



M . L . SNOWDEN  
CATACLASIS STUDY

POSIDONOS

2017

Anniversary

Edition

---

Winner of the International Rodin Competition

hosted by 32 nations Including France, Germany, Sweden, Italy, and China

FOREWORD

By Dr. Marie Busco

Curator and Author, "Rodin and His Contemporaries: The Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Collection," with Philippe de Montebello, Director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art

It is a great pleasure to unveil this special monograph that delves into the aesthetic, intellectual and emotive foundations that have shaped Cataclasis Study. In this complex sculpture, we are presented with M.L. Snowden's seminal and original groundwork for the molding of humanitarian form. In her own unrivaled and signatory technique that came to fruition over two decades ago within Cataclasis Study, Snowden has continued to shape icons that have come forth from this important milestone in her art.

From the creation of Cataclasis Study and its influence on international art, Snowden has forged an important body of bronze that has redrawn the very face of contemporary sculpture along original and heretofore uncharted lines. The face of art history will no doubt consider Cataclasis Study along with all of Snowden sculpture that has been cast across more than 2,000 bronzes in public and private collections, as that particular body of bronze that defines our unique place in sculpture at the millennium.

In these pages, scholars and critics join their words and thoughts in their consideration of Cataclasis Study; a bronze that has spanned countries and continents, reaching out to expand the art and soul of sculpture in the world. In these pages, it is possible to come to a closer and deeper understanding of Snowden's art as it is revealed in this dimensional statement of our time.

*This manuscript is limited to numbered copies that accompany select last casts of the Limited Edition bronzes of Cataclasis Study. The text has been prepared in Goudy Old Style and Felix Titling fonts set on French Aluente azure damascene paper. Each vellum has been remarqued and every page has been hand-tipped by master booksmith Ashley Aliko who executed the binding. The Albieri pin binding has been leather set and housed within specially woven silk headers. Each photograph within this text has been selected by M.L. Snowden and constitutes an actual print from the historic archives of the sculptor. The frontispiece has been mounted with a remarqued drawing proof created by the artist on French natural linen paper ground. The drawing has an archival mounting set within a ribbon seal.*

1

Manuscript Number \_\_\_\_\_

3756

Serial Number \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
M.L. Snowden, Sculptor

Contents

Frontispiece: Original Remarqued Drawing by M.L. Snowden

Declaration

Forward by Dr. Marie Busco

Radiance and Inspiration/ Cataclasis Study

Commentary by Antonio Crespi

Charting the Triad: Latent Energy/Emerging Energy/Active Energy/

Composition

Foundry Drawings/Casting

The Rodin Prize/ Cataclasis Study

Postscript: Commentaria by Hubert Lamberdin

# RADIANCE AND INSPIRATION/ CATACLASIS STUDY

---

CELEBRATING The International Rodin Competition WIN

//commentary by Antonio Crespi

When we come upon Cataclasis study, we come upon surety of sculptural purpose; the drive of the artist to substantiate realms of active dreaming. When we view Cataclasis Study, we view a dreamscape composed of nuances that form a distinct manner of handcraft virtuosity. Cataclasis Study is sculpture that proceeds upon the illumination of form permeating into our own visual realm and private perception like a kind of light.

Cataclasis Study condenses into three dynamic vistas which become slowly revealed walking around the work. Viewing the installation, one may find their deepest personal relationship to cosmic patterns that have come to shape their own humanitarian physical form. A viewer may come to an epiphany that signals an awakening of their own enlarged inspiration.

Studying the work from various vantage points, we may come to realize that Cataclasis Study is a kind of completion; a full circle for the breadth and seasons of life that reach out from a seed-like center-point explosion. Indeed, it is an explosion that extrapolates and burgeons outwards in sheaves and leaves of bronze that house the

sonic patterns of expanding energy. Within this living triad, Snowden establishes one of the central intellectual conceptions that has come to mark her work emanating from the Rodin Prize into the future, for here the sculptor is on record for acknowledging that she is imaginatively forming three individual portrait perspectives of a single energy emission. Looking into the sculptor's journal from the 1980's we find an entry into her private studio :



“Working on this sculpture at midnight, the clay forms around my hands, instantly connecting my fingers and the historic age-worn tools in its mass. I can feel the cool slide of clay under my tool sink into a heated connection. Yes, I think these three divisions of Cataclasis Study exist along an electrical cord. The heavy clays transform under pressure within the earth - I can think of all kinds of seismic energies traveling across varying states yet they all seem an expression really, of a larger unified energy - I can imagine the line of an energy ray beginning in a latent state, rising to emerge into full activity and then having spent itself, seeing it come back full circle, returning to its original position of latent rest. Actually all this energy is just one fingerprint, one and the same coming through these figures. This is fabulous - to feel this degree of hot energy within the earth - within this clay - within this sculpture that seems like a burning candle in the studio.”

