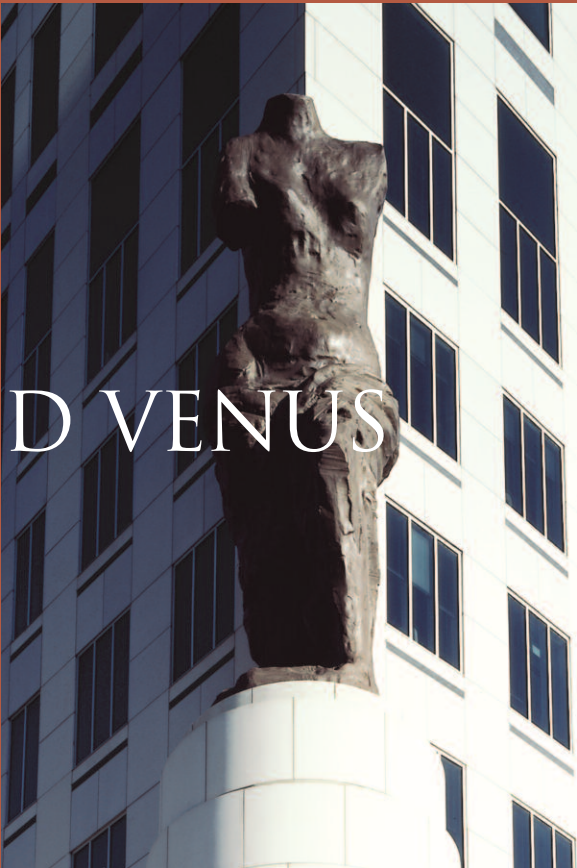


CLEVELAND VENUS

JIM DINE



CARL B. STOKES FEDERAL COURTHOUSE
CLEVELAND, OHIO

“THROUGH ITS PROGRAM OF ART
IN ARCHITECTURE, THE GENERAL
SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
HAS REAFFIRMED THE ESSENTIAL
ROLE THAT SCULPTURE MUST PLAY
IN CIVIC ARCHITECTURE. OUR
BUILDING IS MADE BETTER BY JIM
DINE’S MAGNIFICENT ADDITION
AND, I BELIEVE, HIS SCULPTURE IS
ENHANCED BY ITS SETTING.”

N. MICHAEL MCKINNELL, FAIA
PRINCIPAL
KALLMANN MCKINNELL & WOOD
ARCHITECTS, INCORPORATED

CLEVELAND VENUS JIM DINE

Above the entrance to Cleveland’s new, 22-story Carl B. Stokes Federal Courthouse stands an imposing, 37-foot-tall bronze figurative sculpture by Jim Dine, the internationally acclaimed Ohio-born artist. **BOLDLY INTEGRATED INTO THE BUILDING’S MOST PROMINENT ELEVATION, THE STATUE SERVES AS A BEACON FOR THE SITE OVERLOOKING THE CUYAHOGA RIVER AT THE INTERSECTION OF HURON ROAD AND SUPERIOR AVENUE.** The largest of all of Dine’s sculptures, it was inspired by the *Venus de Milo*, a masterpiece of the 2nd century BC, discovered in 1820 on the Greek island of Melos and now displayed at the Louvre Museum in Paris.

The *Cleveland Venus* is part of a body of sculptural work, begun in 1982, in which Dine has dramatically reinterpreted one of western culture’s most prominent portrayals of feminine beauty. The image of a small plaster cast of this famous Hellenistic statue first appeared in a group of his large still-life paintings, executed in 1977–78. Dine’s budding fascination was nurtured by his growing interest in classical antiquity and by his commitment, which began in the mid-1970s, to drawing the human form from life. Since the late 1980s, he has sketched and studied Greek and Roman sculpture, and the iconic form of the *Venus de Milo* has become one of his favorite themes, depicted in a variety of media.

TURNING HIS INNOVATIVE EYE TO THIS ARCHETYPAL SYMBOL OF ARTISTIC ACHIEVEMENT, DINE MADE IT A PERSONAL VEHICLE FOR SELF-EXPRESSION. In all his depictions of the *Venus de Milo*, including the one in Cleveland, the head has been removed. However, all the other compositional components of the original have been retained: the left leg juts forward while the right one recedes; drapery covers the legs; the pivoted upper torso is exposed; and the arms remain lost to time. Dine’s deft handwork covers the massive figure’s entire surface. All of his carefully considered marks—whether small and subtle or broad and bold—enliven





the form and offer willing receptacles for the endless patterns of light and shade caused by Cleveland's changing climate.

