

Greenwich Time

Romancing the stone: Sculpture of Edward Heim

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When sculptor Edward Heim seeks out a piece of stone to carve, he calls it harvesting. The search usually starts in old, abandoned quarries where he collects massive chunks of marble, painstakingly hauls them some distance to his truck and, with great effort, gets the stone to his studio. This ritual is integral to his work, which can be seen in his solo exhibition at the Garden Education Center of Greenwich.

What attracts Heim to a rough stone in a Vermont quarry could be anything from a nuanced fissure to a darkened vein of color, elements that spark his creative process. The natural, weathered stone informs Heim of the direction he will take when carving.



"I want to create a sculpture based on inspiration and on design," he said. "When I take marble that's been exposed to weather for many years and carve it, I allow the stone to become what it wants in order to create an elegant form."

Heim's work is fluid, seamless, belying the tremendous effort it takes to manipulate one of the hardest materials on earth. Between Heim's creative will and sheer physical force, he says the process always produces the unexpected.

"There are surprises along the way. Many pieces break apart. You have to be a certain type of lunatic to be a stone carver because of the frustration. The marble doesn't always do what you want it to do to be able to create a piece and make it beautiful."

Some stones are scared from quarry mining, marks that Heim cleverly incorporates into the texture of the piece. The rough, pink piece of marble with old cut indentations became "Pink Elephant," a shape the Heim recognized when he first saw the stone.

"I'll see a shape or something that reminds me of something and that's what I go for," he explained. "My work is very basic and all about process and creating forms in stone. In this piece I saw a silhouette of an elephant."

Heim, who is a self-trained artist, has some interesting life experiences that are expressed in his work. The piece "Apparition," was inspired several years ago by a vision of the Virgin Mother seen on the side of a glass building in Clearwater, Fla. Heim, along with crowds of people and news reporters, saw the silhouette of a veiled woman. It wasn't until two years later when he was looking for marble in the winter that he picked up a stone whose shape was concealed by the ice and snow.



"I didn't know what I really had until later when I found that it had a big crack in it," he recalled. "I split it in half, opened it up and inside the stone was the exact shape of the woman in a veil. I allowed it to become what it wanted to become. I carved around it a bit but left the veil. It was a real spiritual experience."

Heim is as deftly expressive in his abstract work as he is in his figurative pieces.

"When I'm working on a representational piece, I get a certain feeling going through my mind and there's some heart and soul that goes into it. But working on an abstract piece -- you have to carve through it. The process is fun."

"Pam's Porpoise," an abstract, two-pronged, tall, vertical wave, gracefully evokes continuous movement. The outdoor piece is about seven feet tall and only two inches wide. Heim got the idea from

seeing a little girl being kissed on her face by a dolphin. "She had one of the biggest smiles on her face -- it was so expressive. And the porpoise was so whimsical looking. You never know where you can get inspiration."

The 40 abstract and figurative sculptures in the exhibit are of carved stone, metal, concrete and found materials. "Mood Rings," are round, concrete spheres that allowed Heim to depart from his usual style. The surfaces became a canvas with wild, drippy day-glow colors reverberating off the three half-circles that seem to balance precariously on one another, defying gravity despite their weight.

For the show, Heim brought a carving table with some marble chunks and a few chisels so people can get a hands-on experience of chipping away at a piece of stone. "If people pick up a chisel take a few hits they might appreciate how difficult this type of work is."

Although molding unforgiving stone into a desired shape is physically demanding, the payback is worth it to Heim. "I know how happy I feel when I've finished a piece. All the pain and hard work make it all worth it."

Heim, an award-winning artist, was born in Madrid, Spain. He was educated in Europe and the U.S. and his work is in many museums, public places and private collections. His interest in carving stone stems from his 20 years of experience in the preservation of historic stone masonry. Heim works out of his studio in Morris County, N.J., and has been involved with such art organizations as the Westport Arts Center, the Art Society of Greenwich, the Art Society of Old Greenwich, and The Katonah Museum of Art.

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Edward Heim's solo show runs through Oct. 29 at The Garden Education Center of Greenwich at the Montgomery Pinetum, 130 Bible St. in Cos Cob. Call 203-869-9242.