

Jan/Feb 2016

Sculpture NorthWest

Inside:

ARTIST SPOTLIGHT WITH BOB LEVERICH

ART AND SCULPTURE BY BILL WEISSINGER

A 'QUICK LOOK' AT LEON WHITE

NWSSA'S HOLIDAY PARTY BY MICHAEL YEAMAN

BOB LEVERICH: 'HOME AND AWAY', LAVENDER GRAY MAINE GRANITE, 9'-2" H x 7'-10" W x 22'-10" W

NORTHWEST STONE SCULPTORS ASSOCIATION

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MISSION STATEMENT

The purpose of the NWSSA's *Sculpture NorthWest Journal* is to promote, educate, and inform about stone sculpture, and to share experiences in the appreciation and execution of stone sculpture.

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In This Issue

Letter From The President ... 3

Letter From The Editors ... 3

Artist Spotlight: Bob Leverich ... 4



Art and Sculpture ... 8

Scheduling Your Drawing Time ... 9



A Quick Look at Leon White ... 10



NWSSA's Holiday Party ... 11

Classifieds & Carving Calendar ... 12

FROM THE PRESIDENT...



It's the winter months and I know some of you are hunkered down until things warm up and the days get longer. Others are using the longer nights to read, relax, and contemplate. This year has seen many new faces, lots of energy and enthusiasm and a growing interest in stone carving. It's an alive, hardworking and vibrant community of carvers that help one another, and during these long nights worth contemplating.

In the last year many of our members participated in the shows we held and a few have completed and installed major commissions. Several of our members have new commissions in progress and it is likely you will be hearing about them in the journal this coming year.

If you are one of our newer members or have new pieces you would like to show this coming year, please consider submitting it to the Flower and Garden show, the Mother's Day show at Lakewold Gardens, or the Volunteer park show. Look for the Call For Artists on our web site: <http://nwssa.org/events/call-for-artists>.

We have had requests for a repeat of the polishing workshop and the idea of a sandblasting workshop, so once again check the nwssa.org web site: <http://nwssa.org/events/upcoming-workshops>

Finally, for those of you interested in figurative work, NWSSA (thanks to Lisa Sviricic) is sponsoring and coordinating Life Drawing sessions at the Schack Art Center (thanks to Shannon Tipple-Leen) in Everett, WA on Friday evenings from 5:30pm, starting Jan15th until April 29. If you are ever in Everett, WA on a Friday evening think about dropping by the Schack Art Center, as an NWSSA member you'll get a discount. For more details check-out: <http://www.schack.org/classes/figure-drawing/>

Learn Much, Share with many, and Carve Proud.

... Carl

FROM THE EDITORS...

A good winter's day to all of you, though with so many sunny days it hardly seems like winter. If you can get past working with cold hands, this is carving weather. And we have a lot of carving for you to look at in this issue.

Bob Leverich is in the Artist Spotlight this time, where he shares with us his love of hard rock carving. Bob has a unique approach to sculpture design that often reveals his philosophical beliefs and hopes. As an architect, Bob is also handy with a pencil.

This handiness impressed Bill Weissinger at Camp B back in 2008. The notes Bill took at Bob's lecture on how to use drawing in our sculpting are brought to life by the keen wit and perceptions of Bill Weissinger.

And there's more. Leon White took a piece of lime green Brucite and transformed it into a moment in the life of a lizard on a leaf. You'll see what we mean when you pause for a Quick Look at the sculpture Leon calls "Patience Pays Off."

And finally, Michael Yeaman, one of our intrepid Roving Reporters, will tell the rest of us what fun



some of us had at the annual NWSSA winter party at the studios of Ken Barnes and Adele Eustis way back in January 10th.

Sit back and enjoy your first issue of Sculpture NorthWest in the fabulous, new year of 2016.

... Lane and Penelope

ARTIST SPOTLIGHT: BOB LEVERICH

Who are you and how has art come to fit into your life?

I grew up on a dairy farm in western Wisconsin not far from the Mississippi, in an era when rural kids had the whole world to range over – pastures and fields, orchards and woods, hills and streams, in all seasons. There was always work to do on the farm, but it afforded a closeness to the natural world that still informs who I am and how I think about much of my work. I count myself lucky for that.

As a kid, drawing and making things were my ways to work out my understanding of myself and the world. I was interested in lots of things – plants, rocks, people, seashells, ships, buildings – and I drew them all. I made little sculptures from materials I found around the farm – clay from the creek, sheet metal scraps, wood, even the red wax from cheeses! Drawing and making turned out to be what I do and who I am. I became an architect and a potter and a woodworker and a sculptor. When I draw or make something, I feel profoundly present in the world. It's also what I have to give. Today I teach visual arts at The Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington. I find students are eager to visualize and make things to make the world a better, more livable place, and I try to make sure they do it well and are valued for it.

