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FROM THE MEMORIAL AND THE SITE

DEAR FRIENDS,

This has been a truly wonderful year! The Director's cut of the new Saint-Gaudens film, *Augustus Saint-Gaudens: Master of American Sculpture*, has been aired multiple times by New Hampshire Public Television.

This has generated huge interest and drawn many inquiring visitors to the Site. We are now moving toward the final edit of the film to ready it for showing on national PBS stations.

There has been a wonderful response to the special programs at the Site during this season: contemporary exhibitions, Sunday concerts, sculpture workshops, lectures, etc., with more to come, including the *Sculptural Visions* event on September 27th.

Blow-Me-Down Farm — the 48-acre parcel of land, currently owned by the Memorial, which is across Route 12A from the Site — has been made available for a variety of programs, activities and uses by the Friends, the Site and community organizations.

(*'Dear Friends'* continued on Back Cover)

ENGAGING THE VIEWER: AUGUSTUS SAINT-GAUDENS AND CONTEMPORARY SCULPTURE*

By Kathryn Greenthal

Augustus Saint-Gaudens was the greatest American sculptor of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Other American sculptors had drive and talent; what brought about Saint-Gaudens' rise above the rest was his non-dutiful approach to his art.

It was not enough for him to simply master the medium, Saint-Gaudens wanted to break new ground, and engaging the viewer was vital to him. With that in mind, this article examines how Saint-Gaudens encouraged the observer to participate in his work, foreshadowing the growing tendency of many artists today to prompt the spectator to ever more interaction with their pieces.

The Farragut Monument (fig. 1) was Saint-Gaudens' first major public monument and his first landmark collaboration with his friend, the architect Stanford White. It was a commission that the ambitious Saint-Gaudens avidly wanted and sought through every available channel. He strove to distinguish his composition from conventional static images that celebrated heroes with didactic elements illustrating labors, victories, and other attributes that often distance the viewer. In the *Farragut*, Saint-Gaudens drew the viewer in. In writing to White, who conceived the pedestal of the *Farragut*, Saint-Gaudens said,

"I've been pegging away at my 'Farragut,'....I have only... the resource of trying to strike away from the stuff [that is, portrait statuary] we have in America."¹

The base of the *Farragut* is an exedra, a semi-circular high-backed bench, and this welcoming, accessible, and approachable device was to become a crucial

feature of Saint-Gaudens' and White's monuments. Here, the significance is murky given that the viewer, who takes a seat, would be under water.



Figure 1. Augustus Saint-Gaudens, *The Farragut Monument*, unveiled in 1881, bronze and granite, New York, Madison Square Park, photograph by Kathryn Greenthal.



Figure 2. Augustus Saint-Gaudens, *The Standing Lincoln*, unveiled in 1887, bronze and granite, Chicago, Lincoln Park, photograph courtesy of artonfile.com.

The *Standing Lincoln* (fig. 2), however, makes brilliant application of the exedra. From the moment the viewer decides to position himself on the enormous bench behind Lincoln, the viewer unwittingly becomes part of the monument; he is participating as Lincoln's audience, he is in the audience, watching Lincoln readying himself to speak. By sitting down, the viewer is transformed from mere visitor to participant in the interactive sculptural experience with the result that the *Standing Lincoln* is an example of participatory sculpture.

Saint-Gaudens employed other methods of bringing the viewer into his work. By having the pedestal relatively short, his *Puritan* (fig. 3) allows the viewer a close encounter. In a similar vein, Auguste Rodin, in his *Burghers of Calais* (fig. 4), initially had shown his figures on a high pedestal in a first maquette, but in a letter of 1893 to the Mayor of Calais, he wrote that he ultimately preferred to have the group displayed "very low to enable the spectators to penetrate the

heart of the subject.... In this way, the group becomes more familiar and plunges the viewers deeper into the tragedy and sacrifice of the drama."²

**By engaging and interacting,
there is a brief moment in our
own lives when we have become
part of something and have
thereby bound ourselves
to history through memory.**

