

THE AGES OF MAN

2010

A SCULPTURE BY

Rowan Gillespie

The publishers would like to thank
Shirley Dunivant, Martin Hart and Jim Zarley

The Ages of Man –
a new sculpture by Rowan Gillespie

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THE AGES OF MAN

A SCULPTURE BY ROWAN GILLESPIE

To Jim Zarley, the amount of fun you have in life is the measure of your success. He is immensely successful – and it shows. The amiable and down-to-earth CEO of the California-based internet company ValueClick has built an innovative internet marketing empire based on sound, traditional business principles and firm leadership that have eclipsed the meteoric rises and crashes of the many ‘dot com’ companies that shone so brightly, yet all too briefly, in the 1990s.

His lakeside home in the residential enclave of Westlake Village, in the hills above Los Angeles, is a vibrant oasis of tranquility. A grassy slope descends from the sun terrace down to the water’s edge, which is dominated by a huge, mature willow tree standing proud, cheek by jowl alongside a mighty flagpole, near the jetty and mooring to Jim’s boat. His is the prime location on this island in the lake.

When Jim first met the man who was to become ValueClick’s Chairman, Martin Hart, in a Florida hotel in 1999, he was introduced to the Irish sculptor, Rowan Gillespie, who was exhibiting at the Miami Arts Fair at the time. The three men became friends, mixing business with pleasure but always maintaining Jim’s observant and light-hearted touch. It was no surprise then, that, over a period of time, Jim decided to commission a major Rowan Gillespie sculpture to add a creative dimension to the natural beauty of the spectacular landscape setting of his home. There was no formality – and no specific start date to the project. Like their friendship, it evolved over time at a number of social events.



▲ Jim Zarley, Martin Hart and Rowan Gillespie at Powerscourt, near Dublin, in October 2009 and, ▼ below, on Jim’s boat at Westlake, sharing a laugh with Shirley Dunivant.





▲ The unique maquette, 16in tall, was photographed and used in the collage proposal to the client. It was later donated by Rowan and Jim to the Irish art auction in aid of Haiti, held in Dublin. It appeared on the advertising material and raised a substantial amount for the earthquake disaster fund.

Jim had long been an admirer of Rowan's CYCLE OF LIFE, commissioned by Martin – a hugely popular, family-group sculpture depicting the passing of time in human terms, which stands at the heart of a real estate development in Steamboat Springs, Colorado. Both Martin and Jim have immensely strong family links – in Jim's case with his five brothers, two sons and grandchildren. Rowan, who was given carte blanche by Jim, soon realised that a close knit, male-focussed composition would resonate most with him. The seeds of THE AGES OF MAN were sown.

When invited to select a location for the proposed piece, Rowan wasted no time in reserving the very tip of the grass headland at the water's edge – excited at the possibilities of a fabulous, shimmering reflection when approached from the water. It was essential that the figures gaze out over the lake to take full advantage of the stunning location and evoke a sense of calm to enhance the passing of time theme. This would mean that only their backs would be visible from the house, defying Westlake Village convention. A huge leap of faith and imagination was therefore required of Jim to deny his instinctive preference to have the sculpture face the house – but this he acceded to with good grace (and considerable trust in the artist).

The sculptor set about the commission back in his Dublin workshop with customary enthusiasm. Initially, he produced a small maquette, modelled in clay and cast in bronze. A cut-out photograph of this was inserted into a digital collage of the proposed work, seen from the lake. It soon became apparent that the sculpture would have much to compete with. The jetty, tree, flagpole, planted terrace and of course the architecture of Jim's home made for a complex and varied backdrop to the piece – doubly so when reflected in the calm water. Simplicity was of the essence so that the sculpture would not fight with its location. Simplicity yet boldness. Rowan therefore decided to empower it with a stunning gold-coloured patina – a nod to the state's founding fathers' rush to pan for the precious metal in 1849. This would be augmented by floodlights to assert residency after dusk. Fortunately, Jim liked what he saw in the visual and gave the proposal the green light. And so began the painstaking modelling of the larger-than-life-size piece in clay and then wax.

