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Landscapes of Beethoven's signature "From the heart, may it go to the heart"

Virginia L. Martin

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LANDSCAPES OF BEETHOVEN’S SIGNATURE

“From the heart, may it go to the heart”

by

Virginia L. Martin

June, 2007
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What was desired was that through this man
the way in which God works should be made manifest.

-- John 9:3

The century is
Not ripe for my ideal. And I live
A citizen of ages yet to come.

-- Friedrich Schiller

The man who solaced the whole world with the voice of his music,
heard no other human voice, not even that of one who wished to thank him.

-- F. J. Rochlitz
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I. INTRODUCTION

*Landscapes of Beethoven’s Signature*, an exhibit consisting of twenty-two works of art in a variety of media, is a tribute to the revolutionary composer Ludwig van Beethoven, who brought to music a radical and astounding transformation which can never be equaled.

This monumental German pianist and composer was born in Bonn, in the Rhineland, on 16 December 1770, to a Flemish father and German mother. His grandfather and his father were musicians employed as Court Singers to the Elector in Bonn. Beethoven exhibited musical talents at an early age and received his first musical instruction from his coarse, tyrannical and drunken father. Christian Gottlob Neefe, the German composer, organist and conductor, became Beethoven’s teacher in 1780 or 1781, and remained his only significant instructor until Beethoven left Bonn. Neefe recognized the young boy’s genius, and played a pivotal role in his early musical endeavors, including lessons in composition and organ playing. He arranged to have Beethoven’s first compositions published in 1783. Thanks to Neefe, the twelve-year-old Beethoven was hired as assistant church organist and cembalist, which required sight-reading of scores and directing the orchestra from the keyboard. In addition, he played the viola in the court orchestra. Around this time, young Beethoven assumed the musical duties of his derelict father, thus assuring financial support for his mother and three siblings.

Early efforts in composition proved the boy had considerable talent, but his reputation was as an unparalleled keyboard performer. In 1792, Beethoven traveled to Vienna where he enjoyed fame as an astonishing virtuoso improviser at the piano. At his first public concert in Vienna in 1795, he played his own Piano Concerto in B-flat.
deafness began to overtake him in his late twenties, his performing career came to an abrupt and tragic halt. In a state of despair, he contemplated ending his life. Providentially, he instead channeled his creative efforts into composition. In spite of chronic ill health, Beethoven continued to compose until his death in 1827. Aside from summertime sojourns to the country and visits to various health spas, Beethoven spent the rest of his life in Vienna.

Music was Beethoven’s nature. His personality and psychology are inseparable from his musical inventiveness and productivity. The Romantics asserted that Genius participated in Nature, which is creative and productive. Artistic creation is natural to a genius. Beethoven’s natural creative ability, indistinguishable from his character, certified him as a Romantic genius.

The most brilliantly gifted composer the world has known was an extremely complex human being. A man of great moral character, integrity and dignity, Beethoven was intolerant of those who did not live up to his expectations and high standards. He had intensely strong convictions about religion, ethics, society and politics. He could be difficult to deal with, especially among those who did not understand him, and he was often impatient and frustrated. He was also terribly lonely, for his deafness--surely the most devastating calamity which could befall a composer--forced him to withdraw from society. A man who dearly loved life--“Wouldn’t it be wonderful to live a thousand years!”--he thought of ending his own when he realized he was going deaf.

Beethoven was at heart gentle, kind and humorous, willing to share ideas and talk to his admirers; he loved people and was always in love. Although ill health plagued him continuously--he suffered from headaches, stomach disorders and eye problems--he never
gave up his intrinsic zeal for living or his impassioned drive to compose, fervently continuing to work on his music until his death. It is unfathomable that he wrote his greatest music during his last decade, when he was entirely bereft of the precious gift of hearing. What apparently impelled him to continue was his strong faith: he sincerely believed in a Supreme Being, and throughout his life he maintained that there is in an inherent goodness in man, that ultimately men would be united as brothers. It is extremely difficult to convey what an astounding impact this man has had, not only on the world of music, but on humanity in general. The Norton/Grove Concise Encyclopedia of Music has this to say: “Unlike composers of the preceding generation, he had never been a purveyor of music to the nobility: he had lived into the age--indeed helped create it--of the artist as hero and the property of mankind at large.”

(69)

It is most assuredly due to the uniqueness--and, it must be noted, the apparent contrariness--of this man that the life and character of his true self have been inflated, distorted and changed to such a great degree over the years by artists, writers and by his acquaintances. A myth in his own lifetime, Beethoven expected and became rather used to admiration, although he found the attention disquieting. His fame was so great that his funeral was a national occasion: over 20,000 people (10% of the population of Vienna) followed his coffin.

Since his death, the tendency has been to depict Beethoven as a superhuman, larger-than-life figure. Fischer and Kock, in their Ludwig van Beethoven: A study in text and pictures, write: “After Beethoven’s death the myth grew to such grotesque proportions that the real person was overshadowed by posterity.” (5) The monumental
body of personal testimony which Beethoven left—including his sketchbooks, manuscripts, conversation notebooks and letters—shows clearly (Fischer and Kock agree) “his contradictory nature, his losing battle with everyday life, his stubborn perseverance with creative work and the spiritual and emotional intensity with which he struggled to achieve it.” They point out that “the contradictions to be found in Beethoven’s own testimony must be accepted as an essential part of his character.” (5)

A separate book could be devoted to illustrating the results of 180 years of Beethoven myth-making. A large obstacle to sorting the facts from the fabrications is the action taken by the self-proclaimed Beethoven historian, Anton Schindler, who appropriated many of the composer’s effects immediately after his death. Schindler left so much inaccurate information and changed so much Beethoven documentation that to endeavor to unravel it all has been a nightmare for historians ever since. One horrific example: out of some 427 Beethoven conversation books, Schindler burned about 300. Schindler’s purpose, presumably, was to eradicate any unflattering or negative reflection on the character of his beloved Beethoven. It is thanks to Alexander Wheelock Thayer’s efforts during the mid-nineteenth century that we have a biographical work which is highly regarded as accurate and well-researched: Elliot Forbes’ two-volume Thayer’s Life of Beethoven.

What did Beethoven actually do for music? The Oxford Dictionary of Music states: “Beethoven’s significance in the history and development of music is immense. He emancipated and democratized the art, composing out of spiritual inner necessity rather than as a provider of virtuoso display material.” (61) To put it briefly, he revolutionized the use of sonata-form through structure and key relationships; because of
him the symphony became the treasury for a composer’s ideas; he expanded the coda and transformed the minuet into the impassioned scherzo; he used motto-themes as a consonant orthodox device. Beethoven also greatly increased the technical and expressive degree of the string quartet and the piano sonata.

William Kinderman, in his *Beethoven*, says: “If the fascination Beethoven exerted in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was tied to his heroic, revolutionary image, the last half-century has increasingly demonstrated the universal scope of his legacy.” (1) Kinderman acknowledges Beethoven’s deep ties to the Enlightenment, which provided artistic traits that go beyond his life and times. Beethoven had an entirely free and unsettled perception of art; his approach to his craft was new and flexible, which has transcended the decades, reflecting “a modern and essentially cosmopolitan aesthetic attitude.” (*Ibid*, 1)

II. AIM: INITIAL PREPARATION & PROCESS

It has been my longstanding desire to make a body of art inspired by music, particularly that of Beethoven. I have always had an intense interest in and love for the man and his music. I felt compelled to bring to fulfillment a creative effort as tribute, or testimonial, to him.