This fundamental realization of the interconnectedness of the figural summaries that define Cataclasis Study no doubt inspired the sculptor to quest forward to actively contemplate signposts of universal interrelatedness. Without doubt, Cataclasis Study is that work that first established the underlayment of Snowden's grand thesis of unification for her deeply personal realizations about the art and craft of sculpture. In Snowden's Cataclasis Study, we realize the sculptor has shaped a kind of crystal in detailing facets of her intensive study of contemporary geological perspectives relating to humankind and how these dramatically illumine and refract upon the substance of sculpture. In beholding Cataclasis Study, we meet the physical incarnation of Snowden's conceptual laboratory and the beginning basis for the Geological Coreium as a cohesive body of bronze.

Within a certain perspective, Cataclasis Study exists as a kind of starlight: just as light from a stellar body reaches earth showing us light emitted eons ago, we realize we are viewing history within this particular sculpture. Cataclasis Study forms a light path back into time, back to its birth year which began in 1985. Scholars observe that the feeling of authenticity we are experiencing today in Snowden's Geological Coreium exists as a kind of radiance that continues to emanate from the foundering of Cataclasis Study more than two decades ago. The work's subsequent role seven years later in gaining international attention in winning the world's foremost sculpture prize; the International Rodin Competition of 1992 in Tokyo Japan catapulted Cataclasis Study from Snowden's private studio and intensely personal thought, onto the arena of public consciousness. From the unveiling of Cataclasis Study's protean form and intellectual program onto the world's art forum held at the Hakone Open-Air Museum that year, we can chart the ascendant and increasing attention of global environmental concerns taking hold in the world. While perhaps the sculpture may not have directly effected this trend, the shaping of Cataclasis Study established a prophetic icon that visioned our present-day focus upon humanity's environmental impact. Today, as international critic Remo Nevi observes, “Cataclasis Study is a cardinal expression. It exists in that timeless place as a hallmark of our culture, signaling our own deep planetary relationship as we continue to exert our collective social and ecologic presence at the millennium.”





Of course, the works of the Geological Coreium are made possible only through an unswerving linear dedication that began in the late 1950's for Snowden. Hers has been a devotion to sculpture that created a kind of focused path highlighted by Cataclasis Study that spread across decades and led to forming a consistently evolving continuum of work. It is work born of an intellectual mind that continues to spur a phenomenal glyptic ability. Putting her hands into clay and overseeing the pouring of the bronze herself out of molten spattering crucibles continues to express the sculptor's basic hunger for her natural materials. Scholars constantly look to the shaping consistency of M.L. Snowden's lifetime career in sculpture, powered by a direct genetic inheritance and a transcendent technological legacy that has come down to her through her father, George H. Snowden. But as noted arts authority Dr. James Cannon has aptly pointed out, the wellspring of M.L. Snowden's mastery is more than familial ties to famous antecedents and mentors; her consistent quest for sculpture is shaped by desire and drive to become one with her medium. Passion is the engine of her art and Cataclasis Study breathes the sculptor's intensity in a sculpture whose abstraction almost appears as a flame and whose shape is almost a soul.

When we speak of M.L. Snowden's inheritance of the Rodin Studios, a legacy which includes thirty- seven of Rodin's original working tools that came down to her through her father from Rodin's praticien and friend, the

Swiss sculptor Robert Eberhard, then we must also look to the legendary studios of Antonin Mercié; and, must look to Barye and to the French sculptor Joffroy who stood as the root inventor of many of the proprietary techniques employed by Mercié, Rodin, Eberhard and Snowden. The path widens in America under Eberhard's tutelage who arranged George H. Snowden's landmark apprenticeship with Adolph Alexander Weinman, author of American coinage, and with whom G.H. Snowden later collaborated. Weinman's basso-relievo abilities were perfected in the inner sanctum of Augustus Saint-Gaudens' studio in Cornish, New Hampshire. Of course Saint-Gaudens, dean of American sculpture, was also the great protege of Joffroy. M.L. Snowden is seen to inhabit a living circle of sculpture greats whose impact, influence and enduring legacy is immeasurable.



M.L. Snowden's early interface as a private student of Salvador Dali was an entrée into the art of drawing that became broadened and perfected in her hands through the years. Seen within this historic context, there is no other living sculptor as M.L. Snowden, who inhabits such a vivid intersection of contemporary yet gravid historic consequence. Proprietary formulas; building methods almost lost; secrets of optical acuity; all and more combine within Snowden's inheritance. While historians may accurately calculate Snowden as the closest living exponent

to Rodin and his milieu, from there, subterranean roads wind into an empire of personal talent that only such a work as Cataclasis Study can begin to map. The interior energies that flood out to the exterior of this diminutive yet potent work hold great keys to fluid and effortless torsion; the lifelines of imperishable handwork; the hidden secrets that thread out connecting each one of us to our own innate greatness; to vast and important turnings of a personal and wider sensate connection for those who come to contemplate the work.

