

GRANITE

HAND SCULPTURES



Photography by Allan Jenkins

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INTRODUCTION

The Process of Creating Recycled Metal Sculptures

Idea to Medium

Every sculpture begins with an idea, whether it's the artist's vision or a client's request. This concept undergoes varying levels of planning, from detailed sketches to simple photographs or even no physical references. While marble, clay, and metal all follow this principle, my approach to metal sculptures typically involves minimal detailed sketches. I rely mainly on photographs as initial references, using them to check completed work as the sculpture takes shape.

Mixed Metal Sculpting

Using mixed metals can involve brand new, recycled, or found objects, either individually or in combinations. New metal, such as sheet metal, must be fully manipulated into the desired form—a topic for another discussion. Recycled or found metal pieces are often chosen because they already resemble parts of the intended sculpture. For instance, creating a lobster sculpture required finding recycled metal objects that could serve as its body, claws, and tail. The perfect segment for the lobster's abdomen, found in an architectural reclamation shop, turned out to be an antique roller coaster wheel cut in half.

Railroad Spikes as Medium

Railroad spikes can be used in their original form or manipulated by cutting to the desired shape. For my HAND Sculptures, almost all spikes are altered. The heads of the spikes are cut off and repositioned to form knuckles, and the shanks are shortened for the fingers. Despite these modifications, it remains evident that the sculptures are crafted from railroad spikes. This approach not only highlights the inherent beauty of the material but also repurposes it in a creative and environmentally conscious manner.



ABOUT GRANITE

Granite was born in the Northeastern United States but spent his formative years in the Midwest, where he was deeply immersed in the regional field of aircraft production. He pursued a degree in Aerospace Engineering, which led to a successful career in the industry. Today, he lives and works in Kansas, continuing his contributions to aerospace engineering.

Despite his technical training, Granite always had a strong connection to the Arts, a passion fostered by his mother who introduced him to oil painting at a young age. This artistic inclination persisted throughout his education, as he took numerous Art courses to fulfill elective requirements for his engineering degree. For many years after graduation, he dedicated himself solely to oil painting, finding solace and expression through the medium.

Granite's transition from painting to sculpture happened by chance. A surplus of railroad spikes from a construction project sparked his creativity and led to his first sculptures. This serendipitous encounter with discarded materials marked the beginning of a new artistic journey. Granite found a way to repurpose these spikes, using them as the primary medium for his sculptures, supplemented occasionally by other scrap metals.

Railroad spikes, designed to secure tracks for safe and reliable train travel, often end up discarded and left to rust. Granite saw potential in these abandoned materials, transforming them into art pieces that not only reclaimed their use but also prevented environmental degradation. His work with railroad spikes distinguishes him within the realm of found metal sculpture, despite the material's inherent challenges. The rigid shape of railroad spikes limits their manipulability, posing a challenge for creating realistic forms. However, Granite's engineering background provided him with the technical skills to push the boundaries of what could be achieved with these materials. Over the years, he has honed his techniques, achieving a remarkable level of realism in his sculptures that sets his work apart.

Granite's journey from aerospace engineering to Art embodies a fusion of technical precision and creative exploration, resulting in unique sculptures that breathe new life into discarded materials. His work not only showcases his artistic talent but also reflects a commitment to sustainability and environmental consciousness.



"A Painter by training, a Mixed Metal Sculptor by chance"

FOREWORD

The Artistry of Granite: Transforming Railroad Spikes into Iconic Hand Sculptures

Granite, an accomplished aerospace engineer based in Kansas, has always had a deep connection to the arts. Introduced to oil painting by his mother during childhood, he later pursued Art courses to complement his engineering education. His journey into sculpture began unexpectedly when he repurposed surplus railroad spikes from a construction project, transforming them into his primary medium. This shift marked the beginning of a unique artistic endeavor that combines technical precision with creative exploration.

Margaret Keane and the Power of Symbolic Representation

Margaret Keane's childhood hearing issues led her to focus intently on people's eyes, inspiring her to paint figures with exaggerated eyes. This unique style influenced a global genre, seen in characters like the Powerpuff Girls and collectible figures like Funko Pop. Keane's story, adapted into a film by Tim Burton, highlights the power of symbolic representation in Art. Granite's work similarly emphasizes symbolic meaning, particularly through his sculptures of hands.

