

# # Monumental # Women

**Meredith Bergmann**

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Today we present a labor of love to you, to New York, and to the world. A labor of love is done for the love of the work itself, done without any assurance that the work will be rewarded, and done with all the intensity that drives us, intensity that is never easily welcomed by those around us.

I've labored to make these bronze figures embody what each of these three women most loved.

Sojourner Truth loved speaking the truth. Her voice was her weapon and her art. It was said of her that she "carried the people by storm," possessing a "heart of love" and a "tongue of fire," combining "power and sweetness in that great, warm soul and that vigorous frame." Here among this collection of statues she will be, as Nell Irvin Painter called her, "the electrifying black presence in a white crowd."

Susan B. Anthony loved to organize, strategize, and win. Stanton compared her to a "Doric Column... so simply, so grandly she stands... supporting her one vast idea— the enfranchisement of women. Anthony once complained to her diary: "I love to make history but hate to write it."

Elizabeth Cady Stanton loved to write. Vivian Gornick wrote that for Stanton, "only the love of thinking could harness the resentment over inequality... it gave her the energy to care for five, six, seven children during the day and sit down at midnight at the kitchen table to write a two-hour speech that demanded to know what it means to be a human being."

These three women loved freedom, and wanted it for themselves. They led a revolution against the definition of "woman" that denied them the liberty to fulfill themselves. They made common cause to fight for the abolition of slavery and the right to vote. Look at them, and realize that at this moment, somewhere, women are sitting together at a kitchen table, working to change the world.

This was a deeply gratifying project to pour my love into, and I got to work with many wonderful people:

Pam Elam and the board members of Monumental Women, who were unfailingly supportive and encouraging,

Professors Nell Irvin Painter, Margaret Washington, Darcy Grimaldo Grigsby and Darcy's graduate students, who gave me thoughtful and useful comments,

My skilled and talented assistants Patrick Pigott, Emily Bedard, and Kate Herzlin,

The artisans at Digital Atelier, Sculpture House Casting, John Stevens Shop, Granite Importers, Ottavino Stone Works and the UAP Tallix Foundry,

Susan Baggs, Richard Southwick and Kat Monaghan at Beyer Blinder Belle, architects,

And my husband and project manager, Michael Bergmann, and our son Dan, who told me,

“I look at the monument and realize that we should all do what we love for the good of others.”