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# Art & Design

ISSUE

+ *A look at...*

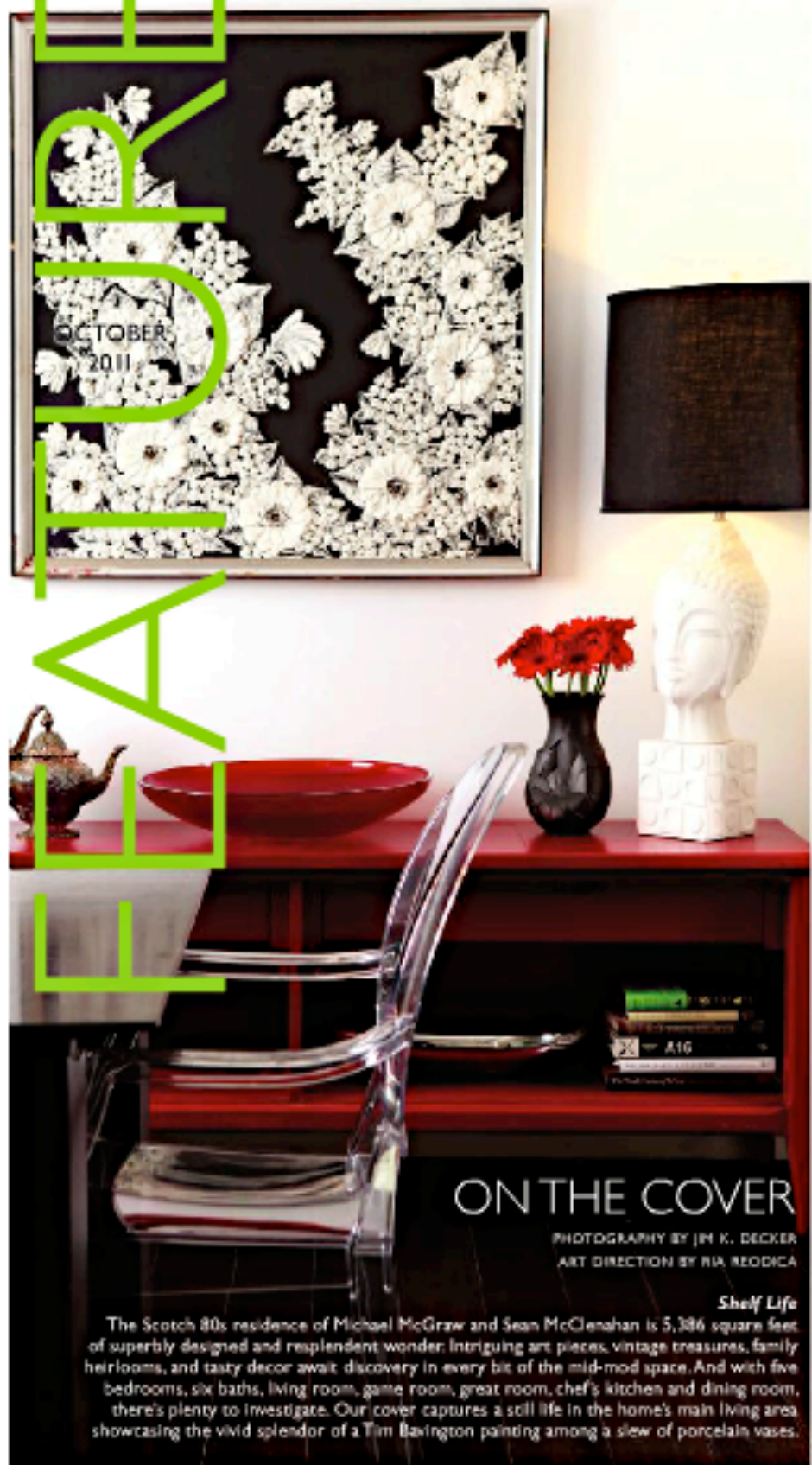
Mad for Scotch 80s Mod.  
Nevada Ballet Theatre Celebrates  
40 Years & Local Artists  
Unearth the Natural Beauty  
of Glass, Stone and Leather

