

NEWS

Public Relations Department
FAITH POMPONIO



475 RIVERSIDE DRIVE, NEW YORK CITY 27 • RI 9-1214
(NIGHT: RO 4-2541)

THE PROTESTANT COUNCIL of the City of New York

the delegated agent of
Protestant Churches within Greater New York

NOTICE TO THE PRESS:
YOUR OR YOUR REPRESENTATIVE ARE INVITED
TO ATTEND AN ADVANCE PRESS SHOWING OF
THE LAST SUPPER WOOD CARVING ON MONDAY,
JUNE 15, AT 10:30 A.M. IN THE MEDITATION
ROOM OF THE PROTESTANT AND ORTHODOX
CENTER AT THE WORLD'S FAIR. SCULPTOR
DOMENIC ZAPPIA WILL BE AMONG THOSE
PRESENT. THE EXHIBIT WILL BE OPEN TO
THE PUBLIC DAILY FROM 10 A.M. TO 10 P.M.
STARTING TUESDAY, JUNE 16.

June 12, 1964

RELEASE AT WILL:

WOOD SCULPTURE OF LAST SUPPER AT PROTESTANT AND ORTHODOX CENTER OF WORLD'S FAIR

While a tired city sleeps, an impressive work of art will arrive by truck at the Protestant and Orthodox Center of the New York World's Fair sometime after midnight on Saturday morning, June 13.

A life-size wood sculpture of the Last Supper, the Fair's newest objet d'art, will be exhibited in the Mediation Room of the Protestant and Orthodox Center starting Tuesday, June 16.

The striking wood carving portrays Christ and the twelve disciples after Jesus has said that one of them will betray Him. The apostles register shock, surprise and dismay, all except Judas, who sits impassively, clutching his bag of silver coins.

Zappia's Bartholomew stands with his feet spread apart. Da Vinci painted Bartholomew standing with his legs and feet crossed. "Now who would stand that way," says Zappia, "especially in a tense and exciting moment such as this when Christ disclosed His betrayal? A man like an apostle surely would jump to his feet. That is why I made my Bartholomew with his feet spread apart, naturally. I just call it a little correction."

The Da Vinci painting has Peter reaching around to look at Christ in a position that Zappia considers almost impossible for a man to stand in. "I have tried to make Peter less stretched-out, more natural," he says.

Although Da Vinci never finished Christ's face, Zappia has finished it in detail. The countenance is sad, yet it radiates a divine serenity.

An artist friend of the sculptor described the work in these terms: "So great is the emotional impact, that the first-time observer can only gaze in astonishment and speak in whispers. Some 500 years after Da Vinci, artist Zappia has translated his countryman's genius from fresco to wood in a manner that would have brought praise from the great Florentine."

Zappia completed his work in four years at his home in Kansas City, Mo. He first constructed a small clay model of the figures to establish how they could be arranged as individual pieces. He then modeled life-size clay figures which were cast into plaster statues, and worked from these plaster models to fashion the final wood pieces.

Each of the 13 figures is carved from a separate 500 pound block of fine grained Arkansas basswood. The golden basswood is fibrous and does not split easily. One of the many problems Zappia had to contend with was the moisture content of the wood that fairly defied the necessary lamination. This was overcome by using radio frequency waves to set the glue.

The sculptor actually used two workshops. The clay work and plaster models were done in the basement of his home. The wood carving was completed in an upstairs room.

A Roman Catholic, Zappia describes his experience while at work on his sculpture as "a personal relationship with God."

"It was very strange," he explains. "Most of my life, I have suffered from an ulcer. Sometimes the work gets tense. There are schedules to meet.

You can get in a rush. But never once during the years I have been working on the Last Supper did I have trouble from my ulcer. Now isn't that unusual?"

He believes he was guided in his work.

"I remember so many times working with my chisel against the basswood," he says. "I wondered whether I was making just the right cut. Had I gone deep enough, or too deep? But somehow, at every crucial point, something told me to stop and measure. Odd as it may seem, every time I stopped like this, my measurement turned out to be just perfect. If I had gone on, I would have made a very bad error.

Zappia points out that it is very common for a sculptor who works with a chisel, a hammer and other tools to get cut or bruised, yet he did not suffer even a small cut in the course of all the work on the 13 figures.

It was approximately six years ago that Zappia first thought of doing the Last Supper when asked to suggest a work to be placed in a new chapel of the Tyler Mountain Memory Gardens in Charleston, W. Va. He was commissioned to do the piece which is now on loan to The Protestant Council of the City of New York, sponsors of the Protestant and Orthodox Center.

Oscar D. Nelson, a Kansas City civic leader and manufacturer conceived the idea of exhibiting Zappia's sculpture in the Protestant and Orthodox Center on a recent visit to the World's Fair. He negotiated with the owners, Mr. and Mrs. Harold E. Smith, of Charleston, W. Va., to have the wood carving sent to the Center.

Mr. Nelson also was responsible for the work being exhibited in Kansas City shortly after it was completed in 1963. An editorial in the Kansas City Star dated April 16, 1963 reads in part: "In the 10 days that ended on Easter Sunday, nearly 35,000 Kansas Citians visited the Little Theater at the Municipal Auditorium to see the life-size characters of the Last Supper sculptured in wood by Domenic Zappia. Few art events in the city's history have drawn this kind of a public response. None perhaps has made a stronger impression on its audience."

Domenic Zappia will be among the guests at a special press showing of the Last Supper on Monday, June 15, at 10:30 a.m. in the Meditation Room of the Protestant and Orthodox Center. Born in Italy, he came to the U.S. at the age

Last Supper sculpture ~~4-4-4-4-~~

of four. He attended the Cleveland School of Art. His past work includes life-size portraits, fountains, and miscellaneous object of art.

The unusual wood sculpture will be exhibited in the Center throughout the Fair years. A description of each figure in the massive carving will be given at the outset of the exhibit on a tape recorded statement by the Rev. Dr. Robert H. Meneilly, minister of the Village United Presbyterian Church, Kansas City, Mo.

- 0 -

RL-WFPL-64-28