Surely hers has been no normal creative path. In any discussion of M.L. Snowden, it could be observed that perhaps once in a century or maybe once in a millennium, forces of an overwhelming ability combine within a certain individual that can have no other possible outcome but the ascendancy and exhalation of their expression. When viewed alone, such marvelous raw sculptural shaping powers as Snowden possesses are rarely seen in any period. In M.L. Snowden, such abilities are coupled to her wellspring of honed intellect and the sheer force of a gravid inheritance from some of the greatest sculpture studios in the history of the art form.

Even as we examine such a work as Cataclasis Study, we realize that it proceeds away from any easy explanation of its impression. As scholars speak and write of Snowden's profound and on-point scientific bent, it is rarely acknowledged that Snowden's scientific and mathematical inquiries were enlarged upon by working with NASA astro-physicist Dr. Michael Ornstein, from 1970 through 1974 at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles on projects that were documented at the time in newspapers. Among physical projects from this period, we have young Snowden's experimental sculptural Moon that wonderfully marked the landing mission of the Apollo astronauts. Snowden, a prodigy like a young Mozart, produced sculptures within this same time period, conceived at the ages of 18 and 19, respectively titled Premia and Wave. These early works strongly established the sculptor's natural will to create physical wave formations within the earliest substance of her sculpture. These early works organically foreshadow Cataclasis Study, evoking integrated wave patterns that M.L. Snowden would later come to study in the writings of Nobel Prize Laureate Physicist, Louis de Broglie.

In the years that followed the return of Snowden from foundation post graduate grants to the Louvre in Paris, the Uffizi in Florence and the Vatican Collections in Rome, a long personal friendship with the mathematician nephew of the great American physicist, Andrew McArthy, lent weight and intellectual vigor into Snowden's pursuit of cutting edge mathematics. Indeed, mathematics was a focal point study that would come to be applied to Snowden's mastery of bronze metallurgy. Andrew McArthy passing in the 1970's, remains noted for his sequestered work with Oppenheimer at the Oakridge Project and further interface at Los Alamos, to which he made pivotal contributions, where his influence upon understanding mathematics as a language had far reaching ramifications for Snowden. Other enduring friendships with engineering professionals such as Rio Varne

Beckwith of Raytheon, a decades career expert in rocketry science, propelled Snowden into undertaking her own advanced forays into physics as well as the metallurgical and geological sciences.



It would seem that all of Snowden's energetic intellectual curiosity of the 70's and 80's is condensed in Cataclasis Study in jewel-like microcosm. And yet, for Snowden, Cataclasis enters into much more than an array of intellectual theories and mathematical explorations, for surely it seems to the viewer that the drive of each of the figures goes beyond the confines of rational intellect. We are perhaps correct in divining cosmic frissons of energy in Cataclasis Study, for the very substance of this sculpture, within the mind of the artist, is the embodiment of planetary and interstellar forces. Indeed, for the sculptor, Cataclasis Study exists on a plane of consonance and import, for in Snowden's words of 1992, "each actual bronze edition of the Study that has yet to



be founded will shape a house of earthly and universal phenomena science has yet to understand. Clay and bronze are shingles off the roof of the cosmos as fractal expressions.”

In Cataclasis Study, it is clear that Snowden creatively works with an open mind, consecrating sequences of experimentation in condensed quarter scale. Each transept of the work shines with a particular character despite the intellectual concept of unity; each kneeling figure energizes a sense of temporal authority through classic nobility that transits across each portrait. The quickened energy of the natural world is evoked in limber shoulders and arms that connect intellectual drive to muscular function. Without any overt strain, we can feel each figure thoroughly embedded within the intention of its action. This might be the power of the luminosity of behind Snowden’s work, where aside from the glowing Fournier patina, Cataclasis’s myriad dimensions project innate knowingness and “rightness” of the figuration that seems to arise because it is natural to do so.



Every inaccuracy within Snowden’s accuracy presents a window for more liveliness to enter the work. What we meet in Cataclasis Study is a kind of energized lassitude, where the will of the figure connects upon every joint and sinew within the authenticity of its action. Snowden’s fast and furious finger-pinching and hand-smoothing clay modelling dance is fully captured in mounded abstract jets. The rapid fluidity of Snowden’s abstract handcraft communicates into passages of musculature. In Cataclasis Study we are confronted with a vigorous gestural icon that powers the release of almost kinetic sequences. Indeed, Snowden infuses sculpture with a peculiar frisson of inner electricity.

The artist’s thematic approach to the sculpture is injected deeply into the substance and gesture of every plane and nuance, where perhaps we are only subliminally aware of any overt program. This is sculpture that is native unto itself. Indeed, the message is enjoined in a dynamic relationship, wherein the intellectual content of geology is intimately united to its natural earth sculptural mediums. Moreover, the fused message and medium of the work is married to gesture, where gesture is inherent and native to the substances of clay and bronze. In this circularity Snowden sees her basic materials inordinately responding as they sense that her coaxing sculptural touch is an octave of related forceful magma. Snowden fully blooded hand is a form of magma that moves in a natural progression as it reforms earth’s willing crust. Inward and outer attributes and influences condense to unify M.L. Snowden’s dimensional dream that defines humanity as one with the earth.

