



Mauricio Degollado

## How Do You Make A Monumental Sculpture?

How do you make a large-scale sculpture? This was the question that Clemente, Federico Silva's assistant for more than 10 years, answered for us. "The first thing is to decide what you're going to do, that is, the figure. Then you make a small plaster model. When Don Federico is satisfied, we make a sketch of the dimensions the sculpture will have." Federico Silva's workshop in Tlaxcala is in a former thread factory called La Estrella, so many sketches can be done on paper hung on its high walls. "Once you have the sketch and you know the proportions, you decide what material you're going to use: concrete or iron. Depending on that, you build a mold onto which the material will be poured." The test of the proportions is important because, for example, determining the distribution of the weight of a piece is what will allow it to remain in place.

Concrete sculptures are made of a mix of materials selected by the sculptor: red and black *tezontle* rock, river sand, mined stone, and they are all mixed with cement to give it a different texture. That is where the red, black and almost white dots we can see in the piece if we get close enough are from. The mix can take on different hues. "If Don Federico decides that it should be colored, he adds earth and pigments; then it is poured into the wooden mold, almost always set on the floor, or it's poured vertically, because when it's set, it's very difficult to pick up." The process can take as long as two months and the result, in the case of concrete, are pieces that weigh almost 20 tons. Sometimes two cranes working together are not enough to pick them up. The iron pieces are made in another way, but no by any means a simpler one. For them, the skill lies in the ability to decide where the welds should be made so they are not noticeable and the sculpture looks as though it were a single piece. **MM**