

# JEM HOBBS

*Fellowship Report 2019*

The advanced study  
of classical figurative  
sculpture for the  
conservation industry



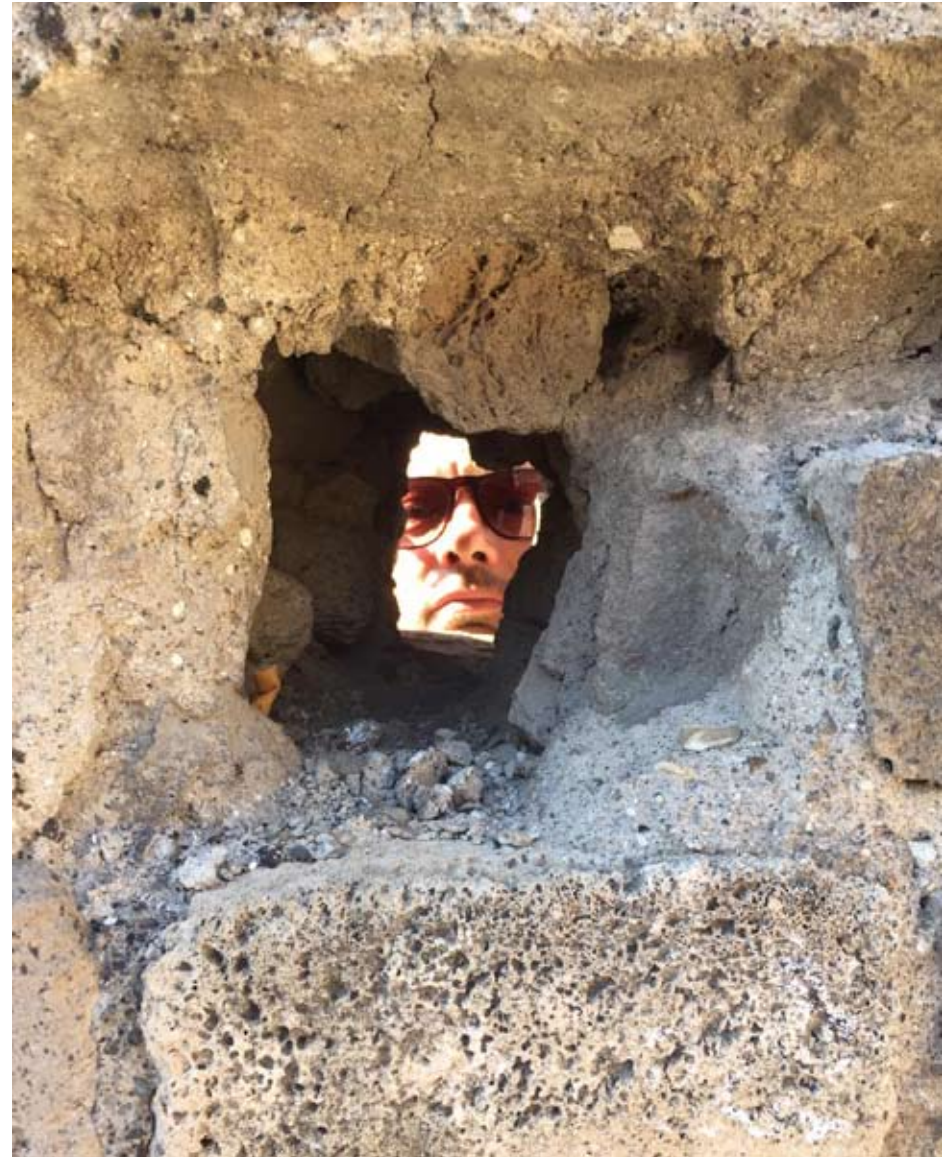
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## SUMMARY OF THE FELLOWSHIP

I was awarded a Churchill Fellowship to travel to Italy to advance my study of classical figurative sculpture for the conservation industry.

My study program included Florence and Pietrasanta, to improve my already comprehensive skills, techniques and understanding of the human form in clay modelling and sculpture. To develop a more thorough understanding of application to stone/marble for the art of conservation and restoration of statuary.



I'd be meeting and working alongside people involved in the traditional art and craft of sculpture modelling and carving of the classical form.

I would be studying with sculptors and craftspeople, attending classes, as well as traipsing endless corridors and rooms full of magnificent marble statues from the Greek and Roman eras, and viewing examples of beautiful work from late Renaissance to early 20th C, with notebook in hand.

My project aimed to address the issues that arise in the conservation industry around such problems as how best to repair or replace historical statuary work and/or origination of new figurative work in clay and stone.

Having acquired an NVQ 14 years ago and mainly being self taught as a carver, I felt the need to advance my knowledge of techniques and achieve a higher level of understanding of the classical form; to give myself the opportunity to study from the 'prime' source. i.e. Italy - Florence & Pietrasanta.

After an intense period of study with a master craftsman and various classes the aim was to acquire a more confident approach to tackling projects within my chosen field. I hoped it would broaden my understanding of the techniques used in classical figurative work, contributing a more professional and thorough approach to projects. i.e. studying form, the proper use of modelling tools and casting techniques.

Having worked at such prestigious places such as Westminster Abbey and Cathedral, and Blenheim Palace, I felt it proved only beneficial to the heritage of our iconic buildings and monuments here in the UK that I bring the highest level of skills to these projects. I was very happy with my achievements, but always felt there was much more to learn.

I intended to attend classes in figurative sculpture in Italy which would in return offer me the important knowledge and formative approaches to further develop my abilities to the highly skilled stone conservation work back in the UK.

The tradition of sculpture is rooted in ancient Greek culture and from there reached its summit in Italy. Studying in Florence & Pietrasanta would enable me to go back into dialogue with the

old masters and how they achieved their skills through craftsmanship, discipline and real understanding of the human body.

The travel program would also include visits to museums, churches and historical sites to examine the ways in which great sculptors of the past dealt with various challenges that the figure presents.

I am always happy to share my knowledge with my fellow colleagues and apprentices. However, this new-found knowledge would have a dramatic effect on the level and kinds of projects I could get involved in, and sharing this will only help to improve the quality of the work. The conservation industry has many facets, and there seems to be many possibilities of developing my career within its industry. It seems only natural for me to move in to teaching in the future; having held a few localised sculptural workshops in the past I would like to create a workplace/artspace for sharing and developing techniques for people with a personal interest in developing their study of figurative sculpture; in clay, casting, and in stone carving and conservation.

My future involvement in conservation will now give me the opportunity to build on these ultimate skills I have acquired from my overseas study program and to share within the industry.

The benefits of this advanced opportunity to study will have a great impact on my career; I now feel better educated and informed, from a source that has proved second to none in its field of art, sculpture and architecture.

I believe this Fellowship has given me the opportunity to bring change and benefit to my approach in my work with the highest level of skill needed.



## JEM HOBBS CV

I am a creative craftsman and have worked in many fields of the creative industry thriving on the challenges this brings. I attended graphic design college and worked as a graphic artist from 1989 - 2003, inbetween enjoying an amateur career as a guitarist/musician. After deciding to change my career direction, I studied Stonemasonry for 3 years at Bath College (2001-2003) and ever since then have been working self employed in the Conservation Industry.

