

# Perspectives

In the following pages, eight artists share insights into their experiences as sculptors working in a range of mediums.

## Pati Stajcar

### Lost in the Wood

During the early 1980s, Pati Stajcar (pronounced STAY-car) worked as an airline reservationist. It was a hectic job involving everything from complicated travel arrangements to "lots of complaints," she remembers ruefully. She started woodcarving lessons "as therapy, almost," to help her relax. From Colorado carver Mike Balas she learned realistic bird carving and discovered a passion for this three-dimensional art form.

"I found I could just lose myself in carving," she says. "I could be so totally engrossed in it that nothing could faze me, and when I'd come out of the 'trance,' I'd feel refreshed, wanting to do more."

Her skill and her passion developed simultaneously. In 1985, she quit her reservationist job and has been sculpting ever since.

Stajcar likens visualizing sculptures in wood to the child's game of imagining shapes in clouds. "When I go into a piece of wood, first I just stare at it for a long time and find out what it tends to be. As I carve, I follow the cracks and the grain and the bark, and the wood dictates pretty much what it wants to be." The resulting sculptures have won national recognition, including awards at the prestigious *Wood World Championships* and *Woodcarving Competition*.

A 1996 piece, *Transitions*, is a particularly impressive blend of design, concept, and technique. Carved from red cedar, the work depicts a red-tailed

hawk embracing its recently killed prey, a wigeon. The soon-to-occur transition of the duck into a hawk's meal is reflected beautifully in the progression from the rough, natural, uncarved burl at the work's back, to the smooth, undulating curves of the birds' bodies and wings.

Stajcar hasn't limited herself to just one medium. She also carves in marble, and during the nineties she has expanded her artistic repertoire to include bronze, thanks to an apprenticeship with modern master Gerald Balcar. "I worked for him for two years — you just couldn't pay for that kind of education."

*High Life* is a recently completed bronze. "I like each sculpture to be a total design," she explains. "Not just an animal in a setting. The elk is combined with an abstract shape, which I think of as something like the curve of a snowbank. I like to pull the head up in sculptures, since that allows viewers to see the head from all angles. I also like the attitude of it, always looking forward, and chin up."

A number of factors help this sculptor keep her art fresh. Stajcar credits her husband, Dave, with being very supportive, as well as contributing to the work — "he does all my bases, and he pours the waxes, too." In addition, she volunteers at the nearby Raptor Education Foundation. "Being around the birds relaxes me; that's kind of my therapy from this job."

— Kathryn (Kay) L. Hong



Photo by Neil Schneider, Loveland, Colorado

PHOTO: NEIL SCHNEIDER/LOVELAND, COLORADO



**Born:** Norristown,

Pennsylvania, 1958

**Family:** Married Dave

in 1979

**Pets:** One former

"pound puppy"

named Jazz

**Lives:** In the foothills of

the Rocky Mountains

near Golden, Colorado

**Mediums:** Wood,

marble, bronze

**Quotable quote:** "My

subject is flow and

motion and design; I

just happen to express

it through animals."

**Top:** *Transitions*,

wood, 15 x 21

x 18 in., 1996,

by Pati Stajcar

**Left:** *High Life*,

bronze, 12 x 15

x 8 in., 1996,

by Pati Stajcar

