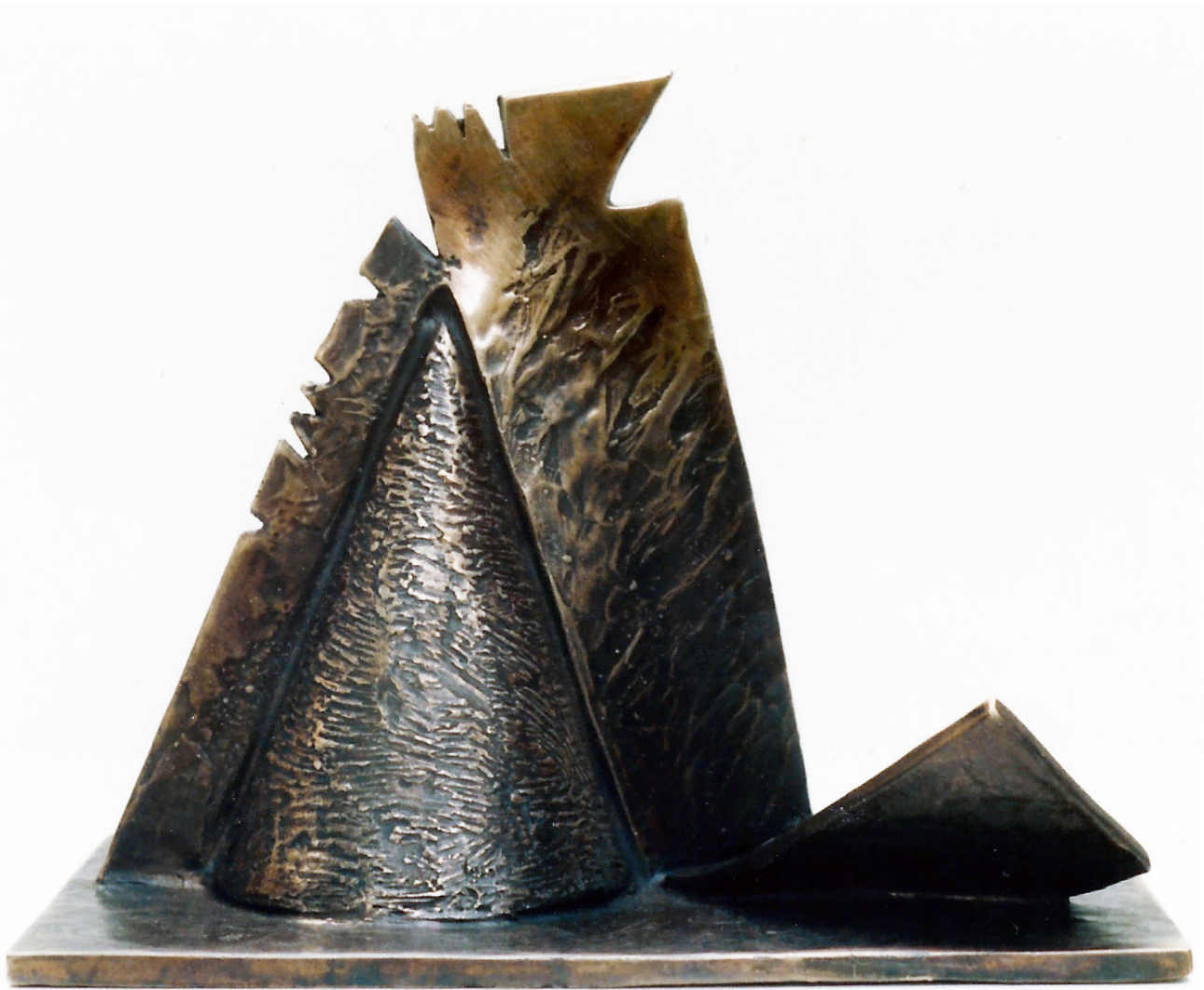




**America's Gateway**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 1984  
Aylett, VA  
Bronze

America's Gateway Park, Miami, FL





**Flaming Teepee**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 1989  
Sarasota, FL  
Bronze

“A familiar feature of Peacock’s bronzes are small figures incised into the metal forms. They represent the sun, among other things, and they have become a kind of trademark. They’re made-up symbols, the sculptor said. ‘I do them as reminders of, oh, say our ancestral past. That could mean cavemen. Some of the symbols have Indian connotations. They’re the human touch. The scoring, the hatch marks are earth marks - the earth may have made them. The incisions are man’s touch.’”

*Arthur Nadel, Sarasota Arts Review, Sarasota, FL, 1990*





**Impromptu Sculpture**  
Summer, 1980  
Aylett, VA  
Split Fence Rails and Welded Steel



**Quarceta**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 1980  
Aylett, VA  
Bronze

*Exhibited at VMFA Collectors' Circle, 1980*

# *Multi-Layered Landscapes*

My bronze relief tablets evolved over decades of drawing, painting and applying surface textures to bronze sculptures in a personalized form of calligraphy. My paintings and bronzes have always had close relationship to each other. Acid-based patinas are applied to accent the painterly textures of the bronze reliefs.

