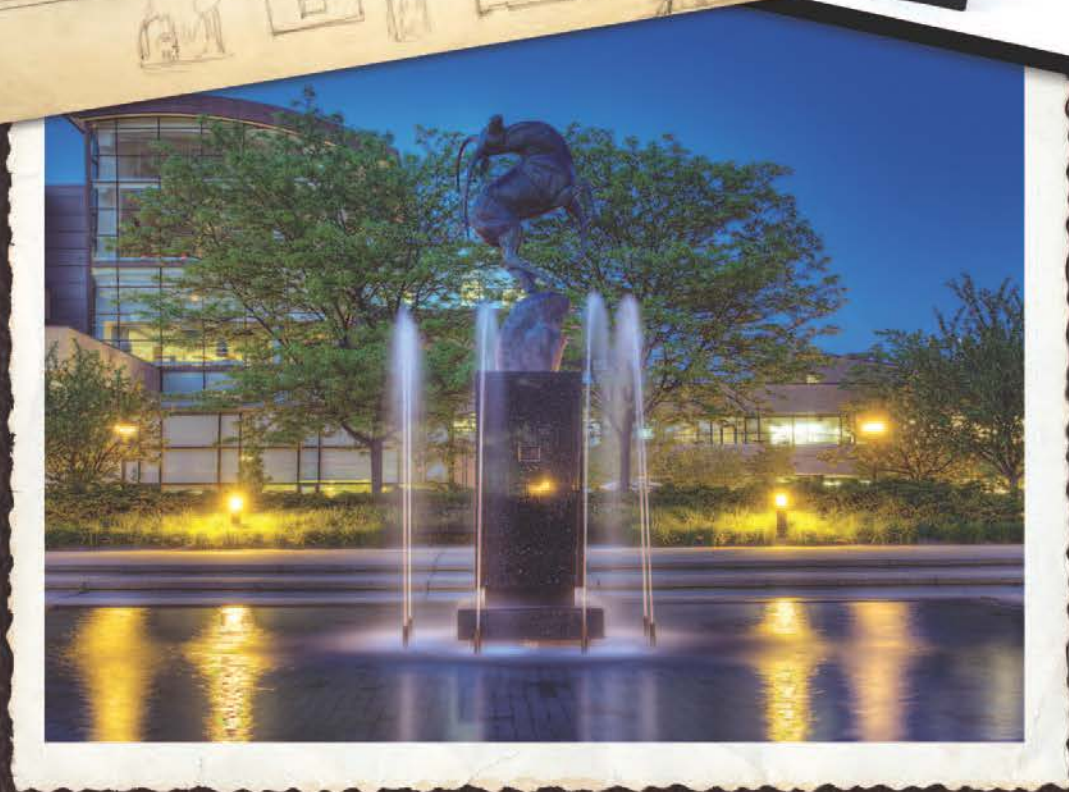
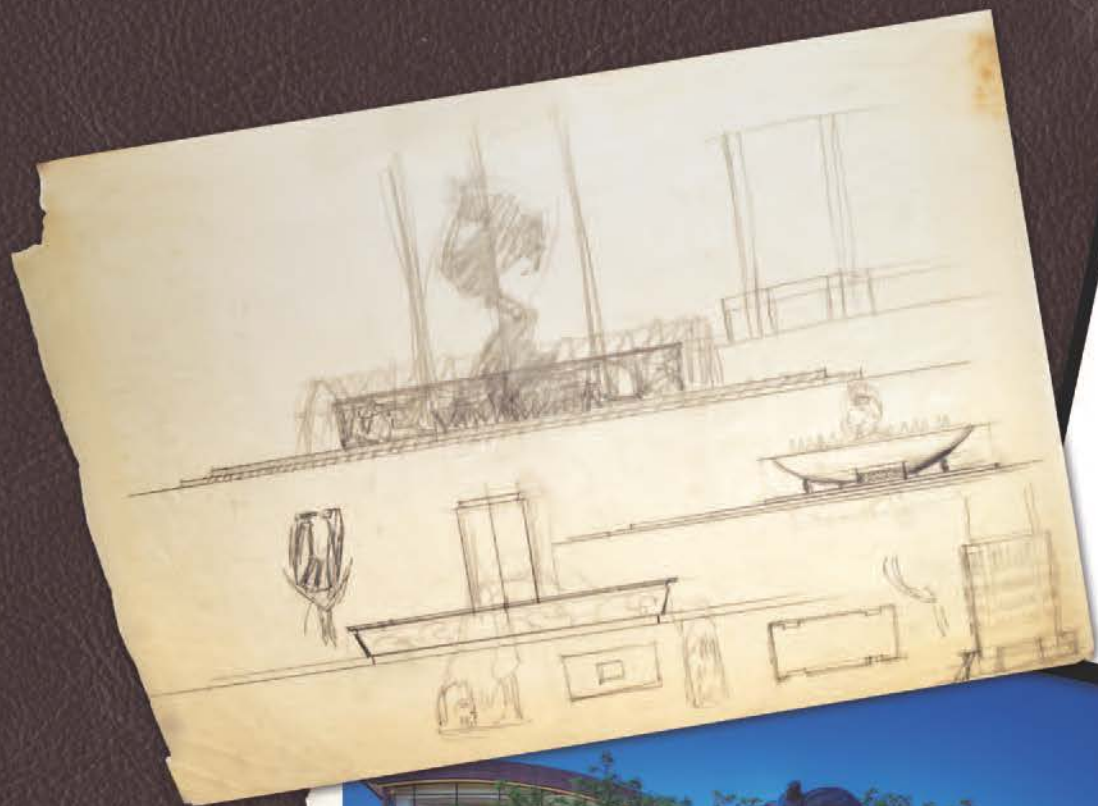


# Sketches to Sculptures, Rendered Reality: Sixty Years with Marshall M. Fredericks





# Sketches to Sculptures, Rendered Reality:

Sixty Years with Marshall M. Fredericks

Marilyn L. Wheaton, Editor

with contributions by  
Joseph Antenucci Becherer, Vince Carducci, Dennis Alan Nawrocki,  
Michael W. Panhorst, and MaryAnn Wilkinson

The Marshall M. Fredericks Sculpture Museum  
Saginaw Valley State University  
University Center, Michigan

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This volume is published to accompany the exhibition *Sketches to Sculptures, Rendered Reality: Sixty Years with Marshall M. Fredericks*, held at the Marshall M. Fredericks Sculpture Museum, University Center, Michigan, February 12 – June 12, 2010.

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**Please note:**

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Where dimensions are given, height precedes width precedes depth unless otherwise indicated.

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## Credo

To me, sculpture is a wonderful and exciting thing, vital and all absorbing. It is sometimes very discouraging and difficult but often, too, unbelievably gratifying and satisfying.

There are several things concerning Sculpture that I believe are extremely important. It must be wholly consistent and in harmony with the Architecture involved, as well as being a beautiful entity within itself. It must embody a significance suitable to and expressive of the purpose and setting, and finally it must have a constructive meaning for others.

I love people, for I have learned through many experiences, both happy and sad, how beautiful and wonderful they can be; therefore I want more than anything in the world to do Sculpture which will have real meaning for other people, many people, and might in some way encourage, inspire or give them happiness.

