

The first of the works is mine. I call it *The Hand of God*. It is cast in bronze and was created in 2022. Recently, I have had a renewed inspiration to sculpt again, something that I have been doing off and on since I was in high school.



I never had any formal training in sculpting and believe it is DNA related, passed down from my father & grandfather.

I finished this piece cast in bronze, which just came back from the foundry. It is reflectively and allegorically the appropriate motif to discuss my sculptings. The idea of it comes from a sculptor I have long admired, Auguste Rodin, the undisputed Father of Modern Sculpture. He sculpted about 100 years ago in Paris, France. I saw his version of the *Hand of God* when I visited the Rodin Museum in Paris. My version is not a copy of his work; it only has the same name. Frankly, without any intended bragging, malice, or envy, I think my *Hand of God* is better, although with a more aged-looking hand! (So how come I am not rich, famous, or an undisputed anything?) But certain aspects are taken from Rodin. The size is larger than life, which Rodin started doing after he was accused of using his own hand and making a plaster cast of it. I used his idea and the name, *The Hand of God*, for my sculpting, and I did use my hand as a model, not

a plaster cast, and it is, as Auguste recommends, larger than life-size. Rodin's sculpting had what looks like the hand is holding an embracing couple, while mine holds a crystal version of the globe of the world, a bit of speculative difference in Rodin and my *Weltanschauung*-(worldview.)

I recently learned from Legalzoom that one could copyright works of art, so I did just that. It is in force for 70 years after I cross the river Styx. If you copy it, I hope to collect a small fortune from you for copyright infringement but would be flattered if you reproduced it in photos or print as long as you give me credit. I seem to be on a sculpting kick and have several other projects in the works, all based on the hand motif. Hands are one of the fundamental



challenges that many artists often avoid because of the complexities and technical difficulties of making it look like a human hand. One frequently sees works of art with the hands somehow cleverly hidden. If you are attuned to that bit of trivia, the artist could not or did not want to face that challenge. I just learned that Jim Cameron, whose most recent productions, the Avatar series, had his artists take a hand-drawing skills test before employing them.

Peter Paul Rubens, the Flemish painter, lived from 1577 to 1640. He was one of my father's favorite artists. Rubens is famous for his voluptuous nudes, inspired by his second wife, the model for most of them. Vladimir was fond of imitating Rubens' style. This charcoal that Vladimir did in 1954 he took from a Rubens painting hints at the cherubic beauty of his women portraits. Rubens was influenced by Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, Caravaggio, especially Titian, and others of the period. He was not only an artist but became a

diplomate serving the Spanish Habsburg rulers. He traveled between Italy, England, France, and Spain to carry messages and sometimes espionage between the government and aristocracy of those governments while they were sitting for portraits that he painted of them. While in Spain for seven months on a diplomatic mission to bring peace between Spain and England. The young court painter for Philip IV, Diego Velázquez, eagerly absorbed all he could from the Master of the Flemish school.

Velázquez learned much from Rubens. He painted his most famous painting, *Las Meninas*, where he created the clever composition of painting himself into the picture. He is viewing us, the viewing audience looking at his painting of the children and Philip IV and his Queen who are seen reflected in a mirror behind Velázquez. That painting hangs in the Prado in Madrid. Mary, my wife, had taken an art appreciation course there when she went to school at Universidad de Madrid. She gave me the quick Frommer tour of the Prado. Peter Paul Rubens' influence can be seen in the works of Diego Velázquez, which can be appreciated especially since the Prado has a large collection of Rubens' paintings.

Praying Hands Albrecht Dürer, the German painter and printmaker, was a contemporary of Leonardo da Vinci.



Dürer's drawing of praying hands is a classic and was the inspiration for my sculpting of clasped hands in prayer. His drawing was a study for a full-sized painting commissioned by a church. He delivered the painting, but the church was consumed by fire along with the painting. The drawing was the only thing remaining.