First Steps: Beethoven’s Creative Life and Troubles

It was imperative, as a first step, that I understood what compelled Beethoven to compose and to continue creating his art while battling extreme adversities. Research for my project, therefore, included consulting some forty sources, and taking copious notes.
Covering diverse facets of the composer’s life, these books included information about his family, friends, enemies, religious convictions, views on politics, the three main creative periods of his adult life, descriptions of his physical appearance, conflicting personality traits, and much more. Texts which were of particular assistance and interest include: Maynard Solomon’s *Beethoven* and *Beethoven Essays*; *Beethoven’s Letters*, translated by J.S. Shedlock; *Thayer’s Life of Beethoven*, Forbes; and *Beethoven: Impressions By His Contemporaries*, by O.G. Sonneck. Contemporary accounts, such as those in the Sonneck volume, were, by virtue of their intimacy, especially compelling. It was necessary to keep in mind the fact that certain contemporary sources are notoriously unreliable, including Antonie Brentano and the aforementioned Anton Schindler, both of whom grossly fabricated and embellished their anecdotes. Naturally, Beethoven’s own words were of utmost import in this endeavor, so his letters and journals are invaluable reference material.

After considerable effort, I acquired an 1845 English-language version of Christian Christopher Sturm’s 1780s treatise, *Reflections on The Works of God and His Providence Throughout All Nature*. One of Beethoven’s most treasured volumes was a well-read and heavily pencil-marked 1811 edition of this work, which contains 365 divine and sublime meditation-like entries that have a strong foundation in natural history. Sturm was a Protestant minister and philosopher whose doctrines held immense significance for Beethoven’s incontrovertible love of God and Nature.

Nature

There is no question that Beethoven’s chief creative stimulus was Nature. He was
exultant when walking in the woods and fields of his beloved Heiligenstadt, a small village on the outskirts of Vienna. Time and again he wrote about trees, streams and valleys—"Every tree speaks!" and "I love a tree more than a man." (Curtis, *The Life and Times of Beethoven*, pp. 45 & 67) In natural landscapes he would see patterns, would furiously record ideas in his notebooks and later transcribe them into music. In letters, journals, on manuscripts and in personal accounts by friends can be found evidence of Beethoven's intense love of Nature, which was the only place where he was truly happy.

Shared Feelings: Source of Inspiration

The affinity I have for Beethoven and his music is neither contrived nor coincidental. From my earliest memory I have loved and have had a vital connection to Nature, a connection that is inseparable from who and what I am. I have always held Nature in deepest reverential respect. For me it is the beginning and the end of Being, and my sensitivity to all of Nature is extremely heightened. In Nature I am most happy; my choice would be to exist only there. Thus my thesis, *Landscapes of Beethoven's Signature*, has many facets: landscapes loved, composed, written about, painted, sculpted, lived in—and, if one is fortunate, shared.

Commencing Work

Work on my Beethoven thesis exhibit began with the portrait sculpture, which alone took six months to prepare for the show. Listening to music was an integral and essential part of the working process for all of the pieces. (But then, of course, I listen to music always.) To a great degree it was from both books and music that I developed
ideas and titles for the artworks. They all relate to the composer’s personality, traits and doctrines, his writings, manuscripts, and handwriting (calligraphy), his illnesses, his loves, and more. One idea led to another, as I set out to create the twenty-two pieces that would make up my thesis.

III. **LANDSCAPES OF BEETHOVEN’S SIGNATURE: A DESCRIPTIVE CATALOGUE**

*Landscapes of Beethoven’s Signature* comprises a body of visual works showing the hand of Beethoven the Creative Artist.Literal landscapes, which also incorporate Beethoven’s calligraphy, have been interpreted in the two larger oil paintings, “In Moonlight” and “Look Through These Trees.” Figurative depiction of “landscape” and “signature” is represented in a variety of ways within the sculptures, prints, books and calligraphy. For several of the pieces, visual material was derived from Beethoven’s actual handwriting and musical notation. In other works, the ideas were created from broader concepts of line, form and composition.

I employed a variety of media, including oil paintings, sculptures, prints, books and calligraphy. For the sculptures, I utilized plaster, molds, wood, found objects, copper, lead, wire, and iron, among other materials; most of these came from my beloved late father’s vast accumulation of curiosities. Each conversation book was made by hand. I stained the paper with inks and tea; I hand-stitched the pages and aged them further by tearing, folding and rubbing their surfaces; then I bound each one with old book covers or fabricated bindings to make them appear old. The print processes which I employed include collograph, Mezzotype, copper plate and ImagOn, Chine Collé, computer
polyester plates, woodcut and spit-bite. All but four of the frames utilized are antique; most had to be restored. Frames were carefully chosen for each particular artwork, or the work was designed to fit a specific frame.

The numbers following the titles refer to the corresponding photos included with this thesis essay.

“This Tower of Strength” -- (1)

Portrait Bust of Beethoven, life-size. Plaster, wood, gauze, nails and glue; includes an accompanying conversation book displayed on an antique shelf on the wall beside the sculpture.

While on a trip to Europe in 1998, I purchased a plaster reproduction (of rather poor quality) of the original 1812 Beethoven life-mask made by the artist Franz Klein when the composer was 42 years old. Klein produced from this mask a bronze sculpture, commissioned by the piano manufacturer, Streicher. The original Klein mask is the only true likeness of Beethoven (photography was not invented until just after his death).

In order to create a sculpture in plaster and wood for my thesis, I began by utilizing the basic outlines and size of the plaster life-mask copy. Over the copy I applied a latex mold; and from the latex mold I took a clay casting. Nearly all distinguishing features of the original mask had been lost in the duplicate, which was smooth and somewhat distorted. What helped me considerably were the mask’s size and basic dimensions. From the latex mold I made a clay casting which was used as a basis to create the final visage for my sculpture. Because the original was cast directly from the composer’s face, the size and shape of this reference piece were most helpful to me.
While referring to a photograph of the original plaster cast (now held in the Beethoven Haus, Bonn, Germany), and reading a doctor’s meticulous description, measurement, and interpretation of this cast, I sculpted the face details in clay. The most difficult part of the process was fashioning the eyes, which had been covered during the making of the original, so there was no accurate reference from which to work.

Descriptions of Beethoven by some of his contemporaries provided clues to assist me in forming the eyes. Pencil sketches and some paintings of the master were also helpful in regard to the eyes and other details.

Over the clay mask I fashioned a five-part plaster mold, then cast in plaster the face which was subsequently used in the sculpture, “Exceedingly Malignant.” Not entirely satisfied with these first results, I reworked the clay and built over it a ten-part plaster mold from which was cast the plaster face used in the sculpture, “This Tower of Strength.” The results from the ten-part mold were much more accurate and finely detailed.

To the back of this casting, I affixed a 1”-thick, 12”-long wooden dowel using metal mesh screen, gauze and plaster; then this dowel was fitted into a several-inch-thick layered wooden base. The positioning of the head was carefully done—I wanted him looking up to the sky at an angle, to his right. In my opinion, nearly all portrait busts of Beethoven are unsatisfactory—they are formal, stiff, unnatural, bigger than life, overly Romantic. (Klein’s bronze could have been much better. The artist seemed to remove qualities from the composer’s visage which most closely represent him. Reproductions of Klein’s and several other artists’ works are included in attached materials.) Both positive and negative opinions by Beethoven, and by a number of his contemporaries,
concerning his portraits were of considerable help to me. Paintings and drawings of the composer were also helpful for the rendering of his clothing.

The hair was applied by dripping the waves on in plaster, small sections at a time. Gauze was affixed underneath the hair as work progressed to provide strength and a working surface. Making the hair out of dripping plaster produced the most satisfying result. It was a very long process, accomplished over many hours and days. Areas which I deemed unsuccessful were removed and reworked. From descriptions by his contemporaries, we know that Beethoven’s hair was fine, long and unruly and I endeavored to portray it as such. The shoulders, chest and clothing were formed by scooping plaster onto the piece, 1/2 cup to 1 cup at a time. The clothing was achieved by two textural approaches--by working the plaster with wooden tools while the plaster was wet (as in the shirt and scarf), and with chisel and hammer, shaping the plaster (coat and lapels) once it had dried.

It was important to me to preserve the surface textures of the image. Beethoven’s face was scarred by an undetermined ailment which left many pits in his skin. Clay was the perfect medium for reproducing the effects I desired. I was so satisfied with the result, that I still have the clay piece carefully preserved.

