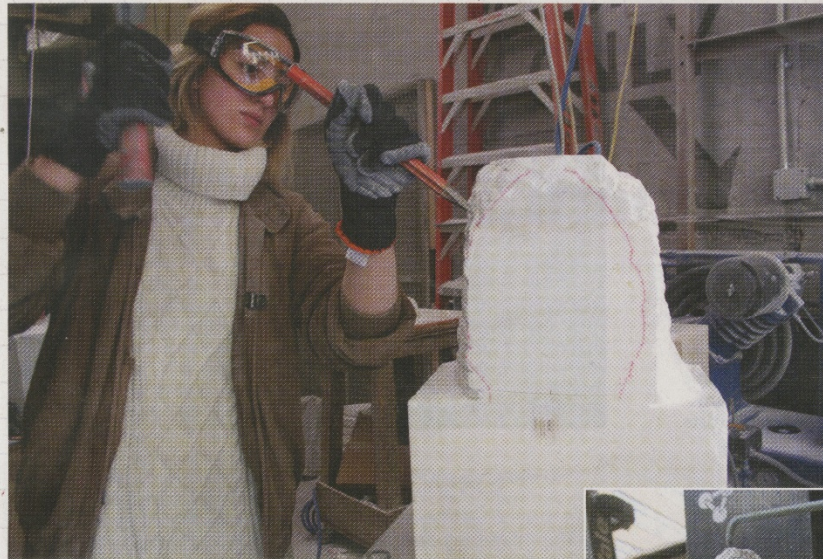




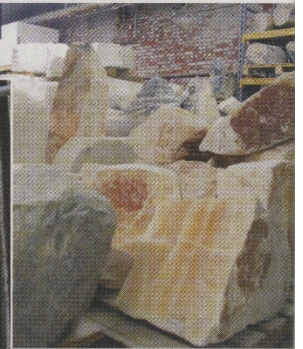
Prime SPACE



LEFT
Helen La Rota carves using a point chisel and hammer after cutting with a diamond saw.

BELOW LEFT
A plaster model by Gianluca Giarrizzo

BELOW
Supplies for the course are donated by Jonathan Tibbett of ABC Stone. Seen here are assorted stone blocks at the Compleat Sculptor



School of Rock

Endangered stone-carving techniques reach a new generation of artists.

Marble sculptures account for some of the most celebrated works in Western art history, but the practice of carving marble by hand is rarely taught in American art schools. An exception to this trend is found at the New York Academy of Art, which for the past several years has offered a stone-carving course for students in its M.F.A. program. *Artists Magazine* recently dropped in on a class, where we saw students working diligently with hammers, chisels, calipers, pointing machines and power tools to slowly create forms out of rough marble blocks.

"A lot of schools have stopped teaching a traditional version of stone carving because it's very technical and a very long process," says instructor Barbara Segal. "Working this way is a dying tradition. It still exists, but because of the onset of CNC machines [automated tools using computer numerical controls], anyone can make a 3-D file and have it carved out by a robot. But these students want to learn how to do it by hand, which teaches you a whole different language in sculpture. It's really a pleasure to teach them."

Throughout the semester, students learn the traditional, academic manner of stone carving,



BELOW
The hand-sculpting course is held in an outdoor area with good light and ventilation.





while also investigating the artistic aspects of the medium. “The material we use is a white marble—either Carrara white or Vermont white, depending on what’s on hand,” Segal says. Students learn to use tools, including angle grinders, diamond cut-off saws, pointing machines and pneumatic air hammers. They start with a block measuring 15 inches to a side and learn a deductive process in which they first remove large chunks of stone using chisels and garment saws, then gradually make flat planes and finer points, measuring from model to sculpture with the use of a pointing machine.

The class is held at the Compleat Sculptor, a sculpture-supply store. “There’s an outside bay where we can work, which is good, because this process makes a lot of dust, and you need ventilation,” Segal says. “We wear masks and eye protection, as well as earmuffs, because there’s a lot of noise.”

“It’s been so empowering to be exposed to marble carving, because it’s not easily accessible to most people,” says student Kate Sinclair. “Working with power tools on a material you really have to wrestle with and approach differently than a painting has changed the whole direction of my art making. It’s given me confidence in sculpture that I wouldn’t have been exposed to otherwise.” —AUSTIN R. WILLIAMS



RESOURCES FOR FURTHER LEARNING

If you want to try your hand at stone carving, Segal recommends the following books:

- *The Art of Stoneworking: A Reference Guide* by Peter Rockwell
- *Contemporary Stone Sculpture: Aesthetics, Methods, Appreciation* by Dona Z. Meilach
- *Sculpture in Stone* by Josepmaria Texido and Jacinto Santamera
- *Sculpture: Processes and Principles* by Rudolf Wittkower



ABOVE
Kate Sinclair works using a pointing machine.

FAR LEFT
Ayna Musayeva works by hand using a claw chisel.

NEAR LEFT
Gianluca Giarrizzo's plaster model, with the artist in the background.