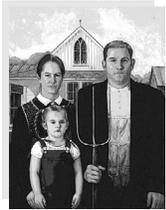


Art Adventure | Sam Dalkilic-Miestowski

The human figure as art



What defines beauty or the ideal body? Since

the beginning of time, many poets, musicians, philosophers and artists have pondered the idea of beauty. The definition of beauty has changed considerably over the past centuries. Recently, the digital revolution has transformed the idea of beauty. Beauty is a commodity used to sell almost anything.

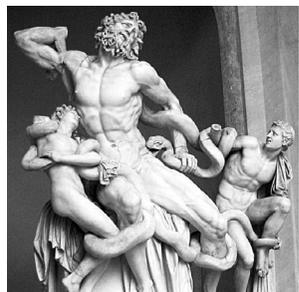
One can go to a plastic surgeon and obtain instant beauty. Even photos can be changed to transform the ugly stepmother into a fairy princess. Before extreme makeovers, before plastic surgery and long before photography, the only way to record beauty was through creating fine art.

Artists have been interpreting the human figure since the beginning of time. One thing that has proven to be constant: the pursuit of the human figure as a theme in art.

One of the earliest forms of the human figure was created during Paleolithic period, c. 24,000-22,000 B.C. The Venus of Willendorf is a small limestone carving,

measuring approximately 4 3/8 inches in height. Scholars indicate that it may have been used as a Fertility Goddess. Her head is small with exaggerated features, including a large belly and large breasts. It is often debated if she is pregnant or simply obese. Either way, the Venus of Willendorf figure remains a mysterious icon in the world of art.

Fast forward to Ancient Greece



and what is often referred to as the Golden Age of Greek art. The human body in all its natural glory was created in larger-than-life statues. Pottery often told stories of athletes, poetry and literature through the nude figures on the vessel.

Move up in time to the 1490s to



Leonardo Da Vinci's revolutionary proportional study of the human figure, The Vitruvian Man. Author and artist Robert M. Place states, "Vitruvius was an ancient Roman architect who wrote a series of 10 books on architecture ... In the third volume, which is on the proportions of temples, he states that these buildings should be based on the proportions of man, because the human body is the model of perfection. He justifies this by stating that the human body with arms and legs extended fits into the perfect geometric form, the circle and the square."

Place further explains, "Many artists tried to illustrate this divine relationship but with varying success. An illustration of the Vitruvian man by Cesariano in his Cosmo Vitruvius of 1521 reeks of failure.

"Cesariano drew a perfect circle and square tangent to each other at the four points of the square; then he forced a figure of a man into the design so that his hands and feet touch the points. The result was one of the most disproportioned figures of the Renaissance with arms too long, legs too short, and hands and feet too big. A system of relationships alone did not make beauty happen. It took the genius of Leonardo Da Vinci to solve the problem. Leonardo started by drawing a perfectly proportioned man and then found the circle and square in the figure. The circle and square are only tangent at one place, the base." Place summarizes, "The thing Leonardo added was beauty."

Leonardo's drawing of the Vitruvian man has influenced artists and scientists for many centuries. It remains one of the most popular and printed images.

Dan Prendergest is an expert when it comes to realizing body proportions. He holds three masters championship bodybuilding awards. The most remarkable thing about Dan is that he won all three championships during this past year at the age of 50.

Combined with his thirty years of experience, Dan is one of the most sought after personal train-

ers in Cardinal Fitness with a full schedule of clients ranging from children, teenagers and middle aged people to senior citizens.

Recently one of his female clients won first place in a local Northwest Indiana women's bodybuilding competition.

When asked what it takes to have the right proportions, Dan shed some insight, "If

I can paraphrase what Michelangelo said about carving stone. When he looked at a piece of marble he had to visualize the figure in the stone and then break away those parts which were not art. That is the same thing about bodybuilding. Most people have a difficult time visualizing their muscles formed, so they can never get to their goal. When you look at your body, you have to imagine the fat being sculpted away like the way a sculptor chisels a block of stone."

Schererville resident John Boyle, 78, another hard-core fitness fanatic at Cardinal Fitness, is a father of eight, has been married for 55 years has been running for more than 30 years. Recently, after Mr. Boyle, out-paced and out-ran me on the treadmill, I had to ask him, "Why do you run?" It all came down to proportions. At age 48 he was overweight and had poor self-esteem. He tried to remember when he felt good about himself and after thinking about it, realized it was when he was running in high school.

He then made a life decision to start running and has continued to this day. His dad passed away at 91 and, until he died, walked 6 miles a day.

I asked Mr. Boyle what was his idea of the ideal body.

"For me if the measure is great self-esteem, then that would be my answer," he said.

If you want to meet Mr. Boyle in person or see his children and grandkids, you might catch them in the mornings at Cardinal Fitness.

To schedule a training session with Dan Prendergest call Fitness XXperience (219) 712-1730.

What is your ideal body type? E-mail your comments to samowner@sbcglobal.net.

Contact Sam at the Steeple Gallery at (219) 365-1014.



Lowell wants to preserve downtown

By KITTY CONLEY
kconley@post-trib.com

LOWELL – Since the Town Council established its Historic Preservation Commission last year it has begun the process of protecting and enriching Lowell's historic buildings.

A great start was made as the commission invited Erica Taylor, director of the Calumet Region office of the Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana, to join the meeting at Town

Hall on March 20. Taylor showed residents, owners of historic buildings, Town Council members and Commissioners how a historic preservation commission can protect and revitalize old buildings and neighborhoods.

Rich Meadows of Lowell Carpet owns two attached buildings on Commercial Avenue that he has been working hard to beautify on the inside.

He is looking forward to help and direction on uplift-

ing the entire historic downtown.

Several buildings are already listed in the Lake County Interim Report of 1996 as part of the Indiana Historic Sites and Structures Inventory.

Meadows' building at 317 E. Commercial Ave., is listed as being built in 1899 and has an outstanding rating.

That same story goes on along Commercial Avenue, where more than 25 buildings were listed.

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