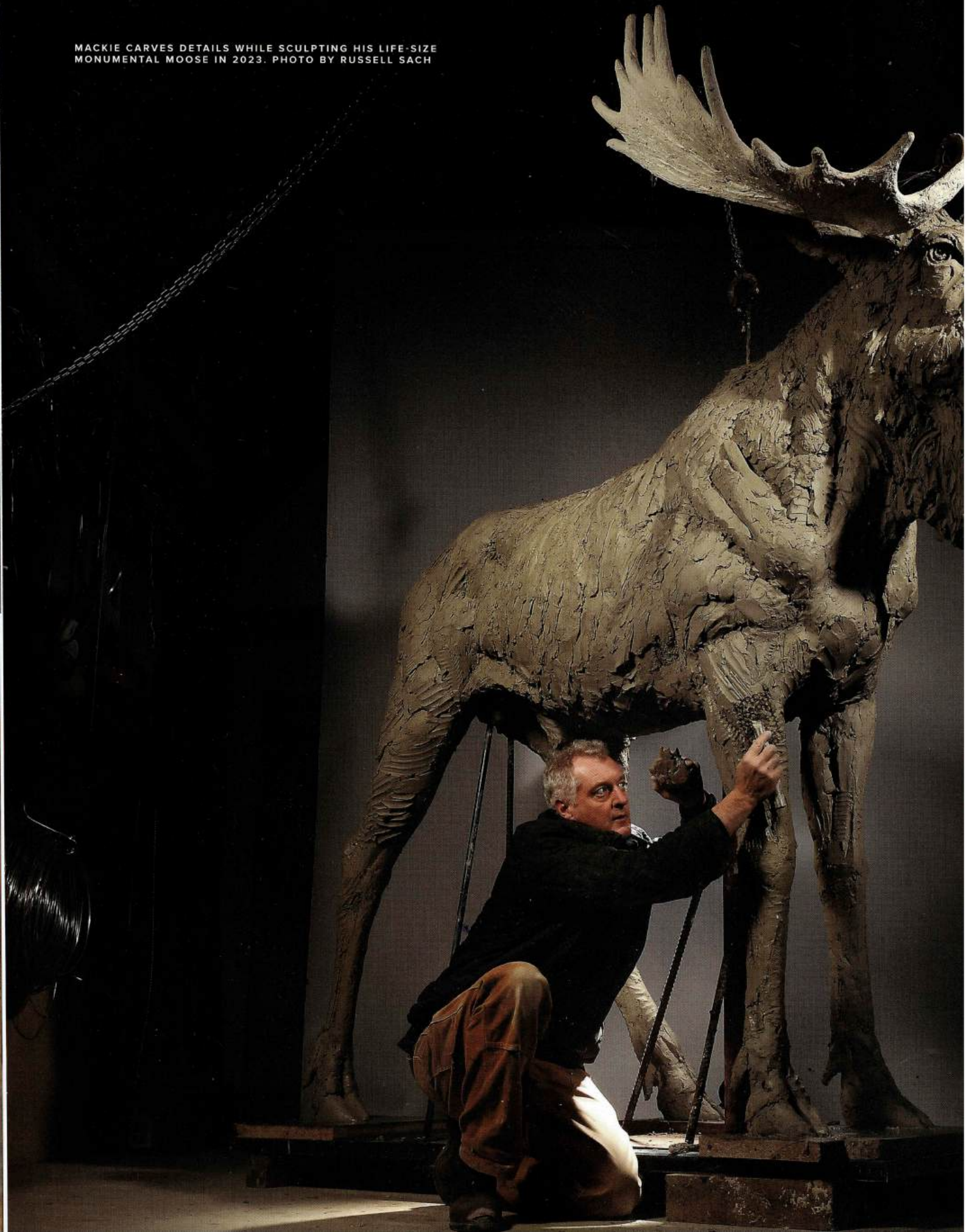


MACKIE CARVES DETAILS WHILE SCULPTING HIS LIFE-SIZE MONUMENTAL MOOSE IN 2023. PHOTO BY RUSSELL SACH

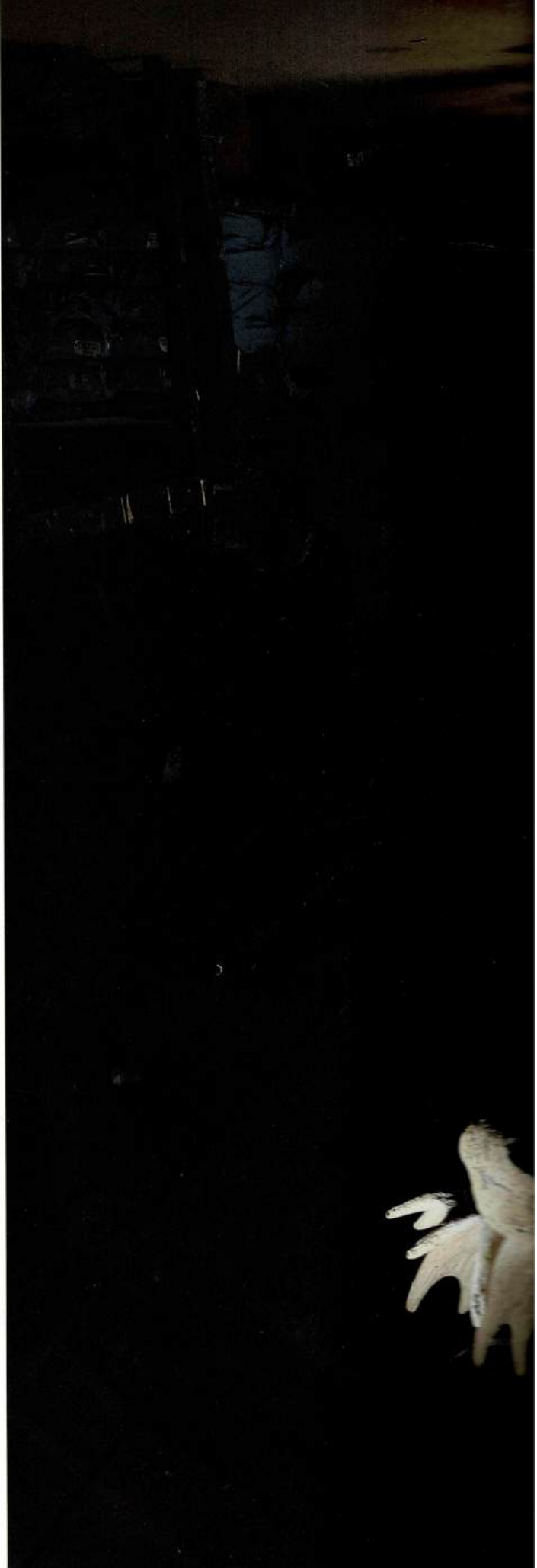


Mackie traveled to Sweden to see moose in the wild. At says the sculptor: "Half the battle of creating a sculpture is getting into the head of the animal and getting the animal into my head," Mackie to change his mind. They wanted a pack of wolves instead, but it was too late for. Unfortunately, the client changed their mind and decided to enjoy making," he says. "I only take commissions if it's something I know I will sculpture of a calf.

in the beginnings of creating a commissioned work of an enormous bull moose, a work he would follow by creating a The day I visited Mackie in his Oxfordshire studio, he was his hands, solidifying their existence in bronze. sculptor translates the very nature of animals into clay with to life with an innate understanding of their true nature. The essence of animals in bronze, bringing life-sized sculptures are at the core of his work. His raison d'être is to capture the savannah. His passion for wildlife conservation and nature England or driving a Land Rover through the Kenyan on the moors of Northumberland in northern Englishman one might see hiking in the rain an outdoorsman. He's the rugged type of amish Mackie, world-renowned sculptor, is

PHOTOS COURTESY OF HAMISH AND LAURA MACKIE
STORY BY MERRILL WATSON

Sculptor Hamish Mackie Conserves Wildlife in Bronze



one harrowing point, a cow moose was not pleased when Mackie crouched to take pictures. His guide suggested he stand up before the moose charged, since the animal may have confused him for a wolf. "My gray hair didn't help," jokes Mackie. The moose puffed and snorted, but, luckily, she didn't charge. Now firmly in Mackie's head, he had to sculpt it despite the changed commission. Would he do the calf as well? "Yes, because it's in my head," he laughs. Mackie's understanding