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Robert Fishko, *Director*

WILLIAM McELCHERAN

(1927-1999)

Canadian

William McElcheran was a talented and prolific Canadian sculptor born in Hamilton, Ontario on September 17, 1927.

Bill's corpulent businessman infiltrate streets, office buildings and public places. They are familiar, accessible and part of our environment. While his work is best known in Canada much of his later activity took place in Europe and the Far East.

On graduation from the Ontario College of Art in 1948, where he won the Lieutenant Governors Medal, he took a job designing and carving wooden church furniture. Later, he worked for the architectural firm of Bruce, Brown and Brisley in Toronto. Bill's interest in architecture, particularly the integration of aesthetics and structure, first found expression during this period. He designed simple churches, places where people can gather and worship and in the celebration of life without the distraction of superfluous glued on ornamentation.

In the mid-1960s, Bill gradually withdrew from liturgical commissions and began to exhibit his secular work. For Sculpture 67, an exhibit of many Canadian artists' works displayed in Nathan Phillips Square, Bill created *The Race*; a pack of 15 chubby running children striving for the lead, their arms and legs entwined, the front runners reach for the finish and some of the stragglers pulling from behind. Bill's interest in group dynamics and the individual's relationship to the group is demonstrated in many of his later pieces. Even when his familiar businessman is standing alone, his uniform of porkpie hat, trench coat and briefcase identify him as part of a group.

Bill's last decade or so produced a number of major commissions in Canada. Japan and Italy. In Toronto, he created two twenty-foot-high marble reliefs at WaterPark Place at the foot of Bay Street, a sculpted terra-cotta wall in the Dundas subway station, a monumental sculpture of Daedalus and Icarus for the head office of the Du Pont Corporation in Mississauga, among many other public pieces of sculpture. His piece entitled *The Family* in Guelph, Ontario has been adopted as a symbol of that city.

Courtesy of the estate of William McElcheran (1927-1999)

williammcelcheran.com/bio