



Eugene Daub, FNSS  
Sculptor Profile



# Eugene Daub

## Sculptor Profile

### How did you get started in sculpture?

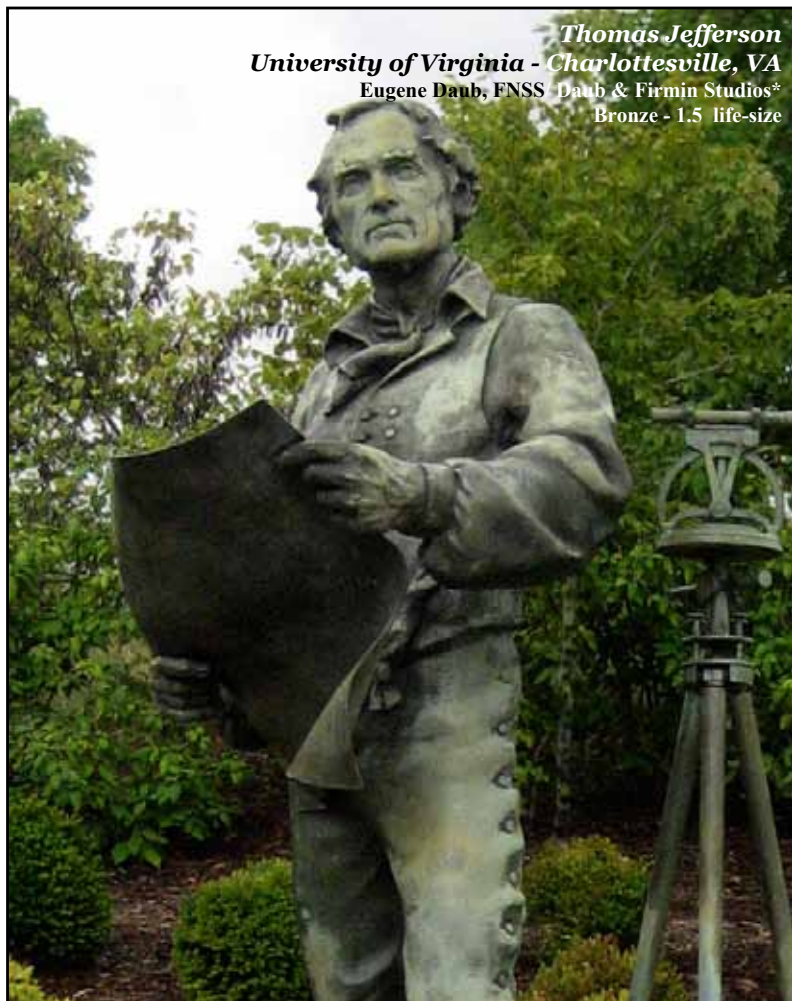
Sculpture was not my first career; I was an Art Director in the Era of "Mad Men." After 10 years I bailed, and decided to pursue my dream of making sculpture as a profession. I knew it had to be a profession and not just an avocation because it had to be full time and support my family. And that was fine, because I somehow knew sculpture was my destiny. How do you know a thing like that? I just did. There was an awakening that took place early in the journey, that my love for graphic design and its root in the picture plane, merged into my obsession for sculpture, in the form of relief sculpture. I had found a hybrid that offered the best of two worlds.

There were times that I regretted that first ten years in graphics, wished that I could have started earlier, thought that I had wasted precious time in the wrong direction. But as the years went on, I came to realize that my ability to render sketches of my ideas was purely a skill that I had developed in my years as a graphic artist.