How did you become involved with stone carving and with NWSSA?

I made my first stone carvings from limestone and serpentine in sculpture classes I took while working as an architect in the 1980's. I didn't return to stone until I began teaching at Evergreen. About ten years ago I planned a program called Written in Stone that I taught with a poet. Our students read and wrote poetry extensively. They collected stones, cast them in plaster, sandblasted words onto them, knapped obsidian and old porcelain toilets (the preferred practice material!), and carved small works in Pyrophyllite. I



met Evergreen biology professor Larry Eickstaedt at that time. "You need to check out NWSSA!" he told me, "and you need to meet Verena Schwippert!" That was the start of my connection with NWSSA, and my friendships with Verena and many other members. I attended my first Camp B Symposium the summer before I taught Written in Stone, and got a refresher course in stone carving basics. Since that Symposium, I've been back for many more. NWSSA has provided me with a community of like-minded and supportive friends, along with opportunities to work, share, and learn, and new directions and horizons for my work.



▲ 'HOME AND AWAY', LAVENDER GRAY MAINE GRANITE, 9'-2" H x 7'-10" W x 22'-10" W



▲ 'CHEST PIECES', RIVER STONES, 35" H x 4" D x 102" W

◀ 'CHEST PIECES', (DETAIL), RIVER STONE, 6 1/2" H x 2 3/4" D x 9" W



▲ 'HOME AND AWAY', (DETAIL)

How would you describe your art, your stone carving in particular?

Carving, in wood or stone, holds a special spot in my heart. I think it has to do with the slowness, the intimacy with the material, and the revelatory quality of the process. When I came back to stone after a long hiatus, I began with figurative pieces. In a way, the body is always the referent in my work, whether I depict it directly, or relate to its scale or sensory dimensions.

There are different themes, or preoccupations, that I return to in my work. I've used the t-shaped form of the upper torso for many years. The chest is the locus of the heart, the lungs and the breath. I like the idea, from classical Indian art, of sculptural form filled, informed, by breath. I use simplified house forms, to suggest solitudes, and when I group them, to say something about isolation, even in community. Houses can refer to families and their separateness, as well. I make horizontal pieces with landscape and meandering path forms. They arise out of the particular stone I'm working with and the physical act of making lines. They can also refer to Chinese landscape painting, where a journey might be depicted or implied, as a metaphor for life and time passing. Rather than unrolling, my pieces can be explored and traced with the hand. Some have inverted landscape forms, like mountains reflected in water in Chinese works.

ARTIST SPOTLIGHT: BOB LEVERICH *(continued)*

Tell us a bit about how you work – your process, your work space, your tools.

Drawing is fundamental, but I find that with stone, the drawing is often more exploratory and less prescriptive; that is, I don't make a drawing and then try to reproduce it in stone. The particular stone has too much to say as I'm working with it. It makes for a more dynamic and tense process in some ways. As with drawing, each mark – each cut – has to be related to all the ones already made until I find a resolution of all of them. I tend to have more than one piece underway at a time and to work back and forth between them.

I like working with granite – it's plentiful and I like the way it moves and how it finishes. I like the softness of bush-hammered surfaces, and the crispness that can be attained at polished edges and plane breaks. I like working with hard river stones from the Cascades, too. They have a delightful fullness of form and wonderful surfaces – easy to carve away if you're not careful. I work outside, under a 10' X 20' tent, or next to it on a gravel drive, and I store my tools in a lockable trailer close by. The tools I rely on are my carbide chisels and a couple favorite hammers, 4 ½" and 7" angle grinders and diamond blades, diamond cup wheels, an air hammer and bushing chisels, and water polisher.

Have you been influenced by any particular artists?

