



**Lee Hutt, FNSS
Sculptor Profile**

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In this issue, we speak with Lee Hutt, FNSS. A Massachusetts resident, Hutt brings an interesting perspective to her work with her background as a trained therapist. Hutt is an award-winning sculptor and has earned several honors from the Catharine Lorillard Wolfe Art Club, Pen and Brush Club, Audubon Artists, and National Sculpture Society. She exhibits widely in group exhibitions and has had solo shows at the Wistariahurst Museum, in Holyoke, Massachusetts and the Pen and Brush Club in New York City. Hutt takes the time to operate a not-for-profit art organization, "Go Figure Sculpture Studios," to encourage and spread the knowledge of figurative art and sculpture in the community. Hutt became a Fellow of National Sculpture Society in 2008 and presently serves on the NSS Board.

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Michael K. Speaker grew up in Portland, Oregon in a musical family. He received his undergraduate degree from the University of Oregon and an MFA in painting from the University of Colorado in Boulder. He moved to Los Angeles, where he worked in the movie business as a scenic artist and as a special effects sculptor and model maker. Since the mid-80s, Speaker has been creating his own sculpture & maintains a sculpture studio in the lower Hudson River Valley of NY.

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Cover Image
Abstracted
Lee Hutt, FNSS
Hydrocal - Life-size

Intimate Moment
Lee Hutt, FNSS
Bronze - 21" tall

Lee Hutt

Sculptor Profile

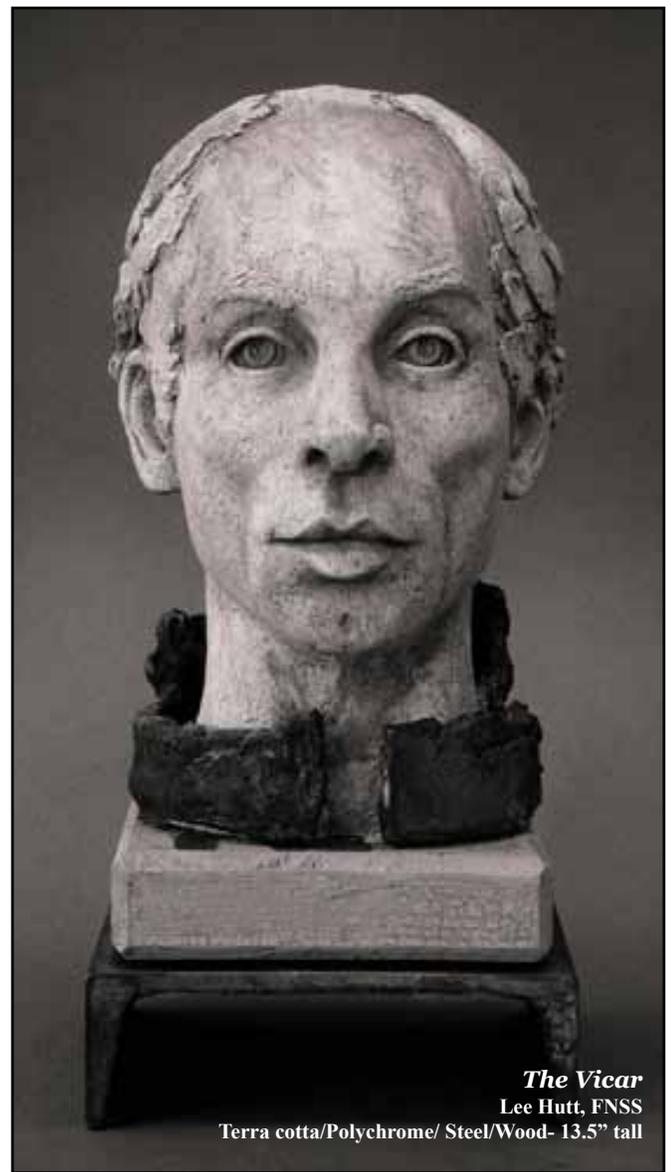
Professionally, you began your career as a therapist. How is it you turned to sculpture?

At the time I entered college, art wasn't something anyone in my world, especially a woman, chose to do as a career. As involved as I was with art, I had to earn a living and it was more likely for a woman to become a teacher, nurse, or social worker. It was important for me to be successful, and to make a contribution to society, and to be respected. I went to Columbia and studied psychology. I wanted to become the next Sigmund Freud.

Eventually, I graduated, married, and moved to Massachusetts. I became the first therapist at Mount Holyoke College and started their counseling program. After 6 years, I went back to school at the Ackerman Institute for Family Therapy and became a family therapist. I had a private practice and it was heady stuff - 5 people in a room at odds with each other, in pain, and in trouble. Therapy takes a lot of concentration and patience. Later I would learn that those are two traits sculptors need to be successful working artists.