Bath College of Excellence 3 years NVQ/ASA 2001-2003  
Awarded Peter Greening Award for Conservation by Bath College  
Nominated as part of the team for Conservation Award from Stone Federation 2016 for our work at Christchurch Cathedral, Oxford  
The Worshipful Masons award winner - Wells Stone Carving Competition 2018

**Westminster Abbey** - clay maquettes and carving of 15 new portraits in stone for chapterhouse pinnacles

**Westminster Cathedral** - marble carving of plaque for Cardinal Vaughan

**Blenheim Palace** - conservation, remodelling, recasting of terra cotta statues north facade. Recarving new arm and hand for statues on west side

**Chequers** - head mason for Jacobian bay window repairs; masonry for curved coping sections and re-carved Hawtree family shield. General masonry and conservation

**Prince of Wales, Dumfries House** - 2 carved sandstone urns for balustrade.

**Queens College, Oxford** - carving for Corinthian capitol, swags and pediment; new hand, cockerel head, cherubs feet and legs. General masonry and stone conservation

**Christchurch Cathedral, Oxford** - carved leaves for lanterns on vaulted ceiling.

**Taplow Court, Berks** - carving in Victorian Gothic style; 2 replacement angels, 3 portraits, label stops, pateri, stiff leaf, pinnacles, crockets and arches. General masonry, repairs, and stone conservation

**Light Dragoons, Norfolk** - lettercarving of 2 tonne portland stone memorial

**Ashton Court, Bristol** - 20 + new Jacobean urns carved in limestone for garden

**Cromer WWI Memorial** - 5 duplicate statues for memorial



## MY BLOG/PIETRASANTA : My adventures in the classical techniques of statuary carving

Let me get straight to the point;  
I'm at Martin Foot's sculpture workshop in Pietrasanta, Italy. The year is 2019. I'm straight into working on a sculpture of Bacchus; his naked frame, and cup in hand.

The roughing out has been done, so my job today and for the next four weeks is to find the surface of the skin by using the pointing tool, from the gesso original, and apply these key points to the marble. Simples!?

Only, I got here late last night, slept poorly and now feel like a man dragged off the streets that's never held a chisel before.

But Martin understands, and leads me through the key elements in using the pointing machine (it's not a machine by the way; I am)

Here it is... le macchinetta a punti !!

After carving limestone for so long now you think you understand the nature of stone carving, but this is very different, much like granite is.

It's all air tools, which I'm used to, but with fewer chisel types.

There are scores of them in this workshop. I'm using predominantly bull noses. Flat ended ones cause complications with the edges digging in.

And the process is slightly different too, you need more gusto, and a sharper eye. Especially as mine keep wanting to close.

I acquired white finger years ago from over use of air tools so I'm slightly apprehensive of this.

After a few hrs I'm getting the hang of it .... aren't eye ??

After a few more hrs, and after nearly knocking Martin off his bike, avoiding another skull fracture, I'm pretty much back to where I started

Exhausted and making mistakes ie cutting too low. ... the points I've found need to be exact, and the areas between need a certain amount of clawed surface left, for the final finish

I need to go back to my bnb. Eat. And sleep.

Today will be a better day;

I've had a good kip, I didn't drink too much wine, one glass, and I ate some good home cooked food, pasta of course!

Waking up to the amazing Airbnb studio space is quite something ; Leone Tommasi's personal space where he worked away on hundreds of sculptures, and all still here.

It's a bit odd getting up in the night, feels like I'm surrounded by plaster ghosts!

I'm feeling more on top of things today

My reference points are clearer and the surrounding areas simpler and more defined

And I'm standing back.

Looking is always a good idea!

It's basically the whole principle; keep your eye on the balls, or you'll drop them!

The marble feels like a totally new material to me despite my experience of it. But that was mostly with a grinder and dremel.

It's tough, and I've already been told to not dig in; I know this , I just got lost in it, because it responds very differently to limestone.

I have to keep the surface clean, so these points matter!

What do points make!?! :)

*Floating, like a point in space :*

I'm making a few mistakes. Martin points out.

Just for the record; I've got tennis elbow, a bad back, hip aches, and a headache. Ok. So you know.

Its heavy work with the air tools, I'm out of practice, it's been quite a light year, sculpting clay and plaster.

Finding the points with the machinnetta is a very methodical, slow and meticulous process, of which one has to be particularly tuned in. 100%. We're talking millimetres here.

Martin came over and looked worried, took my pencil, rubbed out the mark, and repositioned it 2mm to the left. That's the way you make it to a master craftsman.

If you think about it; imagine 100 dots over a statues front, face, arms etc. If all the points are out by a couple of mm, it'll add up to mass confusion and a pigs ear. We'll have no pigs 'ere.

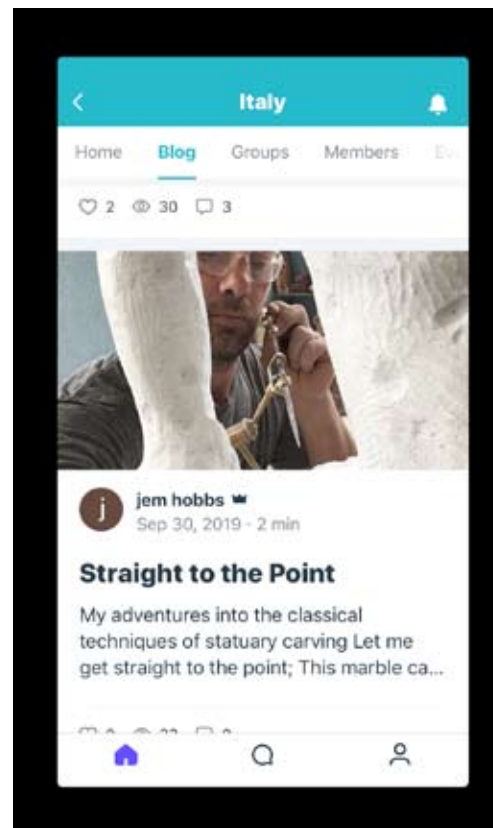
There's not much chat just the noise of the air tools tap tap tapping. A noise I'm used to, but still drives you a bit mad. I'm not on holiday, I'm reminded!

My bnb is at the original Leone Tommasi studio, I'm so lucky to stay here. It was in the stars!

A little about Leone Tommasi: Sculptor, Artist.

Boozer?!

Leone Tommasi was born in Pietrasanta, Italy 1903



where he spent most of his life. He studied first at the Academy of Fine Arts in Rome and Brera in Milan, where he graduated with Achille Alberti in 1926.

For 20 years he was a professor at the Pietrasanta School of Static Art. Despite having devoted himself extensively to sculpture, he was an excellent painter, considered the greatest watercolorist of his time.

Between 1950 and 1954 he traveled to Argentina to make the great statues of social content that were placed in the upper frontispiece of the Eva Perón Foundation and the projected statues to Juan Domingo Perón and Evita. The statue of Perón had been designed to measure 62 meters, but it was never built. During the self-titled dictatorship Liberating Revolution, which overthrew President Perón in 1955, the statues were destroyed and thrown into the Riachuelo. In 1996, President Carlos Menem commissioned his search at the bottom of the river, meeting three. Currently, they adorn the fifth of San Vicente, where the remains of Perón were deposited.