The finished piece was sealed, then coated with Chemtek Dark Bronze Metallic Finish and Spanish Copper Rub n’ Buff. It rests on a 3”-thick piece of oak and displayed on a pedestal tall enough that the final work stands at the composer’s height of 5’ 4.”

“This Tower of Strength”--both the idea and the work--is the focal point of my entire project. It was my intention to create a portrait of Beethoven as he most likely was, not as he is so often unrealistically represented. The sculpture’s accompanying
conversation book was displayed open to the pages on which was written: “The man who solaced the whole world with the voice of his music, heard no other human voice, not even that of one who wished to thank him.” (Friedrich Johann Rochlitz, 1822)

“Exceedingly Malignant--Lead Poisoning” -- (2)

Plaster, copper, wood, lead, iron, wire, found objects, new plaques, nails and glue; accompanying conversation book displayed on an antique shelf on the wall beside the sculpture.

The composer was seriously ill for 31 years, from 1795 until his death at age 56 in 1827, the causes of which have long been the topic of speculation. A scientific analysis of a lock of Beethoven’s hair, performed in 1995, proved that Beethoven had suffered from lead poisoning for at least the last few years of his life, and probably much longer. Current technology cannot diagnose what afflicted the composer from age 25, but his symptoms are consistent with those of lead poisoning.

This sculpture illustrates how immediate and devastating the lead contamination was to this incomparable genius. I wish to demonstrate that through his tremendous inner strength and determination he continued to compose superior music, even surpassing his own previous remarkable achievements, until the end of his life. Nearly all materials used came from my late father’s accumulation of things, including the mahogany candle shelf from an antique pump organ, four iron fence spikes, copper, copper wire, an old, hand-carved table leg, an imperfectly cut block of wood, and very old plaster and wood ceiling molding. From my grandfather’s fishing equipment I acquired lead sinkers. The plaster mask was created as indicated above, in the description of “This Tower of
Strength.” The sinkers hung from copper wire underneath the shelf represent the constant downward exertion on Beethoven’s health and strength. The accompanying conversation book is open to the final words in a passage by Joseph August Röckel (1806): “Whatever was able to strike down this tower of strength so early must have been exceedingly malignant.”

“Ear Trumpets & Spectacles”-- (3)

Copper, wood, old pedestal table, found objects, new plaque and handmade notebook displayed on wall-shelf next to the sculpture.

This sculpture represents the primitive devices employed by Beethoven in his vain attempt to hear and see. There is considerable documentation concerning the useless eyeglasses and hearing aid contraptions which Beethoven desperately and futilely hoped would help him. This piece represents how ridiculous some of the devices could be. Although his infirmities were devastating to the composer, he had overall a delightful sense of humor; he thoroughly enjoyed making jokes and loved to laugh. Most of the found objects for this piece were again from my father’s collection. I assembled them to create ludicrous, mock hearing devices. Among these items are a funnel, plumbing fixtures, a boot polishing brush, metal decorative hunting horns, wire, odd copper pieces, and vintage spectacles. The substructure is a very old pedestal table base that was missing the top which I replaced with a new one.

“Conversation Books” -- (4)

Old paper stained with tea and coffee, gauze, old book covers, string, pencil, pen and ink, leather, ribbon and an old oak plaque.
In order to communicate with Beethoven in his later years, one had to write down in his blank books what one wished to convey. He always carried at least one of these conversation books with him, in addition to his music notebooks. At the time of his death, there existed over 400 of these revealing volumes. Anton Schindler (Beethoven’s acquaintance and self-appointed historian) destroyed all but about 127 of them—supposedly in an attempt to obliterate any negative references to Beethoven’s character. Through this deed, Schindler forever eradicated valuable documentation of Beethoven’s daily life and interaction with his acquaintances. In an uncannily similar occurrence, after the death of Beethoven’s contemporary, the brilliant English Romantic painter, Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775-1851), his executor, art critic and artist John Ruskin, destroyed most of Turner’s nude drawings, which Ruskin regarded as lewd and erotic. John Walker says, in his book Turner: “The destruction of the greater part of Turner’s figure drawings is a crime for which Ruskin deserves unqualified condemnation.” (10) This equally applies to Schindler. In each case, the self-proclaimed keeper of the artist’s integrity did irreparable damage by destroying valuable vestiges of these geniuses that would have contributed significantly to further study and understanding of each artist. Schindler also so extensively altered the remaining conversation books that it is nearly impossible to determine what in them is original.

The conversation books in my thesis include many and varied notes and writings. Recorded are selected descriptions and impressions of Beethoven by those who knew him; notes selected from his personal letters and notebooks; passages recorded by other writers whom he particularly favored (including Goethe and Shakespeare); and, a few contributions from myself, mostly by other writers who have impressed me in relation to
this effort (including a Sonnet by Shakespeare.) The conversation books are an ongoing project, for I will continue to write in each book until they are all filled, and I will also continue to make new books as I acquire old book covers for binding and uncover additional lines to inscribe in them. They are written in either pencil or with quill pen to maintain the historical element.

Included in the writings is the “Heiligenstadt Testament,” which Beethoven wrote in 1802 to his brothers Karl and Johann, although he does not write out Johann’s name. (For an undisclosed reason he left a blank space where it would have appeared. He was most likely angry with Johann at the time.) The “Testament” is an outpouring of Beethoven’s grief and horror as he realized he was going deaf, and an articulation of his subsequent self-imposed alienation from the world as a result.

“In Moonlight” (*Beim Licht des Mondes*) -- (5)  Oil on panel in antique frame, 16 x 20”.

The basic design for this landscape is derived from a painting by Albert Pinkham Ryder (1847-1917), “Siegfried and the Rhine Maidens.” The title is taken from “The Beautiful Shoemaker’s Wife” (*Die schöne Schusterin*), Ignaz Umlauf’s poem set to music by Beethoven. My approach to the subject and technique are inspired by the works of Caspar David Friedrich (1774-1840), the German Romantic painter who was a contemporary of Beethoven.

The Romantic scene and its mood convey the introspective, imaginative and emotional spirit of the times. Incorporated into the trees, sky, water and ground are enlarged reproductions of marks made by Beethoven from two different manuscripts. In the top left area of the prominent tree are several double-forte (*ff*--very loud) indications
that blend from the branches of the foreground into the sky and clouds of the background. In the bottom left foreground, the middle right and center top of the work are scribble lines with which Beethoven crossed out areas of his composition he wished to change. This was a very common practice of the composer, who worked and reworked his musical ideas over periods of many, many years. His publishers had an extremely difficult time interpreting his submitted manuscripts, and Beethoven was frustrated at their supposed ineptitude in deciphering his compositions. I have found these scribbles, marks, notes and calligraphy exceptionally beautiful.

The works in my show are just a prelude to a continuing project to utilize these pen and ink notations in paintings, drawings, prints and sculpture. Beethoven once said, "I always have a picture in my mind when composing and follow its lines.” (Kalischer, *Beethoven’s Letters*, p. 279) I endeavored to interpret this idea in reverse, from music to the visual arts, through Romantic landscapes in particular. It will also be an ongoing project, a synthesis of old and new, music and art. It is a conceptual beginning.

“Look Through These Trees” (*Blick, o Herr, durch diese Bäume*) -- (6)

Oil on canvas in antique frame, 22 x 43”.

This title is a line from a poem Beethoven set to music called “Vesta’s Fire.” Originally twice its present size, this landscape painting was cut down to create a more interesting composition. The scene is taken from a watercolor by N. Bittner, “*In der Hinterbrühl,*” a depiction of a place in Austria where the composer vacationed in the summer. I chose to change the pathways and a park setting to a stream and a wooded scene. The trees in the watercolor reference piece reminded me of notations in
Beethoven’s scores. I incorporated some swirling lines to echo Beethoven’s crossing-out of unwanted notes. The clouds are brought from the sky into the foreground and are rendered in intense flame colors. These colors represent those I see when I hear certain compositions by the composer (including the Incidental Music “Ruins of Athens” and the “Appassionata” Piano Sonata). Like the painting “In Moonlight,” it is a Romantic landscape with assimilated abstract marks.

