

SculptureNews

A publication of the National Sculpture Society



Sculptor Profile
Richard Becker, NSS

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Los Angeles native, Richard Becker, discovered his love for sculpture after a job assignment took him to Spain in the mid-90s. An engineer by trade (even holding a few patents), Becker was so inspired by the European art and architecture that he immediately embarked on an art education, studying sculpture at the Escola d'Art Barcelona, and at the Vaugel Studios and the Los Angeles Art Academy upon his return to California. In the two decades since, Becker has established a career for himself in sculpture and his works are included in public and private collections in the United States and Europe including Twentieth Century Fox, Hewlett Packard Corporation, The Walt Disney Company, Gracie Films and The University of the West of England. These days, Becker is primarily focused on commissions. His recent works include *Liberation*, the 15' *POW Veterans Monument* for US National Cemetery, San Diego; portraits for the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences (Emmys) Hall of Fame, Hollywood; and an *Invitation to Faith* for Good Samaritan Foundation, Dayton, Ohio. Becker won the Edward Fenno-Hoffman Prize for young sculptors from NSS in 2003 and in 2010 became an Elected Member of National Sculpture Society.

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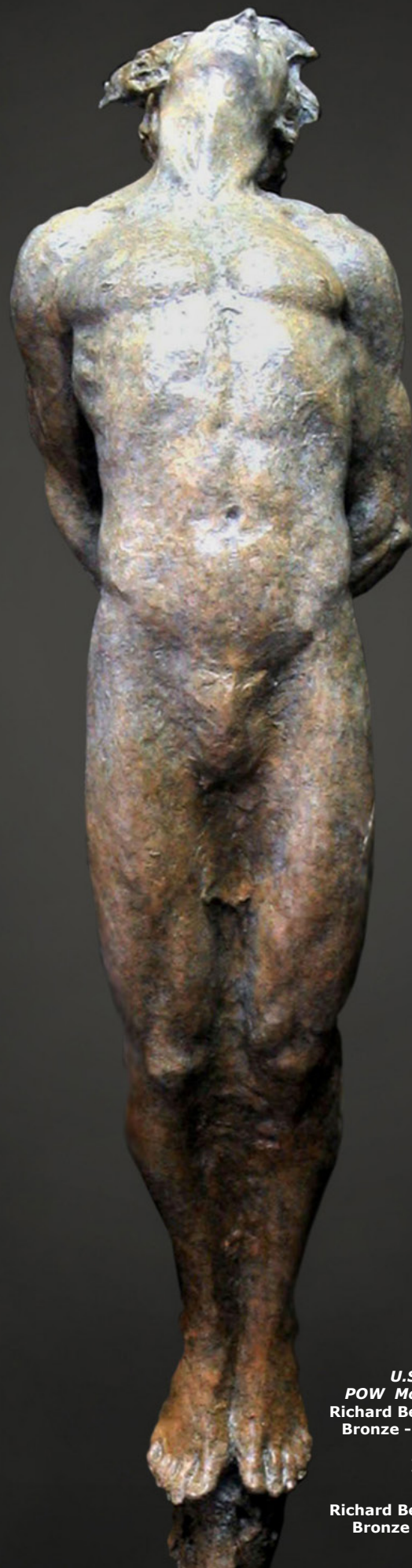
Pages 10-11: Associate Profile: *Kristine Taylor*

Kristine Taylor grew up in Portola Valley, California and resides in the very home where she was raised. Taylor received a B.A. in Fine Art from Stanford University and for much of her career worked in scale modeling and graphic design. In 2007, she turned her attention to sculpture and has since made her mark in the art world 3-dimensionally. In the six years since, Taylor has exhibited extensively at such venues as the Hiram Blauvelt Art Museum (Oradell, NJ); Dennon Museum (Traverse City, MI); Woodson Art Museum (Wausau, WI) and the Wildlife Experience (Parker, CO). In 2012, Taylor's *Preening Swan* won first place at the "Animals: Facts, Fairy Tales & Fantasy" at the Pacific Art League (Palo Alto, CA); and *The Lioness* was included in the "52nd Annual Exhibition of the Society of Animal Artist's Art and the Animal." *Preening Swan* is currently on view as part of NSS's 80th Annual Awards Exhibition at Brookgreen Gardens, South Carolina. Her first solo exhibition is on view at Gallery House in Palo Alto, California from August 27 - September 21.

