

# A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY ~ EVERETT DUPEN ~ (1912–2005)

Everett DuPen began his formal architecture and art studies at the University of Southern California in 1931–1933, when he transferred to Yale University, graduating in 1937 with a B.F.A. in sculpture. He was on both the USC and Yale fencing teams, and was a Southern California fencing champion in foil. In addition to studying art at Chouinard Art School in Los Angeles in the summer of 1932, he studied architecture during the summer of 1933 at Harvard University. While at Yale, he was awarded the Clara Kimball English Travelling Fellowship for his plaster sculpture *St. George*, and in 1937–1938, studied at the American Academy of Art in Rome. In 1938–1939, he held a teaching fellowship in sculpture at the art school of the Carnegie Institute of Technology in Pittsburgh. In 1936 and 1938 he received first honorable mentions from the Prix de Rome, and in 1963 was awarded the Saltus Gold Medal for Excellence in Sculpture from the National Academy of

Design. Later in his career he took leaves to study bronze casting in Florence, Italy, and art in India, Nepal, and Egypt.

Everett was smitten with the colorful, unconventional, and talented ballet dancer, Charlotte Nicks, of the New York Metropolitan Opera's Corps de Ballet. They married in 1939, and moved to St. Louis, Missouri, where he was an assistant instructor in sculpture at Washington University from 1939–1942. In 1942–1945, he and his wife lived in San Francisco, where he worked as a marine draftsman and loftsman for the Sausalito Shipbuilding Company before settling (1945) into his thirty-eight year career at the University of Washington. As a full professor of art, he played a major role in building the University of Washington's sculpture division into a nationally and internationally known group. DuPen was a Fellow of the National Sculpture Society, and was elected to the National Academy of Design in New York City.

## Everett DuPen: *and His Legacy*

March 24, 2012 - June 10, 2012

*An exhibition celebrating the centenary of Northwest master sculptor Everett DuPen (1912-2005), honoring his legacy that carries through to the present day.*



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Everett DuPen, *Reflection*, 1941, Bronze



## Everett's philosophy

In addition to his popular sculpture courses, he was well known for his life drawing classes. In retirement, he continued to teach evening drawing classes and was a mentor in the Northwest Stone Sculptors Association.

DuPen was most well known for his figurative pieces in terra cotta, stone, wood, and bronze. He taught, influenced, and was a friend and guide to generations of national and Seattle artists.

His sculpture can be found in many churches, public parks and buildings, as well as in museums and private collections. Among them are the DuPen Fountain at the Seattle Center, the fountain at the Joel M. Pritchard Building at the Washington State Capitol, and *Exuberance* at 7557 Rambler Road in Dallas, Texas.

Everett DuPen died in Bellevue, Washington, on May 25, 2005.

*On this page, top: Everett DuPen working in his studio on ??? (19??), clay, ?? feet high. bottom left: ?? (1997), plaster, ?? feet high; bottom center: Everett DuPen, his wife, Novelle, Young man, Destia, boy and girl; bottom right: drawing.*







*Opposite page, top to bottom:*  
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# MEMORIES OF MY FATHER, SCULPTOR EVERETT DUPEN

by *Destia DuPen Hermes*

The art world lost a unique talent, countless artists lost a friend and mentor, and I lost my father who died in 2005.

With an artist, creativity is not on call. Inspiration must come and sometimes it is a most reluctant visitor. There is the Ying and the Yang of adoration on the one hand and rejection on the other, and often for the same work of art. The elation of winning a commission is offset by the rejection of losing one.

It is hard to compartmentalize the two...one cannot separate the man from art... Art touched every aspect of his life at home, at work, and in his moods and his attitudes.

We became accustomed to his “mumblings and grumblings” as he faced rejection and conflicts, his pride and jubilation at winning a commission, and all the between times when he isolated himself in his studio creating art when he was not at the university teaching. There was frustration and sometimes it seemed that the push/pull of creation, family, and students was just too much for him.

At times it seemed that mother had a sixth child and she took very good care of all of us.

No matter what, we always knew that he loved us dearly.