It was thanks to Tommasi that Pietrasanta began its flowering as the center of the great artists of marble. That is why it has been called 'Little Athens'. He died in 1965, the whole town mourning his passing, silence all around... There's even a plaza named after him, and a skatepark! I'm sat in his old kitchen every night, drinking the finest wines, surrounded by his works of art. So I should be infused during my sleep by his greatness. I'm hoping.

I understand the pointing technique, but I'm having difficulties dealing with Bacchus' backside right now. You can't just join up the dots, wherever you happen to be. It takes a full understanding from many years of studying the human body. One point leads to another, and how they are set out matters. I'm not classically trained, I've just spent years observing at life drawing classes and generally being self taught. So, my head hurts. And my eyes. If I think too much I feel like it's an impossible task; this covering of skin is endless! One contour becomes another... no edges!

Today I felt I was rubbish, and should give up. Then I remembered I'm here to learn, so I need to go slowly, and take notes. Lots of them.

I'll walk u thru it;

So, to start with, u first mark a point with a soft pencil on the plaster model. This is where we're headed; to find it's corresponding position on the marble.

So with a certain amount of looking like an incapable point handler, you loosen off all the wing nuts, and screws of the machinetta. The whole thing then becomes like an out of control snake, so it takes both hands to aim the point at your pencil mark. At 90 degrees to the surface area, in all directions if possible, as this gives you the information needed to then approach the cutting-in at the correct angle. I.e. Contours.

Approximately tighten off the G clamp, then the next two wing nuts, then you tighten the brass circular nut, under then point slider.

Carefully dropping the point to the surface, then you tighten the final brass nut, giving you the all important depth, which is exactly what you want to get. Precisely. That's the easy bit.

Next, lift off the whole crochetta ( the wooden T) it's all mounted on, and place on the corresponding indents on the marble copy.

Slowly slide your point down until it's on the surface of the proud, roughed out marble, mark it off with a hard pencil, then retract the point... and carve. Until your skin comes off your knuckles, your knees shake, and your ears are ringing. Keep reapplying until you've hit the right depth needed.

To the nearest millimetre !

.... does this make any sense? It's hard to describe. Anyhoo, it's very time consuming. Some days I've got loads of useful points marked, and other days... The more points doesn't necessarily mean it's good thing: it could be considered that the more points marked may mean the carver is less adept, and possibly lacking a certain overall knowledge of the human form. If it is human piece of sculpture, that is.

Smmodellatura - one who removes the stone, for the carver

Modellatura- one who builds up, ie creates bozzetti, models in clay etc. An Artisan. Something I'm a long way off of !!

Finding out more about how the copying of figures in sculpture works;

After two weeks of using the machinetta de punti I'm getting there, however still struggling a little. It's ok putting the points on, and getting the contours correct for the next stage of finishing (which I'll be doing this coming week), but avoiding having a 'Thing' in front of you, covered in dots, random, endless, and confusing, can be troubling. Especially for the natural carver, which I'm realising I am more suited to, through my experience. It's the unlearning, and reapplication that makes me feel at times like I'm not that capable of bringing the two methods together. I know they can work symbiotically. It's like curdling your coffee with cold 'orrible soya milk, just 'cos you thought it'd be better for you. I'm looking forward to sculpting this figure, using the points as a guide, and also putting a bit of myself into it.

Btw: My coffee needs just the right amount of whole milk. But strong.

So, I'm heading off to meet a man who can. Jason Arkles sculpts, teaches, does proper blogs and podcasts, and sounds like a proper historian. So that should frighten the hell out of me! Back to Florence, with all it's glamour and glitz. I know the city well now, so I'm going specifically to collar him, and bend his ear about clever tips and techniques in sculpting. And not get stuck in massive queues wasting half the day.

We meet at his basement studio on the south side of the river. There's a labyrinth of interconnected rooms, full of original pieces, and a teaching room. With a couple of students copy carving a bust.

And...he's even got a bloody bar!

What I'll remember most about today is seeing the Pantograph, for the first time! What's that? you say; It's a big metal contraption, looks like a boom, with two different sized spikes on its arm.

Odd eh! It goes up and down. And each spike/ point rotates in two directions. So, basically, as you manoeuvre one point, the other point follows.

This is predominantly used for enlarging models, maquettes, bozzetti, from their original clay form, to a 'full sized' model, usually then ready for casting. ie, once the client has approved the model, it's then ready to be realised in its actual finished size.

Some sculptors don't think this is the best method, so I've heard, like it's too unreliable. And they would be in favour of using the more traditional compass method; three compass readings, giving you an ultimate point in space. Every reading you take from your model, you then multiply that from the scale you are working to. ie. 3 to 1, a third of the finished size. It's hard to write about all this, but I said I'd try!

Jason has restored this Pantograph back to its original, beautiful condition. There's really not many left these days, few working, and very few people who'd know how to use them. So, I'm a fortunate guy!

Basically, for those who don't do much of this kind of work, or understand too much about what it is I'm getting at; you can use rulers to give yourself a 2 dimensional reference, or the pointing method which gives you ultimately a 3 dimensional reference. So there you have it. This is what it's all about; either getting the 'likeness' of a subject in general, or a 'specific' of a certain subject. The 'ideal', or the 'real'.

Below are some more olde images of methods used; the 'boxing' method: rulers/measurements. The 'definatore'; a disc with an arm attached, with a plumb line dropped down, giving you a point in space (not very popular, or even used!) And finally once again the Pantograph being used to enlarge.

It's raining outside. I had to down tools because I couldn't see anything much, and at a tricky section; yes, revisiting Bacchus. I keep going back to it. Delicate, soft, and tender. Much like my own!

This week I've bought my own machinetta de punti. Finally I can do some proper copy carving when I return. Not just relying on my eyesight, dividers, and a lot of guesswork.

I will also however be bringing back a lot of useful information, tips and techniques for carving with this method. Most of it soooo detailed, that I couldn't even begin to bore you with it.

But ....in a nutshell;

Keep your point oiled

And your hard pencil super sharpened

Tighten all the nuts

Don't drill just a point

Use the flat chisel for gaining as much surface info as possible around the point

ie. contours. Not just a hole

Sharpen your pencil

Be careful not to knock the arm as you lift the crochetta, therefore losing the reading

Use a small bullnose chisel to find the lowest points, therefore not cutting into the sides of 'valleys'

ie. his under-arse crack

Don't get wedged in. Always clear as large an area as possible.

Make every action useful. Don't waste energy.

There's a lot of points to find!

Don't get lost. Start from the head down next time.

Sharpen your pencil

Triangulate - then fill the inbetweens.

Use the dentata- the small toothed claws for giving you direction between the points.

Keep the points visible right until the very end finish. Before you carve.

Pointing is not Carving. Remember this!

And finally...

Don't get distracted by too much 'good' music. I tried Steely Dan out quite a bit ;) Otherwise I must say, Laughing Stock by Talk Talk has been my go-to album, for sanity, in my downtime. Of which there has been a lot.

hmmmm...