Inspired might be a better word. I think we all learn by copying, until we realize we're not the person we're copying, and our real work is something different from theirs, something we have to figure out. So many artists and architects and designers have inspired me, and continue to,



▲ 'MEANDER', CASCADE GRANITE,
7" H X 30" W X 240" L

◀ 'MEANDER', (DETAIL)

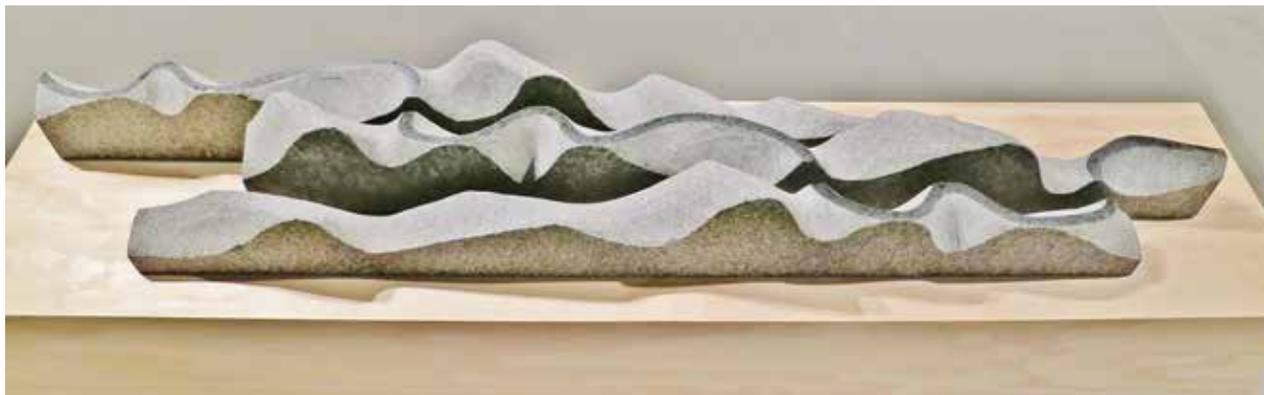
for their work, and now as much for their persistence and rigor – what keeps them making what they make, and doing it so well. "Work comes from work," Richard Serra says.

Describe a recent piece or two.

My long, low floor pieces, like "Meander" and "Between You and Me", marked a transition in my work from singular forms to multi-part works that engage the space around them and

compel the viewer to move to experience the piece. They lead to the piece I made for the town of Castine, Maine the summer before last, as one of the artists invited to take part in the 2014 Schoodic International Sculpture Symposium (schoodicsculpture.org). The three-part piece, called “Home and Away”, is the largest stone work I’ve made to date, carved from nearly ten tons of local lavender gray granite. The abstracted house forms of the tallest element refer to the white clapboard houses on the hillsides of the town and its

I’m really interested in making more works that use multiple elements to create spatial and tactile experiences for people, as well as visual ones. This is not a new idea by any means, but it is a different way of thinking about sculpture for many, so I spoke about it as one of the field artists at Camp B last summer, where I roughed out a four-element piece on the field. It’s back home, where I’m working to finish it up. Having larger works in my portfolio has helped me to get my first public sculpture commission in Washington State, to



▲ ‘ENDS OF THE ROAD’, GABBRO, 5 ½” H X 7 ½” W X 48 ½” L

long polished meanders are oriented out to Penobscot Bay and the Atlantic beyond. The piece invites people to engage the work, follow the meanders with their hands, and sit on the stones to watch boat traffic. I think people were skeptical at first, but they’ve really taken the piece to heart, and it’s become a something of a local landmark. They invited me to return last July for a big dedication celebration. I was really proud and happy to be there!

What are you looking forward to, in terms of sculpture and stone?

make a work for the grounds of Vashon Island High School. I’m just beginning the project; it’s slated for completion later in 2017. It’s exciting – and a little daunting! But I figure I’ll have lots of expertise and insight to draw on in NWSSA. Looking ahead, too, I’d really like to help bring some of the sculptors from the Schoodic Symposium to Camp B. They were inspiring and great resources!

What’s your biggest challenge in making sculpture?

Time! Friends are making retirement plans to kick back, while I’m trying to clear the decks to make more work and take on bigger rocks! I’ve always believed that it’s a privilege to be a maker of things, so I plan to seize the opportunities that come to keep drawing, designing, and sculpting. “Stone is an old man’s material,” Noguchi said somewhere. If he’s right, I guess my timing is good.

Any last words?

How about Michelangelo’s words? “It is well with me only when I have a chisel in my hand!”

That pretty well sums it up!



▲ ‘TRAVELING OVER RED MOUNTAIN’ RED GRANITE, 15 ½” H X 7 ½” W X 66” L

ART AND SCULPTURE

Thoughts on how drawing can help us sculpt. Taken from my notes on a 2008 lecture by Bob Leverich with some input from others.

By Bill Weissinger

For those born without the innate gift to draw well, acquiring an artist's skill seems undoable. "Not so," said Bob Leverich in the summer of 2008 in a lecture at Camp Brotherhood. "It just takes a lot of practice." Seven and a half years after the lecture itself, I typed up my notes from Bob's lecture. Here they are, with some thoughts of my own.

