



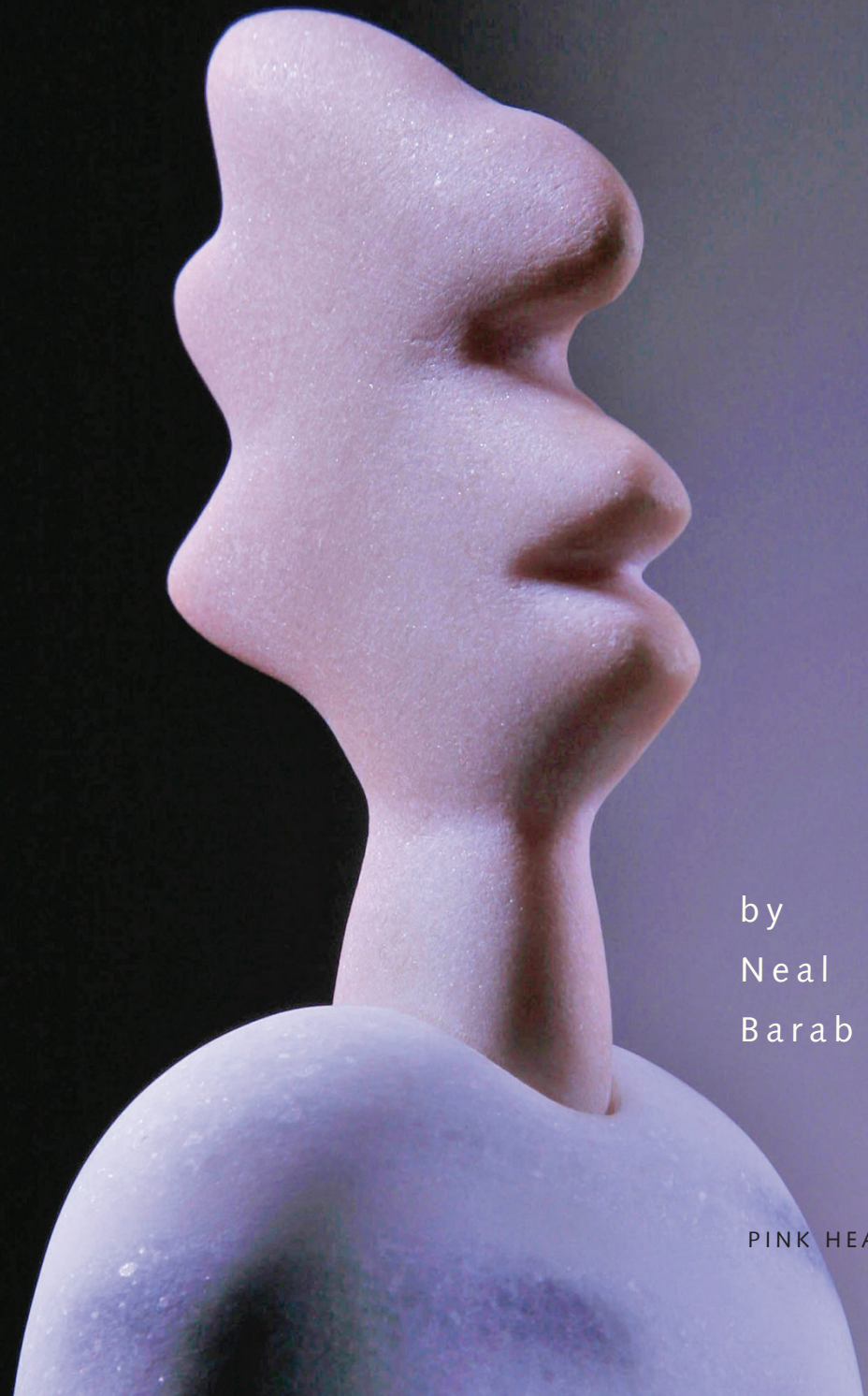
# stonexus

MAGAZINE A TRIBUTE TO STONE, STONEMASONRY AND STONE ART



NUMBER XXII

*personaggi*



by  
Neal  
Barab

PINK HEAD



photos:  
Benvenuto  
Saba

SUPERHERO

LITHIKOS GALLERY

# *personaggi*

by Neal Barab

*PERSONAGGI / DRAMATIS PERSONAE:*  
The characters or actors in a play or opera

Neal Barab, studied art at UC Santa Cruz, where one of his professors advised him that if he wanted to sculpt marble, he should go to Pietrasanta in Italy. He did and made such a connection with the place, its people, and its stone that he stayed and has lived there for more than 30 years.

However, as he says, *"the longer I'm away, the more it is clear that I have a California aesthetic and mentality."* The light-hearted spirit that characterizes his sculptural pieces confirms this.

His sculpture has various influences: cartoons, Mexican Pre-Columbian art, Greek Cycladic sculpture, African art, and Japanese anime—and, perhaps most of all, toys. Barab's father worked for a popular toy manufacturer and young Neal was 'employed' as a toy tester.

In recent years he's been working on a series of *personaggi*, characters—human, animal and animistic, large and small—made up of multifarious stone types. Some of them are painted and textured. *"I think of these pieces not as just sculptures, but living creatures"* says Barab, *"their personalities are deliberately vibrant."* The scale of his pieces runs all the way from 8 inches tall (the cover image) to human proportions, even larger. "Size," he says, "is not as important as realizing each one's character."

The *personaggi*, like many of his other pieces, are an interesting combination of additive and subtractive sculpture, assemblages of elements that are carved then honed or polished and secured invisibly with adhesive and pins.

