

The Pieta

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When I saw the Pieta by Michelangelo, I was dumbfounded at the beauty of the sculpture. I had to remind myself it was just rock. I could not believe into what Michelangelo had transformed rock. It was a sculpture in marble of a sad Mary sitting and holding the dead Jesus in her lap after he had been taken down from the cross. Mary looked like a young girl holding the body of her son with the stigmata showing on the lifeless but incredibly sculpted body of Jesus. Michelangelo captured death just as well as he captured the youthfulness of Mary in her moment of ultimate sorrow. She was so life-like, I cannot imagine why

visitors were not saying hello to the statue. I guess they were giving her privacy in her moment of despair.

I have made a small marble statue which I call the boxer. It was a head about the size of a man's head with a broken nose. I used a chisel and hammer. I held the chisel in my hand and hit it with the hammer, and it hardly made a ding. I had to hit the chisel so hard that I was worried about missing and hitting my hand. It made me appreciate the strength, perseverance and work that Michelangelo needed to complete the sculpture on top of the artistic skill and vision he had.

I sculpted the head at the Okanagan sculpture symposium in the summer of 2002 and an experienced sculptor lent me her air tools so I was able to complete the head to my satisfaction. This head is shown above.

I have no idea how I could have avoided the frustration of using a chisel until I was given the air tools. One has to hit the chisel so hard that one's aim of the hammer is not as accurate as one would like. I never did hit my hand, but I would have given up without the air tools Michelangelo never would have had.

Now I do not want to criticize the sculpture, but Mary could never had looked so youthful at the time of the crucifixion. Sure, some mothers do look youthful after giving birth, but they did not give birth to the son of God.

Can you imagine the stress of looking after a mischievous boy that is always up to something? I fell into the category very easily. As a result, Mom always looked harried in photographs after she had me.

That is a lot of stress, but imagine that the stress would be tenfold if one had to look after the son of God. You can imagine Mary saying to an eight-year old Jesus, "Son, do not go swimming, you just had lunch." Jesus would reply, "That's okay Mom, I am the son of God, and besides that, I think I have finally mastered the art of walking on smooth water."

"And stop turning water into wine, you are not 19 yet."

"Ah, mom..."

Jesus would pet stray dogs, run with scissors, hold an umbrella in a thunderstorm, break mirrors, walk under ladders and even swim with cats, and Mary would be running after him, several steps behind, trying to keep him safe. That would be stress enough for Mary, but there would be a huge amount of additional stress from the psychology of the situation.

When I got committed for my first manic attack, I thought I was Eric Clapton. Before anybody thinks that this is not a clear example of a messiah complex, just think of how well Clapton plays the guitar. Did Jesus ever play a musical instrument as well as Clapton? I think not.

So Jesus was running around thinking he was the son of God. Is this not the original well-documented Messiah complex? How come I got committed, and Jesus did not? However, I will always choose a stay in a mental hospital over crucifixion any day.

Should I have told the doctors that I was the son of God? They did not believe I was Eric Clapton, but would they have believed I was the second coming? Absolutely not. There is a religious belief that the son of God is yet to arrive. Maybe he has already arrived and is laying in a mental institution somewhere.

So back to the sculpture of the Pieta (The Pity of Mary for the crucified Jesus). The depiction of Mary as youthful not harried is completely inaccurate. But please do not let that detract from the magnificence of Michelangelo's masterpiece. Visit the Pieta in the Accademia of Firenza (Florence) and you will take up life drawing, guaranteed.