

Barry X Ball
Yvette Guilbert
Medardo Rosso Project

In 2012, I worked with the Vicenza-based technical company, Unocad, to 3D-scan 39 Medardo Rosso sculptures in the following Italian public collections:

- Ca' Pesaro Galleria Internazionale d'Arte Moderna – Venezia
- Galleria d'Arte Moderna (GAM) – Milano
- Museo Medardo Rosso – Barzio

I also was granted access to Rosso sculptures in private collections. My great friends, Danila Marsure, heir to Medardo Rosso and Director of the Archivio Medardo Rosso in Italy, and Laura Mattioli (collector, curator, scholar, and founder of the Center for Italian Modern Art in New York), provided generous support and assistance. Gabiella Belli, Director of the Fondazione Musei Civici di Venezia, and Elisabetta Barisoni, Director of Ca' Pesaro Galleria Internazionale d'Arte Moderna di Venezia, as well as Paola Zatti, Director and Chief Curator of the Galleria d'Arte Moderna di Milano were also very helpful.

Examples of almost all of Medardo Rosso's mature works (and multiple versions of some pieces) were 3-dimensionally scanned. The technicians employed a state-of-the-art Breuckman white-light scanner to "capture" all sides, surfaces, and volumes of the Rossos. I concurrently took extensive digital photographs of the sculptures. Utilizing the digital photos as references, the scan data was subsequently painstakingly refined and "perfected" at my studio in New York. The resultant virtual models are highly-detailed objective "copies" of the Rossos, the most precise digital records of the late artist's works ever produced.

My goal from the beginning of this project has been to utilize this objective, scientific scan data as a starting point to create poetic new sculptures – sculptures that will retain all the power and mystery of Medardo Rosso's while introducing a panoply of subtle alterations that will profoundly transform them and make them decidedly *my* works – Barry X Ball originals.

After extensive digital alterations to each Rosso model, my sculptures are CNC (computer-numerically-controlled) milled from the various exotic translucent stones I have been collecting for over 25 years – Golden Honeycomb Calcite, pink Iranian onyx, white Iranian onyx, “wounded” Mexican onyx, ultra-translucent white Mexican onyx – by sophisticated robots. Medardo created his works *additively*, by building them up, molding them of wax, plaster, and clay. I have purposely done the opposite – *subtractively* realizing my sculptures, precisely hewing them from stone blocks. The transformation has reversed and bridged the classic Rodin-versus-Michelangelo (modeling-versus-carving) sculpture division. The reversal is emphasized by the fact that my sculptures (including *Yvette Guilbert*) are generally “mirror images” of the Rossos.

My aims are to push Rosso’s famous diaphanous translucency to an extreme, to approach pure abstraction while still presenting the originals’ figurative elements, and to impart a transcendent glow to the soft forms. My golden calcite recalls Rosso’s soft yellow wax, my white onyx his plaster, but the extreme translucency of my chosen stones is far more luminous than Rosso’s materials. Some of my most delicate Rosso-esque sculptures – based on his thin bronzes – evince a hyper-compressed three-dimensionality. Some are so thin and translucent that the contours of their backs are visible through their fronts. The stone venation as well as the cultivated surface flutes of the robot milling – visually superimposed textural layers – work in concert with the sculptural forms to create a subtle, dizzyingly lush visual complexity.

My recently completed 20,000 square foot Brooklyn studio complex was built with a focus on the creation of stone sculptures. It is the most comprehensive advanced high-tech stone fabrication facility in the world. The Medardo Rosso Project is the first new body of sculptures to be realized in this studio. All the preparatory digital work, stone cutting, and final hand carving and polishing of my Rosso sculptures is being done there. For the multi-axis robot milling, I collaborate with sophisticated companies located in the United States and Italy. The pedestals are fabricated by a studio-coordinated consortium of multiple outside fabricators.

The debut exhibition of my Medardo Rosso Project sculptures was at Ca' Pesaro International Gallery of Modern Art in Venice during the 2019 Biennale d'Arte. My subsequent 2020 solo exhibition at the Nasher Sculpture Center in Dallas, "Remaking Sculpture" also featured several of my Rosso works. The spring, 2022, "Cy Twombly / Barry X Ball: A History of Painting and Sculpture" exhibition at Mignoni Gallery (in conjunction with Paul McCabe Fine Art) here in New York paired my Medardo Rosso Project sculptures with Cy Twombly paintings and works on paper.

My *Yvette Guilbert* is a prime example of this ongoing series. Realized in ultra-translucent white Mexican onyx – a stone both more substantial and more translucent than classic Italian alabaster – this work is inspired by Rosso's *Yvette Guilbert*, 1895, in the collection of Ca' Pesaro Galleria Internazionale d'Arte Moderna in Venice, Italy. The Rosso is a brown, opaque plaster. By contrast, the soft translucency of my sculpture's stone – spectral, cloudlike, delicate – renders my portrait ethereally radiant.