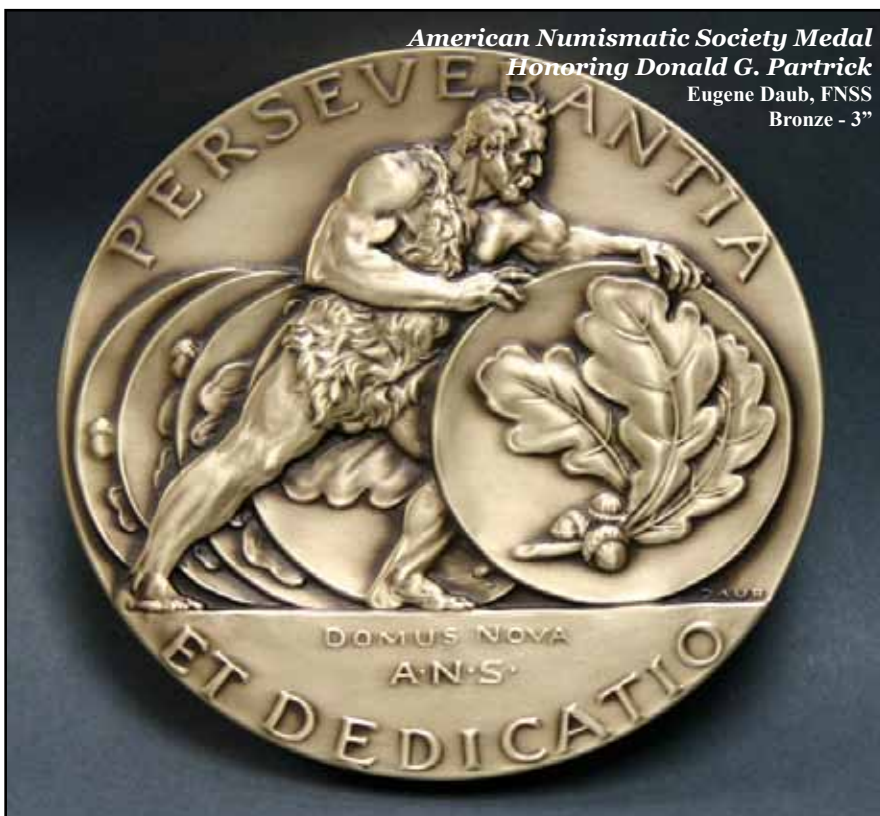
### You're the president of AMSA, The American Medallic Sculpture Association. How did you become so involved in medals?

My first real job in sculpture was at the Franklin Mint back in the late 70's. It was also my first experience in relief sculpture. I instantly loved it. I made lifelong friendships there, several that are NSS Fellows.

In the early 80's, sculptors Carter Jones and Gary Erickson founded AMSA with the help of Bob Weinman and Alan Stahl. I was one of the early members. The mission of AMSA was to start a medallic renaissance before the art form drifted into obscurity. About 6 years ago I joined the board. I, like so many others, had enjoyed the benefits, it was time to pitch in and do something. We just had a wonderful NSS and AMSA Symposium at Brookgreen Gardens and we're very grateful to Brookgreen and NSS for helping us make that a reality.



Thomas Jefferson  
University of Virginia - Charlottesville, VA  
Eugene Daub, FNSS Daub & Firmin Studios\*  
Bronze - 1.5 life-size



American Numismatic Society Medal  
Honoring Donald G. Partrick  
Eugene Daub, FNSS  
Bronze - 3"