In Cataclasis Study, we have only the illusion of a kind of figuration. Here in this sculpture, we have neither torsos nor arms nor hands; for an “arm” here within Cataclasis Study is more about the projection of materials that have condensed around a perfect trajectory of energized material. The seeming musculature of the sculpture is formed upon this projectile of sonic energy within the hands of the sculptor and the result is infused with the deepest sense of inevitability. Encased in this coordinated ease is a kind of magnetic attraction that permeates the work. It is impossible almost to define how the viewer is drawn to Cataclasis almost as if to a flame that seems to light a world hitherto enclosed in darkness. The sculpture is a kind of star; sizzling and cresting with exquisite workmanship and we feel more than think about its substantive meaning. But this is the very seduction of the Study; that as intellectual and as top minded a discussion the work can engage us upon, this is sculpture that is primarily authentic as sculpture, whose intentions are lucid even if its fragile textual semantics and printed dialogues should come to be lost. The Study encourages conjecture as does any artistic majesty that encourages our analysis of wonder; but whatever we may say about it, assign to it or try to understand terms of its form, Cataclasis Study stands as brilliant optical sculpture that defies the scale of its actual measurement in any extant photograph taken against a black background. Small scale Cataclasis Study creates the enduring illusion of a

monumental installation. Certainly we know this from the historic letters received from Japan's Hakone Open-Air Museum and the Utsukushi-ga-hara Museum who were mistakenly preparing a massive industrial crane to install the 30 inch Study on an outdoor monumental base.



What we perceive on a subliminal level about the Study is that it vibrates; here in this ringing bronze are octaves and echoes of cataclysms and we can literally trace the line and fingerprint of erosive and recombinant junctures of breaking rock. We can feel housed within just this small space of the Study a microcosm of the angst of the planet coming into being. This is Cataclasis: the titanic breakup and dissolution of rock that molds and shapes the earth's surface. It is wielded and packed and punched with strength and almost comes to be annihilated in the molten crucibles of the foundry, yet the sculpture, as with the reality of terrestrial phenomena, endures as a cyclical expression of regeneration, rebirth and continuity.

It is arresting to consider how un-grammatically formed this sculpture is - it eschews any sense of combination or formal composition to simply exact what it must from its action. And, that action is most deeply felt not only in the outward thrust of its energetic figural summaries, but in the deep recesses and caverns of its undercutting abstraction. This is potentially tear-apart sculpture: ordinary molding will leave it in shattered remnants. Forgers cannot hope to reproduce its authentic signature by normal re-cast. There is no question Snowden has addressed this, tackling and inventing new foundry interventions married to age old foundry techniques.



Coming from the foundry, when held to the light, the Study is an enigma, a dichotomy of opposites - our eyes can scan the tissue fragility of the abstraction and finger details coupled to the cannons of three heavy-weight figural elements. Moreover, its actual impression of weight is brought to the fore by all its delicate energy patterning contained within its abstracted layers. These are the virtual wings of the sculpture, those delicate



arcs of bronze that shred like shale layers plowed against marls and soils that rise and fall back, creating the underlayment of the earth. What Snowden has shaped is the engines that commune and conflagrate and pull through their physical ethos the very planes of the planet. In this fully complex elaboration the sculptor achieves a kind of sentient earth that contains anabolic and catabolic forces that begin to plow forward into full exposure then fall back into retirement. Age and usage are written beyond symptoms of desiccation and human ageing patterns; what is at stake is the expression of state rather than symptom. Through this universal lens, Cataclasis extends figuration into a universal connection of matter that comes to be summarized through its nature as a conduit of energy. From plants to stars to cellular mitochondria, the furnaces of the universe begin to bellow and fully rage and exhaust their energy patterns and Cataclasis Study does no less.

Modulated between raw sequences, the portraits of Cataclasis Study grow in intensity; every effect of light and shade hovers to create an almost millennial mask on each of the figures that reveal a certain splendor and quality of magnificence. In all of Snowden's oeuvre they present a unique slender physiognomy that reads quite differently in depth perceived profile. Each portrait seems to speak a language that expresses the earth as being deeply baroque; that elegance and simplicity are attenuations and striations of extracted energy but that the natural unmediated, non-homogeneity of earthly energy and human experience is inherently beautiful as well. The phrase, "Life happens" could well be applied here. Indeed, Cataclasis Study is neither a sculpture of homogenous nature nor is it primly considered: it is a raw detonation of energy that is unhindered and unrevised in its expression. The sculpture exerts a sense of sheer will to power and naturally seems to inhabit its own space and calling. Infused with stratospheric levels of exquisite craftsmanship, the sculpture for all its elan, reminds us that here in art as in earth itself, are superlative codes and systems that can rise, orchestrating energy within matter, forming sequences of expression.

