

1. I understand your practice is strictly connected to Futurism. Could you tell us the whole story?

I was first drawn to the radicality of Futurism as a Pomona College student in the mid 1970s. Duchamp and Boccioni were my two favorite Modern artists. Although my works from the beginning decades of my life as an artist are, I hope, radical in their own way, it took 25 years – until 2010 – for me to concretely and specifically confront Futurism. My Masterpieces, sculptures directly inspired by historical works, were responses to ancient models – Greek, Roman, Renaissance, Mannerist, and Baroque. My *Perfect Forms*, inspired by Umberto Boccioni's 1913 Futurist work, *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space*, was the first of the Masterpieces to riff on a 20th century precursor.

The original Boccioni plaster, much damaged and restored, is in Sao Paolo, Brazil. All the *Unique Forms* bronzes were cast many years after Boccioni's death. They vary widely. Multiple generations have been produced with a range of patinas, polishes, and details. They are often surprisingly crudely finished – all bear evidence of the speed with which Boccioni and his assistants hand-sculpted the plaster model. Bronze casting is a millennia-old process. The rough, hand-hewn character of the *Unique Forms* bronzes stands in inelegant opposition to their advanced conceptual genesis. Boccioni's Modern Man has heretofore been realized with ancient methods in an antique material.

The challenge I set for myself was to transform Boccioni's extremely familiar artwork, a Modernist icon, into something completely new – to bring together form, material, technique, and concept. Employing a state-of-the-art Breuckmann white-light scanner, I began my work by 3D digital scanning one of the *Unique Forms* bronzes. My studio team and I then proceeded to alter every curve, line, and edge of the virtual model. The post-scanning digital 3D sculpting alone took almost 3 years of exacting labor. I believe the cumulative impact of those thousands of subtle changes yields a work simultaneously familiar and fresh. The final alteration was to digitally “flip” my model so that it formally mirrors the Boccioni. *Perfect Forms* is reminiscent of its historical antecedent, yet it is thoroughly re-sculpted, with hyper-refined edges and surfaces, smoothly sweeping curves, the precision of a car body.

Perfect Forms had its public debut in 2013 in “Out of Hand” at the Museum of Arts and Design in New York, exactly 100 years after Boccioni created his 1913 plaster. For its physical realization, I chose mirror-finished 24K gold. In contrast to the traditional bronze casting of the Boccionis, my work was “grown” by an advanced large-format “Viper Pro” SLA machine. The resultant hollow plastic rapid prototype was fitted with an interior stainless steel armature and subsequently filled with resin. The sculpture and its integral CNC-milled solid brass base plate were then plated with nickel and a heavy layer of copper. At each stage of the elaborate, multi-step process, the piece was extensively hand refined. The final step was to coat the work in an appropriately perfect metal, 24K gold.

The sculpture's pedestal / vitrine display assembly was designed to be an integral, permanent accompaniment to the work. It was custom fabricated – by a studio-coordinated team of premier craftspeople – of American walnut, ColorCore laminate, aluminum, and Schott low-iron glass.

Perfect Forms' painstakingly polished mirrored surfaces glow in the daylight and scintillate with the movement of viewers around it. The dance of reflections across and around its surfaces

renders it ethereal, melting its crisp contours. Light reflected from the sculpture plays across walls, floor, and ceiling. The work both affects and is affected by its environment. Boccioni strove to depict a striding figure, at one with its surroundings and the forces released by its movement. My intention is that *Perfect Forms* radically expand and complete the unification of form, space, and action my Futurist forebear initiated almost exactly a century ago.

2. Your works have been shown in museums and institutions worldwide for the last 30 years. How did you start making sculptures?

I have had an art career – have been a professional artist supporting myself off sales of my work – since 1986 (for 35 years). From my 1978 arrival in New York until the mid 1990s, my works were presented in painting space – on or directly in front of a wall – and generally referenced painting. However, I always paid meticulous attention to the objecthood of those pieces – their support structures, their attachment to (or suspension in front of) the wall, the relationship of their supports to what I did on their fronts (and backs, sides, tops, and bottoms). All the artists I met when I first arrived in New York were painters. I generally cast my gaze on paintings when I went to museums and galleries. In hindsight, however, I realize that I never really was a painter. In the late 80s and early 90s, I made wall-mounted pieces that referred to painting (*The Not Painting Collection* pieces) and others that presented painted panels (my *Rail / Bar / Panel* works)...but they were effectively sculptures. My large 1995 *A Profusion of Loss*, although inspired by Leonardo's destroyed *Battle of Anghiari* wall painting, was a sculptural wall relief. Finally, with the suspended *Black & White Sculptures* of the mid 1990s, my art moved to middle of the room. I was, from that point forward, undeniably a sculptor.

Within a couple years, I created the first of my figurative works: *Flayed Herm*, a self-portrait head made of the same black-and-white layered Corian as my abstract suspended pieces. Since 1998, I have almost exclusively produced stone figurative sculptures – Portraits, Masterpieces, and Scholars' Rocks. All of those series continue to this day. In 2019, my ongoing Medardo Rosso Project series debuted. And for the past few years, I have also been making new sculptures in precious metal (*Perfect Forms*, the portrait of HSH Prince Albert II of Monaco, my monumental Papal portrait, etc.).