The Significance of Hand Gestures

Hand gestures hold various significances across different contexts. For Walter Hoving, the former chairman of Tiffany & Co., a handshake was a binding contract, symbolizing trust and commitment. In contrast, others view handshakes as routine and insignificant. However, for certain groups, hand gestures form the basis of essential communication, such as in sign language. In the context of Granite's art, hand gestures symbolize connection, communication, and unity. His sculptures, crafted from discarded railroad spikes, embody the idea of small, often overlooked elements holding together larger structures. These spikes, originally designed to secure railroad tracks, now form intricate sculptures that convey deep emotional and spiritual intimacy.

Recognizability and Artistic Impact

A crucial tool in an artist's toolbox is recognizability—the ability for viewers to instantly grasp the essence of a piece. Granite's sculptures achieve this with their distinct and evocative forms. The "Genesis" sculpture, notable for its seemingly weightless appearance, exemplifies Granite's skill in creating impactful, easily recognizable art.

Conclusion: Endless Combinations and Creative Enrichment

Just as books are crafted from various combinations of twenty-six letters and paintings from countless paint strokes, Granite's arrangements of railroad spikes offer infinite possibilities for creative expression. His work not only enriches viewers but also inspires a deeper appreciation for the value of repurposed materials and the symbolic power of hand gestures. Through his sculptures, Granite invites us to see the potential for beauty and meaning in the most unexpected places.



THE PROCESS

Creating Sculptures from Recycled Metal Parts

From Idea to Medium

Every sculpture begins with an idea, whether it's the artist's vision or a client's request. The planning process can vary, involving detailed sketches with precise measurements, simple photographs, or no physical references at all. This principle applies to all sculpting materials, including marble, clay, and metal. Personally, I seldom use detailed drawings or sketches for my metal sculptures. I primarily use photographs as initial references and rely on them to check the work as it progresses.

Mixed Metal Sculpting

Using mixed metals in sculpture involves incorporating brand new, recycled, or found objects. These can be used individually or in combinations. Brand new metal, such as sheet metal, must be fully manipulated into the desired form, which is a topic for another discussion. Recycled or found metal pieces are often selected because they naturally resemble parts of the intended sculpture.

Example: Lobster Sculpture

For example, when creating a lobster sculpture, I needed recycled metal objects for the body, claws, tail, and other anatomical parts. Finding a piece that resembled the segments of a lobster's abdomen was challenging. Eventually, I found the perfect piece in an architectural reclamation shop: an antique roller coaster wheel. When cut in half, it looked exactly like a segment of a lobster abdomen.

Railroad Spikes in Sculpture

Railroad spikes can be used in their original form or manipulated by cutting them into the needed shapes. For my HAND sculptures, almost all spikes are altered. The heads are cut off and repositioned to form knuckles, while the shanks are shortened to create fingers of various lengths. Although the metal is reshaped, it remains clear that the sculptures are made from railroad spikes. This approach not only showcases the material's inherent beauty but also repurposes it creatively and sustainably.



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#1 GENESIS

"The Creation of Adam" panel from Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel is often featured in lists of top iconic paintings. The image of God's finger almost touching Adam's, symbolizing the biblical creation of the first man, has permeated culture, from "E.T." to social media memes. "GENESIS" is my sculptural interpretation of this focal point. Notably, Michelangelo was renowned as a sculptor, not a painter, at the time.





#2 REDEMPTION

I've always admired Renaissance Biblical Art, which conveyed Old and New Testament stories to largely illiterate populations through majestic art. With "REDEMPTION," I engaged with this tradition, benefiting from 400 years of historical perspective. Modern research indicates that nails in Roman crucifixions were driven through the wrists, not the palms.





#3 11/11

November 11, 1918, marked the armistice ending World War I. The red poppy, symbolizing endurance and hope in John McCrae's poem "In Flanders Fields," became an emblem of Remembrance Day. Artificial poppies are now traditionally worn to commemorate the event.





#4 VICTORY/UP YOURS

...You ask, what is our aim? I can answer in one word: Victory, victory at all costs, victory in spite of all terror, victory, however long and hard the road may be; for without victory, there is no survival..."

– Winston Churchill, May 13, 1940, from his first speech as Prime Minister to the House of Commons.







#5 A SALUTE

A salute, a formal gesture of respect, is used mainly by military organizations and some civilian groups. The modern military salute, bringing the hand to the forehead, dates back to the Roman military.





#6 L.L.A.P

"Live Long and Prosper" – the blessing phrase accompanying the Vulcan Salute, introduced by Mr. Spock in the Star Trek universe.



#7 PRAYER #1

Hand positions in prayer, practiced in major religions for millennia, often involve bringing hands together in front of the body. The formal gesture with palms together and fingers straight signifies reverence, while interlacing fingers evokes introspective thought.





