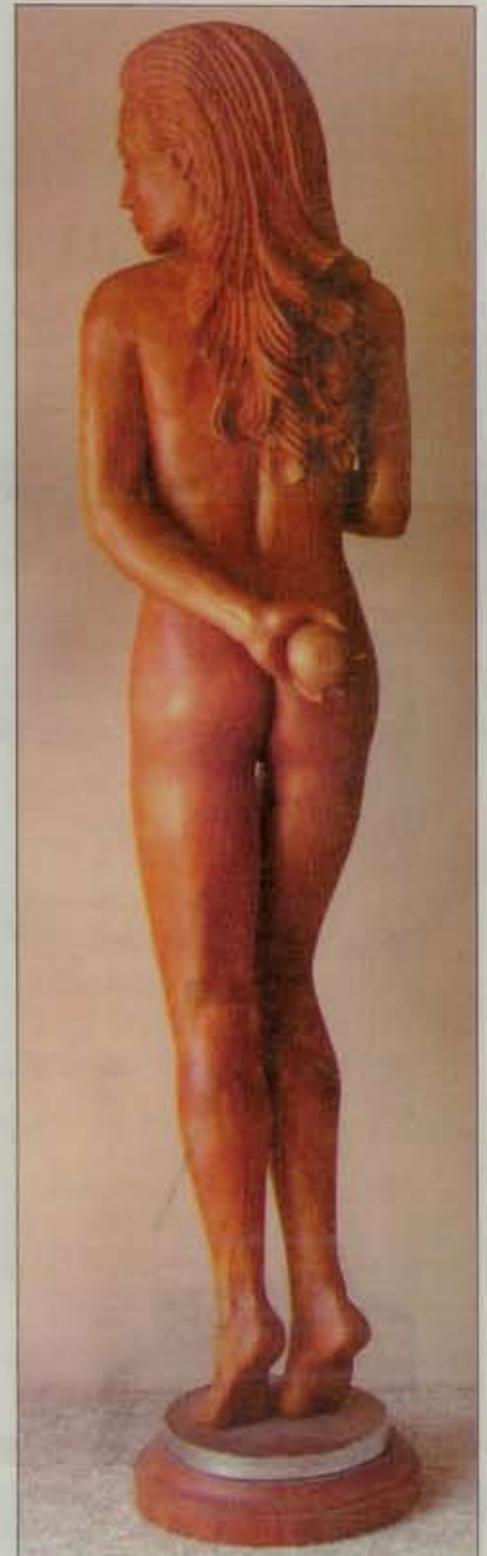




John GORDON/Langley Times

Langley artist Stefan Rogenmoser's work pulls no punches when it comes to presenting his views on humanity; Top right: "Ripped Apart" cherry wood, 2002; Right: "Eve" cherry wood, 2003.



Truth and beauty

KRISTYL CLARK
Times Reporter

Carved in exquisite life-like detail, from the determination in his eyes to the protruding bones exposed from the flesh he has chewed off of his own foot; he's a mesmerizing mesh of horror, beauty and craftsmanship.

His name is Mankind—a sculpture carved of solid maple that stands 28 inches tall.

Mankind is one of several unique works of art created by Langley artist Stefan Rogenmoser.

"He represents the self-destruction of us and our environment with our way of life," explained Rogenmoser while showing off the pieces on display at his home.

"Like the sculpture, it's disgusting, ugly and grotesque, but true," he said.

Rogenmoser's controversial sculptures have been displayed in galleries and at festivals globally but for now they're hidden inside the living room of his Langley home.

Regarding last summer's annual Arts Alive festival in Langley City, he said several patrons expressed concern over his work, arguing it was too 'disturbing' to be out on public display.

Yet, the 38-year-old, who immigrated from Switzerland, doesn't seem to mind.

"All of my pieces have statements," said Rogenmoser.

"That seems to bother many people, but that doesn't mean I'm going to stop making them anytime soon."

He said he's been asked by the Langley Arts Council to leave behind his controversial pieces the next time he takes part in the festival.

"It just seemed to me that during the festival the public would rather see a carved cow or horse than anything with any sort of a political statement."

When asked why he thought people were offended by his work, he said it was most likely due to the fact that all of his sculptures were created nude.

"I don't blame the Arts Council but I do think it's sad that people get upset over nudity."

"Most of the world's greatest statues and sculptures are nude," he added.

"We are living in such a multicultural society that it would be hard to figure out which clothes should be put on her. Indian... Chinese?"

The nude sculpture that caused a stir at the Langley festival was a piece that took him close to 500 hours to finish, which he has named Justice.

Justice is a life-sized wooden sculpture of a nude female wearing nothing but spiked stiletto heels and a blindfold, both made of stainless steel. Behind her back, a scale dangles from her delicately carved hand.

Her provocative stance mirrors a prostitute.

"If a person can buy justice with money, power and corruption, then justice itself must be a prostitute," said Rogenmoser of the sculpture.

Rogenmoser gets many of his ideas from the news.

"I read a lot of papers and a lot of things

"I don't want to go to train at an institution to get polluted with their ideas."

Stefan Rogenmoser
sculptor

that are going on in this world really anger me," he said.

"I want my sculptures to reflect to future generations my view of the world."

Rogenmoser would love to devote all of his time to creating his sculptures but for now he makes his living as a contract tool and die maker.

"I'm the richest man in the world, I just have no money," he chuckled.

"I'm not that worried, one day it will happen for me. One day I'll make it as an artist."

When he applied for a government grant to support his art he was denied in a letter that argued he wasn't eligible as he never underwent any formal training.

"I've never had any interest in going to an art school," he said.

"I don't want to go train at an institution to get polluted with their ideas. I make art the way I want to."

The skills he has, he picked up years ago while working for his father in Switzerland restoring old furniture. As a child he became interested in drafting and sculpting, with the encouragement of his father, Hans.

After completing an apprenticeship as a tool and die maker at 16, Rogenmoser began travelling the world, ending up in Canada, the country he now calls home.

Aside from his sculptures, Rogenmoser also creates unique jewelry, knives, furniture and wall art.

To view more of Rogenmoser's work, visit www.simplyartist.com.