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Cover:
*U.S. National
POW Monument*
Richard Becker, NSS
Bronze - 180" high

This Page:
Towers
Richard Becker, NSS
Bronze - 27" high

RICHARD BECKER

Sculptor Profile

You pursued a master's degree in engineering before beginning a career in sculpture. What was the impetus?

I was always very good in math and science; I loved building things, I raced motocross, I was on auto race crews. This naturally led to engineering and eventually a career designing and managing global technology projects. I did love to draw as a child, and my oldest brother is a graphic artist, but I never really considered art as a career. In fact I tested out of all my college general ed. art classes, considering them a waste of precious "real" learning time. That was pretty narrow thinking, but that was then.

Tell us about your artistic calling.

My wife Jennie and I lived in Barcelona from '94 thru '97 on a job assignment. I fell in love with all the surrounding art and architecture. It was so different from California.

One day we were in ceramic plate store in the town of La Bisbal, near the French border. A bag of clay was propping open the door. On a whim I asked the merchant if he'd sell it. It cost 500 pesetas (about \$5.00). A few weeks later I sat on our balcony overlooking Montserrat and modeled a crude little head. It was a terrible head, but at that moment I had the cliché, spine-tingling experience – my artistic re-awakening. I remember it vividly. It was Jan 1996. I just became enthralled, driven and obsessed with sculpting from that moment.

From Spain, we travelled all over Europe and parts of Asia, visiting many of the world's great museums – The Hermitage in Russia, The British Museum in London and Topkapi Palace in Istanbul. Egypt was absolutely amazing. Italy was incredible: Rome, Florence, Venice, Pompeii... A visit to Vigeland Park in Oslo was an unforgettable experience.

Do you find strong similarities in the study/application of engineering and sculpture?

Sure, lots. They are both about creating something new by combining, trial and error, design and experimentation. I find that my science background helps on many levels. Understanding light and color, 3-dimensional geometry, structure and many of the practical aspects of sculpture and construction processes is very useful. I enjoy reading technical papers on the psychology of human perception, composition, facial recognition, etc. I know that many artists over time have been quite methodical and scientific in their quest to create their art.

On the flip side, when I am sculpting, I have to quiet my dominant left brain, my technical mind, to get in the zone. I have ruined more than one piece sculpting when my head was not right.

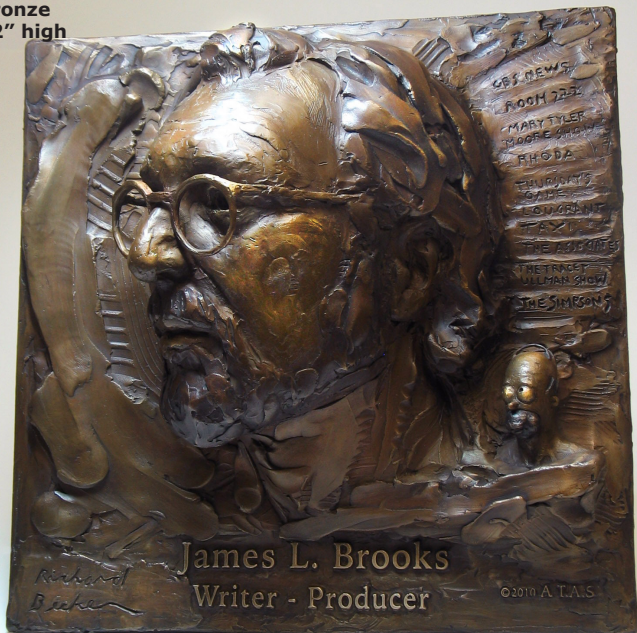
What are the benefits of following a passion after a career in something else? Do you feel you have a stronger appreciation for sculpture?

