

CARVING MY LIFE

Volume II



Angela Treat Lyon

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Please note: The variation from picture to picture of colors that you will sometimes see in the same piece is caused by different lighting and camera angles, and the fact that some of these shots were scanned from xeroxes of photographs that were in an early brochure, since I don't have the original shots anymore. And, some of the image files are over 30 years old, and I had not one clue how to edit them correctly back then—although I sure thought I did. Ah well.

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for my dear friend Pamela

AND...my enormous gratitude goes to all the people who were my angels when I lived in New Mexico and my brief stays in New York—what would I ever have done without you?

Melissa Ireland and Pete Amahl, my beautiful dog Io, Jane Lipman, Dr. Pamela Maloney, Liz Rubin, Nancy Reyner, Amy Hamouda and Jack Bice, Kathy Smith, Patsy Fish, David Gardener, Sandra Fitch, Marty and Carole Kahn, Bin Gippo, Peter and Randy, Janice Garard, Hans de Groot, Fred Atwood and Cynthia Sterling—you helped me keep going and believing in myself in spite of the hardships, illnesses and obstacles!

CARVING MY LIFE

Angela Treat Lyon
Volume II

Preface

Someone asked me why I carve stone, instead of, say, painting or casting in bronze. Well, I do paint, and I have cast pieces in bronze. But stone is my all-time fave.

Sometimes it has more to do with the fact that I have way more energy than I know what to do with, and pounding on stone is a pretty good release. I go to bed at night after a day of carving pretty worn out, but the feeling of accomplishment is deliciously high.



Wild Ride: Montana Soapstone,
18 h x 12 w x 12 d

Most of all, though, I love it because I seem to be able to portray emotion and movement with the simplest line...and I can do it without having to think about color or composition or mixing paint or applying it within a set, rigid square or rectangle.

I like it that my style has evolved to include the most voluptuous, sensuous curves along with completely unpredictable, wild, unruly, unfinished places.

I like to be able to say, for instance, "**Wild Ride** is about a truly powerful woman taking a wild ride through ghastly, upsurging, enormous rip tides, who's able to sit still there in her little boat, calm and collected, as if she was meditating." All that, said in one piece of stone with a bunch of carefully-placed dynamic cuts, spirals, dots and polished surfaces. I really like that.

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When I started carving stone, I was so worried that I might get it wrong, somehow, or that what I carved was silly or not credible. Who knows where those “gotta do it just so” ideas come from. What *is* ‘credible,’ and who sets up those rules?

After a few weeks of these tormenting thoughts, I decided to heck with it and just do it, and let it be. That became my mantra: “do it, let it be.” I had no idea what I was doing, really, but somehow what I created, people loved.

I still fight the “do it just so” voices when I carve, and especially when I’m painting. Just last week I over-painted what would have been a very powerful painting, but my trying to perfect it turned it into a piece of sentimental blah. Should have just let it be. It lost its intrinsic power. I’ve already painted over it.

Now that I’m close to 70 and have been carving for 35 years, it’s become critical to me to heed the “Let it be. Stop! NOW!!!” voice, and to let the looseness and the seeming chaos of creation occur by itself.

After doing something for years and years, your body knows more than you do, and connects with your inner wisdom way better than your conscious mind does, and will give you the powerful result you want. Ignore it, and see you’ll the piece die before your eyes in a nano second, in one stroke.

You have to allow your hands to fly faster than your eyes can track. For me, it’s almost like being in a blind trance I come out of after a while. I stand back and look at what I did, and it’s almost like a miracle to me—I’ll exclaim, “Wow! I did that?”

You have to have the ability to see when the work is actually saying what you wanted it to say, and to stop. Right now. Whether or not YOU call it done, compared to the envisioned, complete painting you have in your head.

You have to have restraint. Overdoing is like blathering on in your writing when your first paragraph knocked your reader over. You wreck your impact by incessant blah-blah-blah. Let the inner wisdom, the voice, of the artwork speak through what you used to call imperfections and wayward lines, colors and forms.

If you get to a point that the piece is what you *used* to call half-done, but it carries the desired message and has the live energy, you have to respect that. From then on, you must be diligent to *only* make micro changes, like nano-minimal cleaning up of minor distracting parts, pieces or lines.

It's about the energy, not the perfection.

That's why I say that I love what I do. Because in truth, I'm an abject coward and would never do the scary things people do—like hang gliding or even simple skate boarding! But! I know how to walk the razor's edge between creating blathery art, and powerful, impactful paintings and sculpture that will continue to have impact for centuries after I'm gone. Centuries—what a thought!

Taking life as an Adventure

This is the Wild Experiment Volume of this series of books. Some of the pieces in it are pretty darn odd, if I do say so myself. Pointy faces and chins, squinty eyes (aliens?) and shapes I never dreamed I'd manifest into being. I'm hoping you will enjoy looking at the underlying exploration of stone, shape and form that came out of this particularly outrageous and creative-fun-for-me time period.

with aloha,

Angela Treat Lyon



Here's where we start!

A nice chunk of soapstone (about 100 pounds), my red marking crayon, my carving glasses, a simple wood chisel, and of course my beautiful walnut carving hammer that was custom made for me by my old friend, master wood turner Del Stubbs

Italy!

Have you ever just had a wild whim and followed it, willy-nilly? Going to Italy was just like that for me. I had no sooner gotten back to Honolulu after a miserable, long, freezing winter in Colorado, than someone gave me a brochure on some art classes that were being taught in Lucca, Italy: oil painting...and carving marble.



image: artistedge.com

Lucca, Italy: the walled city

"Sign up now and get the early-bird fee!" I thought about not going. Didn't feel right. So, I signed up, using every penny I had to pre-pay for airfare, hotel and tuition. All else after that would have to be supplied by angels.

It was the perfect time for me to learn to carve marble and use air powered tools. I'd spent ten years carving by myself—no teacher, no mentor; using only hand tools. I'd carved soapstone, alabaster, dolomite

and serpentine...but never the queen of stone, marble. I had only had experience with power tools working on wood—building cabinets and shelves and the like—but never carving stone. I was quite frankly afraid of the force, power and speed. What if I cut off too much too fast? What if I dropped the tool and it cut me to ribbons? What if...all kinds of what-ifs. I went anyway.

Lucca

I was fascinated with the wall around the town. They call it Le Mura, the Wall. It was built in stages; protecting the inhabitants from raids. Great place to go for walks.

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What used to be robber's central, is now a respectable banking town. It was once the capital of Italy, and is now a popular tourist destination. For those of us who were in the workshop, it was Carver's Paradise!



image: 1000lonelyplaces.com

When I arrived in Lucca, my room had been given away by the hotel by mistake. So they very kindly rented me a spacious, 3-bedroom apartment for the same amount I'd have paid for the room. Happy me!

