

AMY RAHN

B. Amore: Heart of Stone

Over the hill in Castleton, Vermont, sculptor B. Amore's driveway comes up quickly. The gravel path snakes to the left, where a treasure trove of stone juts from the ground like a mouth of wild teeth. For stone lovers, this place is paradise. Marble in white and pink is heaped in carved shapes, and quarried blocks of granite rest beside layered green Italian stones. Rusting steel saws yawn in the gray morning light.

Near the center of the stone yard is B. Amore. A petite woman in a bright purple parka and a woven skullcap, the artist has eyes

that are quick and curious behind circular glasses. She touches the stones and explains about methods of quarrying and carving, and antiquated and current methods of stone production. Then she interjects comments about the beauty, rarity, or quality of each stone. "Look at this," she says of a dramatically veined Italian stone. "This is incredible stuff."

Conceptually, B. Amore's work centers on the connectedness of people. Formally her works push the boundaries of media—from early photographic works printed on glass to current works in cold-cast resin and bronze.

Amore's works probe the intersection of meaning and material. This is seen in her show *Street Calligraphies*, which continues until June 27 at the Boston Sculptors Gallery.

Amore works mostly from her studio and home in Vermont. Placed near the edge of Amore's stone yard are her "Floating Stones," white marble slabs roughly three-feet-square and three inches thick. Each is incised with grid-like lines. Amore explains that stonemasons set these slabs of marble under blocks of stone while huge saws cut through the top stone. The saws would cut just beyond the stone blocks into the marble below. After many cuts, geometric grids emerged in the marble. As is often the case with Amore's materials, these slabs were to be thrown out, but Amore saw the poetic rhythm of their marks.

Amore often introduces one concept to another in her works, creating subtle and unexpected relationships. Such is the case with her "glove series." She takes gloves that she often finds in the streets of New York. She fills them with a compound, but takes great pains to preserve the original shape, gesture, and condition of the glove. Then she gives them many coats of a bronze-impregnated resin. Ultimately she burnishes and finishes the surface. "It's torture," she says. "Everything I do is work."

Amore is one of the founders of the Carving Studio in Rutland. As a single parent of three, she creates her stone works in the few hours between picking her children up from school and holding two jobs. Starting in 1999, she mounted two exhibitions of *Life Line: filo della vita*, a major exhibition combining sculpture, two-dimensional works, historical research, and writing at both Ellis Island and the Tenement Museum in New York. Amore speaks fluent Italian and spent most of her life living between Italy and the U.S. She has written three manuscripts, one of which became part of the exhaustive bilingual catalogue published with *Life Line*. She has received both Fulbright and Mellon Fellowships. Currently, she's organizing an



B. Amore, installation shot: *Floating Stones* (floor installation), 2008, marble, bronzed gloves, glass; 1½' x 10' x 10'. *Stepping Stones* (wall installation), 2004, photo on silk, marble, tin, wood; 8' x 8' x 5".

B. AMORE: STREET CALLIGRAPHIES

Boston Sculptors Gallery

Boston, MA

www.bostonsculptors.com

May 26–June 27, 2010



Above left: B. Amore, *Heart of the Matter II*, 2007, photo on silk, tin, bone, silk flowers, wood, 2' x 2' x 5"; 2007. Above right: B. Amore, *Landscape of the Soul* (detail), 2007, photo on marble and silk, steel, aluminum; 30½ x 30 x 18".

exhibition of works by Mexican migrant farm workers in Vermont, driving from one end of the state to the other to retrieve their art.

Amore's work in the Boston Sculptors show centers on her deep and abiding love of human beings: their stories, flaws, capacity for doing good, and survival. Many of the two-dimensional pieces in the show are mounted on salvaged tin ceiling tiles that Amore pulled from a dumpster in Tribeca. Collaged onto their richly patterned surfaces are assemblages. Amore photographs people on the streets of Boston, then prints their black-and-white portraits on small squares of silk. She collages these

bodily pivot point and a symbol of shared love, shared physicality.

Handwritten text is another recurring element in Amore's work. Her words are the poet/writer meeting the artist in the middle—twin desires to verbalize and pictorialize. With grace Amore takes apart conventional uses of word, image, and form.

Beside a tall window in Castleton, a slab of marble the size of an old atlas holds rusted iron objects precisely inlaid in the milky stone. Amore placed each one and carved the marble to suit its shape. She started this piece twenty years ago when a studio visit

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ephemeral snapshots with found objects—bits of paper, gloves, as well as silk flowers that seem borrowed from a dime-store funeral wreath. Her works are shiny and raw. Amore loves iridescent paint because it emphasizes texture and changes in light. The physical and emotional center of these shrine-like works is often a heart-shaped stone. For Amore, the heart is the intersection of all intersections—the

by Mark di Suvero reinforced her early experiments, collaging metal and stone. She finished the piece only recently, when she found images in a book of ancient Egyptian funerary bundles—pouches of fine cloth wrapped around objects for the afterlife. These bundles are the size and shape of a heart, their timeworn pleats and folds create gesture. Amore transferred the photographs to the marble slab, printing their



B. Amore, *Street Calligraphy IV*, 2010, steel, bronzed glove, wood, 26¼ x 17½ x 5".

serpentine forms in rich black on the clean white surface. They create a sensual ring, a flowing shape winding between the metal objects. Here is the meeting of all things: hand, material, history, and heart.

Amy Rahn is an independent writer contributing regularly to Art New England, Art Map Burlington, and Seven Days.