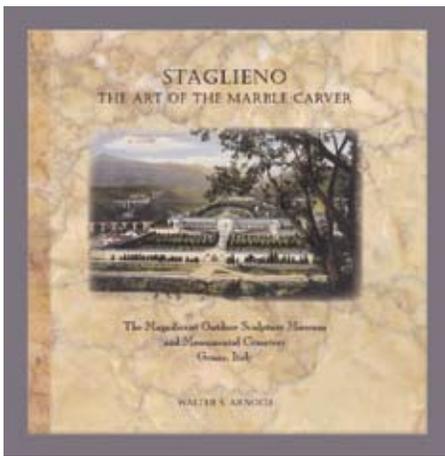


book review



STAGLIENO

The Art of the Marble Carver
by Walter S. Arnold
Edgecliff Press

This book, published last year, features photographs of Staglieno, the magnificent outdoor sculpture museum and monumental cemetery in Genoa, Italy by Walter Arnold, Paulo Marco Guerra and Fely Q. Arnold.

The huge park-like cemetery, established in the mid-nineteenth century, is remarkable for the extreme virtuosity of the sculpture with which it is populated.

As Walter explains in his introduction, "The monuments were group efforts; many specialists were required to bring them to fruition. The skill levels were so high that each particularity would take years, even decades to master. The sculptor would create the design by making drawings and a clay model. Since clay can shrink or shift and is not durable this model was cast in plaster by a *formatore* or mold maker. In the carving studio a team would work together; the *spozzatore* roughed out the block and the *smodellatore* measured from the model, developing all the forms and proportions. Then the *pannista* would carve the cloth and drapery and the *scultore* carved the face, hands and complex anatomy. The *ornatista*, with his precise and delicate hands carved the ornamental details, such as flowers, foliage and lace. The *scalpellino*, or stone cutter, would do the architectural moldings, geometric work and lettering. When necessary, the *raspatore*, with rasps and files and the *lucidare*, the polisher would refine and polish the surface of the marble.

When the carvers were done, the *barrocciai*, or sculpture transporters, would move these massive delicate masterpieces from the studio to the cemetery in an elaborately orchestrated effort utilizing ox-drawn carts, wooden rollers, iron pry bars, jacks, pulleys and ropes."

Selecting images from Walter's book to represent the range of the work represented therein made me aware of how difficult it must have been for him to choose subjects from the thousands of grave sites (117,600) and hundreds of chapels within the walls of Staglieno.

The book can be ordered from Walter's web site, www.stonecarver.com.



left and above: The delicate and intricate work of the *ornatista* is depicted in these images. The coins, although they are such a small part of a monumental composition, are rendered in excruciating detail—heads, symbols and decorative wreaths were carved on each coin with no less care than the faces, hands, wings and drapery of the figures of the angels, the face of the nun in the lower left corner and the architectural details, the ornamental cornice and capitals behind the angels.