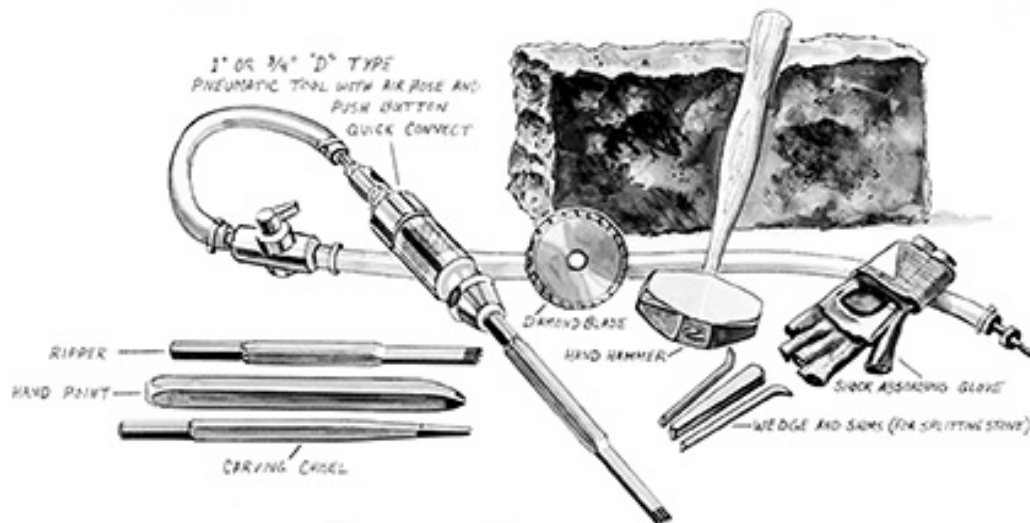
Only one drawback. See the tower at the top left? That's the church's bell tower that

was directly across the street from my apartment (the red dot). Took me a while, but I finally got used to the hourly clamor. Well, almost hourly—it wasn't good enough to set my watch by.

I walked to our carving studios (see left red dot in Lucca picture on page 1) every day across beautiful Lucca, and as I did, I'd hear, "Ehhh, caldo oggi, eh?" I waved and smiled and walked on my way to get my morning espresso, with no clue that they were doing the equivalent of the wow-whistle. My maestro Roberto finally translated for me: they were shouting, "it's hot today!" Well, it was! I had no idea why they were cat-calling me, the gawky American in dusty shorts and tank top.

Working with a maestro was a complete eye-opener for me. With his instruction, suddenly, instead of taking a week or two to chisel out a shape, I could do it in a day or two. The difference? Air and power tools! I was stunned by the speed and sheer force I could wield.

image: [Trow and Holden](#), modified



In a mere two weeks of morning lessons, I had completed my very first marble piece, **Curiosity** (right). It took that long only because we would stop and start as Roberto would talk to us about each stage:

1. Making a clay model (which I strongly protested having to make—I wanted to just start carving away on the stone...but later was so glad that I did the model)
2. Going up to the stone yard in Pietra Santa to choose the stone (and buy other, extra stone to ship home—felt like being a kid in a candy store)
3. Going to Milani tool store (all hand made chisels and files and rifflers—yet another candy store)
4. Selecting the right air hammers—I like to use small and medium sized ones because my hands can't handle the enormous, goliath ape-size ones the big men use
5. Sketching my design onto the stone
6. Which chisels to start with? Fooled you—trick question! You don't start with a chisel, you start with a pointing tool!

...and so on.



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I could go on and on about tools and stone, but I think maybe you'd be bored silly. Instead, let me introduce you to the Italian Alps (below). That's marble, not snow. Check out those roads—if you want a real thrill, drive one some day!

image: from quarriesandbeyond.org, catalogue



You should see the marble carrying trucks come up and down those turns. It's a real heart-stopper. That's where Michaelangelo got his stone. Imagine going up and down those roads in wooden wagons pulled by teams of oxen. No thanks.

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Soon the hotel decided that since my wonderful apartment had 2 empty bedrooms, they should make some dough off it. So they plopped two great room-mates, Gwen and Marion, on me. Good thing we got along.

They were from Holland—Marion's family came down to Lucca every year.

They took me all over Tuscany on wonderful tours of towns and the lovely countryside, showing me the insider's view points. My angels were with me still!

Did you know that there used to be lots of towers in Lucca? Rich merchants vied with each other as to who could build the highest ones. One day an earthquake toppled them, killing and maiming hundreds.

Only the Torre Guinigi (right) remains. The climb up to the top is freaky—only a narrow set of steps right next to the brick walls. There are Holm Oaks growing on top, and you can look out all across Lucca.

No more towers were built higher than the houses from then on.



I went to many of the local professional carving studios, where the men and assistants all wore this amazing high-tech protective head gear—hats made out of folded newspaper. They said since marble dust wasn't toxic, all they worried about was the coarse dust wearing out their hair!



I considered my visits to the quarries the highlights of my time there. You've seen the shot of the Alps—in the white heart of the mountains, they cut the marble with 4" thick steel cables that looked like giant bread cutters, and release chunks from the sides of the quarry walls that would dwarf your house.

The enormous trucks they use to convey the stone to Pietra Santa and Carrara look like baby Tonka toys from a distance...yet their tires are taller by twice than most tall men. Make sure to watch this shorty video, where you can see quarry workmen calmly loading an enormous hunk of marble onto the bed of one of those huge trucks, and then navigate those nasty hairpin turns down the side of the mountain: interestingones.com/work-marble-quarries-carrara.html

Remember in **Volume I** I told you about the Yule Marble lying out in the elements down by the river? All along the way down these mountains, too, were piles and piles of stone. We got out to inspect them on one of our trips, but it was almost all dead stone. We wanted to find chunks to carve, but how many people go there with the same idea?!? None left! Never mind!



image: [939brittle.com](https://www.939brittle.com)

See what I mean about the huge trucks looking miniscule? Maybe seeing this gives you some perspective on the gargantuan task it is to quarry this stone. And just so you know, this is a small hole—most of the quarry holes are way bigger.

We were completely, utterly exhausted after each trip we made to these quarries. It's not that we did all that much but drive, look, and drive back, but the sheer scale of the quarries makes you feel like a cosmic gnat.

So we'd come back to the Piazza in Pietra Santa for an evening espresso and a serving of frutti-di-bosco—it's a local concoction, kind of like shaved-ice, made with wild berries from the forest (bosco). Then we'd drive back down to Lucca.

This is the heart of the little town of Pietra Santa. To the left, out of sight, is the place where Michaelangelo stayed; the piazza is where they hold annual sculpture shows. Up the street, to the left and down a ways is the Milani Tool Store, the sculptor-mecca for hand-made carving tools.



The second time I went to carve in Italy, this is where I lived. I carved with one of sculptor Lynne Streeter's carving groups, with Maestro Leo Muti in one of the sculpture studios. The artigiani (carvers for the studio) all laughed at me when I took out my little bitty hand mirror so I could use my own face as reference.

"You can't do that! It's too small! What kind of sculptor are you?!?" All teasing good fun. They didn't laugh when my piece, **Secret**, was done though (next page), or when they saw how fast I carved the other piece, **Bacciame**, since my time there was up in 10 days and I had to go home!



One of the fun points of my second trip to Italy in '92 was being able to meet some of the well-known artists who lived and worked in Carrara and Pietra Santa, one of whom was stone and bronze sculptor Marcello Tomasi (left).

He had an (enviably) huge studio and bronze foundry, half of which was floor-to-ceiling crammed with sculpture his father had done during WWII under Mussolini. Powerful, hard-eyed, grim faced soldiers, sharp-cheeked men, very stylized women—it was an amazing collection.

When we all sat down at his big table to have cakes and coffee, he came up behind my chair and whispered in my ear. My Italian wasn't quite good enough to understand, so I asked my friend, Martin, what he'd said.

Blushing madly, Martin finally blurted out that Marcello had asked me to "forget the coffee, let's go take a nap!" Ummm...thanks so much anyway!