This involves cutting away a hardened wax impression from a lifesize clay model in sections and then coating it inside and out with plaster. It is then encased in cement-like 'grog' plaster and clamps to withstand tremendous heat and pressure. Each piece is heated in the kiln until the wax melts – this is the 5,000 year-old 'lost wax process' for which Rowan Gillespie has become renowned. Molten phosphor bronze is then poured into the gap left by the thin skin of wax to give the thinnest possible skin of bronze – hollow inside. The moulds are smashed open, breather 'sprues' ground off with a power tool and the pieces welded together invisibly: a time consuming and complex process in which Rowan excels. He has always believed firmly that the entire creative process, from contact with his clients (many of whom become friends), through the formulation of ideas, to the cacophony of the foundry and workshop, is a journey that he must take by himself without assistance.

But the process does not end there. He will never

IRISH ART AUCTION IN AID OF HAITI

de Veres Art Auctions,
in association with **Ahern & Co, Boyle**
achieved a sale total of **€125,000**
at the Irish Art Auction in aid of Haiti
on Monday, 26th April.

A big thankyou to all the artists
and collectors who donated
work to this sale and also
to all the bidders and under bidders
who attended the auction.

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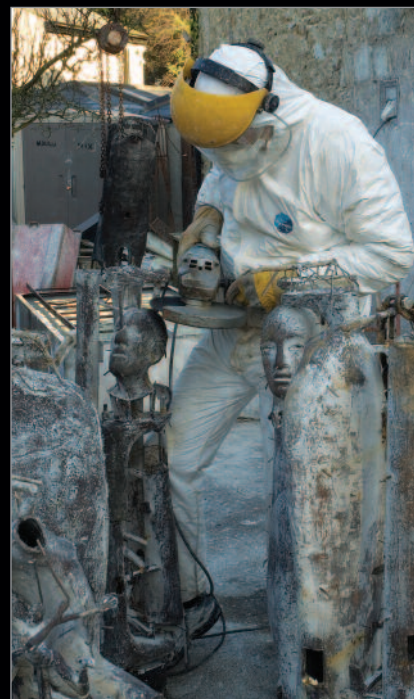
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▼ Having cast the figures in sections, Rowan grinds away the 'sprues' or breather channels, and welds the sections together.

release a commissioned sculpture into the world, nor accept payment, unless the client is completely happy. So he must formulate a careful installation and lighting plan, often liaising with technicians who must prepare the site precisely to his specification – so that when the elements arrive at their destination (hopefully intact), the process will run smoothly. The parts are designed to fit together seamlessly and the lighting has to connect up and switch on at the right times. Importantly, the sculpture must fit effortlessly into its new home... blending, not intruding.

An optimistic Jim Zarley had arranged a launch party on Saturday the 24th of April 2010 to coincide with the ValueClick Annual General Meeting, at which his son Matt, an up-and-coming singer/songwriter, was due to perform his latest composition. Board members and friends were flying in for the occasion. Corporate lawyer Scott Barlow was to fly in for the day from Washington DC during a break in the middle of an important court hearing. The sculpture had to be installed the day before – with no margin for error!

I arrived at Westlake, at the kind invitation of Jim, with Rowan on Thursday the 22nd. Our journey from London to Los Angeles had been threatened by the Icelandic ash cloud, and Rowan had to drive from Dublin and take a ferry to London to be sure of making the trip. Our flight was one of the first to resume – much to the annoyance of those who had been waiting for days to cross the Atlantic. Calmly, we ran the gauntlet through the frustrated, waiting hordes and took our seats... thanking our lucky stars and hoping desperately that the assembly of the sculpture was going to run as smoothly.





