

Saint Martin: Sculptural Portrait of a Homeless Man

(Please respect his privacy. Please don't touch!)



Saint Martin is constructed of: electrical cabling, pipe fittings, duct tape, wood, chicken wire, metal wire, padding, hair wig, and belongings.

When in London in the fall of 1988, my husband Jeff insisted that I re-enter the St. Martin-in-the-Fields church to see something I had overlooked during the concert. In a side pew of the famous church a homeless man was sitting perfectly still, his hat covering his face, his outstretched arms propped up by a few bundles of possessions. The only clues that this was a man and not a sculpture were his long grey beard and the ruddy hands which dangled, motionless, at the ends of his sleeves.

After months of thinking about the visual impact of this man, whose only privacy was the hat covering his face, I wanted to create a public work that could make people stop, look, think, feel and maybe even do something about the tragedies of homelessness. I decided to make a sculptural portrait to be placed within a New Haven community parish.

During the early 1990s Saint Martin was installed in numerous churches, synagogues and public spaces around Connecticut. Wherever he was placed, the sculpture engendered discussion within the community about homelessness and art activism. A flyer with a description of the work was affixed to a donation box. Printed on the reverse of the flyer was a poem written by my brother, Arthur Steuer, in response to this sculpture. The donation box raised more than \$1000 for the New Haven Community Soup Kitchen.

Martin is now retired at a private residence where large community events continue to bring in small donations. Thank you for taking the time to think about a problem that all of us wish would go away, but won't unless we all work together..

*Most Sincerely,
Sharon Steuer*