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Secret

Cararra Marble Statuario, 24" x 20" x 8"



Bacciame

Italian Steatita, 30" x 24" x 8"

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Bacciame

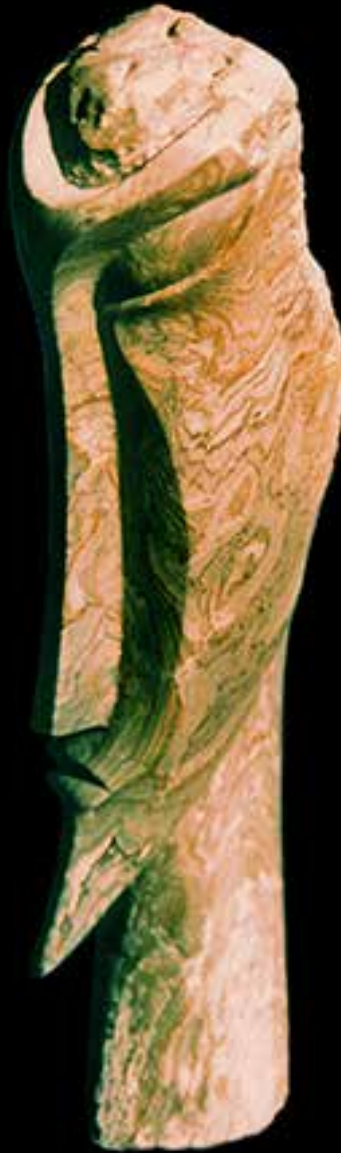
Italian Steatite, 30" x 24" x 8"



Higher Self

New Mexico Who Knows What Stone, 24" x 8" x 6"

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Higher Self

New Mexico Who Knows What Stone, 24" x 8" x 6"

After Italy

Back in Honolulu, the only marble I could find as I waited for my Carrara stone to come was marble tombstones as yet unmarked. **Ready** (below - 24" x 12" x 8") was carved from Taiwanese marble that one day would have been a grave marker!



The Oddisms

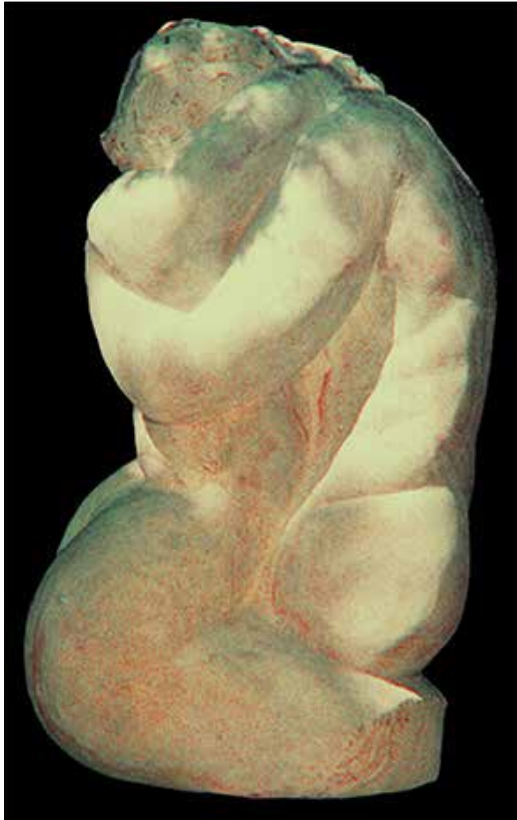
Bacciame was the start of the Oddisms. I like to focus the attention of the viewer on the emotion of a piece by exaggerating the physical features. I wanted to push this piece as far as I could go. I did several more like her, pushed far as possible.

Higher Self was probably one of the most odd of them all. She was carved out of a rogue stone someone gave me that looked like a walnut burl high on LSD.

I actually 'saw' her in a dream, and carved her from the drawing I had made from that.

She seemed so too-odd that I almost cut her apart to carve something else, but she was saved barely in time by a collector who liked her just the way she was. She lives in his garden in New Mexico now.

When people come into my carving studio, they stand in front of my carving table as if it is a magic altar. They reach out and touch the tools and the stone, reverent, a look of complete wonderment on their faces. They see the little scrap of paper on which I've done a very basic sketch, turn to me and say, "How do you do that? How do you get the idea in *that* little drawing into *that* piece of stone?"



Like **Eternity** (left, 26" x 13" x 10"). It was a commission for a couple who wanted a touch-stone for love in their bedroom. I drew it out for them just as you see on a tiny scrap of notebook paper.



They liked the idea, I carved it, they liked it, and off it went to their home.

Having the ability to envision something in 3-D grows over time. At least, it has in me—remember I told you in Volume I that it was really hard for me at first to go from 2-D to 3-D? Now I can do it pretty regularly without thinking much about it.

I want you to see the steps that are involved in carving a stone piece. You may not have seen anything like it before, so on the next pages are the steps I took to carve **Pikaki** out of alabaster. Then I'll show you a few other 'odd' pieces, and others not so odd.



Pikaki

Stage 1 - roughing out the basic form

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Pikaki

Stage 2 - positioning limbs

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She doesn't look like much, does she? Sometimes a piece will look like so much of nothing that I will change it right there to something else. But Pikaki was her own boss—I knew right from the start what she'd look like.



I wanted to fit her into the natural triangle shape of the stone. I can't stand to lose any more stone that I need to—maybe it's my New England frugal heritage coming through (of all places), but when I see some sculptors carve tiny little pieces of the center of a large stone and all that waste, it makes me a little nutty....

Some sculptors start carving a block of stone with an idea of what they want to carve out of it. Others ask the stone what's already in it. I do that. This stone just said, "Mellow. Sweet. Kind. Contented." OK, here we go.

See the air hammer on the right (red arrow)? It's a steel tube with a small piston inside. You hold the dull end of the chisel inside the tube, against the piston, which makes for a jack-hammer effect, allowing you to push the other toothed or sharp end of the chisel against the stone so you can carve it.

Once you've gotten all the bulk you want off, you start using smaller-toothed chisels, and then you work at it with files and little bitty files called rifflers to get the fine detail.

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Pikaki

Stage 3 - starting on the details



Pikaki

Almost done - rifflers and sandpaper stage

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Pikaki
Completed

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Pikaki

Colorado Alabaster, 16" x 14" x 10"

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Pikaki

Face detail

Pikaki is what jasmine is called here in Hawaii. I carved both her and **Lehua** on Maui. My old friend Bruce Turnbull, a wonderful wood sculptor, invited me to come stay and make art. And, he just so 'happened' to have some alabaster lying around, and said, "Use it!" So I did.

If you look carefully on the detail of **Pikaki**, you can see that there are little grooves and scratch marks. That's because I only went as far as using the rifflers, with very little application of sandpaper. What's a riffler? See the 3 funny looking tools at the bottom of the illustration? Those are rifflers, or mini-files.

Many beginning carvers often think that a high shiny polish is a good, professional look. I did, too...until I saw all the satin skinned sculptures in Italy. I asked Maestro how he got that effect, and he said very sternly that I should never use a higher grit than 350 sand paper for skin. He growled, "How many people do you see with a shiny plastic skin? Never! Only on corpses!" Ew. So I stopped working on **Pikaki**

when I got to the finest riffler, only using sandpaper on the broad areas to make her clothing soft to the touch.



