

Between A Rock And An Art Place

By Marilou Giammona

Her sculptures are carved from alabaster slabs, but the creativity and planning behind each piece is in no way set in stone. Sculptor Suzanne Posner pours her heart and soul into each of her creations, many of which go through various permutations as she works to make the stone come alive.

"The stones tend to guide one," Suzanne said in the sunlit gallery of her Great Neck home. She orders alabaster from a supplier who travels the globe in search of stone of various color, shape and size. Suzanne, herself a globetrotter who has traveled through five continents, eyes the stone first for color, then for a "stimulating shape."

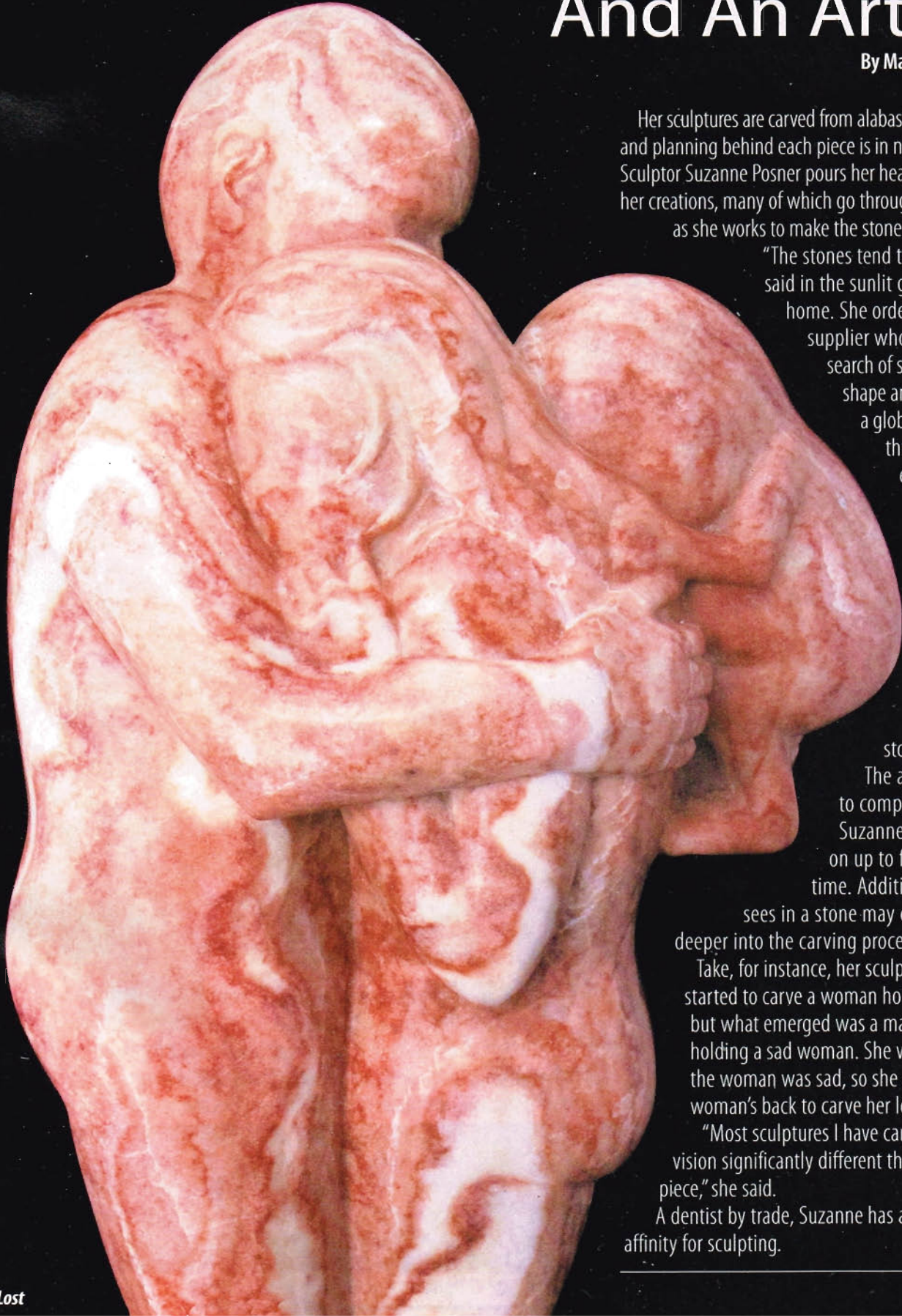
Working with a hammer, chisel, files and sandpaper in her home studio, Suzanne takes off the rough edges and then imagines what the stone could be.

The amount of time it takes to complete one sculpture varies. Suzanne may alternate work on up to five different pieces at a time. Additionally, what she initially sees in a stone may change as she gets deeper into the carving process.

Take, for instance, her sculpture titled "Lost." She started to carve a woman holding a laughing baby, but what emerged was a man who appeared to be holding a sad woman. She wanted to portray why the woman was sad, so she used extra stone on the woman's back to carve her lost fetus.

"Most sculptures I have carved I started out with a vision significantly different than that of the finished piece," she said.

A dentist by trade, Suzanne has always had an affinity for sculpting.





