

Felix de Weldon remembered

When I consider developing a monument like The Voyage of the Fox I like to draw from my friendship and mentoring of Felix de Weldon who was perhaps the greatest monument builder of the 20th century. We met in Newport RI during the America's Cup in 1983 when I exhibited my new collection of bronzes featuring a history of the America's Cup. He became an instant friend and supporter of my work. We both share a birth date in April, just a few days apart, so I always think of Felix around this month.

When I met de Weldon he was owner of Beacon Rock, a Newport RI mansion, originally built for Edward D. Morgan, J.P Morgan's cousin. Felix was very humorous and a great story teller, when we lunched in Woodstock, Virginia with several other people and his son Byron, he kept all of us and eventually the whole Waite Staff, in rapt anticipation of the punch line of the next story told.

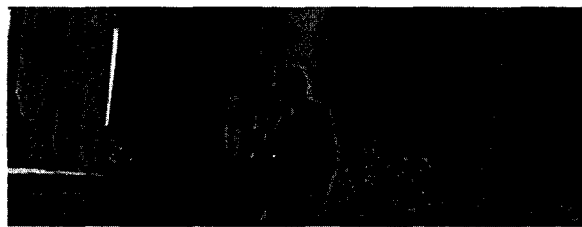
Felix worked at his sculpture, using oil based and water based clay and frequently plaster, in a suit and tie. Rising by 5:30 or 6 AM each morning Felix would come to the

George Laakso-Sculpture.com

Sculpture by George Laakso
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Very often in Art History the individual Artist has very little to do with his own legacy; particularly in the case of a relatively short life span. When there is a large collection of work as in the case of George Laakso and an eventful life, which was shared by his surviving widow Ruth, who passed away recently in April of 2007, there is a lot of information which needs to be put in order.. The value of this is that the past and present collectors and art appreciators can have some idea of the biographies and extent of the Laakso's contribution in Art. You never really know how time will judge an artist.. Sometimes they can fall out of view for 50 or 100 years or more before their full worth is realized and then again there really is never a final assessment or value for an artwork. It might be interesting to note that da Vinci who died in the arms of the French King disappeared from view, as an important artist, for hundreds of years. It was only when a rather small portrait called Mona Lisa surfaced that there was a renewed interest in da Vinci's paintings and then his codices and later his sculpture. And we can repeat a similar story for Rembrandt..

Did anyone believe in Vincent Van Gogh's Art other than his brother Theo? who fortunately was an Art dealer and yes, of course the one *other* person who purchased one of Vincent's paintings during his lifetime. Art is really the one thing that never really dies. As



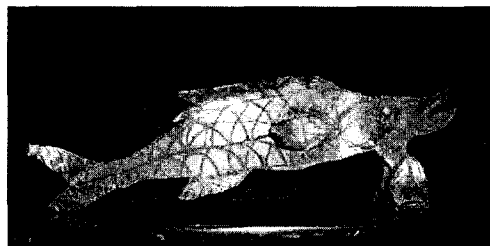
Felix de Weldon, Bill Osmundsen at Beacon Rock, Newport, RI

studio between 7 and 8 AM after his breakfast, which he took in town. During the times I did some work for him he would put me up at Beacon Rock, in a bedroom suite, and after his breakfast, when I was already in his studio, Felix would graciously bring me a smoked salmon on bagel, for my breakfast, without fail..

Felix de Weldon passed away here in Woodstock, Virginia in 2003, he would have been 101 this year. He is most famous for making The *Marine Corps War Memorial*, near Arlington National Cemetery, which is the massive monument of the taking of Mt Suribachi and the raising of the flag on Iwo Jima.

Here is a link to an interesting verbal history made with Felix de Weldon in 1969 at the Truman library.

<http://www.trumanlibrary.org/journalhistjdweldon.htm>



"Pike" aluminum
From the Kalevala
By George Laakso

long as it exists the energy that artist put forth dwells in this object. . Robert Hemi author of the Art Spirit said it best, when to paraphrase, '*An Artist creates an exact record of himself at that moment and such a thing will never be produced again.*'

When you navigate the new *GeorgeLaakso-Sculpture.com* site it is broken down into various categories and they relate in turn to date chronology, bibliography of articles written and known works by George Laakso and collections the work is in.

I was able to go through a complete portfolio of Georges work, as well a countless pictures and notes. For me this was a Labor of Love for I have know both the Laakso's well since 1969 when I began exhibiting in their Studio-Gallery in Virginia Beach. Although I moved out of the area for many years it was my good fortune to again relocate here and pick-up my friendship with Ruth Laakso. Ruth and I had recently discussed organizing Georges work, as his life had so abruptly ended of a heart attack in 1981. Ruth continued to paint for another 26 years until being hospitalized, before her death, at age 87.

Without question I was impressed as a young man with this dynamic couple and today nearly 40 years

Continued on Page 4