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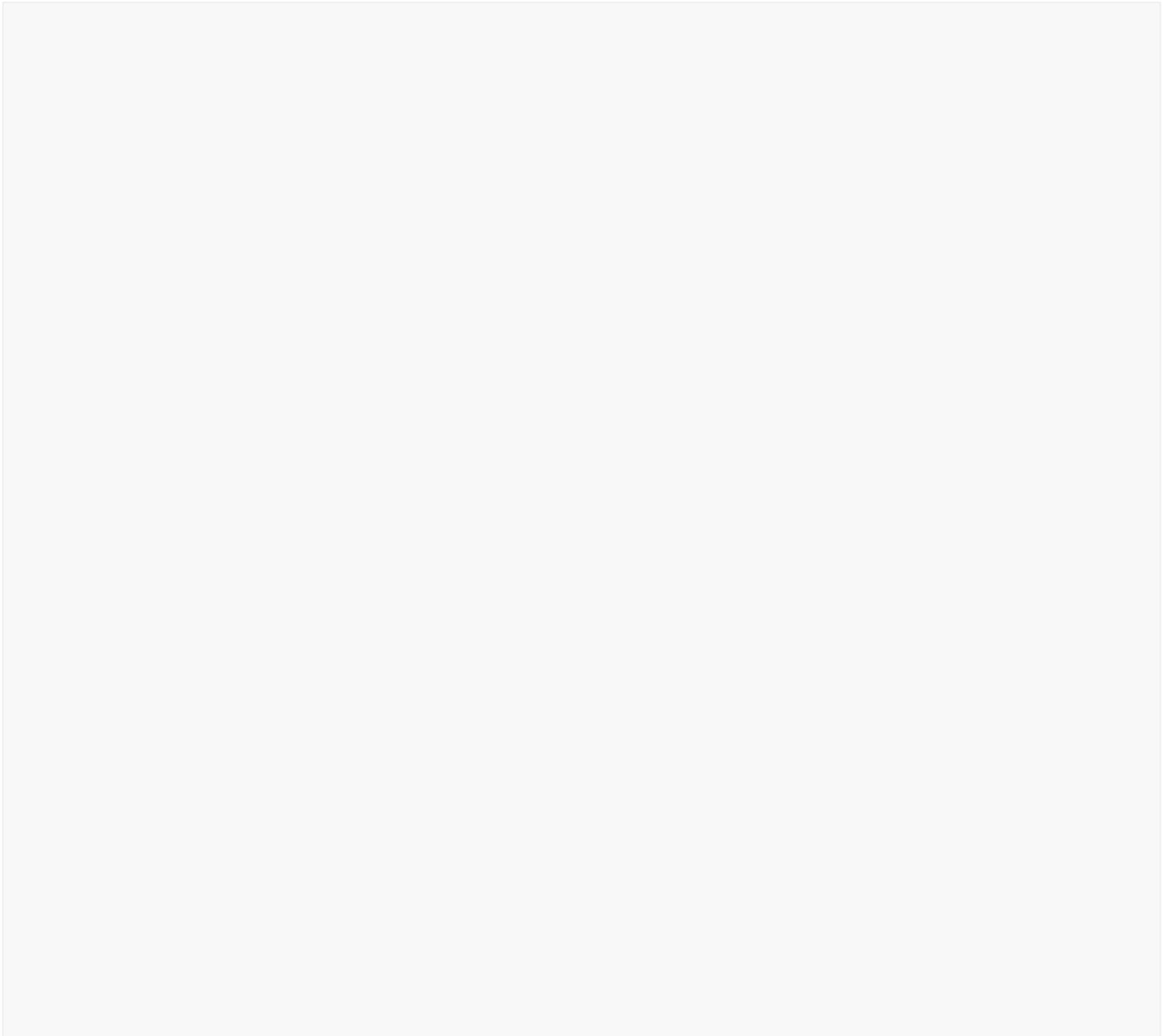
# “What the Body’s Pose is Saying:” Gerald Siciliano on Workmanship, Intuition and the Art of Reinvention

Posted on [May 10, 2017](#) by [The Art Commission](#)

[Gerald Siciliano](#) passed by an auto body shop near his Brooklyn, NY studio for several years before the inspiration hit him. More precisely, he passed the shop’s dumpster overflowing with discarded plastic bumper covers in a spectrum of colors and conditions.

“I walked past, I walked past,” Siciliano remembers, “and then one day I started collecting them and bolting them together.”

The results, he realized, recalled John Chamberlain’s colorful metal sculptures. Now his assemblages—bouquets of damaged bumpers that contrast hard and soft, heavy and light—serve as an homage to the sculptor.