For Dine, the removal of the head immediately reduced the sculpture's specificity and eliminated the implied narrative carried by recognizable features. Indeed, the modified form of the *Venus de Milo* has been remarkably inspirational for the artist, allowing him to make new work by continuously reinventing this historic figure. **THE MORE GENERALIZED HEADLESS AND ARMLESS VENUS HAS BECOME THE IDEAL SCREEN UPON WHICH HE CAN PROJECT THE EXPANSIVE RANGE OF EMOTIONS AND IDEAS DERIVED FROM HIS LIFELONG SEARCH FOR MEANING AND INSIGHT INTO THE HUMAN CONDITION.**

The courthouse's design architect, Michael McKinnell of the distinguished Boston based firm, Kallmann, McKinnell, & Wood, shares Dine's passion for classical culture. Key elements of the building's distinctive quarter-round structure recall the parts of a classical column (base, shaft, and capital) and evoke a sense of permanence. For this project, McKinnell made an unusual decision to set aside space for an art commission that would be a prominent and integral aspect of the structure's façade. He hoped to foster an artistic partnership that would expand and enhance his interpretation of classical architectural elements. **FOR HIS PART, DINE WAS ATTRACTED TO THE NOTION OF CLOSE COLLABORATION BETWEEN SCULPTOR AND ARCHITECT—A TIME-HONORED TRADITION—FOR THE GREATER BENEFIT OF THE BUILDING.** The sculpture completes the structure's ambitious composition; the two are united as symbols of grace and durability.

In September 2003, more than two years after the commission was awarded to Dine, a large crane placed the 23,000-pound bronze sculpture on its podium. Its journey included a multi-staged fabrication process at the Walla Walla Foundry in southeastern Washington State, where the artist has collaborated since 1982 on numerous projects with owner Mark Anderson and his



highly skilled team. Appropriately, classical references are recalled in Dine's fabrication techniques. Beginning with a 26-inch clay model, the technicians relied on 21st-century computer technology and milling machinery to update the ancient process of "pointing up," used to copy the proportions from a smaller model to a larger finished work. They scanned the maquette to transfer all the nuances of the artist's marks in the clay surface to blocks of plastic foam, which were then glued together to create a full-size model. A variety of tools, including a chain saw, were used to complete and enhance the surface. For the final

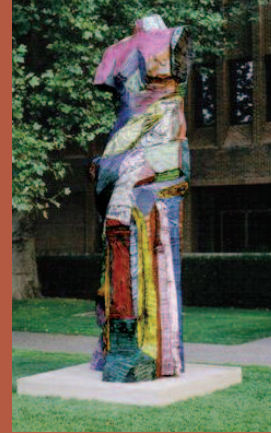
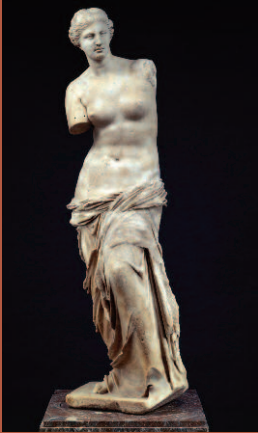
bronze, Dine specified the centuries-old "lost wax" casting process, which includes the creation of a mold. Because of the model's immense size, foundry workers created 250 two-foot-square rubber and plaster mold sections, each filled with wax. A heat-resistant ceramic layer encased the wax, which melted out when the molten metal was poured in. The resulting bronze sections were welded together, producing a shell that in turn was supported by an internal framework of stainless steel. Before the completed sculpture was trucked to Cleveland, the artist applied an acid-based solution to produce a caramel-colored patina, which was inspired by the courthouse's exterior surface of creamy toned gray limestone.



ABOUT THE ARTIST



Born in Cincinnati, Jim Dine attended the University of Cincinnati, the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and Ohio University, Athens, from which he received his B.F.A. in 1957. For over four decades, he has been in perpetual motion—intellectually, creatively, and physically. His immense production, however, resists easy categorization. With technical mastery, Dine has ranged from live events, or happenings, through painting, drawing, assemblage, and printmaking, to sculpture and, more recently, photography. Equally broad has been his palette of favorite subjects, now comprising some 20 to 30 themes. Early favorites include common tools, a man's bathrobe, and images of hearts; more recently, the artist has turned to careful renderings of the human figure and nature, depicting the owl, raven, and Pinocchio. With flexibility and ingenuity, he continually revisits this inventory of ideas. Since the mid 1980s, he has traveled extensively, maintaining his multifaceted oeuvre from numerous studios, printmaking facilities, and hotel rooms. During his career, he has been widely exhibited in solo museum and gallery exhibitions around the world, has been extensively collected by public institutions and private individuals, and has been broadly published in magazine articles and monographs on various aspects of his work.



