

Unveiling spotlights a recently completed portrait commission, figurative work or upcoming exhibition from some of the best and most active members of the Portrait Society of America. Featured this month is award-winning member, Alicia Ponzio, who discusses her recent unveiling of Nashville Symphony Music Director, Maestro Giancarlo Guerrero.

Alicia Ponzio: Carving Out New Challenges

BY CHRISTINE EGNOSKI

Internationally known, award-winning sculptor Alicia Ponzio is a member of the Portrait Society of America, has served on the faculty of *The Art of the Portrait* conferences, and was awarded First Place Sculpture in the 2016 *International Portrait Competition*. In September 2018, she unveiled the bust of Nashville Symphony Music Director Maestro Giancarlo Guerrero in honor of his 10th anniversary with the orchestra.

After recently speaking with Ponzio, I found her story about how she came to her art career fascinating and inspiring. For as long as Ponzio can remember, her main interest was art, but for a variety of reasons shortly after graduating from high school, she enlisted in the military. She served as a lieutenant in the U.S. Navy with a career in nursing. It was during her last years of service she gravitated back toward art, making the decision to follow her aspiration to be a figurative artist. After her discharge, she studied at the Watts Atelier and then with the late Sebastian Capella before

enrolling in the Florence Academy of Art in Italy. After graduation she remained in Italy for another three years, serving as the school's director of artistic anatomy and écorché sculpture.

Working mostly on speculation and selling through galleries, she recently accepted several commissions. Ponzio says, "This year I completed a medal for the Brookgreen Gardens Medal Series, the portrait of Maestro Giancarlo Guerrero and I'm currently casting a large-scale, two-figure composition for a private home in Minneapolis. Each of these projects has brought new challenges and surprises. For example, the Brookgreen medal project opened my mind to the possibilities of relief sculpture, an area I'd like to explore eventually in my personal work. In the future, I'd like to continue working in both ways, on speculation and commission. I feel that they fuel each other."

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Maestro Giancarlo Guerrero, bronze, 24 x 24 x 14". Collection of Nashville Symphony, on permanent display at Schermerhorn Symphony Center, Main Lobby, in Nashville, Tennessee.

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Alicia Ponzio with Giancarlo Guerrero at the unveiling of the sculpture. Photo by Sally Bebawy Photography.

Guerrero conduct. This gave her a sense of his persona. Later, they discussed the project via Skype and became further acquainted. Then Ponzio created small-scale sketches to work out ideas for the composition. In September 2017, they met for a sketching session, and in two hours she created a life-size clay sketch that she shipped back to San Francisco for reference. Ponzio says, "Those two hours were extremely useful in that I was able to study his facial features in three dimensions and converse with him. Watching a person's natural expressions helps to get a stronger



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sense of their character. I then created the final piece at my studio in San Francisco."

The unveiling of her sculpture was met with a grand round of applause from all who attended the event. Ponzio successfully brings life to her bronzes, using the language of the figure to speak of emotional experiences. In the bronze bust of Guerrero, she was able to capture his seriousness as an artist and his joy in creating music.

When I asked her if she had anything to pass along to emerging sculptors, she said, "I think it's important to evolve; and so I'd say step out of your comfort zone often. Take on new challenges and see them as opportunities to grow as an artist." ●



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