“From the heart--may it go to the heart” -- (7)

Plaster casts in hardwood antique camera plate frames, 14 1/2 x 14 1/2”; set of four.

The four vignettes of this work were derived from Beethoven’s Missa Solemnis manuscript. The original page is especially beautiful because it was entirely drawn and written by the composer--including the five-line staffs. Most of the time the composer utilized lined staff paper. It appears that he quickly laid down these necessary marks in order to record his ideas of the moment. The resulting characters provide exceptional material for this project.

The non-uniform lines and hieroglyphic-like notations are stunning in their abstract beauty. Black and burnt sienna colors were carefully selected because they evoke for me much of Beethoven’s music, including the string quartets, and what I see when I hear them. The movement of the lines tends to lead the eye from one section to the next, and next, and back around--like a small landscape of hills, valleys and shapes.

Inscribed by Beethoven on the score of Missa Solemnis, the title for this work, “From the heart, may it go to the heart,” is introspective, moody and personal.
This group was one of the first works created for this thesis. The process used to make these pieces is as follows: I first fabricated square cardboard trays that matched the inside size of each of the four frames. Into each tray I pressed red clay, about 1 and 1/2” thick. Each of the four music notations was then carved into the clay squares. After removing the cardboard from all pieces, I made plaster molds of each one. The clay was removed from the molds; each mold was coated with a release agent, then plaster was poured in for each mold. They were removed from the molds when dry. The finished pieces were painted with black tempera paint and patina-ed with rust-colored Rub n’ Buff. Lastly, I put the four plaster sculptures into the wooden frames.

“Missa Solemnis” -- (8)

Print: copper plate, oiled photocopy, wire, rice paper, antique frame; 13 3/8 x 14 3/8”.

This is the manuscript page from Missa Solemnis referred to above, in “From the heart--may it go to the heart.” From an old book, I photocopied the manuscript page. This paper was then soaked in canola oil and exposed onto a copper plate with two layers of ImagOn, which resulted in a more textured surface when the prints were made. I was so taken by the original image that I sculpted a copper wire duplication to affix over the print. The rice paper matting is designed to echo the frame, which in turn echoes the crossed marks in the manuscript.

“The Last Signature” -- (9)

Print: engraved wood, copper, rice paper, antique frame; 11 x 16”.
Another example of the beauty of Beethoven’s calligraphy, this print is a key piece in the collection because it is his actual signature. This word is used in the thesis title, referring not only to his hand-written name, but also to his music, his face, his words, his ways and his life. Thus his signature is on everything, however obvious or subtle it may appear. This particular inscription is from 25 March 1827, one day before his death. I etched the name into a thin wood panel, which was originally the backing piece from an 1880s picture frame. The texture of the wood is very deep and rough, full of landscape lines. The signature was transferred to the wood from a photocopy enlargement and then engraved into the wood with a Dremel tool. Sepia and black printing inks were mixed and rolled onto the wood surface, then transferred to watercolor paper by carefully hand-rubbing with a transfer tool on the back of the paper. The black antique frame and rice paper backgrounds were chosen for their somber, funereal look. Behind the print, copper grounding wire is arranged like a music staff and measure line.

“Con fuoco,” “Dolore,” “Sostenuto,” “Sotto Voce” -- (10, 11, 12, 13)

Oil on canvas, 8 x 10”, 9 x 12”, 12 x 12”, 7 x 11”.

This series of small paintings was executed early on in the project. Actually, the marks used in “Dolore” inspired my entire thesis idea. At the moment I first saw this enlargement of a measure on the cover of a book, I realized how remarkably sublime are his hand-written lines and how vast the material is from which I could work. Although I had not intended to include these in the exhibit, it was recommended that I do so. I am glad that I did. They add an entirely different dimension of color, line, mood, form, size and sensitivity.
Each of these small oils was produced in a different color scheme.
The four titles are musical terms, instructions to musicians for interpretation, carefully selected to reflect the mood in line and color of each study. Their meanings are as follows: “Con fuoco”—with fire; with a combination of force and speed (colors—yellow, orange, red; lines—frenetic, furiously rendered). “Dolore”—sorrow; painfully (colors—blue and red; lines—intense, deliberate). “Sostenuto”—sustained; slower, with smooth flow (colors—light and dark blues; lines—large, simple). “Sotto Voce”—in an undertone; barely audible, below the voice (colors—light blue to dark greens; lines—sparse, very simple). “Sostenuto” is also derived from the Missa Solemnis score—the same notation was used in “From the heart--may it go to the heart.”

It is my intention to eventually work these pieces on a larger scale, with more attention to the integrity of the lines, and more thought given to color choice.

“Waves of the Sea” -- (14)

Print: Mezzotype; matted, antique frame; 16 x 20”.

The calligraphic segment used for this print, as well as in the small oil painting “Con fuoco,” is from the original score of the Overture to Lenore #3. The dripping ink from the marks Beethoven scrawled over his unwanted notes provides lovely abstract scenery for this medium. The lines are at once graceful and intense, like the music of the score from which it comes. The process employed to make this print is as follows. Screen filler is painted on a copper plate prepared with ImagOn ULTRA (photo-sensitive polymer film laminated onto the copper plate, developed in soda-ash solution). When the screen filler is partially dry, the excess may be washed off with water. The remaining
heavy lines and dark areas of the screen filler will print light or white. Brown ink for the
print was chosen to impart age and a solemn mood. It’s presented with a simple mat in a
modest antique frame in order to keep the viewer’s attention focused on the print. The
title, “Waves of the Sea,” was chosen from another poem Beethoven set to music,
because the work imparted this image to my mind and was related to the music written
for the poem.

“Im Stiller Tal” (In This Quiet Valley) -- (15)

Oil on Canvas, antique frame; 8x 10”.

The notation for this piece is also used in “Dolore.” This time, I wanted to make
it more like an actual landscape--trees, fence, path, sky, moonlight. The deep shadow-
box frame draws the viewer back into the scene, as do the fence or line of trees in the
background. The title of this work is taken from The Beautiful Shoemaker’s Wife.

“Ruins of Athens” (Die Ruinen von Athen) -- (16)

Spit-Bite Print and Chine Collé, Antique frame; 10 3/4 x 14 7/8”.

For this process, ImagOn is affixed to a copper plate and exposed to Aqua tint,
but not developed. Soda ash dissolved in water is used as a developing medium. Three
solutions of different strengths are used to create the image. I painted the soda ash
mixtures onto the prepared plate, washing the plate in water once the desired effect was
achieved. Subsequent layers may be applied and washed off.

The image came from the score of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony. The title was
chosen for the purpose of calling attention to one of his lesser known and exceptional
works of incidental music composed for theatrical presentations. Chine Collé (French term--gluing Chinese paper to prints, usually pressed on during the print run) is a process I like very much because the added dimension and color enhance the final product. The paper colors were chosen carefully, especially the rust, a color I see when hearing “Ruins of Athens.” When I framed this print, I utilized rice paper as a mat for the purpose of unifying it with the art, and I lifted the edge of the Chine Collé from the print to overlap the mat. The image is a simple view of lines and curves, a sparse landscape. The old frame was chosen for its simplicity and lines.

“La Tempesta” (The Tempest) -- (17)

   Print: Copper Plate and ImagOn; 12 x 16”.

   The image is computer-scanned from a book reproduction of a manuscript page and printed on a polyester plate. First exposed onto to an ImagOn-coated copper plate, it was then exposed to Aqua tint and developed. “La Tempesta” is printed on watercolor paper which was soaked overnight in burnt sienna-colored ink. The directness of the image is striking because it is an actual reproduction of his hand-writing from the Lenore Overture #3. Although the scenery is somewhat flat, the stained paper, mat and integrity of the lines make it an intriguing piece.

“Credo” (I Believe) -- (18)

   Collograph, 16 x 20”, matted, antique frame.