## **Reflections**

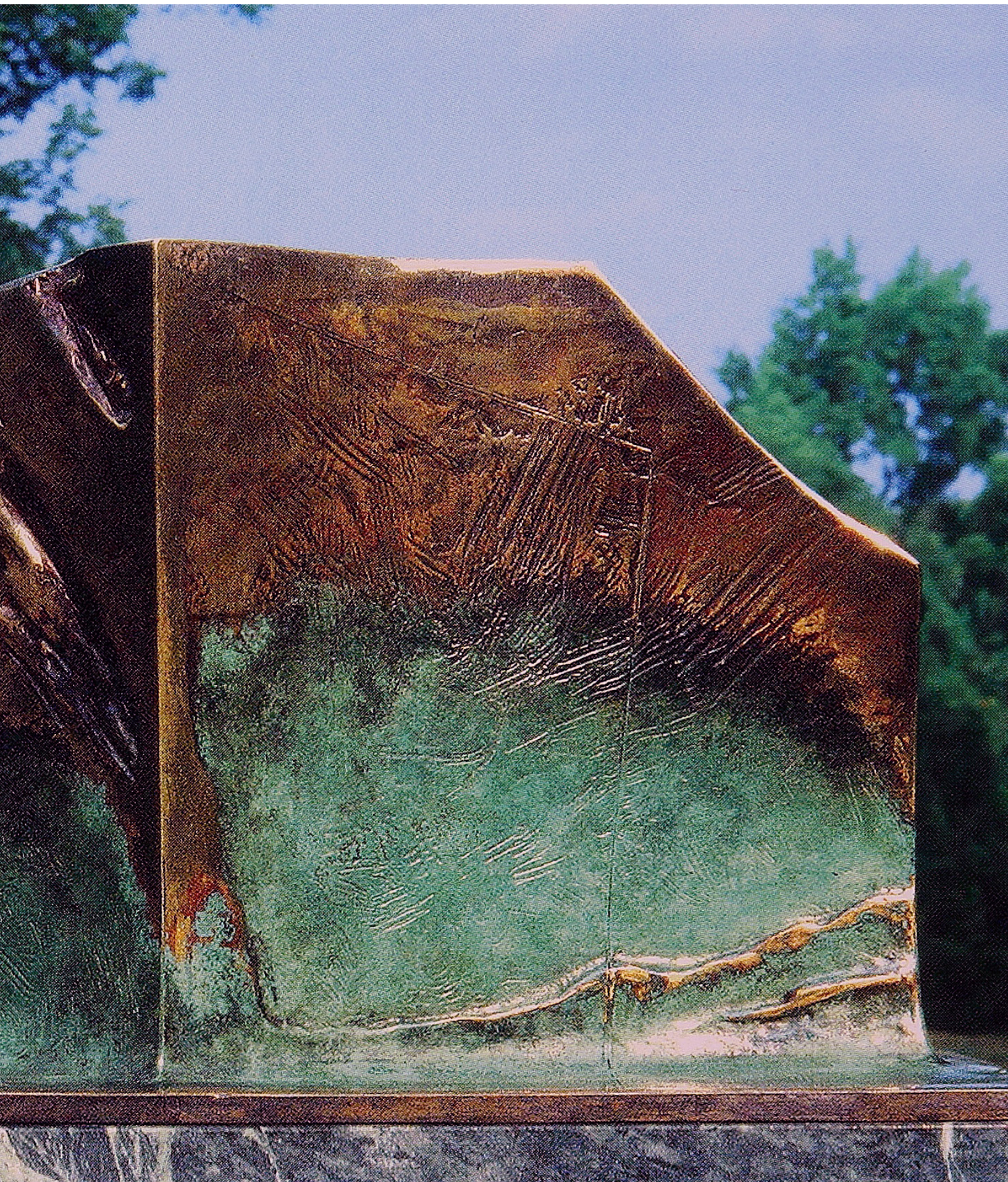
Aylett Art Foundry, 1991

Aylett, VA

Bronze

Virginia Museum of Fine Arts







*Surface detail*



*Finishing work in my studio*



**Fragmented Geometry**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 1994  
Aylett, VA  
Bronze



**Whale House**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 1993  
Aylett, VA  
Bronze



**Silhouetted Geometry**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 1987  
Aylett, VA  
Bronze



**Paradise**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 1992  
Aylett, VA  
Bronze



*Concept for double layered industrial cut metal*



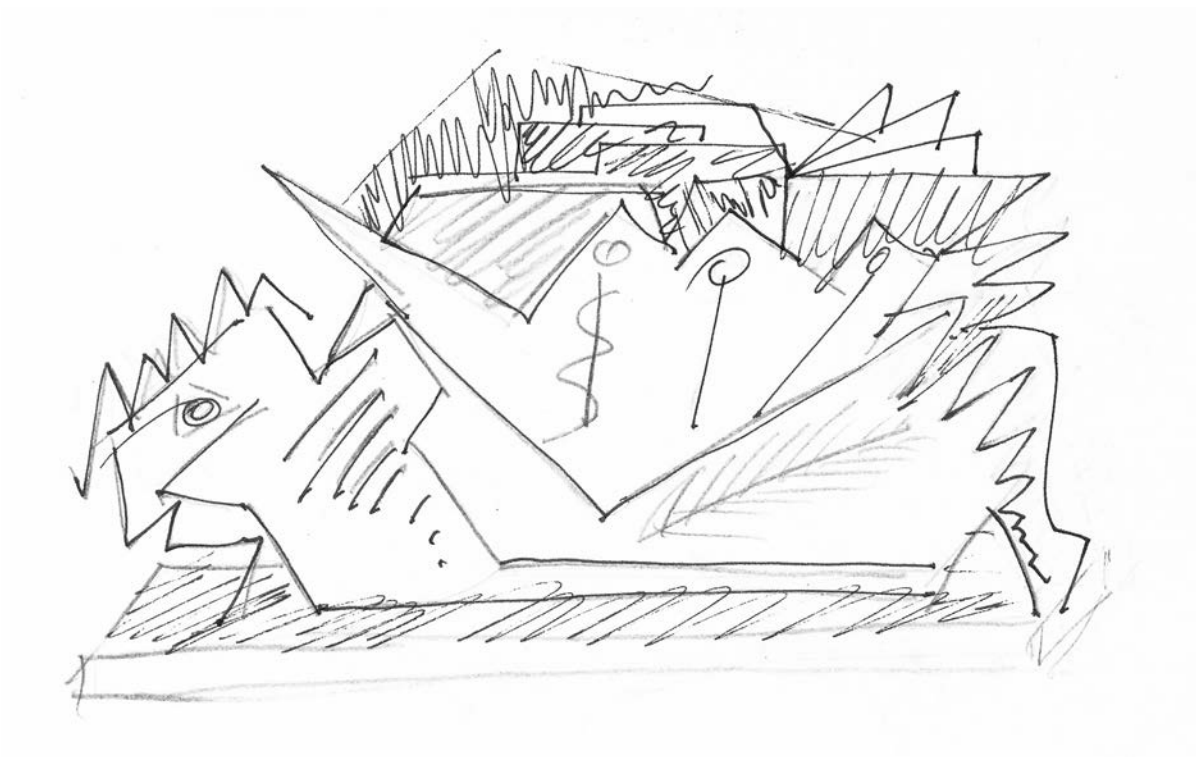
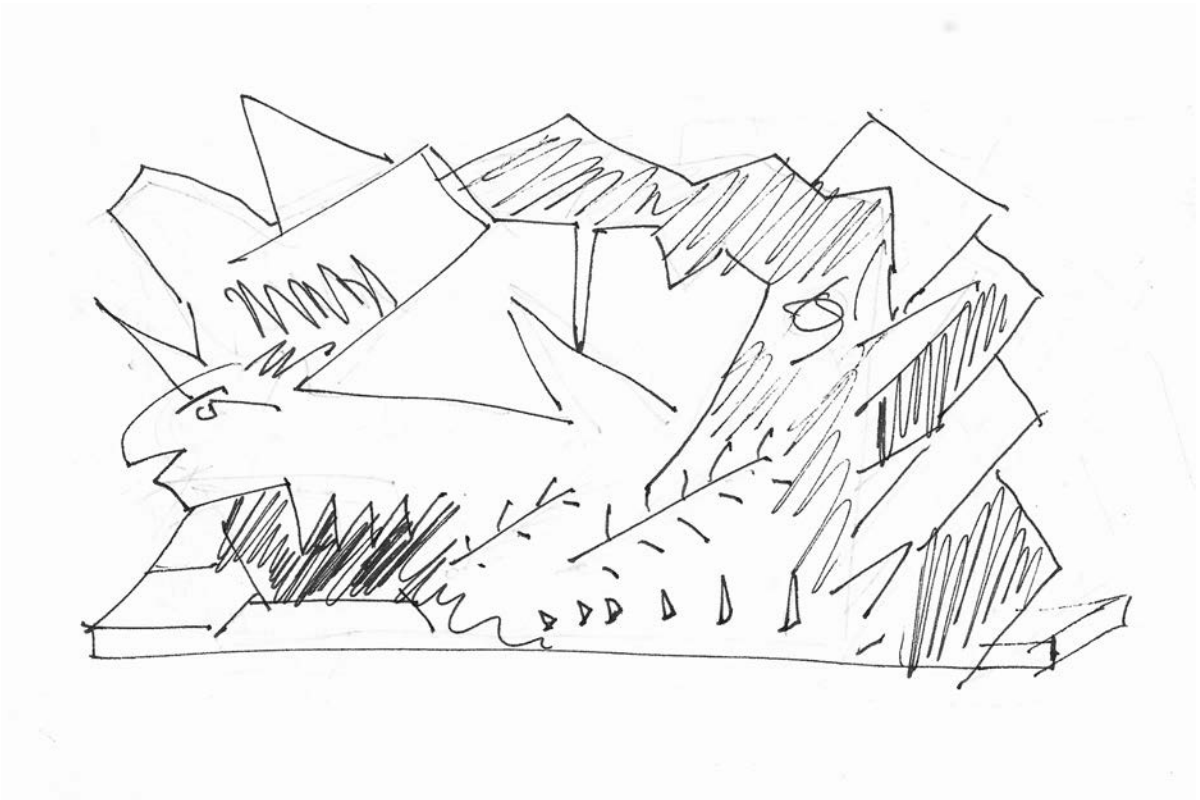


