

Parks Library

title

Left Sided Angel

artist

Stephen De Staebler

Location:
Parks Library, South Entrance

Material:
Cast Bronze

Size:
8 feet high on 6 feet base

Date:
1986

Made possible by:
**Iowa Art in State
Buildings Program* and
Phi Kappa Phi**



About the Sculpture

Angels are often found in western art, but the one Stephen De Staebler created for the entrance of the Parks Library is not typical. Unlike many other images of celestial beings, this figure is not unearthly or above the human condition. Battered and bruised, it has only the left wing intact.

The sculpture is placed in front of the library. A library is the repository and collector of human knowledge, an angel is a human's soul, a human's recording. In contrast to other beautiful and victorious angels, the *Left Sided Angel* stands on the toes of its single foot. This makes the sculpture seem unbalanced and precarious as though it might fall, or the viewer might feel that the angel is about to take off in flight. Stephen De Staebler asks that each viewer react to this suspense. Could this lopsided figure with only one wing possibly fly? If the angel could leap from the base, would it crash to the earth or would it grow new wings and ascend above the evils of the world? This tentative and unusual angel forces us to think about the delicate place that humans hold in the world. And through it all, *Left Sided Angel* remains upright and tenacious, refusing to give up. Is this then a message of hope and reassurance? A message that might encourage humans to do the same?

**University Museums/Art on Campus Program
Iowa State University Ames, Iowa**

Artist's Comments

In a discussion of Stephen De Staebler's *Left Sided Angel* sculpture, the artist made several comments regarding the work and its interpretation:

"I get the best reactions to my work from people who aren't artistic and react from the gut. From my point of artistic view, a piece is working when it provokes reaction, whether positive or negative. What's not so great is when people don't react at all. That means there's no emotional punch," said De Staebler.

He continued by saying that sometimes viewer's reactions to an artwork change, just as with relationships with other human beings. He also pointed out that when a piece of art is disquieting, it holds people's attention longer. "It's like a puzzle. People will keep trying to figure it out." That is the way De Staebler likes it -- he feels that the truth of an artwork is in the viewer's eyes. He said, "It's what the viewer makes of the image, not necessarily what was intended."

The artist also provided some insight into the thinking process that went into the creation of his *Left Sided Angel* by saying "Everyone when they were a kid stood on one leg. It takes a lot of balance and the idea of balance with this piece is very important, because it contributes to a sense of precariousness." While viewing this sculpture, the viewer may want to balance on ones tip toes and hold the pose for an extended period, to understand the multiple layers of balance.

More About the Artist

Albright, Thomas. *Art in the San Francisco Bay Area 1945 - 1980*.
University of California Press, 1985.

Anderson, Wayne. *American Sculpture in Process 1930 - 1970*.
New York: Graphic Society, 1975.

Ashton, Dore. "Stephen DeStaebler." *Arts Magazine*. November 1984.

Burstein, Joanne. "Stephen DeStaebler." *American Ceramics*. March 1, 1984.

Speight, Charlotte F. *Images in Clay Sculpture*.

New York: Harper and Row Publishers, Inc. 1983.

LEFT SIDED ANGEL

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Additional information about *Left Sided Angel*, other Art on Campus information sheets, and Art on Campus maps are available at the University Museums office 290 Scheman Building (2nd Floor) 515/294-3342, or visit us online at <http://www.museums.iastate.edu/>

*The **Iowa Art in State Buildings Program** was enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Iowa (Chapter 304A, Code 1979. Sections 8-14) to provide for the inclusion of fine arts projects in state building construction projects in cooperation with the Iowa Arts Council. At Iowa State University, the Art in State Buildings Program is administered by University Museums.

**This information sheet is intended to be used
in addition to viewing the Art on Campus. At no time should this sheet be used
as a substitute for experiencing the art in person!**

Left-Sided Angel to Its Critics

And if I am an angel in decent,
perhaps fallen, in some of its senses,
What did you expect? A neon halo?
Wings with feathers from a dancer's boa?
These are hard times for the spirit—too much
of everything, too much money, lunches
on the university's tab, cocktail
patio parties where the whiners impale
olives and gerkins. stab colleagues between
the shoulder blades, slice up their friends,
roast their students over ruby charcoal,
resident novelist, in Mark Twain cool
whites, threatens to put John in his next book—
as a slimy minor character. Look
at yourselves. Who's unimpaired, whole? Surprised,
I watch you watch me through your log clogged eyes.

Ann Struthers, 1995
Cedar Rapids, Iowa

Petition to Remove a Statue

Hunk of shrapnel!
Pile of mangled bronze!
We want him down from his one-foot poise.

Victory should be maimed
but beautiful, not banged-up
with barely a leg to stand on.

One wing clipped, the other gone,
how he deforms the whole environment,
warps the air itself with absences.

If sculpture is pure form,
or its pursuit, then this nightmare
comes as close to art

as any freeway accident,
with us out in the bushes
looking for the missing limbs.

We want to make him whole,
in his own perfect image; we want
him far less human than he is;

but since we cannot heal him,
and since he wears our wounds so openly,
by God, we'll have this unright angel down!

Neal Bowers, 1990
Ames, Iowa

In reaction to Stephen DeStaebler's sculpture,
"Left Sided Angel."