



Leon R. Strauss

Artist:	Jesse Vonk, German
Title:	Leon R. Strauss, 1999
Media:	Bronze, granite pedestal
Owner:	Grand Center, Inc. (donated by Fox Associates)

St.L PACK

Teaching Suggestions

Leon R. Strauss

LOOKING AT ART:

- As you walk around this sculpted bust, what are your impressions of the man depicted? What role does the facial expression play as compared to the use of materials and techniques in conveying the personality? Is this life-size?
- Why do you think a wife might commission a piece of art in memory of her late husband? How do the statements accompanying this sculpture help you understand some of the motivations? What other reasons can you think of for commissioning a piece of public art?

SOCIAL STUDIES:

- Leon Strauss was referred to as an “urban pioneer” and praised as a “preservationist.” Look up these words. Then, thinking about the community in which you live, make two lists—one reflecting what might be preserved for future generations, and another reflecting a forward-thinking or pioneer spirit.
- The plaque mentions various sites in the Grand Center area. Locate each place on a city map, and then find photos from the beginning and middle of the 20th century as well as today. Make an illustrated timeline. Visit each location.

LANGUAGE ARTS:

- Choose a person who has had a positive impact on your life or on the community in which you live. Write an epitaph that expresses how you think he or she should be remembered.
- Review your initial reactions to the piece, the pedestal, etc., as well as your knowledge of Leon Strauss and his involvement in the city. Write a poem from the standpoint of a grateful city. Write in first-person. Read it aloud to your classmates.

SCIENCE, MATH, AND TECHNOLOGY:

- Describe the challenges an artist would have creating a life-like sculpture of a person using only several photographs as reference. Include what knowledge and understanding would need to have mastered in order to create this piece.
- Very large sculptures such as the Statue of Liberty were made by incrementally increasing the original model of the idea. Research and compare earlier methods of developing to-scale replicas with the technology available today.

PERFORMING ARTS:

- Musical compositions frequently re-create musically an urban or a natural setting—for example Leonard Bernstein’s “West Side Story” or Aaron Copeland’s “Appalachian Spring.” Listen to recordings of several of these pieces and discuss the qualities of each. Describe how you think the area around the Fox Theater should sound.
- Use the process of restoring the Fox Theater—what led to the need, the process itself, the outcome, etc., as the basis for building a rap. Keep in mind the structure of beginning, middle and end.

VISUAL ARTS:

- Sculptors who create realistic portrait busts must develop a very keen sense of touch – a way of “seeing” with their fingers. Find several small, very different three-dimensional objects. Put each one in a paper bag. Have students feel each form and then describe it. Then try to draw the object based on the experience. Use the activity to discuss issues related to those who are blind or visually challenged.
- Based on the accomplishments of Leon Strauss, create an abstract sculpture to express and memorialize him. To start, visualize words such as renewal, decay, change, transformation, etc.
- Make a clay self-portrait. Since it’s difficult to see the sides and back of one’s own head, pair up with a classmate so that each can ask the other about hard-to-see areas.