Should you care how to draw? Although clients may want to see sketches of a proposed commission, the most important reason to learn how to draw (as Alexandra Morosco emphasized to me when she saw my second sculpture in 2003) is to learn how to see.

Learning how to draw. There is no one "secret," other than a lot of practice, preferably with a live model. But there are a few insights that are important. Here is one, not from Bob, but from *Visual Thinking*, by Rudolf Arnheim: for the survival of our species, it was "of the greatest practical importance that things should be seen as constant and that change should be attributed to them only when they themselves do the changing." In other words, the instinctive rejection of proportion as presented to us by our eyes is a survival skill. That made me feel better: I'm not so much a bad drawer as a good survivor. "Un-seeing" that rejection – one of the requirements for drawing well – takes a lot of training.

How does one do that? Bob recommended one solution: see how the Masters solved the problem. Not just perspective: how does Degas solve the problem of showing the volume of the cheek? How did Monet organize the page? To find out, trace the work. "No, this is not copying," Bob said. Well, of course it is copying, but the point is that it isn't copying for the sake of shilling it out to unsuspecting buyers, but copying in order to learn.

Pay attention to the stages of drawing. The first stage is wanting to draw a particular thing – a tree, perhaps, or a beautiful woman – or man. Once one achieves a rudimentary understanding, the next stage is paying attention to the object you are drawing, versus the field in which the object lies, so that you begin to draw fields rather than objects.



▲ 'LIFE DRAWING' CARBON PENCIL, 22"H X 28"W

FIGURATIVE AND SCULPTURAL STUDY DRAWINGS BY BOB LEVERICH

▼ 'HOME AND AWAY', DEVELOPMENT STUDY, PENCIL AND INK ON YELLOW TRACE, 12"H X 24" W



Relationships. "Everything," Bob says, "is relationships in a painting:" pay attention to the relationships amongst the objects you're drawing.

Keep track of your ideas. Mark Twain once said something like, "If I'd written down all the ideas for novels I ever had, I would have been the greatest novelist of all time." So Bob recommended that you write down your art ideas. Because if you don't, you'll lose them. He also recommended keeping an art notebook/journal with you. Write in it, Bob said. Draw in it. The drawing is for you. The drawings are about insight, not skill. And the writing in the notebook is so that you can have a dialogue with yourself. And so that you can have a way to get the idea down to remind yourself later.

Then, over time, you have lots of sketchbooks, and things emerge. "Oh, I've been thinking of this for a while." I saw that personally just this past week. I've had a recurring image about which I've been thinking a lot. I recently reread a writing journal from six years ago: there it was! I'd been thinking about that idea all this time. Sounds like I need to start sculpting it.

Don't worry about being original in writing in your journal; rather, find out "what is yours." Originality isn't the same thing as novelty. You are looking for your roots; to see what keeps reappearing.

ART AND SCULPTURE *(continued)*

Be wary of throwing out drawings you hate. I have little respect for my two-dimensional abilities, but when I go back over old work, every now and again I say “Hey! That wasn’t too bad.” Conversely, sometimes I’m feeling bad that I’m not a better artist, and then I’ll see something I did long ago that truly sucks, and I’ll realize I have come a long way. You won’t be able to make those comparisons if you’ve tossed your old work. In the last week I drew from a bust the head of Michelangelo’s David, and then compared it to my 2006 drawing of the same head. Yes, my 2015 drawing was much better. Whew!

Symbolism in sculpture. Bob quoted Matisse, “The measure of an artist is the number of plastic (that is, malleable/shapeable) symbols he has introduced into the language of art.” Some fine sculptors scoff at this notion as it applies to sculpture, but if meaning in art is important for you, then you should think about what “plastic” symbols you are bringing to your work.

Fear. Bob’s suggested that you think about what stops you, about what shuts you down from drawing – or from

sculpting. For me, it is fear of being a beginner, of not being good enough.

Here in another approach for dealing with it. A friend of mine recently wrote of having seen a movie documentary about Seymour Bernstein, a concert pianist who gave up his career to teach. A former student talked about feeling inadequate, to which Seymour replied: “Well, stop beefing about it and make yourself adequate.”

Permission. I have a project to do in my garage (This is me talking, not Bob). It would be a fun project – mildly naughty, perhaps, but fun. It’s been there awaiting me, undone, for a year. In the last 365 days, all of us have had time to do about anything. So why haven’t I done it? The Protestant Ethic, perhaps: it is frivolous. It won’t sell. No gallery owner will be impressed. The real reason, then? I didn’t give myself “permission.” Don’t be like me: give yourself permission to be a beginner, permission to do things that won’t pay the rent, permission to, in short, have fun.



