

Sculptural Pursuit

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Making art is a means of transportation that allows me to travel to other places where gourds become creatures, the odd is beautiful, and discarded objects become jewels. Kathleen Sherman

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Sculptor, Designer, Gourmet Chef

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Pounding Clay

Precious Stones Used for shaping "The Clay"

Photographer: Shari Winicki

EXSALIRÈ JUBILATÉ

Slate Relief by Christopher Totaro

Photographer: Artist

Totaro & Graywolf

Mother and Son, Sculptors of Earth's Elements

THE SON IN COLORADO RECALLS MEMORIES of riding on his mother's back, trekking into nature, connecting with the earth elements of sand, water, earth, trees, plants, and creatures. He tells of eating dirt, and his mother adds that he also fancied the taste of snails and loved the sea, drawn to the water as a baby. He remembers butterflies landing on his hand or arm. She recalls his gentle nature, that of a docile soul. He says he took softer footsteps because her pains showed him what not to do on his journey. They both share an awareness of understanding skills native to their heritage, a *knowing* that simply exists in their lives as they pursue their creativity. She tells of a conversation she shared with her son in her sixtieth year, "I had a conversation with my Colorado connection, my mentor, my champion, the person responsible for my taking the first terrifying and halting steps towards putting 'the work out there.' He encouraged, cajoled, assisted, held my hand; a remarkable, extraordinary human being and artist, my son, Christopher Totaro."

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Totaro and *GRACE*
Alabaster

CHRISTOPHER TOTARO

Sculptural Pursuit talked first to Totaro, asking him how he came to be a sculptor. He described the path as being a place where sculpture is an aspect of who he is, a metamorphosis that allowed a sculptor to emerge. “It was, and is, a profound desire to seek the essence of a thing and a quest for truth. My life thus far has been an exploration filled with a plethora of questions and only enough answers to count on one hand. Since I was a child I would look at a thing, a butterfly resting on my arm, for ex-

ample, and I would wonder and ponder where it came from, where would its existence lead it, did it wonder about my reality, was it real or did I manifest it into being? I found that if I cleared my mind to a meditative state, which is really the aspect of prayer where the *Great-Oneness* absorbs you and guides your hands, I could take part in the co-creation of form. The distillation of that process was a putting to form that which I cannot put to words. Sculpture is a tool for me to share with humanity what I learn each time that I venture out into the ever expanding circle; you know, that place in the great expanse where everything connects.”

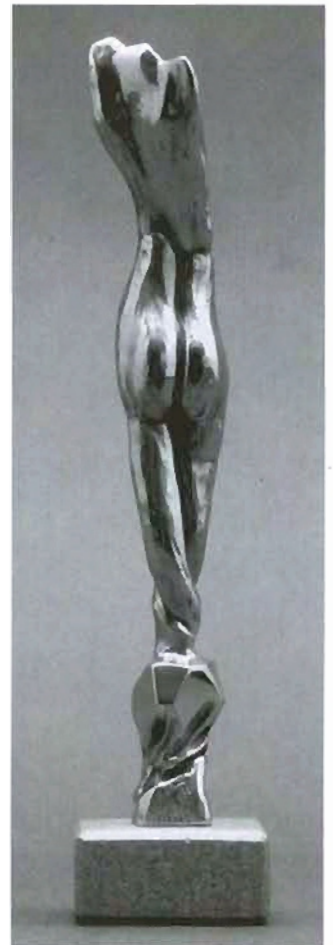
Totaro shared that he has been an artist his entire life and possibly for many lives prior to this particular one.

He said, “I do not hold the traditional ‘Webster’ definition of what an artist is or is not. The word artist, when applied to an individual, does not define them by what they create; to be an artist is the way in which you look at things. It is a philosophy, a mindset, an overall approach to life itself. It is the way we are born into life; we cannot change it or ignore it; to ignore your true self, if you are an artist, is to face agony and death.”

When asked what he enjoys most about being an artist, he explained that he constantly explores the mystery of self, of the *Great-Oneness*, to understand how they may work. “Some artists record where we have been; some artists record where we stand today; and it is my passion to explore the possibility that lies before us, the great ‘what if’ and the seldom entertained, ‘why not’.”