   The vista in this print is also directly derived from Beethoven’s calligraphy. Although I neglected to reverse the image when I worked it, the backward result of the
scene was still acceptable because the lines are interesting in their movement, shape, direction, valleys and hills. This particular printing process intrigues me because of the resulting surface texture. It is achieved by painting directly onto a copper plate with a mixture of Carborundum (silicon carbide) and screen filler. The thicker the applied surface, the whiter the print area will be. The stark black and white treatment impels one to focus on the image. “Credo” refers to the third section of the *Missa Solemnis* (it is part of all masses), in which is declared, “I believe in God the Father Almighty....” Beethoven held to his belief in one Supreme Being, and had an undying conviction that one day all men would be “brothers.”

“Accolade” -- (19)

Prints: Copper plate, ImagOn, Chine Collé, rice paper and antique frame; 20 x 27”.

For these two scenes, the same process was employed as in “La Tempesta.” The bottom print has a ghost image from a ‘failed’ plate overlaid by the successful plate, then enhanced with Chine Collé. They are displayed together in one frame, one above the other, laid out like a music score. The dual meaning of the title “Accolade” (an act of honoring, and a musical term for the brace that joins several staves on a manuscript score) replicates the double significance of the word “signature” in my thesis title.

“*Muss es sein? Es muss sein.*” (Must it be? It must be.) -- (20)

Spit-Bite Print, antique frame, antique tin-type mat/frame; 8 x 10”.

Beethoven wrote these words on the manuscript of the last movement of the
String Quartet in F Major, Opus 135. Their meaning has not been conclusively established, but much could be interpreted from them. I have included the line in one of the conversation books as well. This cryptic image is the only piece in the collection which was not created specifically for the thesis. It was a class experiment in the printing process, but I strongly felt that the resulting piece should be included in the thesis. Recently I made a pilgrimage to Beethoven’s original grave site in the Währinger Cemetery in Heiligenstadt, near Vienna, Austria. The feeling I experienced at this site echoes the brooding and morose atmosphere generated by this print.

“This attractive, gentle man” -- (21)

Oil on panel, antique frame; 8 x 10”.

This is an image that has always been part of my life; I was compelled to reproduce it. The original is a miniature on ivory, about 3 x 4”. By referring to contemporary accounts describing the young Beethoven, I learned more about his appearance, and from this information I added to the portrait. In November of 1791, Beethoven performed on the piano for a group which included a man named Kaplan Carl Ludwig Junker. His insightful recollection of this moment is recorded in a paragraph that provides one of the earliest impressions we have of the young composer. Junker declared that Beethoven’s playing was “more expressive, more meaningful” than the playing of other noted pianists of the day, and that he “appeals more to the heart.” The passage begins, “I believe this attractive, gentle man shows real virtuosity.” Beethoven was making his mark in the music world as a brilliant pianist and improviser before deafness forced his early withdrawal from the concert stage.
These were made as described earlier, and are displayed on small antique shelves throughout the exhibit, on simple copper stands. Each volume is open to a carefully chosen passage. These passages include: “Muss es sein? Es muss sein.” (Must it be? It must be.); “Wie stehst du jetzt gewaltig da!” (See how you stand there now!); “Und so, so sind wir vereint.” (And so, so we are united.); “He is more for the heart;” “I love a tree more than a man.” One book was open to show his signature. Although each line was specifically selected to accompany the work with which it was displayed, any writing in the books would certainly be appropriate to accompany all of the art works.

IV. THE CREATIVE LIFE

For this essay, I spent a considerable part of the five years since my thesis show researching the philosophy of creating. Through this inquiry, I began to understand on a more profound level Beethoven’s astounding genius, and I discovered some of the probable sources of his inextinguishable determination to compose his music. Consequently, I have gained an introspective awareness of my own comparatively humble creative endeavors and their derivation.

Creativity

The scholarly and pioneering contributions to the study of creativity by Rollo May, *The Courage to Create* and *Man’s Search for Himself*, are of inestimable value in
endeavoring to understand the spirit and disposition of the creative individual, as well as the process of creating itself. His findings are especially pertinent to this inquiry into the personality, soul, and creative genius of Ludwig van Beethoven, of whom May said: “Beethoven knocked on silence for an answering music. He pursued meaninglessness until he forced it to mean.” *(The Courage to Create, 95)*

May asserts that creativity is “a passion of the adult human being, which is a passion to live beyond one’s death.” *(The Courage to Create, 7)* He says that one must have courage to create, by which he means “the capacity to move ahead in spite of despair.” *(3)* To be genuine, this courage necessitates a centeredness within one’s own spirit. The artist must pledge commitment to his or her art, which May avows will be “healthiest when it is not without doubt, but in spite of doubt.” *(12)* Furthermore, he insists that the artist must be able to communicate the experience through his art, so that the one participating in that art--the viewer or listener--receives a profound sense of the idea, without the need for verbal articulation. The true artist who brings something into being, which has never been done before, is the creator, the one who produces a new entity. Truly creative people are those who expand the consciousness of mankind, who are able to express being itself. Through this creativity, the creative soul fulfills his or her own existence in this world. The creative process represents the highest degree of emotional health of people in the act of making themselves genuine. *(33)*

In his book, *Creativity, Flow and the Psychology of Discovery and Invention*, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi says: “To be creative, a person has to internalize the entire system that makes creativity possible. Creative individuals are remarkable for their ability to adapt to almost any situation and to make do with whatever is at hand to reach
their goals. ... This distinguishes them from the rest of us.” (51) In order to clarify the broad usage of the word “creativity,” the author cites a number of definitions. The third of these is relevant to this study, for it identifies as “creative” those people who have significantly transformed our culture in positive ways. Frequently, he tells us, the term “creative” is used as a synonym for “genius,” but that term should be reserved exclusively for a person who is at the same time both brilliant and creative. (26) Geniuses are the individuals who make an invaluable contribution to humanity.

Csikszentmihalyi points out that the creative act, in order to prove its newness and value, must be weighed against various standards as well as pass critical and aesthetic evaluation by society. Therefore, creativity happens through the interaction between an individual’s concepts and cultural society, not simply within someone’s mind. (23) In other words, a painting or sculpture must be seen, or music must be heard, and compared with works of art already known, in order to establish their worth and impact in our culture.

Describing the artist during the creative process, May says he or she will experience intense inner turmoil. He states also that authentic creativity incites an active conflict with “jealous gods,” and that there is an unnerving closeness between genius and psychosis. In addition, a disturbing feeling of guilt frequently accompanies creativity; and at the apex of creative achievement many artists commit, or are tempted to commit, suicide. (Beethoven declared that “Art ... art alone!” prevented him from taking his own life.) While making their art, the creators suffer emotionally and physically. Because they possess sharpened sensitivity to their inner beings, and their reactions to external influences are intensely heightened, artists’ supposed aberrant behavior is rarely
understood by the outside world. But, as May asserts, these gifts and traits are essential to creative people in order that they may produce their art. Creative people are characterized by the reality that, in order to receive the gift of ‘divine madness’ (a term used by the classical Greeks), they are willing to suffer anxiety, insecurity, sensitivity and defenselessness. (May, 29ff.)

