

Local Genius

World-renowned artist, Bill Mack, works right in our own backyard

BY AMY JENSEN STONESTROM

Most often, relief sculptures are forever mounted on ancient and classic Greek and Roman architecture. The gods' and goddesses' heavy forms never intended to venture down for today's art collector to put in their home. That is, until internationally renowned sculptor Bill Mack started combining his creativity, unique technical knowledge and talent for distorting objects to make beautiful relief sculpture available to all art fanatics.

This Minnesota native started doing relief sculptures 30 years ago, a skill he learned as a young draftsman, in order to put him through journalism school at the University of Minnesota. He started as a free-lance artist, designing coins for state government collections. Mack admits that he didn't experience the "starving artist syndrome" that many artists go through at the start of their careers. "I found that I was earning more by following my passion than I could with my degree, so I went with it. I believe that if I would've tried anything other than art as an occupation—I would have definitely starved trying to succeed."

From coins, Mack graduated into doing life-size sculpture in bronze, sand and aluminum. The most unique technical aspect of his sculpture is its weight—or lack thereof. Most of his pieces are created for wall mounting and weigh less than 100 pounds. This should be an impossible feat due to the heavy materials that he uses to create his work. But, Mack has developed a way to combine these casting materials with resins, urethanes, epoxies, silicones and acrylics to create a medium that weighs a fraction of the original material. "Until now, relief sculptures have always been monumental. No one has thought to take it out of architecture and find a way to put it in people's homes."

Alto relief, or bringing the third dimension into full round, is another rare ability Mack possesses, making his art a highly sought after commodity. "A lot of dimensions



have to be distorted when I create a relief in order for the piece not to look grotesque," says Mack. "It's an odd talent to possess, I don't have a formula, it is just something that I can do well."

Hometown Operation

Mack created his studio, Erin Taylor Editions in the mid-80s and moved literally to "Camelot" in 1995, a 25,000 square-foot castle in Edina that was originally built in the 1960s as a restaurant. He redesigned the complex to house his complete production facility that employees 15 people. All works are photographed, drawn, molded, finished and framed on site.

In a typical year, Mack creates six new pieces of art. In order to not make price a prohibitive factor in selling his work, he creates limited editions of each new piece of art. Usually 100 to 125 reproductions are made in his foundry of each original. When an edition debuts, a piece of art typically sells for \$4,000 to \$5,000. As the edition becomes more rare, the price increases to \$25,000 or more for the same piece.

Even though Bill Mack is an internationally known sculptor, many Minnesotans don't know that they have such acclaimed talent virtually in their back yard. His local customers are usually introduced to his work while they are on vacation in one of the national or international cities, such as Las Vegas, New York, Paris, Rio De Janeiro, Monte Carlo, Tokyo, Osaka, Mexico City and Munich, where he exhibits his work.

Famous Admirers

Famous political figures from across the globe, such as former-Presidents William J Clinton, Gerald Ford and Ronald Regan, Mikhail Gorbachev and Prince Albert of Monaco, have purchased sculptures. A sculpture of his large and bold American eagle even hangs in the Great Hall of the People in China, a gift presented to Premier Jiang Zemin. Many entertainers and athletes such as Robert Redford, Elizabeth Taylor, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, Celine Dion and Peggy Fleming also own pieces of his work.


As for his overall customer base, eighty percent are women, which he says initially surprised him since the majority of his work

features female nudes. In addition to the human form, his 75- piece repertoire features American icons that include sports figures, the bald eagle and famous faces such as Marilyn Monroe and Elvis Presley. He has also created many pieces for charity including a sculpture of Ryan White, entitled "Hope," which raised money for AIDS research.

Mack plans to stick with his first and only passion—creating relief sculptures. "I'll die


doing it," he says. "The only thing that I might do differently is settle down and do lower numbers in my editions and do less manufacturing and traveling. That way I can spend more time in my studio, doing the creative part of my job that I enjoy the most."

AMY JENSEN STONESTROM is a Twin Cities-based freelance writer.



LANDSCAPES
Putting greens, chipping areas, sand traps

GOLF IN YOUR OWN BACK YARD!
Appearance - Playability are unbelievably real!



Golf Landscapes turf systems are the most advanced synthetic pitching and putting surface on the market today.

65% OF ALL GOLF SHOTS ARE WITHIN 100 YARDS OF THE GREEN

474-4461
www.golflandscapes.com

...or see our greens at
The Bunker in Minnetonka and St. Paul,
and The Dogleg in Burnsville