

Sculptor Known for Detailed Work

Susie Chisholm has a special connection to Nathanael Greene. The sculptor the GSSR contracted to create Greene’s likeness is from Savannah, Georgia, where the general is buried. Furthermore, for 125 years her mother-in-law’s family owned Mulberry Grove, the plantation which Georgia gave to Greene following the Revolution. Some two-hundred years afterward, her future husband many times traversed the very same grounds that Greene himself did.



Susie works on Sam Adams.—
All related photos by
Daniel L. Grantham, Jr.

Her existing work includes life-sized bronze likenesses of John Adams and Minuteman John Parker that were commissioned for the new, interactive Boston Tea Party Ships and Museum in Boston Harbor. Chris Belland, vice president of Historic Tours of America, the developer of the museum, complimented Chisholm’s work. “The pieces look brilliant. The detailing and likeness is amazing!”

Her public portfolio also includes a life-size rendering of singer-songwriter Johnny Mercer in Savannah’s Ellis Square and one of Hilton Head developer Charles E. Fraser in (where else?) Hilton Head, South Carolina.

“My passion is representational, figurative portrait sculpture” Susie said. “I enjoy making ‘real’ people and bringing them to life in bronze. I spend a good deal of time before beginning a project getting to know the subject and strive to master all of the details needed to insure accuracy. It is imperative not only to make the sculpture life-like, but also to give it life.”

The Key Ingredient

For Susie, part of the secret to a successful sculpture is learning as much as possible about the character’s time period, the clothing, and how the ma-



The finished Sam Adams in
Boston.

terials would have hung on the person. For that, she normally works from a combination of live actors, photos of the actors, and any existing documentation of the person being created. Depending, it may also involve talking with family and friends or descendants of the subject.

“I believe it is very important to invest in the personality of the person, not just cover his other surface features,” she said.

For the two historical pieces in Boston, she and her brother documented and photographed two re-enactors from every angle. “We measured all of the clothes so that I would know exactly where to put the pockets, how many buttons there were on the jacket, what size they were, and how far apart they were.” Her brother, Danny, took hundreds of photos for her to work from.

The same level of detail has gone into the Nathanael Greene project. The re-enactor who posed for her as Greene was Dave Loda of Bolton, Connecticut. Mr. Loda is a retired Naval Reserve commander and former Army and Navy pilot, with eleven U.S. patents and multiple foreign patents to his name. He has frequently portrayed Greene’s aide de camp, Maj. David Humphreys.

At this point for the GSSR, Susie has created an eighteen-inch maquette of the life-size work to be completed. The maquette is on display at

our headquarters in Williamsburg. To complete the project, the Society is seeking to raise \$100,000. After those funds have been raised, Susie and her brother will travel to Connecticut to photograph and document Mr. Loda for the life-size sculpture.

Her Background

She studied fine arts at the University of Georgia and majored in graphic design. From there, she participated in a study abroad program at the Lamar Dodd School of Art in Cortona, Italy. The program lasted three months, during which time she traveled from Naples to Venice and everywhere in between, studying and experiencing the rich art of sculpture in Italy. “It was a wonderful experience,” she reports.

Although she has earned several awards for her work and now operates the Susie Chisholm School of Sculpture and organizes the annual Savannah Show of Sculpture, she says her biggest accolade was in being elected into the National Sculpture Society. “You must be juried in, and there are only about two hundred members. It is quite the honor in the sculpture world.”

Chris Belland of Historic Tours of America travels frequently to Savannah. Susie’s bronze of Johnny Mercer caught his attention. And the rest is, well... a matter of history. ■—Editor

The maquette of the GSSR memorial to Nathanael Greene.—For more about Susie, visit susiechisholm.com



The finished Johnny Mercer in
Savannah.