#8 LOVE

The heart shape formed with hands to represent love has unclear origins. Some believe it is based on ivy leaves, while others trace it to ancient descriptions of the human heart. By the 19th century, it symbolized romantic love, popularized by the “I ♥ NY” iconography in 1977.







#9 THE BUMP

The fist bump gesture is simply two people taking either of their close fists and tapping them together. It can be used as a greeting or a means to express respect, approval, or an act of celebration. History of the fist bump can be linked to the beginning of a boxing match where the two participants are instructed to touch gloves before the contest begins. During the COVID-19 Pandemic, the fist bump may have overtaken the handshake as the standard informal hand greeting as studies showed the gesture spread fewer germs.

#10 THE SHAKE

The handshake gesture can be used as a means of greeting, parting, offering congratulations, or as an agreement. Accomplished by two people clasping eachothers hands and usually accompanied by a brief up and down movement. Originating in ancient times to show peaceful intent as the initial open hand position shows that no weapons are being carried. This message of goodwill conveyed by a handshake could even be understood by cultures that spoke different languages.



Sculpting with Mixed
Metal is a "Kind of
Magic".
Grant





#11 THE FINGER

A hand gesture used to show contempt or disrespect.

The finger, giving someone the bird, or flipping an individual off is achieved by showing the back of the hand to the person and extending the middle finger.

The obscene hand sign has its origins in Ancient Greece and Ancient Rome with much the same meaning then as it has now.



#12 ROCK,PAPER,SCISSORS

A hand game for decision-making, where players simultaneously show one of three gestures—rock, paper, or scissors—with each sign beating one other in a circular fashion. If both players choose the same gesture, the game repeats until there is a winner.





#13 OKAY

The Okay Sign, indicating approval, is made by joining the thumb and index finger in a circle while extending the other fingers. In ancient Greece, it symbolized affection. The gesture became synonymous with “OK” in the 19th century.



#14 THUMBS UP

The Thumb Signal as a closed fist in the thumb up position is used to convey positivity, approval, or all is fine. Interpretations of Ancient Roman texts have surmised that it was the hand sign given to spare the life of a gladiator; however, there is no historical evidence to support this theory. In the movie industry, the thumbs up gesture has been the means that Fall Guys (Stunt Men) let everyone know they are good condition right after a stunt. Now days, thumbs up is one of the most used response emoji icons in digital communications.





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GRANITE'S SCULPTURES: *Repurposing and renewing value*

Granite's hand sculptures made from railroad spikes symbolize the importance of repurposing and renewal. Influencer Gary Vee's analogy, "A basketball in my hands is worth nothing. A basketball in LeBron's hands is worth millions," underscores the transformative power of context and skill. Similarly, Granite transforms scrap metal into art, extending its value and preventing environmental deterioration.

#15 RUNNER

Set in a dystopian future, "Logan's Run" portrays a domed city where inhabitants, provided for by automation, must participate in the ritual of "Carrousel" at age thirty, leading to their "Renewal" or death. Those who flee are "Runners," hunted by "Sandmen." A flower crystal embedded in their palms indicates age, changing color and blinking as "Last Day" approaches.

The devastating effects of war, overpopulation, and pollution have the survivors of the 23rd Century living in a great domed city that is sealed off from the unknown world outside. Inside this futuristic metropolis, with everything provided by automated mechanisms created in an earlier time, the inhabitants have no responsibilities except the pursuit of pleasure. The only catch - no one lives past the age of thirty. Such is the premise of the dystopian novel "Logan's Run" and the movie of the same title with a similar plot based on the book

When someone reaches the age of thirty, they must submit to the ritual of "Carrousel" where they are vaporized as part of the reincarnation process that leads to being "Renewed" for another three-decade lifespan. For the few who believe this ceremony results in nothing more than being killed, the only option is to "run" and attempt to find a place of refuge named "Sanctuary" rumoured to be outside of the domed world. Those individuals who choose this means of escape are called "Runners". It is the job of a police force comprised of elite officers known as "Sandmen" to hunt down and terminate the "Runners", ending any chance they had for "Renewal".

The way to identify someone's age is by the flower crystal embedded in the palm of their left hand. At age twenty-four the crystal changes from solid green to solid red. It begins blinking red with the approachment of "Last day", the day of "Carrousel" when an individual turns thirty.