It's a quiet, noisy, and lonesome life sometimes, this carving lark. And I often wonder about the physical damage I've done. Is the artist's struggle for greatness worth all the pain and effort? Yes! but happy balance is needed. This much I've definitely learnt from being here. This niche little world doesn't always seem to lend itself to great sharers of information; hence why I've found it so hard over the years to find a community of people/patrons etc. to pick up tips from. However... I'd just like to dedicate this blog to my late boss, for the most positive, most exciting, and productive season of my career as a stone carver, working with the Cliveden Conservation team; Trevor Proudfoot passed away the week before I came out to Italy. RIP.

...and in the end, we make more dust".



## THROUGH THE DOORWAY : From 'Guesswork' to 'Knowing'

I'd first heard about the town of Pietrasanta through a colleague once at work; he'd had the fortune of travelling there to see the master marble craftsmen at work in their studios, just like they'd been doing for hundreds of years. I knew back then that I'd benefit from going too, one day....

That was in 2007.

I'd had an unbelievable amount of difficulty getting this trip organised, with the right people, in the right places. I knew no-one directly so I phoned around for some vague links/contacts; Italian conservers I'd worked with, artists, masons etc. And one name kept popping up; Martin Foot. Not a very Italian name I hear you say, but Martin had been living and working out there for 25 years, and was fully integrated in the community of marble carvers in Pietrasanta. He was the guy some of the old-school Italian families of carvers would go to, for advice! God, he must be good. He was my only hope, and fortunately he was happy to accommodate me in his studio during my Fellowship. I was very lucky.

I was there to learn the traditional techniques of using the 'Pointing Tool' to transfer information from a plaster model, across to stone. This method has been used for the last 200 years. In basic terms; creating a stone copy of a figure, from an original model. We generally call the original, made in clay, the maquette, or 'bozetta', in Italy.

It allows the artist to 'sculpt' the clay, and work it slowly into the correct form. Years of life study, drawing, modelling.... 10,000 hours they say! So, I had a few more hours to put in.







I'd landed the evening before, and checked into my accommodation. How I ended up there was a very strange coincidence;

Leone Tommasi was a very famous sculptor from Pietrasanta. He had worked on hundreds of statues and portraits, all so beautiful, and his work was always something I'd aspired to; that level of ability and perfection.

Whilst looking for a place to stay I could only find the usual dull hotel rooms and BnB's, or I could stay with the nuns...and I didn't really fancy that.

Then I looked again, and up popped The Studio of Leone Tommasi on AirBnB. This was fated. As it panned out, I was the 'first guest' ever to have stayed there. The building is just as it was left, wall to wall in plaster casts of heads and figures. It was being used for life classes, and art events, but it was only ever lived in by the Tommasi family. Leone's granddaughter Francesca was to be my first host.

But the point of this really, is that; in all the waking, and sleeping hours that I was to spend whilst working in Pietrasanta, I could also soak up the art of this greatly admired artist. I could touch and feel the faces and figures, draw and take photos as much as I liked.

I need to get back to telling you about the 'Machinetta per Punti' - The Pointing Machine.

However, it is not a machine. I will 'become' the machine, unfortunately, adding to the pain in my already tennis'd elbow!

This, for me, is the Holy Grail. The thing that gives you a point in space, which allows you to then transfer to your stone block, and

carve down to a specific point. It's quite hard to describe, so you'll have to forgive me if it sounds complicated. It's really not. The most irritating thing about getting to grips with it is...erm... getting your grip on it. There are four keys parts, wing nuts, and screws, to keep tightened. All beautifully manufactured by the same people who created the first ones to go into production over 150 years ago - Milani.

The Blog tells you a bit about the daily ins and outs of using the machinetta. Here I'll try and go more in to detail on how it's used, and it's key advantages over other methods.

As I said, this gives you an exact point in space. Just look at a square piece of freshly cut stone, and try and imagine a figure inside it. It's not easy to imagine. Let alone create. I've spent many years doing this, as a trained mason would. By using templates, drawing, and measurements. Rulers and measuring give you a reference on a 'face', and this can also be applied to another face. Two sides to work in, to 'find' your key point. This however is not failsafe. It also takes a lot of guesswork, and with that, hoping. Hoping you have not gone wrong in your application. And going wrong, and not knowing, is the main issue. When you are carving stone you do not get a second chance. It's expensive if it goes wrong and needs to be done with expertise and skill.

When duplicating a sculpture, from a model, your starting point is called the 'capa punti' - the top point. It usually makes sense to put this on the top most point of the statue. A head, or a shoulder. In some cases you need many 'capa punti', as there may be limbs sticking out, which makes things very complicated and involved.







You create a 'crocetta' - an inverted cross, which 'carries' the machinetta. A nail bent at its top, to hang from, and two steadying nails, at either end of the 'T'. This forms a triangle, and will not wobble, you hope.

Mounted on your stone block are the three relating points for the cross to mount on to begin.

This is bespoke, always being made by the carver who is 'roughing out'; the first process of creating the sculpture. Then the Pointing, and finally the Carving. As I was to understand, they are three very differently considered job titles. Up until then I'd done all three back home.

The machinetta is then 'G' clamped to the cross, and it is up to you to decide where the starting point should be, ie, where abouts up and down the length of the cross will the key points be most easily accessed.

In simple terms, imagine an anglepoise lamp; you can manipulate the light to wherever you choose, as long as the base is in the right place ie. close enough to your bed so you can read. See?

So, side by side, you have your plaster model, and your piece of stone, at the same height, and a similar angle, depending on how you are standing between the two. It's actually key to carving; standing in the right place!

To begin with you're looking for the general outline of the figure; a shoulder, a hip, a knee, the feet. Or with drapery, obvious places where the folds fall, at the arms, the hem etc.

To be clear, this process is not something you are taught from day one; you need a thorough understanding of how to carve stone, and what all the issues are that arise from these materials. What chisel to use in which situation.



I'd carved some marble before, but not really a huge amount to feel confident. I'd used air tools on many jobs too, but that was a while ago. So, all in all, I was feeling quite nervous about starting this task, and being trusted.

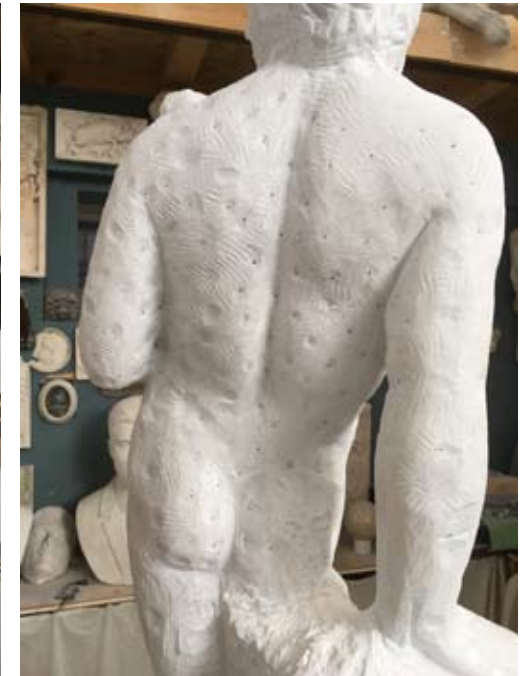
As you progress you start to get used to the *macchinetta*, and all its quirks. Not tightening one of the screws enough, and the whole thing slipping happened quite a lot. Martin would come over and assist me, constantly giving me advice and tips on how or why something seems hard. I was at first just finding the simple task of carving the marble awkward, and very tiring. Let alone carving specific details with a sharp eye. Most of the time my eyes were full of dust, despite the goggles.