I really loved being a therapist, but my desire to make art wouldn't go away. I entered Smith College as an art major in a special program for "uncommon scholars." My focus in art was sculpture, but those courses filled with traditional undergraduates and I couldn't get into the classes. I left and I designed a one-person, non degree graduate school program. I took every workshop and read every book by every sculptor I ever admired.

Early on, NSS was my yard stick. When my first piece was accepted in an NSS exhibition, my thought was "I must be on the right track." It gave me the courage to continue showing my work and I eventually stopped doing therapy, closed my office, and opened my studio. I became a working sculptor and I haven't looked back since.



The Vicar
Lee Hutt, FNSS
Terra cotta/Polychrome/ Steel/Wood- 13.5" tall



The August Rabbit
Lee Hutt, FNSS
Painted Concrete & Steel - 11.5" tall

How did your background as a therapist help you develop as a sculptor?

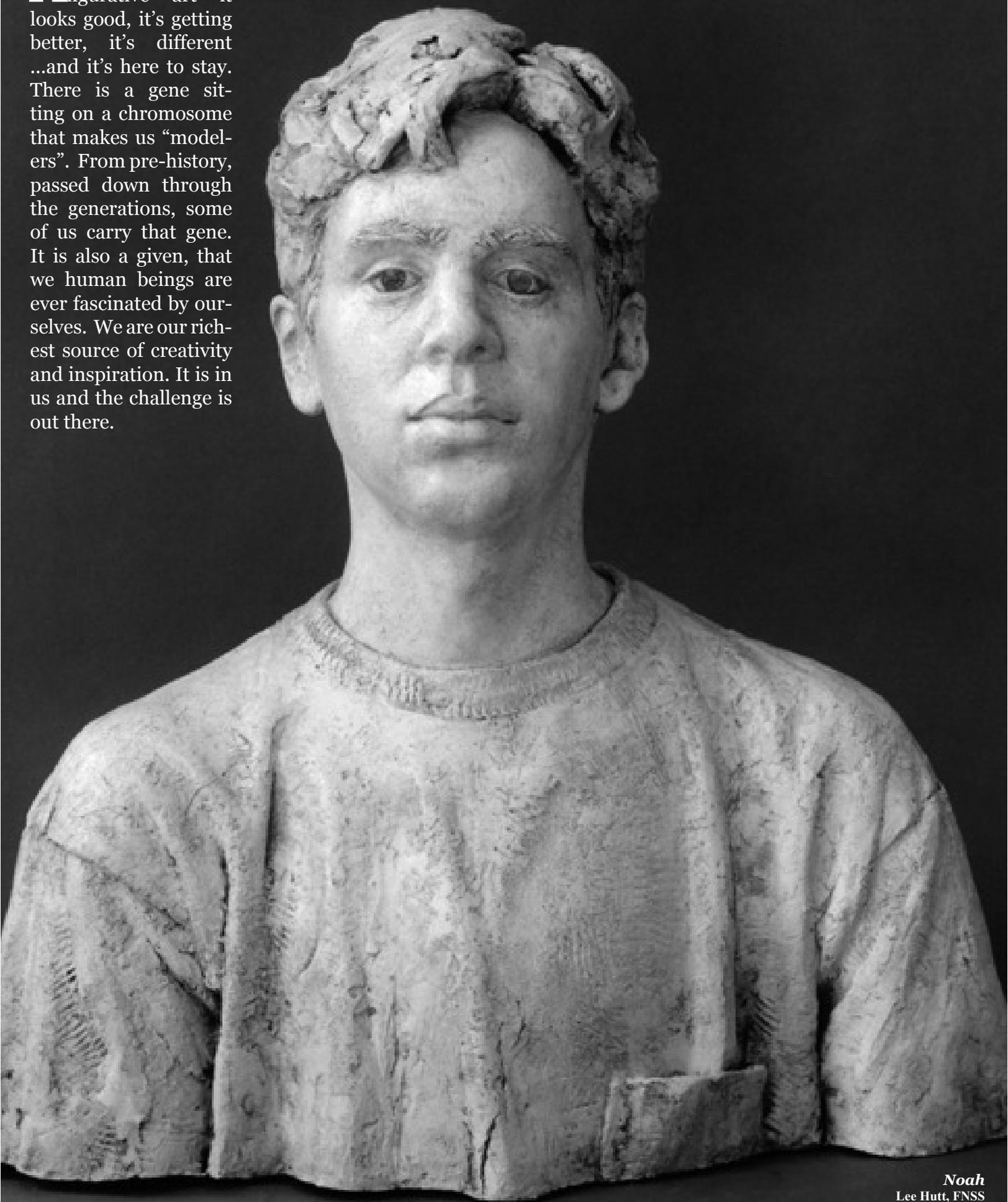
I do figures, animals, abstracts, and portraits. Portraits are my strength. I read faces as a sculptor with the knowledge of a therapist. It is said that the artist is "in" every work of art she produces, but I have the ability to know who the sitter is, apart from me, and I think that comes through at the end. I am "in" the piece just as when I did therapy...I dig for the dignity and the strength of the sitter.