See the big, funny looking file in the box? It's called a Vixen file. I only just found out about

them last year. They don't have rows of little teeth the way regular files do. Instead, they have rows of sharp curved ridges, like this:)))))))))))))))))). They're monster files!

Using one, I can take a rough piece of stone to smooth in just a few strokes. And those are the cutting ends of cutting chisels to the far left in the drawing.

Lehua is the flower of the Ohi'a tree. In an old Hawaiian legend, Ohi'a, who was a handsome young Hawaiian man, fell in love with a lovely girl named **Lehua**. The goddess Pele saw Ohi'a and wanted him for her own, but since he had no eyes for her, she turned him into a gnarly old tree. Lehua begged to be reunited with her lover, but Pele ignored her. The other gods felt sorry for her, turning her into a red flower on the tree so she and Ohi'a could be together. (See her on pages 86 & 87)

Blades!

It was about this time that I became fascinated with carving blades out of stone. Don't ask why! These things just rear up and bite me! So here are a few of them. My challenge to myself was to see how thin I could carve them without them breaking apart at a touch. The thinnest, **Straight Blade**, was just like a thick knife blade.



Straight Blade
Utah Candy Alabaster, 6" x 2" x .25"



Dancing Blade

Colorado Alabaster, 14" x 5" x .35"

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Dancing Blade

Colorado Alabaster, 14" x 5" x .35"



Eagle Blade

Colorado Alabaster, 12" x 6" x .45"

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Eagle Blade

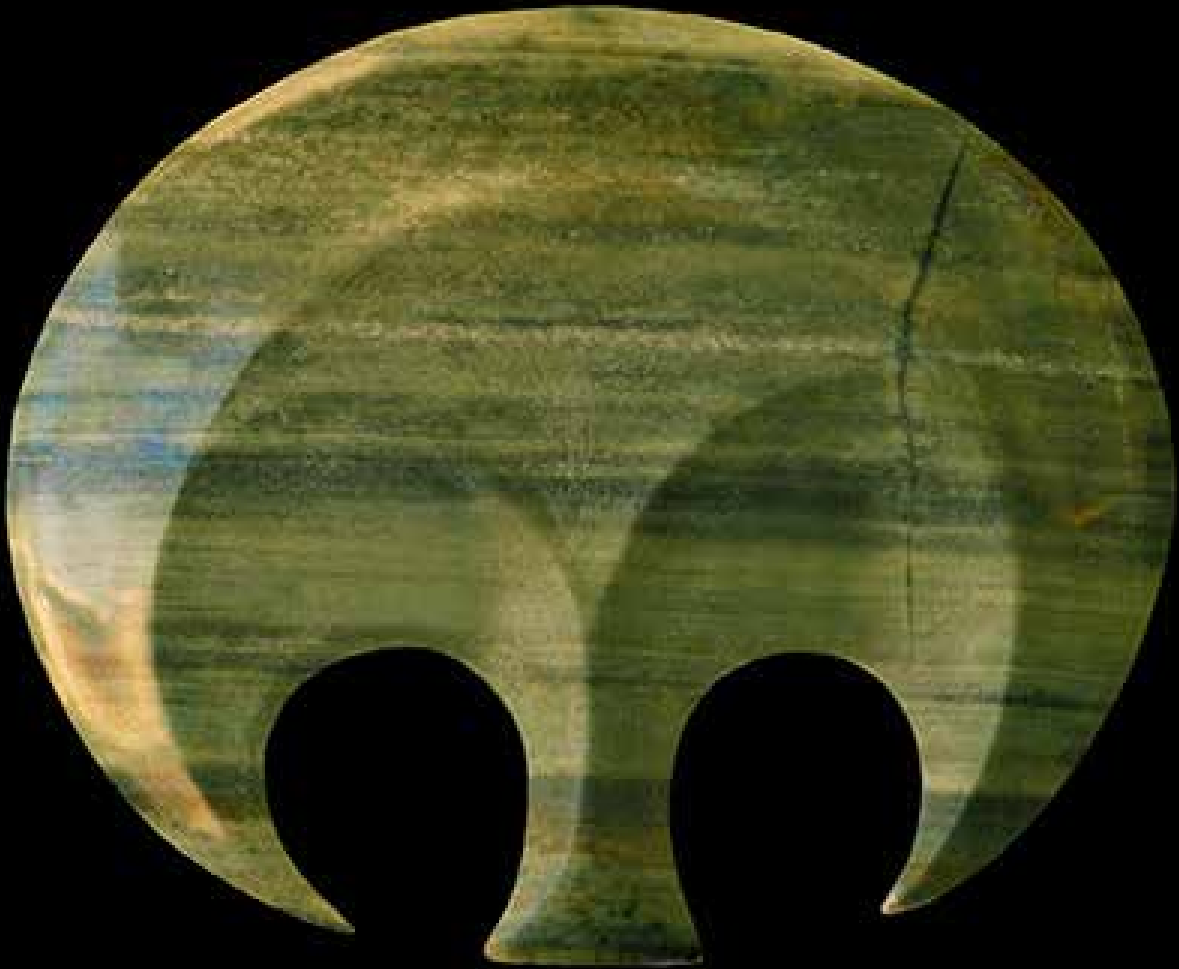
Colorado Alabaster, 12" x 6" x .45"



Horse Blade

Utah Candy Alabaster, 8" x 1.5" x .25"

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Spring Blade

New Mexico Serpentine, 4" x 4.5" x .25"



Yule Blade

Colorado Yule Marble, 10" x 5" x .4"

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Goddess Blade

Utah Candy Alabaster, 8" x 3" x .25"

Ode to Judy Chicago

Ode to Judy Chicago was named that because, as I carved it, I kept thinking about the enormous doors of possibility Judy Chicago had opened for women in the art world, simply by being daring, courageous, outrageous and persistent.

On the crescent moon above the head, the 28 dots are the Woman's Sacred Cycle; under her eyes her Sacred Water flows because of having been held inside for centuries, and gratitude for having been finally set free; and under her mouth are her Tribal Marks, saying This Is Who I Am, I Have A Voice.

I carved it out of Utah Candy Alabaster. It's one of the most difficult alabasters to carve because, unlike most stone, it has no fluid 'grain.' It's formed by little clumps of material glommed together under tremendous underground pressure. Because of that, you often find inclusions of dark globs of mud—you can see some in her chin and by her eye. These are hard to carve around without that part of the piece simply crumbling and falling apart.

The back is hollowed out, too, because I wanted to see what it would be like if it was placed near light. I'm told people like that, but it doesn't thrill me enough to make me want to do any more of them.

Patience Is A Virtue

Along with ***My Higher Self***, this has got to be one of the strangest of the Oddism pieces. I like it, though, because it was such an adventure to carve.

It's only about 3" thick, so I had to make the body and face all fit onto that plane and make it look 3-dimensional—all without carving all the way through the thin

stone. My ongoing experimentation with carving different types of eyes is really emphasized in this one. I originally named it *Impatience*. But after thinking about it, I decided I wanted to focus on what I'd prefer, rather than what I didn't like.

Polar Bear Toes

Polar Bear Toes was one of my first bears. I thought of this piece yesterday, when a fellow sculptor came to visit. I found myself talking about my philosophy to never start out any piece of art with the idea of creating a masterpiece.

I came to that through doing the Oddism sculptures. When I saw the people really liked what I was carving, I got stuck on trying to create pieces that would be liked and appreciated, and that I could call Masterpieces. I ended up feeling afraid to make a single cut for fear I'd wreck what I had already done.