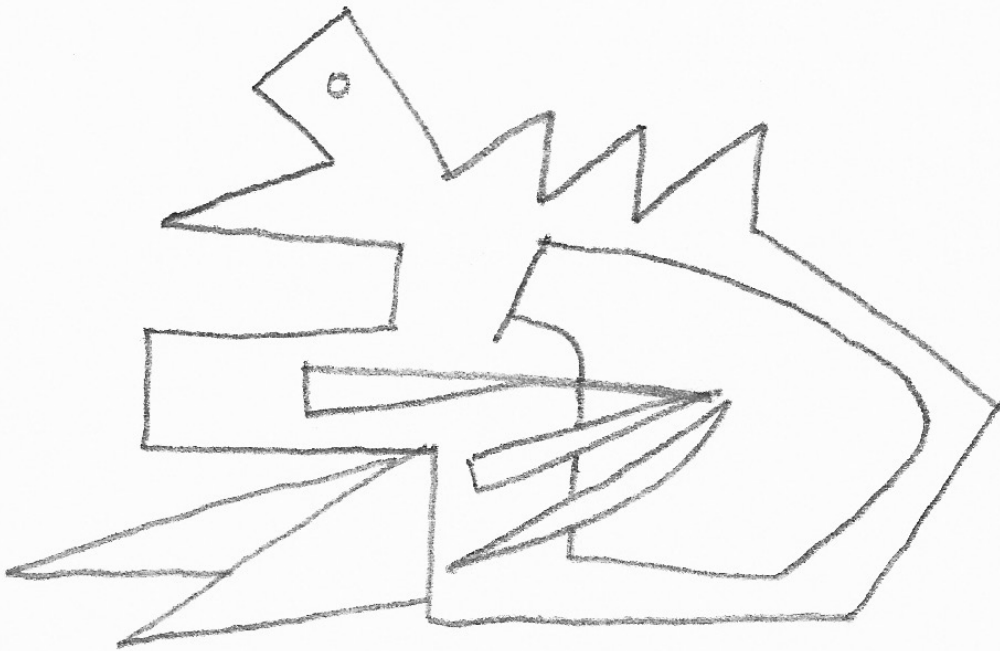
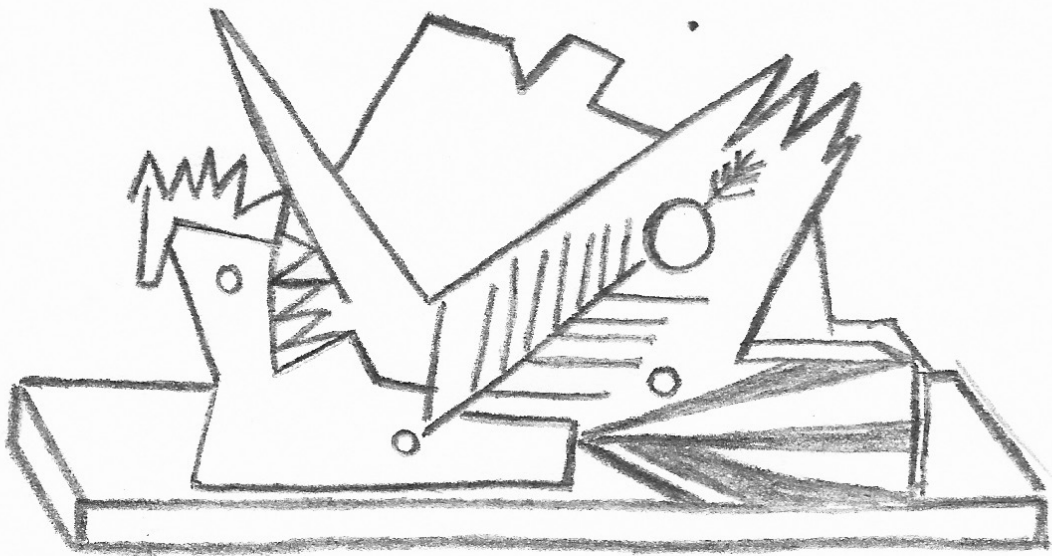
“Fine art addresses itself not only to the eye but also to the imagination. The eye takes notice of ten different qualities of objects: light and darkness, colour and substance, form and position, distance and nearness, movement and rest. It is through his depiction of these in his work that the artist reaches our minds and animates our thoughts.”

*William Gaines, program director in a VMFA lecture, 1969*



**Butterfly Chief**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 2015  
Sarasota, FL  
Bronze



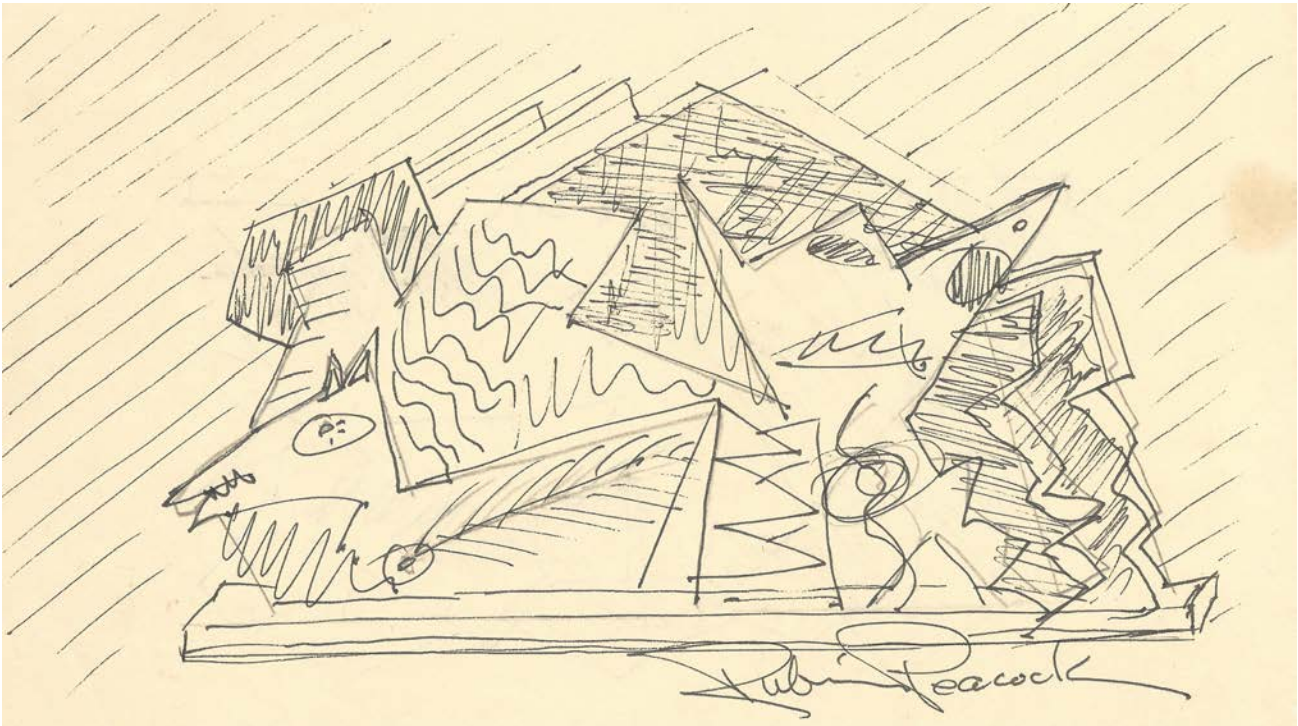


*Sketches, 2012*



**Broken Geometry**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 1990  
Aylett, VA  
Bronze

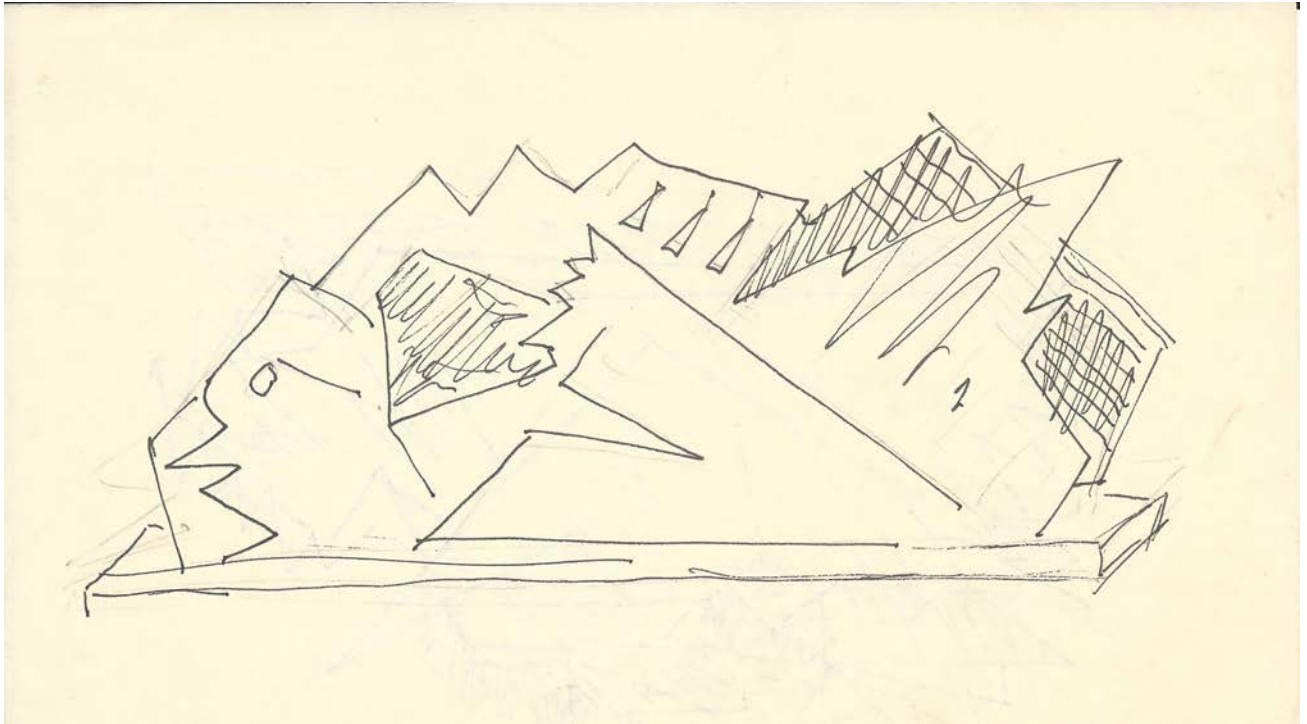
*In the collection of Valentine Museum*



*Sketch, 2013*



**Geometric Wall Series**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 1986  
Aylett, VA  
Bronze



*Sketch, 2013*



**Geometric Wall Series**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 1986  
Aylett, VA  
Bronze

# THE 1990S

A directional change in my work is always refreshing. The build-up to a new series can last for months, even years. With my studios, foundries and homes finally complete and my cyclical migration between them established, the 1990s provided some rhythmic pauses with time for artistic exploration.