- Marshall M. Fredericks  
1956





## Preface and Acknowledgments

Marshall Fredericks's forte was sculpture intended for the public arena, and his Credo, reproduced on the opposite page, makes it clear that he believed such accessible sculpture "might in some way encourage, inspire or give [people] happiness."

Public sculpture falls into two major categories: freestanding works placed in public spaces and architectural works that are incorporated into the design of a building, bridge, or other structure. In the former group are such diverse works as the prehistoric Stonehenge monument in Wiltshire, England, erected some forty-five hundred years ago, and Alexander Calder's monumental bright red stabile *La Grande Vitesse*, dedicated in 1967 in downtown Grand Rapids, Michigan. Architectural sculpture ranges from the gargoyles on medieval cathedrals to embossed concrete panels adorning the sides of a local bank or office complex. Architectural sculpture is often actually integrated into a building; when freestanding it is nevertheless conceived of as closely related to the structure to which it belongs. Freestanding sculptures are designed to be studied and enjoyed from any angle. Some are site-specific, their meaning and artistic effect dependent to some degree on their location, while others are truly able to "stand alone" and could be placed in a variety of settings. Marshall Fredericks excelled at both types of public sculpture.

Fredericks's *Leaping Gazelle*, one of the artist's favorite sculptures, was cast several times and is a fine example of a freestanding sculpture that can be viewed from every angle. It can be seen at eleven sites in Michigan, including the artist's gravesite at Greenwood Cemetery in Birmingham, and in Aarhus, Denmark; Stavanger, Norway; Lidingo, Sweden; Toyota City, Japan; Palm Beach, Florida; Spartanburg, North Carolina; and at Brookgreen Gardens in South Carolina.

Architectural sculpture was of paramount concern throughout Fredericks's career. He greatly respected architects and developed close relationships with a number of architectural firms, including Harley, Ellington and Day; Alden B. Dow; and Graham, Anderson, Probst and White. Those collegial relationships resulted in important projects such as *The Spirit of Detroit*, a monumental freestanding sculpture in front of the Coleman A. Young Municipal Center in downtown Detroit; the *Day and Night Fountain* in front of the Henry J. McMorran Auditorium in Port Huron, Michigan; and *The Expanding Universe Fountain* in the inner court of the U.S. Department of State Building in Washington, D.C.

Among Fredericks's site-specific sculptures are the *Cleveland War Memorial: Fountain of Eternal Life* in downtown Cleveland and *Christ on the Cross* in Indian River, Michigan. These two monumental works show the artist's ability to create powerful symbols in very divergent locations—a busy urban space and a secluded natural setting.

Many of Fredericks's personal traits—spirituality, love of children (he and his wife Rosalind had five of their own), remarkable sense of humor, humanitarian impulses—are exemplified in much of the work he created during his seventy-year career. While his extensive body of work is hard to neatly categorize, four major themes can be identified: architectural (both freestanding and reliefs incorporated into buildings); commemorative (sculptures and medals); spiritual (saints, biblical, and spiritual figures), and whimsical (fierce animals with friendly faces, dramatic clowns).

While people have for decades marveled at Fredericks's prolific work ethic and the quantity of monumental work he produced, most are not aware of the incredible effort involved in bringing his works to fruition. The goal of this exhibition and publication is to elucidate Fredericks's working process—how a sketch or a drawing of an idea becomes a maquette or model, then a mold and finally a metal or stone sculpture. *Sketches to Sculptures, Rendered Reality: Sixty Years with Marshall M. Fredericks* is intended to give the viewer a look at the multiple processes of creating a sculpture. The exhibition includes informal ink sketches on tablet paper, graphite and pencil drawings on tracing paper, and presentation drawings done in gouache and charcoal on board, all drawn from the artist's project files, which are housed in the archives at the Marshall M. Fredericks Sculpture Museum. These are presented in proximity to bronze castings of the original maquettes and models of the full-size works. Many of the informal sketches include notations penned by Fredericks that explain his ideas for materials to be used, the possible title and dimensions of a work, and quotations that might be included with memorials.

Seeing the drawings side by side with the bronze maquettes and models provides insights that will enable viewers to better



appreciate one of this country's greatest twentieth-century figurative sculptors. The publication *Marshall M. Fredericks, Sculptor* (2003), which is available for purchase at the Marshall M. Fredericks Sculpture Museum, includes more detailed information about the artist and his life's work.

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In the 2007 strategic plan for the Marshall M. Fredericks Sculpture Museum the Advisory Board and staff set the goal of making the museum and Marshall Fredericks's work known globally. One of the strategies we adopted to meet that goal was to create an exhibition of Fredericks's work that would travel extensively.

In early 2008, Museum Registrar Geoffe Haney and I began to identify objects in the collection that would represent a broad spectrum—sixty years—of Fredericks's career and which would be appropriate for traveling, keeping in mind that plaster objects cannot travel, in accordance with the legal agreement between Marshall M. Fredericks and Saginaw Valley State University (SVSU).

Because education is embedded in every aspect of Museum programs, the staff and I made the decision to make this traveling exhibition more than a display of sculpture. We wanted every viewer to walk away from the exhibition with some understanding of the thought processes of a sculptor and how a concept that is first drawn on paper becomes a reality.

Using our compiled list of thirty small bronze sculptures and three reliefs, Museum Archivist Melissa Ford researched Fredericks's project files in the Museum archives and located one or more drawings or sketches drafted by the artist for each of the sculptures. Thus the exhibition title, *Sketches to Sculptures, Rendered Reality: Sixty Years with Marshall M. Fredericks*.

Because the drawings and sketches are fragile, they are too delicate to travel and so we asked Rebecca Zeiss at Superior Photo & Design in Midland, Michigan, to create high-quality archival reproductions of these thirty-five never-before-seen works on paper. Rebecca spent hundreds of hours examining every sketch and drawing, devising techniques and choosing paper for the reproductions that would perfectly capture the look of the originals. Scott Slocum, who was Marshall Fredericks's assistant for seventeen years, installed the exhibition for its debut at the Marshall M. Fredericks Sculpture Museum in February 2010. When the last piece was hung, Scott asked: "Are you sure these aren't the real sketches and drawings?"

Museum Curator of Education Andrea Ondish and Senior Secretary Laurie Allison were steady hands and provided insightful suggestions during the exhibition preparation and installation. Thank you!

Assembling a traveling exhibition and publishing a catalogue is a major undertaking that requires substantial financial support. I am forever grateful to the generous donors who have supported the exhibition and this catalogue: Bob and Maggie Allesee, Eaton Corporation Charitable Fund, Don and JoAnne Petersen, The Jack and Joanne Martin Charitable Foundation, The William P. and Susan H. Vititoe Charitable Foundation, Denis and Madeline Burke, Robert Sarow, and Carl and Christina Fredericks. I am especially appreciative of the SVSU Office of University Communications, which funded the printing of the catalogue.

Museum Board members Suki Fredericks and Barbara Heller were very helpful early in the project, when we first began thinking about who the catalogue essayists and editor would be. Working with essayists MaryAnn Wilkinson, Joseph Becherer, Vince Carducci, Dennis Nawrocki, and Michael Panhorst and editor Cynthia Newman Edwards has been an extraordinary experience. My thanks to them for their significant contributions to this catalogue.

I especially want to thank Dr. Donald Bachand, SVSU Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, and Sue Vititoe, Museum Advisory Board Chair, who have consistently and with absolute confidence provided financial, moral, and intellectual support for every project we have undertaken at the Museum.