This completely undermined my other philosophies: to 'carve and let it be,' and to use a series of carvings as experiments, to see how far I could stretch the stone, the design and execution of the works.

So I had to give up the masterpiece idea. It made each piece too precious to work on. It was much more fun to say to myself, "this is practice. I can do whatever I want, including destroy this piece, if I want, in the name of learning my trade."

It worked. Now I never look at a piece I'm doing as a masterpiece, but rather as practice. And if it comes out really well and I like it a lot, maybe *then* I can call it masterpiece. Or not.

Polar Bear Toes was definitely a practice piece. And I really liked it.



Ode to Judy Chicago

Utah Candy Alabaster, 13" x 8" x 2" (hollow backed)

Angela Treat Lyon



Patience is A Virtue
Colorado Alabaster, 8" x 15" x 3"



Polar Bear Toes

California Soapstone, 16" x 8" x 10"

Angela Treat Lyon



Comfort

Strange Soapstone, 7" x 4" x 5"

New Mexico

The mid 90s was a very hard time for me. I was living and carving in two of the big fire-truck bays of an old abandoned fire station in a tiny, sulphur-smelling ex-coal mining town in New Mexico called Madrid. Not Ma-DRID, the way you say it as if it were in Spain, but MAD-rid. I know. Weird. But that was OK with me. What was *not* OK was the fact that I had no running water, no floors, and no windows.

I made a run to some of the local supermarkets and snagged some pallets, laid them down and topped them with plywood. Floor accomplished. A little woobly here and there, but who cared? Carpet scraps hid the ugly truth. I cut a couple of windows through the outside walls, and pushed the big bay doors all the way open

and covered the tops of the doors and the opening with a slanted roof.

I built false walls on the outsides of the doors that included as many windows I could find at the dump. Light! I could finally see!

I had to make two runs each week to a service station about ten miles away that would allow people to get fresh water for free. I filled up five 50-gallon barrels and hauled them back in my van so I could wash, cook, and even water my little garden. And oh my, it

was sooooo cold in the winter. Before I lived there, I thought New Mexico was desert...which, to my mind = hot. Not at 7000 feet above sea level!



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Here's (left) my little carving studio—there's the air hose hanging above my table, tools laid out, and my band saw for roughing out small pieces behind me. Stone was stacked under the table and against the walls.

About a year after I started living in Madrid, I met a handsome man and got married for the third time. You'd think I'd have learned by then—the state of marriage and I just don't mix. It didn't last long, but at least we (eventually) became friends again. We still are—no one needs enemies.

I had very little money to function on. I had not one iota of a clue of a fragment of an idea what marketing was. If you had asked me, "Angela, why aren't you talking about your art, and taking it to shows and galleries, so you can sell it?" I'd have glared at you and probably gone off in a huff. I had the horribly mistaken ideas that art should "speak for itself," and that "selling" was a dirty word. No wonder I was starving and depressed! But finally I began showing my paintings in bakeries, breweries, restaurants and even a Madrid gallery.

In the late 90s, I got really, really sick. No one could figure out what was wrong. I felt like the walking dead, and had about as much energy. There were days I couldn't get up out of bed, and I'd lie there and cry and cry and cry. My beautiful dog, Io (EE-oh), would put her sweet little black button nose right in my face on the pillow and look at me as if to say, "It's OK, mom, I love you, I'm here!"

At last, after I had dragged around for months, a gal who used Dark Field Microscopy finally discovered that I had heavy metals in my blood and organs. Her very timely treatment saved my life. As did my dog.



Comfort

Sometimes you get a really crappy piece of stone but you want to carve and you don't care what you carve out of it. Comfort was like that—originally an ugly stone so multi-hued with muddy browns and blah greys that I almost threw it away.

But I wanted to practice carving hands, so I used it. I kind of liked it, so I stained it black to bring out the form. I look at it now and wonder why I ever made her fingers so sharp at the ends! One more practice piece....

Flag Horse

When I got home in '92 from wandering around the Arizona desert, where I was selling my jewelery, I went right for my carving tools! This little piece was one of the first pieces of stone I picked up to carve.

I figured small = easy, right? So wrong! Hidden within that little body are hard spots and fissures so complex I was practically throwing my hands up in despair of ever getting it done. I considered it a real triumph that it came out so nicely.

Then I came down with a honking case of pneumonia that had me down for weeks. I was very glad to see **Flag Horse** go to a local gallery...and very sad that within a month it had been dropped and broken.

Singing Home the Moon

I hear phrases on the radio sometimes that turn into themes for sculptures. I don't remember right off where I heard *Singing Home the Moon*, or even if it was a real phrase. Sometimes my ears just hear what they want to hear and it has nothing to

do with what was actually said. When I heard the phrase, I had this picture of a family gathering, and Mama and Papa were flying home through the Night Sky, carrying Babe in their arms. As they Sang the Sacred Song, Moon journeyed with them across the Starry Heavens.

New York!

During the late 90s, I spent a year and a half with my friend, Cynthia, in Bayville, New York. I had met her at a conference, where she had heard I was recovering from heavy metals poisoning.

I'm not sure if you know how hideously hard it is to even function during the time you have that kind of junk in your body, but I can tell you that the recovery time is about as hard. She invited me to come stay with her until I felt well enough to get by on my own.

Somehow, I packed up all my stuff and trekked it all the way across country to her house on Long Island. She was my angel in disguise! She helped me get settled, totally took care of me, fed me, made sure I was getting better.

And when I was well enough, she encouraged me to take the computer training I saw advertised in the paper. I did 6 months of training in Adobe Photoshop, Quark and Illustrator software and design, then went to work in the graphics department at *Anton News*, one of the oldest newspapers on Long Island.

During my last year in New Mexico, I was able to use those computer skills to get work at the big Santa Fe newspaper, and then be on my own as freelance designer. That was when I 'met' someone from New Zealand online, and decided to go on an adventure to see him and New Zealand. I figured if it didn't work out, I could still travel and see the beautiful, most-raved-about country—which is what I did.