I began a series of strapped bronzes. By adding a network of thin wax straps to almost-finished wax *maquettes*, I found I could create an element of visual tension to the work. A long-simmering interest in the sculptural combination of stone and bronze bubbled to the surface and I became intrigued with the harnessing effect of bronze wrapped around stone. It spoke to me of human problem solving during the Stone Age and Bronze Age.

My process for creating these sculptures required a smooth volcanic, fused sandstone that could withstand 2,000-degree temperatures and I knew exactly where to find it: a small village located deep in the Sierra Madre mountains of Mexico.

Throughout the 1990s, I made frequent excursions to Mexico, Cuba, Guatemala, and Nicaragua, studying the sites of ancient



*Mayan ruins, Mexico 1999*





**George Mason Memorial**

Aylett Art Foundry, 1989

Aylett, VA

Bronze

My 1989 proposal for the George Mason memorial, commissioned by Gunston Hall (Mason's home) was designed to rise to a height of 16 feet in the center of the reflecting pool on the National Mall in Washington D.C. Mason's Virginia Declaration of Rights, which served as the basis for the U.S. Bill Rights, is abstractly referenced in the bronze. The project, unveiled by Virginia Senator Joseph V. Gartlan at a large celebration, was close to implementation when a new governing board at Gunston Hall scrapped plans in favor of a traditional statue of Mason, despite scant evidence of his physical appearance.



**Spirit of El Secco I, II, and III**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 2014  
Sarasota, FL  
Bronze & Volcanic Stone





*Discussing designs with a Zapotec stone carver*

civilizations and local art. On one trip to Mexico with my friend Cameron Cardy, I looked for a stone carver I had met on an earlier trip only to discover he had died.

Disappointed, Cameron and I continued to drive deep into the mountains of Mexico, visiting Indian ruins, but happy just to be there. By chance, we came upon an entire village of stone carvers. I was ecstatic and immediately forged contacts.

The following year, I returned with several *maquettes* for enlargement, pieces that later would be incorporated into combinations of bronze and stone.

In addition to those pieces, I created a series of flat and layered bronze tablets with sharply incised and relief surfaces.

In 1998 Sylvia and I parted ways, but remained close friends until her death until 2018. I am grateful for the years we had together, for the companionship, the shared dreams and adventures, so many of which, remain alive in my work.



III



**Bull Fish**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 2013  
Sarasota, FL  
Bronze & Volcano Stone



**Horned Stele**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 2013  
Sarasota, FL  
Bronze & Volcano Stone





## *Strapped Bronzes*

Always aware of the visual importance of controlling tension and stability, I modified the traditional use of bronze to suggest a possibly ritualistic relationship between these two natural elements.



**Strapped Cube**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 2012  
Sarasota, FL  
Bronze





**Alligator Ride**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 2012  
Sarasota, FL  
Bronze and Volcanic Stone



**Melodic Contour I**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 2009  
Mexico/Sarasota, FL  
Bronze & Stone



**Melodic Contour II**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 2009  
Sarasota, FL  
Bronze





**Controlled Geometry**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 2011  
Sarasota, FL  
Bronze

*Opposite Page:*  
**Silhouette Delineation**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 2011  
Sarasota, FL  
Bronze



**Vertical Integration I**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 2005  
Sarasota, FL  
Bronze



**Stabilizzatore Verticale I**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 2010  
Sarasota, FL  
Bronze



**Undulating Organic Gestures with Straps**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 2013  
Sarasota, FL  
Bronze





**Seamstress**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 2013  
Sarasota, FL  
Bronze



**Vertical Integration II**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 2013  
Sarasota, FL  
Bronze



**Stabilizzatore Verticale II**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 2010  
Sarasota, FL  
Bronze

## *Painted Sculptures*



**Liquid Geometry**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 2005  
Sarasota, FL  
Painted Aluminum Silicate

When space-age casting material became available to artists in the 1980s, I experimented with high-fired aluminum silica products and colloidal binders to create basic sculpture forms.

After firing these pieces up to 2,000 degrees and allowing them to cool, I applied several coats of thick industrial lacquer colors to complement the shapes of the sculptures. They combine my work as a painter and sculptor.



**Untitled**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 2005  
Sarasota, FL  
Painted Aluminum Silica

## *Character Faces*



**Character Face I**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 2015  
Sarasota, FL  
Bronze

*Opposite Page:*  
**Character Face II**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 2015  
Sarasota, FL  
Bronze



**Character Face III**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 2015  
Sarasota, FL  
Bronze







**Character Face IV**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 2015  
Sarasota, FL  
Bronze

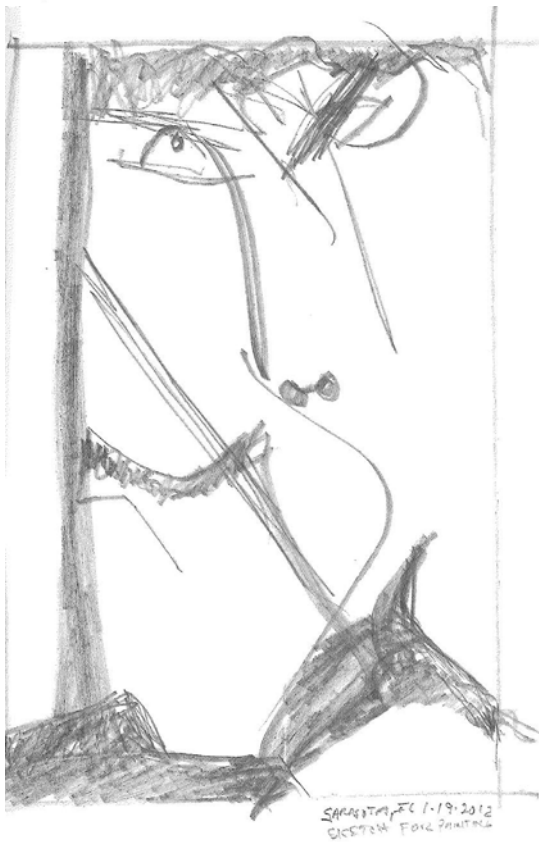
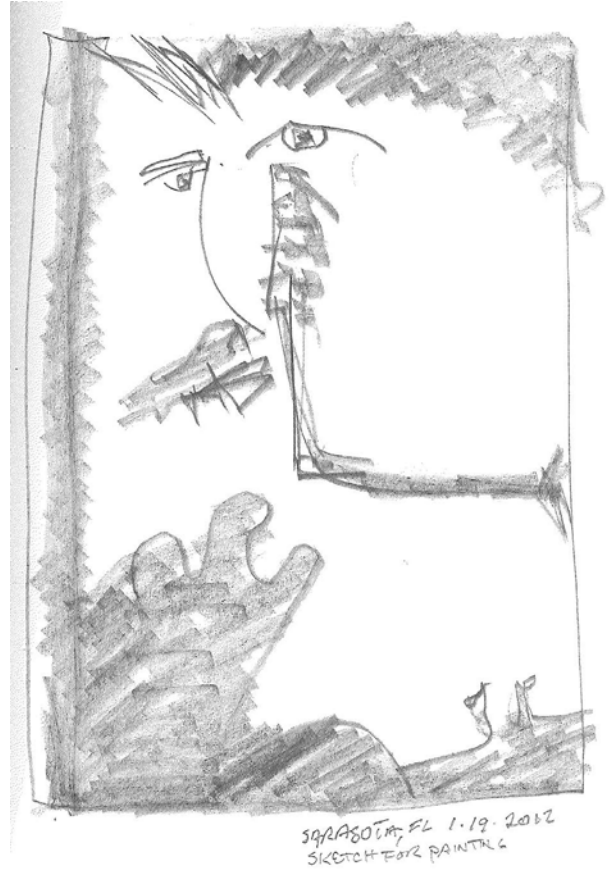


