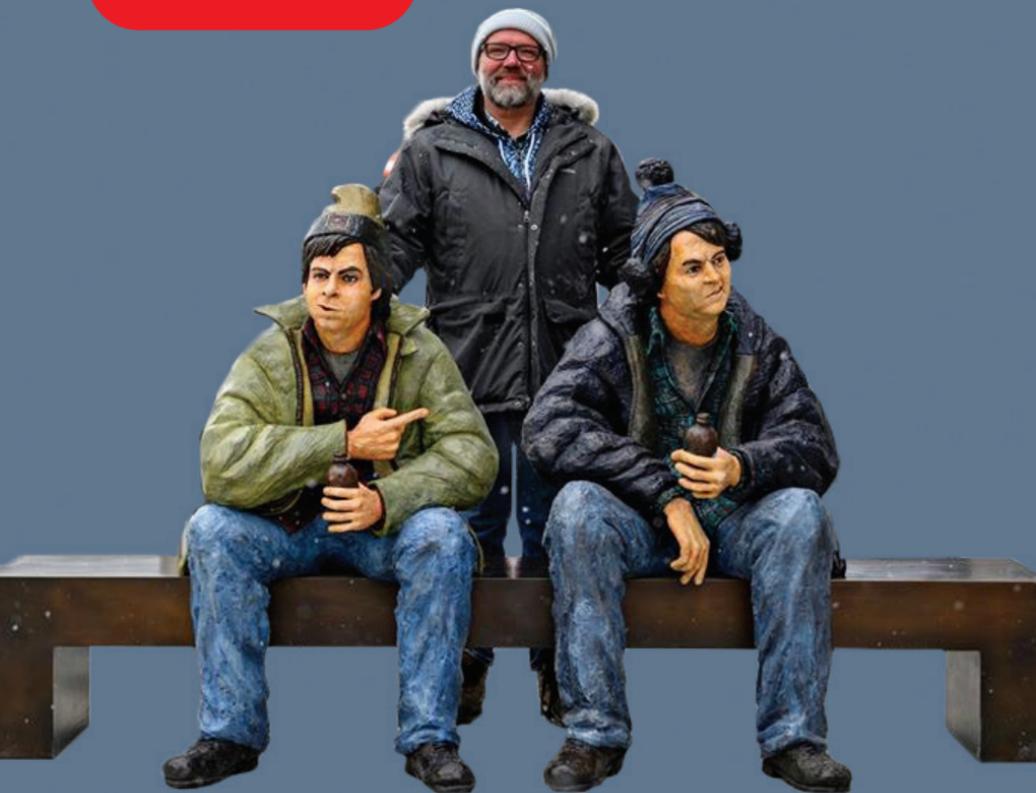


June 25 - September 3, 2022

SCTV
GUIDE

Making of a Monument

Ritchie Velthuis



Great White North hosts Bob and Doug McKenzie

SCTV MONUMENT:

THE GENESIS	1 - 3
CREATING THE ORIGINAL	4 - 6
AT THE FOUNDRY	7 - 9
THE PATINA AND REVISIONS	10 - 12
INSTALLATION AND REACTION	13 - 16

THE GENESIS

2012 PETITION LAUNCHED

In 2012, Avenue magazine ran a cover story on SCTV's Edmonton history. The seminal years of this influential comedy show were shot at the south-side ITV studios, which now houses Global Edmonton. Then they thought why not do more than a story. Edmonton had the Wayne Gretzky statue and a statue of a guy taking lunch break in Churchill Square. Why not have a statue celebrating some of SCTV's most famous characters. Late publisher, Orville Club championed the idea. A petition was launched at an event at Metro Cinema, where some of the show's most famous skits were screened. With the support received though the event and an online petition it was clear that our city was rallying behind the idea of a sculpture.

SCTV's first season was filmed in Toronto, but the show was at risk of being cancelled before it could gain any sort of momentum. It was Dr. Charles Allard that laid the groundwork for the show to move Edmonton and to blossom as a staple on both CBC and NBC. It was from Edmonton that characters such as the McKenzie Brothers, Johnny LaRue, Guy Caballero and Edith Prickly would emerge as pop-culture staples.

