

I made the decision to undertake the building of my new studio complex for several reasons.

By 2011, it had become apparent that the tenement-style Williamsburg building (97 Grand Street) I had occupied for over 20 years was too small to properly accommodate my growing studio and my art. My staff of 15 people and I were jammed into less than 2,500 total square feet, spread across 3 floors (and 4 Home Depot backyard sheds). We had 1 small kitchen and 1-1/2 bathrooms there, no dining room, no locker rooms, no communal spaces. By contrast, the new 193 Banker Street (Greenpoint) studio complex comprises nearly 20,000 square feet with soaring spaces, beautiful light...and 9 bathrooms and 3 kitchens. My phenomenal studio team and I really love working in this incredible facility. The entire side of the large, 25-foot-tall fabrication hall has 15-foot-tall motorized Bator industrial doors. In warm weather, they can all be opened, simultaneously, in a few seconds to permit working indoors / outdoors, a uniquely wonderful experience in very-enclosed New York City.

For a long time I had wanted to make larger, heavier, monumental sculptures that simply were not possible to fabricate in the old studio. I also dreamed of consolidating every aspect of my work's creation in one location – conception, digital design, CNC (robot) machining, hand finishing, sandblasting, photography, crating, display, archives, storage, offices, etc. That dream has been realized at my new studio. It is the only comprehensive advanced-technology stone sculpture studio in the U.S. (and maybe in the world), with everything in one place. The studio also includes residential facilities for visiting scholars, fabricators, artists, and friends. I knew that I wanted to start with a tabula rasa, open land. That I was able to find and purchase the large 200' x 100' site (nearly 1/2 acre) in near-to-Manhattan, near-the-East-River Greenpoint, Brooklyn is a great plus. The visibility of both my art and its complex fabrication processes to the international contemporary art world is now greatly increased. It so happens that the studio is situated in the North Brooklyn Industrial Business Zone, a neighborhood designated by the City of New York for manufacturing. I – a “job creator” as well as an artist – have received generous support from the city, Con Edison, NY State, etc. toward the establishment of my studio there.

At the new facility, with it's twin 20-ton bridge cranes, I can receive, store, and process massive blocks of stone. The exotic material that I have been accumulating for over 20 years, hundreds of tons of stone that was formerly held in multiple storage deposits in the U.S., Mexico, and Europe, is for the first time consolidated in Brooklyn, at the same site where my sculptures are created. I can now walk among my blocks as I conceive of my works. Characteristic of my art is my use of atypical exotic stone sourced from all over the world, in a wide variety of coloration, figuration, and translucency. The direct presence of this incredible palette is already, as I had hoped, taking my work in unexpected new directions. To accommodate the weight of the stone, the buildings, and the cranes require the construction of extraordinarily strong foundations. The installation of over 200 50-foot-long piles + a dense grid of concrete

grade beams was necessary before the slabs could be poured. Because the studio is located near the East River, directly over a former small tributary stream, the water table is just a few feet below the surface of the land. Building here was somewhat like building in Venice. And due to the new flood-zone regulations – Hurricane Sandy waters lapped at the edges of the property – we had to elevate the entire site 14” above sidewalk level.

I was born and raised in Southern California. My family vacationed – in scorching August, when motel rates were low – in Palm Springs, California, in the 1960s, when I was a boy. I fell in love with modernist architecture there. I wanted my studio to have that same open lightness. I also wanted to have new studio buildings designed and constructed, not to renovate existing structures, hence my purchase of open land (with an existing structure on about 1/4 of the property). Of course, primary to the design of the new studio is function. I worked closely with Andrew Berman to meticulously lay out an efficient “factory” for the creation of my sculptures, incorporating the best features of the several facilities in which I had worked. Andrew and his staff, with input from Tim Dumbleton, then did a brilliant job of designing the facility, one that is in keeping with the industrial history of the neighborhood, while simultaneously pointing to the future.

The studio is both open to and hidden from the street. The perforated, semi-transparent corrugated metal front fence wall simultaneously reveals (especially with nighttime back-lighting) and conceals my stone collection. There are hints as to what’s going on inside the buildings behind, but purposeful mystery remains. Of course, there are practical reasons for keeping hidden the fact that world-class high-end art is being produced, exhibited, and stored onsite.