I don't do many commissions. I started by sculpting anyone who would sit for at least three hours, but no more than two years. I sculpt the people in my life, any interesting person with good bone structure.

What is your process?

I don't really know how I begin or how I get to where it ends except that I work on the eyes very early on. My husband is an ophthalmologist and in his evening critiques he makes sure I don't make anyone cock-eyed. When the work is going well and I get a "look" in the eye that relates to a thought, the dialogue with the clay continues and it becomes intimate and interesting and the work feels almost complete.

As for the future of figurative art it looks good, it's getting better, it's different ...and it's here to stay. There is a gene sitting on a chromosome that makes us "modelers". From pre-history, passed down through the generations, some of us carry that gene. It is also a given, that we human beings are ever fascinated by ourselves. We are our richest source of creativity and inspiration. It is in us and the challenge is out there.



Noah
Lee Hutt, FNSS
Hydrocal/Polychrome - Life-size



The humor in my work comes from my way of thinking which is in Jules Feiffer cartoon strips. You laugh because it is funny, and it is funny because it is true. I don't ever plan the content. The content is often conceptualized after the piece is completed. When people ask me what the piece is about, I sort of make it up...after the fact.

The Walking Man

Lee Hutt, FNSS

Bronze - 13.5" tall



Lee Hutt sculpting from the model in her studio.
Photo credit: Ben Barnhart

What do you hope the viewer sees in your finished work?

For me, the best compliment is when someone says the piece, the subject, looks familiar. Then I know I captured a “type” by searching for that single likeness. F. Scott Fitzgerald said “write about an individual and you will wind up with a type . . . write about a type and you wind up with nothing...”

Where do you see your art heading in the next five years?

I suppose more heads. I just completed a series of seven of one sitter; four of another. They seem to be coming in multiples. Iterations of the same subject, each done from life, unique and capturing varied aspects of the same person. They are turned into different materials...terra cotta, plaster, cement, bronze and more recently carbon steel.

I see more steel in the next five years. There is something about rust . . .the color, the texture, the suggestion of age and decay and strength and endurance, that has me in its grip.

I see more of the mix of photography with sculpture. Photographing my own work and manipulating the photo to reveal aspects of the sculpture the viewer may not see, has always interested me. Showing them together, as I do in my gallery, can be both enlightening and beautiful.

Tell us about the mentoring program for artists you developed.

“Go Figure Sculpture Studios” was created as a not-for-profit entity. We are located in the city of Holyoke, Massachusetts, in an old paper mill that has been converted to artist studios. Ours is a 1,000 sq. ft., unobstructed, fully equipped space, reserved for sculpting and drawing from the live model.

I was motivated by the desire to be able to work with other sculptors, if not in a colony, at least as a collective and I realized how difficult it is for a sculptor to afford working with a live model on their own. We make it easy to work from life on a regular and affordable basis. We have grown by word of mouth. While there is no formal teaching, a beginner can learn anything they need to learn about the process or the art part. There is always someone around with experience or, if asked for, an opinion...ready to give it away.

There is a lot of ancillary work associated with running any group. Without my friend and fellow sculptor, Esthela Bergeron, we would not have lasted these five years. Esthela manages the scheduling and hiring of the models, pays the bills, collects the fees and keeps the books and she writes grant proposals that are accepted.

We have all grown as artists from consistent practice, from our interactions, our competitiveness and our support of one another. Three of our members were juried into an NSS annual show from work done in “Go Figure.” “Go Figure” produced a gold medalist, and one recently elected NSS member, and others who are acknowledged in other professional venues.

What projects are you working on now?

I am one of a number of artists invited to do site specific works inspired by the Wistariahurst Museum in Holyoke. This mansion, once home to the Skinner Family of Skinner Silks and Satins is on the National Register of Historic Places. The industry is gone; the Skinners are gone. The mansion and its gardens are being restored and aspects of both are being embellished.

I am adding a sculpture to the old stately, granite, garden bench...a koi fish above the extinct koi pond and three corten steel pillars, mimicking the trees, with cut outs that frame parts of the 1874 architecture of the building.



Sasha
Lee Hutt, FNSS
Bronze - Life-size