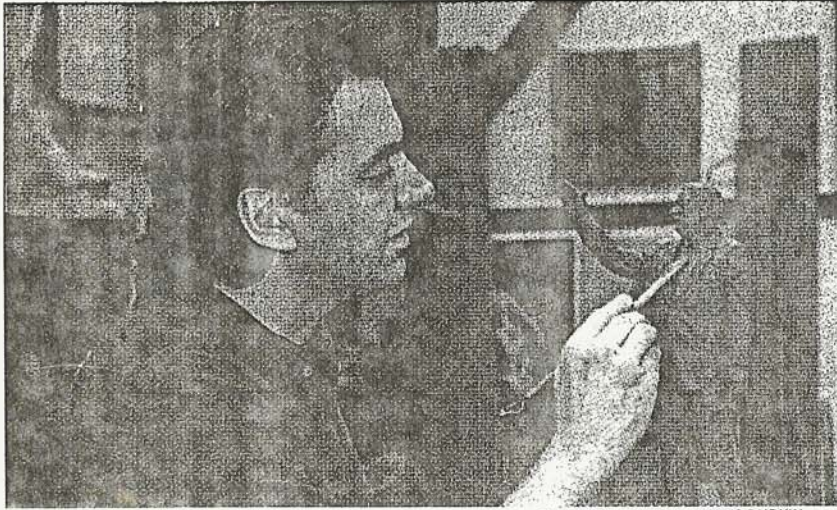


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Zenos Frudakis puts a finishing touch on a Philly legend, Frank Rizzo.

Glenside sculptor will make Frank Rizzo larger than life

By Chris Durkin
Staff Writer

Zenos Frudakis breathes life into bronze.

His soul whispers to his flattened thumbs to resurrect the man. Like a modern Michelangelo, the sculptor smoothes the politics of art with green clay from ancient Italian earth.

When he is finished, his work speaks.

Frudakis' latest subject, the late Philadelphia mayor Frank Rizzo, would have understood the process well.

"I would think that he would have appreciated sculptures, and that a monument was being created of him," the artist said.

Frudakis was commissioned by the Rizzo family to sculpt the larger-than-life former police commissioner and mayor for a statue at the Municipal Services Building across from City Hall. The privately-funded statue of a waving Frank Rizzo will be 9 feet tall.

The sculptor recently changed his work after a member of the Philadelphia Art Commission said she wanted Rizzo smiling more. Meanwhile, the Rizzo family wants a more dignified look for the ages. Frudakis is still working on clay models.

The sculptor's resume of accomplishments is as endless as the subjects he has sculpted ... from Jefferson, Hamilton, Lincoln and Martin Luther King to Dinah

Shore, Don McLean, Gen. Douglas MacArthur and Glaxo CEO Sir Paul Giro-lami. His works are on display at museums and in collections across America and the world.

Works-in-progress include the Pennsylvania Anthracite Miners' Memorial in Shenandoah, Mark Twain for the Lotos Club in New York, and Arnold Palmer and Jack Nicklaus for the Golf Hall of Fame.

At Frudakis' Glenside studio, bronze and wax legends cast a world-weary eye at the viewer. Wolves menace; a horse is tranquil. Beethoven plays in the background.

"I just always drew," the 44-year-old Frudakis explained about his early years in Gary, Ind. He described his coal miner Greek father, whom he admired, as "Zorba." Frudakis' mother baked his bread sculptures, and once he drew his teacher on the back of a test before handing it in. She liked it.

He is soft-spoken and earthy, yet there is an inspired authority about him. He speaks of sculpture with the respect of an historian, in awe of such an ancient art form.

Frudakis deftly applies wood tools to clay like a bow to a violin, working from a skull dating to 8,000 B.C. "It's useful to

have things like that," he instructed.

Admittedly, Frudakis has done "very well" in attracting work, but "It's not just always a matter of ability," he insisted. "Sometimes people pick you because you can communicate. I try to work with people on the whole project.

"If people like my work they hire me," he shrugged. "I don't go through the dog and pony show."

The artist pulled himself out of a Gary steel mill to attend the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts and the University of Pennsylvania. Like his influences, Michelangelo, Rodin, and Bernini, he is drawn to the human form.

Beginning with a concept, Frudakis forms clay which is eventually cast in wax and dipped in a ceramic material. When bronze is poured into a hollow shell left by the process, the ceramic is broken away to reveal the statue. He works on the bronze at a Chester County foundry. Acid is added to achieve the patina, then more wax is added.

"I like doing people," he explained. "I think it has to do with my obsession with time - to freeze the moment - stop time. I like bringing people back like Frank for people who haven't known them, to get a feeling of what it's like to walk around them."

When Rizzo's son, Frannie, saw the sculptor's work, his search for someone to portray his father went no further. Frudakis proceeded to pour over several photos with the family.

"It's very difficult to do people who are no longer living," he related. "It's very important to get character and personality in there."

Frudakis met Rizzo, whom he describes as "quite a character," during a showing of a bronze he did of former Philadelphia mayor W. Wilson Goode, a Rizzo rival. At the time, Goode was caught in a media blitz for allegedly getting large discounts on his suits.

Frudakis watched as Rizzo walked over to the bust, rubbed his hand on the front, smiled and said, "Nice suit."

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Sculpture of Former Philadelphia Mayor Frank Rizzo Unveiled on New Year's Day

Philadelphia, Pa. - An over life-size bronze sculpture of former Philadelphia Mayor Frank Rizzo greeted Mummies parading past him, ushering in the New Year. The sculpture was unveiled on New Year's Day, 1999, by Philadelphia Mayor Ed Rendell. Created by Philadelphia-based, world-renowned sculptor Zenos Frudakis, the statue of Mr. Rizzo will face the north side of City Hall as he walks down the stairs in front of the Municipal Services Building Plaza, near the corner of 15th Street on John F. Kennedy Blvd. The sculpture took years to create and months to cast at Laran Bronze Foundry in Chester,

Zenos is a first generation American whose father, a lira player, poet and restaurateur, came to the U.S. from Chania, Crete. His mother, who now lives in Crown Point, Indiana, came to the U.S. from Philiatra. Zenos was an altar boy in the Greek Orthodox Church in Wheeling, West Virginia, where he attended his first Greek School. He also attended Greek School in Gary, Indiana, when his family moved there. Through arrangements made by his priest, Father John Limberakis, Zenos sculpted the bust of Father Cavvadas for the Greek Orthodox Seminary in Brookline, Massachusetts. Archbishop Iakovos posed for Zenos for a sculpture which it is hoped will be developed in the future.