Cataclasis Study has the capacity to surprise the most astute viewer who mistakenly assumes that with an easy hand they can physically move the sculpture from place to place. It is a potent heavy installation filled with meaning and substance and houses intense artistic ramifications for the sculptural art of Snowden. A pivotal and seminal work, Cataclasis Study ranks as the first break-out sculpture of Snowden. It is documented as calling upon vast reservoirs of contemplative substance and evolution within the mind and heart of the sculptor in formulating the perspectives of the Geological Coreium that would subsequently come to define the cohesive nature of all M.L. Snowden's future work. As previously explored, Snowden's Coreium turns upon the meditation that the art of sculpture is inherently geological and that its message is fused to its medium.

In Cataclasis Study, we see the hands of the sculptor preserved in a vital, time-dated gestured performance of the

work that remains as a milestone and landmark. Cataclasis is built to endure, standing at the helm of Snowden's creative threshold, blazing the creative path of the foremost body of bronze that has come to be forged at the millennium.





# POSTSCRIPT

“M.L. Snowden’s Cataclasis Study is a startling sculpture.

see it..... feel it.....think about it.

It touches .....as it is touched

any one point jetting from Cataclasis Study can arrest the senses.....

a hand spiking from its abstract nest.....

a profile that commits its soul eye to eye.....

roots of waves that spill over from the bronze Spreading like a fine net

flowing past human hands onto the wide Aegean sea

The sculpture brings forward its own experiences of the foundry

thinking and feeling its way through

As Cataclasis Study comes into view

It touches at that Pivotal Meridian.....

that universal timeless point between earth and sky.....

that place oft recognized as home”

Commentaria . Hubert Lamberdin .

Commemorating the International Rodin competition

And the honor Bestowed upon M.L. Snowden and Cataclasis study in his introductory

speech, Ars media JAPAN



## CHARTING THE TRIAD:

LATENT ENERGY /

EMERGING ENERGY/

ACTIVE ENERGY/

COMPOSITION

LATENT ENERGY/

CATACLASIS STUDY

Latent energy, as it is expressed in Cataclasis Study, is formed of a series of crystal coves and hilts that form along the mystery of the compressive fingerprints of sculptor M.L.Snowden; first upon clay and subsequently upon chased bronze. In a complex set of welding arcs and metallurgical protocols that depend upon the influence of gravity to deliver molten metal to the delicate interstices of the sculptural detail, Latent Energy forms a stanchion

of compressed and folded torsion that almost floats in introspection. This Latent portion of Cataclasis Study projects inner levels of power; the sculpture exudes a sense of self directed and focused upon its own physicality only serves to offset the impression of a larger contained grandeur awaiting the chance for action. The easy grace and energy that is a larger- than-life force that has turned in upon itself.



M.L. Snowden is able to convey fragile and transiting states that become revealed through external light sources cast upon the work. Latent Energy is no exception: the vacillation of radiance over the glowing Fournier patinaed surface of the bronze leads the eye into the deep mirage of the sculpture's soul. Latent's energy, profound and mantis-like, gains much of its power from its massive inflected gestural reach as well as from its position rising as an expression of the supportive rock from which it emanates. This is latent energy: ripe with promise, heavy with intention turned in upon itself. It is also at rest and its essential inactivity evokes a sense of age without calling upon any outward manifestation. The Latent element is neither realistic nor architectonic; neither classic nor mannerist; as a sculptural evocation of Snowden, it remains defiant of any easy terminology that might be used to describe its sense of immediacy evoked by titanic forces. Not enough can be said for



Latent's delicate details engraved within its massive conceptual cannon: the aquiline nose; the hollow of the cheek; the sensitive swell of jaw; the slight protuberance of upper lip; the signature restrained treatment of hair edged with an energetic back flip. More than a thousand nuances of sculptural delineation fold back into a vibrant symmetry that powers the Latent element. The Rodin tools number 9 and number 7 were used to shape the delicate planes of Latent's details.

Cataclasis Study is defined by its three figural energy summaries that call upon the latent, the emerging and the active to form a catalyst for change. Addressing its deepest calling, the sculpture is a magus for transformation. It is a work that is at once immediate yet historic; it is with this powerful sculpture that Snowden's Geological meditation for sculpture became crystallized and affirmed internationally. The exudation of the combined meditations contained in the work constitute a kind of magnetic talisman that Snowden recognizes as being symbolic of the very energies necessary to implement and build the structures of sculpture.

Above all, the work is gestural and contains within its bronze framework, the positive affirmation of the sculptor's touch. To place one's hands upon Cataclasis Study is to join oneself to the tactile map of fingerprints forming the work. There is a sense of empowerment that is carried deep within the work; an empowerment that brought the Study to the fore of international attention and set its mark, gaining the high prize of the International Rodin Competition of 1992.