### Have you seen a renewed interest in medallic work?

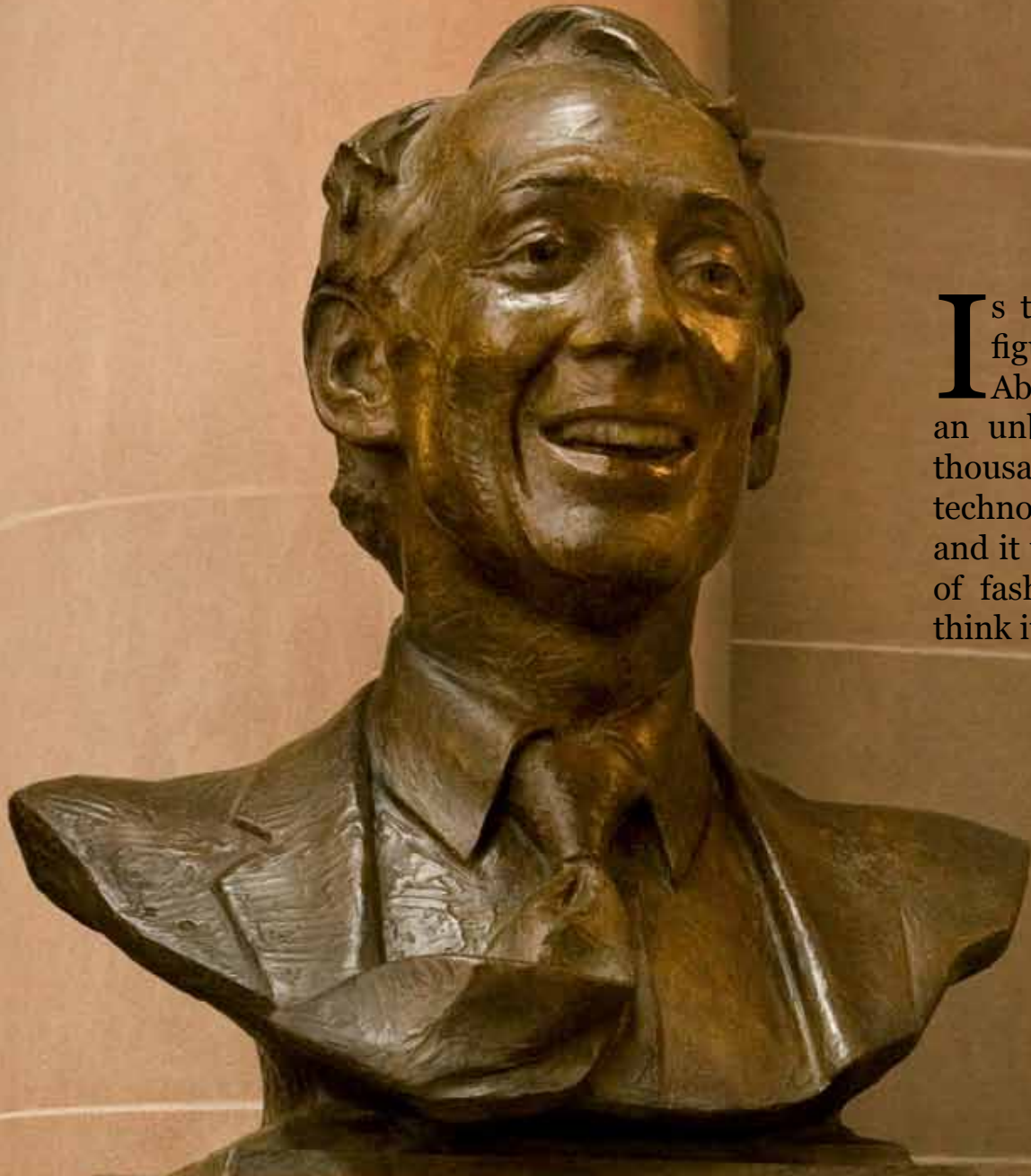
I was very impressed with the turnout at this year's symposium. If we continue to have interesting and educational venues, a renewed interest will follow. I believe that AMSA and the NSS will benefit from building bridges between our organizations and others, like the ANS (American Numismatic Society) and the ANA (American Numismatic Association). Being part of AMSA provides members with a path to participate in major museum shows in the USA and in Europe.

### Please tell us about your commission work.

There has always been two components of my work, the public and private commissions, and the work that's very personal. In recent years the commissions have taken the lion's share of the two. Hopefully in the next few years that pattern will reverse.

For many years I was quite satisfied with one or two public commissions a year. I would balance that with a mix of portraits, personal and experimental sculpture, a few medallic jobs, and some teaching.





Is there a future for figurative sculpture? Absolutely! There's an unbroken chain for thousands of years. The technology will change, and it will go in and out of fashion, but I don't think it's going away.


HARVEY MILK



*Harvey Milk*  
San Francisco City Hall  
Eugene Daub, FNSS/Daub & Firmin Studios  
Bronze - 1.5 life-size



*Saint Matthew*  
*Holy Cross Cemetery - San Diego, CA*  
Eugene Daub, FNSS  
Bronze - 16"



There are so many artists I admire from so many eras. Two of my favorite sculptors worked at the turn of the century: J. V. Myslbek and Paul Troubetzkoy. I also love the Gilded Age masters, as well as Rauschenberg, Marisol, Marini, Mansu and Messina.



**Sacagawea**  
**Lewis & Clark Monument**  
**Kansas City, MO**  
Eugene Daub, FNSS  
Bronze - Twice life-size  
Photo Credit:  
Roger Anderson



In the late 90s, I began collaborating with artists. First with Louis Quaintance on two large commissions: the USS San Diego Memorial in San Diego and the Japanese-American monuments in San Francisco, San Jose and Los Angeles.

Early in the 2000's, my wife, Anne Olsen, and I began to collaborate and won a few great commissions. We come from a different aesthetic. She is an amazing artist. If an eye could have 'perfect pitch,' she's got it! Anne pushes me to think out of the box. Hell, sometimes she throws the whole box out!

Seven years ago I teamed up with Rob Firmin. Working with Rob is like the equation where  $1 + 1 = 6$ . He is armed with an MBA and a PhD in Demography. He also has an encyclopedic knowledge of world history, astronomy, and could probably pass a Bar examination. Oh yes, and he has a passion for sculpture. So he learns from me; I learn from him.

As a team we're usually working on 4 to 6 jobs simultaneously. Because Rob is so good at the writing, research, legal, and engineering, it frees me up to focus more time on sculpture. We both work on the sculpture at various stages of completion. He coordinates the day-to-day job management. I manage the sculpture. We work on the concept together, and then I'll do a comprehensive maquette. Rob usually coordinates and builds the site model. Since we joined forces, we've won 16 public commissions and completed 12. Two of the works shown here were Daub and Firmin projects: Rob did the theodolite to the right of *Jefferson* and he also designed and engineered the granite pedestal for *Harvey Milk*. We're a good combination; however his progress in sculpture is going much faster than my progress in business and the rest of it.

### **How do you transition from doing an over life-size monument to a palm-sized medal?**

The whole sculpture process starts small, from the sketches to the maquettes. All the major decisions are made at the diminutive size and the finishing and refinements are made at the enlarged size. Oversized work always seems to get more attention, many times undeservedly so. It's quite empowering to work at a heroic scale, but I really embrace the opportunities that both large and small offer. With a large piece you can really romance the surface; with a small work you really need to simplify. I like being forced to abbreviate.

The biggest difference is that small things, like medals, are frequently done large (9" to 12") and then reduced to a third of that or less. It's just the opposite of making a maquette and enlarging it. It's all relative.