**Character Face V**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 2015  
Sarasota, FL  
Bronze



**Character Face VI**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 2015  
Sarasota, FL  
Bronze



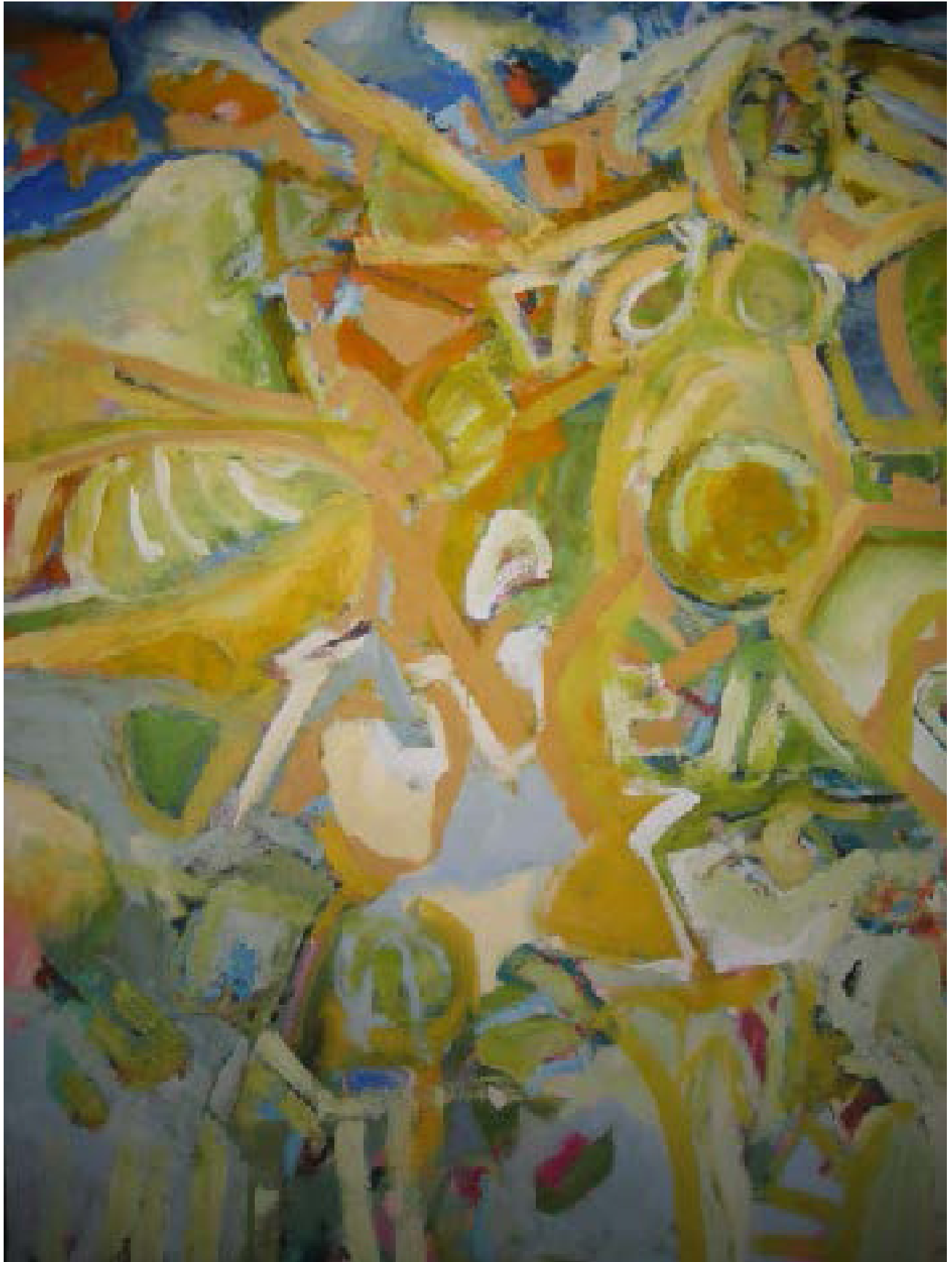


*Studies for Paintings, 2012*  
Pencil

# *Paintings*



**Skyscape I**  
Richmond, VA, 2010  
Oil on Canvas



**Skyscape II**  
Richmond, VA, 2005  
Oil on Canvas



**Skyscape III**  
Richmond, VA, 1976  
Oil on Linen





**Snow Fight**  
Richmond, VA, 1974  
Oil on Linen



**Skyscape IV**  
Richmond, VA, 2015  
Oil on Linen



**Masonic Temple**  
Richmond, VA, 2015  
Oil on Canvas



**Flying Wolf**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 2014  
Aylett, VA  
Bronze

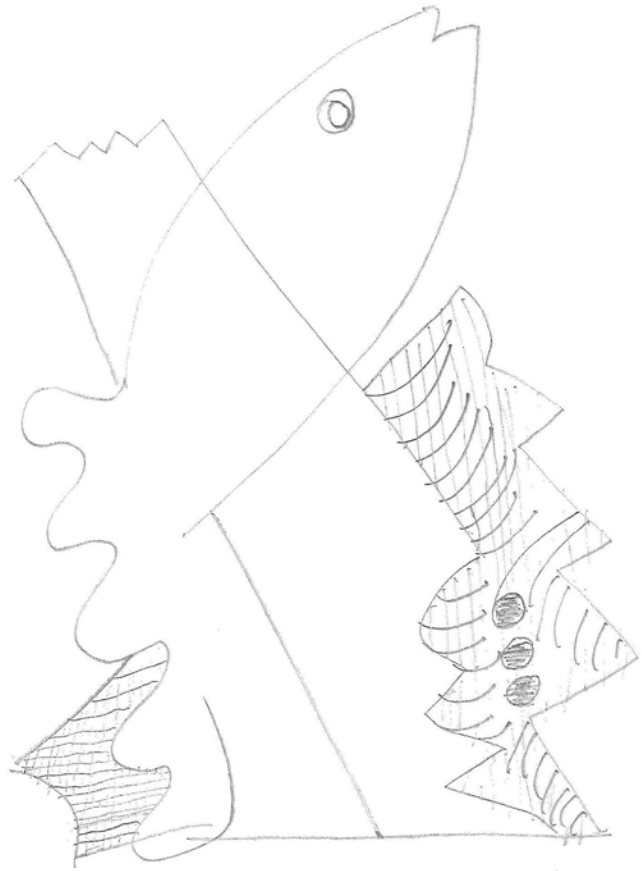


**Moon Cow**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 1985  
Aylett, VA  
Bronze

## *Creatures*



**Cat Boy**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 2015  
Sarasota, FL  
Bronze



**Pamunkey Fisherman**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 2009  
Sarasota, FL  
Bronze



**Flying Fish I**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 2011  
Aylett, VA  
Bronze



**Flying Fish II**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 2011  
Aylett, VA  
Bronze



**Mail Order Bride**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 1992  
Sarasota, FL  
Bronze



## *Figurative Pieces*

My fantasy figures are expressions of freedom, with strong emotional content. But that content--like their physical features--may not easily relate to any known field of reference. These characters are in a world of their own.



“Other pieces reveal gentleness, like this ethereal, angelic female bronze figures...his sculpture evokes the same organic quality: the same sense of flowing time captured in the form of a solid object. It’s a gentler take on the same living truth.”

- Marty Fugate,  
Herald Tribune, 1985



**Message Bearer**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 1974  
Aylett, VA  
Bronze & Marble



**Flying Twins**

Aylett Art Foundry, 2010

Sarasota, FL,

Bronze

“The best of Peacock’s sculptures are built on enormous tension but never tension that is not aesthetically resolved. The rich patina on many of them is almost liquid in its luster.”

- Roy Proctor, 1980, *Richmond News Leader*





**Matador I**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 2010  
Sarasota, FL  
Bronze



**Matador II**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 2010  
Sarasota, FL  
Bronze



**Seraphic Visitor - In Memory of Abbott Lambert**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 1985  
Sarasota, FL  
Bronze