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# SCOTT LIFE



## ON THE COVER

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JIM K. DECKER  
ART DIRECTION BY RIA REODICA

### Shelf Life

The Scott 80s residence of Michael McGraw and Sean McClenahan is 5,386 square feet of superbly designed and resplendent wonder. Intriguing art pieces, vintage treasures, family heirlooms, and tasty decor await discovery in every bit of the mid-mod space. And with five bedrooms, six baths, living room, game room, great room, chef's kitchen and dining room, there's plenty to investigate. Our cover captures a still life in the home's main living area showcasing the vivid splendor of a Tim Bawington painting among a slew of porcelain vases.

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# Making Art *of* Alabaster

BY MARILYN LAROCQUE | PHOTOGRAPHY BY JIM K. DECKER

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**T**reasures of Mother Earth, undisturbed through millennia, come to life and reveal their secrets in the sculptures of local artist Dorit Schwartz. Sensuous. Sinuous. They yearn to be caressed.

"Stone speaks to me," Schwartz said. "There's a connecting energy between us. That's how I choose one piece over another. I take elements from nature and work with them to bring the outside world into people's homes for them to touch and enjoy."  
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A native of Israel, Schwartz studied art as a teenager in Tel Aviv. When she was 17, her family moved to Los Angeles, where she continued developing her artistic talents at private studios.

Her sculpting suffered a devastating setback, however, when the 1994 Northridge earthquake in southern California demolished much of her collection. Two years later, when Dorit, her husband, Ronnie, a real estate developer, and their three children moved to Las Vegas, she again took a break from art and opened a

fashion boutique. However, she realized her heart wasn't in it.

"About six years ago, I began exploring new things, having new adventures with art," she said. "I met Sharon Gainsburg, a wonderful artist in the Las Vegas Arts District. She became my mentor. I discovered stone and became passionate about it as an expression of my artistic soul."

Schwartz sculpts primarily in alabaster from Utah, and Mahka driftwood from Thailand. Synergy develops as form evolves and the artist and her materials communicate with each other.

"I had previously worked in clay," she explained. "If you don't like something you've made in clay," she observed, "you can take it apart, remove something, start over. But you have to study stone, its color, the veins. Working with stone is fascinating and gets my creative self out-of-the-box. However, marble or alabaster is a challenge. It's like peeling an onion. If you make a mistake, you have to live with it."

"It's more of a challenge," she replied of her choice to sculpt over choosing to paint. "I enjoy working with such an ancient material and with a three-dimensional element rather than with a canvas that just sits there as you create a feast for the eyes."

"Living in Las Vegas, Red Rock also motivated me to work with stone, and Mt. Charleston inspired me to work with wood. Stone represents cohesiveness and harmony and serves as the foundation for the creative process. I have also been influenced by my travels to the Far East. I very much admire the culture's reverence for nature and family. Art is the bridge to the human spirit. I want to communicate the joy and beauty of living through art."

"As a stone sculptor," she remarked, "I'm drawn toward organic shapes and textures occurring naturally in the environment, and then utilize each stone's features. From that emerges the visual form. The alabaster and wood represent balance and harmony in nature. Stone adds gravitas, durability, and power. The translucency of alabaster offers vigor and delicacy. I even celebrate the beauty of seeming imperfections. I want to showcase the material's natural beauty but also create new forms by integrating materials that enhance each other so that someone viewing them journeys from element to element, eventually interpreting the entire piece from a personal perspective and relationship."

Schwartz's sculptures not only share her perspective on life and art, intimately intertwined, but also portray the human spirit in 3-D. All 360° of each work is a "finished" sculpture. There is certainly a perceived "front," but sides and back flow seamlessly together; and, as you walk around the work, it presents a different "face." Some single and paired pieces swivel so that the image of the sculpture and spatial relationships alter when they move. When the light changes, so do the sculptures as highlights and shadows deepen or disappear



altogether. All this creates both a totally new work of art and a different evocative experience for the viewer.