► The constituent parts of the sculpture were shipped from Dublin to Liverpool where they crossed England by train. From Hull, another boat took them to Rotterdam where they were loaded on to a trans-Atlantic vessel bound for Boston. They crossed America by railroad, finally arriving at Westlake Village on a truck. Jim and brother Ron had been called away suddenly to attend a funeral, leaving Jim's son Chad to unload over a ton of bronze; unpack it and cut up the wooden crate into manageable pieces. The driver arrived with no lifting device – and without the Herculean exertions of Chad and Joel, Trent and John from the Sherwood Country Club, the task would have been well-nigh impossible!

We were welcomed graciously by Jim's brother Ron at Westlake. Rowan asked anxiously if the figures had arrived safely. Imagine our shock when Ron replied, "Yes, they're both laid out in the driveway". **BOTH?!** My life flashed in front of me. Rowan was horrified... "BUT THERE ARE SUPPOSED TO BE **FOUR!**" After our long journey, combined with the time difference, we were not yet quite prepared for the Zarley brothers' double act of leg pulling! We needed a couple of cooled 'Fat Tire' beers each to calm our nerves. But all the constituent parts of the sculpture had actually arrived safely. Good fortune prevailed as, after a few days of unseasonal rain and cold from the north, Friday dawned with clear skies and typical California sun.



Fortunately, all went smoothly – with Ivan the Chilean builder and his assistant; Alan Hiscocks, ValueClick's Vice President of Facilities and Ron Zarley all lending a hand – with the wonderful Joyce providing cool beers. The bronze figures, while hollow, still weigh up to 600lbs each, so considerable effort was needed to slot them into the prepared, setting concrete. With some fine tuning, the jigsaw fitted perfectly (thanks to a prudent dry run back in the Dublin workshop). Ivan proudly fitted the bronze plaque and finished landscaping the "grassy knoll" on which the sculpture sits. There was a minor hiccup as the power was switched on and a feeble glow emerged from the spotlights. Alan and I were dispatched to the electrical store to buy plug





fittings, a transformer and some energising beef jerky. The problem was solved as current flowed and a golden light shone upwards to bathe the four figures – a beacon highly visible from the bridge to the island.

The sculpture blended in with its new surroundings timelessly as though it had been there throughout the ages. The local wildlife was quick to investigate and, sensing no threat, gave a nod of acceptance. The major test was yet to come, however, and tension built as we waited for Jim to return from his meeting to take a first look. Fortunately, a wide grin appeared almost immediately on his arrival at the water's edge and we knew that the client was happy. THE AGES OF MAN was a success.







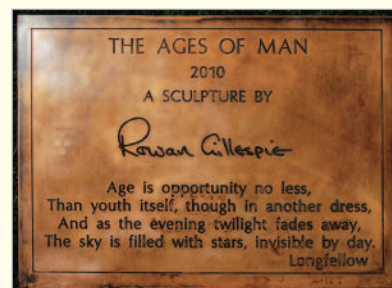








As the launch party began, Ron skippered boat trips to see the piece as it should be viewed – from the lake. Party goers and neighbours alike drew close from the lakeside to scrutinise the new Irish migrants, with the Irish flag fluttering from the flagpole in their honour.



I later asked Jim for an initial response as to what the piece meant to him. He replied "... for the most part I see THE AGES OF MAN as one person who begins his young life looking up to his elders for guidance and support; seeing them through the eyes of need. The second stage is more the adolescent phase where he begins to think for himself; less influenced by his elders. The third stage is the adult phase where he begins to have a sense of responsibility for both the young and the elderly; and the fourth is the elder stage where he is beginning to be looked after as he enters his golden years". Typically, Jim went on to say "The most fun is, it stimulates thought – which leads to interesting conversations about the cycle of life that we all experience".

Or as Rowan puts it: "This sculpture is about fathers, sons and brothers. It is about growing old, the cycle of life, men and how they communicate. As they stand apart, gazing in different directions, they do, I hope, simultaneously convey a silent bond of trust, unity and care."

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“Age is opportunity no less
Than youth itself, though in another dress,
And as the evening twilight fades away
The sky is filled with stars, invisible by day.”

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow



