



Making Curly

Angela Treat Lyon
Sculptor

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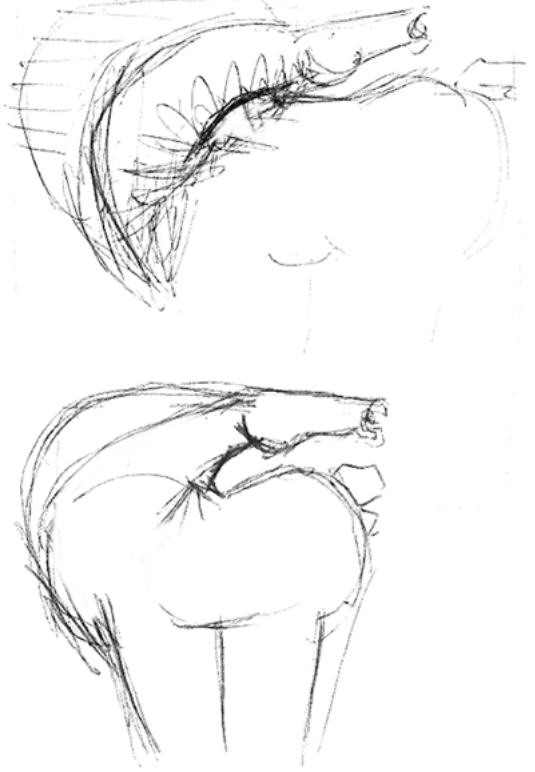
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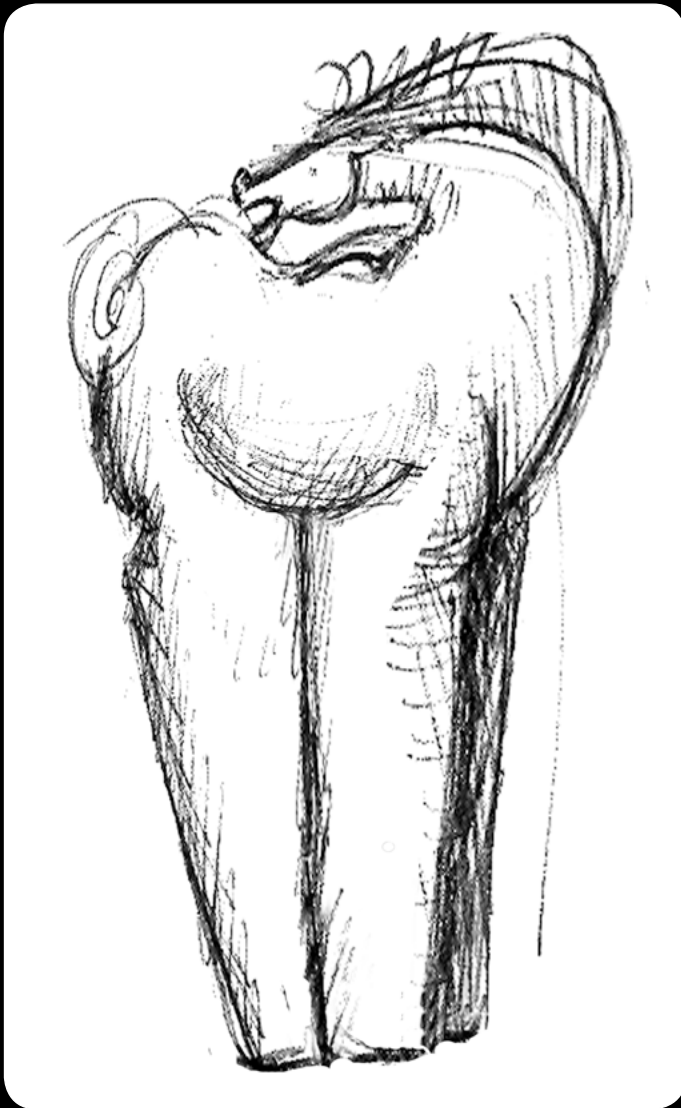
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One night, I had a dream about a whole bunch of horses running around and standing in various poses.

This was the preliminary sketch of the one I would eventually name "Curly," although he started out as "Hey! How'd I Get A Curly Mane?!?"



I don't usually do a whole lot of sketching before I start carving, because once I get into drawing, it's as if the piece is already done...so why carve it?

So I distorted it a bit and that was enough to give me the idea what I wanted to do with the stone I had waiting for it.



At the time I started workong on Curly, I had my sturdy little carving table out under the big Monkeypod tree near the canal out back. If you paddle your kayak for about 10 minutes down that canal, you get to Kailua beach.

But the light was too poor in all that shade, so....



...I switched to my front yard, where the light is better, and my friends the plants keep me company. Even though it's open-air, unless it's doing the afternoon rain thing, I pretty much get to carve every day if I want.



Here's what the stone looked like before I did a thing to it. It measured about 12" x 12" x 6" in volume, and weighed in at about 50 pounds.

That funny looking blade is a Japanese cross-cut saw. You pull it across your material, whether wood, stone or whatever, instead of pushing it the way western saws cut. It's really sharp.



