

## Riding upon the wings of morning



Marshall Fredericks

This isn't an age of heroes. These days, the infamous and eccentric get attention because they're more likely to appear as entertaining spectacles to the slumbering masses, who too often mistake ecstasies for solitude. But Marshall Fredericks thought otherwise.

Fredericks, who lived in Birmingham and had an international reputation as a sculptor, believed in the heroic. That was obvious when you looked at his magnificent sculptures.

Today, many are mourning the passing of someone who some are calling one of the last, great American artists with an heroic vision.

### Broader truths

At 90, the creator of "The Spirit of Detroit," and "Freedom of the Human Spirit" — along with numerous large-scale public sculptures around the area, country, Europe and Asia — finally let go of his grasp of a world that was profoundly different from the one he entered.

In a century filled with megalomaniac artists, Fredericks' work demonstrates that he simply focused on broader truths. Those common characteristics and moral claims that bind humanity, not solely distinguish individuals.

And now, as a community searches to place Fredericks' long, productive life in perspective, a simple question must be addressed: What is Marshall Fredericks' legacy?

### Quiet radical

While most artists keep up with trends of the art world, Fredericks never changed his sculptural style since he first found his way through a mound of clay in the mid 1930s. Life, as Fredericks' work attests, really isn't so complicated. Honesty, integrity and faith can take you a long way.

Indeed, as Fredericks proved again and again, aspiring to the noble life can elevate the most mundane-minded to soaring heights. Skeptics need only to realize that "The Spirit of Detroit" is the most recognized symbol of our shared metropolitan.

Throughout the past 60 years, there's been too many occasions when that symbol may have been the only uplifting sign of the future.

### Taking flight

In demeanor and style, Fredericks couldn't be accused of being a swash-buckling revolutionary. But in some ways, he was a quiet radical.

After all, wouldn't it have been easier for him to follow the latest art-world trend rather than stay true to his vision?

Although known around the world, he never appeared pretentious or to be taken in by his celebrity status.

How real was he? Fredericks was listed in the phone book. And if an arts writer called him asking if he had some time to talk, Fredericks wouldn't hesitate.

"When do you want to come over?" he'd say.

And when you knocked on the door,

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Heroic: "Freedom of the Human Spirit" is Marshall Fredericks' signature work.

# Rebuilding a mystery

## Artists religiously rebuild sacred mystery

AS Christians made their annual pilgrimage to reaffirm their faith during Easter week, many probably took for granted images that enlighten their entry into the sacred world.

Even for procrastinating Christians, the iconography of the church has served immeasurably to animate the drama of Jesus' resurrection and illuminate a religious creed of redemption.

For many, this past holy week reaffirmed how artists imaginatively portray the Scriptures, offering a mythology to support the Christian answer to the mystery about an afterlife.

Even in these secular times of trial by public opinion, the most striking religious art may compel agnostics to reconsider, and atheists to realize that perhaps they merely lack imagination.

"There's always been a great need for churches to have art to seduce their audience through imagery," said Sergio De Giusti, a renowned sculptor from Redford.

The most powerful religiously inspired art, according to De Giusti, has shown the sacred as well as the profane. For instance, works that depict the beautiful Madonna and Child along visions of eternal damnation.

Ironically, De Giusti noted that the overt nudity in paintings from as early as the 16th century might be called pornographic by today's standards.

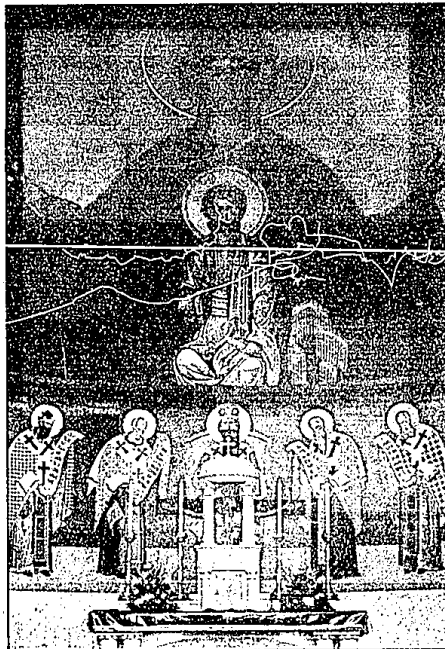
"I sometimes wonder how free we are to express ourselves."

### Art that integrates

De Giusti's speculation seems a bit too heavy for a culture suffering from an attention deficit disorder and a compulsion for empirical verification.

Instead of pondering the power of faith, scholars have turned metaphysical speculation into the ultimate conundrum: Is the New Testament fact or fiction?

Two recently released books ("The Birth of Christianity," "The



Ethereal: The painting of the Holy Trinity on the ceiling above the altar at St. Hugo's embodies an awe-inspiring sacredness.

Acts of Jesus") and last week's PBS documentary, "From Jesus to Christ," offer deconstructive theories on the man from Galilee whose teachings — along with the Torah — have formed the value system of the western world for nearly two millennia.

While some scholars seem intent to dim the halo of divinity surrounding Jesus, there's a growing trend for artists to reflect their own spirituality, sometimes drawing on traditional religious themes, sometimes their own interpretations of wholeness, healing and connectedness.

"Religious art is not necessarily liturgical art done on commission," said the Rev. Torrence Dempsey, director of the Museum of Contemporary Religious Art on the St. Louis University campus.