This same sort of intimate relationship with a subject was sublimely considered by Saint-Gaudens in his *Adams Memorial* (fig. 5), which commemorates the photographer Marion Hooper Adams who committed suicide in 1885. Again, White's contributions were essential: he helped Saint-Gaudens with the design of a plinth behind the figure and with the setting for the piece, and the entire scheme is perhaps as important as the memorial statue itself. In terms of sculpture typically found in American

cemeteries, the use of bronze was a departure from stone and the substitution of an eye level view for a high pedestal was not as common. The seclusion provided by the greenery was calculated because Saint-Gaudens wanted to control how the piece would be seen. It was the carefully constructed landscaping that furnished the managed views and enhanced the image and what it symbolized. Amidst the sheltering privacy of the shrubs, trees, and hedges are narrow paths that guide the viewer in, leading to an expectation of solitude, refuge, and retreat. By its presence, viewers are invited to sit on the bench in contemplative union with the statue. The taking of one's own life, the cause of death being spoken of in hushed tones, is perfectly echoed by the memorial being hidden in a quiet grove. The memorial has been called an outdoor room, and it is altogether a remarkable work.

A comparison of a face elevation for the *Shaw Memorial* (fig. 6) from the office of Henry Hobson Richardson, the initial collaborating architect, and a plaster sketch for the monument (fig. 7) demonstrates the notion of distancing versus inclusion. The drawing has a spectator in a customary guise, standing back and gazing at the relief. In contrast, even as early as April 1883, by when this 15 by 16 inches sketch model was fashioned, the sculptor was already thinking of the viewer, including him on a bench attached to the relief.

As with Saint-Gaudens' *Lincoln*, George Segal's *Gay Liberation Monument* (fig. 8) induces accidental participation — where by seating oneself, inadvertently, one becomes a part of the sculpture. These seated men play a role that high-

lights the inclusive nature of the piece for those who view them in the context of the sculpture.

It was not enough for Saint-Gaudens to simply master the medium, he wanted to break new ground, and engaging the viewer was vital to him.

Gay Liberation Monument is in the traditional vein of the sculptor — representational in form and time-honored in materials — bronze and paint masquerade as plaster. With Olafur Eliasson and his *Weather Project* (fig. 9), we are catapulted into the world established by contemporary sculptors and installation artists.

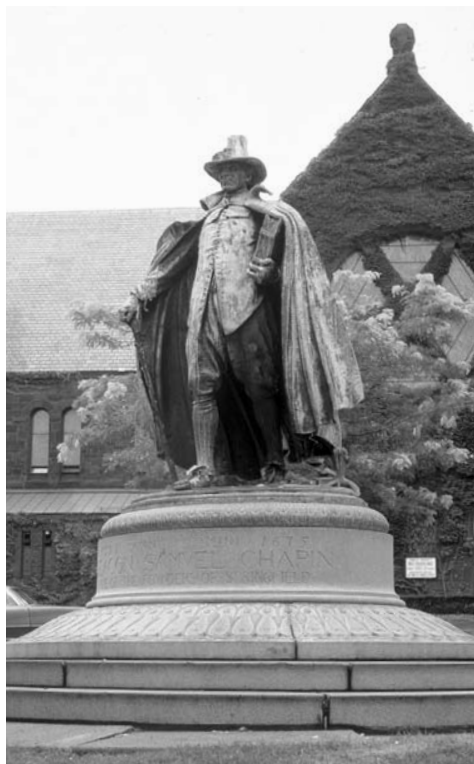


Figure 3. Augustus Saint-Gaudens, *The Puritan*, unveiled in 1887, bronze and granite, Springfield, MA, Merrick Park, photograph by Kathryn Greenthal.



Figure 4. Auguste Rodin, *The Burgers of Calais*, bronze and stone, Calais, France, in front of the Town Hall after 1924, photograph by Jean Boutté.



Figure 5. Augustus Saint-Gaudens, *The Adams Memorial*, unveiled in 1891, bronze, granite, and stone, Washington, D.C. Rock Creek Cemetery, photograph courtesy of artonfile.com.