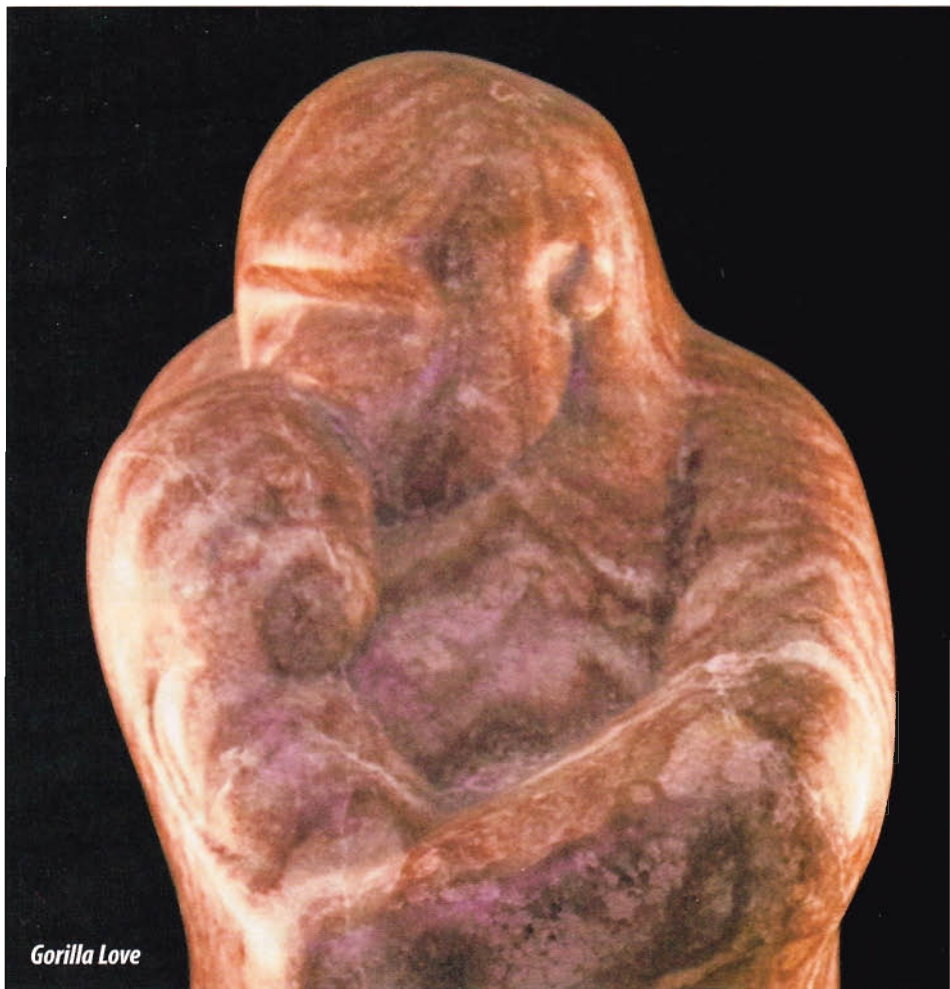
Suzanne Posner with a sculpture of a black squirrel in her Great Neck home. (Photo by Marilou Giammona)

This Gold Coast artist pulls life from stone

"I've been sculpting all my life, in food, in tinfoil, in clay, in found materials, and finally, 20 years ago in stone," she said. "When my children were young and I worked as a dentist two days a week, I needed to do something for myself for a few hours each week."

She enrolled in a sculpting class at the Cumberland Adult Center in Great Neck. Since then, Suzanne has crafted dozens of alabaster pieces, including an award-winning sculpture that was recently on display at the Shelter Rock Gallery that is hosted by Manhasset's Unitarian Universalist Congregation at Shelter Rock.

Suzanne returned to Cumberland two years ago, only this time she's on the other side of the desk, running a sculpting workshop "in which participants offer peer support and informal discussion of ongoing work in an open studio environment," she said. "People are afraid of carving stone, but as I tell my students, 'If you make a mistake, you can just carve deeper and you will achieve a more interesting piece.'"



Gorilla Love

A Great Neck native, Suzanne attended E.M. Baker School and Temple Israel, and graduated from Great Neck North High School in 1979. From there, she went to Bryn Mawr College, where she majored in philosophy at Haverford College, and graduated in 1983. Suzanne completed her studies at UNC Chapel Hill Dental, earning a DDS in 1987. She and physician husband, Alan Katz, lived in Manhattan, and she enjoyed seven years of dental practice, ballroom dancing and classes at the Art Students League of New York, where she is a life member.

Children — two sons, now ages 17 and 20 — prompted a move back to Great Neck. Her life, including young womanhood, pregnancy and family, has been the inspiration behind much of her work.

These days, Suzanne is a full-time artist. She paints and crafts clay sculptures, but stone sculptures are her primary focus.

“An artist can use any materials at her disposal,” she said. “I prefer 3D because of the tactile. 2D is just a translation of 3D. I like to get a sculptural feeling in my paintings. When artists use a variety of media, they become better in all of their media.”

Many of Suzanne’s alabaster sculptures can be viewed on her website, <http://suzanneposner.wordpress.com>. ■