

Reprinted with permission from:

FineArtConnoisseur

800.610.5771 or International 011-561.655.8778.

[CLICK TO SUBSCRIBE](#)

TODAY'S MASTERS™

Three to Watch: Artists Making Their Mark

There is a *lot* of superb art being made these days;
this column shines light on a trio of gifted individuals.



JOHN SISCO (b. 1958) is a Seattle-based sculptor who mastered his medium against the odds. Having learned to make pottery in middle school, he commandeered his high school's workshop to teach himself the bronze-casting process — from models, molds, and shells to pouring, chasing, polishing, patination, and sealing. Disappointed with the absence of technical rigor he found in three college art departments, Sisko ultimately earned his BA at the University of Washington in philosophy — a body of knowledge, and a way of looking at life, that informs both his subjects and compositions. This intellectual evolution was neatly balanced by a nine-year, hands-on apprenticeship in the Bellingham studio of sculptor Tom Sherwood.

Over the last 25 years, Sisko has created more than 80 limited-edition bronzes on various scales, including 16 commissions. Most of his works are three-dimensional human or animal forms, though there are also medallions, reliefs, vessels, and site-specific installations. All reflect Sisko's command of anatomy, movement, and gesture, yet it is a sign of his confidence — and individuality — that he often distorts the figure's proportions and thrusts its energy upward or downward to convey feeling and thought. "In a way," Sisko says, "each piece is a kind of self-portrait, a meditation about some aspect of my experience, or a reflection of a dichotomy such as man/animal, physical/mental, or freedom/necessity." In his worldview, "emotions have bodies, thoughts have bodies, and stories have bodies. When I conceptualize my own experiences, I do so with the thought of a human body bending or turning or posturing."

Overlaying Sisko's innovative massings of form are variations of surface — such as cavities or pronounced areas of musculature — that enhance the play of light and shadow to keep the viewer's eye engaged. Hands and feet are particularly crucial in this regard; one need only imagine Rodin's renowned *Burghers of Calais* to grasp the aesthetic and emotional potential these small body parts possess. Not surprisingly, Sisko is at work on a book about the cultural and philosophical constraints sculptors have long confronted as they depict the nude.

While his virtuosity led to Sisko's election as a Fellow of the National Sculpture Society, his articulation of complex ideas has landed him as chairman of the editorial board of that organization's journal, *Sculpture Review*, and has led to teaching stints at South Carolina's Brookgreen Gardens, Seattle University, and the Gage Academy in Seattle. In 2006 his home city warmly embraced the Seattle Art Museum's Olympic Sculpture Park, which intersperses iconic masterworks with brand-new experiments. The following year, Sisko converted a storefront nearby into the Sisko Gallery, where he presents rotating exhibitions of established and emerging artists, primarily sculptors from the Northwest. Naturally his work can be found here, and also at John Pence Gallery (San Francisco).

JOHN SISCO (b. 1958)

WEAVE II: THROW

1995, BRONZE ON SANDSTONE BASE, 35 x 16 x 17 IN.

JOHN PENCE GALLERY, SAN FRANCISCO; PHOTO: MEL CURTIS