Figure 6. Face Elevation, Robert Gould Shaw Monument Project, H.H. Richardson Architectural Drawings, Houghton Library, MS Typ 1096 (MON B1).



Figure 7. Augustus Saint-Gaudens, *Shaw Memorial Presentation Sketch Model*, 1883, plaster, 15 inches x 16 inches (SAGA # 25), Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site, Cornish, NH.

All the same, some of Saint-Gaudens' concerns are Eliasson's as well. In the confines of the Tate Modern's Turbine Hall, 500 feet long by 75 feet wide by 115 feet high, the sun reigned supreme and permanent, captured indoors. The orb, composed of hundreds of light bulbs on one wall, was tremendous and hypnotic, but it generated little heat. Eliasson had mirrors on the ceiling that appeared to double the height of the Hall. There was also a machine that showered mist which then evaporated.

About *The Weather Project*, Eliasson said, "I would like to think that the spectator became the center of this piece... so the people who came to visit were what the art was about."³ Jonathan Jones in *The Guardian* wrote that museum goers "lie, looking up... and conclude that... we, down below, make the art."⁴ One had the impression that one was at the seaside: jackets and sweaters were spread out like beach towels and visitors went about the business of sun-bathing. According to Adrian Hardwicke,

one of the Tate Modern's staff, whose diary entries were published in *The Guardian*, on January 12, 2004, a couple was found picnicking, having carted into the museum a rug, a large picnic hamper, and champagne. On January 20th, a man sat in a blown-up canoe pretending to paddle towards the sun.⁵ Perhaps the ultimate act of engagement occurred when visitors photographed themselves from a hundred feet below, documenting where they once had been.

In a similarly scaled setting at MASS MoCA in North Adams MA, Ann Hamilton's *Corpus* (fig. 10) filled the 300-foot long gallery and two auxiliary spaces in the massive Building 5. In the rafters high above the gallery floor, Hamilton installed forty ceiling-mounted pneumatic mechanisms that brought air to lift — she labeled it "inhaling"⁶ — blank sheets of translucent onionskin paper one at a time and shuttled them across a track on the ceiling and then dropped them — exhaling — at irregular

Monuments are reminders and memorials are remembrances.

intervals in a gentle flutter twenty-four feet to the floor. Hamilton wanted the museum goers to invent their own stories and not have them be tied to one. Perhaps the sheet of paper, after slowly floating down, went home, as a treasure, with a child and was saved like a pressed flower in a book. Or, the paper was crumpled and left in the back seat of the car on the ride home or was discarded at MASS MoCA, after the magical split-second of taking hold of it was over. Rather, it was the feat of catching — that precise instant of connecting with the art that was important. In one of the upper spaces, spectators watched as visitors below shaped *Corpus* by moving about it. It was a work produced by the people for the people by their participation.



Figure 8. George Segal, *Gay Liberation Monument*, unveiled in 1992, bronze and steel, New York, Christopher Park, photograph by Kathryn Greenthal.



Figure 9. Olafur Eliasson, *The Weather Project*, installed in 2003-2004, London, Tate Modern, photograph by Andrew Dunkley and Marcus Leith.

High Plane V (fig. 11), which was on exhibit at P.S. 1 in Queens, NY, is by sculptor and installation artist Katrín Sigurdardóttir. Upon entering the gallery, members of the public encountered two steep 16-step ladders which immediately provided the anticipatory thrill of ascent. A person experienced the excitement of not knowing, but, of course, wanting to know, what he would find at the top. The piece came off best when two visitors, simultaneously or one after the other, for an element of surprise, poked their heads through the two square-shaped holes near the gallery's ceiling (fig. 12) so that a disembodied head seemed to float and turn in the middle of the arctic terrain. Issues of scale and the function of the observer are key. In the Brobdingnagian guise of an explorer, the viewers peered into a miniature glacial mountain landscape, or icescape, surrounded by artificial snow or ice, and their heads became a disproportionate part of the scene. It is the viewer who creates and completes the



Figure 10. Ann Hamilton, *Corpus*, installed in 2003-2004, North Adams, MA, MASS MoCA, photograph by Owen Williams.