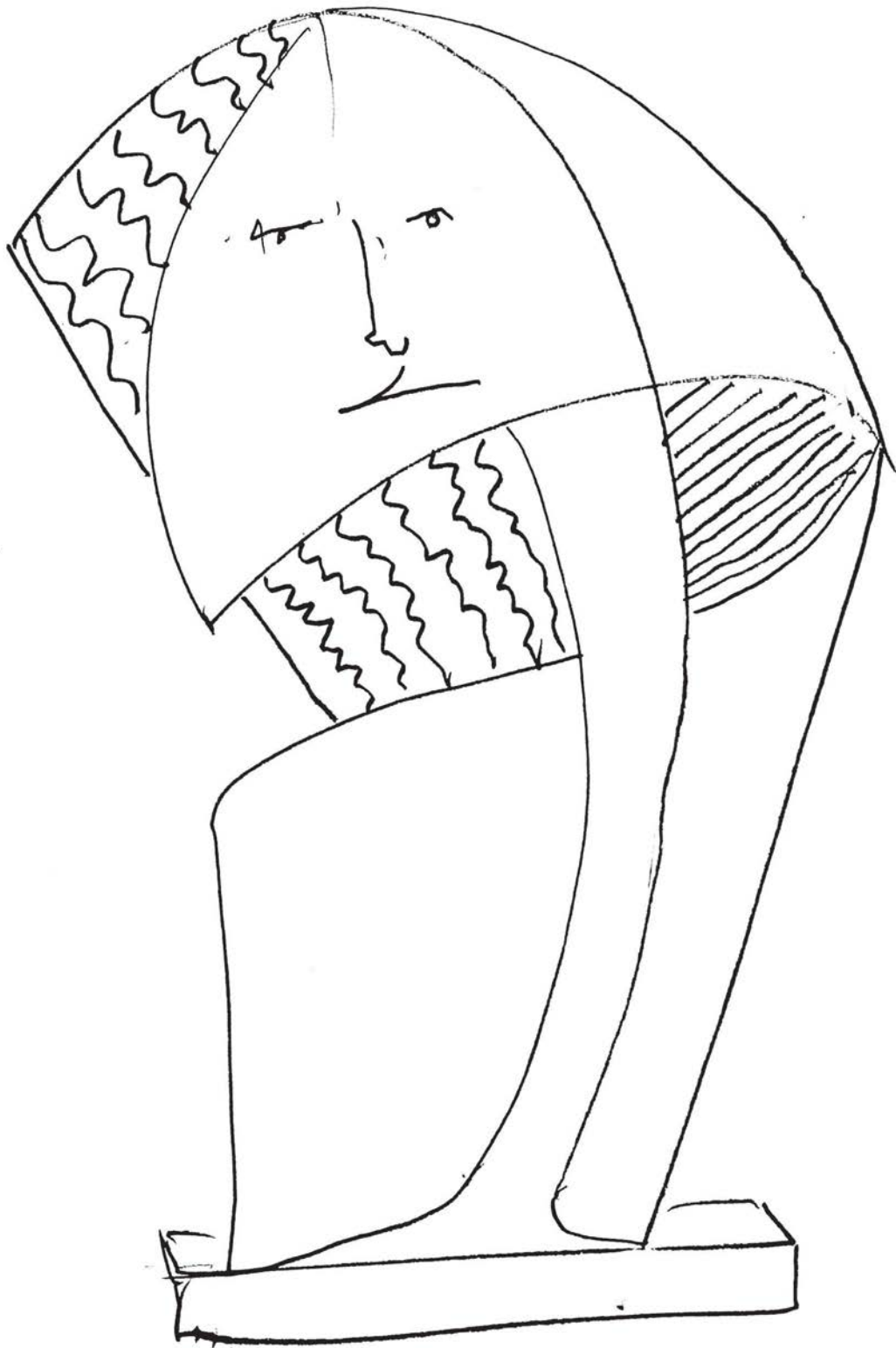
*Photo Credit: Kris Fitzgibbon*



**Veiled Symbol**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 2012  
Aylett, VA  
Bronze



**Antic Spirit**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 1974  
Aylett, VA  
Bronze & Marble







**Undulating Gesture**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 2011  
Sarasota, FL  
Bronze



**Seraphic Visitor II**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 2015  
Sarasota, FL  
Bronze

*Opposite Page:*  
**Seraphic Visitor III**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 2000  
Sarasota, FL  
Bronze





**Swayed Hegemony I**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 2015  
Sarasota, FL  
Bronze



**Swayed Hegemony II**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 2015  
Sarasota, FL  
Bronze



**Pamunkey Series I**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 1972  
Aylett, VA  
Bronze



**Pamunkey Series II**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 1972  
Aylett, VA  
Bronze



**Beethoven as a Young Man**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 1972  
Aylett, VA  
Bronze



**Pamunkey Warrior**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 1999  
Aylett, VA  
Bronze





**Leticia**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 1988  
Aylett, VA  
Bronze



**The King's Fool**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 1972  
Aylett, VA  
Bronze



**Tanneke**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 2012  
Aylett, VA  
Bronze



**Holy Ghost Guard**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 1995  
Sarasota, FL  
Bronze



# 2000 AND BEYOND





“Its tall vertical form references the tradition of native American totems, while its biomorphic shape echoes the organic motifs favored by Surrealists. An important feature of Surrealism is biomorphism. While biomorphs can be appreciated as abstract shapes or for their allusion to sources in nature, they aren’t specific subjects in nature. Rather, they convey the organic essence of life.

With its concentrated fields of color, abstract form and vigorous gestural expressionism, this sculpture shows the influence of Abstract Expressionism, which in turn, drew upon Surrealism. Like Surrealist art, this piece shows an interest in myth, archetypal symbols and the unconscious.

This bronze embodies the qualities that are the foundation of American modernism: abstraction, the natural form, mythic resonance, and an emphasis on the essence of things. It also represents a crossbreeding of the ancient and the contemporary with its use of bronze, its abstract form and its transcendental presence.”

*“Slow Art” tour, 2017,  
Virginia Museum of Fine Arts  
Jennie Dotts, docent*

**Untitled Totem**

Aylett Art Foundry, 2011  
Sarasota, FL  
Bronze

For decades, country life provided the tranquility and privacy that sustained me and my work. It buffered me from distractions. But it also involved travel and maintenance that became burdensome. And, after a while, I missed the close and regular contact with people, the energizing lift of being around them. In 2015, I made the difficult decision to sell my beloved Marlboro in Aylett, where I'd operated my foundry since 1970.

Two years later, I sold my winter studio in Sarasota, whose isolated character has been rapidly overrun with condos and shopping centers. After 40 years, it was time for a change and I've seized exciting opportunities to expand my studio and living spaces in Richmond, where I have access to established foundries to assist with my work

In 2016, the VMFA installed my "Untitled Totem" in its sculpture garden. This bronze originated as a *maquette* in 1978, when I was working in Pietrasanta, Italy. My long-time friend and supporter, Henrietta Near, commissioned a bronze from that *maquette* for her garden in Richmond's Fan District in 2005. Eleven years later, she donated it to the VMFA in memory of her late husband, Pinkney, the museum's first curator. I'm deeply grateful to Henrietta and the VMFA for making this sculpture available for wide public viewing in a lovely natural setting, so rich in history.

In 2017, the VMFA acquired another large-scale commissioned bronze, "Pentangle," from the estate of Eric and Jeanette Lipman. The relocation of this piece to the museum is serendipitous. I first met the Lipmans at what was then called the VMFA's Institute of Contemporary Art in 1980, where I had a solo exhibition.



Marlboro, 1970



Marlboro, 2014, *The end of an era*



A space for a sculpture in the Lipman's new home had been designated by their architect when the house was built. After meeting with Eric and Jeanette at the house, I created three *maquettes* that I thought would suit the space without interfering with their river view. A mix of the abstract and the organic, the bronze is a low-slung, geometrical piece with a greenish-blue patina and surface texture intended to blend with the dramatic natural setting and crisp, contemporary design of the home.

2017 was another milestone year. That's when Media General, a powerhouse media company headquartered in Richmond, was acquired by another company and Media General's entire art collection auctioned. I had two pieces at Media General: a large painting, "Wild Indians on the Beach" and a bronze sculpture, "Mattaponi Memories."



**Mattaponi Memories**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 2000  
Sarasota, FL  
Bronze

*Photo Credit: Terri Shanks*



When Media General expanded its headquarters in the early 1990s with impressive new buildings in downtown Richmond, Jack Blanton was their art consultant, charged with selecting new works for public spaces and offices. He now asked me to create a sculpture specifically for the executive office rotunda. I designed a geometrical bronze to be viewed from the intersecting hallways and circular reception area.

**Wild Indians on the Beach**  
Aylett Art Foundry, 2000  
Sarasota, FL  
Bronze

I was pleased to meet the couple who acquired the bronze at the auction and to know that it had acquired an appreciative new home.

In 2017, the daughter of a dear deceased friend approached me about creating a sculpture in memory of her father. This commission is of special interest because of my long association with her father. The location of her country estate at the rolling foothills of the Blue Ridge mountains in Virginia presents one of the most pristine, inspiring sites imaginable for the placement of an artwork.



The *maquette* chosen for this piece is reflective of values associated with a classic 19th century Virginia home that is enlivened by the presence of cattle, stately architecture, and the vastness of an uninterrupted sky. This geometrical design is adorned with multiple horns, another example of my intuitive interest in combining the primitive and the contemporary, the organic and the abstract.

As a sculptor, I'm always interested in experimenting with new materials and directions. This has led to renewed interest in exploring all the possibilities of cast iron, of which there are many. While it is a brutal material, it lends itself to many types of surface finishes and effects. I've been waiting for years to have the leisure to pursue this interest.