I do think my art is stronger for having an alternate first career. You never really know where another path would have led -- if I had become an artist earlier -- but having a challenging, global day-job gave me amazing opportunities to travel, educate myself (including the MS from Stanford), grow as a person and work with some of the most brilliant people and artists in the world. In the last few years in technology, as I became "more" artist, and as my hearing impairment progressed, I began managing visual designers



Pioneers
Richard Becker, NSS
Bronze
84" high

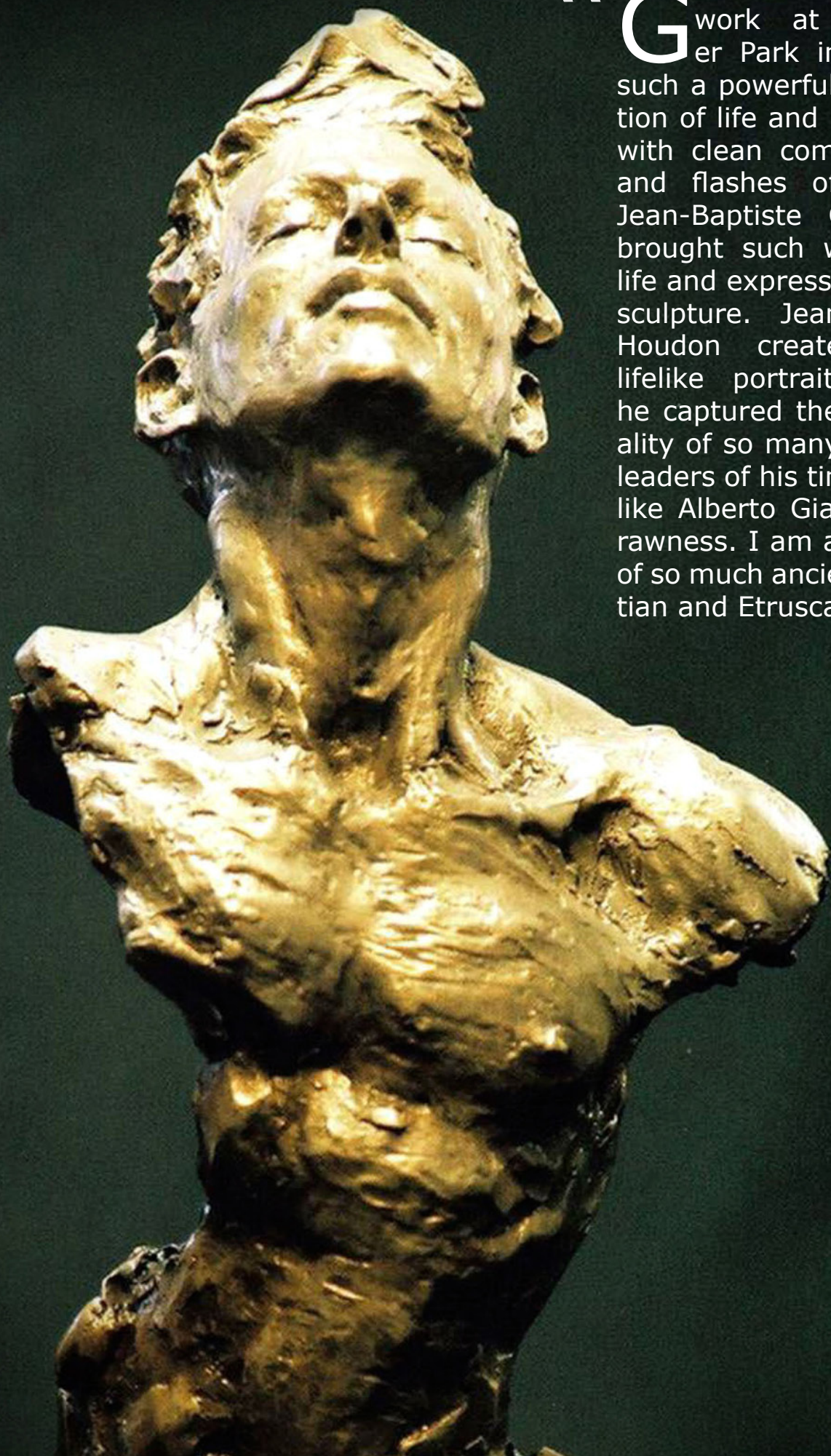
James L. Brooks (c) A.T.A.S used with permission
Richard Becker, NSS
Bronze
12" high