Now you can see how fine a cut that saw makes. This was the first cut, right under what would be the horse's tail.

Some sculptors use power saws to cut these first cuts. I normally would, except I'm prohibited from making a lot of dust where I live, so I stick to hand tools.



Now the section under the horse's tail is cut and removed. One day I'll use that little piece for some small sculpture.

To start carving this soft soapstone, I use a half-inch flat-bladed wood chisel. You can see how short my hammer handle is. I cut all my stone hammer handles down because if they were longer, they would slam into my wrist as I carve.



So this is how it looked after that first little piece was removed.

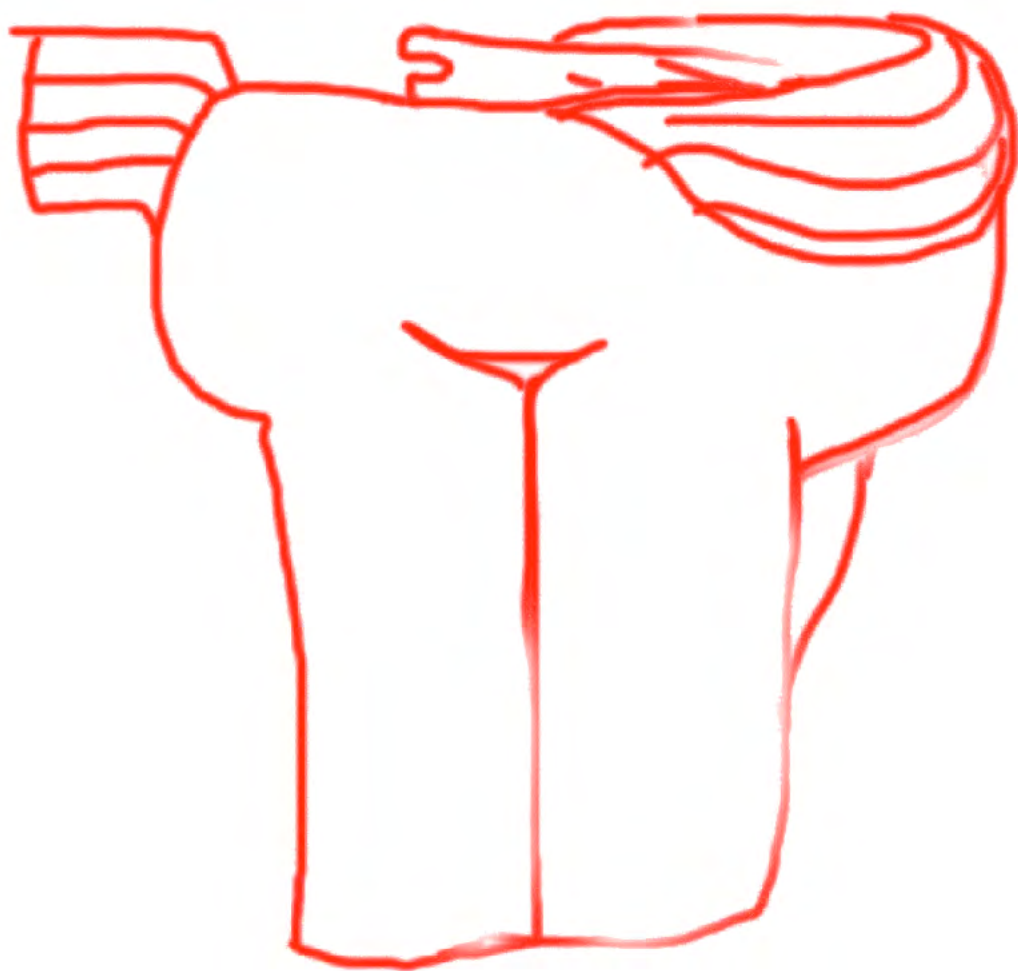
You can see the beauty of the stone—it's mostly a lovely, soft misty-sea-green color, with darker streaks running through it.



Now to turn it over and cut off the area under the neck. This is a tricky cut, because only one leg is aslant, so I have to be careful not to cut too far in and hit the other leg.



Now I've made the leg cut, and chiseled off the rough area to define the other front leg a bit.



Next, I made quick sketches of both sides to super-impose on the stone itself, so I could see where I was at. You'll see what I mean in the next image.



So now I draw the red lines on the stone. I use those fat, hard carpenter's crayons you can get at the hardware store.

The drawing doesn't hurt the stone, and all the lines disappear once the filing and sanding is done.



Now all the major cuts are made, and I'm at it with my half-inch flat chisel. You can see the choppy marks left by the chisel.

As I'm prohibited from making a lot of dust because of this area being a residential district, my compressor, air tools and electric tools are out. Carving using a chisel takes way longer than if I could use power tools!



You may have been wondering why the tail is so short. I wanted it to look like it was bound the way the Japanese of old tied their warrior horses' tails to keep them out of the way.



I took a picture of the piece as I went along, and then drew on the image in red lines so I could see if I needed to make any other big changes.



