

SPOTLIGHT: Jan Zach
Title of Piece: Prometheus



El Presenter: Pepper Berkeley

Date: November 17, 2009

Title of Piece: Prometheus

Year created: 1958

Artist: Jan Zach

Presented to the UO by Gamma Phi Beta sorority to commemorate their 50th year on campus. Jan Zach was born in Czechoslovakia in 1914, and came to the UO as a professor of sculpture in 1958, remaining until 1979. Another of his public art works in Eugene was a very large stainless steel mobile at the top of the inside dome at Meier and Frank (now Macy's) at Valley River Center. This could be viewed from many angles by climbing to other levels in the store. Unfortunately, the sculpture was lost when the store was sold and remodeled. There was no local effort to find another location.

Five points of interest about this work of art:

1. The sculpture is basic, elemental, strong. Prometheus was portrayed in Greek art, (he was a green mythic figure) in human form, but strong.
2. Prometheus' rib cage is exposed. This may be a reference to the Greek myth. Prometheus was the son of a Titan and a water nymph. He came to the attention of Zeus at a special feast of the gods, when he tricked the gods into choosing a pile of offal (fat and bones) instead of choice meat items. Zeus sentenced him to a mountain, where an eagle (vulture, other birds) ate his liver, which regenerated constantly.

3. What Prometheus has in his hands may refer to another myth. He stole fire from Zeus, hid it in a hollow reed, and gave it to mankind. He was always helping mankind, which did not set well with Zeus.
4. When I look at this sculpture, I think Primal. In Greek legend, Prometheus is not the god, but one of the early ones. There are no wasted parts to the sculpture.
5. The finish is rough, the material heavy, there is nothing dainty.

Possible questions to use when discussing this piece with museum visitors:

1. Why isn't this done with a smooth finish?
2. Do you think this is a superhero type?

Tour Type: Learning to Look

JSMA Collection:

<https://jsmacollection.uoregon.edu/mwebcgi/mweb?request=record;id=617;type=101>