Since *Portraits and Masterpieces*, my large solo exhibition at Ca' Rezzonico in Venice as part of the 2011 Biennale (the museum premier of my stone sculptures), the number of individual and group museum and gallery exhibitions of my art, with accompanying books, has significantly increased. In recent years, there was the 2018 *The End of History* retrospective exhibition at Villa Panza in Varese, IT and concurrent monumental installations at Castello Sforzesco in Milano (2018), the 2019 solo presentation of my work at TEFAF Maastricht and *Medardo Rosso Project* show during the Biennale at Ca' Pesaro in Venice, and the recent (2020-21) comprehensive *Barry X Ball: Remaking Sculpture* exhibition at the Nasher Sculpture Center in Dallas (the first U.S. solo museum presentation of my art).

In the next couple years will be museum and gallery shows and installations of my work in Milano, St. Moritz, Paris, Capri, New York, Baku, Florence, and China.

3. In your artist statements you mention that your works are mirror images of their sources. Talk about this.

In my Portrait, Masterpiece, and Medardo Rosso Project sculptures, I effectively “reverse their polarity” by horizontally flipping them – making them mirrors of their sources, switching left / right orientations. For my portraits, the sources are either plaster life-casts or direct 3D digital photogrammetric scans of my sitters’ heads and necks. For the Masterpiece and Medardo Rosso Project works, I flip the scans of their historical antecedent sculptures. This mirror reversal renders my sculptures subtly unfamiliar and disorienting, redolent of their origins, but purposely “off”, strange, and new. My portraits become the images the sitters know of themselves, their mirrored selves. But to us that are familiar with those sitters, my flipped-image sculptures disturb. The same goes for those who are familiar with the historical models of my Masterpiece and Medardo Rosso Project sculptures.

The history of art is rife with copies (think of the many Roman versions of Greek sculptures). Traditional copying methods (e.g. Canova’s famous “pointing up” system) yielded non-mirrored multiples. However, making a mirrored copy back in the day was difficult. With the digital foundation of my works, it’s simple to add a mirrored note of freshness. I have had the opportunity on a couple occasions to pair my mirrored sculptures with their non-mirrored historical antecedents in exhibitions, forming dramatic Rorschach-like bilateral compositions.

4. What are your thoughts about the usage of new technologies on traditional materials (I mean stones and marble)? In what edition do you usually produce your artworks?

Artists have always applied the most advanced technologies of the moment to create their works. Still, there persists a historically-uninformed, retrograde school of criticism that falsely, laughably posits an idealized, cartoonish vision of hand sculpture production as an ideal. Michelangelo and Canova, to take two examples, employed innovative (for their time) technical solutions in the creation of their marble works. I’m certain those guys would have been enthusiastically using robots if they existed back then.

I employ a complex suite of cutting-edge technologies to realize my sculptures – 3D digital scanning, virtual modeling, 3D printing, CNC (computer-numerically-controlled) milling, etc. However, to achieve the hyper-detailed finishes I demand, each of my works also requires hundreds – often thousands – of hours of traditional hand carving / detailing / polishing. After 10 years of design, construction, and fit-out, my fantastic studio team and I are now joyously working in our new 20,000 square foot purpose-built state-of-the-art Brooklyn studio complex. It’s a beautiful facility, perhaps the nicest sculpture-fabrication studio in the world. Both the aesthetic and technical possibilities for my art are now limitless!

I produce variations of particular subjects in a panoply of exotic stones, but all of my stone sculptures are unique. Only my 24K gold *Perfect Forms* and my photographic prints have been editioned to-date.

5. What are you working on at the moment?

After almost 10 years of labor (including over 8,600 hours of final handwork + months of digital sculpting, robot milling, engineering, etc.), my new monumental *Saint Bartholomew Flayed – Ascension* in meaty / marbled / bloody-red French “Rouge du Roi” marble was just completed. The Saint’s public debut? – to be announced.

Many other new works are in various phases of initiation / fabrication / completion. It’s an intensely-experimental period for me, both conceptually and technically. My goal is to make a densely-layered comprehensive thesis of each sculpture. Nature, human creation, technology, presentation, pedestal / figure dynamics, stone "imperfections" counterpoised with fetishistic craftsmanship. Simultaneity of ordered tool-path fluting, glistening polished viscera passages, stretched distortions, florid flayed skin, petro-blending. Pinching, wrapping, smashing. Impaled, clinically presented, suspended, propped. Opaque, translucent. Subjects. Victims. Light.

I am simultaneously continuing with my portrait project, in both stone and metal. In fact, I believe I am the only international-level contemporary artist seriously pursuing portrait sculpture. For one example, I’m working with my studio staff right now on the portrait of HSH Princess Charlene of Monaco, a complex sculpture to be realized in solid gold. Her golden head will be suspended next to the one I completed in 2015 of Her husband, Prince Albert, in a new custom vitrine I have designed for the Princely Palace’s Galerie des Glaces. I am simultaneously creating other portraits of well-known figures from the world of art and architecture.