In the 1950s and 1960s, four artists known as the “Northwest School” (Mark Tobey, Guy Anderson, Kenneth Callahan, and Morris Graves), became very well known. They had departed from traditional forms and combined natural elements of the Puget Sound area with traditional Asian aesthetics to create a novel and distinct regional style of abstract brush art. This created some frustration for my father as he chose not to follow the abstract trend. Everett DuPen remained committed to sculpture in the representational figurative form, while occasionally creating beautiful contemporary pieces. The figure, whether in sculpture or in sketches, was his passion.

Teaching and art were complementary in his life, even though he was not always



aware of it. The satisfaction of teaching offset the frustration. Earning a living by teaching allowed him to be true to the creative process, enabling him to mostly choose his themes and create as he wished.

His love of teaching was exhibited by his anger when he reached mandatory retirement age of seventy-five and the University of Washington required his retirement. It was further evidenced in the fact that, as a professor emeritus, he was able to continue

using the UW art school to teach a Wednesday night class for years to a dedicated group...many of whom continue that tradition.

The rector of St. John the Baptist Episcopal Church in Seattle came to see him the day before he died and father asked him, “Father, I have been away a long time, do you think God will take me back?” The Reverend Peter DeVea responded, “Everett you have never been away, look at your work!” His sculpture adorns churches throughout the region.

He spoke to each of his five children in person or by phone that day and kept repeating, “The only thing that matters is love.”

His biggest regret and worry was leaving Charlotte, his wife of sixty-five years and his protector, advocate, and muse. He loved her so. In 2012, she has reached age ninety-seven.

When I asked him if he had any messages for anyone else, he said emphatically, “Yes, my students. Let the spirit shine through your work...”

In the documentary film of his life and works he repeated how important it is to let heart and emotion come through to art.

One gift I received was the opportunity to be close to him as his needs increased. The pressures of life waned, allowing his happy and philosophical spirit to come through.

I will miss my father every day of my life, but I will always feel him through the magic of his works.



# RECOLLECTIONS OF MY FATHER

by *Novelle DuPen-Meyerhoff*

I remember my father's studio, which was his kingdom and sanctuary. The smells are still vivid to me: pipe tobacco, wet clay, wood, stone dust. Serene classical music played in the background. So much to look at: hundreds of sketches, art postcards, beach stones, shells, maquettes, photos of faces and all types of bodies, skeletons and skulls of small rodents, fish and birds, even a human skeleton.

This was his sanctuary, the place where he created, and spent enormous amounts of time. In fact, when at home, he was always in his studio, except when he was eating or sleeping. The concepts of leisure and fun were antithetical to his lifestyle.

My father couldn't tolerate the noisy activity of children. Our mother, Charlotte, would not allow us children to run, jump, shout, or play in the house. But in his studio, Father was welcoming. He enjoyed having us visit him there. I would perch on a stool, he would give me clay to work with, and he conversed with me about his sculpture and what he was trying to accomplish. Sometimes we would model for him; he made busts of all his children.

My father was so competent, so in control in his studio and in his art. He used a variety of tools, including dental tools for modeling clay. When he didn't have what he needed, he would construct his own tools, for example, he made an awl using Northwest Native American carving tools as models. If he needed to use engineering methods with which he was unfamiliar in order to transform his ideas into reality, he mastered them.

In contrast, Father was of little practical use around the house. In essence, Charlotte shielded him from all such demands. A comment of hers sums it all up: One day during a visit, she said



to me, "I'm so proud of Everett—he made his own lunch today."

My father was a bundle of contradictions. Extraordinarily knowledgeable about art, he was often remarkably uninformed about the world around him. Gracious and inviting in his studio, he was often anxious and irritable outside it. A Hollywood boy, he grew up among the glitz and glamour of the 1920s movie scene, yet his art strove for timeless values, beauty, and tranquility. An

extraordinary art master and inspiring, patient teacher at the university, where he was revered by his students, he was often demanding, moody and self-centered at home. Despite his inner turmoil, he created sculpture that portrays inner peace and harmony. And, while he created beautiful, flowing, and sensual sculpture that invited interaction through touch, he himself was massively powerful and enjoyed the hard manual labor required by bronze casting, wood and stone carving, and welding.

Despite these contradictions, or perhaps because of them, he created great art. He transformed his passion for beauty and his reverence for the human form into his sculpture.