– Marilyn L. Wheaton  
Director, Marshall M. Fredericks Sculpture Museum  
January 2011



# “An Environment of Beauty as a Part of Everyday Living”: The Sculpture of Marshall M. Fredericks<sup>1</sup>

*MaryAnn Wilkinson*

Marshall M. Fredericks was one of the few artists of his generation to revel in the challenge of making art for public spaces. His sculptures are a testament to his belief that art could and should have meaning for the ordinary viewer and that a sense of engagement between viewer and sculpture would bring greater meaning to the space surrounding the work. He believed in the traditional relationship between sculptor and architect, and many of his sculpture groupings are elegantly paired with building design. Over his long career, architecture styles and expectations for public sculpture changed dramatically, but he remained true to his training and to his personal beliefs. The body of work that resulted includes some of the most memorable and emblematic American sculpture.

Marshall Fredericks was born in 1908 in Rock Island, Illinois, a small city on the western edge of the Quad Cities area, to parents of Danish and Norwegian descent.<sup>2</sup> Throughout his life, his Scandinavian heritage influenced his work as an artist and was an important component of his wide-ranging humanitarian interests. He spent his formative years in Cleveland, Ohio, and by 1924 he was attending the John Huntington Polytechnic Institute, a school specializing in technical and scientific studies, before enrolling for four years in the Cleveland School of Art (now the Cleveland Institute of Art). Upon his graduation in 1930 he was awarded the Herman Matzen Traveling Scholarship in Sculpture, which he used to visit Scandinavia and study in Germany.

While in Sweden he sought out the renowned sculptor Carl Milles, even working for a period in Milles’s carving studio. Fredericks described the strong impression that Milles and his heroic sculpture made on him as “being struck by lightning”<sup>3</sup>; his relationship with the Swedish master sculptor influenced his style for the rest of his career. Milles was internationally known for his skill in the sculptural decoration of architecture as well as his designs for freestanding sculpture and fountains. Milles and other prominent American sculptors of the early twentieth century, such as popular New York sculptor Paul Manship, commonly used archaic references, such as stylized hair and features, or classical themes as an affirmation of traditional values, while also looking ahead to the future in their invocation of Machine Age ideas and modern industrial design. Influenced by the example of Milles, Fredericks turned away from the naturalistic style of his early years to the bolder, more stylized and symbolic compositions that would characterize his mature work.

Fredericks’s characteristic sculptural style is first evident in his *Levi L. Barbour Fountain* (see fig. 8 and cat. nos. 16–17), created for Belle Isle, a large island park near downtown Detroit, in 1936. The central figure in the fountain grouping is a leaping gazelle, positioned so that it seems to be rearing back as much as actually leaping, the curves of its S-shaped body echoed by curving horns and arching legs. Grounded by the blocky forms of four other rather prosaic animals (rabbit, hawk, grouse, and otter), the composition is unified by arching jets of water. Elegant yet playful, the fountain establishes a more intimate link with park visitors than the formal fountain honoring James Scott located nearby. The Barbour fountain, designed when Fredericks was only twenty-eight years old, is the first manifestation of the dual concerns he would bring to much of the rest of his work: a keen understanding of and sympathy for the relationship between man and nature and an innate understanding of how to locate sculpture appropriately within its surroundings.

By the time this work was realized, Fredericks was teaching at the Cranbrook Academy of Art in the northern suburbs of Detroit. Milles himself had come to Cranbrook in 1931, hired by Eliel Saarinen as the first resident sculptor. Milles did not teach as much as lead by example; his studio was filled with a collection of antique sculpture casts and major sculpture commissions in various stages of completion. In 1931 Milles hired Fredericks to assist in his



studio, and within two years Fredericks was teaching modeling and carving at the academy, remaining as an instructor there until the outbreak of the war (fig. 1). With the Barbour competition, Fredericks established himself as a sculptor of works on a large scale in his own right.

Fredericks was also aware of the quintessentially American ideas of architect Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue, who believed strongly in the importance of sculpture to architecture and the value of close collaboration between sculptor and architect. It was during his years at Cranbrook that Fredericks began what would be an ongoing partnership with the Detroit firm of Harley, Ellington and Day, for whom he would design both freestanding and architectural sculpture over the major part of his career. His early work with this firm shows his great facility with relief sculpture. The carved stone reliefs for the Rackham Building in Detroit (1939) and for the Administration Building (now the Literature, Science, and Arts Building) on the University of Michigan campus in Ann Arbor (1949) employ the dramatic visual technique of fitting a nearly three-dimensional figure into a confined architectural space. Drawn from life, Fredericks's heroic figures engage in ordinary activities, in often witty vignettes that viewers could relate to and that enlivened the restrained lines of the buildings.<sup>4</sup> The artist's talent for vivid relief sculpture and his mastery of the narrative impulse would later expand into an unprecedented panorama of story telling in the metal and fiberglass reliefs for the Ford Rotunda (1953; destroyed by fire) and Ford Auditorium (1956).

The problem of the relationship between the geometric frame and the interior figurative design first explored in the architectural reliefs was one to which Fredericks often returned. Applying what he had learned to designs done on a small scale, such as seals, and particularly medals, he was able to bring to these works a gravity and presence that belie their actual size. Fredericks even used medals, the smallest form of sculpture, as fields for experimentation, and these diminutive works display some of his freshest, most direct, even abstract designs. One of his finest designs was for the 1977 Brookgreen Gardens Membership Medal series, the only medallic series issued by a museum.<sup>5</sup> The Brookgreen medal features the leaping gazelle from the Barbour fountain on its face (a cast of which is in the gardens) and on the reverse, a charming composition of rhododendron blossoms and wrens, which fills the circular space in an allover, tapestry-like pattern.

His success with the *Barbour Fountain* and other projects brought national attention to Fredericks's work. In 1939, he was one of four sculptors (with Paul Manship, Donald Delue, and Theodore Roszak) commissioned to create sculptures for the New York World's Fair, whose theme was "The World of Tomorrow." His *Baboon Fountain*, created for the Glass Industries Building, reversed the typical arrangement of tall center and lower sides by placing in a circle five nearly identical figures of grim-faced baboons, seated on tall plinths, facing inward toward a diminutive baby baboon crouched on a half-sphere above low jets of water (see cat. no. 50). This delightful yet daring design was chosen as one of six sculptures that would be permanently relocated into New York's park system after the close of the fair; unfortunately, the temporary stone castings were later destroyed when the site was requisitioned for other uses during the Second World War, and the fountain was never reconstructed. Its subject suggests Fredericks's



Figure 1. Marshall Fredericks with Carl Milles at Cranbrook, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan (photo: ca. 1935–36).



empathy for children and his impish love of anthropomorphizing animals, two qualities that would result in his charming series of animal sculptures for zoos and other public settings.

Concurrently with these early works featuring animals, Fredericks was developing a range of ideas about the human figure. A heroic, muscular, and massive figure type inspired by the work he saw in Milles's studio was used primarily for metaphorical heroes. He explored a different, more supple, figure type for female nudes such as *Eve* (1937) and the related *Two Sisters* (1937). For these figures, Fredericks experimented with a smooth, fluid style that only lightly defined their musculature, emphasizing instead the smooth, uninterrupted surfaces of torso and limbs (see cat. nos. 31 and 32). This approach reflected the modern style typical of post-Rodin France, as reflected in the work of Aristide Maillol. These figures are characterized by naturalistic, beautiful bodies, quiet gestures, and rather inexpressive faces that have an air of introspection. Emotional opposites to the Nordic heroic type, they are not only conceptually rooted but also physically rooted, brought down off the pedestal.