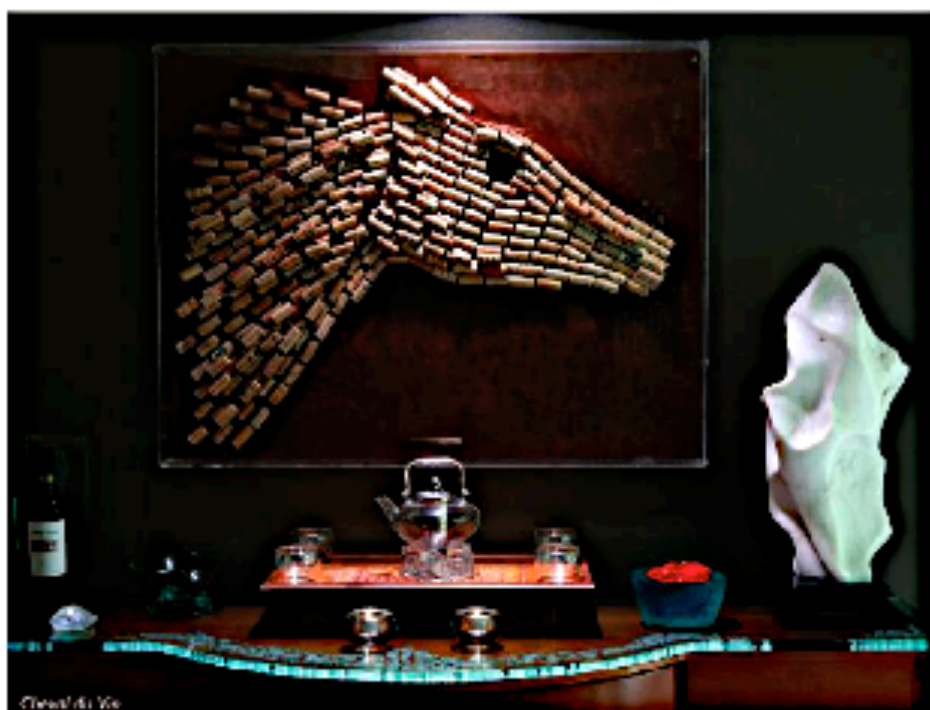
Each sculpture begins as a chunk of alabaster, marble-like stone, weighing about 100 pounds. Schwartz considers its natural shape, color, curves, and size. If she finds a fragile area in the rock, she works around it or removes it. Large cracks are removed so the sculpture stays stable and won't shatter. Schwartz may contrast raw, chiseled outcroppings with highly polished surfaces. She may even find, and leave, a fossil. The introduction of the Maka driftwood, with its varied, weathered hues, adds different dimensions of texture and color and punctuates the sculpture's poetry.

"Leave the wood alone," Schwartz stated. "It has sat in water forever and has achieved its shape and strength from nature and works in harmony with other raw materials, like alabaster. I combine elements that have existed in the environment for years and sculpt the stone so the two work together in harmony. The challenge is to find a piece of alabaster the right color and size that will complement the wood."

Schwartz works on several pieces at a time. "Sometimes you start a piece and get stuck," she admitted. "Nothing inspires you. So you set it aside, then go back to it; and the love affair starts again."

She begins crafting a sculpture in Gainsburg's studio, deftly wielding hammer, chisel, and power tools to transform the natural stone so it reflects her vision. She finishes each piece at home by hand, using small chisels, a hammer, and 80- to 600-grade sandpaper. To help her anticipate the final color, she pours water over a piece. She frequently works outdoors on her patio. "It's such a beautiful, inspiring place," she commented. "I'm surrounded by nature while I'm working on something wonderful, something natural...and the breeze blows away the dust," she quipped.