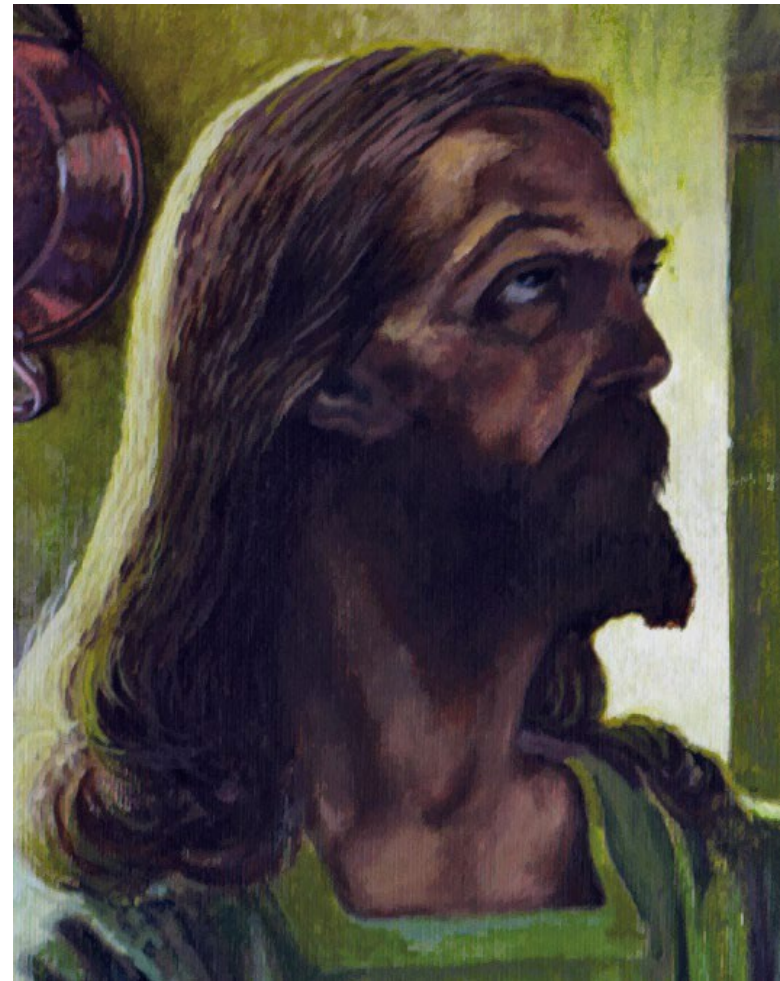
The origin of folded hands to pray is shrouded in the fog of the historical past. Many of the World Religions use folded hands to signify communing with God. They are seen in Buddhist, Hindu, and Shinto prayers. They came to Christianity through the returning of the exiled Jews from Babylon who had learned it from the Sumerians. But Jews now do not usually clasp hands for prayer. When Romans used that gesture to show submission, as if you offered to have your hands bound with rope, they rejected that symbolism.

Islam also uses a more supplicant position for prayer. Total prostration requires seven body parts touching the ground, the head, both hands, both knees, and both feet for Shia Muslims,



(bronze), they are then poured into the empty mold. When the metal has cooled, the mold is broken to display the final product. This technique dates back 3000 years to Greece and is called the "lost wax technique." Amen!

Probably Vladimir's best painting is *The Supper at Emmaus*. It is the moment when the Apostles recognize that the crucified Christ has risen and walks among them. It was painted in the mid-1960s as a commissioned work from a church in Peoria, Illinois. The risen Christ encounters two of his disciples, who did not recognize him until he broke bread with them in a home in Emmaus (Luke 24:30-31). That moment of recognition, amazement, and wonderment is captured in this painting. Since there was no easy access to models for this painting, Vladimir used other painters as his references. Caravaggio (two versions), Rembrandt, Velasquez, and Titian all painted that moment; mostly, he relied on a French painter by the name of Léon Augustin L'hermitte. Vladimir added his own style and touches. Vladimir felt that the face of Jesus in all of the grandmasters depicted too much of a pretty-faced, cherubic Italian instead of the Semitic man/God who had been crucified and just rose from the dead. He gave the face of Jesus more gravitas and suffering, yet radiating the celestial omniscience and peacefulness. The stark contrast of light and dark, called tenebrism, also known as "dramatic illumination," is effectively used to naturally give an apparent supernatural glow of divinity emanating from the head of Jesus without