## EMERGING ENERGY/ CATACLASIS STUDY

Emerging Energy is borne forward on a cresting wave of energy resulting in the formation of wings. This is sculpture that is static yet mobile; downwardly countenanced yet upwardly thrusting; forceful yet fragile. Emerging Energy is fleshed with a sense of mission. The action of Cataclasis Study is promised in this portion of the compositional triad which conveys a sense of larger purpose. Here in the Emerging element is a force that is felt as much as it is able to be seen. Every intention of action is written in sinew, in muscle, in facial tone and in the minute flexed fingertips of the sculpture. Here we can study the deft woof and warp too sharply nor too

much in a unique technique that allows the element of light itself to shape of Snowden's graceful synergistic approach to modeling bronze sculpture that neither writes its own impaction upon form.



As a sculptor, Snowden shapes a sense of mystery. Indeed, those shadowed, turgid hollows that contain untold amounts of potentiality and power come alive under Snowden's legendary touch and we feel more than think about the vital impression of Emerging Energy as it comes forward into action. Here in the Emerging element, we are able to experience the quest of the sculptor to shape a portrait of youth outside of the signs of ageing. Just as the Latent element is evocative of suppressed energy attendant on advanced age, the artist is able to create this impression within the sculpture through the lens of a universal figural matrix marked by symmetrical cannons of proportion. From the sculptor's viewpoint, similar age-related energy suppression and sequence expression has coordinates deep within the arrangement of the earth's rocks and soils. As contemporary science increasingly views planet Earth as a living organism, with its rocks and soils subject to the same ageing patterns as humankind, the biomorphic qualities of natural earth materials are seen to come to the fore in an expanded range of understanding.



While M.L.Snowden is a direct inheritor of Rodin's figurateur working methods, Snowden has pursued figuration independently as a naturally occurring biomorphic energy summary inherent in clay and bronze. For Snowden, "walls of clay and bronze do not want to warp to the architectural planes of Euclidian geometry; they naturally fold and warp toward the muscularity inherent in figuration. Half my art is listening to what my materials desire to become."

In coming to understand Snowden's artistic sensitivity, we can better appreciate the almost immaterial variability of the Emerging Energy element that seems to change so radically from its almost sentient position when it is viewed in profile closest to the Latent element, as opposed to its vital and more active state when it is viewed three quarter in closer proximity to the Active Energy element. From one vantage point to the next, the impression of the figure transforms almost completely. This is sculpture that is ultimately built upon almost subliminal layers of skill, where working without models, Snowden's recognition of both geological and anatomical cognates have come to bear upon the crystalline matter of clay in the creation of subtleties that make the work a constant discovery of protracted layering. Indeed, layer upon bronze and clay layer, Snowden engages these timeless materials in a vibrant conversation and revelation.

From the archon mask of Emerging Energy's profile; to the slight corona of the frontal hairline; to the splayed muscularity of the tensed thighs; to the braced incline of the back arms leading to the energized hands; all these elements impact the topography of the back anatomy. Handmade tools number six and number 4 from the historic Rodin collection were used to shape the vital edges of the most delicate passages highlighting the Emerging Energy element.

# ACTIVE ENERGY/ CATACLASIS STUDY

Active Energy inhabits the final cornerstone of the Cataclasis triad. It was the last portion of the work to be sculpted and seems to pull, by way of an intensive activity, the entire back of the sculpture into an expressive sense of elongation. Cataclasis Study is ultimately a gestural sculpture filled with the actions of Snowden to shape its planes, yet the root of the action seems more contained within the core of each figural transept giving rise to the design and formation of the work.

What we experience in Cataclasis Active is the life force of the hand of the sculptor embedded like a glowing coal in the thickest recesses of the bronze. The whole of the figure is powered from within, escaping synthetic gesture to achieve an actual reach that spreads the impact of its energy in waves throughout the bulk and mass of the Study. Here is the ultimate electrical charge, pulsing, cutting, driving the water of the clay and bronze into its final shape. Here we can literally see the root of universal building preserved immortally in form. For, just as the sea drives lines of silt in waves breaking upon the shore forming diatonically spaced webbed lines in the sand, we can see these same formations in tree branches overhead and we can see these same formations in the splayed hands of Active Energy. This Active Energy element is the very embodiment of electrical circuited energy that drives the very length of our own fingertips and magnetizes raw energy to condense matter around patterns formed along gravitational chemical and physical phenomena still to be identified. Here in this transept we meet the crux of impact; the flower of purpose larger than rational identity; the point that would take us beyond our own confines to expand upon our world and universe.

As we circle to view this portion of the triad, we come upon a central building conduit of M.L. Snowden that is important to identify: for here in the Active element we can identify a certain feeling; an intuitive point where the artist has literally closed eyes and leapt. What we see is Snowden running forward beyond cannons of formalization taught by all her famous historic antecedents to achieve a translation for the language of her own geologic materials. It is possible to feel a real sense of freedom celebrated in each one of her works.

