

VIEWPOINTS

Michelangelo – much more than a mere mortal

My first trip to Italy changed my life permanently.

Right off the jet, I visited with a family in Milan that taught me that Italians do not ask, "What do you do?" In fact they hardly talk about their work. Instead they talk about ideas. They enjoy life with all its sensual pleasures – but in moderation. There is a store where one goes to buy a cordial, or an espresso, or a piece of candy, or a cookie, or a piece of pizza, or a sparkling water, or a gelato. Not all of the aforementioned at once, but instead, they enjoy one small portion at a time. One may stop back several times a day for another treat and to pause, perhaps at a table.

I learned for the first time to stop, sit down and relax.

I learned that "prego" isn't a spaghetti sauce, but a word used for most anything polite, such as "excuse me" or "your welcome" or "what would you like."

I learned that Italy is a land of artists. Everywhere I turned, there was art including the signage on the highway – these were paintings depicting the next town. There was public folk art, such as mosaic niches along the sidewalks.

There was scaffolding everywhere too; this was in regards to preservation of their buildings, their fountains and their views.

I discovered it is a land of engineers. As the country is made up of mountain ranges surrounded by the sea, which require many bridges and lengthy tunnels – and ramps, way up in the sky. These are startling in their construction.

I fell in love with the work of Michelangelo. Formerly, I had heard Michelangelo Buonarroti painted the Sistine Chapel, and I remembered as a kid seeing his "Pietà" behind glass at the 1964



Ellen Leahy
Wondering about

World's Fair. The theme of that fair was "Peace Through Understanding." The Vatican actually had a spot alongside America's innovative corporate giants, such as General Electric.

I didn't know Michelangelo's first love was sculpture. I just didn't realize how prolific he was, creating a statue so divine as "The David," and again, work so prophetic, as his "Prisoners." I didn't know he sculpted several "Pietàs" (Mother and Child, or more precisely, the Virgin Mary holding the body of Jesus, after his crucifixion).

I didn't know he was the architect behind St. Peter's in Rome. I didn't know that he didn't paint the Sistine Chapel until he was more than 70-years-old.

I was surprised at how I marveled at St. Peter's, returning again and again to take in more of its giant, yet amazingly proportional structure.

The Renaissance, I learned, was where art and math really melded. It was a collision of the right and left brain. It was an expression of human creativity in the visual world, much like the rock and roll renaissance that occurred in music in my youth when electronic technology entered the equation.

Sadly, I have not traveled back to Italy for many years, and now with the poor state of the U.S. economy and our weak dollar, Italy seems further away than

ever. So, when I read in the Daily Orange that Syracuse University was staging a show featuring Michelangelo's sketches I was charmed to my toes.

"Michelangelo: The Man and the Myth" will be at the SU Art Galleries in Syracuse from Aug. 12 to Oct. 19; and then if we miss this, we can also catch it in Manhattan at the Palitz Gallery at SU's Lubin House from Nov. 4 to Jan. 4.

The Orange also mentioned the University will host the works of other artists of the Renaissance, including Leone Leoni, Marcello Venusti and Giorgio Ghisi. Fourteen of Michelangelo's works will be on display, including his poetry.

I'm going to investigate more on the show, and I'll report on it in the upcoming weeks. But for now, I believe here is one more clue that Syracuse is thinking in the right direction

Ellen Leahy is the editor of the City Eagle - her contact information is on page 2.



HERM CARD

One of several Pietàs in Rome, Italy.