

## Boaz Vaadia

Boaz Vaadia is the internationally known sculptor whose timeless, evocative stone figures now inhabit museums cultural sites, art galleries and private collections. As major installations at prime buildings, parks and homes around the world, they set a tone of peace and serenity.

Born and raised in Israel, Vaadia moved to New York City in 1975 thanks to a grant he received from the American-Israel Cultural Foundation. Vaadia established his studio in SoHo just before its streets labored to give birth to a new community of working artists. Roads were torn up and buildings were torn down. In the chaos of New York City, he discovered supplies from the earth. Slate and bluestone, ubiquitous materials of the city are sedimentary rocks from glacial periods, millions of years old. The city's detritus: vestigial windowsills, shingles and curb stones were all readily available to an artist, permitting the recycling of nature's resources to build, destruct and reconstruct edifices of the future. Vaadia used these materials to make personal totems that evoked primal energies and ritual.

Starting in 1985, generic representations of man and woman emerged from Vaadia's earlier abstract, monumental effigies. Though generalized in form, there is some individuality in each figure, the artist's intention being to represent the essence of a specific person. I love people. Each person is unique, as is the work of an artist. It is important that we, as artists, identify our own uniqueness, just as every individual needs to identify his/her own individuality. This individuality resides in centeredness, not in superficial attributes. It is that which unites us as human beings.

Vaadia hand carves slices of slate and bluestone, shaping them to be layers in a kind of topographical map. He stacks the horizontal slabs until the graded silhouette of a person, animal or group emerges. Sometimes he places a long single stone piece across a layer within juxtaposed figures to unite them. This subtle strategy suggests the merging and love shared between the figures. He views the geological layering of the stone as a natural model for his own sculptural process. It seems a logical metaphor for our human layering of experience and memory.

Vaadia's new work focuses on gigantic, layered stone heads, heads that develop from small studies of particular people. He selects all the sitters, beginning with his own children, Sara and Rebecca, and then seeks other unique heads among people with whom he works and sees on the street. Vaadia takes photos to formalize a first impression, and then sculpts a likeness in oil-based clay, adding grooves to simulate stone layers. The subsequent plaster cast begins to dissolve details, focusing instead on mass, volume and body language, qualities that are characteristic of the sitter. Details are blurred, made more generic in the handling of the stone layers. Vaadia listens to viewers' impressions, enjoying their process of filling in the details and projecting their own interpretation onto the work.

In recent years, Vaadia has been making bronze castings of many of the large outdoor pieces as well as the variously scaled studies. Vaadia is keeping a collection of castings, one from each edition, and a few of the original stone works, for loan to public museums and for exhibitions that travel. In the spring of 2005, two large pieces will be on loan for two years to the DeCordova Museum and Sculpture Park in Lincoln, Massachusetts. Adrienne Garnett - The South Florida Art of the Times.

"My work is based on the concept that man functions according to the same laws as all other creatures of nature. Therefore, the urban environment is not an artificial creation but a natural habitat that man has created for himself.

The materials I use in my sculptures: slate, shingle, bluestone and boulders, are from the immediate area surrounding my studio in New York City. The slate roof shingles and bluestones are sedimentary rocks which were formed by layers of sediment compressing over millions of years. Slate and bluestone are used throughout the city for roofing and building and also used in sidewalks, backyards, and for landscaping. Brought to the area by glacier movement during the ice age, the boulders in my latest work came from building sites in Brooklyn.

My sculptures are executed by hand carving each individual layer and stacking it up until the piece is completed. Although at this point the piece will stand up by itself, I bolt it together with threaded rods and glue for permanence and safety.

The connection of man to earth and nature is vital to my art. By using the natural forces of rocks, my work awakens ancient earth senses that were slowly abandoned by man during his evolution to civilization. One way I make the connection of man to earth is by using the natural layers of sedimentary rock. By carving the stone, I release its inherent energies. This stone sculpture now carries a direct message to the soul of the viewer. Man came from the earth and in death returns to it. I see stone as the bone structure of the earth." -- Boaz Vaadia, 1992

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