Here in Cataclasis Study is an Active Energy that is in the throes of escape: it does what it must to become what it is. Beyond mediator or magus, this is volatile energy that achieves its reaching through its will to break with the continuity established in the Latent and Emerging elements. Here in Active is the open-mouthed gestured sculptural renegade, dismissive of the fine-tuned strokes of the sculptor's hand lavished on the other summaries. Standing before the work, the left profile of the portrait closest to the Emerging element, bears the direct impression of the Rodin tools. Here, the easy jointure of sinew is attenuated into the fullest sense of torque. The arms, as well, seem to fall just short of their reach which further condenses the will of the figure to be more than the triangulated composition can control. This is a galvanized portrait of energy that tests, that propels, compels, and literally grabs past the optical conceptual line of allowance. The Rodin tools number 4, 5 and number 9 were turned onto the rifts and valleys of the clay, transforming shallow areas into shadowed wells of kinetic drama.





# COMPOSITION/ CATACLASIS STUDY

Not enough can be said about the optical impact of Cataclasis study. It contains and exudes a particular dynamic that is at once magnetic as it is unforgettable. As sculpture, it orchestrates visible light in such a manner that its variable highlights, lowlights and shadows create patterns that define it in profound ways upon the human retina. At once, we know it as a masterpiece.

Cataclasis Study is possessed of linear and mass cognates that only have begun to be plumbed. Here is sculpture that is more subterranean and profound than its initial reading; it is a kind of sculpture that can lead us on a journey of discovery.

From the outset, there can be no doubt as to Snowden's intention for this work. The artistic composition of Cataclasis Study is its very clay and bronze: the Study is a portrait of its foundational material. The colloidal suspension of quartz crystals that compose the crystalline composition of the Study's original proprietary Defeneco natural-mined European water-clay, presents an energy conducting medium that absorbs every intention and nuance of the artist's compressive and conceptual energy. The sculptor's proprietary pour of silicon Fournier bronze stands as a direct octave of the clay in exhibiting a proportionate mathematically spaced crystalline structure. From clay to bronze, it is vital to the sculptor's conception that all the annealing, compressive, chasing actions upon these deeply related earth materials dramatically impact their energies and shapes in precise and exquisite ways.

Snowden's crystal materials; the sculptor's fingers; the branches of the viewer's arterial system leading from the heart; the root system of trees; the wax sprues that form a network in foundering Snowden's bronze; all these structures have the same ratio numeric spacing as the spacing of the planets and the musical notes on the diatonic scale. Johann Kepler who lived from 1571 to 1630, established the basis of this finding more than 300 hundred years ago and today it is known as Kepler's Law. Cataclasis Study is a microcosm of a kind of musical notation of this Law in placing each transept of the triad at harmonic intervals. The rifts and actions of the clay that coalesce to give rise to each energetic summary, in turn form the planes as well as the corners of a compositional harmonic triangle.



What is described within the work is an electrical circuit which is evinced not only through the states of its figuration, but also deep in its bronze pith that both stores and projects the human and mechanical crucibles that have shaped it.

The Study exists as a kind of optical tapestry of lights and darks that enclose deep numeric harmonies in terms of both their numeric relationship and their relative positions. In its triangular form, Cataclasis Study intimates a kind of proportion associated with the ancient Greek sculptor Phidias who worked on the Parthenon around the year 450 BC. If the length of a rectangle is divided by its height and the result equals 1.618, or “phi” (named after Phidias) then that configuration is considered to exist within a golden proportion. Cataclasis Study inhabits contiguous proportions that are seen in the pyramids, in sea shells, and as noted, in musical compositions including those of Beethoven. Each delicate surge and wing of bronze abstraction that puts flesh to the shape of the Study’s triangle sings of accords housed deep in muscular action; not only expressed in the figuration of the sculpture but within ourselves – we who have come to view it.

Conscious as well as unconscious awareness of a golden proportion infuses every aspect of our own coordination and balance. Conduits of perfected harmony; of shape, and action weave through the artist and the viewer in this particular bronze. The core walls of Cataclasis Study are built to quarter inch thicknesses and the action of open torch flame raised to precise Kelvin, heats these walls, transmuting the historic Fournier patina into a bloom that rises from the pores of the blistering bronze into platinum harmonic radiance.

# THE RODIN PRIZE/ CATACLASIS STUDY

In 1992, Cataclasis Study won the world’s foremost sculpture prize in existence, the International Rodin Competition held in Tokyo, Japan. Held under the auspices of the Utsukushi-ga-hara and The Hakone Open-Air Museums, the Special Prize was deemed the world’s richest sculpture award. The competition, held among professional sculptors worldwide, was hosted by the embassies of 31 countries including Sweden, Germany, France, Italy, and The United States. The competition was sponsored by the Fujisanke media empire as well as Mitsubishi and other corporations. The Rodin Competition had been in existence for approximately eight years and M.L. Snowden was to be among the last of its winners. Soon after, The Rodin was merged into the Henry Moore Prize. Cataclasis Study was purchased for the permanent collection of the Hakone Open-Air Museum, the most extensive sculpture museum in the world. In the year 2006, Cataclasis Study was acquired for the Presidential Art Collection at the White House.

