

William McElcheran

Humanism in Bronze

ENDANGERED SPECIES

Eyes shifting, watching for movement, nose sniffing
for traces, ears
attentive for sounds above or below the buzz of the
city, watching,
smelling, listening, prey and predator.
Calculating, (no time for contemplation), basking,
bronzing at
appointed times — but reachable.
Aiming to more than survive, fracturing infinitives and
anything else
that impedes or endangers.
Non-hero, non-poet, non-philosopher, endangering
and endangered — in
our millions.

-William McElcheran, 7 October 1998



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KINSMAN ROBINSON GALLERIES

MAY 1 - 29, 2010



Homage to Barlach (Flat Out), 1994

Humanism in Bronze

WILLIAM HODD McELCHERAN was one of the most accomplished and versatile figurative sculptors of the twentieth century. A virtuoso, he started modelling realistic portraits at the age of 10. He was given advanced standing into second year at the Ontario College of Art at the age of 16 due to his exceptional ability and his considerable body of work. His natural talent blossomed there earning him a painting scholarship and later the Lieutenant-Governor's Medal. Most nights he attended life drawing classes after painting and modelling from the figure all day. He even made a special arrangement with the custodian to let him in early so that he could do an hour's work—sculpting in clay—before classes started. During his lengthy professional career, he worked in a variety of media—from carving in wood and marble to modelling in clay to casting in fiberglass and bronze. From early on, Bill McElcheran resolved to have any recognition of his work based on content rather than form. He was determined to be recognized for the humanism of his sculpture. This resolve ultimately led him to create his 'non-hero' or 'everyman'—the single, bronze businessman.

Lesser known, but no less significant, are his commissioned works for a wide range of architectural and environmental projects. McElcheran's 1964 commission for St. Teresa's Parish (St. John's, NL) showcases some of his finest work. Not only did he design the church itself, he designed and cast the Stations of the Cross as well as the Baptismal font cover. He painted *Our Lady of Newfoundland* for the Adoration Chapel. He carved the four evangelists that adorn the sanctuary. He designed and created the tester that hangs above the altar.

Bill McElcheran is well-known for his bronze businessmen which are included in important public, corporate and private collections on three continents. The wit and irony of these pieces comes from McElcheran's broad and deep knowledge of and insight into philosophy and art. German art professor, Gerhard Finkh once wrote, "An understanding forgiveness for the human being in the businessman is discernible." Over his lifetime, McElcheran sought a new synthesis of plastic expression in a much larger human context than most contemporary sculpture had previously tackled.

It was his combination of masterful craftsmanship, intellect and moral courage which gave rise to the powerful humanism which animates all of his work. Bill McElcheran, the sculptor, always kept in mind the context of his work as he created each individual piece. His businessmen are not mere figures in bronze; these hurrying figures touch the world with their relevant subject matter which is immediately identifiable. McElcheran's satire was pointed but never cruel. In a 1973 review, freelance journalist Sol Littman wrote, "McElcheran's work is biting yet warmly human." While McElcheran poked fun at the business elite, he distilled his bronzes into classic forms which never lost their grace and movement.

Though often remembered for his bronze businessmen, Bill McElcheran completed many large, architectural achievements of diverse subjects during his lifetime. Any assessment of his works should take into account the larger context within which his businessmen are found and might appropriately be called The Art and Humanism of William McElcheran.

Paul C. H. Robinson,
Director



Raconteur, 1997



Watch Your Rear, 1987

Inspired Businessman, 1996



On The Move (left), 1989; On The Go (right), 1987



Internet, 1997



Entrenched Woman, 1997



Woman With Groceries, 1979



Excelsior, 1989



I'm Lovely, 2008



Convincing Businessman, 1995



Staying Ahead, 1995



Calculating Businessman, 1995



Aspiring, 1994



The News, 1997



Through The Millennia, 1980



In Our Time, ????



Acro, 1984



Tirimisu, 1990

List of Works in Exhibition

**The Tackle (Football Players), 1969*

Bronze sculpture
20 in, 50.8 cm
one-of-a-kind

After The Deal, 1976

Bronze sculpture
18.75 in, 47.63 cm
edition 9

**Woman With Groceries, 1979*

Bronze sculpture
12 in, 30.48 cm
edition 6

**Through The Millennia, 1980*

Bronze bas-relief sculpture
28.5 x 38 in, 72.39 x 96.52 cm
one-of-a-kind

....In Our Millions, 1981

Bronze sculpture
17 x 17 in, 43.18 x 43.18 cm
edition 9

**Arco, 1984*

Bronze sculpture
19 in, 48.26 cm
edition 8

**On The Go, 1987*

Bronze sculpture, posthumous cast, multiple
14.5 in, 36.83 cm
edition 100

**Watch Your Rear, 1987*

Bronze sculpture, posthumous cast, multiple
14.5 in, 36.83 cm
edition 100

Watch Your Back, 1988

Bronze sculpture, posthumous cast
50 in, 127 cm
edition 4

A Man & Muse, 1989

Bronze sculpture
12 in, 30.48 cm
edition 9

**Excelsior, 1989*

Bronze sculpture
19 in, 48.26 cm
edition 9

**On The Move, 1989*

Bronze sculpture, posthumous cast, multiple
14.5 in, 36.83 cm
edition 100

Descending Muse, 1990

Bronze sculpture
15.5 in, 39.37 cm
edition 9

**Tirimisu, 1990*

Bronze sculpture
11.5 in, 29.21 cm
edition 9

**Aspiring, 1994*

Bronze sculpture, multiple
25.5 in, 64.77 cm
edition 100

**Homage To Barlach (Flat Out), 1994*

Bronze sculpture, multiple
19.75 in, 50.17 cm
edition 100

Venus, 1994

Bronze sculpture, multiple
24 in, 60.96 cm
edition 100

Che Fa?, 1994

Bronze sculpture
78 in, 198.12 cm
edition 4

Crowd of 37, 1995

Bronze sculpture
2.5 in, 6.35 cm
one-of-a-kind

**Calculating Businessman, 1995*

Bronze sculpture
28 in, 71.12 cm
edition 9

**Convincing Businessman, 1995*

Bronze sculpture
28 in, 71.12 cm
edition 9

**Staying Ahead, 1995*

Bronze sculpture, posthumous cast
42 in, 106.68 cm
edition 6

**Inspired Businessman, 1996*

Bronze sculpture
28 in, 71.12 cm
edition 9

Walking Businessman I, 1996

Bronze sculpture
10.5 in, 26.67 cm
edition 9

Am I Last?, 1997

Bronze sculpture
9.5 in, 24.13 cm
edition 9

Entrenched Woman, 1997

Bronze sculpture
28 in, 71.12 cm
edition 9

**Internet, 1997*

Bronze sculpture
10.5 in, 26.67 cm
edition 9

**The News, 1997*

Bronze sculpture
10.5 in, 26.67 cm
edition 9

**Raconteur, 1997*

Bronze sculpture
29.5 in, 74.93 cm
edition 9

Among Equals, 1998

Bronze sculpture
10.5 in, 26.67 cm
edition 9

I Swear It, 1998

Bronze sculpture
10.5 in, 26.67 cm
edition 9

**I'm Lovely, 2008*

Bronze sculpture, posthumous cast, multiple
9.5 in, 24.13 cm
edition 100

**In Our Time, ?*

Bronze sculpture, posthumous cast
28.25 x 17.25 in, 71.76 x 43.82 cm
edition 4

Please note that the asterisk (*) denotes that the work is illustrated in the catalogue.



The Tackle (Football Players), 1969

Cover: *Aspiring*, detail, 1994

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