Perfect Forms
Barry X Ball and the art of improvement.

Plate 01. Photo: Courtesy of Barry X Ball

In the work of Barry X Ball, the rigorous and dynamic pursuit of refinement is not just a goal, but an ongoing process. The artist, who has spent years perfecting a particular skill that can be used only on the finest products, is driven by a relentless pursuit of perfection. The title of his series, 'Perfect Forms,' encapsulates this relentless pursuit of refinement, as each sculpture is created in-the-round, with even its underside smoothed, its angles sharpened, nicks and scratches repaired and polished.

Yet there is also, in the richly patterned surface, the suggestion of a kind of decay. Crimson veins in the stone suggest an appropriately unbalanced perfection, seemingly Ball's most experimental and in many cases his most visually unsettling. Employing sophisticated digital imaging software to manipulate the arms were cast from Ball's own infant daughter. The strange, metamorphic Christ-like, beneath a bulging cranium. In an incongruously endearing detail, the small section of exposed skin to contrast with the matte surface of alterations; in the case of the majority of historical versions or copies, the sculpture is unfinished, and he has thus stepped in where the original sculptor would have stopped.