Fredericks's human figures often seem to exist in another world and thus, curiously, have less of an emotional connection to the viewer than the expertly rendered animal sculptures, which echo many aspects of the human condition. In yet another approach to the figure, Fredericks's circus clowns and acrobats are defined by exaggerated costumes, bulbous peplums and collars, rendered in a decorative, geometric style with knife-sharp edges and little reference to the bodies underneath. Expressive faces with clearly delineated expressions (lovesick, for example) are turned upward, so that the viewer first sees the attitude of the costumed body and only afterward the often contradictory emotional expression. An emphasis on geometric form and the suppression of emotion suggest that these are Fredericks's most evident response to the Art Deco style of the years between the world wars. His search for a personal style that would meet the myriad goals of his sculpture reflects the many strains of figurative sculpture in mid-twentieth-century America.

In 1942 Fredericks volunteered for the armed forces. After serving in the 8<sup>th</sup> Army Air Corps in India and Asia, he was honorably discharged in 1945. Returning to Michigan with his wife, Rosalind, whom he had married in 1943, he set up a studio in Royal Oak, a suburb north of Detroit, not far from Cranbrook. He returned to a robust climate for public sculpture. Economic readjustment after World War II was relatively quick in America, and with unparalleled prosperity came a new concern for the expression of symbolic qualities in public architecture and a renewed awareness of monumental works that went beyond mere utility.<sup>6</sup> In this atmosphere, one so suited to his talents and ideas, he began a flurry of public and private projects, including fountains, architectural commissions, and freestanding sculpture. He learned shortly after his return that he had been selected for a major sculpture project, the *War Memorial* fountain in Cleveland, Ohio (see fig. 5). This project took nearly two decades to complete and is the most profound expression of Fredericks's humanism and spirituality.

The fountain grouping honors Clevelanders who sacrificed their lives in World War II and the Korean War and was begun with a campaign for private donations by the *Cleveland Press*. By 1947, the plaster model had been approved, but problems in the siting and construction delayed completion and the sculpture was not dedicated until 1964. Fredericks expanded his physical plant to complete this commission, establishing working studios in New York City and Norway to accommodate the monumental bronze castings for this fountain. Fredericks explained his symbolic intention in a written description of the memorial. According to the artist, the central figure is "the noble spirit of Mankind...a living thing, exalted and purified, freed of earthly limitations, rising above the physical into Eternal Life."<sup>7</sup> Many secondary projects were born out of this grouping (for example, the design of the central figure was modified in 1997 for the design of *Star Dream Fountain* [see fig. 3] in Royal Oak, Michigan). Perhaps influenced by his own war experiences, this project emphasizes Fredericks's personal blend of humanism and spirituality, updating and personalizing the traditional monument. Unlike the typical war memorial, which focuses on members of the armed forces, this fountain is a universal paean to the human spirit; the figure grouping is invested with grandeur and solemnity, yet is sensitive to the memorial's purpose of marking individual lives and losses.



In 1950 Fredericks worked again with the firm Harley, Ellington and Day on the design for the Veterans Memorial Building (now the UAW-Ford National Program Center) in Detroit. He used the entire north facade of the building as a field for a huge applied relief sculpture, an image of an eagle in flight that dramatically highlights the building's entrance.<sup>8</sup> This bold image, carved from white Vermont marble, is the most abstract of all of Fredericks's works. The enormous eagle is both a powerful statement of military might and a strong advocate for peace; in its talons are laurel and palm branches, symbols respectively of glory and victory. Its graphic V-shape refers both to veterans and to victory. Details are stripped away to leave only the dynamic shape of the bird's wings; only later does one notice that the eagle's head is twisted back to look behind. The sculptor described it as "moving forward but looking back to acknowledge the lessons of the past."<sup>9</sup> Its simplicity, sense of motion, and relationship to the otherwise undecorated facade of the building makes this work at once menacing and protective.<sup>10</sup> The American Institute of Architects awarded Fredericks's design its Fine Arts Medal in 1952 in recognition of this effective design solution. The eagle, symbol of aggression for both man and nature, was used again on a smaller, more naturalistic scale in works such as in the *Ann Arbor War Memorial Eagle* (1950; see cat. nos. 22 and 23); these examples are some of the few times that Fredericks's animals relinquish their winsome charm.

The most important works of Fredericks's mature career link his understanding of the power of symbols with the drama of site and placement developed so effectively for the Veterans Memorial Building. One of Fredericks's best-loved designs, *The Spirit of Detroit*, was designed for the Coleman A. Young Municipal Center in 1955 (dedicated 1958), another Harley, Ellington and Day building, and has become a ubiquitous community symbol (see fig. 4). The massive central figure, muscular and powerful even in repose, is placed in front of a huge curved marble wall, on which are the seals of the city and county (these, too, were designed by Fredericks). Also included is an inscription of the biblical verse (2 Corinthians 3:17) that inspired the composition: "Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." The link between the human spirit, the family, God, and the urban community is unmistakable, and the sculpture's site on the major north-south thoroughfare of the city drives the message home. Fredericks's metaphorical figure, its archaizing masculinity in an attitude of support and humility, represents the intellectual power and traditional values of Western civilization, the link between the family unit and spiritual belief. This powerful package of spirituality, pride, and hope shows Fredericks at his most adept at translating universal ideals into uplifting and unforgettable images.

*The Spirit of Detroit* is emblematic of an approach to public sculpture that persisted into the 1960s, which looked to sculpture to carry messages of patriotism, hope, and freedom. Representational relief sculpture as part of a building's decoration no longer fit with the variation of the International Style of architecture that had come to America from Europe. Buildings were generally unadorned, with simple lines and often flat roofs. Against this neutral backdrop, traditional figurative sculpture compositions were the bearers of shared community values. *The Expanding Universe*, Fredericks's commission for the south court of the U.S. Department of State Building in Washington, D.C., isolates the powerful male figure type of *The Spirit of Detroit*, in this case holding aloft an orb with Saturn-like rings in each hand and sitting atop another such orb (see fig. 6). His dynamic pose—reaching up, looking down, with potential energy that makes him seem about to rise—is one of the most beautiful and evocative of Fredericks's figure designs. The quiet facade behind it seems to concentrate the figure's suggestion of movement. Similarly, in another work from 1964, *Freedom of the Human Spirit*, a commission for the United States Pavilion at the 1964 World's Fair, soaring figures, a man and a woman and two wild swans, seem to defy gravity to rise up in front of the low, blank facade of the building (see fig. 7). Fredericks did not develop the image of floating or soaring figures—it had its roots in nineteenth-century sculpture—but they carried for him a fundamental message of spiritual freedom.