of animals stems from growing up on a farm in Cornwall. The eldest of three boys, he says he had the most idyllic of childhoods. However, school life was less than perfect. Being left-handed, "the sign of the devil in Cornwall," his school forced him to learn to write with his right hand by tying his left arm behind his back. The administration also put a patch over his good eye to correct his "lazy eye." This did not help as it taught his brain to do mirror writing, which means to read using a mirror. However, I notice as he applies clay to the moose's frame, that he uses both hands skillfully. Perhaps the torture did indeed help his craft?



LEFT: "BALD EAGLE," 2023; RIGHT: "GROUSE FLUSHING," 2019





Mackie sculpts most of his creations in editions of 12; the moose is part of an edition of nine. There are smaller pieces that he calls "mortgage busters," such as a popular sculpture of a titanium octopus that measured six inches long in an edition of 50. Shrewdly, Mackie currently eschews gallery representation in favor of social media with the help of his wife Laura. Social media has a global reach

too? And he does. He had just funded his studies of furniture and product design by selling his art, so why not make a living out of it,

he says. "Everyone said you won't make a living out of sculpture,"

After university, Mackie decided to sculpt full time. has inspired our students to create their own three-dimensional work in response to his great guidance." Mackie vision with young artists," says a Radley official. "Mackie He's eager to spread and share his artistic passion and giving back.

early support, and, according to the school, the sculptor is stands on the school grounds. Mackie is grateful for the him to create a bronze sculpture of Saint Peter that still Shortly after he left Radley, the school commissioned afterwards:"

to do what I'm doing now. I never studied sculpture "I walked away from Radley with enough knowledge develop it.