being the stilted and stylized halo so commonly used in paintings of the middle ages. That technique was the brainchild of Caravaggio (1571-1610), starting a trend among Rembrandt, Ribera, Bernini, and Rubens, now called "the Tenebrists." One of the chairs used in the painting on which one of the disciples is steadying his hand is one that I brought back from my travels in Spain. It was a copy of a Middle Ages labor chair used in childbirth for women. Vladimir also used other wooden spoons and a copper pot in the background.

The painting turned out to be a masterpiece. Vladimir was reluctant to sell it, but a deal is a deal, and the painting went. He was heartbroken for years until he duplicated it in the early seventies. This is the duplicate. He used a canvas that had been used previously and painted over it just as the old masters had one painting on top of another. Looking at the painting from the back, you can clearly see a ballerina outlined.



TRAGEDY AND COMEDY

I sculpted the theater masks seen above in homage to the Greeks who invented Tragedy and Comedy, which still have a powerful influence over our plays/movies and our lives. Comedy is depicted with a whimsical tongue suggesting flirtation and mischief, while Tragedy has the frown with the corners of the mouth turned down.

One of the things on your bucket list should be the Odeon of Herodes Atticus in Athens. It was built in 161 AD by a Roman, Herodes Atticus, in the memory of his wife, Aspasia Annia Regilla. Herodes was the teacher of Marcus Aurelius and a generous donor to the culture of Athens. The Odeon is on the ascent stairway to the Parthenon. This place saw a lot of action from Greek Comedies and Tragedies a couple of millennia ago to Maria Callas, Placido Domingo, Frank Sinatra, and Elton John in more recent times.

Mary, my wife, and I have been there a few times, once with my daughter Amber when she was just in her first teen year. The evening we came to Athens was late. We were barely cognizant of getting to our hotel, a little delirious from jet lag imparted on us from the long plane trip from Los Angeles to Athens, just enough to get checked in and go to what we thought would be a quick dinner and then bed. But circumstances bode us another plan. An unexpected fabulous dinner on the hotel's rooftop restaurant, with Moussaka, a Greek salad of tomatoes, olives, and Feta cheese, and the only in Athens, Retsina, a wine that requires a taste you must learn to acquire. Greece has no hardwoods like oak, only wood like pine. Thus their wine casks are made of pine. The wine has a distinct pine sap flavor, sort of like turpentine. Although when you are jet-lagged, it works just fine. It was a hot summer eve, so the outdoors was very welcome. The hotel was just below the Acropolis, and we were treated to a light show. Later, strains of the unforgettable melody of the Sirtaki dance that everybody knows from "Zorba the Greek", came echoing from street-level. It was magical!

The next morning we got up and started the surprisingly ambitious hike up to the Parthenon. We did not expect the spectacular Odeon. This was the place where Greek culture unfolded. Greek theater began in the 6th century BC. The first scripts were tragic, started by Aeschylus. Sophocles may have written the perfect Tragedy, Oedipus Rex, when Oedipus commits the unforgivable sin of sleeping with his mother, for which he must gouge out his eyes and wander aimlessly until the end of his life, pretty tragic! Even Aristotle got into the playwright business. In his "Poetics," he lays down the foundations of writing. Drama requires six elements, plot, character, thought, diction, music, and spectacle,

which is still true today for Hollywood. The leading man or lady should neither be the paragon of virtue nor the depravity of evil, just like he thought, we are all a mix of good and bad.

