

## **‘Rock Solid XVIII’: 27 artists find new takes on stone**

By Mary Gow Arts Correspondent, *The Times Argus/Rutland Herald*

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*Rene Schall: “Division”, Photo cr: Jeb Wallace-Brodeur / Staff Photos*

Activist Emma Goldman’s force of character shows through in her mug shot, peering out through a layer of mica. A round pebble sits in the center of concentric ripples of Danby marble. A granite block seems to balance on a welded steel beam.

The variety of stone as well as of artists’ creativity is breathtaking in Studio Place Arts’ annual “Rock Solid” exhibition. Alabaster, slate, quartz, river stone, mica, marble from Danby and Carrara, a variety of granites, limestone, brownstone, and more are in the show. The subjects are even more diverse.

For the 18th year, SPA’s “Rock Solid” exhibition brings together a stunning and broad selection of stone sculpture and assemblages by Vermont artists. The show also features two-dimensional work including paintings and photographs relating to stone. Altogether, 27 artists are represented in “Rock Solid XVIII.”



*Giuliano Cecchinelli: "Repose #3", Photo cr: Jeb Wallace-Brodeur / Staff Photo*

"Rock Solid" offers the public an annual opportunity to see the extraordinary skill and talent of the state's stone sculptors and carvers.

"This year's stone show includes a number of imaginative uses of alternative media and stone. For example, Heather Ritchie used leather laces with her granite seat with work boots made from Barre gray, Sabrina Leonard wrapped embroidery floss on stones in two of her works; and Rob Hitzig made faux boulders from wood," explains Sue Higby, SPA executive director, who has assembled 15 of the 18 annual fall-season SPA stone shows, and a lifetime retrospective for the late sculptor Frank C. Gaylord in 2015.

"Additionally, on the heels of the recent Comic Con in Barre last weekend, local sculptor Giuliano Cecchinelli II created a mini installation with a Superman toy bursting with volcanic thrust from a hunk of granite, called 'Faster Than,' Higby said.

Giuliano Cecchinelli (senior), who was honored at the opening reception for his lifetime achievements and recent induction into the Vermont Academy of Arts and Sciences, has three pieces in the show. In "One Step Up in the Corporate World" a woman gazes ahead, ascending a pink granite stair. In "We are all Parrots," his antique Green Mist Quartz bird tilts its head, perhaps quizzically.

A snow-white Carrara marble three-masted ship floats atop an undulating black river stone in Gampo Wickenheiser's "Voyage." In Wickenheiser's pair of "Perch" sculptures, a bronze finch and a bronze sparrow stand on their respective marble resting places.

Larry Bowling used the thin, almost transparent stone mica in his two mixed-media pieces, "Homage to a Dangerous Woman" and "Oscar's Boy." Bowling's "Dangerous Woman" is Emma Goldman.

"She was an anarchist, spoke out for women's rights and social issues. She was kind of a rabble rouser. She spoke at the Barre Opera House in the early 20th century before she was deported back to Russia. She was a dangerous woman — which we need," explained Bowling, who has developed other pieces also considering Goldman.

Beneath Bowling's mica are multiple layers of collage with color transparencies, including Goldman's mug shot from an arrest and a Russian postcard with stamp and writing from the era.

Among the two-dimensional artwork are six photographs by Athena Petra Tasiopoulos. Five are of land formations of earth in the American Southwest. One is of quarry reflections in East Dorset. The curves of the land in her photographs echo the delicate curves of Jeanne Cariati's "Trinity" sculpted of translucent alabaster.

"I like to look for visual scenes that have texture and color and finding the poetry and quiet moments in life, the same things I look for in composing my collages," Tasiopoulos said.

Sabrina Leonard brings stone and embroidery floss together in two of her works, making a lovely but unplanned connection to the "Tension" exhibition in SPA's third floor gallery. In "Unravel," a rough river rock has been pierced with two slices, red thread binds the wedge, seeming to secure it to the whole, but the thread dangles off to the ground.

"My sculpture work is conceptual in nature. I explore how two or more elements relate to one another and I use different processes and materials in this study," Leonard said in her artist's statement.

"Whether two objects are merging, diverging, or band together, or a single object is split and altered, then stitched back together, a story unfolds about a life, a relationship, internal and external forces," she noted.