Toward the end of his career, Fredericks' major projects looked back to earlier works that had personal meaning. For *God and the Rainbow* (1995; see fig. 9), an homage to Carl Milles, Fredericks reworked an early sketch by Milles for a peace monument into an eighty-six-foot bronze rainbow sited at the entrance to Stockholm harbor, across the fjord





Figure 2. Marshall Fredericks working on the full-scale plasteline model for *God on the Rainbow* (photo: ca. 1994).

from Millesgården, Milles's home and studio (fig. 2). *Black Elk* and *Lord Byron* are two late works based on earlier designs that he enlarged to their full scale in the late 1990s (see cat. nos. 18, 38, and 39). Seemingly contradicting his goal to give his sculpture a sense of weightlessness, these grounded, massive sculptures look back to the dramatic commemorative sculpture type developed by Rodin at the end of the nineteenth century. Working in his studio until his death in 1998 at the age of ninety, Fredericks in these last years seemed to be not only taking stock of where his sculpture had been but also concerned with pushing it in new directions.

Marshall Fredericks realized every sculptor's dream of working on a large scale; indeed, for him, his works' relationship with architecture and commissioned sites made it truly meaningful. Throughout his long career, Fredericks sought to create not only beautiful works of art but also objects that would impact the daily lives of the greatest number of people. He put his own stamp on a traditional approach, creating sculptures that even today delight and inspire. Although by the last third of his career the attitude of architects and city planners toward public sculpture had greatly changed, Fredericks was still in demand as an interpreter of shared values and inspirational ideas.

## Endnotes

1. Quotation from Marshall M. Fredericks, "Architecture and Sculpture," *Journal of the American Institute of Architects* (July 1952): 8.
2. A complete chronology and other biographical information can be found in *Marshall M. Fredericks, Sculptor*, Suzanne P. Fredericks, ed. (Saginaw Valley State University, 2003).
3. Quoted by Vivian M. Bauch, "Marshall Fredericks – the Spirit of Detroit," *Detroit News*, August 4, 1998. See also "Recollections of My First Meeting with Carl Milles – June 1930," in *Ten American Sculptors – Carl Milles' Students at Cranbrook* (Millesgården, 1986).
4. The heroic figure type used on the Rackham Building can also be seen in Diego Rivera's monumental mystical figures of the "Four Races" in the *Detroit Industry* murals (1931–33) across the street at the Detroit Institute of Arts.
5. *Marshall M. Fredericks, Sculptor* (note 2 above), p. 230.
6. Leland M. Roth, *A Concise History of American Architecture* (New York: Harper & Row, 1980), p. 276.
7. Quoted in Joan Marter, "Sculpture and Painting" in *Design in America: The Cranbrook Vision 1925–1950*, exh. cat. (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1983), p. 253.
8. The original facade was designed without the upper window.
9. Marshall M. Fredericks, "Import of Sculptural Work," *Michigan Architect and Engineer*, 1950, unpaginated.
10. The design also included ten carved marble pylons, intended to bring the architecture down to human scale. These were later moved and sandblasted, undercutting the artist's original intent.



# “In harmony with the Architecture involved...”: The Architectural Sculpture

*Michael W. Panhorst*

There are several things concerning Sculpture that I believe are extremely important. It must be wholly consistent and in harmony with the Architecture involved, as well as being a beautiful entity within itself. It must embody a significance suitable to and expressive of the purpose and setting, and finally it must have a constructive meaning for others.<sup>1</sup>

By 1956, when he penned these words, Fredericks had created many works of art that were in harmony with architecture. He was in the middle of a successful nineteen-year quest to complete the *Fountain of Eternal Life* (1946–64) as the focal point of a major urban park in downtown Cleveland and on the verge of dedicating *The Spirit of Detroit* (1958) at the entrance to Detroit's City-County Building (now the Coleman A. Young Municipal Center) (see figs. 4 and 5). Over the next decade, he would dedicate the largest sculptures of his career, statuary that is itself on an architectural scale: the thirty-nine-foot-tall *Christ on the Cross* (1959) at Indian River, Michigan; the twenty-four-foot-tall *The Expanding Universe Fountain* (1964) in the south courtyard of the U. S. State Department Building in Washington, D.C.; and the twenty-seven-foot-tall *Freedom of the Human Spirit* (1964) for the New York World's Fair (see figs. 6, 7, and 11).<sup>2</sup> During his long career, he also designed, fabricated, and installed numerous figurative sculptures that were applied to the walls of churches, schools, post offices, and other public buildings in Michigan and Ohio, as well as sculptures for permanent display in architectural settings.<sup>3</sup>

From the very beginning of his career, Fredericks worked closely with architects to embellish the broad, flat planes and large masses typical of modern architecture with sculptural imagery that helped to humanize the multistory buildings and to identify the purpose of each edifice. In 1939, Fredericks had been selected by Malcolm Stirton, the chief designer for Detroit's Harley, Ellington and Day architectural firm, to collaborate on the design of the Horace Rackham Educational Memorial Building. The sculptor created forty-six handsome figurative reliefs symbolizing knowledge and education for the exterior limestone of the Art Deco-style structure situated next to the Detroit Institute of Arts.<sup>4</sup> A decade later he again worked with Harley, Ellington and Day to create thirty-nine reliefs for the Literature, Science, and Arts Building at the University of Michigan.<sup>5</sup>

To create each of these sculptures Fredericks employed the same lengthy process involving traditional techniques. He gave form to his ideas first through sketches on paper, usually making multiple images, which he studied, redrew, and simplified until the images conveyed his intentions clearly. Often, he then shaped clay sketches on a scale he could hold in his hands. If the finished sculpture was designed to be a few feet in height, the clay models would be refined before being cast in plaster. If the finished sculpture was to be larger—a life-size, heroic-scale, or colossal figure, for example—the clay models were left roughly finished but were still cast in plaster to serve as scale models for the larger works. The sculptor would then build an armature of aluminum wire, iron pipes, wood lath, or (late in his career) plastic foam, apply clay to this construction, and then refine the full-scale model's sculptural forms, lines, and textures with his hands and a few small tools called rakes. Fredericks often said that making monumental sculpture was a slow process of repeatedly building up forms, then raking them down.

Fredericks's process is illustrated well by his drawings for *The Spirit of Detroit* (cat. nos. 1–4). His initial ideas show a gently curved two-story wall with two medallions bearing inscriptions providing a human-scaled backdrop for a larger statue. His drawings show that he explored designs employing one, two, or more figures in various arrangements. He eventually incorporated the four-figure family group, which he initially placed on a pedestal as the central motif, into a subordinate group held in the right hand of a single colossal figure who holds a radiant orb symbolic of “The Deity” in its other hand.<sup>6</sup> Not all viewers realize that the radiant orb is emblematic of a spiritual force, but most recognize that the man, woman, boy, and girl clearly symbolize the family unit, which Fredericks felt was the greatest manifestation of the Holy Spirit in this world. The sculptor gilded the familial group, both to emphasize their importance and to provide a contrast to his signature sea-green patina on the huge bronze figure.

Casting the colossal bronze figures for *The Spirit of Detroit*, *Christ on the Cross*, and the *Fountain of Eternal Life* posed technical problems that Fredericks solved by working with a small foundry, Kristiana Kunst, in Norway.<sup>7</sup> *The Spirit of Detroit* was cast



in pieces, assembled, and shipped to Detroit on the *Thomas Shulte*, the only freighter large enough to stow the sixteen-foot-tall figure below deck and yet small enough to negotiate the St. Lawrence Seaway. The figure for *Christ on the Cross* was shipped in pieces, trucked from the port in Detroit to Indian River in northern Michigan, and the arms attached there. The thirty-six-foot-tall figure and the ten-foot-diameter filigreed sphere for the *Fountain of Eternal Life* were also cast in Norway.