He was often criticized by the art community for creating art that was "too beautiful" and representational during an era when abstract art was dominant. Despite the changing trends in art, his sculpture is timeless because it responds to the human spirit. For me, his work is like meditation: peaceful and serene.



*Opposite page:* *Ballerina* (1969), bronze, 7 inches high;

*On this page, left to right:* *Seven* (2010), bronze, 10 inches high; *Le Chapeau Nouveau* (1999), bronze, 18 inches high, *Fourteen* (2010), bronze, 14 inches high.



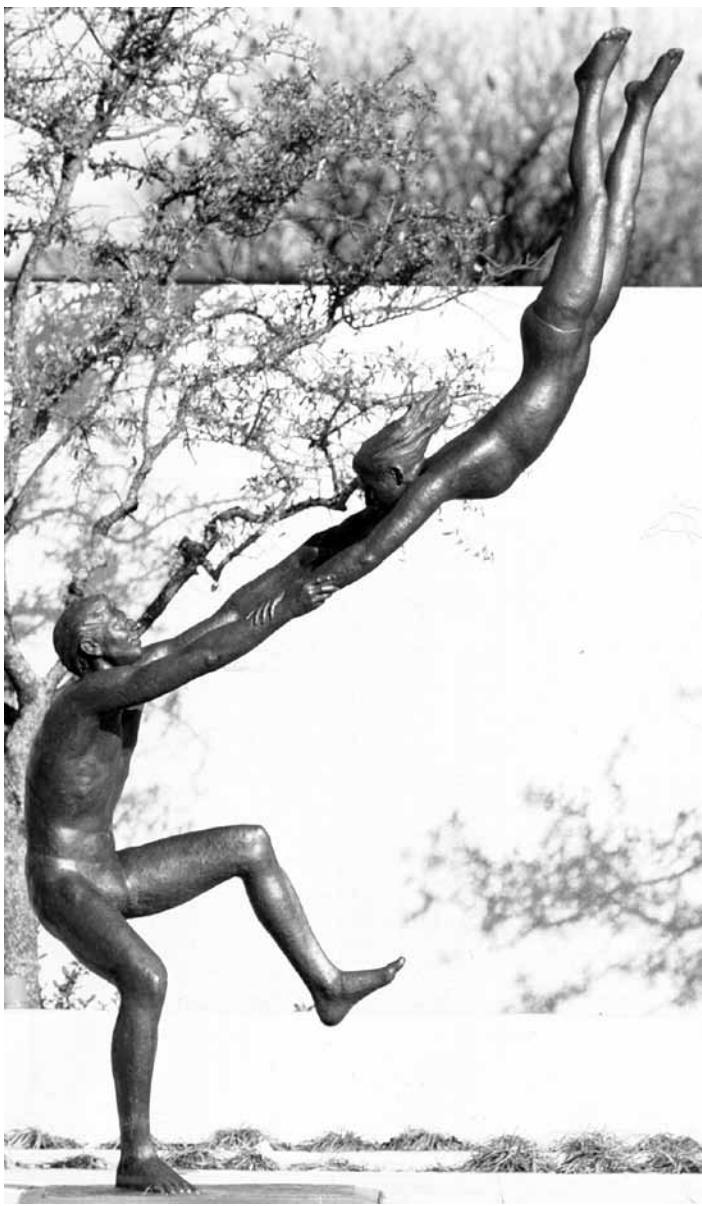
*Opposite page:* Crossing the Prairie (2001), bronze, 6 feet high. *On this page left:* Sacagawea Golden Dollar obverse (2000); *on this page right:* Sacagawea and Jean Baptiste (1999), bronze, 7 feet high.

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# EVERETT DUPEN, MEMORIALIST

by *Patricia Failing*

In 1995, Seattle's Frye Art Museum presented a comprehensive retrospective of Everett DuPen's work, celebrating the eighty-three-year-old sculptor's "long-term impact" on the region's artistic heritage. Today the impact remains, but the artist himself, who died in 2005, is little known to a current generation of visual art audiences. This paradox is not mysterious: DuPen was an influential teacher and a successful public artist, but the art-historical status of his figurative work waxed and waned during his career. Looking back at DuPen's accomplishments, however, his long-term impact cannot be divorced from his approach to sculptural form.