#16 HIGH 5

The High Five is where two individuals simultaneously raise one hand in the air and slap their open palms together in a show of celebration or a way greeting each other. It is one of the few hand gestures that has its beginnings in modern times. Origin for the high five is linked to a Professional American Baseball Team of 1970's. On the last day of the regular season, one player accomplished a record for the team that had never been attained before in history and rushed over to a teammate excitedly with his hand in the air. The other player was a bit taken aback by this action and did not know exactly what to do, so he slapped his teammate's hand that was in the air. Later stating - "It seemed like the thing to do."





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Mixed Metal Artist

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WORKS AND PRIVATE COMMISSIONS

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2024 - *"Sacrifice" Sculpture, Father Pat York (Wichita KS)* 2023 -
2023 - *"Commanche 250" Painted Aircraft Propeller, Eric and Donna Conrad (Dallas TX)*
2023 - *"George Burns" Bust Sculpture, The Setter Foundation (Wichita KS)*
2023 - *"The Lobster" Sculpture, Justin Ladner (Wichita KS)*
2023 - *"Butterfly with Cone Flowers" Sculpture, Jury Eye Care Clinics (Kansas City MO)*
2022 - *"The Rose" Sculpture, Jury Eye Care Clinics (Wichita KS)*
2022 - *"Father H" Bust Sculpture, The Setter Foundation (Wichita KS)*
2021 - *"Elijah" Metal Cigar Indian Sculpture, The Setter Foundation (Wichita KS)*
2021 - *"The Rose" Sculpture, Sarah-Jane O'Malley (Wichita KS) and Leticia Basgal (London UK)*
2021 - *"Beech Aircraft" Painted Aircraft Propeller, J.D. O'Malley (Wichita KS)*
2020 - *"The Grind" Sculpture, Keith Studebaker (Wichita KS)*
2020 - *"The Wait" Sculpture, Kutter Veterinary Clinic (Wichita KS)*
2020 - *"Contest Trophies Sculptures, Wichita Soaring Association (Glider Club – Wichita KS)*
2020 - *"Groucho Marx" Bust Sculpture, The Setter Foundation (Wichita KS)*
2019 - *"The Char" Sculpture, Old Town Cigars Elogio Lounge (Wichita KS)*
2019 - *"The Ecstasy" Sculpture, Justin Ladner (Wichita KS)*
2019 - *"Smoking" Sculpture, The Setter Foundation (Wichita KS)*
2019 - *"Kansas City Chiefs Logo" Sculpture, Bob Sterbens (Wichita KS)*
2019 - *"The Scorpion" Sculpture, Vanessa Gambio (Miami FL)*
2018 - *"El Toro" Sculpture, Jury Eye Care Clinics (Wichita KS)*
2018 - *"Cigar Man" Sculpture, The Setter Foundation (Wichita KS)*
2018 - *"Kansas City Chiefs Logo" Sculpture, Old Town Cigars Elogio Lounge and Justin Ladner (Wichita KS)*
2018 - *"The Rose" Sculpture, Vanessa Gambio (Miami FL)*
2018 - *"Dallas Cowboys Logo" Sculpture, Sarah-Jane and J.D. O'Malley (Wichita KS)*
2018 - *"The Scorpion" Sculpture, Leticia Basgal (London UK)*
2017 - *"El Toro" Sculpture, Justin Ladner (Wichita KS)*
2017 - *"Old Crow" Painted Aircraft Propeller, Air to Air Photography (Wichita KS)*
2016 - *"Burma Banshees" Painted Aircraft Propeller, Justin Ladner (Wichita KS)*
2015 - *"Crucifixe" Sculpture, Leticia Basgal (London UK)*
2012 - *"Smoking Gorilla" Oil Painting on Canvas, Justin Ladner (Wichita KS)*
2011 - *"Lear Fan Vortices" Oil Painting on Canvas, Air to Air Photography (Wichita KS)*
2008 - *"The Last Ride" Oil Painting on Canvas, Justin Ladner (Wichita KS)*
2006 - *"Earthrise" Oil Painting on Canvas, Justin Ladner (Wichita KS)*

WITH THANKS

To all my family and friends, your support was much appreciated while I was working on the HAND sculptures. Thank you to Allan Jenkins who took all the stunning photographs of the sculptures and made me look good in the portraits. A big thank you to Justin Ladner who always kept me focused on getting things done for the Exhibition and a very special thanks to Leticia Basgal who's perseverance and hard work made the HANDS exhibition possible.

From Granite, with Love!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Granite". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. A long, sweeping underline begins under the 'G' and curves around the bottom of the word, extending to the left.







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