



The spotlight shines on...
DEB VANDEMBROUCKE
Sculptor, Webmaster, artist

Ann Stanke: Before we get into your various forms of artwork, let's introduce you to our readers. You grew up in the suburbs of Chicago and attended Eureka College, and you seem to have a variety of vocations and avocations. Start at the beginning!

Deb Vandembroucke: I had attended a very large high school in the Chicago area and wanted to go to a smaller college. My father was on the road a great deal, my mother didn't drive, and it was difficult for me to visit various colleges. Eureka, a small college in central Illinois (and Ronald Reagan's alma mater) came to me to talk about their college programs and to solicit my attendance, and it was an easy, comfortable decision. I graduated with a degree in art and mathematics.

I like abstract math and actually, Eureka was one of the few colleges where computer classes were part of the curriculum. Coincidentally, I needed a one-credit course [to finish] and sculpture was available — my first introduction to the art form. Ultimately, I received a Master of Fine Arts degree in sculpting from the University of Chicago. But it was Eureka that got me started on the road to sculpting.

AS: And your computer skills grew from the college class?

DV: Absolutely. I became quite proficient with Web design and Web mastering and I actually came to Madison to work with computers for Epic Systems and its clients. While I'm no longer a full-time employee of Epic, I continue to do

consulting for their clients, traveling wherever my services are needed. I'm also a Webmaster for small businesses and for artists, helping them to establish their Internet portfolios.

AS: Your sculpting was brought to my attention because of a commission you've just completed. Tell our readers about it.

DV: The sculpture is for Karen Combs, who works for Epic Systems, and Madison architect Stephen Boelter. While both work here, their home is in Grand Junction, Colo. Stephen designed the house and asked me to create a piece for it. The stone is white marble with some green and gold streaks. It sparkles in the sunlight!

Karen and Stephen got the stone from the Yule Quarry in Marble, Colo., and brought it back to Madison. Karen named the sculpture, which is called "Yuletto." "Yule" is for the quarry; "et" is a feminine suffix and "o" was added because they really love the artist Christo. The piece has taken four years to complete and it is finally ready to be taken to its Colorado home.

AS: This piece is probably the most time-consuming commission you've encountered. But we see other beautiful pieces on your Web site. For

example, I'm planning to acquire a piece of orange alabaster, which I know is available at a rock "store" in Utah. There are many stores that have quarry pieces available.

AS: I'm also intrigued by the collages you do. They appear to be rather large puzzles and I've noticed on your Web site that you pay tribute to Milton Bradley. Since the two seem to be a bit incongruous, perhaps an explanation is in order?

DV: [Laughing at the question.] I pick a large jigsaw puzzle and put it together. I use a puzzle fixative and then, on top of the puzzle, I cut, snip, and glue various shapes, forms, pictures — whatever suits my fancy. So it becomes three dimensional in scope. For the Mt. Rushmore puzzle, I actually let a good deal of the real puzzle show through, only I embellished it with various other shapes, mostly women who mingle with the Presidents on the mountain. It's lighter work than the sculpting and it lets me do jigsaw puzzles, which I truly enjoy!

AS: And the mixed media? Let's talk specifically about the one titled "A Piece for Men." Surely it's a tongue-in-cheek work of art?

DV: [Laughs.] It just happened. I was consulting and saw many heavy springs used for a variety

of reasons. This particular spring caught my eye. The weight and length were right and I pictured the spring hooked at the top, but dangling at the bottom with another hook within eyesight. While I didn't anticipate the reaction, I found that men in particular try to stretch the spring and hook it to the bottom. Of course, they can't do it. That's the humor of the piece.

DV: This will sound strange, but feeling the onyx reminded me of a stomach that was big and round, and I shaped the piece as I imagined a stomach would look. The initial onyx stone was rough, big and round, but the end result is smooth and quite lovely.

AS: You also show a piece of Black African Wonderstone. Where do you get your stones in their original form?

DV: Mostly, they come from quarries or rock "stores." For exam- ➤

Vandembroucke's most recent commission, "Yuletto," has taken four years to complete.



I usually work between three and four hours a day on sculpting, although in the final stages of "Yuletto," I was working 12 hours a day to get ready for the unveiling and the subsequent trip to Colorado.

AS: What's an average day like?

DV: Basically, my income is based on my enjoyment of a consulting job and the artwork. I work in a home studio and usually do the consulting work or Web work in the morning. In the afternoon, I do the artwork. The two parts of the day seem to be a very comfortable marriage of vocation and avocation.

AS: Readers, check out this talented woman's Web site at www.debwork.com.

of course, sculpting creates quite a bit of sculpture dust and lately, I've donated some to McFarland High School where teachers used it in science class for experiments about acid rain and the buffering capacity of limestone, marble and dolomite.