Figure 11. Katrín Sigurdardóttir, *High Plane V*, installed in 2006-2007, Long Island City, Queens, NY, Courtesy P.S. 1 Contemporary Art Center. Photographer: Matthew Septimus.

sculpture as an active participant. The spectator is in fact the object. In *High Plane V*, we have moved to a more vigorous level of involvement and engagement: from accidental or coincidental to deliberate and intentional participation.

The late Felix Gonzalez-Torres, in his *Untitled (Placebo)* (fig. 13) 1991, offered the viewer the opportunity to take a hard candy from the nearly 40,000 pieces that comprise his installation. By removing the silver-wrapped edibles, the viewers mold and whittle down the sculpture to a radically altered art object. The inspiration for *Untitled (Placebo)* was the AIDS epidemic and the death of Gonzalez-Torres' partner, Ross, and this bittersweet homage to loss, though multi-faceted in its meaning, is unequivocally dependent upon the response of the audience.

Monuments are reminders and memorials are remembrances. Even installation art is about "remembering." We take our photographs, we pay tribute to the famous or, more privately, we acknowledge a loved one with a marker. Being remembered in some manner is what we wish for. By engaging and interacting,



Figure 12. Katrín Sigurdardóttir, *High Plane V*, installed in 2006-2007, Long Island City, Queens, NY, Courtesy P.S. 1 Contemporary Art Center. Photographer: Matthew Septimus.

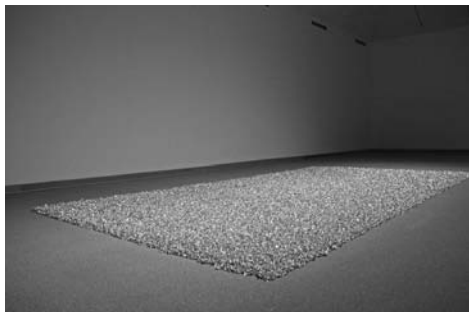


Figure 13. Felix Gonzalez-Torres, *Untitled (Placebo)*, installed in 2007-2008, Williamstown, MA, Williams College Museum of Art; image courtesy of the Williams College Museum of Art, photograph by Roman Iwasiwka.

there is a brief moment in our own lives when we have become part of something and have thereby bound ourselves to history through memory. It is a generous invitation for the artist to ask us to partake of his work. Being in the act of what is transpiring or what we make transpire may count most as it gives us all a bit of immortality.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ *The Reminiscences of Augustus Saint-Gaudens*, edited and amplified by Homer Saint-Gaudens, The Century Co., New York, 1913, v.1, p. 256.
- ² Antoinette Le Normand-Romain, "The Monument to the Burgheers of Calais," "The Monuments," www.musee-rodin.fr/smonu-e.htm (accessed May 9, 2007).
- ³ Olafur Eliasson, quoted in Michael Kimmelman, "The Sun Sets at the Tate Modern," *The New York Times*, March 21, 2004, Arts & Leisure, Section 2, p. 30.
- ⁴ Jonathan Jones, "Reflected Glory," *The Guardian*, October 30, 2003, www.guardian.co.uk/culture/2003/oct/30/1 (accessed August 20, 2008).
- ⁵ Adrian Hardwicke, "Secret diary of an art gallery attendant," *The Guardian*, March 18, 2004, www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/2004/mar/18/art1 (accessed August 20, 2008).
- ⁶ Liam Otten, "Ann Hamilton to lecture on 'The Practice of Work: From Silence to Speech Oct. 26,'" October 16, 2006, Washington University in St. Louis, News & Information, University Communications, <http://news-info.wustl.edu/news/page/normal/8027.html> (accessed August 20, 2008).

* In July 2007, at the Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College, a symposium was held to honor Augustus Saint-Gaudens on the 100th anniversary of his death. This essay is an abbreviated adaptation of Kathryn Greenthal's lecture.

