

Robert Frost Sculpture

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Below, the finished statue is in good hands and well guarded.



Background and History

Special 50th Reunion Gift...Robert Frost Sculpture

In 1997 Alan Schechter viewed a life-size bronze sculpture of Robert Frost by George Lundeen. His immediate reaction was that a Frost sculpture would enhance the Amherst campus. The experience reminded Alan of the very special times that we had together with Robert Frost during our College days.

He was also inspired by the thought that such a sculpture could be used to symbolize the importance of professors in shaping the lives of Amherst students. This led him to propose to a group of our Classmates that the Class purchase the Lundeen sculpture for presentation to the College as part of our 50th Reunion gift. The response

was overwhelmingly positive.

Alan next discussed the concept with President Gerety and others in the Administration. After some consideration, the College decided that the addition of a Frost sculpture would be most appropriate. However, it favored the commissioning of a unique piece for a specific location on campus, rather than the Lundeen sculpture, which was one of about ten copies that had been made.

Tom then named a committee from various constituencies to move forward on the development of the concept and the selection of an appropriate sculptor.

In 1999 the College selected the noted sculptor, Penelope Jencks, to create the Frost sculpture that will be a part of the 50th Reunion gift of the Class of 1957. Ms. Jencks has created numerous public works, the most notable of which is probably the eight-foot bronze and granite sculpture of Eleanor Roosevelt that stands in Riverside Park in New York City.

The following is quoted from the Winter 2002 issue of Amherst. *“For the Frost piece, due to be completed before ‘57’s Reunion, the sculptor envisions ‘a casual pose, half seated half standing against a pile of rocks.... In his hand he would be holding a book. This would all be carved from one piece of granite: rocks, figure and book.’ The eight-foot figure will be placed on the ground without a pedestal and will face across the Main Quadrangle toward the Robert Frost Library.”*

Following Homecoming 2000 attending Classmates met to endorse the plan and its role as our special 50th Reunion gift. In a letter to Tom Gerety we indicated that our support of the project was based both on *“...the special role Robert Frost played in our lives on campus...”* and our desire *“...to contribute to the preservation of the memory of those moments and to express our appreciation of and to honor all of the members of the Amherst faculty who contributed so much to the enrichment of our lives.”*

In July 2002 Alan, Tom Gerety and Jill Meredith visited Ms. Jencks at her studio in Newton, MA. There they viewed the first clay maquette of the sculpture. They were very excited with the initial work and Ms. Jencks was authorized to proceed to the next stage, which is the production of a larger version of the first model.

The overall cost of the project is estimated to be \$250,000. As the project nears completion, we will seek contributions to help fund this gift to Amherst. Any remaining balance will come from College funds and the generous support of one of our classmates.

As we get closer to our 50th Reunion, Alan will launch a contest among Classmates to come up with the most appropriate wording for the sculpture’s commemorative plaque.

Stay tuned; you will not want to miss this opportunity.

Class Gift Chair, Alan Schechter
Past President, Bill Donohue

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Artist's Comments

Penelope Jencks is the artist creating the sculpture of Robert Frost (our class gift to Amherst)



College). The following are excerpts from an email Penelope sent to Alan Schechter in May, 2003 just before she sent the "clay" photos. *Webmaster*

**Piazza Stazione 12
55045 Pietrasanta (LU)
Italy
8/05/03**

Dear Tom, Jill & Alan,

I have finally gotten the sculpture to the point where I feel satisfied enough to have it cast into plaster. I am sending you some photos so that you can see where we are. As I mentioned, the head & hands will need to be "finished" in the full size, so I have decided to work on them in my own studio (as opposed to the enlarging studio, which from time to time resembles Grand Central Station at rush hour!) when I return in September.

As you can see from the photos, [[to view photos, click here](#)] the head has been roughed in, but there are still little wooden toothpicks in certain strategic spots, so that I will be able to know where I am, when it is enlarged. Some of these correspond to measurements I took from the Walker Hancock sculpture. Some are merely for purposes of clarification such as the one in the center of the mouth, which helps me to be aware of the center of the head, so it does not get lopsided. Naturally they will all be gone & the head will be much more resolved & simplified when it is finished.

The sculpture will be enlarged 1.6 times, so that it will be about 9 feet high. I plan to add 2 inches to the bottom, as I am not satisfied with the scale of the rock that is under his foot. It seems a little squished to me. It is hard to get a real sense of the whole piece, as the pictures were taken from much too close, due to the size of the room it is in. So it is kind of distorted and the proportions are a bit strange.