Schwartz's sculptures are not massive, no more than three feet tall. Many adorn the family's spacious Sumnerlin home. The house itself is a personal expression of artistic sensibilities in earth tones, especially warm terracotta and apricot joined by black, slate gray, beige, sand, and white, as well as mossy green. In the great room, a polished aluminum "brick" fireplace adds a shiny accent. Vases of flowers and a terracotta marble flowerpot with white and



## ART OF ALABASTER

purple cypripedium provide living color. And a trencher-shaped pewter dish garden, landscaped with orchids, miniature yellow roses, mosses, and halved eggshells with gold-painted interiors, brings the outside in. It's a subdued, sophisticated "showroom" for her work.

Jim Decker's photographs of Schwartz's sculptures speak eloquently of her creativity and vision. Suffice to say, "Tulip" evokes the glowing fields of Holland in the spring. She describes "Unity" as a "man and woman" (she revolves), with him "standing to protect her." The white alabaster "Flame Within" exemplifies purity of spirit. The surface features of the wood and alabaster of "In Unison" interact. "Mother Earth" nurtures her world. "Letting Go" contrasts the power and protection of dark wood with the vulnerability of white alabaster. Waves of gray alabaster strive to move forward in "Against the Wind."

"People don't rush to purchase sculptures," she observed when asked if sculpting has financial rewards. "They will fill up walls with paintings before they'll consider a sculpture because paintings cover a lot of space and make a big impression. A sculpture is relatively small, has to sit on something, and takes up space on a table or floor or you need to get a pedestal for it."

Schwartz doesn't eschew wall art altogether, however. Although most people save wine corks to make wallboards or table trivets, in collaboration with artist Sharon Rose, Schwartz's imagination takes a whimsical turn in marvelous, framed wine cork "paintings." Horses strain to nose out their competition in a series called "Cheval du Vin." Feathers and jewels bedeck a fashionable cork chapeau and stiletto heels that mimic today's latest fashions. A saxophone and guitar await the hottest jazz greats.

"Because all the corks I use are 'used,'" Schwartz explained, "they have character and are lighter and darker, depending on the wine stain. Each cork is a straight, linear element; so I work with color and size and apply them to the background surface in layers to create dimension and the horse's muscles. The eye is river rock. Feathers in the mane help give a flowing effect. One mane is made entirely of ostrich feathers. All of the cork art is hand assembled and 'original' but may be the same design. However, different backgrounds and

different corks create a unique artwork. I use about 400 to 500 corks for a horse. People who commission cork art may provide their corks, or I get them from wineries and restaurants."

Schwartz's passion for art spills over into her philanthropy. As co-chair with Tanya Amid of the 2011 Las Vegas Honors St. Jude Gala, she organized an auction of sculptures called *An Affair of the Heart*. Local artists painted three-dimensional, five-foot-tall anatomical heart statues, not Valentines, made of white polymer-infused gypsum whose original design was created by Las Vegas artist Miguel Rodriguez. The event raised \$550,000. Many of the hearts were on public display around town and some remain, including those at Tivoli Village, Town Square, The District, and the soon-to-open Smith Center.



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*I'm drawn toward organic shapes and textures occurring naturally in the environment, and then utilize each stone's features.*

"I'm a wife, mother, sculptor, and charity volunteer in that order," Schwartz described of her pursuits. "I juggle everything, much like the stone, which is symbolic of cohesiveness, harmony, and reconciliation with oneself. That is how I live my life. My life's journey is my art, allowing myself to be a vessel through which creativity flows. It has become an incredible friend who penetrates deeper and deeper into my existence and identity."

To see more of Dorit Schwartz's sculptures and artwork, visit [www.doritschwartzsculpture.com](http://www.doritschwartzsculpture.com) and [www.RoseSchwartzDesign.com](http://www.RoseSchwartzDesign.com). In addition, some of her sculptures are displayed at The Living Penthouse at Soho Loftis, 702.997.1024. □