LEESA HAAPAPURO 2008 SCULPTOR-IN-RESIDENCE

“Whoa – who is that?”

“How much does he weigh?”

“Is it going to be bronze?”

“When will you finish?”

Since her arrival at Saint-Gaudens last Spring, Ohio artist Leesa Haapapuro, has been fielding questions like these daily.

Smiling, Lee patiently provides answers as she works. In the process, she brings the art of figurative sculpture to life for park visitors of all ages.



The head of *Big Brother* will be roughly 20 in. high.



Leesa working on one of the hands of *Big Brother*.



Leesa Haapapuro, SGNHS 2008 Sculptor-in-Residence working on her heroic *Big Brother* sculpture. An early sketch of the figure can be seen on the shelf.

Born in Detroit, Lee began sculpting at Interlochen Arts Academy in northern Michigan as a high-school student. She received early training at the Cleveland Institute of Art, taking part in their study abroad program in Avignon, France. She earned her B.F.A. from the University of the Arts in Philadelphia, and her M.F.A. from the prestigious Cranbrook Art Academy. She has been an active participant in the Dayton art community since moving there in 1991. Lee teaches sculpture at several area colleges and with the K-12 Gallery for Young People in Dayton, and also works with at-risk youth on community art projects. Her work is in the collection of the Dayton Art Institute and she has been recognized with numerous awards and honors.

Besides, sculpture, Lee also teaches drawing and painting, as well as paper-making, and art appreciation at the graduate level. Now, Lee is focused on clay, finessing aspects of an enormous male form. “When I applied and was accepted to serve as the 2008 Sculptor-in-Residence at Saint-Gaudens,” Lee explains, “I knew I would use the five months to create a memorial for my brother. Initially, I had

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(Dear Friends' continued from Front Cover)

This issue of the Friends Newsletter features an article adapted from Kathryn Greenthal's talk at the Dartmouth symposium on Saint-Gaudens in 2007. Engaging the Viewer: Augustus Saint-Gaudens and Contemporary Sculpture discusses the ways in which Saint-Gaudens draws viewers into active participation with his work and the history of which it is a part. This is a timely reminder as we seek to bring Saint-Gaudens and his work back into the public eye and imagination.

Byron Bell PRESIDENT SGMemorial
BJ Dunn SUPERINTENDENT SGNHS

The Saint-Gaudens Memorial is a private, non-profit corporation chartered to advise the Department of the Interior, support the National Historic Site and sponsor programs and activities that promote public awareness of Augustus Saint-Gaudens, his work and sculpture in general.

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(Leesa Haapapuro...' continued from page 7)

intended to make a life-size seated figure, but when I saw the Ravine Studio I realized I could work in heroic scale." Heroic is a term used for sculpture that is larger than life-size.

Lee spent June making small sketches in clay and on paper to determine the pose. She then constructed an armature, or internal support system, with help from Saint-Gaudens' facilities department. The PVC and hardware cloth structure need to be strong enough to support the 350 pounds of clay she will use. July and August were spent modeling the figure. Lee begins the arduous process of mold-making in early September and plans to start casting the figure in handmade paper before — and during! — Sculptural Visions. Lee frequently casts with the strong, yet translucent kozo fiber imported from Japan, but hopes to be able to gather enough milkweed pods locally to supplement the imported pulp. The completed sculpture is scheduled to be exhibited at the Dayton Convention Center from November through December of this year. Visitors to Saint-Gaudens in October may see the heroic scale figure out along the Ravine trail being photographed in the fall foliage. Lee may be found working at the Ravine Studio from 9:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. each Wednesday through Sunday and encourages park visitors to stop by.

Article submitted by Liza Draper, 2008 Teacher to Ranger to Teacher (TRT) at Saint-Gaudens NHS. This is a grant funded position within the National Park Service that allows school teachers to spend eight weeks at a National Park site working as an interpretive ranger and writing a curriculum about the park and the National Park system, to use in his/her classroom. Liza is a fifth grade teacher in the nearby Claremont, N.H. school system.