

## simple beauty with carol crawford

There's something profound about the work of artist Carol Crawford, whose organic, sculptural forms can often feel both otherworldly and innately grounded at the same time. Working with bronze, alabaster and plaster Carol cuts, shapes and refines each piece intuitively without preconceptions of the final form the work will take. A longtime friend of bassike, Carol created a work that she felt resonated with her relationship to our brand. We visited Carol in her Sydney based studio to talk about the work, titled #1960, her creative practice and how she spends her time outside of the studio.

Hi Carol, could you tell us about the work you created for the bassike 10<sup>th</sup> birthday and how you feel it reflects the brand?

#1960 was created with my usual aesthetic philosophy – beauty in simplicity, enhancing the flaw that was inherent in the stone, and of course the 'O' that I have carved out of the centre of the stone has a connection with the bassike logo.

The sculpture is carved out of Italian bardiglio alabaster. My process is totally organic, I do not decide the final form of the sculpture before I start carving in to it. It becomes a conversation between me, and the individual piece of stone – each of my sculptures has their own personality. As Leonard Cohen says – 'There is a crack in everything, that's how the light gets in'. I think this aesthetic also runs true for bassike.

### **When did you first start practicing sculpture?**

Close to 14 years ago. I started attending the Tom Bass Sculpture School and Tom Bass (a pre-eminent Australian public sculptor) was my teacher and mentor. He taught in a very traditional way – his studio was set up as an atelier studio, with students and professional artists working side by side. I modeled in clay, direct plaster, undertook life studies and learnt to cast and mould sculptures. It was student driven, no curriculum. I studied with Tom for 8 years, until his death, at the age of 93 in 2010. His influence still guides my practice today. I am still very much involved with the Tom Bass Sculpture Studio School in Erskineville, which is still a thriving sculpture school, having been on the Board of the school for the past 8 years.

### **Can you tell us a little bit about your creative process? How do you conceptualise each piece?**

I personally choose each piece of stone I sculpt. The rough stone (normally alabaster) has to have some attraction for me. When buying the stone, I climb

over great piles of rock to get to the one that appeals to me. I normally buy the stone in the USA and then ship it back to Australia. I purposely choose rough stones that have flaws in them, because I see beauty in imperfection. I have a very large full 'egg' of alabaster in my studio that weighs close to 500kgs – I was incredibly attracted to this stone, and it is a very long work in progress – her name is Rachel. She may take me 2 years to finish. I do not make maquettes (small versions of the stone sculptures), I do not do drawings - my process is very organic, and full of surprises for me, and for the audience that view my sculptures. All of my sculptures are female, and each has their own personality.

### **How long does it generally take from start to finish to create a work?**

This varies, some sculptures can take up to 10 months whilst others (smaller pieces) can take a month or two. Carving stone is a very slow process, especially the way I do it. Only using an air tool to chip out the big stuff, and then I use hand files and hand polishing with sand papers to finish the piece. I often leave a piece almost complete for a few weeks or months, until I am completely satisfied with the final form. The shortest time would be about 6 weeks, and the longest, well, that would be Rachel, and she may take me a couple of years to complete. I do not like to put deadlines to finish sculptures because they require time to evolve their own individual personalities. Some sculptures mature quickly, others more slowly – just as in life.

Has there been anyone in particular that has influenced your practice?

Definitely Tom Bass was a very strong influence, not only in my practice but also influencing my philosophy. Barbara Hepworth, a contemporary of Henry Moore, has also been a strong influence on my sculpture. This year I visited the Barbara Hepworth Museum in St Ives, Cornwall, which I found absolutely fascinating. The museum is in her home, the place where she also worked and actually died in an accident. It had an incredible aura about the place.

Sculpting by nature is a very sensory pursuit, can you tell us a little bit about the experience of creating something with your hands?

Absolutely correct, sculpture is so sensory. I use touch a lot in my practice because your hands often tell you things your eyes cannot. Creating something with my hands, like so many other artists, gives me immense pleasure. When I am carving the stone, time stops, my mind is fully engaged with what I am doing, even though my body may be aching because of the physical exertion required in my practice. I could liken it to a positive addiction, incredibly pleasurable and rewarding.

carol crawford in her surry hills studio, sydney photographed by [charles dennington](#) wearing [bassike compact cotton bib front shirt](#) and [pique oversized short](#)  
view more of carol's work at [carolcrawfordsculpture.net](#) or on instagram [@carolinkasculpt](#)  
#1960 artwork photographed by [toby peet](#)