



Iconic Art

GLOUCESTER ARTIST MORGAN FAULDS PIKE
CREATES WORKS OF ART STEEPED IN HISTORY.

By **Mary Grauerholz**

Photographs by **Kindra Clineff**



The Gloucester
Fishermen's Wives
Memorial is one
of the city's most
iconic attractions.



She stands sentry on the Gloucester waterfront, her skirt rippling in the wind as she faces the ocean with her

two children, eyes searching and hopeful for the sight of a fishing boat. The Gloucester Fishermen's Wives Memorial, a 12-foot-tall sculpture, is one of the city's most iconic attractions. This year, a new

seawall along the boulevard and rows of new flower beds—including 22,000 tulips—form a beautiful backdrop for the bronze and granite sculpture. Its creator, Morgan Faulds Pike, is grateful.

"They're glorious," Pike says of the flowers, planted last spring by Generous Gardeners, a Gloucester volunteer group. She couldn't be more pleased to see the floral touch around her sculpture, which took two years to create. "It wasn't until the crane lifted the bronze figures to the boulder, and the feet fit, that we could breathe a sigh of relief," she says.

Pike is currently working on part of a pipe organ case for Christ Church Episcopal in Philadelphia; her new carvings exactly match the originals on the restored and enlarged antique case that now houses a brand-new instrument built by C.B. Fisk.





Pike's own artistic spirit bloomed when she was a girl, drawing with her mom and building furniture with her dad in the family's Wilmington, Delaware, workshop. As a teenager, she worked in painting and printmaking. But when she got to the School for the Arts at Boston University and took a sculpture elective, a fresh seed was planted. "I knew immediately I wanted to be a sculptor," she says. "It was the tactile aspect and the three-dimen-

sional aspect; it was about building something."

After getting her BFA in sculpture in 1975, Pike was offered a way to explore artful construction in a nine-to-five job when C.B. Fisk, a pipe organ builder in Gloucester, hired her to work as an apprentice cabinetmaker, designer draftsman, and sculptor. "It was very interesting to go from a fine arts degree to applied arts as a cabinet builder," she says. After working there for

five years, she branched out on her own, continuing to hand-carve elements for the facades of pipe organs and create sculpture for liturgical and architectural contexts, as well as stand-alone pieces.

Among her majestic pieces are carved panels for a 20-foot-high baptismal font for a church in St. Paul, Minnesota, and carved panels for a C.B. Fisk organ in the Minato Mirai concert hall in Yokohama, Japan. For her largest work on a

Right, Pike at the Gloucester Fishermen's Wives Memorial. Opposite, A carved wood reredos altarpiece at St. Mary's Episcopal Church in Rockport.



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pipe organ façade, now at Indiana University, she carved life-size male and female figures out of solid walnut for an awe-inspiring 40-foot-high façade. Pike recently built a carved wood reredos altarpiece for St. Mary's Episcopal Church in Rockport, which will be dedicated this fall.

Pike works in a spacious studio in the home she and her husband recently built in Gloucester, part of a full life that is intertwined with

love, music, and art. Her husband, David C. Pike, is a musician and a pipe organ builder who holds two positions: executive vice president and tonal director at C.B. Fisk and music director at St. Mary's Episcopal Church in Rockport. (Morgan sings in his choir.) "I call us a design-build team, with music added," Pike says with a light laugh. The couple just celebrated their 35th wedding anniversary.

Pike's work finds her steeped

in history. She is currently working on part of a pipe organ case for Christ Church Episcopal in Philadelphia's historic district, where Benjamin Franklin attended church. Her new carvings exactly match the originals on the restored and enlarged antique case that now houses a brand-new instrument built by C.B. Fisk.

When Pike started carving for pipe organs in her early 20s, it was a rarity to see a woman working on massive projects that require major muscle. "The most frequent comment I used to get," she recalls, "was 'Oh, I thought a little old man did this!' I'm sure I lost some big jobs because they thought a pint-sized woman couldn't do this kind of work."

Pike was elated to hear she had won the competition to build the Gloucester Fishermen's Wives Memorial in 1991. The sculpture was conceived and funded by the Gloucester Fishermen's Wives Association, whose members maintain the sculpture; the City of Gloucester donated the site. Shortly after Pike got the commission, the fishing industry suffered a collapse, which delayed the fundraising effort for building the sculpture.

Pike found the sculpture's 25-ton boulder base at a Cape Ann quarry whose owner, the late Don Johnson, donated the boulder and its excavation. That alone was a feat. "I spent the better part of a spring and fall tromping around Johnson's property," she says. The sculpture was dedicated in August 2001, in a ceremony that Pike happily recalls. "It was very festive," she says, with notables such as John Kerry mingling with the crowd and Ted Kennedy attending via satellite.

"The whole building process," Pike says, "was a thrill ride." ■