For decades, I've done my own casting. This allowed for spontaneity as well as control as I developed my own techniques, geared for my type of sculpture. Now, I am ready to move in new

**Bison**  
OK Foundry, 2018  
Richmond, VA  
Bronze

*On display in my gallery*

directions while shifting workloads to other experienced foundry workers. Without the burden of concern for foundry production details, I feel an immense freedom to visualize new possibilities for sculpture. For thousands of years, casting techniques have been refined and I see myself as part of that historical continuum, forging new connections between art and technology.

In early 2018, a *maquette* of “America’s Gateway,” a large-scale sculpture commissioned by America’s Gateway Park in Miami, Florida was loaned to the Branch Museum of Architecture and Design in Richmond.

“During my formative high school days, I became a fan of Arthur C. Clarke, the British science fiction writer, science writer, futurist, and inventor. It was the 1950s.

Everyone was talking about satellite communication and connecting people around the world through TVs and phones. And then—to great surprise-- the Russian satellite Sputnik transmitted a “beep..beep..beep” from outer space. That changed the world.

TV, radio and newspaper coverage of the event obsessed over new communication possibilities. In my own semi-rural North Carolina world, rocket launching became a craze among teenagers and young adults. Although most of these small, crude rockets only managed an altitude of a few hundred feet, they represented a universally shared vision for the future.

In 2009, after forty years of bronze casting experience and a lifelong fascination with Arthur Clarke, I decided to do a portrait of him. I depicted him - after several versions in clay and wax-as he appeared



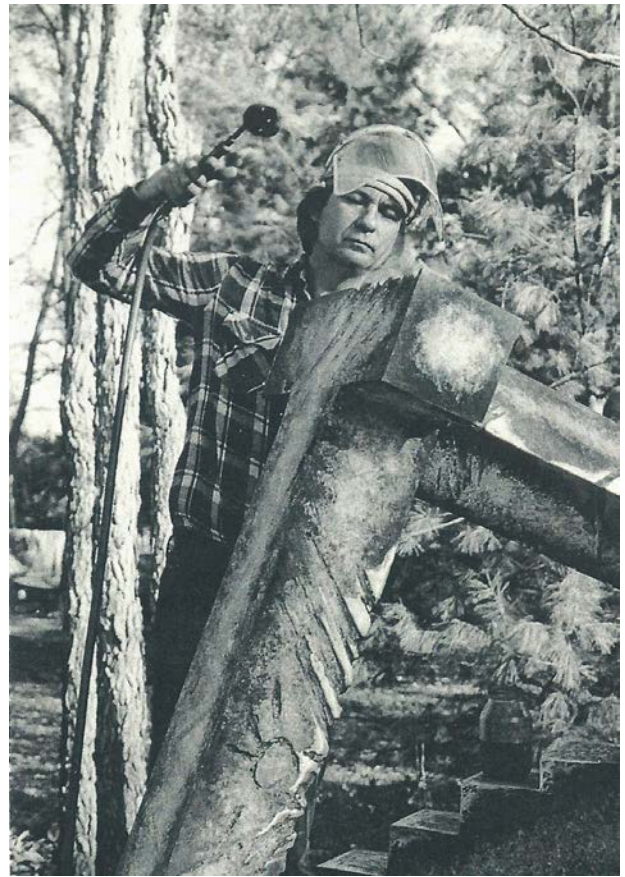


*Maquette of America's Gateway*

often in the 1950's: a contemplative man in midlife, looking to the future. The National Museum of Electronics in Maryland acquired this life-size bronze in 2019, where it dwells among radar antennae, jet planes, and other marvels of the human imagination.

Abstract though my sculptures may appear, they reflect a life-long urge to return to nature, to the origins of bronze as an enduring material for creating objects of beauty. My earliest bronzes, made in 1963, reveal an awareness of the ancient, sometimes ritualistic practice of making objects of beauty using molten metals. From my first casting and wax working, I felt a lasting connection to a creative force I can't begin to explain. Despite the hard labor involved, I felt a rewarding connection to a tradition stretching to some of the earliest expressions of human creativity.

To illustrate the unique quality of each bronze, let me tell you about a recent sale of my work. It brought back fond memories of my early days of laboring over investment casting. As the sculpture was being loaded into the new owner's car, a small amount of residue from the white, sandy remains of the mold sifted out. The sand had been trapped in the inner core of the bronze for 35 years. The powdery grains were a fragile, though enduring, reminder of my earlier days of investment casting, a process rarely used today.



*Photo Credit: Roland Peacock*

Modeled and cast at my studio in Aylett, this *maquette* traveled to Sarasota, where I enlarged it for a client. The *maquette* for the enlarged bronze was back on the road, moving to exhibitions in Richmond at the VMFA, a gallery in Washington, DC, Washington and Lee University in Lexington, Virginia, and back to the Modern Art Gallery in Sarasota. It was exhibited four or five times before it was purchased in Virginia in 2015 and entered the next chapter of its life.

The life of a bronze is often long and migratory because the inherent quality of bronze is lasting and its beauty universally recognized.

# TESTIMONIALS

“Although our three Peacock sculptures are quite small in scale, they seem to occupy a surprising amount of space, for despite their compact dimensions, despite their material density, despite their inanimate form, they are somehow “antic,” possessed by an almost biomorphic energy. They remind us of the planet itself: solid yet simultaneously fluid, cohesive yet suggestive of the infinite.”

*Tom and Alexa Robbins, La Conner, WA*

“Rubin’s work is a rich patois of pre-Columbian, contemporary and indigenous forms. His studio and foundry, a rough and tumble workshop and gallery, are full of energy and focus. His piece is at the heart of our collection. It speaks to enduring power and gashed, unhealing history howling at the moon. Rhythm and pattern animate a group hug of surviving spirits. Wow!”

*Eric Franklin, Portland, OR*

“By 1980, art had entered a period when the avant-garde no longer shocked, when the ‘-ism’ labels so cherished by critics ceased to be valid, and when daring new materials and techniques had become commonplace. This has made for a healthy atmosphere for artistic creativity. Yet, in the midst of this stands an artist whose life work is rooted in the tradition of a timeless material. For Rubin Peacock, the Bronze Age did not end with the second millennium; bronze is his material and he makes it speak for him. His sensitivity to the material and his sense of experience coalesce in an art that is at once both timeless and reflective of the influences on his life.

The influence of diverse cultures, the tradition of the material, and the artist’s clear understanding of the creative process in a contemporary idiom result in works that are powerful, mystical, visionary, even magical.”

*Jackson L. Blanton, North Palm Beach, FL*

“The seven or eight years that I have owned and enjoyed Rubin Peacock’s bronze sculpture ‘Untitled Totem’ in my garden have been the most inspiring that I have ever had. He created the sculpture from a small sketch, which I chose from his collection and he expanded it to about 6 feet tall. It became the perfect focal point in my garden... the surface textures and patina caught the light in interesting ways, which immediately transformed the space.”

*Henrietta Near, Richmond, VA*

“My fantasy is fulfilled! My art collection, as eclectic as it is, is complete. I am surrounded by beauty and have ‘Sphere with Motion’ as part of my daily existence. How fortunate can you be?”

*Sonia Vlahcevic, Richmond, VA*

“I first met Rubin Peacock at Peace Corps training on the campus of San Diego State University in 1966. We were headed to Jamaica to serve as teachers. . . .As time wore on, and our teaching duties became routine, Rubin’s need to create art began to assert itself. It was something we talked about frequently, and he began doing abstract pen and ink drawings. But his primary interest was clearly doing metal sculpture, a process that was not possible at the youth camp because there were no casting facilities. On several occasions I suggested he do some wood carving, but it was not a medium that interested him. When I asked him why, he replied: ‘It’s important to me that my artistic creations last forever. Paper tears, wood rots, glass breaks, iron rusts, but bronze lasts forever.’”

*Bill Milisen, Gales Ferry, CT*

“We live on the Pamunkey Indian Reservation, so we were immediately drawn to ‘Howling at the Moon,’ because of its native American theme. The piece reflects a spiritual longing and suggests a connection to the eternal. It is Rubin’s passion and creativity that draws us to his work.”

*Brad and Kathleen Brown, King William, VA*

“I, the Fabricator, and Rubin, the Sculptor contemplated the sagging corner of a very old wooden building one summer in the country. Its bones were broken. Over the course of a few hours we jacked and levered, placing bits and pieces of aged but sturdy wood into position. The task was less like the precision cuts and well-placed nails of a carpenter and more like molding the shed back into shape through sheer will power and inspiration. We left behind a secret sculpture, important as any, I think. While Rubin’s bronzes garner well-deserved attention, his lifelong sculpting of flotsam and jetsam into new and unique forms has been a joy to observe and that one morning, for me to participate in.