### **THE ART OF TAKING A POINT :** *la Macchinetta per Punti*

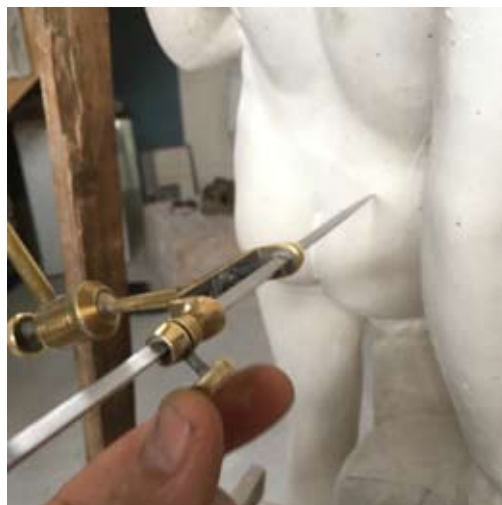
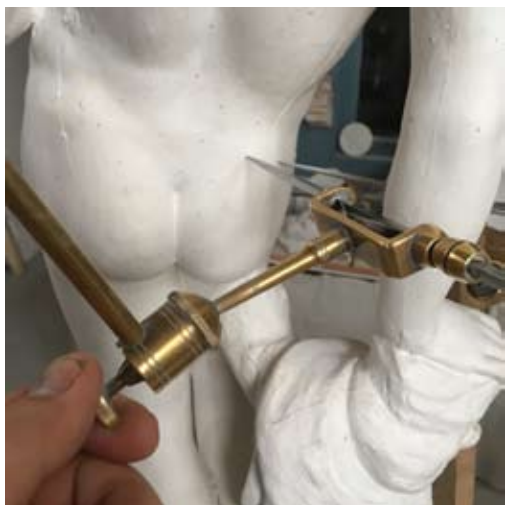
With a soft pencil you chose a point for reference, which will then in turn be 'found' in your stone. Each point must give you more than just a point, it needs to give you surface angles and direction. There is also a method to stick to, i.e every point found sets you up for your next point. A bit like playing snooker. Moving down a leg you'd go from the top of the thigh to the knee, but choosing where on the knee, and then where on the calf...and so it goes on. The human form is like an ocean; the skin is endless. It doesn't ever really have any flat areas, all is one seamless shroud.

It's a real paradox at times, describing this traditional technique; it sounds crazily difficult and unfathomable, yet at the same time it can be likened to you becoming a 'drill'. A robot even.

Martin said at one point that 'hundreds of years ago it was done by robots, on red wine'. I'm sure it was. I looked through many







of Martin's old books, from the local area of Cararra, at pictures of the workshops that were liberally scattered below the marble mountain Altissimo. The men were there, just like we are here. The same tools, the same traditional methods. Its just that back then it was quite normal to go into that career. Obviously it was a very highly regarded local skill, specific to that area, but it made many great artists, purely because of the blood that ran through those workshops. All the fine tuned experience, and skill, channelled into teaching those young lads, who then in turn taught the next generation. And now it's up to us to do the same. Unfortunately the skills will be lost if we don't continue to share them, which is something I am very passionate about!

My pointing improves as the weeks go by. Using the machinetta gets simpler, and most of the time it does, and goes, where I want it to. The statue of Bacchus which I'm working from is a copy of a Michelangelo, so I feel like I'm in good hands. The modelling of this figure is so exquisite, the surface of the nude being so subtle in its line. I cannot afford to go 'wrong'. I'm programmed to be cautious, but sometimes this is extreme! I mark on the point on my marble with a hard pencil, a millimeter 'proud' of the final surface, I then score that point with a tiny chisel point, and then re mark the pencil, so I can see it, and it won't get rubbed off.

### **OTHER METHODS FOR COPYING SCULPTURE : Triangulation Method or the Compass Technique**

This is basically the oldest method for taking a reading from your model and applying those points to your stone. For this method we use calipers or compasses. Again you start with a main point the 'capa punto', and 'find' key points thereafter which will add to the references of covering your sculpture with 'found' surface

areas. Point Triangulation depends critically on getting the angles right. (That's how you map-read across country and don't get lost...and need to be accurate with a compass). You need to keep cross-checking the angles back to original known positions because a small error in the angle will propagate into a large error the further you get away from your original datum.

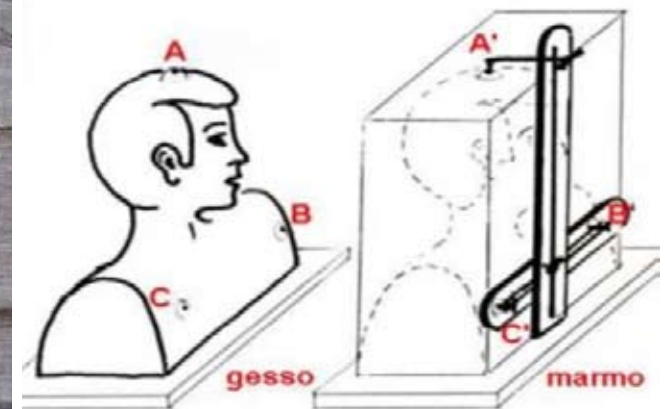
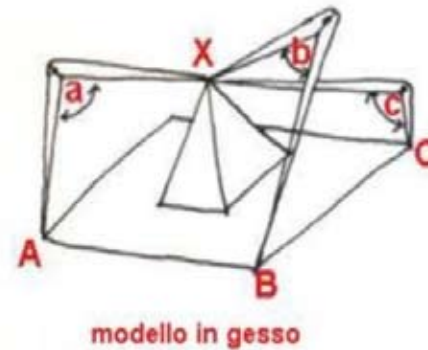
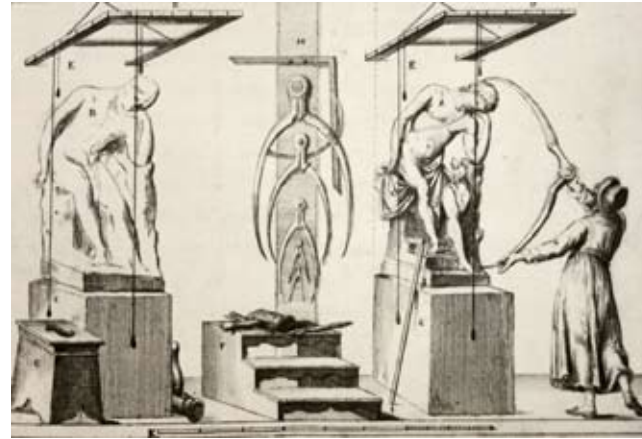
### Direct Carving:

Also referred to as *taille directe*. A less planned approach to carving in which the sculptor carves the finished sculpture without using intermediate models or maquettes. The sculptor typically works from memory, though some such as Cornelia Van A. Chapin would carve with a model in front of them. The practice gained prominence in the early 20th century and, in some respects, was seen as a return to the direct approach used in primitive art.