JC2 (from the Hommage Series 1)

High Impact Resin  
62x 39x 28 inches

They are not, Siciliano makes clear, attempts to reproduce or “rip-off” Chamberlain’s vision. Rather they are “my own reinvention of a theme, much like my figurations are a reinvention of the figures of all the greats who have come before me.”

At first glance Siciliano’s assemblages may appear as a departure from his nearly five decades of often figurative sculpture in clay, stone and metal that inhabit homes and public spaces around the world. Upon closer consideration, however, they are in fact consistent with all of Siciliano’s work—characterized by a fascination with materials, inspired by the medium itself and wrought with the intuition and enthusiasm that he brings to all of his endeavors.

## Material as Inspiration

“I’ve always tried to stress versatility instead of a single focus,” Siciliano says when asked what most inspires him. “Marble, bronze, clay, those are inspiration. Centuries of art are my inspiration. You combine those two and you have the basis for doing tons and tons of work.” In the end, he laughs, “I just love playing with material. I have from when I started way back when.”



PUGILISTA  
Cast Stainless Steel  
26x 12x 11 inches

“Way back when” was the late 1960s as a young student at the Pratt Institute (where he now teaches in the Department of Fine Art). Initially an aspiring cartoonist (“I thought they were so urbane!”), he quickly gravitated to three-dimensional media. Feeling “outclassed” by the students around him, Siciliano says he put his middle-class work ethic into overdrive. “I decided to gather all the information I thought they had. So I explored everything in terms of materials.”

When his graduate work took him to Tuscany to train in marble carving, Siciliano found himself captivated by classical workmanship. “It blew my mind,” he says of his time there. “I never looked back even after more than 40 years of stone carving.”

Siciliano’s fascination with rendering the human form also seems to stem from his early years and runs like a vein through his body of work. A recent series of bronze castings captures a woman’s torso in repose. Headless and fragmented, the pieces are meant to relay neither the entire nor even necessarily an accurate representation of the model’s body. Instead, Siciliano says, they aim to convey “the essence of her presence.”

“Everybody has unique characteristics—the way they hold their body, the way they hold their neck, their shoulder. My path is to find what the body’s pose is saying.”

While his years of craftsmanship and study unquestionably provide him with fluency with which to express what he sees,

Siciliano’s method is in fact far more intuitive. “I don’t consciously say, ‘I’m going to make this body part look like an outstretched arm or look like a dancer,’” he says. “I’m working specifically with the inherent quality of the material to be bent, twisted, manipulated and caressed into a pleasing three-dimensional form. Becoming more lyric, poetic, personal with it is what I strive to do.”

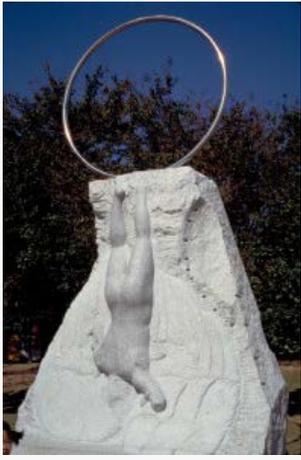


TINA 1  
Bronze  
14x 12 x 10 inches

## Every Commission is Exceptional

Siciliano approaches his commissioned pieces with the same combination of rigorous preparation and spontaneous inspiration. “At the time it must be the entire focus of my productivity,” he says of the work he has produced for clients as far away as Korea, Mexico and North Africa.

Particularly with commissioned projects, he says, “intuition and practicality go hand-in-hand.” After all, while some clients can articulate precisely what they are looking for, others are less certain. Bolstered by a



ICARUS (descending)  
White Korean Granite  
230x 120x 110 cm  
2001

client's confidence in his work, he says he looks to his surroundings for clues. "It also can be a great experience to ad lib and see what the stone has to say." Even the travel itself, he says, "the exposure to the culture and customs, becomes part of the fabric of the piece."

Take for example his time in Tangiers. While asked to produce a figurative piece for the city's Waterfront Park, Siciliano was aware of the sensitivity of Morocco's Islamic culture to figurative art. (Meanwhile, the throng of nearby beach goers underscored the city's modern and traditional sensibilities.)

After some consideration, he directly carved into the local white limestone "to see what the stone has to say." What appeared was an abstract representation of women walking in full burka. He knew he'd hit upon something good when the person who commissioned it "took one look at it and broke into a big smile."

"Any commission that I have worked on has been special," Siciliano says looking back. "I can wax poetic about aspects of any one project but in the end being able to work with a client who has chosen my working style and abilities makes every day a good day."

◀ Jonathan Brown: Mosaic for all Mediums



KAFTAN FOR KABBAJ  
African Limestone  
190x 140x 160 cm  
2000

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