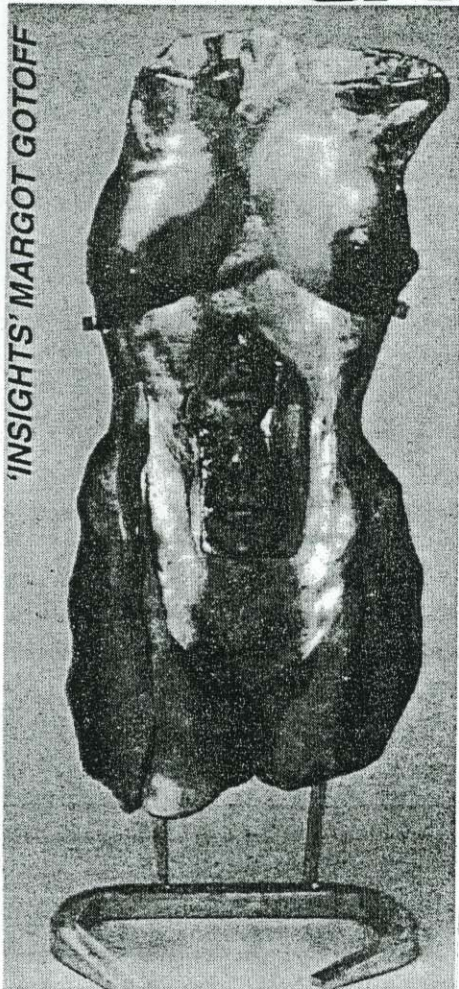


Some Women Sculpt

'INSIGHTS' MARGOT GOTOFF



Some women shop, some women dance, some women cast glass or bronze to fulfill their dreams. Why women sculpt and how they become involved in their medium reflects not only their vision of life but all the years they bring to their art. Whether working with wood, stone, glass or bronze, sculpting takes patience and skill, perseverance, strength, space, and most of all the permission to play.

A Childhood Abroad

When she was a child, Margot Gotoff played with wax from the candles every Friday night, but she never thought she could be a sculptor. That was her father's domain. Margot grew up in Brazil and Paris, then eastern Europe after the war.

She majored in French literature at the University of Michigan. Not until her senior year, when she took a course in the history of European sculpture, did she know she wanted to be a sculptor. Upon revealing her plans to go to graduate school, her mother said, "No, this is it." Margot moved to New York and applied for a job at Gimbel's. After a few months, she told her parents she was miserable. When they asked, "What do you want to do?", she said, "I want to be a sculptor."

Her father staked her for two years at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Geneva, Switzerland, then for a masters at Michigan. She taught figurative sculpture to junior and senior high school students in the Boston area. In one school, the administration was not pleased with the plaster footprints her 800 students laid down in the hall leading away from her classroom. Sculpting is messy business.

She met a junior professor of Latin and Greek. They married and had two children. Margot continued teaching part-time. Harr's faculty appointments offered travel opportunities in Europe. Margot shaped small wax figures on their granite kitchen tabletop in Rome. While the children were at school, she trekked to suppliers for wax and pigment and tools. "In Italy nothing is easy," she says with a laugh, but she got her bronze figures into shows.

After a stint in Illinois, Harry got a position at the University of Cincinnati. Margot got another masters at UC where she taught the foundry class her second year. She taught eight years at the Art Academy. She now teaches two classes from her own studio.

Like Vulcan but
with Glass

How did she get involved

with glass? One of her night students kept telling her she should be working in glass. She rented space in a glass studio in Over-the-Rhine. Ed Francis built her an oven in her own studio where she has produced glass sculptures for the last five years.

Margot doesn't pour or blow glass. She moulds fragments into plaster-and-silica flour molds and melts the chunks together. Her multiple step process employs the lost wax method of casting. She starts with a clay figure from which she casts a rubber or plaster mold. She paints wax into the mold and produces a wax fragment, a torso or a face, onto which she adds chunks or slabs for a setting. She constructs a box around the fragment and pours a mold. After steaming out the wax, she carefully places glass shards and hunks into the upside-down mold. Over a two-week period, she cooks the glass, only peeking at her red, molten work-in-progress when it's safe to open the door. Liquid glass is so viscous, she explains, it doesn't boil or churn; it barely moves in the mold. When she breaks off a gob, it forms a thick string like melted cheese.

After it's cooked, Margot's work is not done. She grinds and polishes with a diamond pad. Her pieces glow, revealing the bubbles and crackles of glass. Her processes and subject are unique.

Why glass? "I do love bronze," she says, "but there's something about glass, its color and light. I guess it's infected me."

Her pieces may be viewed at Marta Hewitt Gallery on Main Street in Over the Rhine, White Crane in Medina, outside Cleveland, and K.L. Fine Arts in Highland Park, outside Chicago. The Carnegie Arts Center in Covington selected her as the only sculptor to enter a piece in its portrait show January 5th through 26th.

A Louisville Girl

Nancy Carolyn-Smith didn't travel abroad. She grew up in Louisville, where she still goes down to celebrate the Kentucky Derby. Although she wanted to be an artist, she studied education. Not until after she married and had two of their four children did she decide to be an artist. She drove to the Art Academy one day in her mid-thirties and talked her way in. Working on a series of spirit boxes for an art class theme, "Inside Outside", she began thinking in terms of physical space. She took

By Madeline Croy Izzo
Cincinnati Woman Magazine