Rubin has left many secret sculptures in his wake including one constructed of a microwave oven, turntable motor, vacuum cleaner parts, audio player, velvet curtains and a Pac Man console, among other cast-off materials and, no, I won’t reveal. It is a secret.

I purchased a building from Rubin, 10-feet wide and 40-feet deep, next to a banana warehouse. He had rescued the gutted shell and I was honored to ‘finish it off’ a bit. The vision he brought to the site remained clear, a pioneer renovator of cast-off buildings. This was not the first and not the last of his ‘design/build’ projects. Who else would tow a condemned bungalow from an airport runway extension project half way across Sarasota, FL to complete a compound?

Some folk accomplish big things with bravado and ambition. Rare folk take time to observe, listen to the world around them enabling recognition of something to be made out of virtually nothing. Rubin is one of the latter and has done it all with good humor and a respectful hand.”

*Thomas Erhardt, St. Croix, Virgin Islands*



“Living with Rubin’s pieces so often reminds us that they not only represent creativity, but hard physical labor. They allow us to see Rubin through them as a dedicated artist whose strength and determination show in every piece he creates. They express in a resilient manner something that is so important for each of to recognize: art is an expression of work just as work is so often an expression of art.”

*Susan and Warren Cook, King William, VA*

“Rubin is a master of visual space for it is not what you see, but how you see his work, how they thrust themselves into the vision of your consciousness. Their geometric forms require you to react to them consciously, for each monolith, rectangle, square and triangle firmly attaches itself to Mother Earth.

We own three of Rubin’s sculptures. Although the emphasis of our collection is 19th and early 20th century, these three pieces live quite comfortably in our collection.

- 1) “Standing Nude”-When we first saw her, it was love at first sight. She was so tactile you just want to hold her and keep her warm.
- 2) “Wind Swept Man”- When we first saw him, we just knew it was a study for a monumental work to be placed on a mountain top and live with the winds.
- 3) “The Postman” – We first saw this work in the studio on Rubin’s work bench, unfinished. We merely said, ‘Finish it for us for it so alive with action, tension, texture within itself.’ It stands alone in its glory!
- 4) “The Helmet”- A circular work with an outer shell covering a mystical space. This work is the ultimate compliment to Rubin’s talent for it was stolen from the reception area of our art gallery, Post Impressions.

*Bob and Margaret Mayo, Mathews, VA*

“Rubin intrinsically knows how to coax every nuance of beauty from bronze. His shapes and textures, from organic to abstract are testaments to his virtuosity. His spectrum of vibrant patinas are stunning.”

*Janet Cameron, Sarasota, FL*

“Rubin’s work speaks for itself without interruption by committee or financial purpose. The result is a most pure expression of a man’s soul, which is clearly older than the man himself. I have several of his pieces reverently displayed in my home. His work brings with it a unique blend of a warm glow punctuated by strong statements.”

*Ryland Fleet, New Kent, VA*



“I had the good fortune of meeting Rubin in 1980 during which time he was creating his foundry, workshop and home in Sarasota, FL. He’s not only a unique personality, but a driven and passionate sculptor, who will always remain one of my favorite artists. I was given a small bronze ‘Catawba Man’ by him on my 30th birthday. This simply formed figure is delightful to view from every angle and it holds many memories of times spent with Rubin in Florida and Virginia. I will always treasure it, as I will treasure my friendship with Rubin.”

*Suzy O’Connell Lamont, Sheffield, Tasmania, Australia*

“Rubin Peacock has helped fuel our growing interest and love of dimensional art. We already have five of his pieces and look to grow our collection. We consider him to be a Richmond and Virginia art treasure.”

*Art and Lloyd Backstrom, Richmond, VA*

“A visit to Rubin Peacock’s gallery inspired us and gave us a deep appreciation for his sculpture. Rubin sculpted ‘Butterfly Chief’ for us in 2014. We are honored to have this incredible sculpture in our home and have enjoyed sharing its beauty with our family and friends. Rubin’s sculpture has enriched our lives and our appreciation of art.”

*Tim and Terri Treinen*

“I have enjoyed my unusual piece of Rubin’s vision for more than 20 years. It has enhanced three different outdoor decks in our family moves. Viewing ‘Blue Angles’ from various positions always provides changing enjoyment.”

*Gene Francke, Richmond, VA*

“In some generations there appears one unique individual in the world who is faithful to his unique imagination. Rubin Peacock has consistently through the years given us his fresh and dynamic bronzes, paintings, and drawings. It’s a great pleasure to know of one who gives us such aesthetic pleasure through his delightful and amazing craftsmanship.”

*William Kendrick, Richmond, VA*

“Over the years Rubin developed unique styles, some combined biomorphic forms with more structural or architectural elements. I found those to be particularly exciting and provocative. Rubin’s output of sculpture has been prolific, as he is one of the hardest working artists I have ever met.”

*Sharon J. Hill, Ph.D., Richmond, VA  
VCU Dept. of Art History, emeriti faculty*

“We have three of Rubin’s pieces. The one we appreciate most is an outdoor sculpture ‘Lost Canyon,’ which we have owned for some 30 years. It is a stable and perfectly balanced piece, reminiscent of the mountains we love. The texture is perfect. It is placed in the front yard of our Richmond Fan District home where it generates conversations and is enjoyed by neighbors and passersby.

*Heyn and Sandy Kjerulf, Richmond, VA*

“The viewer will observe certain areas and surfaces that may appear supportive or relatively static. These areas combine harmoniously into other more active sections directing the ebb and flow of energy within the work. Streamlined surfaces are juxtaposed with areas that are bitten and torn. A characteristic element of Rubin’s works is forms pushing against each other. These forms are combined and balanced to produce an articulate and elegant statement.”

*Annette Sand, Sarasota, FL*

“We have enjoyed Rubin’s sculptures for a number of years now. Our first purchase from Rubin was a whimsical female figure, which begat our purchase of a flat relief. They are both sited on our primary viewing space situated in our main sitting area. As time passed we realized we had to have the ‘Wrapped Cube’ to complete the set and close the space. Now, we are in the process of defining a new area, which requires more visual stimulation, hence we are lusting after a larger work for an outdoor area. We enjoy the visual stimulation on a daily basis provided by these exquisite works of art.”

*Brooke G. Asbury and Zulfia Tursunova, Sarasota, FL*

“I have been privileged to watch his sculpture evolve over the years. He uses techniques that are centuries old and his work reflects a permanence that is almost antithetical to much of today’s sculpture... Visiting him in his Florida home, I picked up the *maquette* of ‘Inca Passage.’ That sense of physical contact, the seeing and feeling of it, made me know that I wanted this piece. I decided it was an appropriate way to memorialize my late husband Richard Bowles.... The pleasure I experience when I see Rubin’s work is intense. I love flowers and I love seeing the sculpture among the flowers, shrubs, and trees. To look at the work makes me think of my late husband and the love I had for him. More than that I am reminded of the love Rubin has for his work.”

*Linda Sawyers, Lexington, KY*

“Rubin has been a friend going on 50 years. I know him as a friend who makes art. He is a better cook than me. We have shared many a good meal at his house, commiserating about the world situation and how to fix it. We are each other’s ace-in-the-hole when it comes to needing manly help moving heavy objects or advise on everything from mechanics to romance. My life would be diminished without him.”

*Sam Forrest, Richmond and Mathews, VA*

“With disciplined energy Rubin pursues his daily schedule at whatever project he happens to be committed to at the moment whether it’s a sculpture, painting, or perhaps moving a vacant house or studio acquired free onto a lot he owns next door. His early training in Italy and France furthered his training as a sculptor to that of a world-class master and teacher. The unusual theme for his abstract bronzes comes from within the inspirational gift of his mother’s native American genealogy. It’s the wonderful genius, power and creativity of his art. I acquired a small bronze from Rubin’s 1996 production for my collection. This unusual, very abstract piece, often stirs conversation while commanding the large fireplace mantel of my northern Michigan lodge.”

*Craig Brigham, Northport MI and Sarasota, FL*

“Rubin Peacock is one of our community’s long-time mainstay blue chip artists, and his work is always spot on...he’s a sculptor’s sculptor. His career has been an unwavering of thinking art, studying art, making art, and nurturing a continual love affair with material and form. Every Rubin Peacock artwork has a vested pedigree of hard work, focused thought, and intentional portion of something that is too often casually dismissed from contemporary trends: beauty.”

*John Bryan, former director, Richmond Culture Works, Richmond, VA*

“We have collected Rubin’s sculptures for the last forty years and each day it gives me a feeling of substantial stability that one person could create such beautiful and intuitive works.”

*Harvey McWilliams, Richmond, VA*







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