Concerning his training as a sculptor, Totaro said that traditionally the answer is that he is self-taught. “I believe that there are students and there are masters. The student seeks out an individual or institution to impart some secret knowledge to them, believing that they must study under an individual’s guidance for a period of time. That is wonderful if you are lacking discipline or your vision is not in focus yet. The master takes instruction from the collective wisdom that is available to anyone who desires it. The master sees it, knows it, does it. Think about it. Who taught the first artists? Art was born from the desire to express an idea or feeling of one human to another human prior to language; or it looks that way based on history. So, the next artist sees what the first artist did and puts his or her particular spin on it

Left to Right:
THE GAME
 Limestone and Bronze
ORIGIN
 Raku, Copper, and Stone
TORSO
 Bronze
 All Artwork
 Photographs by Artist



and *voilà!* The masters are those who are willing to try new things, pay close attention to failures, take notes, and move forward. The techniques of today are the perfected failures of yesterday. Student/ master, it is not about good or bad; it is what is right for you. After all, are we not all student and master?"

Talking about art fitting into the rest of his life, Totaro shared that the rest of his life folds into the co-creation process. He found, early in the process, that he was enveloped; there was no balance, as he would be in the studio for days at a time. "Food was not an issue as I was feeding myself with the deep meditation of prayer. There is much clarity that is derived from fasting; although, the act of fasting was not intentional. The studio, or more accurately, the space I enter into to collaborate in the process of co-creation has become the temple, and from my time in the temple I have discovered that Art or being the Artist is not about physical creation as much as it is about how one approaches existence, and the way in which one looks at and acts upon all the encounters of life. It was not an easy lesson to learn; however, discovering that the artist hat is one worn in every situation whether business, personal, spiritual, artistic, etc., has made all the difference. It is an approach to life for me, not an aspect of it."

He gains pleasure from his work in the co-creative aspect, and it brings him a two-fold joy. "One is that when I am centered in my life and clear, the process perpetuates a sustained state of grace. The second joy is when I am given the opportunity to witness a connection made between a form or image and a human being; it is a beautiful and profoundly humbling experience."



JUNO (front & back view)
Alabaster

He sees his work continuing to evolve as “my soul grows.” He tries to avoid expectations, but he does search for a means to convey effectively the intersection of science, particle physics, and spirituality. “I have this fascination about the essence of a thing that ties into the concept of perceived chaos as infinite order which leads to the connectedness of All. I hope to realize an effective means to convey this truth in this lifetime.”

Totaro feels that if a sculpture evokes any emotion when viewed, positive or negative, then it is successful. “I feel that when we have taken it as far as we can without getting in the way, success has been achieved. It would naturally follow that the viewer would perceive that success.”

In the early days of his career, when dealing with the business aspect of art, Totaro would take off his artist hat and put on his businessperson hat. Now, he leaves the artist hat on and finds that an artful approach to business needs to be fluid and approached with the highest level of integrity. “As artists, we are nothing without our integrity. I do my best to be approachable in various situations and engage in dialogue with those drawn to an object that I have co-created. The interaction of humans is a profound learning experience for me, and I marvel at how different creations evoke unique responses in each individual.”

In the realm of business, it has taken Totaro some time to come to a place of peace with the valuation aspect of creation. He still considers himself to be in process. “One aspect of the self values highly what I contribute, but there is another side of the self that understands that we are caretakers here and can never truly own a thing. Everything is a gift, it was all here when we showed up and it will all be here when we leave; our time here seems to be filled with a desire to rearrange energy and matter. So, I am learning that there are a limited number of creations that I can take part in, and the exchange of my energy for another’s energy, usually the green kind, must be appropriate for right action to occur. It would be my preference to gift my work to the individual who would most benefit from its presence in their life, but for now that reality exists on Star Trek.”

Totaro currently has an art representative in Denver, Bobbie Walker of Walker Fine Art. He feels that she works hard and has the highest level of integrity that he has encountered in the business of art. “I have not done much with the relationship lately as I am in transition while I move the studio to New York. I am approaching the gallery thing with caution and open eyes. I have turned down twenty-four galleries. It’s funny that when you interview the owner or director from a place of empowerment, they seldom want to deal with an intelligent artist who asks questions like: ‘What

YOURMENOMORE
Copper



were your last year's sales? Will you provide me with a list of references? Your contract looks okay; will you sign my contract which states no lien may be placed on my work if your debtors come after you?'

"Ever the eternal optimist, I believe that there is a plethora of future prosperous gallery relationships to form. We need to remember that it must be win-win. The gallery concept is built on a belief that the artist's work *will not* sell, in that it is a consignment venture. How many other for-profit businesses can you think of that pay nothing for their inventory? Yes, they advertise; yes, they pay rent; yes, they pay labor; but so does every other business. We, as artists, must get smarter about our business affairs. A good place to start is with self-validation rather than seeking validation in sales, or thinking, 'Wow, they want my work. It must be good.' There are wonderful galleries out there, well run and operated with integrity, but perhaps it is time to separate the wheat from the chaff. I don't know for sure. I do know that participating in shows, studio tours, alternative venues, or anywhere you can interact with people has worked well for me. If you desire recognition, you must participate."