Fredericks's original design for the *Fountain of Eternal Life* featured two nude figures, a male and a female rising side by side from a sphere flanked by auxiliary sculptures symbolizing the four great civilizations of the world. Objections to the figures' nudity caused Fredericks to revise the composition. He removed the female figure from the composition and masked the male's genitals with flames rising from the supporting sphere to symbolize the destruction of war (see cat. nos. 6–9). But the artist never gave up on his effort to build the two-figure sculpture, believing that it was a good design that he would eventually realize elsewhere. True to his characteristic persistence, the year before his death he succeeded in placing the colossal two-figure composition, by then renamed *Star Dream* (fig. 3), in a civic plaza outside the municipal building in Royal Oak, Michigan.

The dedication of *Star Dream* was a fitting conclusion to a life spent making sculpture for architectural settings, a life itself dedicated, as he said in his *Credo*, to making "Sculpture which will have real meaning for other people, many people, and might in some way encourage, inspire or give them happiness."<sup>8</sup>



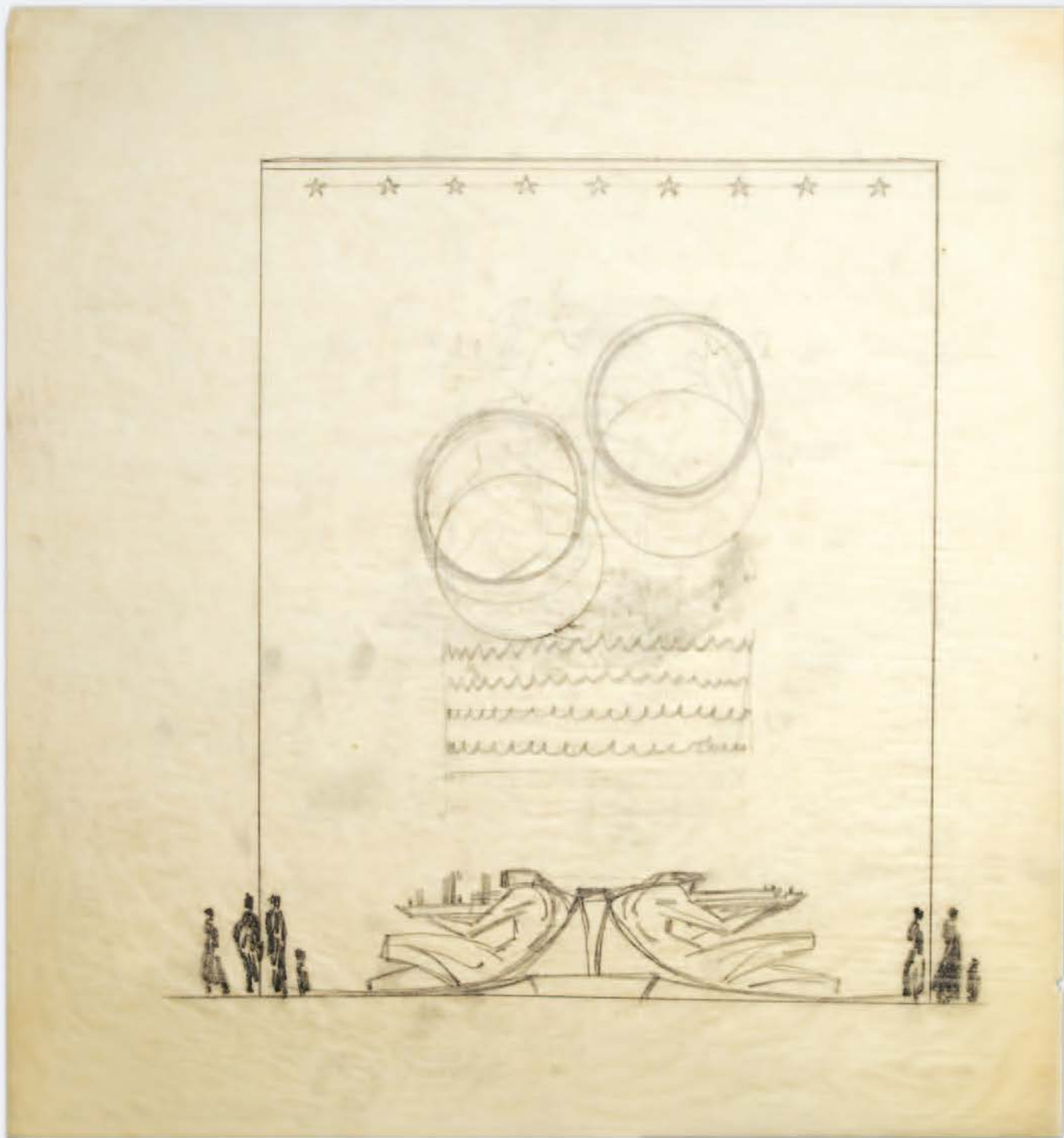
Figure 3. *Star Dream Fountain*, Royal Oak, Michigan (photo: 1997).

## Endnotes

1. See Marshall Fredericks's *Credo* on page iv.
2. That decade also saw the installation of the twelve-foot-tall bronze *American Eagle* on the University of Michigan War Memorial (1950) in Ann Arbor and the twenty-one-foot-tall anodized aluminum *American Eagle* relief on the Federal Building (1964) in Cincinnati.
3. The post office reliefs (1938) are in River Rouge, Michigan, and Sandwich, Illinois. By 1956, Fredericks had fulfilled Henry Booth's commission for *The Thinker* (1938) for the steps of the Cranbrook Museum of Art in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. He had also completed reliefs for the Louisville Courier-Journal Building in Louisville, Kentucky (1948), *Childhood Friends* for the exterior of Jefferson Elementary School in Wyandotte, Michigan (1950), and *Youth in the Hands of God* for the Dallas Public Library (1956). His architectural sculpture was not restricted to exterior ornament. He made *The Romance of Transportation* for the narrow space above the gates of Detroit's Fort Street Station (1951; the reliefs were relocated to the B&O Railroad Museum in Baltimore when the depot was demolished). He also illustrated the theme of transportation in four reliefs inside the Ohio State Department of Transportation Building in Columbus (1965). To commemorate the Ford Motor Company empire, he designed and fabricated a 145-foot-long relief, as well as two smaller relief groups of clowns, for the lobby of the Henry and Edsel Ford Auditorium (1956) in Detroit.
4. Edgar Richardson (*Marshall Fredericks, Sculptor* [University Center, Mich.: 2003], p. 3) wrote that, "Fredericks designed enrichment for all the key points—the pylons on the auditorium front and the entrances on the north, south, east, and west fronts....In subject these carved reliefs are drawn from contemporary life, stylized and given monumental treatment. One science, Astronomy, has an historical subject: an ancient Chinese astronomer making the earliest recorded observation of an eclipse of the sun. In the others, an airplane, a dynamo, a microscope, a school desk are symbols drawn from the world around us."
5. Seven of these were carved in the exterior limestone of the building, but the others were cast in metal (seven aluminum, two bronze) and applied to the exterior surface, demonstrating Fredericks's ability to work in a variety of materials and his mastery of the additive sculpture process of modeling as well as the subtractive process of carving.
6. The two figures seen in one sketch (cat. no. 3) rising side by side were soon used by Fredericks for *Youth in the Hands of God* (1956) for the Dallas Public Library. Variations on the two recumbent figures seen in another sketch (cat. no. 1), probably inspired by Michelangelo's Medici Tomb (1520–34), are also related to *Animal Kingdoms* (1939), four bronzes which today are at the Marshall M. Fredericks Sculpture Museum.
7. In addition to his work with Kristiana Kunst, Fredericks supported Scandinavian industry by introducing Norwegian Emerald Pearl granite to architects in the United States. He was the first to polish the stone, capitalizing on its scintillating surface and distinctive color. He specified its use for the auxiliary sculpture groups in the *Fountain of Eternal Life* and for the pedestals of many of his monumental sculptures. He also influenced its selection for the facade of the Ford Auditorium.
8. See the *Credo* on page iv.