It was fitting that the Allard family shared the vision for a sculpture and the SCTV committee was formed. No public announcements were made. They worked behind the scenes rallying support, filling out paperwork and taking the necessary steps to achieve their goal.



2013 REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

In the spring of 2013, I presented an exhibit at the Discovery Gallery at the Alberta Craft Council entitled *Neighbourhood Icons*. The exhibit featured brightly coloured ceramic sculptures of ordinary people whose contributions and aesthetic told stories of their community. This exhibit coincided with a very select and quiet request for proposal for the *SCTV Monument*. Renown sculptor and friend, Barbara Paterson, creator of the *Famous Five Monument* on Parliament Hill and Calgary was asked to submit a Request for Proposal (RFP). I served as a technician for Barbara during the making of the *Famous Five Monument* and my very small part of that process exposed me to the ins and outs of creating a bronze sculpture. She declined the invitation



Bob and Doug MacKenzie, 2013, fired clay painted with acrylic

but said she knew the perfect artist for the project and forwarded my name. I was and am eternally grateful for her belief in my talent and glowing endorsement.

The RFP required a cv, a written description of my proposed project, examples of my work and a preliminary budget. Shortly after submitting my RFP, I received news that I was one of the artists

selected to create a maquette; a small version of the proposed bronze sculpture. I spent the summer and fall researching each of the original seven characters, Rick Moranis, David Thomas, John Candy, Andrea Martin, Catherine O'Hara, Eugene Levy and Joe Flaherty and creating a more comprehensive budget. I got lost in the process of creation and spent a blissful few months creating the seven iconic characters from

SCTV in clay. Having never produced a bronze sculpture, I thought my chances were slim but I was honoured to be selected to develop my ideas.

2014 STRANGE BREW

On February 12, 2014 I presented my maquette to the SCTV Monument committee. Created in clay and painted in acrylic, these gestural and animated sculptures represented the main characters of the fictitious SCTV station. The creation of all seven characters in life size bronze would be cost prohibitive and my choice for the monument would be Bob and Doug McKenzie. The comic genius of Rick Moranis and Dave Thomas, instantly catapulted the characters, Bob & Doug McKenzie to Canadian Icon status and their subsequent cult classic movie



Second City Television, SCTV's Bob and Doug McKenzie AKA Rick Moranis and Dave Thomas on the set of the *Great White North*
photo by /SCTV Handout

"The Adventures of Bob and Doug McKenzie: Strange Brew" made them cross generational stars. The committee agreed and in a surreal moment I felt confident that I would be creating my first bronze sculpture.

Time passed and my main contact, Paul Allard, would periodically check in to assure me that the project was moving forward but there were still many details to work out. As time passed I became less and less confident that the sculpture would happen. More time passed and nearly two years after my presentation I surrendered to the possibility that this project may not happen.

2016 UPWARD SWING

In January of 2016 I told Bronzart Casting Ltd., the bronze foundry I was to work with, that the project seemed dead in the water and likely would not happen. It was a dark time; something so close to actualization was seemingly snatched from my hands. In March of 2016 I received a call from Paul Allard with news that the SCTV committee was ready to move forward and I was on the upward swing of the Public Art rollercoaster.

CREATING THE ORIGINAL

2016 CHALLENGE ACCEPTED

Creating the original began July 2016. My career to this point had given me the skill set to confidently move forward on the project and I began to prepare for the hard work ahead of me. My job was to complete the original of the life size sculptures of Bob and Doug McKenzie and oversee the bronze process to it's completion. Paul Allard was my contact for the SCTV Monument committee throughout the process and Carole Henson was the liaison between me, Rick Moranis and Dave Thomas. One of the main stipulations for the project was that the actors wanted input and final approval of the sculpture. Paul Allard simply instructed me to take my time and make the best sculpture that I could.

Armatures were welded together with detachable body parts which included their heads, hands and legs to ensure ease in the sculpting and moulding process. Two wooden plinths on heavy duty casters were constructed to house each individual figure and ensure they could be easily moved to be worked on individually or together. Most originals used for bronze sculpture are constructed from a core of styrofoam and plywood or metal which is then covered in foundry clay. Many artists will use a computer program to scan and



SCTV fabrication process styrofoam support for clay model, 2017

point up their maquette but as the model increases in scale so do the imperfections or mistakes in the anatomy. A contour lines that worked in a 10 inch model may not work when you blow it up to 6 feet. Rather than correcting anatomy on a computer generated plywood/ styrofoam base, which can prove difficult, I decided to start from scratch. I cut and glued styrofoam around the welded armature to create a mass to be carved.