Left to right: The inspiration for Dine's *Venus* series, the *Venus di Milo*, collection of the Louvre Museum, Paris, France; *Looking Toward the Avenue*, in New York, NY; *Carnival*, Whitman College, Walla Walla, Washington; *Bordeaux Venus*, Bordeaux, France.

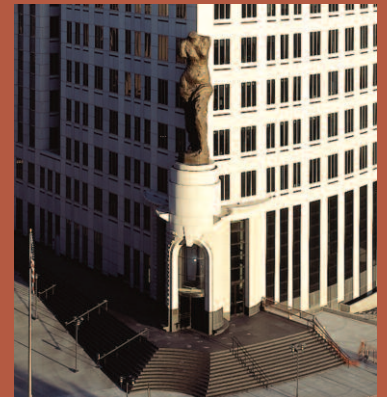
Left to right: The artist's original model shadowed by the full-size, plastic foam version of *Cleveland Venus*; the full-size model of *Cleveland Venus* at Walla Walla Foundry prior to casting; the crew of Walla Walla Foundry with *Cleveland Venus*, Spring 2003.



Responding to the opportunities and challenges of the commission, he has created a major work of public art that joins an already distinguished group spread throughout downtown Cleveland. In the *Cleveland Venus*, Dine's diverse artistic and symbolic concerns are perfectly balanced. Breathing fresh life into a historic model, he has transformed a well known image into a new, unique sculpture distinguished by its form, size, and surface texture. Interpretations of the work are also expansive. It immediately evokes references to the classical female figure and such universal symbolic associations as beauty, femininity, and justice. Placed within an urban environment, the fragmented figure suggests the enduring nature of human values throughout history. Dine's subjective and autobiographical approach to this theme adds depth to the work's meaning. Resonant with multi-layered references, the *Cleveland Venus* welcomes infinite responses.

Essay by Tom E. Hinson

For more detailed information on Dine's career and involvement with the Venus theme, consult these books: Jim Dine. *Jim Dine: Venus*, with essay by Marco Livingstone (Milan: Electa, 1996); and Marco Livingstone. *Jim Dine: The Alchemy of Images* (New York: The Monacelli Press, Inc., 1998).



THE ART IN ARCHITECTURE PROGRAM

The United States General Services Administration's Art in Architecture Program commissions artists, working in close collaboration with the project design teams, to create work that is appropriate to the diverse uses and architectural vocabularies of new federal buildings. These permanent installations

of contemporary art within the nation's civic buildings afford unique opportunities for exploring the integration of art and architecture, and facilitate a meaningful cultural dialogue between the American people and their government.

COMMISSIONING WORKS OF ART

The nomination and selection process for commissioning art for federal buildings follows guidelines developed over the past thirty years. GSA allocates one-half of one percent of the estimated construction cost of new, or substantially renovated, federal buildings for funding works of art. For each project, a panel composed of the project architect, arts professionals, representatives of the community, the federal client, and GSA

staff provides guidance in selecting the most suitable artist for each Art in Architecture commission. This panel suggests appropriate media, reviews artists's portfolios, and recommends a small pool of finalists. GSA evaluates this group, and awards the commission to the most suitable candidate, who develops a design concept. The panel and GSA review the artist's concept. Once approved, the final work of art is fabricated and installed.

ART IN ARCHITECTURE PANEL

Kathleen Coakley Barrie
Kristin Chambers
Kathleen H. Crowther
David L. Deming
Gretchen Goss
Susan Harrison
Tom E. Hinson
John Hunter
Chief Judge Paul R. Matia
Michael McKinnell
Edward Reich
Barbara Robinson
Caroline Sachay

The Malrite Company
Museum of Contemporary Art Cleveland
Cleveland Restoration Society
Cleveland Institute of Art
Cleveland Institute of Art
G.S.A. Art in Architecture Program
Cleveland Museum of Art
Cleveland State University, Art Department
U.S. District Court
Kallmann McKinnell & Wood Architects
Cleveland City Planning Commission
Ohio Arts Council
G.S.A. Art in Architecture Program

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The George Gund Foundation
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Cleveland Public Art



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