The museum, established in

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Path of salvation: The paintings, stained-glass windows and sculptures along the walls of St. Hugo's in the Hills offer a compelling environment for meditation and worship.

## Rochester's symphony of voices

When he isn't conducting the Rochester Symphony, James Fenwick Hohmeyer usually directs business from the road.

Hohmeyer travels frequently to and from East Lansing where he's completing a doctorate in orchestral conducting at Michigan State University.

One hand on the wheel, the other on a cell phone and a wisecrack readily at hand.

"People need to see symphony orchestras as more than a static museum," he said.

"If not, just call us 'Orchestra-saurus Rex.'"

Talk about extinction is premature. Despite closing their season with one of the most popular choral compositions to honor the dead, the Rochester Symphony is showing signs of a thriving future.

Friday, Hohmeyer leads the 36-year-old community orchestra in a grand performance of Verdi's "Requiem Mass" at St. Andrew's Church in Rochester.

The concert features the Rochester Community Chorus, Christ Church Grosse Pointe Choir, St. Ignace Rochester Choir, DeHaven Chorale and the Rochester College Chorus.

"Part of our mission is to involve the community and be an outlet for local musicians," said Hohmeyer.

With a modest \$60,000 budget, however, Hohmeyer concedes that the Rochester Symphony faces tighter limitations than community orchestras in Warren, Pontiac, Birmingham-Bloomfield and Southfield.

But the group of professional musicians, music instructors and part-time musicians are as enthusiastic about the future of the orchestra as they are about their music, said Hohmeyer.

With "a cast of thousands," Verdi's "Requiem Mass" offers a showcase for many local musicians. Not to mention a spotlight for featured soloists Gloria Kirkland, Robert Bracey, Jayne Sleder and John Paul White.

In the last two years, the Rochester Symphony has developed outreach programs, and aggressively pursued corporate grants.

As a result, the symphony recorded a CD with a variety of orchestral compositions. The CD was made available to schools and public libraries. The project was made possible by a \$26,000 grant from the Chrysler Corp.

Over the next several years, Hohmeyer expects a higher profile for the symphony and additional private grants.

Although no dates have been set, next season's schedule for the Rochester Symphony includes: violinist Yura Lee; the world premier of "Opera Martini," melodies from popular operas; Oakland Youth Singers concert; an evening with "Learner and Lowe," composers of "My Fair Lady," and "Camelot," and a concert featuring the winner of the Van Cliburn Competition.

What: "Verdi's Requiem Mass," presented by the Rochester Symphony, featuring Rochester Community Chorus, Christ Church Grosse Pointe Choir, St. Ignace Rochester Choir, DeHaven Chorale and Rochester College Chorus.  
When: 8 p.m. Friday, April 17  
Where: St. Andrew's Church, Rochester (corner of Maywood and Ingletwood)  
Tickets: \$15, no reserved seating; (248) 651-4181

## ART IN THE COMMUNITY

# Tradition shapes religious images

Following in the footsteps of artists through the centuries, Canton sculptor Joseph DeLauro struggles to make the invisible concrete when creating religious art. DeLauro, a devout Catholic, and a member of Our Lady of Good Counsel in Plymouth, draws on his spiritual beliefs. But not all artists have such strong ties to religion.

Redford sculptor Sergio DeGiusti's inspiration comes from his ethnicity rather than from practicing the Catholicism he grew up with in Maniago, Italy. Zubei Kachadorian, baptized in the Armenian Orthodox church, studied icons from the Byzantine period before sketching altar paintings for St. John's Armenian Church in Southfield.

Whether it's Corrado Parduce's bronze Stations of the Cross at the Shrine of the Little Flower in Royal Oak, DeGiusti's "Christ on the Water" and "Genesis" reliefs at Nardin Park United Methodist Church in Farmington Hills, or DeLauro's 12-foot Christ



Sergio DeGiusti

figure on the front of Christ Our Savior Lutheran Church in Livonia, artists turn to tradition for guidance.

"The only clue we have of what saints and other religious figures look like is from the artists," said DeGiusti. "They're the ones who've interpreted the stories."

Creating religious art calls for lengthy research on the ways artists approached the subject throughout history. DeLauro reads about the saint or religious figure before turning to the masters and "how they attacked the problem." His years as founder and chairman of the art department at the University of Windsor have well acquainted him with the subject of art history. But even as early as grammar

school, DeLauro was inspired by the Gothic cathedrals of Europe.

"The Gothic architecture keeps you looking up and up," said DeLauro. "The idea was to rise and give glory."

No matter the denomination, DeLauro strives to express spiritual ideas in his religious works in addition to respecting tradition. He considers charity, love, beauty and humility as aspects of the spiritual side. All have remained essential to his work since the 82-year-old sculptor's first commission for six limestone reliefs for a Carmelite monastery near Marygrove College in 1947.

"It's important to create something from the personal and to try and express spiritual ideas whether in painting, mosaic or sculpture," said DeLauro, who earned a bachelor of fine arts degree from Yale University and a master of fine arts degree from the University of Iowa. "Part of us as human beings has a spiritual side. Charity, love, beauty, humility are



Following tradition: This relief, "Christ on the Water" was done by Sergio DeGiusti for Nardin Park United Methodist Church in Farmington Hills.

aspects of the spiritual side. Like music, Handel's "Messiah," uplifts you. I strive for that in my sculpture."

Everywhere you look in DeLauro's home are sculptures from his long career. In the living room, a one-third scale model of the Pietà commissioned for the grounds of Holy Cross Parish in

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