I am really sorry that you are unable to get here at this point to see it for yourselves, as a sculpture is definitely worth a thousand pictures! But everyone here who has seen it is extremely enthusiastic, and one woman (American, Frost enthusiast) was quite overcome. All of which makes me happy and feel that you would have liked it, too. Tomorrow I will scan the photos, at the enlargement studio, and send them on to you. Then I will send a copy of this letter with the original photos to each one of you so you can have them in better quality.

Italy is warm & beautiful & sunny & full of flowers...But I hope to actually get some vacation time here, while they are casting the piece. After it is in plaster, I will touch up things that need it and then it will go to the stone yard.

So...hope all is well with you & I will be coming to Amherst sometime this summer to go over the site with Carol Johnson. Hope to see you all then.

**All the best,
Penelope**

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Photos of Statue - Early Clay Stage

Penelope Jencks provided these photos of the Robert Frost project in the

early clay stage. The next step, after refining the clay model is to cast it in plaster. The final sculpture in granite will be about 1.6-times the size of the clay model. More progress and pictures will be forthcoming soon.

Four views of the head of
the sculpture



Three views of the entire sculpture, in the early clay stage of development

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Mini-Reunion in Italy visit Frost Statue

July 2004

Dear Classmates,

All about the Frost statue, the trip to Italy to review its progress, how you might participate and an array of mini-reunion opportunities in the coming months.

The Class of 1957 mini-reunioners who went to Italy this past May (Cris and Bill Donohue, Ken and Sue Kermes, Alan and Alison Schechter, Peter and Ellen Siebert,

Carl and Joni Grey, George Hacker, Michael Wray and Julie and I) had an extraordinary adventure of sight-seeing, learning, laughing, wine-drinking and occasional sleeping. My first and most enduring impression is we were a terrific group of bright, curious, knowledgeable, interesting and funny people. In that way, a good representation of the full class. The privilege of being with such people is the best reason to return for the reunion in May, 2007.

The Schechters planned an amazing itinerary. The high point was the day in Pietrasanta where we met Penelope Jencks, the sculptor who is creating the Frost statue our class will present to the college. (The ostensible reason for the trip was to see the work on the Frost statue in progress, not the wine and pasta).

Pietrasanta is the sculpture capital of Italy. Penelope has a small, well-lit studio there with 100's of photographs of Frost mounted on boards, a model of the finished statue dotted with holes and her rendering of the final head to scale. She took us through the entire process, beginning her first rendering of the piece, then doubling it (the reason for the holes - distances to be measured with calipers and then recreated 100% larger, still 1/2 the size of the final piece).

After the enlargement, Penelope completed a plaster version of just Frost's head - to scale. Then she invited three different studios to compete for the final carving assignment by doing a rendering of the head -- also to scale. We saw all three versions (which though based on the same model, were quite different) and spent considerable time with Keara McMartin, an American artist and Director of Sem Studio which won the competition.

The final statue is the result of a unique collaborative relationship between the artist, who does the original concept and rendering, and the artisan, who does the actual carving of the granite (which is being dug at this moment in Zimbabwe). Following Penelope's model, an artisan at Sem Studio does a rough-hewn rendering of the work. Late next winter, Penelope will return and work closely with that artisan to finish the sculpture. We saw this close relationship with other artist and artisan pairs at work at the Sem Studio. I suspect this is the defining moment -- when their combined creative energies come together on the final piece. That will be going on next spring.

Penelope and Keara are interesting, involved, committed artists. We are lucky they are in the process and grateful to the college, administration(s), Trustees and 1957 alumni who brought us together with them.

This sculpture is an amazing and unique project on a scale that I don't believe any other reuning class has ever undertaken. It will be dedicated at the meeting of the Society of the Alumni on Saturday of our 50th Reunion, May 31 -June 3, 2007. Penelope Jencks will be there to join us. You be there, too.

This statue honors Robert Frost in his role as teacher; he was on the faculty of Amherst on and off for decades and lectured and visited English classes the spring of our senior year. Through him, the statue also honors the stimulating and challenging Amherst College faculty who all encouraged us to grow, to experiment,

to develop knowledge and interests, to take risks, and to use the skills we learned throughout our lives.