Asked if he would do anything differently if starting out today, Totaro responded that he has no regrets. He feels that life is about lessons and the application of that information. "I have been fortunate in that I have not had a typical path. My career took off from day one, not that I equate sales with success. There has been lots of Top Ramen for dinner in the past, but when I presented the work, it sold. So, no I wouldn't do anything differently—that's what the next life is for, right?"

When asked if he had any tips for beginners in the field, he said that each person must walk their own path.

"Some of the most useful knowledge that has come my way resulted from getting beat up in the Art World. Adversity breeds a stronger, more tempered individual. To the beginners, I would offer for consideration that validation comes from within. Do not go seeking validation from a gallery or a sale of a work. You need to know that what you have taken part in the creation of is, by that fact, Art. Good or bad, whatever that means, it is Art."

He goes on to suggest that beginning artists develop thick, resilient skin, metaphorically, and do not place value on people's opinion. He further advises them to seek to understand why they are choosing this field, and to decide if they want their work out in the world or if the work is for their personal enjoyment. "If you decide to sell, begin the process by talking to other artists who have chosen that path and who are joyful with their decision. Each person's experience is unique; however, it can be a difficult path. Just remember that it becomes more fluid. Finally, share all of your knowledge and insights, not holding back with anything. Art is a huge puzzle and each piece into the puzzle benefits the whole. This is a beautiful life; enjoy the exploration of it and yourself."

Totaro clearly states the source of his inspiration: "From God, the *Great-Oneness*, the Creator, Divine Father-Mother, you know the All of it All. For me,

“*After all, are we not all student and master?*”

it’s about showing up, being a clear being, and following that with which I resonate. This question, in particular, deepens my understanding of how limiting language is as a descriptive. It would be far more accurate for me to project my mind into your mind so you could feel my inspiration. I’m not there yet. But, the inspiration is from a knowing that it is all connected, everything to everything. You know, the little piece—the wave and the particle. It’s what gets me out of bed in the morning.”

Totaro does not teach art in the traditional sense. He feels teaching art is to provide a fertile environment for the act of co-creation. His approach to teaching is to philosophize, ask questions, and draw out that which already exists within an individual—something they may not know is there, so that is his contribution to the process.

“We are both student and master simultaneously; so, it is about posing questions. Influence can be limiting. Think about it. If we stay in the box, the zone of comfort that is accepted knowledge, we maintain the status quo and growth halts. ‘Think outside of the box’ is the fashionable term. I best describe my approach by saying, ‘what box?’ We have enough rules in our lives; art is about making your own rules. Be bold. Someone once said, ‘Listen to that which exists only in your heart.’ If I devoted myself to following another, I would lose my connection to the experience, and I wouldn’t wish that on anyone.”

Totaro talked about his mother, Graywolf, and their relationship as artists, co-creators. “Graywolf and I interact as two people who would hang out as friends, regardless of the nature of the relationship we have chosen for this life. I have tremendous respect for her, all that she has experienced, and the way in which she has navigated those experiences. There is a maternal dynamic present which is more about thankfulness for having borne me. The nature of our interaction is grace, friendship, respect, and all of this is tied together with a ribbon of kindred spirits. There has never been a parent-child struggle for power or control. I can describe it best by saying that even if there were not an automatic introduction at birth, I would have Graywolf in my circle of friends. She is an individual of magnitude.

“The influence that she has, on that which I have contributed to the creation of, is not direct in the sense that her body of objects influences my body of objects. The influence is from the knowledge she has imparted to me in this life; the adventures, the conversation, the experiences that she opened the door for me to walk through. Her influence upon my reality has been about the tools I now utilize to navigate, comprehend, introspect upon, and manifest in my process as I pose larger questions. One profound influence has been that, as a mother, she lay down on the shards of glass on the road in the early part of the journey, which helped me to avoid some of the insanity that can come with the life lived in pursuit of questions that are explored in form. Thanks Mom.”