Using the maquette as a reference, I began to rough out the figures using a series of Japanese handsaws, utility knives and an oscillating saw. I decided to carve the styrofoam in a realistic manner and the SCTV characters quickly began to emerge. At this stage my motivation was to ensure the individual elements (figures) worked together and were relatable. The lines, anatomy and



gesture of the figures needed to tell the story of the lovable comedic disdain between these SCTV brothers before getting lost in the portraiture so important to the project. After two months of carving, two pink styrofoam figures stood before me in my basement studio of Harcourt House Artist Run Center. Happy with the results I was ready for the next step; applying the foundry clay.

The foundry clay was comprised of paraffin wax, powdered clay and petroleum jelly. Heat sensitive, the clay turned liquid when exposed to high temperatures and hardened when cooled down. The first step was to paint the styrofoam figures with the liquid clay thus enabling more clay to easily be applied to the sculpture. The next few weeks were spent scouring over pictures and videos of Bob and Doug and adjusting the lines and form of the

sculpture and to begin to work on the likenesses. Although the sculpture was nowhere near complete, it was beginning to tell the story so the first progress pictures of the sculpture were sent to the SCTV actors and the committee at the end of October 2016.



Applying clay detail layer to styrofoam support structure, 2017

Feedback from the committee was quick and positive. A few days later I received an email from Paul saying the actors input had been received. He seemed concerned that I would be offended by their direct and pointed observations. While reading their comments I recognized that their focus was primarily the likeness while my focus was the entire sculpture. They made some excellent observations that gave me tools to tackle the portraiture. Rick Moranis' concerns focused on the slope of his nose, width of

his face and shape of the mouth. Dave Thomas complimented me nailing his signature sneer but was concerned with the width of his face. He also pointed out that the Doug McKenzie characters trademark ear muffs were worn above the earlobe and I had covered the ears. All of these observations were extremely helpful in creating a believable sculpture of Bob and Doug McKenzie, born from the comic genius of Rick Moranis and Dave Thomas. The actors also conceded that they were not sculptors and perhaps looking to my peers for advice would be an appropriate strategy but my recollection of one of Rick Moranis' statements really resonated with me. "I hope that either through colour or the sculpture you capture the youthful exuberance of the characters, Bob and Doug McKenzie, created during our time in Edmonton." Challenge accepted, I went to work.

The next few months were spent pouring over countless photographs and videos of the SCTV episodes filmed in Edmonton. I would freeze frame different angles of the actors face and translate what I saw. My nearly two decades of participating in the life drawing and sculpture classes at Harcourt House served me well as I was very familiar with capturing the subtle nuances of the human anatomy in clay. With each

passing week, Bob and Doug began to come alive.

2017 REFINING DETAILS

A couple more months were spent refining the sculpture and in April of 2017 I sent another set of progress pictures to the committee and actors for revue. The committee was satisfied but weeks past without hearing from the actors and I was expecting a list of changes to deal with. I reached out to SCTV committee member Carole Hensen to see if there was any word and then in May of 2017 I received the news from her that the actors had approved the sculpture. I spent another few month refining small details in the sculpture and building crates for transporting it to the foundry. In August 2017 the Bob and Doug McKenzie sculpture left Edmonton and was delivered to Bronzart foundry in Calgary for the next stage of the project.



Artist Ritchie Velthuis with the completed clay model, 2017

AT THE FOUNDRY

2017 THE BRONZE AGE

When faced with the decision of choosing a foundry, my pragmatic nature told me to research my options but my heart and instincts told me Bronzart foundry, located in Calgary, would be my choice. Having seen their work on numerous bronze projects by such artists as Barbara Paterson, Al Henderson, Edmund Haakonson and Richard Tozak, they are arguably the best foundry in Western Canada with an international reputation. They are also one of the only foundries who not only allowed artist visits throughout the process but encouraged them. After my research my instincts were confirmed. The secret of success is teamwork and Vaughn Stewart and Mel Parsons of Bronzart were my valued team members.