Satire and comedy were created by Aristophanes. He wrote *The Clouds*, which caricatures Socrates, his eventual trial and execution, and *Lysistrata*. In this racy pacifist farce, women stop a war by the only potent weapon they possess, their feminine guiles. Men were the only actors allowed, but they played women's parts. Greek theater utilized masks to display the emotions and character of whom the actor portrayed. I was inspired by their utilization of Tragedy and Comedy displayed in these masks. They would hold them before their faces, and you could instantly tell who was who. Another characteristic of the plays was the chorus, a group of men who would be like the audience but on stage. They would interact with the actors by giving them advice recounting the past or predicting things to come. If the divine intervention was necessary, they used a technique they called "Deus ex Machina" - God (emanates) from Machines. It was a means to resolve an unresolvable issue. It is alternatively credited to Aeschylus or Euripides. It is still used today by modern playwrights. An example of "Deus ex Machina" is in Steven Spielberg's "Raiders of the Lost Ark." Indiana Jones has been beaten by the evil Nazis, and all seems lost, but God rises from the Holy Ark of the Covenant and kills the evil Nazis.

Theater is a reflection of life. We can laugh and cry at others' expense.



Peace of Mind, a 21" x 25" oil on canvas board, was painted in Vladimir's Peoria Period from 1956 to 1966. He worked at Peoria State Hospital, and at that particular time, he switched jobs to become the night physician. He was the only doctor for the six thousand patients during the hours from 6 PM to 6 AM every night. This left the day to paint. Sleeping was not in the equation. During this time, he churned out a massive amount of art. *Peace of Mind* was among these. Many of his works were done from sketches at the scene that he then brought home and reworked into a painting. This work, however, being a still life, was painted directly from life,

no sketches, no reworking of previous ideas. The detail in the brass candelabra and the translucent wax candle with the flickering flame attest to the realism Vladimir strived to achieve. He loved to take his newest work and hang it in his office at work. One of the psychiatrists, who was a nationally known name in the psychiatric world, happened to be in Vladimir's office when the newest painting was unveiled. The psychiatrist naturally inquired the name of the new painting. Upon learning that it was *Peace of Mind*, he became visibly upset. "The candle is too close to the curtain!" he exclaimed. "It does not give me peace of mind." When Vladimir explained that it was only a painting, he calmed down.

THE WAVE painting by Vladimir Iwasiuk

Santa Monica period 1966-1975

Each breathing human inhales and, by necessity, exhales approximately 25 sextillion molecules of air with each breath. That is 25 with 21 zeros after it (25×10^{21}). The entire atmosphere on earth has 1.09×10^{44} molecules in it. By sheer calculations, we can determine how many molecules of Caesar's last breath each of us is inhaling in a day, and it is in all probability at least a dozen. By the same token, there is a finite amount of H_2O that reached our planet through snowball comets or asteroids made primarily of ice, pelting our planet millions of years ago. That same, by now melted ice, washes in and out of our bodies every second through drinking, transpiration, perspiration, urination, absorption, etc. Like the air we breathe, we have a few molecules of water that were part of Aristotle, Mozart, and Madam Curie's chemistry. That water eventually passed through all the world's oceans, then back to us through the rain. Almost all of our atoms are replaced on a regular basis. Some tissues replace quicker than others, such as intestinal mucosa, skin, and blood. Taste buds last about ten days, while fat, to our consternation, is around for eight years. Neurons in the brain, on the other hand, are never replaced, only one issue to a customer for life. If one neuron dies, it is not replaced. Although ultimately, when the whole organism dies, the elemental makeup of the neurons gets recycled by the worms and by the chickens that consume the worms.