Kilsby, with acknowledging his talent and pushing him to him to develop his art further. He credits his teacher, Paul and run a pack of beagles, Mackie's teachers encouraged school, where to this day the boys dress in gowns and ties At Radley, a quintessential English boys' boarding his talent.

College in Oxfordshire where he was able to fully develop the draconian Cornish education system. It was at Radley parents decided to send him to a boarding school far from art teachers who encouraged his creativity. Fortunately, his Despite the school's strict approach, he did have great

and allows collectors to see his work as well as his process. The sculptor begins his process in the wild by photographing animals because it's usually safer than getting too close to them. While herding rhinos at Lewa Conservation Trust in northern Kenya in 1996, an aggressive male chased him up a tree, much to the amusement of the park rangers. It was this harrowing work at Lewa that cemented his passion for conservation. Now he works from life with a pair of binoculars and his traveling studio box, creating maquettes, small models, in clay in the back of a Land Rover. According to Mackie, fashioning the maquettes is, "A great way of making you look properly. I can get the subject into my head." He then brings the maquettes and the pictures back to the studio to transform them into life-sized sculptures. "I have to show you this," says Mackie, leading me to a freezer in his studio. He opens the lid to reveal a skinned Roe deer with its head still attached. Mackie loves deer stalking, and deer have always been one of his favorite subjects. "I'm going to sculpt him, so I have skinned half of him so I can see how it all works." One might not think that shooting the deer indicates a love of wildlife. On the contrary, Hamish says he's extremely enthusiastic about conservation and wildlife. "I also love eating game. It all goes hand in hand. Without shooting, there wouldn't be any conservation." This is particularly true on the grass moors, he says. However, he admits while on a recent shoot, he had more fun taking pictures of grouse than shooting them. Mackie sculpts using the lost-wax process, *cire perdue*,



MACKIE PROUDLY STANDS NEXT TO HIS MOOSE SCULPTURE.

which dates to 3000 B.C. Little has changed in the process, and it remains very labor intensive.

First, he creates an armature, the metal skeleton that keeps the body erect. Then he applies the clay.

"I love making things out of mud. You get gnarly texture, including fingerprints."

These "gnarly" textures give Mackie's sculptures life. The clay on the moose is currently four fingers away from its final thickness.

Next, he covers the clay with chicken wire and molds silicone rubber around the structure. This allows him to pick up the tiniest of details, including fingerprints. Afterwards, with the help of his foundry, he creates a positive relief mold in wax to match the desired thickness of the bronze. Mackie then applies wax fitted with tubes that allow metal to flow in—and noxious gasses to flow out—during casting. The wax mold is filled over five days with liquid ceramic fortified with fiberglass and wire. When the ceramic shell is fired, the wax melts away—hence the phrase, "lost wax."



MACKIE ALIGNS HIS "GROUSE FLUSHING."

In the last step, Mackie pours the melted bronze. Once the metal has solidified, he breaks away the ceramic to reveal the final bronze. He then treats his creation with chemicals and heat to obtain the final color and patina of the sculpture. Mackie has been working with Lockbund Sculpture Foundry to help produce his sculptures since 2008. Simon Allison of Lockbund, who backed Mackie from the beginning, told the sculptor, "You cast what you want and pay me when you sell it." Considering the time and expense involved, like Radley College, Allison must have seen something in Mackie and his work. There is indeed something there. The animals Mackie sculpts are dynamic and have soul. He shows me a lioness he created. Her eyes cave inward, yet she follows you around the studio with her gaze. Mackie sculpts the eyes this way to give a hint of an eye. "Let the brain fill in the details," he says, which makes the animal look alive. It works. Mackie strives to recreate the wild in his animal subjects. Seeing them in their own habitat, getting into their heads, experiencing their environment,

MACKIE STALKS A MOOSE IN SWEDEN.





TOP: "BLACK RHINO RUNNING," (2018; MACKIE STUDIES A BLACK RHINO AT LEWA WILDLIFE CONSERVANCY.

he claims, "It [all] makes me appreciate who they are, what they are and why they are like that. It is particularly good for us as humans to have a connection to nature. I have a big interest in getting back to who we are as an animal and species."

It's that grounded connection that enables Mackie to create these dynamic animals with soul for us all to enjoy.

Thank you, Hamish. (◡)

For more information about Mackie and his work, visit hamishmackie.com.

Merrill Watson, a native Californian living in the English countryside with her three setters, fell in love with writing while sending letters from her mud hut in Senegal in the 1990's. A freelance writer, she loves to share her passion for outdoor sports, travel and art with her readers and fellow travelers. She is currently working on her first novel about adventures in the English countryside as an American. For more information, contact her at merrillwatson@hotmail.com.