What Rollo May calls the “creative process” involves talent and creativity. A person is born with talent; it is not an acquired skill. According to the *New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, “Talent is beyond craft, beyond reason, even beyond the rules of art: it is the transcendent operator....” (455) Creativity is the encounter with the idea for the creation; it is what transpires between the artist and the artist’s idea. It is possible to have one without the other, but when an individual has both talent and creativity, great art is attainable. May calls the experiential efforts of creating great art the “intensity of the encounter.” By this he means that the artist is completely involved and absorbed in the act of creation. While making his or her art, the artist experiences an awareness that is fiercely acute and a consciousness that is extreme. The artist undergoes physiological changes, which include higher blood pressure, a faster heartbeat and sharper vision; and the artist is oblivious both to the passage of time and to his or her surroundings. (37)

Transcending all other artists is the creative soul who is a true “genius” (Latin, meaning “spirit”). The idea, or definition, of “genius” as we know it today developed around the neo-classical and pre-romantic eras (c.1700s). By 1775, the term “genius” is clearly linked with creativity, inventiveness, and a prolific imagination. In the *New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* we find that “Genius surpasses talent just
as the sublime exceeds the beautiful.” (The concept of the “Sublime” is discussed further on in this essay.) Genius shifts from the “top of the class of mortal intellects to those above the mortal class altogether.” As James Russell Lowell observed, “... talent is that which is in a man’s power; genius is that in whose power a man is.” (New Princeton Encyclopedia, 455) According to Paul Mies (Beethoven’s Sketches), composer Robert Schumann believed that genius must be aided by a will of iron, which Beethoven certainly had. Jacques Barzun captures Beethoven’s essence thus: “For the Romanticists, and since, the name (Genius) stands for productive power.... The genius is an uncommon type of human being and the outward sign that he deserves the title is the scope of his imagination, matched by means adequate to its concrete and lasting expression.” (From Dawn to Decadence, 470)

Crucial to the developmental process of creation is inspiration (Latin, meaning “breathing into”), defined in Webster’s College Dictionary: “S.Theol. a divine influence directly and immediately exerted upon the mind or soul.” (697) In the New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poets and Poetics, the concept of inspiration is dealt with at length. Included in the discourse are the following ideas. During artistic creation, the artist acknowledges that elements—which include ideas, images, forms, shapes, etc.—materialize “from sources which lie beyond the pale of consciousness.” Such material can manifest itself through deliberate endeavor and ability, “but at least some material seems to come into the mind from that place which we know only as other.” (609) In many cultures, it is believed (and I concur wholeheartedly) that the source of this daimon is divine, or God-given. This was Beethoven’s credo.

In relation to the creative process being the expression of a passion for form, Plato
asserted: “For he who would proceed aright in this manner should begin in youth to visit beautiful forms; and first, if he be guided by his instructor aright, to love one such form only--out of that he should create fair thoughts; and soon he will of himself perceive that the beauty of one form is akin to the beauty of another, and that beauty in every form is one and the same.” (quoted by May, The Courage to Create, 146) Beethoven was an admirer of Plato’s thought. This assertion about form and beauty are central to the composer’s mastery of the sonata-form, as referred to earlier (from the Beethoven entry in Oxford Dictionary of Music). Max Raphael, quoted in Maynard Solomon’s Beethoven, says: “The work of art holds man’s creative power in a crystalline suspension from which it can again be transformed into living energies.” (316) And: “The work of art closest to perfection is both most profoundly determined by its time and goes furthest beyond it into timelessness.” (326)

Beethoven is the ideal embodiment of the most sensitive of creative souls, the artistic genius. Beethoven ardently believed in a Supreme Being and Elysium—Paradise. This faith fired the creative fervor which sustained him throughout his life and which provided hope for life beyond the one he lived on earth. There has most assuredly never been an artist more centered within his own spirit, more divinely inspired, more committed to his art, nor one who better communicated his unique experience through his revolutionary music, than Beethoven. Friedrich Schiller used these words of Immanuel Kant to capture Beethoven’s life philosophy: “Determine yourself from within.” (quoted in Ungar, Friedrich Schiller, 20)
Romanticism and The Sublime

"If you wish to understand the psychological and spiritual temper of any historical period," wrote Rollo May, "you can do no better than to look long and searchingly at its art. ... Artists have the power to reveal the underlying meaning of any period precisely because the essence of art is the powerful and alive encounter between the artist and his or her world." (The Courage to Create, 46)

The second half of the eighteenth century was a time of heightened political and cultural transition all over Europe. It was during these tempestuous years that the spirit of revolution arose throughout the continent and a separation occurred within all the arts, more extreme and profound than any heretofore. A rivalry developed between the Classical and the new Romantic schools. In the Classical style, artists aspiring to the perfect, balanced and beautiful antiquities of Greek and Roman art and thought derived subjects from ancient history and poetry which idealized acts of self-sacrifice and patriotism. Classical form adhered to critical guidelines and established methods which emphasized orthodox simplicity, symmetry and restrained emotion.

The new movement, to be called Romanticism, appealed on the other hand to true and authentic emotions, especially to the fears and excitement agitated by the unrest of the revolutionary times. Romantic art was ardent, passionate and fervent; it captured the fiery emotions of the epoch. (See Clark, The Romantic Rebellion.) In the visual arts, the emotional essence was enhanced by strong lights and darks, intense use of color, and the exaggeration of action rendered startlingly natural, in a style which was in stark contrast to the tranquility and sculptural forms of Classicism. Romantic art, according to Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, "subordinates form to content, encourages freedom of
treatment, emphasizes imagination, emotion, and introspection, and often celebrates Nature, the ordinary person, and freedom of the spirit.” (1167) At the same time, however, the two impulses were in some ways intermingled, both considering subject matter important and both looking to past history for material. Kenneth Clark writes: “Every great classical artist was a romantic at heart and vice versa; the distinction between them is more convenient than real.” (The Romantic Rebellion, xiii)

To Enlightenment writers, painters, and composers, the idea of sublimity was synonymous with invincible forces that produced overpowering sensations. “The Sublime” represented principally a subject matter, such as the savage and uninhabited natural world, or the natural power that diminished the solitary human being. It depicted the supreme, ultimate degree; it impressed the mind with a sense of power or grandeur; it inspired veneration, awe and reverence. The result was to at once make a person aware of his own relative weakness in the face of natural forces and to generate a feeling of the might of one’s own abilities.

Beethoven’s music embodies the qualities of the sublime: it is “eminent, transcendent, grand, noble, exalted, lofty, stately, majestic, empyrean” (synonyms for “sublime” in The Cambridge Thesaurus of American English, 446). John Baillie, in his Essay on the Sublime (1747), declared: “Vast objects occasion vast Sensations, and vast Sensations give the Mind a higher Idea of her own Powers.” (Cited in New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry & Poetics, 1231) The German Romantic poet, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe “conceived of Nature as an entity independent and alive and ever productive in accordance with its own laws in all the depths and all the heights. ...” (quoted in Ungar, Friedrich Schiller, 59-60) As the authors of The Beethoven Quartet Companion
tell us, Goethe maintained that nature and art were distinctly united by means of a fundamental correlation to human feelings and sentiment. Goethe wrote: “In the act of listening, an internal dialogue was generated; patterns of memory and remembrance were triggered—‘the awakening of reminiscences’.” (Winter and Martin, 80) And E.T.A. Hoffman is quoted there as saying, “Beethoven’s music sets in motion the machinery of awe, of fear, of terror, of pain, and awakens that infinite yearning which is the essence of Romanticism.” (68)

Poet, dramatist, and historian Friedrich Schiller (1759-1805) amplified these notions as they applied to Beethoven, when he declared: “nothing can satisfy whilst a superior thing can be conceived, because the ideal that had existed in Paradise and will exist once again hereafter can never exist in the present moment.” (quoted in Winter & Martin, Companion, 77) Beethoven’s sights were set, without exception, on a beautiful and perfect Elysium, where all things will be in accord and—his ultimate dream—where all men will be brothers. The years between 1780 and 1790, says Solomon (Beethoven Essays, 205) “saw the culmination in German-speaking lands of the Enlightenment ideal of a benevolent social order devoted to spiritual freedom and secular reform.” Schiller wrote his “An die Freude” (“Ode to Joy”) in 1785. This work (in Solomon’s view) achieved immediate recognition through its semi-religious representation of a state in which all conflicts were dissolved in love, brotherhood, and reconciliation. (Ibid., 205) Schiller was a proponent of the doctrine of the philosophy of happiness, or Glückseligkeitsphilosophie, drawn from English Enlightenment philosophers, including Locke and Shaftesbury, “which saw joy and love as the motive forces and goal of creation, overseen by a loving father who seeks to bring his creatures to perfection and
enjoins them to promote the welfare of their fellow man.” (Ibid.)