**Best regards,
Harry Clark**

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Amherst College Class of 1957's 50th Reunion Gift

In 2002, after producing the first clay maquette, noted sculptor, Penelope Jencks of Wellfleet MA, was commissioned to create the Robert Frost sculpture. Most of the work is being done in Pietrasanta, the sculpture capital of Italy, where Ms. Jencks has a small well-lit studio with hundreds of photographs of Robert Frost mounted on boards. Working in clay, she made a second model, twice the size of the first maquette, which was then cast into plaster. The final sculpture, in granite, is 1.5 times the plaster model, or about 8 feet tall. Prior to the granite work, Ms. Jencks created a full size bust of Frost, in plaster. Having experienced some difficulties with the artisans in enlarging the maquette, she decided to give this bust to 3 different carving workshops in order to see how they would interpret her work, and if, in fact, granite would suit her sculpture. All three studios did excellent work. The College decided they preferred the treatment by Studio Sem, run by the American, Keara McMartin. The final sculpture is the result of a unique collaborative relationship between the artist, who creates the original concept and makes the models, and the artisans who do the actual carving in granite. Ms. Jencks is working closely with those artisans to finish the sculpture. The following pages are a montage representing the production of the sculpture from clay to granite. For more details, visit <http://www.amherst57.org/members/frostframe.htm>.



Penelope Jencks in Pietrasanta, Italy



Penelope Jencks describes the development of the Frost statue with classmates in Pietrasanta, Italy.