### The Definitore:

Invented by Leon Battista Alberti, but rarely used, the 'definitore' was a method for finding a point in space. Quite an invention if you look closely; a disc with measurements around its circumference, in the centre an 'arm', along which another ruler projects, and from it hangs a weighted 'plumb' line. And with these 'readings', albeit quite complicated, one can 'find' points in space.

His sculpture manual was written during the early Renaissance by this original Renaissance Man. Alberti was a personal friend of Donatello, Brunelleschi, and Ghiberti, and his treatise on the science and practice of sculpture during the early Renaissance show us just how much in common we have with the past masters- and how much we might be able to learn from them.





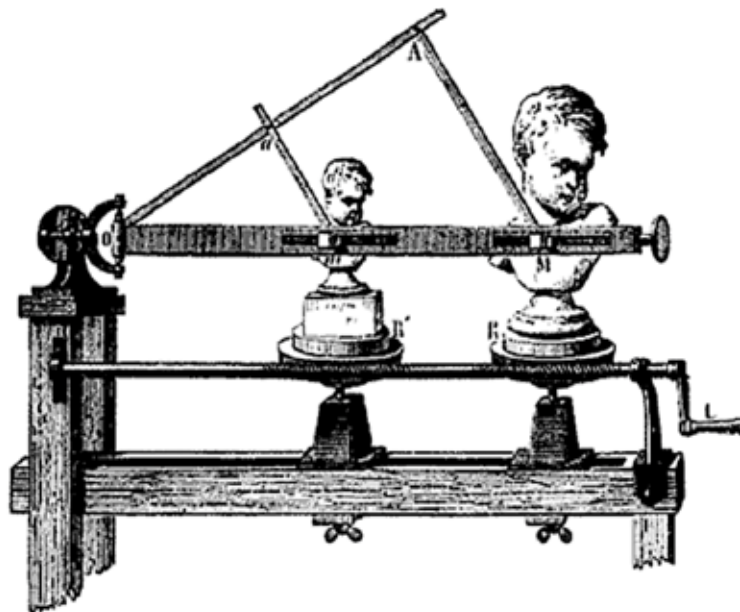


### ***The Pantograph:***

Oh, the Pantograph. What a thing! I'd only heard about this from my noodlings through the internet and talking with others. But I'd not seen one, until I was in Florence.

Jason Arkles is a sculptor teaching the traditional methods, and I'd made a date with him to visit and talk about and see the old masters' work around the city. What I didn't expect to discover was a pantograph being used, reconditioned, in his vaulted studios under the streets of Florence.

This contraption looks menacing, with its spikes and heavy boom. It is however very delicate and touch sensitive. It's quite hard to explain, again, but I'll do my best. The first point nearest to the pivot is where the model you are copying sits beneath. You manipulate the arm to a position on the figure, and this in turn moves the larger point further up the boom, giving you a proportionately enlarged positional point, on your secondary figure. You can obviously adjust the position of the two points along the boom to give you a differing enlargement ratio.



## HOW SOME THINGS NEVER REALLY CHANGE, BECAUSE THEY DON'T NEED TO: Cuturi Workshops early 1900's



### TERMINOLOGY :

**Carving:** Carving involves cutting or chipping away a shape from a mass of stone, wood, or other hard material. Carving is a subtractive process whereby material is systematically eliminated from the outside in.

**Casting:** Sculptures that are cast are made from a material that is melted down—usually a metal—that is then poured into a mold. The mold is allowed to cool, thereby hardening the metal, usually bronze. Casting is an additive process.

**Modelling:** Modelled sculptures are created when a soft or malleable material (such as clay) is built up (sometimes over an armature) and shaped to create a form. Modelling is an additive process.

**Bozzetto:** (Italian) A small terracotta sketch of a sculpture

**Maquette:** A maquette is a small scale model for a finished sculpture. It is used to visualise and test shapes and ideas without incurring the cost and effort of producing a full scale sculpture. It is the analogue of the painter's cartoon or sketch.

For commissioned sculptures, especially monumental public sculptures, a maquette may be used to show the client how the finished work will fit in situ.



## **CARRARA** : *My Pilgrimage & The Italian Way of Things*

On my first weekend off from 'pointing' Bacchus' backside, I decided to take a trip, a pilgrimage as such, up to the Carrara quarries. This is the huge Apuan mountain range that stretches parallel to the coast, where most of the top quality statuary marble comes from. The mountainous Apuan Alps chain is unique in its characteristics and develops over 60 kilometers along the areas of the Versilia, Lunigiana and Garfagnana. It is renowned for the beauty of its marble; Carrara marble is a type of white or blue-grey marble of very high quality and has a long history of being used in sculpture.

The marble has been used since the time of Ancient Rome. Huge blocks of marble were loaded onto ships and were then transported from the port of Luni to Rome. The marble was used for the decorations of the roman temples. The real breakthrough in marble quarrying came in the 16th century with the advent of explosives. During the Renaissance marble was used by Michelangelo for his sculptures, the artist came personally to select the blocks of marble for his works ie. David and the Pietà.

At the end of the 19th century, Carrara became the cradle of anarchism in Italy, in particular among the quarry workers. Many of them were ex-convicts or fugitives from justice. The work at the quarries was so tough and arduous that almost any aspirant worker with sufficient muscle and endurance was employed, regardless of their background.



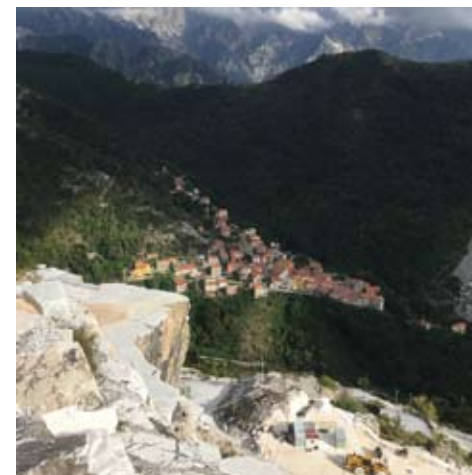


There are two types of marble quarries: closed and open. There are currently about 270 active Carrara marble quarries, and in these quarries the world's most advanced technology is used. Yet although there are hundreds of Carrara quarries, only a few yield the top quality marble so prized for its colour and texture. The best marble is 'hidden' very deep in the mount, and it is pure white and has a perfect texture. And this is where I was headed.

### **A Pilgrimage:**

A Carrara Marble Tour offered me an off road 4x4 trip in the stunning scenery of the Carrara marble basins, where some scenes of the James Bond Quantum of Solace film were shot in 2008. This tour was a unique opportunity to see stunning places usually inaccessible to most visitors and discover the world of Carrara's marble and how it is cut.