Bronze sculpture is a very involved process. There are many steps to create the final sculpture and it typically takes anywhere from 12 to 14 months to complete a large bronze project and I would go down periodically to assist with or review various steps in the process.

The first step was to create a rubber mould of the original clay sculpture by gridding it into sections. Keyed shims separate each section and layer upon layer of liquid rubber mould material was applied to the



Painting on rubber mould material onto the clay model - preparing rubber moulds for wax model, 2017

sculpture taking care that each layer was completely dry before applying another. A plaster mother mould was then applied over top of the rubber mould to prevent distortion.



Wax models for heads, released from rubber moulds, 2017

In the next step wax was poured into the mould to create a 3/16 to 1/4 inch thick wax shell of the original. Then the mother mould and the rubber mould were removed. Seam lines in the wax were removed, the wax pieces were fitted for

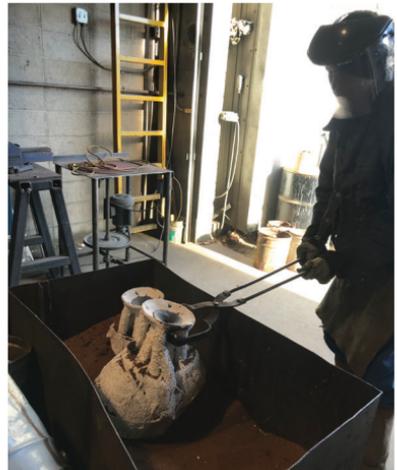
alignment and I would carefully inspect the sculpture to make any final changes to the wax. Bronze is a lost wax process, so the wax shell was representative of the final bronze. Wax rods called spurs or gates were then attached to the sculpture. A large wax cup was attached to one end which received the molten bronze when poured. The placement of the gate system allowed molten bronze to flow through these areas allowing gas to escape through smaller bars called vents.



Wax hands incased in refractory investment to pour molten bronze in to

Once the wax was complete a secondary mould was made by dipping the wax in a liquid binder called slurry and a fine silica sand

was applied. Each coating was completely dried prior to the next and the number of coats was determined by the size and weight of the piece. The heavier and larger the piece, the thicker the ceramic shell needed to be to support the molten metal. The slurry coats the inside and outside of the wax and when the ceramic shell was thoroughly dried and hardened we were ready for the next step.



Hot mould is placed into sand support, wax model has been burned out of refractory mould leaving a cavity for molten bronze to fill, 2017

The ceramic shell was then placed in an autoclave or burn out oven to de-wax the shell. Once the wax was lost the shells were cooled and inspected for cracks. Then they were heated up to 1400 F degrees, placed



Molten bronze is poured into the cavity of the refractory moulds, 2017

in a pouring pit and molten bronze was poured into the hollow shells and allowed to cool and solidify. The shell material was removed inside and out and then sandblasted to remove any shell material from the intricate details of the casting. The multiple pieces of the original were then fitted together and welded with great care and attention to alignment. Then the sculpture was chased to remove any sign of welding seams and several different polishing and detail tools were used taking care to match the original texture of the sculpture. The bench was fabricated using sheet bronze and Bob and Doug were placed onto the bench to ensure a proper fit.



Once cooled the refractory mould material is broken away from bronze casting, 2017

Upon looking at the nearly finished sculpture I was filled with gratitude for my team at Bronzart foundry. Vaughn Stewart and Melissa Parsons call themselves technicians but they are truly artists. Their attention to detail, skill level and the tenacity to get the sculpture right is a testament to their creative spirit. 13 months in the bronze process, the sculpture was ready to patina.



Raw and cleaned bronze components ready for surface finishing and assembly

THE PATINA AND REVISIONS



Completed SCTV casting sitting on fabricated bench, 2017

2018 COLOURFUL CHARACTERS

Throughout the journey of working on the final sculpture, the patina was in the forefront of my mind. As the bronze of Bob and Doug McKenzie came to life I pondered whether colour was needed. There was a camp of peers that said leave them bronze, while others agreed with my full colour choice. Maybe the sculptures themselves had enough presence in natural bronze to tell the story. In conversations with committee member, Paul Allard, he expressed his preference for colour. The sculpture concept

was presented in colour to the stakeholders after all and I agreed. The colour gave an allegorical context to these colourful characters and should be represented as such.