SCHEDULING YOUR DRAWING TIME

By Bill Weissinger

Scheduling time to draw is important. As an example, I’ve set out below my personal log of a recent drawing project – generalized for your benefit – for which I’d scheduled one hour.

1. What if terrorists are attacking at this very moment? One must keep up with what is happening in the world. Spend 20 minutes reviewing the news on the web.
2. To draw well, being relaxed is important. Go down to the kitchen for a glass of wine. A snack might be nice too. Better, if you have a sweetie, a massage is a good way to get relaxed. Perhaps your sweetie has other ideas on how to relax you. If your sweetie moved fast, you now have twenty minutes left.
3. It is important that your drawing instruments be ready. Sharpen each with care.
4. Stare blankly at the paper for 5 minutes, because you know that the second your pencil leaves a mark on the paper you are going to begin defiling the beauty of whatever you are trying to draw.
5. Finally, begin. But wait: weren’t you supposed to check in with your friend about getting together? Damn, he wasn’t home.

6. Your drawing looks like a surprised ghost of a deformed old man. Know what would help? More wine.
7. Finish the drawing two weeks later, under the press of the due date for an impending article.
8. Realize that delays are merely avoidance behavior. Next time, set a drawing schedule for one hour, and use it all for drawing.



You can find out how
to do something and
then do it
or do something
and then find out
what you did.

—isamu noguchi

A 'QUICK LOOK' AT LEON WHITE

"PATIENCE PAYS OFF"

By Leon White

Having worked Randy Zieber's dark green Brucite which makes wonderful plant forms, I had to try his Lime Green Brucite. I am not an abstract artist, though I try at times. At Camp B a few years ago, I had this piece of lime green and wanted to carve a sculpture having only two large leaves. So, I asked Will Robinson to make a cut through to separate the leaves with his diamond chain saw and hoped to leave it at that. NOT! Too boring for me. I then visualized a lizard perched on one of the leaves (the top of the lizard's back is where the top of the leaf was.) The plan was to keep the lizard



simple and stylized. But as I was carving the legs and feet, I saw how hard and strong this stone was, almost jade-like. Wanting to take advantage of its strength, I carefully carved under the tail, legs, and feet giving the lizard more life. It was then that I noticed a darker green spot in front of the lizard's face that had a butterfly shape, serendipitous? I left it until last, questioning if this would make the sculpture too kitschy. In the end I carved the dark green butterfly which gave the lizard a reason to be perched on the leaf, hence the title. Sanding in those small tight areas, not fun, but I was happy with the end result.

Leon has been a NWSSA member since 1989 having served on the board, and as sculpture exhibit chair, finding and arranging opportunities for the organization to exhibit. He is an International Award Winning artist in both painting and sculpture. His works are in private, corporate, public and museum collections and; he is a signature member in national and international organizations. Leon is represented by Matzke Fine Art Gallery & Sculpture Park on Camano Island, WA. (Matzkefineart.com)

◀ 'PATIENCE PAYS OFF',
17" X 14" X 8", BRUCITE



AND THE BEAT GOES ON...

A REPORT FROM THE NWSSA 2016 WINTER HOLIDAY PARTY

by Michael Yeaman

It may still be getting pitch dark at 6pm around here but it was bright and cheery at NWSSA's 2016 winter holiday party on Saturday night, January 9th. Our annual festive event was once again held at Ken Barnes' amazing sculpting studio where you definitely don't want to go if you get "big saw and hoist" envy very easily. This open space with its soaring interior provided the perfect environment for this industrial strength happening with plenty of member-provided food and drink. I think my favorite was the fresh crab legs with spicy cocktail dip and Pat Barton's morel packed mini-pastries.

Many of the usual suspects were there including the always smiling Gudrun Ongman, the often acerbic Wayne Maslin

and delightfully erudite Rich Hestekind. We were especially lucky to be joined via Skype with Steve Sandry from South America. Steve has had some health issues lately and all the party goers were very pleased to see his smiling face beaming wide on Ken's PC.

The party began at 5 pm and by 6 we had nearly 40 revelers all trying to keep the stone dust off their party clothes. By the time I left at 8:30, the festivities were still going strong, a rather appropriate testament to the enduring strength of our members and our great NWSSA organization!



**Though the printed issues of Sculpture NorthWest are in gray scale,
don't forget that you can zoom-in on all the photos in living color
by going to nwssa.org.**





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▲ BOB LEVERICH: 'ALONE TOGETHER',
GRANITE AND BASALT RIVER STONES,
11" H X 24" W X 24" L

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