CARALINE GRAYWOLF

“The initial attempt to cohesively conceptualize my herstory as an artist opened with the statement, ‘My journey as an artist didn’t begin until my sixtieth year’,” relates California sculptor, Caraline Graywolf on her journey as an artist. At that time, she had the conversation with her son Christopher who encouraged her to take, “. . . the first terrifying, halting steps towards putting ‘the work’ out there.” She describes her trepidation and struggle with calling herself an artist, “With the myopic definition I held of what creativity was, who an artist was, I certainly never considered myself either. Resourceful, perhaps.” She felt she was blessed with what her Osage Grandmother simply called “Indian ingenuity”. Then she came to a new realization of the meaning of the word create: “Create: to cause to come into being, as something unique, to evolve from one’s own thought or imagination. That fit!” she said.

Her new awareness of being an artist, and of the act of creating, reminds her of a significant chapter in her life where she spent seventeen years practicing in a helping profession. She now realizes that her profession in therapy was a collaborative creative process. “The art of chipping away the impeding pieces, thereby releasing the intrinsic form, the invincible human

spirit, ergo equals The Art of Therapy.” Graywolf goes on to say, “In the past I had designed, implemented, and directed, unique to the field of addiction, long-term recovery programs, as well as creating the text of brochures and literature focused on Women’s Health Issues for the California Women’s Commission on Alcoholism and Other Addictions. I had also collaboratively created and directed a high-end gallery in Taos, New Mexico. With the expanding perspective of what creativity was, what an artist is, I gained a deeper appreciation for who I was, indeed! Thank you, Christopher.”

Above, Left to Right:

SHARING THE DRUM

Clay

MARJAH, WIND SPIRIT

Clay

PRAYING FOR RAIN

Clay Relief

All Photographs
by Shari Winicki



STILLPOINT
Clay
Photographer: Shari Winicki

Her relationship with what she calls *the clay* is what began in her sixtieth year. “I was in the process of regenerating from an illness that required rest. A dear friend brought me a bucket of dirt to play with, to fill the hours. It was clay dug from the Laguna, Cuyamaca Mountains where I have lived for the last decade. As I picked up a clod, deep rich russet sprinkled with mica, it felt alive, and I simply remembered. So it began! In the ensuing months, *the clay* became the impetus for healing: body, mind, soul. An offering, an expression of thanksgiving.” Graywolf believes that as she healed, the artist then was revealed. She feels that art is a validation of healing, the soul pushing through the mind to heal itself.

Graywolf also uses clay that friends bring or send from other regions: rich, red mica from New Mexico’s Sangre de Cristos Mountains, some from the Santa Isabels of the Rocky Mountains, and the black clay of Eastern Oklahoma. One friend, a sister artist, Sally Snipes, even smuggled a cupful from a hot springs spa. Graywolf carries a shovel and plastic bags in her car in case she spots a streak of clay while driving. She covers the bag with a cloth and hammers it, then runs it through a kitchen strainer until it is fine grained. Then she mixes in water and stores it in the refrigerator to keep it moist.

“The process of preparation and execution remains for me the same as it was for indigenous cultures eons ago, and as it is for those cultures today. All the elements of the Earth Mother—Earth, Water, Air, Fire—incorporated. The clods of clay pounded into sand, strained, water melded, worked, kneaded until silken smooth, formed, and air-dried. Then burnished by hand with a precious chocolate brown river stone the size of a quarter—a gift from a high mountain stream that came to me as I soaked my blistered feet after completion of my third-year Sundance, a part of my personal medicine, my *Wota*. *The clay* is then fired in my woodstove; ground firing is too dangerous while we remain in a drought. I learned early on to not have a preconceived notion or expectation of a fired piece or of its color. I place the work under a bed of ash, add sage, light the fire, and surrender it to the *Peta*, Spirit of Fire. I sometimes seal a piece with layer upon layer of hot, melted, pure beeswax; a practice used by the ancients of Egyptian and Mesopotamian cultures.

“The entire process is Ceremony! My early relationship with *the clay* was simply sitting by my woodstove, rolling clay between my fingers, forming beads, each bead a prayer. I used a long porcupine quill or a peeled willow to pierce and to engrave aboriginal medicine markings on the beads, or to form dimensional images of animal helpers. When air-dried, I burnished each bead, a process that took thirty minutes to an hour depending on the willingness of *the clay*. Then I fired, cooled down, and strung the beads on goat thong or waxed linen. They were as *malas*, rosaries—medicine pieces.”

“ . . . art is a validation of healing, the soul pushing through the mind to heal itself. ”

She hung these above her altar. As the numbers increased, she hung them on her walls. A friend came by, “Caraline, they are wonderful; it looks like a gallery in here, that’s where they belong. Sell them!” Graywolf recalls feeling ill, rather than complimented. “It was nearly two years before I could ‘let them go’. It began by my gifting people I loved and a trip to Colorado. I took some pieces with me, and Christopher hand carved deer antler closures for several of them. ‘Mom, it’s time, they belong out there,’ and I began to *know* they would go with who ever was drawn to their particular medicine, and that is indeed what has come to pass!”