With Vaughn's decades of experience working with traditional chemical processes to create a bronze finish and my extensive experience with colour, we began work on the patina. We started by using traditional chemical methods to create a bronze base and used colour washes over top and randomly allowed the bronze to come through. As this was an



Beginning of the patina process

outdoor and very interactive piece with thousands of hands potentially touching it, we felt the piece would age more gracefully if some of the bronze was intentionally exposed. When it came to doing the faces and hands Vaughn was concerned that creating a flesh tone would be difficult and susceptible to noticeable wear. Taking that into consideration and trusting his years of experience, we decided to leave the faces in a natural light bronze which illuminated to a near natural flesh tone in bright sunlight. After a long week of work the sculpture was complete. I was very happy with the result but in the back of my mind I wondered whether leaving the faces in bronze was the right decision. The sculpture was lacquered and waxed in October 2018 and put into storage to await news of it's final home.



Patina process, 2018

Nearly a year later my nagging doubt about the faces was confirmed. Rick Moranis and Dave Thomas reached out to express concerns with the bronze faces. With the prime minister/ black face controversy in the news they were most concerned that the bronze faces would be misinterpreted

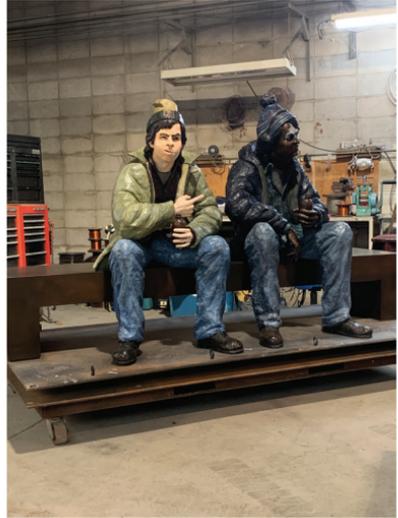
negatively and their solution was for the entire sculpture to be re-finished in a bronze patina. Earlier in the foundry process we had done a series of bronze details of the sculpture for patina tests and these details included a fragment of the Bob McKenzie's/Rick Moranis' face.



Detail of sculpture to test patina process, 2020

2020 NEW PATINA

My counter suggestion was for me to patina that sample for their approval. In January 2020 I painted the face fragment and sent pictures of the sample in different light as requested by Mr. Moranis. The actors' response was nearly immediate. They were on board and excited to see the finished sculpture. The foundry stripped the faces and the hands and I travelled to Calgary to redo the patina of the faces. It was the right decision.



Patina process

INSTALLATION AND REACTION

2020 THE HARDEST PART

Perhaps the hardest part of the SCTV *Monument* project was to keep it quiet for so long. Filled with many challenges, stops and starts, the project seemed to never end and at times I wondered whether it would ever be unveiled. The dreaded questions most often asked by the small circle of peers that knew about the project were “When is your sculpture going to be unveiled?” But perhaps the most frequent question was “Do you know where it will be located?” My stock answer was “My job was to create the best sculpture possible and the rest is up to the SCTV Committee.”

The location of the Bob and Doug McKenzie sculpture was finally confirmed in February 2020. It was to be installed on 103 Avenue and 103 Street and I was elated. It had been the top choice as far as location from the beginning. What would be more fitting than for these Iconic figures to be placed in the walkway entering the Winter Garden of the ICE District of Edmonton. Bob and Doug McKenzie were synonymous with winter. I was filled with gratitude for SCTV *Monument* committee’s hard work to secure the ideal location.

The installation was slated for March and an unveiling celebration was



Delivery of SCTV *Monument* March, 2020

planned on the afternoon of March 27, 2020 with Rick Moranis and Dave Thomas in attendance. I was over the moon with excitement. Then the coronavirus hit and everything changed. My first reaction was “It’s the flu? How bad can it be?” Well we all now know how bad it can be. The unveiling was cancelled but we decided to install the sculpture anyway.