We derive all our energy, directly or indirectly, from that big nuclear furnace in the sky, our Sun, a relatively small pulsar star in a remote corner of the Milky Way, our Galaxy. It has been there in its present form for 4.5 billion years, initially created along with everything else 13.8 billion years ago when a tiny, very dense bit of mass exploded in what has been euphemistically called the "Big Bang." Our Sun has enough fuel left to last another 5 billion years or so, more than enough for each of us to have a few more birthdays. This energy comes to us in little packets called quanta. These particular quanta are photons. They have bounced around the interior of the sun for thousands of years before they reached its surface and gained the force to escape into space. They travel rather fast, at 186,287 miles per second, one of the more "constant constants" in the universe-- the speed of light. At that rate, it takes 500 seconds to get from the

Sun to us. Obviously, the longer it takes light to reach us, the further away its source is. The nearest Galaxy to our



Galaxy is Alpha Centauri, and light takes four years to reach us from there. That light was generated four years ago, so in fact, we are looking back four years in time when we look at that Galaxy. With the most powerful telescopes, like the Hubble telescope, we can actually look at the light that was created almost near

the beginning of time, the Big Bang, and look at the past and the creation of our Universe! Furthermore, gravity also influences how fast time passes. If we were in the habit of wearing ankle watches and our watches were accurate enough, we would notice that the wristwatch would always be faster than the ankle watch, as the stronger gravity is, the slower time moves along. It gets even stranger. Energy can turn into mass and vice versa, something that was proven when the Enola Gay dropped "Little Boy and Fat Man" and vaporized Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

I share this with you to remind you and myself that we are a small, seemingly insignificant part of a larger picture and that there is a certain timelessness to our physical being. Also, this does give us a small, but definite, claim to eternity, even if we are made of just 7×10^{27} atoms from only 60 elements of the 118 elements listed in the periodic table, forged together by our DNA into the only intellectual beings, at least on this planet.

I like to think of our journey through our existence as a “wave on the ocean.” A wave is a constantly changing force that moves over a body of water and eventually ends up on a sandy beach, creating a lot of white foam. A wave changes its substance constantly. From one second to the next, a wave is made up of entirely different molecules of water, yet it remains the same wave, just as we who float through life with different molecules at various times making up our physical structure, but remaining the same person. The closer the wave gets to shore, the taller it gets, just as we often become stronger and wiser, the longer we are around. Just as the cresting wave shows off its beauty and power, it must crash on the shore and end its existence. We, too, decline at the end but leave a mark on the sand, and the spent force of the wave pulls some of the sand back into the ocean.

It might surprise you that gravity is also thought to travel in particles, called gravitons, and it too travels at exactly the same speed light does, 186,287 miles per second. Time and space are intimately related, as are mass and energy. Space is bendable by mass, and time passes slower the faster you are traveling.

Although the earth looks much the same after a single wave has washed ashore, it has left a mark along with many other waves to slowly alter the lay of the land. Furthermore, by leaving a bit of our DNA to our progeny, we continue to send more waves ashore to leave their mark in the sand. We and ours, too, change the lay of the land, some more than others. But we also leave our mark and thus gain a bit of eternity.

Mary Jane



In 1969 all men born between January 1943 to December 1950 received the notice from the Selective Service System (the Draft Board) to report for duty in the military. I was born in 1943, so I was eminently qualified. I was in a Residency Training Program for General Practice that finished in July of 1970. In August 1970, I was sent to Wichita Falls, Texas, for basic training. The US had just included Cambodia in the Vietnam War. I was expecting to go to Vietnam. A miracle happened! I was sent to Portugal as an Air Force Captain. I was able to bring my wife, and we were stationed on Tercera, the third largest island in the Azorian archipelago, a virtual paradise. Our base was composed of about 4,000 troops, mostly Air Force, but there were also Marines who did the security, the Navy who surprisingly did the flying, and Air Force that did the support, including the hospital. I “fought the war” for the next two years on a semi-tropical island doing health care for basically healthy young people. We bravely kept every Viet Cong from making landfall there. I didn't know it then but it was probably the best time of my life. I was young, healthy, full of energy, and enthusiasm. There was a lot of time to pursue hobbies. Since I had always loved to sculpt, I did. My beautiful wife served as a model for several works.

