

# BEAUTIFUL CONTRADICTION: THE CONCRETE SCULPTURE OF CHRISTOPHER SMITH

“I am a sculptor with the nude human figure as my primary subject.” —Chris Smith

by Jodie A. Shull

**F**or Philadelphia sculptor Christopher Smith (b. 1958), the human figure has provided a consistent theme and inspiration. Solitary or in combination with others in compositional narratives, from the sacred to the secular, the human figure has always fascinated him. How did this accomplished sculptor of the flesh decide to learn the secrets of casting in concrete, the substance of sidewalks and skyscrapers?

“I was attracted to casting sculpture in concrete when I saw Stephen Robin’s (b. 1944) *Bowl of Fruit II* (1989) at the Pennsylvania Convention Center,” Smith says. “That

sculpture contains a beautiful contradiction: full sensuous forms expressed through a coarse, abrasive material normally associated with the construction trades. I loved the way it receives light, much like plaster but in a more granular fashion. Stephen’s concrete *Bowl of Fruit II* was the inspiration for my concrete reclining figure *Still Life* (2001–2003). The forms of her torso and limbs evoked fruit forms spilling from her cornucopia-like vulva.”

*On this page:* 4PM (2008), cast in GFRC (glass fiber reinforced cement), 35 inches high. *Opposite page, top:* 4PM (2008), cast in GFRC, 35 inches high, detail; *bottom:* Owl (2017), clay and GFRC, 20 inches high.