DuPen was trained as a sculptor at Yale University, where he won a fellowship to the American Academy in Rome in 1937. At Yale he studied with Paul Manship, who had recently completed his Prometheus Fountain at Rockefeller Center in New York City, and was at the height of his career. In 1945, DuPen joined the faculty at the University of Washington. He taught sculpture in the School of Art until 1982; as professor emeritus he chaired the sculpture program from 1982–1995. DuPen's résumé during these years is impressive: He received numerous awards for his sculpture and his work was exhibited in national venues, such as the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, the San Francisco Museum of Art, DuPen exhibited at the San Francisco Museum of Art in 1954 and 1959 (renamed The

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art in 1975), the St. Louis Museum of Art, and the Detroit Institute of Art. Manship sponsored DuPen's election to the National Sculpture Society in 1959. After receiving several honors at the academy's annual exhibitions, DuPen was awarded membership in the National Academy of Design in 1971.

Seattle artists and collectors of DuPen's work are most familiar with his small-scale bronze and terra cotta sculptures that recall the Art Deco production of Paul Manship, the figures of Manship's one-time assistant, Gaston Lachaise, and the animated profiles of Carl Milles's youthful bodies. DuPen is also remembered for his most publicized commission, Seattle Center's bronze and stone water garden, created for the 1962 Seattle World's Fair. The long-term



impact of DuPen's work, however, is perhaps best represented by his contributions to institutional memory, especially on the University of Washington campus.

In 1947, two years after he began teaching at the university, DuPen received his first major campus commission. The previous year, architect Paul Thiry, one of Seattle's best-known early practitioners of International-style architecture, was selected to design the university's new electrical engineering building. "In the design I left some great panels for a sculptor to work on," Thiry recalled in a 1983 interview. "I had this idea—



this building being about electricity...that it was full of movement and vibration...I began to think of Balinese dancers and different things that had to do with the switching of currents. I got a hold of [DuPen] and tried to electrify him [with these ideas].” When DuPen submitted his models, however, Thiry was surprised—they were “good sculpture[s], but not what I intended.”

DuPen’s views on collaborations between sculptors and architects, as it turned out, are consistent with the reaction his models provoked. According to DuPen, “whereas the last generation of sculptors was so extremely conscious of modifying their designs to fit architecture that they lost much of the sculptural impact, the present-day sculptor is most reluctant to ‘water down’ his designs to conform. He feels that if his forms are well designed, his choice of materials right, and he has something aesthetically important to say, he can be of service. In other words, the present thinking on the problem suggests that sculptors feel their work can act as opposing contrast and be strong in its own right.”

Whether or not he had Thiry in mind when he composed this statement, the three allegorical relief sculptures DuPen created for Thiry’s campus building stand out as an “opposing contrast.” The first, titled *The Atom*, presents a 44-inch high limestone human hand cradling a small baby boy, and was prominently displayed near the main entrance; the second, *Inquisitiveness*, features an Art Deco-style young man looking skyward, holding a book; the third, *Superstition*, depicts a female figure shrinking in fear from an invisible force.

The architect obviously learned to respect DuPen’s artistic vision. In 1955, Thiry commissioned DuPen to create a fountain for the Washington State Library he designed in Olympia and, as director of architectural planning for the 1962 Seattle World’s Fair, Thiry approved DuPen’s selection as designer of the Seattle Center water garden. Today, reinstalled on the exterior of the university’s Paul G. Allen Center for Computer Science and Engineering, DuPen’s allegorical sculptures are the only remaining physical traces of Thiry’s building that once



occupied this site.