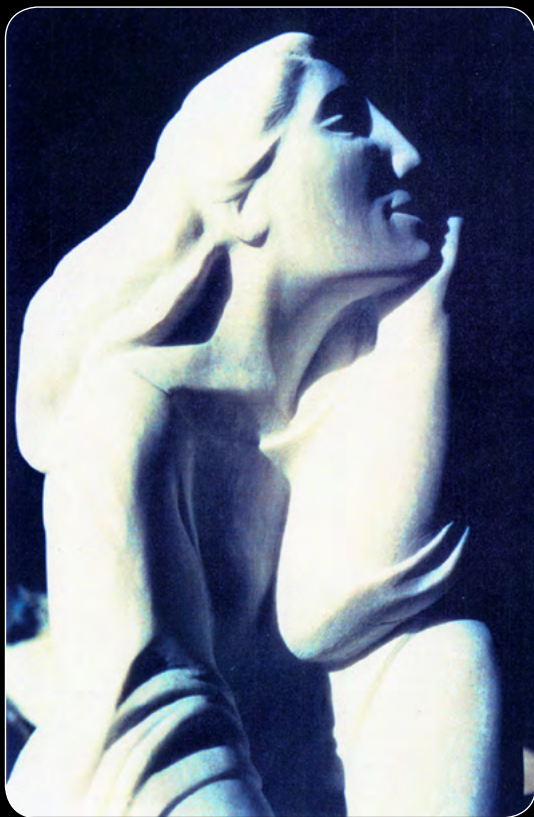
Now I'm getting to the part showing the curly mane. To keep the shape I want, I hold the piece sideways to me as I carve so I can see the profile emerge. When I look at it that way, I prevent myself from cutting away too much.



When I get to details like the curls, the head, tail and belly, then I switch to creating planes.



Once I get the planes, I can soften and round them off.



Unfortunately, I get so immersed in the carving of the piece that I forget to take as-I-go shots.

So I'm including some shots of another sculpture, Pikaki, that I did remember to shoot as I went along.

Above are shots of Pikaki as she was roughed out.

You can see how I went from rough (chisels) to fine (files and sandpaper) in this progression.

She was carved from a beautiful white alabaster from Colorado.



The next several shots are the first ones I took after I finished the filing, sanding and polishing stages. He's standing on the tall stool I sit on when I do the detail work, out in the garden.



You can see how lovely the stone itself is. I can't tell you how many people have asked me if it's jade. No, it is not. ;-))







Now I've taken more shots and used a professional background to make them look exhibit-ready.





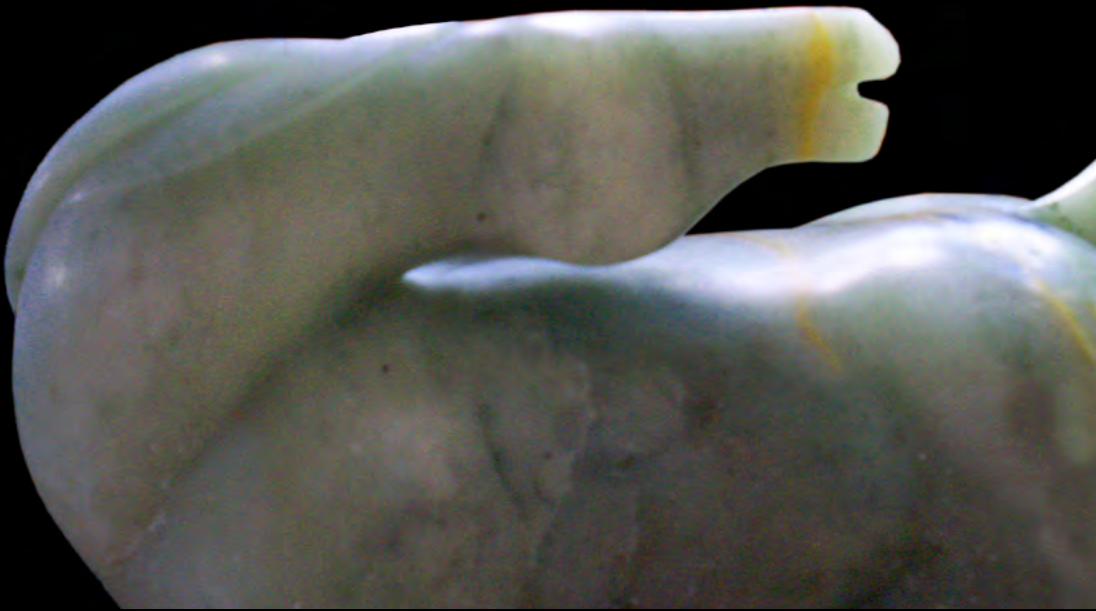


When these horses (there are 2 in the series) were at the art gallery here in Kailua, I'd see people reach over and pat his butt. It is pretty cute!





A closer look at his curls. Originally, I named him, "Hey! How'd I Get A Curly Mane?!?" But it got shorted to Curly over time.





And there you have it, the story of how Curly was made. Hope you enjoyed it. Thanks for appreciating my work—it really means a lot to me.

Thank you for being my wonderful reader!



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