I thought It'd be simple to find where the tour started. It was all online; I had my phone charged, so off I jolly well went. A train from Pietrasanta, then a bus up to Carrara town, then another bus up to where I'd 'researched' where the tour would begin. A little township atop the mountains. A very isolated spot.







As the bus finally stopped in the square of Colonata, I leapt out. There were only a few minutes to go before the tour started. I asked around in my not-even-pigeon Italian “where is the Cave di Marmi Tour”....only to be greeted by blank faces. It was as if no-one had come there ever to go to the quarries. How odd. After twenty minutes walking around I rang the Tour Man. “Hi, where’s the tour?” “Ah, we’ve seen you walking around” “Yes, so, and...?” “We’ll ring you back” “Bbbut...” After half an hour I looked down into the valley. I could see a huddle of tiny little Land Rovers all clustered together below. That must be where the tour starts. I was hoping I’d get on the last tour of the day. I walked down the hill, and as I approached the now ‘full sized’ trucks a man called out, “ah, the English man”





Yes. That was me. A bit lost, and bit found, a bit tired and a bit frustrated, I asked where the sign was for the tour, and the man turned around and pointed to a tiny peeling sticker, stuck to a fence, over which a bush had grown. It said 'Cave di Marmi tour'. "There!" he said.

Anyway, after a short wait the excitement again mounted as we skidded and scrambled our way up the winding tracks which led us to the open quarries, and after only one breakdown we were up within the bright white marble.

The marble is cut out with 10mm spring fitted electroplated wire which is lassooed through drill holes into the existing face of the marble. The wire is fed through these holes; one from the top down, one from the face in, and the final one along the base, which then gives you two 'L's, connected through the upright drill hole. The wires are then joined in 'hoops' through driven the cutting wheel, which runs them at great speed, whipping through the marble.





## **CLASSES :** *Modelling in clay*

### **Romanelli Studios:**

Romanelli Studios is in Florence, tucked away in the original old artisan side of the city, and I was fortunate to spend part of my fellowship studying in the workshop.

It's an authentic sculpture studio where the same family have produced traditional sculpture over two centuries. The studio has a vast collection of predominantly figurative work ranging from the classical and Renaissance pieces, to neoclassical and contemporary masterpieces. Traditional and modern techniques are used, the marble sculptures being hand carved out of the finest Carrara marble. The in-house sculptor is Raffaello Romanelli, who represents the fifth generation of Romanelli sculptors and he teaches those interested in learning the traditional sculpting techniques.

I was there to improve my understanding of the Sight Size method; a naturalistic observation technique.

This method is based on the idea that the size you see the subject is the size you create by comparing your work to the model, hence the name of the method. The objective is to recreate the size of the original object and train the eye so it can eventually see the differences between the real model and the representation without using any external measuring elements.

The Sight Size is a method to give life to the work with a special sensitivity, true to life, which is especially useful in the representation of portraits and figurative works.





I started first on a copy of Michelangelo's mouth from his 'David'. This is a standard piece, a plaster cast approximately 8" square, which many students learn from due to its subtle classical form. Practising on such a small and simple thing at first seemed quite straightforward, but after a day spent on just this piece, I soon realised how much work there was to undertake. Looking from all directions there was a universe of fine line to study.

I was to have a sitter for the first week, her name was Gloria. For me this was the first time I'd had the full responsibility of a model to myself, for any length of time. I'd participated in many life modelling classes but only as part of a large group, where it's often difficult to get the time and attention you require.

It was very intense. She spoke little English, and my Italian was limited, to say the least. But I was there to observe, and learn new techniques. Raffaello was a gifted tutor, and I picked up a lot of useful tips. Predominantly my main issue was racing in, and not standing back enough to observe. I knew I was quick at work, I'd learnt to be, due the nature of my job. When you have a brief to fulfill, timings and prices to work within, you become very time-conscious. My time here with this particular portrait class was to slow things down somewhat, and enjoy the task, instead of often feeling rushed.



I went through much discomfort throughout the week, physically, artistically, socially, and emotionally. It was exhausting, but I wasn't entirely sure I knew how or why. It would become clear when I looked back on this episode. For the time being I felt responsible for Gloria's comfort and happiness. Outside of my own needs the sculptor has nothing if the model decides to get up and leave. Making sure they are comfortable and have enough stretches and



breaks, walks and coffee is equal to their time spent sat still for you to observe, like a specimen of still life.

Taking time to really see the human as well as the form was important for me. Not only the structure of the skull and vertebrae, but what makes and gives a face personality. This is what this course was all about for me. I'd carved many 'heads', but modelling a particular person, capturing a likeness, was often something that I'd found difficult. It's the greatest issue with portrait sculpture; catching more than just a glimpse of the human inside.

We had first thought that having her hair down would be a nice image to capture, but after working with it for a while I felt I wanted to see more of her face. Gloria's bone structure was ideal; a strong profile, and good cheekbones, a slender neck and sharp clavicle, all lending themselves to a great final figurative form.

I also had time the following week to copy a classical anatomical figure, based on an 18th C sculpture. Again it was using sight-size method, side by side I worked using with clay and armature next to the plaster cast model. This is a standard way of studying; often a cast is used instead of a live model, for obvious reasons. It allows the sculptor time to develop, move around, rotate and spend more invaluable hours with the form. I would occasionally measure with my tools, but only with a thumb mark, not a ruler or dividers. It was hard to rely on this source, but eventually, after a week and a half, I felt I'd found another method to add to my ever growing font of sculptural knowledge.

I was pleased thus far with my achievements, but I knew there was room for improvement and better was yet to come.



### **Maudy Brady:**

My time spent in a studio with Maudy was priceless. She is such a superb teacher of human anatomy, Head of Figurative Sculpture at Florence Academy of Art, and award winning artist in her own right. Her experience threads through the world of art restoration to TV and film, settling on teaching in more recent years.

There was a small class of 6, with 2 models, so we had the intimacy of 3 of us rotating around the sitter, with plenty of light coming through the windows of the bright hall. I realised how important it was to have the space and light to be able to stand back and observe, as the course progressed.

Unlike the previous class of sight-size technique, this was very different, and certainly one that works alongside. This method starts with a 'Lanteri' armature; a block of wood on a board, with aluminium wires pinned on, creating a head-like frame for you to build on with the clay. This is all mounted on an adjustable stand, wound up to the right height. It's so important to work at the correct height; our backs take all the stress, culminating in bad posture if you're not on top of it.

Maudy's method is to study the side profile of the model and carefully build up a 'disc' of clay, as if producing the 'silhouette'. In this case a representation showing the shape and outline of the head and neck. My model was Bjorn; a handsome Swede, with some strong and interesting features. I'd worked with quite a few female sitters in other classes, so it was a rare opportunity to have a male for a change, as they're often not so common in life modelling classes.

After 'finding' the profile, and feeling like I'd captured a good







representation of my model, the next phase was to create the 'high' points, over the surface of the disc of clay. With small amounts of clay, bit by bit, you build up tiny 'mountains' to give you first the cheekbone, then the jaw, the temporal lobe, the ears etc. until you have what looks like a strange image of an abstract head. I quite liked seeing this, it certainly made a pleasant change. Watching the structure manifest in this way really gives you the opportunity to carefully view each and every point of the face, from the front and sides at first, eventually bringing a full three dimensional quality to your work.