DuPen’s most unequivocal contributions to the university’s institutional memory, however, are his portraits of historical figures. The earliest is from 1949, a bronze bas relief plaque depicting Hiram Conibear, “father” and coach of the University of Washington

crew program from 1907–1917. Working from a photograph, DuPen created a compelling portrait of this legendary athlete, who revolutionized the sport by inventing a new, shorter style

of oar stroke—“the Washington stroke.” A portrait of Alvin Ulbrickson, created in 1961, depicts the university crew coach who served from 1938–1959, and led his team to the Olympics three times. These portraits may owe a debt to Manship’s medallions: Conibear’s profile, for example, is enclosed in a coin-like form with raised lettering superimposed over a megaphone. The Ulbrickson sculpture includes a row of oarsmen organized in a rhythmic pattern not unlike those Manship favored for hair and drapery. The coach’s megaphone doubles as a cornucopia framing three oarsmen,



perhaps a tribute to Ulbrickson’s three Olympic victories. A third plaque in the series, executed in 1976, is an awkwardly foreshortened but vivid likeness of celebrated Seattle rowing shell designer George Pocock.

The crew portraits, mounted in the university’s shell house on Lake Washington, are well known only to a small group of student athletes and coaches. Similarly, DuPen’s relief portraits of university Health Sciences doctors and faculty are accessible primarily to facility staff. Nearly all undergraduates and faculty, however, have encountered DuPen’s colossal 1973 bronze portrait of Charles E. Odegaard, displayed in the undergraduate library bearing his name. As

university president from 1958–1973, Odegaard was indeed a colossal figure. Under his tenure the university’s budget increased tenfold, the student population doubled, and thirty-five new university buildings were erected. DuPen, who was fond of Odegaard, created a sympathetic portrait from life, representing his subject with a relaxed expression and small, friendly smile. The bronze is expertly





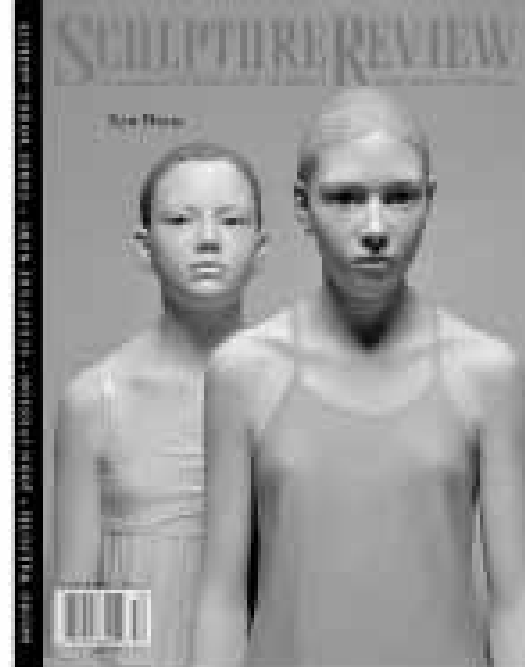
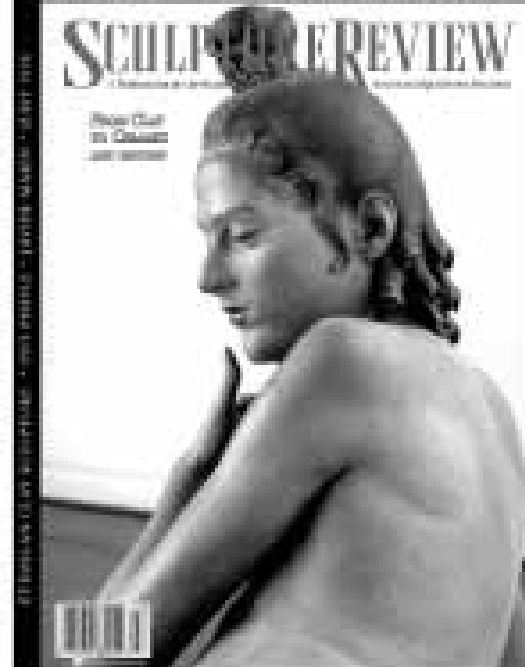
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crafted, as are all of DuPen's sculptures. In this case, the artist employed subtle shifts of surface texture to vary the plays of light on the forehead, chin, and cheeks, calling upon the material itself to mitigate the inevitable chilliness of a large metal head. Today the Odegaard portrait, like DuPen's other campus sculptures, serves not only as an aide-mémoire for the entire university community, but also as a marker of an artistic legacy designed by an expert whose work outlives his name.

Patricia Failing is a professor of art history at the University of Washington who publishes widely on modern and contemporary art.





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