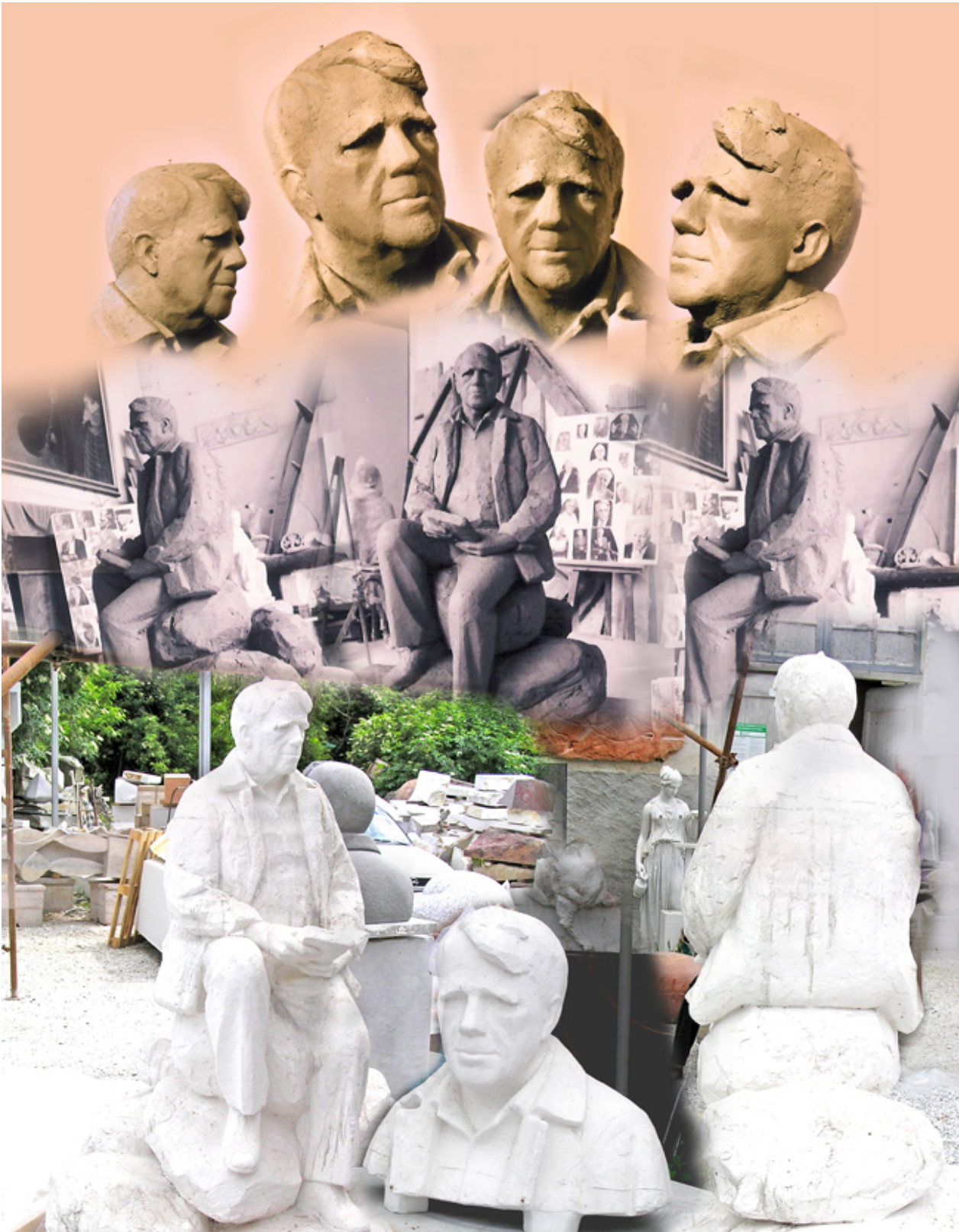


Penelope Jencks with plaster cast of statue

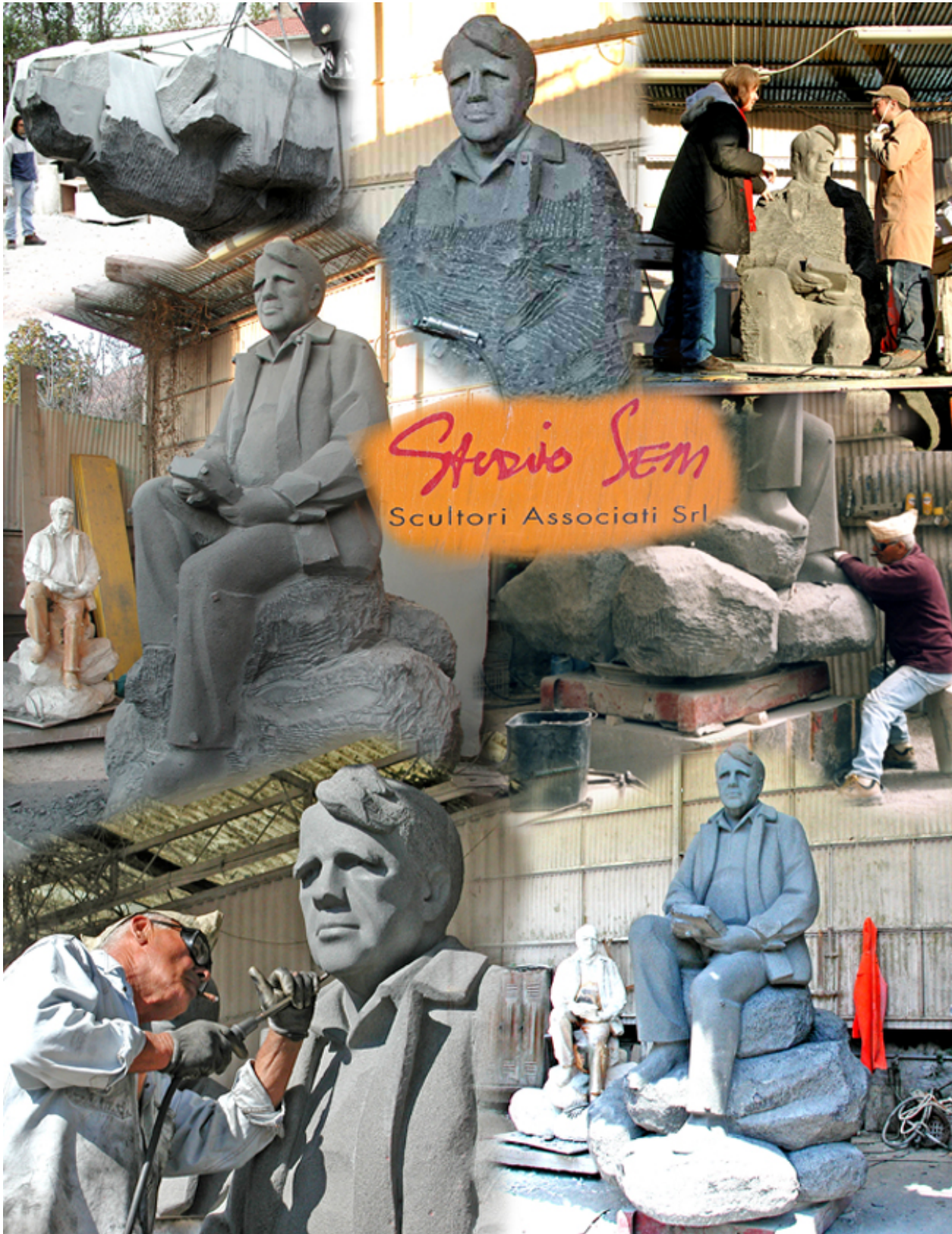


Classmates G. Hacker, C. Gray, M. Wray, W. Donohue, P. Seibert, A. Schechter, K. Kermes, and H. Clark with a bust of Frost at Studio Sem, in Pietrasanta, Italy.

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