Flag Horse

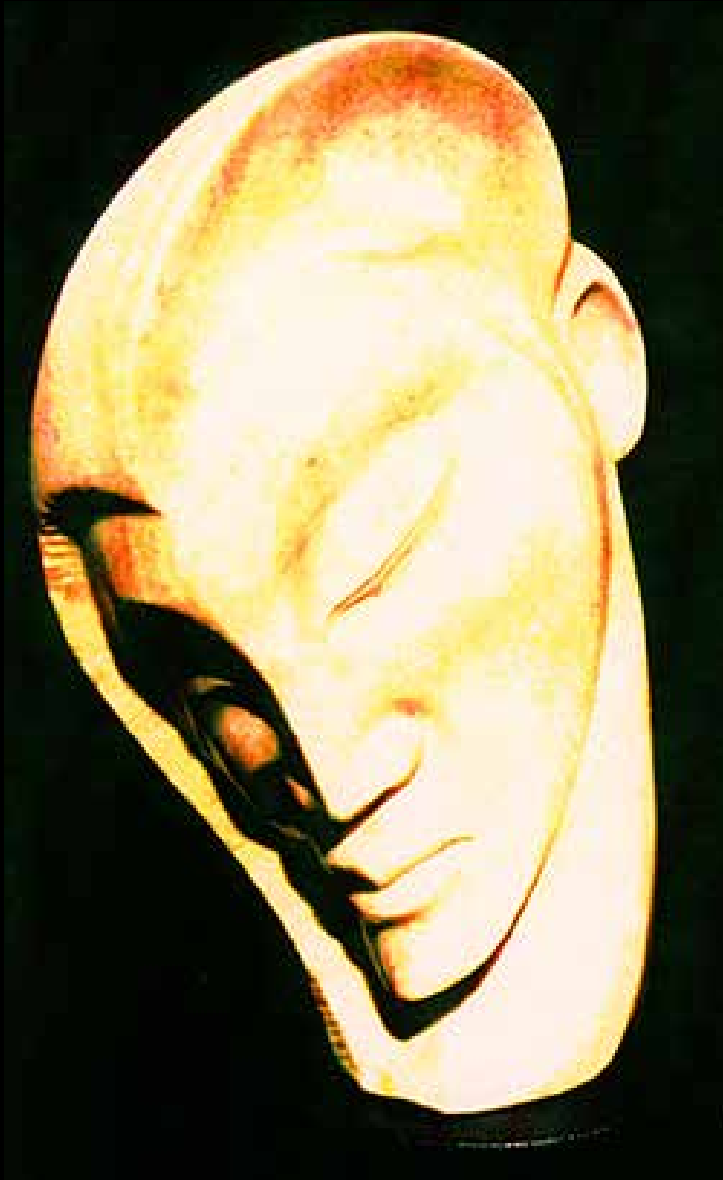
New Mexico Alabaster, 7" x 5" x 2"

Angela Treat Lyon



Singing Home the Moon

New Mexico Brown Alabaster, 12" x 24" x 8"



Mama, How I Miss You
Colorado Alabaster; 12" x 8" x 4"

The biggest defining milestone of my life, though, was when I left Honolulu to go live in California after I got back from my first trip to Italy. If I had one thing to redo in my life, I'd choose to stay in Hawaii. By leaving, I lost my avid collector base, and had to start over all again in a town where I was a mini-minnow in a big sea of really good artists. My life and career spiraled downwards from here on out for a good ten years. In all that time, I barely had enough money to pay essentials, and was even homeless at one point. How I kept carving and making things is beyond me. Sheer stubbornness, I suppose, despite the illnesses and debilitating depression.

Primavera

I rented studio space in San Rafael, CA from an amazing sculptor named Al Farrow. He made the most incredible steel head portraits of people like remarkable artists Egon Schiele and Louise Nevelson, and other noteworthies. All twice life size or larger. Watching him work was like having a double shot in the arm of inspiration. This was when I was commissioned to do **Primavera**.

I was asked to go look at a pool house to see where a sculpture would go, and to offer ideas about what it might look like. Thinking it was going to be easy, I walked in all full of confidence. Wrong! The building was shaped like a nautilus shell, with not one niche, shelf or corner place where a free-standing sculpture would go without getting in someone's way! What to *do*? I felt completely stumped.

Finally, 3 months later, I had a dream of a woman holding back her veil, emerging from the center pole of the pool house that held the roof up. Beautiful! It looked to me like Strong Woman finally coming OUT.

So I carved a plaster original, and had it cast in bronze. When she was installed, she looked 3-D, but in fact she was only 4" deep, wrapping around that center pole, hanging over the pool. It was stupendous looking.



Carving Primavera

Plaster Original

Angela Treat Lyon



Primavera

Bronze, 48" x 24" x 4"

Masks

There were many times when all I had to carve were little scraps—sometimes merely scraps of scraps. Having always liked masks—I love the thought of an alter-identity one can put on and take off—I made a series of them out of the scraps.



Since my family background doesn't include Bali, Africa, Alaska, or any of the countries or ethnic groups we usually associate with masks, I had to dig deep to see images that fit for little ole white girl me. Masks that expressed how I felt, or what I might wear if I wanted to present a different personality to someone.

Fimo and stone

First I tried using a heat-in-the-oven plastic clay called Fimo. I used bright colors and gold leaf, ink stains, shells, found feathers, and all kinds of strange things. Then I got bored with how much work the silly little things were, and went back to the stone scrap pile, settling on simple = satisfying.

Gotta have fun....

And I went to the Mine Shaft, the local tavern, for the annual halloween party, dressed as a classic Santa Fean, loaded with all kinds of huge turquoise jewelry. Santa Fake....

Angela Treat Lyon



*Dreaming of the Golden Sun
& Sparkling Waters of
lanikai Beach*

Dreaming Mask

Fimo, Gold Leaf, Mixed Media, 4" x 2" x .35"



Sad Day
Fractured Day
Where's My
Link to Spirit?

Saad Day Mask

Fimo, Gold Leaf, Mixed Media, 4" x 2" x .5"



*Exhausted Wasted Tired Don't Want to Get
Up Don't Want to go to Work for Them Want to
Hang Out and Sleep*

Don't Want to Work Today Mask

Fimo, Gold Leaf, Mixed Media, 4" x 2" x .5"



Mask: Comic

Brazilian Soapstone, 7" x 7" x 1"

Angela Treat Lyon



Mask: Conqueror

Brazilian Soapstone, 6" x 3" x 1"



Mask of Invisibility

California Soapstone, 4" x 2" x .5"

Angela Treat Lyon



Mask: Grumpy Eyes
African Soapstone, 5" x 3" x .5"



Mask: Old Man, Look at My Life
California Soapstone, 10" x 8" x 1"

Angela Treat Lyon



Mask: Shy

African Soapstone, 10" x 8" x .75"



Double Take

New Mexico Alabaster, 10" x 16" x 9"

Angela Treat Lyon



Double Take

New Mexico Alabaster, 10" x 16" x 9"

Double Take

My friend, carver Dan Raven, turned me on to some white alabaster from New Mexico. Very rare and unusual. Even more unusual was how big a piece of it this was. I had it up on a table in the back of my studio for months, waiting for it to show me what was inside of it. One night as I turned off the lights, I 'saw' the two faces on the broad side of the piece.

It was so exciting looking I turned the lights back on and started carving it then and there. At the time, I was experimenting with different ways of carving eyes. This particular manner came right off a series of pieces carved by Zimbabwe artists. You can see how distinct the layers are—the lids, the eyeball, the curve under the brow.

When I got to the front of the piece, facing the faces, I did a double take, because I was surprised that there was enough stone to carve a third face on the back side. Now you know why I named it that.

I like how they are whispering and singing words of love in each other's ears.

Drum Bliss and Reunion

I got a shipment of black stone from Virginia, most of which was disappointing, full of white inclusions and hard spots. But I was darned if I was going to go to the trouble and the expense of shipping it back!

They sat on the floor at the very back of my studio for months, until I had run out of almost everything else to carve. I begrudgingly put them up on the tables to see what was in them. Drum Bliss was obvious—he just popped on out, grody and

rough and unrefined. Now I rather like that he was so rough.

Reunion surprised me, because under its rough black exterior, it was at its core a beautiful brownish black color, and its grain was actually quite smooth. It was really difficult to take pictures of it because of the lack of light contrast. Hopefully you can see how lovely a piece it was in these shots. I especially liked how the foot in the back insisted on being included.

These were some of the last pieces I did before leaving for New Zealand, which you will find out more about in Volume II.

