



## Artist Statement

I am guided by an intuitive connection to stone and a strong motivation to work with a material in its natural state. Expressing my feelings, vision, and beliefs, my art is my conversation with the world. I look at artists from all periods of time. Michelangelo's *Prigionieri*, which demonstrated how figures are liberated from stone, are a strong catalyst for my work. I admire the work of Constantin Brancusi for his invention and abstraction of form and the brilliant simplicity of Isamu Noguchi. The sculptures I create are part of this historical discourse and also reflect my personal narrative.

Inspired by personal experiences, the art I create is reflective of my roles as a wife, mother, and Iranian immigrant adjusting to life in America. It is influenced by my Jewish values and traditions and is part of my journey as a modern woman exploring her place in the artistic world. My work creates an exchange of ideas between varied arts communities, women and future generations. Each work is reduced to essential elements: human torsos, individual and groups of full-sized figures, and objects from nature—trees, animals, the sun and moon.

The stone speaks to me and guides me as I work. Large-scale sculptures are often created out of a rigorous process including sketches and the creation of models. Smaller pieces are very sensitive things. They emerge from my feelings. Stone looks very hard, but it is truly quite soft. It is rough at the beginning and soft at the finish. I am very involved in the process of selecting the stones for my sculptures and travel each year to quarries in Italy (Carrara and Pietrasanta) and Los Angeles. I also work in clay and bronze, materials that offer great flexibility and allow me to sculpt greater detail and expression.

*Strength Revealed*, my latest solo exhibition, was a 25-year retrospective of my work organized by Barbara Gilbert, curator emerita of the Skirball Cultural Center. Accompanying the show was a catalogue titled *Strength Revealed: The Sculpture of Soraya Sarah Nazarian* including essays by Ruth Weisberg and Cynthia Burlingham and an interview with Gloria Gerace. The retrospective and publication centered on a desire for art to be used as a tool to create opportunities to dialogue. I consider the interchange between the finished piece and the viewer to be the most important aspect of the work. This conversation creates an energy and life within the stone that is not easily extinguished.