

Providence has a number of artists among its alumni, including Ray Day '57, who taught generations of students at Providence and later pursued his career as an artist. The following stories represent those who have pursued a career in various aspects of fine art, from painting or sculpting to photography and videography. Read on.

BRINGING IDEAS TO LIFE

'80 grad sculpts pieces around the world

By Christa (Payne) Hoyland '84

Guy Tedesco '80 has more ideas for blessing the world with beautiful sculptures than he has the funding to create them. But he continues to promote his work, his proposals, and his art in hopes he will be able to bring his ideas to life. He realizes he'll likely always be a "starving artist," he said, but he can't help but create.



Photos provided by Guy Tedesco '80

Recently, he traveled to south China to Chengdu, where he created the original for what will become a life-size Pegasus with a 20-foot wingspan as part of the city's efforts to integrate art into its park system. Chinese artisans will eventually create a stainless steel and bronze statue from his original, one of 40 pieces in the city's plan.

Typically, such a project would take Tedesco about three years, with him following the creation of the original with a mold, a wax casting, a second mold, and then the final metal casting. But Chengdu officials want their artists to do much of the creation with Tedesco's occasional supervision.

Tedesco is one of about 40 artists from around the world who were invited to submit projects as part of Chengdu's sister cities program, which connects the city to Louisville. He said he chose the Pegasus because it is an international symbol of rebirth and advancing to the future, representing the ancient Chinese city's recent modernization as well as Louisville's heritage.

As exciting as it sounds to create a project in China, like many of his projects, the payment will likely barely cover his costs. But he hopes that media coverage of his work will help him get future work and funding for his project ideas. He also is planning to start a speaker series as another way to pay his bills while he seeks funding and works on other projects.

"This is fitting in with my overall plan at the moment," Tedesco said.

Now back home, Tedesco is focused on a statue of the late Cardinal Joseph Ritter,

who was born in New Albany, became a bishop of Indianapolis and St. Louis, and was named Indiana's first cardinal. The project will represent Cardinal Ritter's efforts to desegregate Catholic schools – decades before public schools did so – and to unify people of different races and faiths.

That project will depict Cardinal Ritter with three children, one working with the cardinal to push over a glass wall and the other two children burying glass blocks engraved on one side with negative words to allow the positive words on the other side to face up.

The Cardinal Ritter Birthplace Foundation is handling fundraising for the project, and Tedesco said he has faith that the project will be supported. He has started some work on the project, including a bust of Cardinal Ritter, pictured at right.

Tedesco said he is excited about the project for several reasons because it will teach the world about Cardinal Ritter's contributions, which also include his efforts with Vatican Council II. He hopes that project will have four reproductions in cities representative of Cardinal Ritter's service, including at the Cardinal Ritter Birthplace museum in New Albany; Cardinal Ritter High School in Indianapolis; in St. Louis, where he served as cardinal; and at the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C., the founding of which Ritter supported.

Born to create

Tedesco has been an artist since his childhood, when his mother insisted the 8-year-old craft new hands for the statue of Mary at Sacred Heart in Jeffersonville because the originals had broken off. After taking shop class at Providence, he wanted to build furniture, but he earned his bachelor's at Purdue University in clothing design. He found some success in New York but was disillusioned with the clothing design industry and returned to Jeffersonville to try a career as an artist. By the late 1990s, he settled into sculpting after creating the crucifix and altar for Sacred Heart's new church.

He soon opened his own studio, and his projects can be seen locally, including the statue of Pres. Thomas Jefferson in Warder Park in Jeffersonville, and around

the country. Along with doing commissioned work, he also has ideas of his own, including another project for the Catholic church, one he has dreamed of since he was a child.

That dream project would allow people to pray the Rosary while also encountering the humanness of Mary, the Mother of God. He would depict Mary at various ages for each of the four sets of mysteries – for the Joyful Mysteries, a young, joyful Mary; the Luminous Mysteries, a proud middle-aged mother; the Sorrowful Mysteries, "an intensely sad woman;" and for the Glorious Mysteries, "a beautiful old woman sitting quietly with wisdom in her eyes," he said.

The images of Mary, who despite living a simple life became one of the most well-known and thus "the most powerful woman in history," would allow people to empathize, be inspired, and meditate, he said. Tedesco dreams of the images one day being placed at the new St. Pope John Paul II National Shrine in Washington, D.C., to honor the late pope's fierce devotion to Mary, and at the Vatican.

For now, the project – and several others – are simply ideas. Tedesco said he will keep talking to people who are likely to be able to initiate fundraising efforts. He knows these projects will be important pieces and touch many people for decades to come, so he will keep creating, working, marketing, and speaking.

He looks to the inspiration of St. Francis of Assisi, who as a young man made poor choices and then became the world's most well-known saint. Tedesco hopes he can convey the lessons he learned from studying the saint's life in some way in all his artwork, especially his spiritual pieces.

"Those are teaching moments of artwork, allowing these figures to be human" so others can empathize and be inspired, he said.

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