Measuring 15 inches high by 20 inches long by 20 inches deep, Cataclasis Study has been created by M.L. Snowden in an edition of 75 remarked Fournier bronzes. Each cast bears the signature and handwork of the sculptor and roundel seal of the sculptor stamped into the metal.



## CASTING/ FOUNDRY DRAWINGS



In contemplating the foundering of Cataclasis Study, pre-existing foundry and metallurgical techniques would be inadequate to address the sculpture's complex physical design. Indeed, standard foundry wax sequences that had been in place since the Renaissance and used in the casting of some of Rodin's bronzes, were seen as less than optimum in the translation of the Study's delicate yet heavyweight details. The primary concern was that standard wax formulations would shatter the abstract forms of the Study as a result of pulling away



the mold. Exhibiting looping and undercutting complexity, Cataclasis would require an almost infinite number of small molds to be constructed in order to achieve the release of its parts, or, an attempt to re-piece shattered fragments broken from the mold-pull would need to be undertaken. In the best-case scenario for contemporary fine art bronze foundries, Cataclasis Study would require an extensive re-building, re-working and chasing outlay for its metal that would run the risk of significantly altering and warping the sculptor's original conception.



Rising to this challenge, Snowden employed a proprietary "cire de memoire" inherited from the Rodin Studios; a specialized kind of wax that would bend and spring back, accurately molding the original conformations of the work. However, Snowden needed a wax even more powerful. Snowden set about inventing a chemical substrate that would modify her historic working wax, infusing it with a new application of a specialized plastic and other experimental and historic mediums that would produce a new casting medium. With Snowden's invention, the integrity of each bronze edition of Cataclasis Study bears the unique distinction of having been cast from a whole

artist's proof original wax; a wax that was able to be lifted from its mold matrix in its entirety. Every wax that was pulled was then completely re-detailed and sharpened personally by Snowden. Every vital step of the cast created from Snowden's proprietary bronze metal formulation was undertaken and overseen by the artist, from chasing protocols to the use of her inherited specialized bronze surface smoothing techniques. In the final stages of the sculpture, the planes of the metal were hand buffed to mirror shine preparatory to the stages of the final Fournier platinum patina.

For over thirty years, Snowden perfected the metallurgy of her art in bronze casting sequences that would come to write a new chapter for the art and specialty of foundering. Because of the demands of Snowden's sculptural meditations, groundbreaking areas of bronze experimentation were forged in extrusion, inclusion, bronze cantilevering, and other areas of metallurgy. Time and again, the artist is seen in each of her works as a formidable engineer; a sculptor responsible for inventive construction.



One avenue of Snowden's authorship is seen in her foundry notation drawings. These specialized graphite and chalk images are the sculptor's shorthand for mapping metal lines, stresses, projected chasing points and pivots. In these drawings, we also find subtle instruction memos written across figural summary elements that show steel armature grids supporting the original clay model. These drawings have been prepared as a memory chart for Snowden's longtime foundry assistants and are used in the individual molding and mounting requirements for each unique cast in the edition. From these drawings alone, it is possible to realize that each bronze Cataclasis Study has required almost the virtual building of a new work of art for each number of the edition. Each cast bears the kind of extensive and intensive handwork that confers "Original" status for an artwork.

The existence of these drawings lends a certain insight into Snowden's artistic technique especially when we realize that these are not sculpture drawings in the traditional sense. Unlike Renaissance masters or even Rodin who used drawings to project their intellectual and visual conceptions in planning sculptures, Snowden's drawings have come after the completion of the model. Indeed, the realization that Snowden is not using the medium of drawing to calculate her work or to establish any sequence of her primary clay sculpture in a two-dimensional reality, only serves to confirm that her sculpture is born out of a direct conversation with her medium. In considering this, it begins to dawn upon us that Snowden stands before thousands of pounds of material and metal without any outward sign in her studio other than her tools, utilizing neither human or physical models nor any other kind of reference. It is confirmed and documented: Snowden simply begins to build alone.

As part of Snowden's overall conception for Cataclasis Study, the sculptor created one dozen drawing proofs especially for this monograph that dedicates the closure of the bronze limited edition. The drawing contained within this manuscript commemorates an important aspect of form and composition relating to Emerging Energy which describes among other elements, three inner steel structural supports pictured in the lower left hand corner of the leaf.

Here, in Snowden's drawings, both dedicatory and notational, reside both the signature and the substance of the sculptor's handwork built upon draftsmanship that comes into being much as a flower is connected to growth from the root of a plant. M.L. Snowden's art forms upon a unique and foundational basis that is both historic and immediate; it is an art formed of theoretical as well as substantive energies. Ultimately, these unfading sculptural evocations and their ephemeral master drawings lead us to consider the presence of spirit residing at the heart of matter.