Soon other sculptural forms began to emerge from her clay. She tells us, “Interspersed among the making of the bead sculptures and mystifying to me, in holding and working *the clay* strange, arcane *humanals* began to emerge, often gestating, pregnant, giving birth. Mother and infant? Intellectually, I had no idea of who ‘they’ were; yet there was inside of me a sense of progressive unfolding. As time passed, the pieces changed in form and mood. They began to appear as women. Soft contours, understated essence with just enough detail to impart mood. I named them *DAUGHTERS OF THE EARTH*, *A TAOS REFLECTION*, and presented them in a tableau that conveys women’s activities on market day from a bygone era.”

Graywolf talks about the fires that raged last summer in her mountains, and the work that emerged from that experience. “This past summer we experienced fire, 70,000 acres in twenty-one days. On a daily basis, I was awed by Mother Nature’s terrible beauty. The fire raged and our mountains burned as if *Kali* were on a rampage. The experience sent me to *the clay*, again acknowledging the power of the Earth Mother’s elements—Earth, Water, Air, Fire. And the pieces came: *MARIAH*, wind spirit of Vulcan Mountain; *ENCINA DE MADRA*, the invincible oak; *PHOENIX RISING*, the spirit of hope; *PRAYING FOR RAIN* and *THANKSGIVING*. My process remains Ceremony, the work, an Offering.”

When asked about a sculptural collaboration with her son Totaro, she responds, “Although Christopher and I have not created any pieces together, my work would not exist if not for our emotional and spiritual collaboration. Being separated by the miles has been the deterrent to our physically working together. I hold the vision—WE WILL!

“I have a grateful heart for those who support and encourage me, especially Christopher. The fullness in my heart extends to my friend and fairy godmother, Annie Rowley, owner, director of the Santa Ysabel Gallery (an oasis of pure intention); to the dear sister of my soul, Lisa Goodman Elkins, who brought me the bucket of dirt; and to the men and women who honored the work by giving them new homes. The Earth Mother whose elements are inherent to bringing forth the work, and the illness that stopped me long enough to discover another aspect of myself ~ and so it continues. *Itakuye~Oyasin!* (Lakota)” ✕

poetry



Photographer: Shari Winicki

Caraline Graywolf, sculptor, poet.
You can contact her at PO Box 423,
Julian, CA 92036.

At dawn ~ climbing the hills upward
towards that sacrosanct place
finally ~ falling to my knees as if to pray
I fill my hands with deep carnelian red Earth,
from the stream, I blend, meld the ancient recipe ~ Water and Earth

Enfolded in my hands, formless, mute yet
asking to be made complete.
Through generations of waiting, your image has remained in my blood.

The sun rising over Vulcan warms me
I stand to sing my Thanksgiving prayer, *Pilamaya, Pilamaya,*
Cansasa offering (red willow bark tobacco)
like my song, carried on the wings of *Wiyohyepa Tate*
(Wind Spirits of the East)

In morning ritual you have danced in my soul,
Familiar ~ you have cried to me through
the sacred smoke of tribal fires.
I echo your primal voice, drumming blood ~ I sing your song.

I see you ~ your long graceful shadow,
face flushed, cheeks berry from the fire's glow,
as you dance in gratitude for a bountiful hunt.
I see you ~ among the tall grasses of the high plains,
gathering your medicines.
I see you ~ sacred *Chanupa Wakan*, pressed to your breast,
as you pray in the Black Lodge *inipil*.
I see you ~ washing your raven hair in a glacial mountain pool.
I see you ~ in the ghost dance circle crying for the end of genocide.
I see you, eyes smiling, as you teach your daughter to quill.
I see you ~ in the Sundance offering your body, mind, and soul
for the healing of *Ina Maka* (Earth Mother) and all her children.
I see you ~ as you become one with the drum
I see you ~ I see you ~ I see you

It is time at last, this dawn of New Moon
with a hesitant prayer, in silence,
from my innermost space,
I call you out of "The Clay"

Your bones glide between my fingers,
grasp my heart, you who walk inside me
I breathe you out.

Oh, how these winter winds move my soul
Spirits of *Shakopeh Ouye* (Six powers of the Universe).

Let me see you, in this morning light,
you wrapped in deep carnelian red Earth
Myself repeated! Woman of Clay