The idea is to not get lost. This is the key to modelling a portrait. It's a mixture of finely tuned and understood anatomical knowledge, and an overview, a softer study of the personality. There are important areas over the surface of any head, but some are key to catching the person, and not just a human form. We all know it takes years of practice, but every class, and every way in which we build on our way of working, adds to our canon of methods and techniques. I began to find this particular method one of the most useful and tangible ways to approach this task. Maudy is the most professional and capable tutor. I felt very fortunate to have been in a room with such a pro.

Bjorn began to take shape. Between tea and biscuit breaks, stretches and strolls, and even sleeps, the class was starting to produce some of the best work I had ever seen. On so many levels, from such varied abilities, with this way of working, we were all able to create a piece that truly resembled what we saw in front of us. My Bjorn is probably the first portrait I felt I'd really got right, one I was truly happy with. I went on to cast this on my return, and also fire the original.

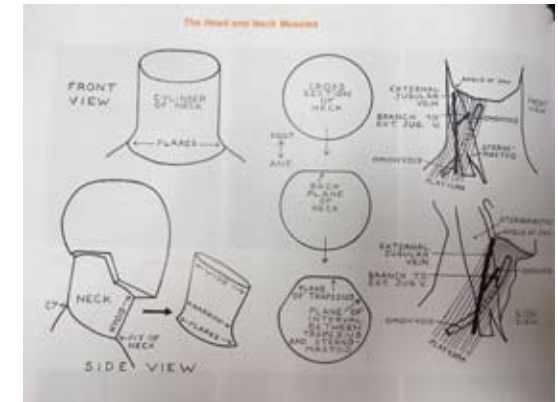
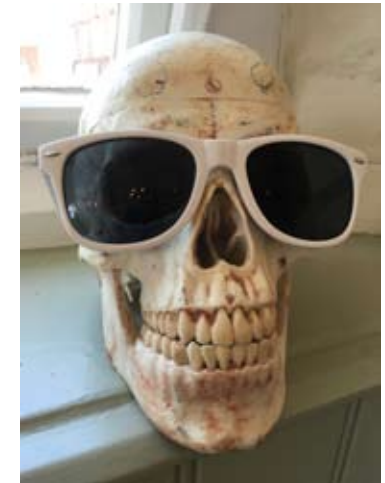
As well as just the practical classes there were sessions on the

detailed study of anatomy. Understanding the human skull, the bones and their structure, the tendons and muscles, all add to the thorough knowledge needed to produce work that looks realistic, and correct.

Again Maudy displayed her ability to translate this information to us in a way that was applicable and made sense. We weren't biology students, so it wasn't too heavy, our interest coming from an overview, one where we could grasp which muscle is attached to what. The shapes and density, the tension and the softness; things the sculptor needs to understand, which will be seen to be well studied and understood in their final piece of work.

I love the idea now that I can see why one thing works and why some don't make sense. We are programmed to understand the human forms, it's in us, it's just a matter of being able to translate that in three dimensions. Taking time to really correctly place and sculpt the clay with this added knowledge began to click with me, and I think in terms of importance this time was possibly the most useful. How to look, how to stand, where to stand, what light works, and all the tips and methods gave me a great 'bag of tricks' to go away with, and hopefully produce some even more convincing heads and limbs for repairing statues.

It was also my happiest time; working in a team, sharing ideas and tea and biscuits is always far more preferable to endless days standing alone in the cold, something of which I am very familiar. It has given me a window into a world that I'd only really read about before, seen pictures, and heard others talking about. I certainly want and need to do more of this, to better understand the infinite world of the human form.







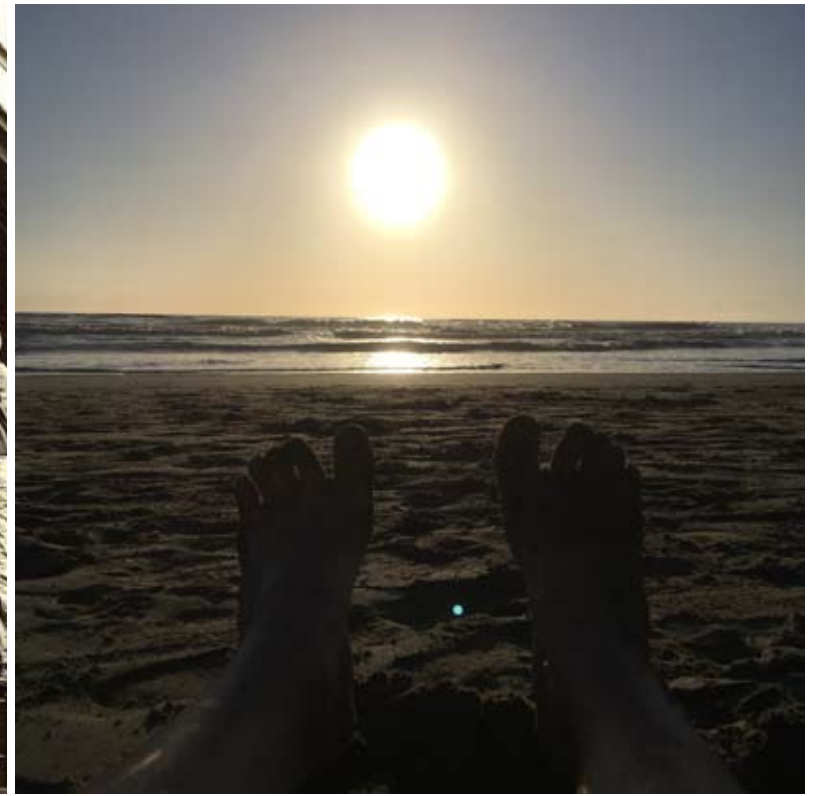
## TEACHING & SHARING :

My time this year has given me the opportunity to share my skills with my colleagues and students. During the summer break in my Fellowship I spent a day with students from Frome college, inspiring them to take up careers in the Arts. I showed them clay modelling techniques and the basics for stone carving. I shared my experience from my classes in Florence in May and we mused on the life of the artist, and the roles which it takes and its uses in the creative industries, especially stone conservation. Some of the students and tutors had a go at carving, and each created a simple head in clay.

I was Head Sculptor of three of the Nine Muses, statues from Greek mythology, for Stowe school in Buckinghamshire. One of the students, Isaac, was very interested in my work, and came to spend a week with me, applying modelling techniques, and learning about simple armatures and plaster casting. Remodelling fingers, hands and arms, and repositioning drapery. He learnt a lot putting this into practice, and it was useful for him to see how a creative eye can be applied to real work.

I have been invited back to the college to talk more next year.





...and in the end, we make more dust.

**A BIG THANK YOU :**

I'd like to thank everyone at the WCMT and The British Council for this golden opportunity to find out more about the wonderful world of stone carving and sculpture in Italy, to discover some of the things I knew existed but had never had the chance to see, and to unearth these hidden gems.

Jem Hobbs