Shona Sculpture

During my time in New Mexico, I was fortunate to be able to maintain a fabulous collection of Shona sculpture from Zimbabwe at a sculpture park with over 250 pieces in it. The smaller pieces were kept in the gallery and the larger ones outside in a huge field. The harsh sun and sandy wind was really cruel to those pieces—I had to completely unpolish them and redo their finish twice a year.

When the Zimbabwean artists finish a carving, the entire piece is dunked into a huge vat of very hot wax. The wax soaks in, and upon cooling, is polished. It's a magnificent finish. But with the wicked blasts of sandy wind that comes up in New Mexico in the spring and the glaring sun that beats down mercilessly all summer, by fall the sculptures looked like they'd been around since the dark ages.

It was in that sculpture park that I got to experiment deeply with finishing and polishing techniques. At first, I only knew about the dunking finish technique they used. But how was I supposed to dunk 250 pieces, half of which were taller (and waaaaay heavier!) than I was? I had to come up with some other solution.



Drum Bliss

Virginia Soapstone, 10" x 10" x 4"



Drum Bliss

Detail



Reunion

Side and back detail

Angela Treat Lyon



Reunion

Virginia Soapstone, 12" x 10" x 5"



Reunion
Side detail

Angela Treat Lyon



Reunion

Faces

After two years of trying this, trying that, I finally decided simpler is better. I started using a hand torch to heat up a small, 4" x 4" area at a time. Then I'd rub off the old finish, and resoak the hot area by brushing on a certain kind of wax. Then as the wax cooled, I'd polish it. It took forever to do one piece, but it worked very well, and lasted the season. I finish my own pieces that way now.

It was such an honor to have my little hands all over those marvelous sculptures, some of which were from the oldest, most respected carvers of Zimbabwe: Henry Munyaradzi, Bernard Takawira, Tapfuma Gutsa, Fanizani, Agnes Nyonhongo, Colleen Madamombe, Bernard Matemera, Nicholas Mukomberanwa...stupendous carvers.



There's a new generation of sculptors, and lots of changes in Harare. I'm not sure how they finish their pieces now, but I do know that most of them still carve using only axes and scutching hammers. Think about a hunk of stone that's 5 or 6 feet tall, with you chipping away at that amount of hard bulk with just a pointy hammer—pretty intimidating.

Soft Dreams

I had placed **Soft Dreams** and a number of other pieces in a gallery in Santa Fe. I instructed them not to put them outside on the deck or on the floor, because most people don't watch where their feet are going, and would walk right into them.

Most people are completely uninformed about the nature of stone. They think stone = hard, indestructible. Not so! You can scratch any stone, including granite, and you can bruise it terribly with the toe of your shoe, a hammer strike, or a hit with another hard object. A bruise will appear white, because the structure of the matrix of stone crystals has been smashed, just as if you had been given a knuckle on the arm, and developed a dark bruise there. It's the same thing.

And sure enough, when I went back up to the gallery to check on them, three large pieces had been left outside on the deck flooring. Each one was scratched where they had been lifted by someone either with sharp jewelery or a scratchy zipper on the front of a jacket, and bruised by being kicked and walked into on the deck. And one small piece was completely broken. Grrrr. Took 'em home.

I originally carved **Soft Dreams** as a celebration of the type of relationship I'd like to have with a close partner. Where each partner respects, supports and honors the other, always with a soft touch.

It pulled a fast one on me, though! After it was done, I realized that, if I looked at the back of the piece, He was being way too forward, puckering up His mouth with a big fat kiss, and She was pulling back, saying, "Hey! Wait a minute! You're moving too fast!" But if I viewed it from the front, He's being soft, gentle and allowing, even pulling back, understanding Her boundaries, and approaching Her softly, in awareness and respect.

I rather like it, because it says women have power and choice, despite how pushy some men can be about getting their way; and that men can be pushy, but also are totally able to be aware and respectful. To me, this is a celebration.

Homeless

The last fall and winter I lived in New Mexico, I was homeless, living in my little tiny Kia Sportage with my dog, lo. I was working at the big local newspaper as a graphic designer in the ad department, but not making enough for the first and last month rent plus utilities deposit required by any landlord.

Let me tell you how grateful I was to have lo with me! She'd curl up right inside the loop of my arms and snore her way through the nights, keeping at least the front



Soft Dreams

Colorado Alabaster, 20" x 30" x 8"

Angela Treat Lyon



Soft Dreams

Colorado Alabaster, 20" x 30" x 8"



Ka Ipu (The Gourd)

Detail

Angela Treat Lyon



Ka Ipu (The Gourd)
California Soapstone, 16" x 16" x 6"

of me warm. Since the car was so small, we warmed it up quite fast, but oh my, getting up in the morning in the freezing cold was pretty awful. There was a kind of secret, tucked-away place on the banks of the big arroyo that goes through town where I loved to park and build a tiny fire and cook my breakfast. I didn't dare sleep there, though, because it was too dangerous. I finally found a parking lot where I could park and not be noticed.

After a few months, I got some house-sitting jobs where I was able to sleep and cook indoors; and then a friend of mine and her husband asked me to come stay with them in their beautiful house in Tesuque, a gorgeous area just north of Santa Fe. Eventually, they asked me to house-sit for them, too, as they were going to sell the house and wanted someone staying there and looking after things since they were packing up to move to another state. I set up a small table carved ***Ka Ipu*** and ***Kahuna O Ka Hula Kahiko*** for a couple of very timely commissions from Kauai.

Kahuna O Ka Hula Kahiko

Kahuna was part of the commission pieces I did for a guy on Kauai during my time in Tesuque. I wanted to honor the tradition of the ancient hula with it.

Did you know that when the missionaries came to Hawaii, they banned traditional hula, music and dancing? It almost completely died out, but for the intervention of "...King Kalakaua, who inspired the perpetuation of the tradition, native language and the arts..." and "...King Kamehameha V, Prince Lot Kapua'iwa, who revived the once banned hula in the district of Moanalua."*

She has a Haku Lei (vine-twisted garland) on her head made from Maile leaves, the sacred leaves of the Maile from up on the mountains on Kauai. They have a special fragrance unlike any other plant.

"In Hawaii, the placing of a lei over the head and around the shoulders of a person signifies the bestowing of honor and respect and the spirit of aloha. Maile was the lei for people of all classes and all occasions. It is an open-ended lei made of the spicy scented green maile stems and leaves. The native Hawaiian vine, with shiny fragrant leaves, is a member of the periwinkle family, and is associated with the goddess of Hula, Laka. In ancient Hawaii, Maile was also considered a peace offering in the field of battle. Maile plants are rare and do not look like much until they are woven together to make a lei. The Maile lei is noted for its rarity and considered by many to be the finest of all leis."**

(*and **: aloha-hawaii.com/hawaii/maile/ and en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lei)

Haku Mele

An interesting side note: the making of a 'Haku Mele' is to braid a song composed out of affection for an individual! I love that!



Ka Ipu

Ipu means Gourd. The gourd is ubiquitous in Hula—you'll see one or more women sitting there on their cushions, thumping the hollowed, hardened gourd against the hand, the lap or on another thin cushion on the floor, leading the rhythm of the singing and the dancing with the unique sound of the Ipu.

<< Carving **Eternity** out in the desert at my friend Bin Gippo's place in Cerrillos, New Mexico.