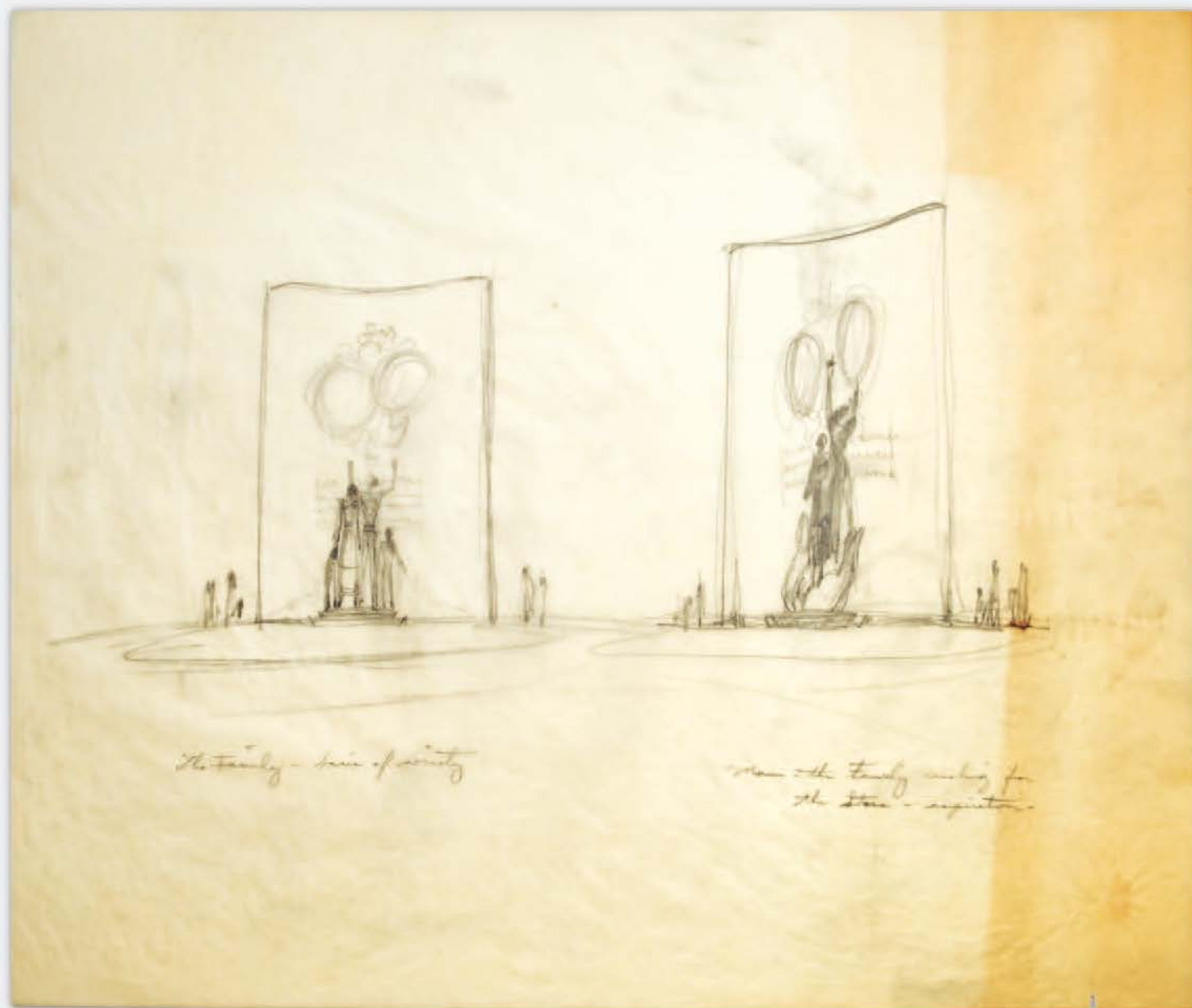


Cat. no. 1 - Study for *The Spirit of Detroit*, ca. 1958  
Graphite on tracing paper, 14  $\frac{3}{8}$  x 14  $\frac{3}{4}$  in.



Cat. no. 2 - Study for *The Spirit of Detroit*, ca. 1958  
Graphite on tracing paper, 16 1/2 x 13 3/4 in.





Cat. no. 3 - Study for ***The Spirit of Detroit***, n.d.  
Pencil on tracing paper, 16 ½ x 13 ¾ in.



Cat. no. 4 - Presentation drawing for *The Spirit of Detroit*, ca. 1958  
Pencil and conté crayon on board, 23 x 30 ½ in.