### **You are on the NSS Board. What do you hope to achieve during your term?**

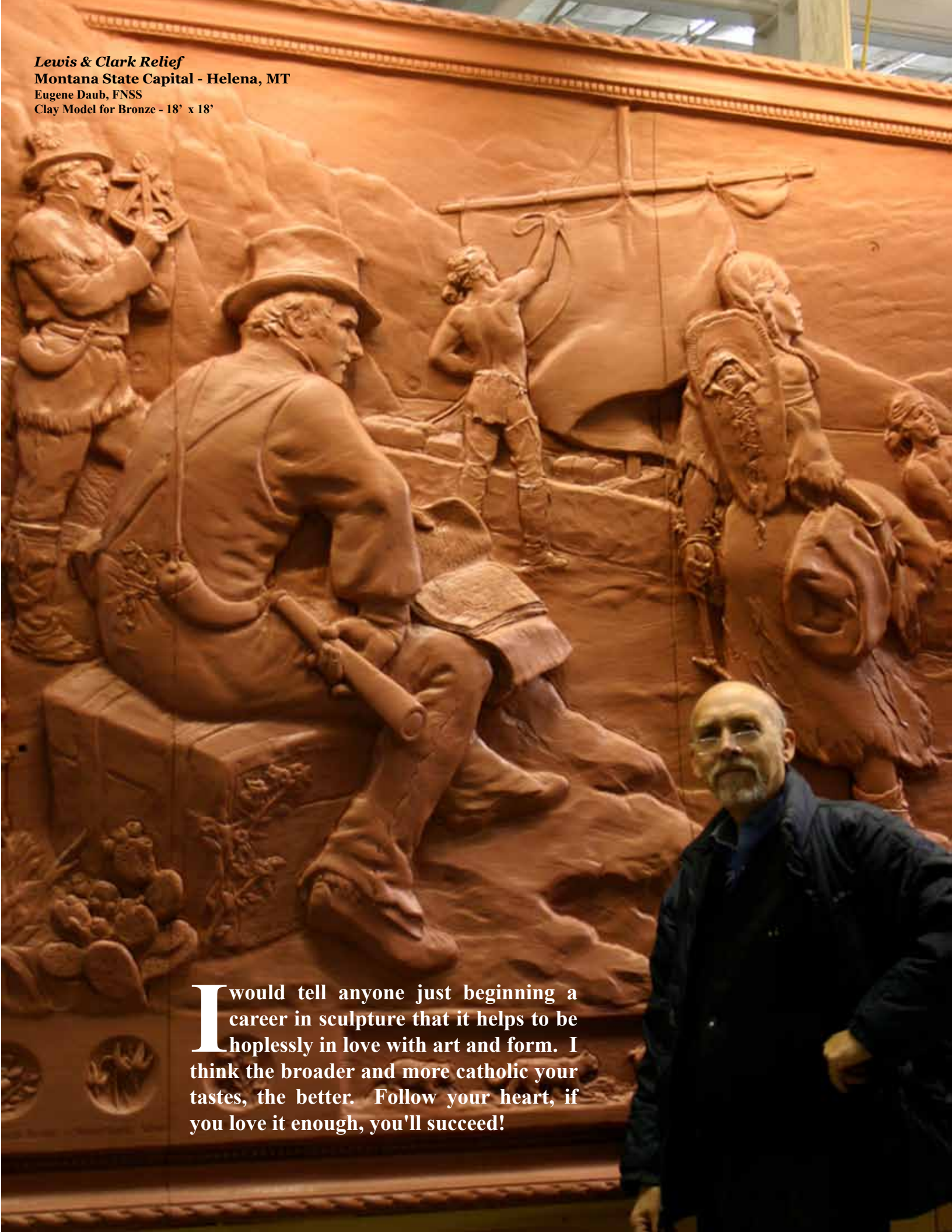
One of the things I like about being on the NSS board is that you can participate in the area's where you have special interest. Currently I'm on three committees: Education, Editorial, and Membership. I joined the education committee first. I was very inspired by Gordon Alt (former NSS Education Committee Head). He was full of great ideas and knew how to implement them. I'm an odd fit for the editorial committee - in that I can't write a lick - but I very much like being part of what goes into Sculpture Review magazine. Currently I'm chairman of the membership committee. It's very important to me that we maintain a traditional and contemporary balance when reviewing new members.



**Crucifix**  
**St. Timothy's - Escondido, CA**  
Eugene Daub, FNSS  
Bronze - Half life-size



*Lewis & Clark Relief*  
Montana State Capital - Helena, MT  
Eugene Daub, FNSS  
Clay Model for Bronze - 18' x 18'



**I**would tell anyone just beginning a career in sculpture that it helps to be hopelessly in love with art and form. I think the broader and more catholic your tastes, the better. Follow your heart, if you love it enough, you'll succeed!