Kahuna O Ka Hula Kahiko (Kahuna of Ancient Hula)

Detail - California Soapstone, 16" x 15" x 5"

Angela Treat Lyon



Isabella

Yule Marble, 8" x 8" x 2"

Isabella

I was experimenting again with carving the eyes. After the complexity of **Double Take** and **Patience Is A Virtue**, I wanted to see how simple I could make them, and yet have them say, “I can see you!”

There was a gallery down the road from Madrid run by a wonderful Greek man, who loved this piece and asked if he could show her. He ended up getting her for himself. Her base is flat—imagine a 1” x 10” board about 24” tall, painted flat black, with a narrow 2” wide platform on top for **Isabella**. Looked pretty elegant.

I named her after one of my favorite actresses, Isabella Rosselini, since she is so lovely. Kind of looks like her, don’t you think?

Yule Mama

Yule Mama was the last of the birth-baby-mama series. I had done **Tickle Mama**, **Smile Mama**, **Birth Bliss** (in *Volume I*) and **Mama, How I Miss You** (page 48), and a few others. Enough!

I especially liked **Yule Mama** because her expression is so soft and welcoming, and Baby is just cuddled in there all comfy and safe. Interestingly enough, a few years later when I was back in New York, I did another series of mamas and babes, only this time in pastels. Same feeling, but with color and more texture. You’ll see them in the upcoming **Painting My Life** Volumes.

Next: New Zealand!

Angela Treat Lyon



Yule Mama

Colorado Yule Marble, 10" x 14" x 8"



Yule Mama
Detail of heads

Who is that woman?!?

I showed ***Carving My Life, Volume I*** to a friend recently, and as she looked at a dark haired, pre-Italy-trip picture of me, she looked perplexed, asking me, “Who’s that woman, and why is *she* in your book?”

I guess people are so used to seeing me with white hair that no one remembers what I looked like pre-Italy! Truth is, when I had gotten my ticket to go, I thought I’d be really stylish and get my hair streaked. Brave me! I’d never colored my hair before, and it was an exciting idea.

But after being in Lucca for a couple weeks, the streaks looked to me like they were getting kind of ratty looking, and needed redoing. So I found a local hair salon, marched in, sat down and requested, in my still-stumbling italian, “Please make it a little more blond.”

Well, *their* idea of ‘a little more’ and mine didn’t *quite* jive, and I walked out of the place like a human light bulb! I was absolutely mortified. Me! With bleached hair! Oh no! Looking for solace, I went to my favorite little restaurant, hoping I could hide in one of the corners and enjoy a comfort meal. But oh, no! Not to be! The maitre d’ took one look at me and, in his booming bass voice, called to me from all the way across the restaurant, saying, “Ahhhh, Ahnnngela! Brava! Bellissima! Brava! Brava!” Every head in the room swiveled like the girl in the Exorcist towards me, eyes bulged out and gawking. So much for hiding!

I decided right then and there to like the way I looked, and to enjoy it. So when he put me right smack in the middle of the room at the main table, I smiled and waved as if I was Grace Kelly—back straight, big smile, hair fluorescent as a bug light on a summer night in the tropics. Took me weeks to get used to it, but now it’s just ‘how things are.’ Besides, now it’s getting to be that color all by itself! t!



Lehua

Colorado Alabaster, 24" x 11" x 10"

Angela Treat Lyon



Lehua

Colorado Alabaster, 24" x 11" x 10"

On to New Zealand now....

The ten years I spent in New Mexico were some of the toughest times I've ever been through. Almost dying twice from illness and being dead broke the entire time took my survival strength to the limits.



Angela Treat Lyon, formerly from Hawaii and now living in Gore, works on her masterpiece in Mount Somers' old quarry.

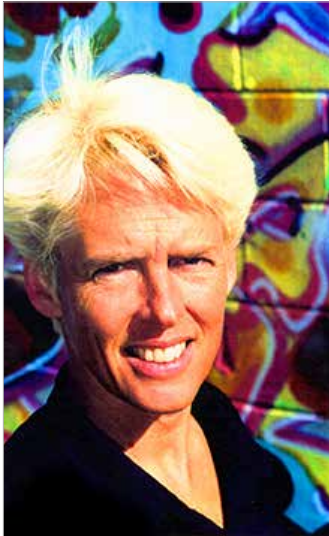
But I *made* it! And I made a lot of art, helped instigate the First Annual International Tombstone Show at a friend's local gallery in Cerrillos, and even founded the Intergalactic Garden Club (a wild creative writing group). But if not for my friends, I don't think any of it would have been possible.

At last, although money was still an ever-present struggle, things got way lighter once I get to New Zealand. I was

treated like a queen, or a hero, and it made me feel like everything I had gone through was so worth every second.

I was invited to go to two international carving symposia...well, you'll see in the next volume! Including the sheer magic it took to get me back to Hawaii in 2002....

More adventures to come....



Returning from my
second trip to Italy in 1992

That's it for this volume—thank you so much for your kind and loving attention!

Volume III is next!

You'll read about the big mistake I made and paid for dearly when I chose to go to New Zealand; how I saved myself (finally!) from 35 long years of suicidal thinking; and how I became the first Artist-in-Residence in Gore, a tiny town in New Zealand—internationally known for being *the* place to go for trout fishing—that didn't even have a regular art gallery yet!

I hope you've enjoyed this volume—I look forward to 'seeing' you in the next one!

Much aloha love to you -

Angela

About the Author

Angela Treat Lyon was born in Plymouth, Massachusetts and grew up on Long Island, New York. She has lived in New York City; all over California; in Madrid and Santa Fe, New Mexico; Redstone, Colorado; Hawaii and in Gore, New Zealand.

She's sailed on a 31' yawl with only one other person from Nawiliwili Harbor on Kauai to Santa Cruz, California; hitch-hiked from the west coast to New York on semi trucks and driven back in a made-over hearse; she's ridden a sexy sultry BMW motorcycle from San Francisco to New York (and was subsequently disowned by her grandmother for doing so).

She has traveled for art and business all over the world from Canada to Mexico, Japan and New Zealand to France, Italy, Switzerland and the UK, the Caribbean and the other Hawai'ian Islands.

In amongst all the travel and adventure, Angela and her then-hubbie built a home out in the mountains, grew fruit trees and an organic garden; raised ducks and chickens and goats and a sweet horse; they dug a pond and set up a sauna nearby, and a great catenary arch kiln for their pottery. They had two beautiful baby boys (with one amazing home birth), who have now grown up into very cool men and have given the world three equally beautiful grandkids.

Angela has worked in oils and acrylics, black and white media and pastels all her life; carved all manner of stone from soapstone to marble, alabaster and other weird kinds; she writes books, designs and builds books, does book cover design and computer generated paintings; she adores Adobe InDesign and Photoshop.

Angela hosts and produces *Daring Dreamers Radio* (IDareYouRadio.com), and is a Business Success Coach (EFTBooks.com) for inspired women biz owners/entrepreneurs who want to live their dream of making a big difference in the world.

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A Sculptor's Life Volume II



If you love sculpture that's been carved out of stone or concocted out of unusual mixes of strange materials, you'll enjoy this marvelous second volume of unique works created by Hawaii based Sculptor Angela Treat Lyon.

In many art books, great conjecture (and great misconception) usually prevails as to where an artist got her inspiration, why she made this, carved that.

No guessing in this book! In her easy, casual writing style, Angela gives us a rare peek into her thoughts, inspirations and celebrations in her life as a skilled sculptor and adventurer.

If you've ever been wondered what it's like to be a stone sculptor, now you can find out!