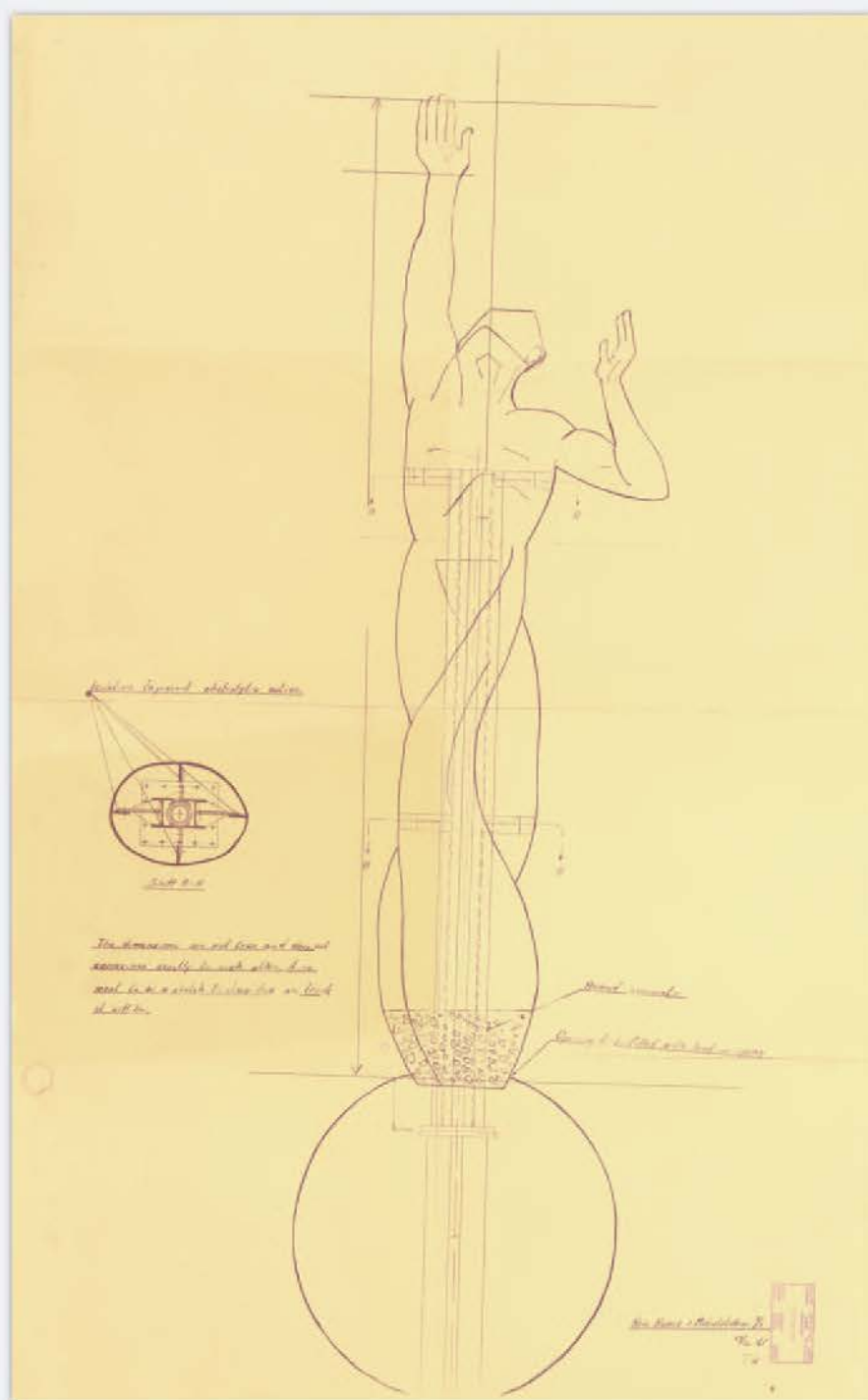


Cat. no. 5 - *The Spirit of Detroit*, 1958  
Bronze, cast 2000-2002, 12 x 14 ¼ x 4 ½ in.







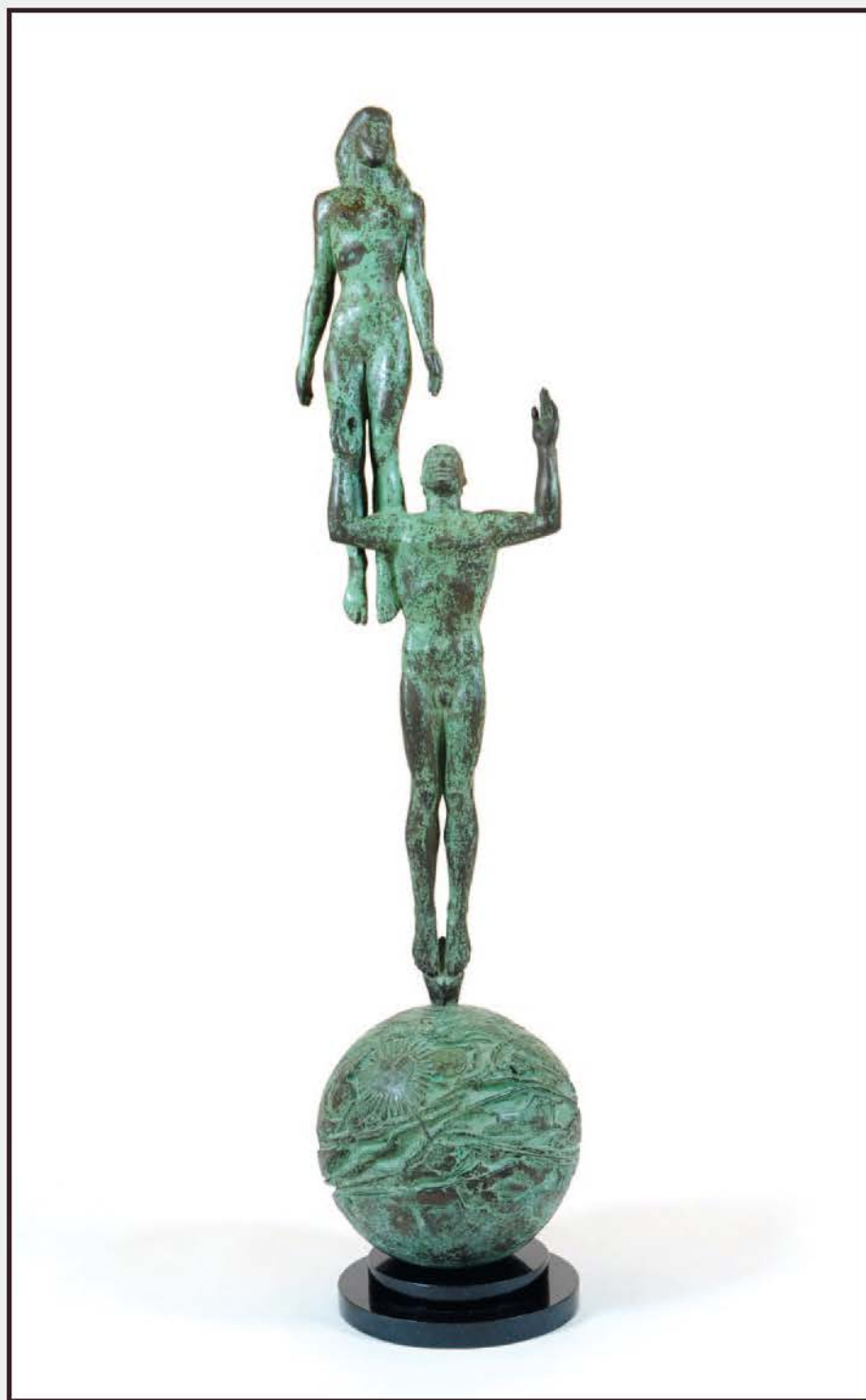


Cat. no. 7 - "Shop drawing" for **Cleveland War Memorial: Fountain of Eternal Life**, n.d.  
Ink on paper, 35 x 23 in.





Cat. no. 8 - Presentation drawing for *Cleveland War Memorial: Fountain of Eternal Life*, n.d.  
Gouache on board, 35 1/4 x 22 in.



Cat. no. 9 - Study for *Cleveland War Memorial*, ca. 1945  
Bronze sketch model, 38 x 9 x 9 in.





Figure 6. *The Expanding Universe*, U.S. Department of State Building, Washington, D.C. (photo: 1964).



Cat. no. 10 - Sketch for *The Expanding Universe*, ca. 1964  
Pencil and ink on tracing paper, 13 ½ x 11 in.





Cat. no. 11 - Study for *The Expanding Universe*, ca. 1964  
Conté crayon, pencil and gouache on newsprint, 14  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 18  $\frac{3}{4}$  in.



22 Cat. no. 12 - *The Consciousness of Mankind Rising Above the Earth into the Expanding Universe*, n.d.  
Pencil and watercolor on board, 20 ½ x 30 in.





Cat. no. 13 - Study for *Man and the Expanding Universe Fountain*, 1963  
Bronze, 19  $\frac{1}{4}$  x 12  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 10 in.







Cat. no. 14 - Sketch for *Freedom of the Human Spirit*, ca. 1964  
Pencil on tracing paper, 8 x 5 in.



Cat. no. 15 - Study for *Freedom of the Human Spirit*, 1964  
Bronze, 27 ½ x 11 x 11 in.