And so on the afternoon of March 24, 2020 we began the installation of the sculpture. No fuss, no fanfare, they simply appeared on a large picker truck and were lowered down by crane to their final resting place. The afternoon was spent drilling holes in the cement in preparation for the anchor pins to be securely epoxied to the ground.



Artist Ritchie Velthuis unwraps *SCTV Monument* during installation March, 2020

As I unwrapped the protective styrofoam padding, Bob and Doug emerged and I knew the boys were home. At first glance these street level figures just appeared to be two friends or brothers engaged in humorous conflict. Only after closer scrutiny does the viewer realize they are a sculpture. Perhaps two Edmontonians sitting on a bench engaged in silly banter inspired the comic genius of Rick Moranis and Dave Thomas while they filmed in Edmonton. As dusk approached it was time to leave. Although I was very proud of the piece its installation seemed anticlimactic. I

could not help but feel somehow cheated. Was this the way my 5 year journey was supposed to end? No unveiling or celebration but these were unprecedented times: COVID 19 had changed the world.

Early in the process arts reporter, Fish Griwkowsky, learned about the project. During an interview at my studio I convinced him not to break the story. It only seemed fitting to let him know Bob and Doug were in the public domain and with the installation complete I messaged him. He immediately contacted me and asked a few questions to supplement the interview he had

done years earlier. Fish's story broke in the middle of the night and the next day I was flooded with calls for interviews. I was finally able to talk freely about the project and process. Congratulations and compliments poured in and the sculpture became a local sensation and even got some provincial and national press. Images on social media popped up everywhere and pictures of people sitting with Bob and Doug quickly replaced fan's Facebook covers or profile shots.

A picture of Bob and Doug wearing surgical masks with the caption "#StayHome It Could Save Lives" flooded the internet and became my own personal temporary Facebook profile picture. The *SCTV Monument: Bob and Doug McKenzie* became the feel good story of the day and distracted Edmontonians from the sobering reality of the world situation. I had no idea it would resonate so strongly with so many people. It has been over two years since the monument was installed. I still see selfies of people with Bob and Doug and I take pride in the reality that a new generation are discovering SCTV due to the sculpture.

Art processes build cultures of collaboration and creativity. Part of my legacy has been to create community driven, interactive art and



Selfies with Bob and Doug



Bob and Doug wearing surgical masks

the success of the *SCTV Monument* would not have been possible without the collaboration and hard work of the SCTV Monument committee, the input and comedic genius of SCTV cast, especially Rick Moranis and Dave Thomas and the artistry and skill of Bronzart foundry. My career highlights thus far have been dependant upon collaborative efforts and I am humbled and proud to have created a sculpture that honours Edmonton's entertainment history with the help of such an exceptional group of individuals.



Bob and Doug MacKenzie with the artist outside
photo by Marc Chalifoux photo

2022 EXHIBITION AT THE ACC

In February 2021 the SCTV ceramic works were set to be exhibited at Harcourt House's Art Incubator Gallery, but due to covid mandated closures of galleries at the time, the public was unable to see the exhibition.

The Alberta Craft Council (ACC) is proud to present *Making of a Monument*, a free public exhibition that shares Ritchie's ceramic sculptures of a number of legendary SCTV characters as he developed the monumental public sculpture

immortalizing Bob and Doug Mackenzie and SCTV's place in Edmonton's cultural fabric.

We invite the public to join us in celebrating artist Ritchie Velthuis' journey in the creation of the SCTV *Monument* and his contribution to our community as an artist.



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The Alberta Craft Council is the Provincial Arts Service Organization that develops, promotes, and advocates for Fine Craft in Alberta. We strive to support contemporary and heritage crafts as significant art forms that contribute to Alberta's culture and to develop a craft sector of creative, skilled, viable, and sustainable craftspeople, studios, businesses, and network.

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Calgary, Alberta. T2T 6T7

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The Alberta Craft Council works on Treaty 6, 7 and 8 Territories, home to many First Nations, Métis and Inuit whose footsteps have marked these lands for generations. In the spirit of reconciliation, we are dedicated to ensuring that the spirit of these treaties are honoured and respected while working together to champion for craft and for creative prosperity.