



Marla Friedman CAPTURING THE SPIRIT



LEFT

Rise, 2016
Bronze
28 x 18 x 22 inches

RIGHT

Rise (detail), 2016
Bronze
28 x 18 x 22 inches





Captain James A. Lovell, Jr., 2012
Bronze
16 x 7 x 8 inches

Viewing Marla Friedman's sensitive and insightful sculptures, it is surprising that this was not her initial calling as an artist. Building upon an accomplished career in portrait painting, Friedman tried her hand at sculpture for the first time in 2010. She developed a foundation in two-dimensional Realist portraiture at the Art Students League and the National Academy of Design in New York and L'École Albert Defois in the Loire Valley, France. Bringing these skills into three dimensions, Friedman approaches clay with the confidence of history and the freedom of the autodidact. She captures the likenesses of her subjects, but also conveys an intangible sense of inner spirit that is the product of careful observation and close research.

Friedman works intuitively with her clay, beginning not with sketches or maquettes but with an intimate study of her subject before communing directly with the medium. The artist seeks a connection to her subjects that approaches the spiritual, in that she wishes to convey not merely their likeness, but a real sense of their personal presence. She describes this process as "listening," in both an aural and a spiritual sense. Her sculptures develop out of an openness to the lived experience of the subject; they are formed from equal parts empathy and insight, resulting in compelling works that carry a weight beyond mere representation.



Abraham Lincoln, 2012

Bronze

14 x 8 1/4 x 9 inches

Commissioned by The Abraham Lincoln Presidential
Library Foundation

An early exposure to classical forms fed Friedman's interest in nineteenth century art. She spent her childhood years in the Hyde Park neighborhood of Chicago, living just across the street from what is now the Museum of Science and Industry, a grand classicizing structure built as the Palace of Fine Arts for the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition. She found her muse, though, at Paris' Musée d'Orsay. The official portrait of French president Jules Grévy, painted by Academician Léon Bonnat in 1880, completely transfixed Friedman. She was struck not only by the near-photographic precision of the painting, in which the figure emerges from a darkened background, but by Bonnat's deft and sensitive use of color: in a composition that is largely nuances of black, his attention to subtleties makes the work sing. It was the chance discovery of portrait sculptor Jo Davidson's autobiography, which showcased his expressive work in clay, that inspired Friedman to sculpt. She is self-taught in this medium and looks to the immediacy of Davidson's portraiture, as well as the sculptures of Rodin, Augustus Saint-Gaudens, and Daniel Chester French for guidance and inspiration.



Booker T. Washington and Julius Rosenwald: Dynamic Vision, 2016
Bronze
18 x 22 x 12 inches

Friedman revels in the opportunity to delve into the lives and likenesses of her portrait subjects, who are often iconic figures, both historic and contemporary. Beginning with a sculpture of Apollo 13 astronaut Captain James Lovell, Friedman has had the pleasure of working with many superlative figures of recent history. Her collaborative portraits with Captain Lovell in both oil and bronze, installed at the United States Naval Academy Museum, the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum, and the Captain James A. Lovell Federal Health Care Center, capture the space pioneer's essential optimism and strong leadership. Likewise, her busts of Civil Rights activists Rosa Parks and Maya Angelou radiate a commanding sense of peace and inner strength. Each expresses their unique essence and is reflective of their individual contributions to the movement. Parks is depicted with eyes closed, as her "soul rested" upon making her momentous decision not to give up her seat on the bus. Dr. Angelou is rendered with hand outstretched, as if to "rise" and usher her words of triumph and hope into the world. Across her oeuvre, Friedman celebrates the unique qualities and exemplary accomplishments of her subjects in sculptures that are themselves unique and exemplary – deeply felt and masterfully accomplished.

Ashley Park



LEFT

Peace Sculpture - Two, 2016

Bronze

41 x 16 x 15 inches

A variant of this example is at the Akko Center for Arts & Technology
in Akko, Israel

RIGHT

Peace Sculpture - Two (detail), 2016

Bronze

41 x 16 x 15 inches



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