It is probable that Beethoven was acquainted with Schiller’s writing as early as 1782. He participated in the Lesegesellschaft (Josephinian reading society); played viola for theatre presentations, and patronized the widow Koch’s Lehrgarten (literary tavern), where he would have been introduced to the works of current writers and philosophers. Beethoven likely attended performances of the writer’s dramas, The Robbers and Fiesko, which were presented by a traveling theatre group in Bonn in 1782-1783. Schiller’s devotee and friend, Bartholomäus Ludwig Fischenich, wrote in a letter from Bonn to Schiller’s wife about a promising young composer who was interested in setting “Freude” to music, “I expect something perfect, for as far as I know him he is wholly devoted to the great and the sublime.” (Ibid., 206) As early as 1793, Beethoven was jotting down ideas for setting “An die Freude” to music, which culminated in his monumental Ninth Symphony nearly thirty years later.

It is not known if Beethoven read Schiller’s major aesthetic writings on politics and art, which include Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man, but Schiller’s Elysian aesthetics clearly inform many of Beethoven’s compositions. Schiller strove to heal the “wounds” that had been dealt to an innocent humanity by civilization. His ideal was to restore balance and peace between man and Nature. This would be achieved through man’s uninhibited creation of art, using “effigy of [the] ideal,” or memories of a lost paradise, as the ultimate goal. Schiller, in his Letters (no.9), wrote: “All nations that have a history have a paradise, an age of innocence, a golden age. Nay, more than this, every man has his paradise, his golden age, which he remembers with more or less enthusiasm, according as he is more or less poetical.” (quoted by Solomon, Beethoven
Schiller believed that the artist should look not back but forward to a future Elysium, where joy and harmony would transcend the despair and anguish of a distanced present and the glorification of memory. “A state such as this is not merely met with before the dawn of civilization; it is also the state to which civilization aspires. ... The idea of a similar state, and the belief of the possible reality of this state is the only thing that can reconcile man with all the evils to which he is exposed in the path of civilization.” Thus, it is “of infinite importance for the man engaged in the path of civilization to see confirmed in a sensuous manner the belief that this idea can be accomplished in the world of sense, that this state of innocence can be realized in it.” (from Schiller’s Naive and Sentimental Poetry, “The Idyll;” quoted by Solomon, Beethoven Essays, 214)

Beethoven was a man of strong beliefs and convictions, and also a man of contradictions. He accepted as his own the prevailing, progressive ideology of the day, and maintained throughout his life a strong adherence to the ideals of “political liberty, personal excellence, and ethical notions of the Enlightenment—virtue, reason, freedom, progress, universal brotherhood.” (Solomon, Beethoven, 40) Within him were conflicting forces which called into question his convictions. Solomon points out that Beethoven’s character is not unlike the portrait given by Anna Freud of the creative adolescent who undergoes “the height of elation or depth of despair, the quickly rising enthusiasms, the utter hopelessness, the burning ... intellectual and philosophical preoccupations, the yearning for freedom, the suspense of loneliness, the feeling of oppression by the parents, the impotent rages or active hates directed against the adult world, the erotic crushes ... the suicidal fantasies.” (Ibid., 40ff)
Beethoven’s Spiritual Journey

Beethoven’s religious and philosophic beliefs are also extremely complex. He had an unwavering devotion to God—a Supreme Being—but he did not attend church, nor did he adopt as his own any structured religious form. He was born into a Catholic family, but apparently his only direct involvement with the Roman Church was limited to playing the organ for masses and services when he was still a child in Bonn. Although Beethoven did not leave clear documentation concerning his religious doctrine, it is evident from his letters and notebooks that he was in accord with Schiller, who wrote: “Religion itself, the idea of a Divine Power, lies under the veil of all religions; and it must be permitted to the poet to represent it in the form which appears the most appropriate to his subject.” (quoted by May, The Courage to Create, 213)

From 1812 to 1818 Beethoven kept a journal, or Tagebuch, which is of particular interest. Included in this volume are religious and philosophical references which represent clearly his own beliefs and thoughts. Beethoven embraced Immanuel Kant’s doctrine of the existence of God as consonant with natural law. In Solomon’s Beethoven Essays we read: “When in the state of the world order and beauty shine forth, there is a God. ... Since this order has been able to flow from universal laws of Nature, the whole of Nature is inevitably an effect of the highest wisdom.” (227) In a letter to his patron, Archduke Rudolph, Beethoven wrote: “God ... sees into my innermost heart and knows that as a man I perform most conscientiously and on all occasions the duties which humanity, God and Nature enjoin upon me.” “‘Humanity, God and Nature’,,” says Solomon: “here is Beethoven’s spiritual trinity, which remains as the foundation of an
ever-ascending superstructure of faith and of expectation.” (227)

It was with the writings of Christian Christopher Sturm that Beethoven perhaps found appeasement within his ideology. Sturm was a Presbyterian cleric who attempted through his writings to develop a harmony among religion, the Enlightenment and science. The composer owned an 1811 copy of Sturm’s 1770s treatise, *Reflections on the Works of God and His Providence Throughout All Nature*, in which Beethoven marked heavily those passages reflective of his own beliefs and thought. In his Tagebuch, he freely expressed his deep desire for solace and his profound need for a Supreme Entity. It was during his forties that Beethoven embarked on a complicated quest for religious meaning, which included Eastern and Egyptian practices, Christian theology and Classical mythology.

The composer recorded in his journal impassioned outpourings: “All things flowed clear and pure out of God. If afterwards I became darkened through passion for evil, I returned, after manifold repentance and purification, to the elevated and pure source, to the Godhead—and to your art.” And: “God, God, my refuge, my rock, O my all, you see my innermost heart...O hear, ever ineffable one, hear me, your unhappy, most unhappy of all mortals.” (Solomon, *Beethoven Essays*, 223) He copied passages from Sturm into the daybook. An example: “Nature is a glorious school for the heart! Well, I will be her pupil and bring an eager heart to her instruction. Here I shall learn wisdom, the only wisdom that is free from disillusionment: here I shall learn to know God and enjoy a foretaste of heaven in that knowledge. Among such occupations my earthly days will flow peacefully by, until I am taken up into that world where I shall be no longer a student, but a knower of wisdom.” At the close of 1818, Beethoven recorded his last
entry in the *Tagebuch*, also taken from Sturm: “Therefore, calmly will I submit myself to all inconsistency and will place all my confidence in your eternal goodness, O God! My soul shall rejoice in Thee, immutable Being. Be my rock, my light, forever my trust!” (Solomon, *Beethoven Essays*, 223)

Eastern religions, to which Beethoven was drawn, teach that one must withdraw from the outer world as a means of achieving wisdom and, for Beethoven, artistic fruition. It was the composer’s conviction, most especially in his last decade, that one must suffer in order to realize creative fulfillment. In an 1816 letter to his friend Marie Erdödy he wrote: “Man cannot avoid suffering; and in this respect his strength must stand the test, that is to say, he must endure without complaining and feel his worthlessness and then again achieve his perfection, that perfection which the Almighty will then bestow upon him.” (Solomon, 225) And three years later, in 1819, Beethoven wrote to his patron, Archduke Rudolph: “There is hardly any good thing which can be achieved—without a sacrifice; and it is precisely the nobler and better man who seems to be destined for this more than other human beings no doubt in order that his virtue may be put to the test.” (*Ibid.*)

* * *

“I saw him stop often, pencil stub in hand, as if listening intently, and then write something in a notebook. His hair was steel colored. When he spoke, particularly with people he liked, he assumed a benevolent and mild expression. Every internal mood was instantly reflected on his countenance.” (August von Klöber, from Pugnetti, *The Life and Times of Beethoven*, 48)

* * *

Inspiration for Beethoven’s music came from Nature and his reverence for God. During the summer months, he would move to the countryside outside Vienna where he
would do much of his composing. "... His notebooks show how closely he related the experiences of solitude, serenity, and union with Nature to the awareness of a transcendental, personal God. ... ‘Almighty One in the woods! I am blissfully happy in the woods; every tree speaks through Thee, O God! what splendour! in such woodlands as these! on the heights is peace to serve Him,’ and ‘It is as though every tree in the countryside said Holy, holy! Ecstasy in the woods! who can express it all?’” (Cooper, *Beethoven: The Last Decade*, 116ff)