His work is colorful, either from the contrast between the different stone types he uses, or the colors of paint or pencils which he applies to the marble (see cover photo). This application of pigment to white marble displeases some of his colleagues but Barab responds: *"I use marble, I make sculpture, but most importantly, I produce Art. Which has no limitations."* The fact, not universally known, that the ancient Egyptians, Greeks and Romans also colored, sometimes quite gaudily, their marble statuary gives additional support to this aspect of his style of work.

The *personaggi* could be described as articulate ambassadors from another world, *Barabia*.

*"I feel in the prime of my life creatively and productively. Sometimes I stop in the middle of my work and laugh. It is so good, the creative life, the marble, Italy, my family and friends. Thank you to everyone." ■*



PAOLO



WARRIOR SCARAB

*This is a photo of an actual beetle, included here because it has been an inspiration to the artist and a reminder to him that it's impossible to out-imagine nature. photo:levonbiss*

LOTTE





SCOUT



LOTTE and DUDE

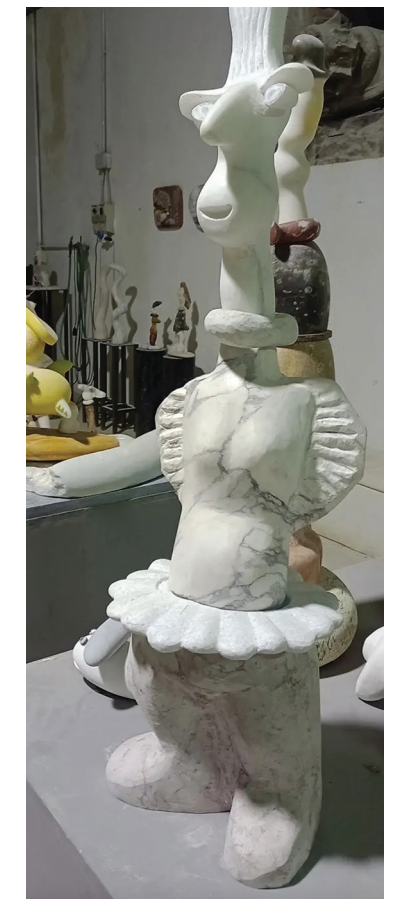
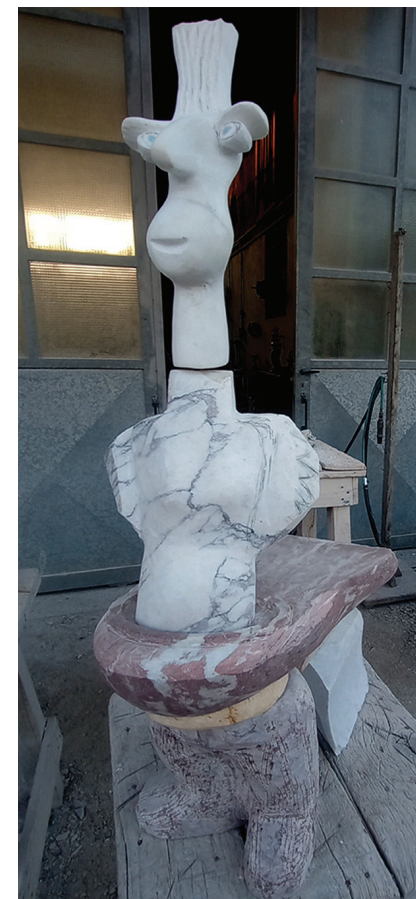


IL VICINO



These are works in progress. As the ones on the bottom row show, Barab likes to work using a modular system with interchangeable parts. He moves heads, torsos, legs and feet from piece to piece like the Surrealist game 'Exquisite Corpse' in which each of three participants, not knowing what the others have drawn or will add, draws one of three segments of a figure, the result being a bizarre graphic creature. Finished Barab sculptures often differ greatly from their original concept.—because of the artist's modular system of working just described, but also due to his practice of taking photos of works in progress, altering the images and transferring the changes to the actual stone sculptures.

left: TILT, right: ???  
right:  
far right: EX ELEFANT  
below: Six versions of an unfinished and as yet untitled sculpture.





PASCALINA



TOP HAT and NEAL



above: one of a series of stacked stone sculptures that preceded the PERSONAGGI series



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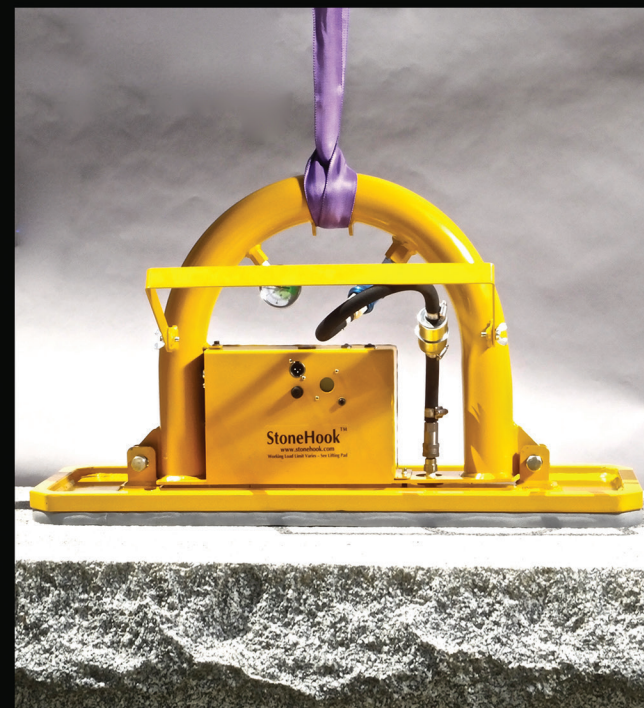
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