“I believe that good figurative art will continue to rise in prominence within the contemporary art market. There is such a resurgence of realism with so much new, captivating, vibrant work being created. With the increasing availability of scanning and 3-d figurative models, more and more conceptual artists will add figures to their works because it will be so easy. //

Queen of the Sea
Richard Becker, NSS
Bronze
10" high



“Gustav Vigeland’s work at Frogner Park in Oslo is such a powerful celebration of life and humanity with clean compositions and flashes of humor. Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux brought such wonderful life and expression to his sculpture. Jean-Antoine Houdon created such lifelike portraiture and he captured the personality of so many thought leaders of his time. I just like Alberto Giacometti’s rawness. I am also a fan of so much ancient Egyptian and Etruscan art.”

Relax
Richard Becker, NSS
Bronze
14" high

Invitation To Faith
Richard Becker, NSS
Bronze
102" high



and had technical collaborations with art-related institutions like the British Museum, The National Gallery of London, Tate Modern, The Getty Conservation Institute and a special project with British Pop Artist Richard Hamilton. I learned a lot from all these experiences and I think that I am stronger because of it. And I was able to learn and create my early art freely, without the concern of a paycheck.

You've mentioned your hearing impairment. Can you tell us a bit about that and how it plays in your art.

I started losing my hearing in college and it has been a slow, continuous progression. I am now considered severely impaired, so I rely mostly on my other senses for my view of the world, especially my visual sense. Out of necessity, to interpret the simplest interaction, I am intently studying body language, reading lips, assessing facial expression and factoring all this into the surrounding context. I believe that this has made me a keen observer of people that it is reflected in my art.

The great news is that I intend to get a cochlear implant this year. These have brought many people back to near-normal hearing. I am very excited to see how my life and art evolves.

How did you become the sculptor for the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences Hall of Fame?

Some of the folks who produce the Emmys saw some of my work at a foundry in Los Angeles. I just got a call asking if I was interested in creating a couple sculptures for their Hall of Fame fountain (*James L. Brooks* and *Charles Chaplin*). Since then, I have been commissioned to sculpt (a new version) of *Mary Tyler Moore*, *Vivian Vance* (Ethel of *I Love Lucy*) and now I am working on *Ron Howard's* bust. It is demanding portraiture work since these subjects are so recognizable, but I love working with the Emmys and the Hollywood experience is fun.

Any advice to young sculptors just beginning their careers?

1. Learn from your favorite artists, past and present. Take workshops from artists you admire.
2. Set clear life goals and re-write them daily. Visualize your success and take consistent actions toward that future.
3. Learn to control your brain so you sculpt what you really see and feel. Sculpt the contours and the forms you see, not your mind's shorthand symbol for each body part.
4. Use detail wisely, only when it matters. Just because you can, doesn't mean you should.
5. Stop before you think you should, while it is alive and fresh.
6. Put down your phone and get into the studio.

Peter Farrell
Richard Becker, NSS
Stainless Steel and Azurite
18" high

