

Dedication

Susanne Vertel Studios

The figurative bronze work of Susanne Vertel incorporates both spiritual and aesthetic elements into a synthesis of personal vision that has gotten her critical acclaim from peers and collectors.

Although her work occasionally makes use of the male image, her focus is the many faces of women. From Russian "Babushka" series to aesthetic nudes, there is a thread of inner peace that permeates her work and touches an inner emotional space within us.

Vertel's work has won prestigious awards and numerous commissions. A monumental version of her "Babushkas" was commissioned by a private collector.

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General Leslie R. Groves



J. Robert Oppenheimer

Groves-Oppenheimer
Memorial Dedication
May 19, 2011

Shidoni Foundry

The Shidoni Foundry uses a lost wax bronze casting process. To go from the original in clay to completed bronze can take weeks or months depending on the size and complexity of the piece.



Step 1: Create the original sculpture usually from wax or clay.

Step 2: A flexible silicon rubber mold is made from the artist's original.

Step 3: The mold is filled with molten wax to create a copy identical to the original.



Step 4: Wax rods are added to the wax sculpture which allow even flow of metal and allow air and gas to escape.

Step 5: 'Investment' is then added to the wax surface. As many as 20 layers are added to form a sturdy enough shell to support the final bronze casting.



Step 6: The piece is then heated in a kiln to bake the 'investment' shell and to remove all the wax from the interior.

Step 7: As the ceramic mold is removed from the kiln, molten bronze is quickly added.



Step 8: After cooling for several hours the ceramic shell is carefully broken off of the bronze within. Fine sand is blasted onto the bronze to remove the last of the tiny ceramic particles.

Step 9: The sculptor then cuts away the sprues remaining from the earlier stage and grinds, sands and polishes the assembled pieces until it looks exactly like the original clay sculpture.



Step 10: At last the bronze is treated with a variety of chemicals to transform the surface of the metal into a variety of colors. Polishing wax helps preserve the vibrant colors.

Vertel's Process

Creating the portrait bronzes of Dr. Oppenheimer and General Groves has been a great honor and a very fulfilling endeavor in many ways. I learned so much about the history of that time which gave me an even greater appreciation of the contributions these two men made to our country. I also learned a great deal about these men that I barely knew about when the project began.

The artist, working alone, goes within to create. This is never more true than when the goal is to capture an image from photographs of a person who is alive only in our hearts and our memories. This was especially so when trying to capture the essence, the inner man if you will, of two men who were and continue to be, larger than life.

With Dr. Oppenheimer it was, in many ways, easier to sense the inner man because so much has been written about him. I was also able to purchase several videos about the Manhattan project and especially about Dr. Oppenheimer or "Oppie", as he was sometimes called. I would play the videos on a TV adjacent to my studio and pause to see the images of him. It was through these videos and the interviews of his friends and fellow scientists that a persona evolved for me that was much more than that of a brilliant scientist. I learned about his deep appreciation for nature. He was a sensitive man who loved poetry and the many forms of beauty he found

around him. To me he came across as a visionary, a dreamer of what might be. What I hope I captured in this sculpture is his sense of the dramatic, his confidence and, in his eyes, a connection to all that is.

With General Groves it was much more difficult to sense the inner man. But there was no doubt about his "high intelligence, drive and energy and great organizational and administrative ability." (wikipedia) This man was awesome. "Groves was a larger than life figure, a person of iron will and imposing personality who knew how to get things done. He was ambitious, proud and resolute." (Robert S. Norris "Racing for the Bomb")

But it was through his daughter, Gwen Groves Robinson, that I was given a glimpse of another part of him. It was through her e-mails to me and the family photos she shared with me, that I was able to see a softer side of this great man. And so it was deeply gratifying to me when, after receiving some "work in progress" photos from me she wrote: (with permission)"My father is very definitely my father and I thank you for capturing the amused twinkle in his eyes. His handsomeness and humor both come through nicely." What I hope the viewer of this sculpture sees is a man of many facets and the sense of pride he felt in having accomplished a Herculean task of bringing the bomb to fruition, of providing the means to end the war.