



(From left) Stephen Marc, *Untitled* (from *Passage on the Underground Railroad* series), photographic montage, 2005; Rigo 23, *America*, mixed media on paper, 2002. (Photo courtesy of Gallery Paule Anglim)

Alumna Receives MacArthur GENIUS Grant

Elizabeth Turk '94 has been called a *genius* for her ability to make marble look featherweight, but now she has actually earned the title after being named a 2010 MacArthur Fellow. Turk, who received an MFA from MICA's Rinehart School of Sculpture, was recognized with a \$500,000 "genius award" for her elegant marble sculptures.

In Turk's installation series *The Collars*, hefty blocks of 400-pound marble are transformed into 21 delicate sculptures. In her hands, a traditionally heavy and finicky medium is reduced to a weightless and almost skeletal level of intricacy. Defying easy categorization, Turk's collars recall elements from the natural world—skeletons, spider webs, and shark's teeth—as well as Elizabethan fashion and antique lace patterns.

"With these and other visually arresting feats of precision, Turk is pushing the physical limits of her material and reviving a classical medium for contemporary artistic exploration," the MacArthur Foundation said in an announcement. The work is labor-intensive and often leaves little room for error. "That's the intriguing part. You have to think about gravity all the time," she said. "If you make a mistake, it breaks. You can't create some sort of concept that says, 'Oh yeah, that was really about some esoteric thing.' It just breaks."

Turk, who works from Atlanta, received a BA in international relations from Scripps College in California and went on to become a lobbyist before overhauling her career and attending MICA's Rinehart School of Sculpture.

Graduate school at MICA, she said, gave her the unfettered freedom to pursue her own ideas. "MICA taught me to 'figure it out on your own,' just like an art career," she said. "It is a very individual and, at times, tough path."

Much of Turk's career has been marked by an interest in a variety of mediums, including wax, clay, bronze, and porcelain as well as photography and video. But the demands of working with marble were part of what drew her to the medium.

"There is an incredible challenge to it," she said. "Not only does it carry the baggage of past histories but it's intellectually hard because all cultures have used it over time. You've got an amazing body of work to work from, but you also have to try and have a conversation with it, and I like that challenge."

"My hope is that I can further live up to the bar that's now placed in front of me, and I think that's really exciting," she said, anticipating her art will continue to focus on "the contemplation of human work and nature's work and how the two meet."