* * *

“In spite of the sturdiness of his body, he is ill. Nature has kept him tied to the world by a few and delicate strings. His musical sense is such that he can do without his hearing. In all my life, never have I met a heart more simple or a more inflexible will.” (Weissbach, from Pugnetti, *The Life and Times of Beethoven*, 56)

* * *

Beethoven most assuredly suffered terribly and sacrificed much. Throughout his adult life he was plagued with illnesses, which included severe stomach disorders, headaches, eye problems and, most dreadful of all, a hearing loss which began during his twenty-seventh year. A sensitive man with great capacity for intense emotion, he desperately longed to be married, but was endlessly disappointed in love. Many times he wrote to friends or in the *Tagebuch* how very lonely he was. During his mid-forties, Beethoven was embroiled in a legal battle with his sister-in-law over custody of his nephew, Karl, during which time he composed virtually nothing. After a long, dreadful and distressing ordeal, Karl was placed under the composer’s guardianship, but the situation proved to be onerous for the boy, his mother and his Uncle Ludwig.

Beethoven’s non-musical education left much to be desired. It is evident that for the most part he was self-taught, doing most of his reading later in life and in his spare
time. Because of his singular musical gifts, his early schooling focused on musical
instruction at the expense of his general education. Beethoven had great difficulty in
expressing himself through the spoken word, as his contemporaries in Vienna attested,
and his letters were marked by poor spelling and grammar. J.W.N. Sullivan remarks that,
although he left a large body of letters and notebooks, he was “exceptionally insensitive
to language as an instrument for the expression of his thoughts and feelings.” The
copious private writing gives little evidence of “a clear, orderly and powerful mind,”
says Sullivan. “In this they present so complete a contrast to his music that one is
tempted to regard Beethoven as a striking example of the ‘unconscious’ genius. And the
stories we have testifying to his ‘hallucinated’ condition when inspired by some musical
idea, seem to bear out this theory.” (Beethoven: His Spiritual Development, 80)

Nevertheless, throughout his writings Beethoven expressed himself from his
innermost heart and soul, perhaps with more passion and ardor than someone with a
better education could do. And his knowledge of ancient and contemporary writers and
philosophers was considerable. A favorite pastime of the composer’s was frequenting
second-hand and antiques shops, where he would acquire curious objects and books
which particularly appealed to him. Among his most valued possessions were his books
and the manuscripts of other composers, especially the complete scores of Handel’s
music, which were a cherished gift from a London publisher. Beethoven showed great
interest in the works of his contemporaries Goethe, Schiller and Kant, and referred
frequently to writings of the ancients Plato, Homer and Plutarch. He never lost his zest
for learning; even on his deathbed, he declared of his books, “I can still learn from
these!”
V. CONCLUSION: Beethoven’s Creative Genius

Beethoven has aptly been described as “the musician who felt, thought, and dreamt in tones.” Sullivan points out that this is why “many musicians have noticed a peculiar and unique musicality about Beethoven,” and he adds: “Beethoven is one of the very few musicians who can really be compared with a great and profound poet.” (Sullivan, Beethoven, 81, 84) In fact, it was a great poet, Goethe, who described Beethoven as “an untamed personality,” referring (as Albert Leitzmann explains) “to the creative impulse, the idealism, the extreme emotional violence, the childlike innocence in worldly matters and the grotesque manners of genius—all coming from a single source.” (quoted in Cooper, Beethoven: The Last Decade, 96) Poets, musicians, critics and historians in great numbers have attempted to assess the profound mixture of spiritual power, intelligence, talent, and temperament that make Beethoven the prodigious genius he is acknowledged to be. What follows is a brief selection of the innumerable estimations of Beethoven’s significance to the world of modern musical art.

* * *

“The aim of true music remains the expression of the essence of things. To penetrate to the very bottom the intimate essence of things, almost to let a light shine forth from the things penetrated—namely, to reveal in their secret meaning so many passions of the human heart and so many of nature’s marvels—this was the aim of our great Beethoven and his work. He remains for us the prototype of all musicians. ... He came to announce and express the new word, destined to interpret the profound meaning of things in this world.” (Richard Wagner, quoted in Pugnetti, The Life and Times of Beethoven, 75)
"Beethoven is a complete artist. If the term is rightly understood, he is one of the completest that ever lived. Beethoven was of all men the last to tolerate the belief that the artist has a temperament which sets him above the standards of ordinary citizenship, or excuses his failure to reach them. Whatever his sins may have been (and on this subject the evidence is doubtful), he was eminently a man who held himself responsible. ... Beethoven's psychology ... is always right. His music is, in fact, a supremely masterly and hopeful criticism of life." (Donald Francis Tovey, Beethoven, 1, 2)

* * *

"Great artists appear who possess a higher degree of consciousness than that enjoyed by the ordinary man. And amongst such artists are some whose growth in awareness, in sensibility, in power of co-ordination, is apparent during their lifetime. In Beethoven such a process is very marked, more marked, probably, than in the case of any other artist" (J.W.N. Sullivan, Beethoven: His Spiritual Development, 149)

* * *

"Beethoven endures and is venerated not only because of what he was, the greatest composer of music in all its forms the world has known, but of what he is: an indomitable example of the human spirit, persevering at his appointed tasks despite the most crushing handicap a man of his craft could suffer. Though his achievements were monumental, his objectives were even greater—to lead man, from insularity to brotherhood." (Irving Kolodin, Saturday Review, 59)
"For Beethoven, creative necessity dominated everything else. It utterly determined his outer life, constantly interfered with it, and rendered it perpetually erratic, as it does for most artists on his level. ... His artistic involvement was so intense that it tended to reduce the rest of his life to a struggle for equilibrium in which the pressure of the work could cause the life almost to wither away." (Lewis Lockwood, Beethoven: The Music and the Life, 18)

* * *

In His Own Words

“Art demands of us that we shall not stand still. The imagination, too, insists upon its privileges.”

“There exists an order for Nature.”

“Only art and science give us intimations and hopes of a higher life.”

“Let us begin with the primary original causes of all things, how something came about, wherefore and why it came about in what particular way and became what it is, why something is what it is, why something cannot be exactly so!!! Here, dear friend, we have reached the ticklish point which my delicacy forbids me to reveal to you at once. All that we can say is: it cannot be.” (letter to Friedrich Treitschke, 1821)

“Muss es sein? Es muss sein!” (from the last String Quartet)
APPENDIX: Beethoven Portraits by Other Artists (A Brief Review with Comparisons)

It is safe to say that Beethoven has been represented by more artists, in more media, than any other composer in history. The myths about him began while he was still alive, and the visual and verbal accounts rarely concurred with his actual physiognomy. One contemporary account sets the tone for future artists' interpretations: Beethoven was “a genius inspired by inner voices in the presence of nature, with leonine hair writhing wildly in symbolic parallel to the seething turbulence of creativity.” Alessandra Comini cites this in her 1987 *The Changing Image of Beethoven: A study in Mythmaking*, where she scrutinizes the conflicting interpretations of the “true” Beethoven found in more than two hundred works of art and writings, both contemporary and future, about the composer. Many artists produced just a single Beethoven portrait, others created a number of images, and a few left monumental bodies of Beethoven artworks. Included among the latter are Johann Peter Lyser (1803-1870), who rendered many pen and ink and pencil sketches; Emile-Antoine Bourdelle (1861-1929), who made red-chalk drawings, oils, and bronze and marble sculptures; and Max Klinger (1857-1920), whose massive effort of the early 1900s, the “Beethoven Monument” for the Max Klinger Beethoven Exhibition of 1902, involved efforts by many of his colleagues in the arts, including Austrian painter Gustav Klimt (1862-1918).

The field of Beethoven art is vast, and creative interpretation is the artist’s prerogative. I, too, am one of many creative souls who have been compelled to translate into art an obsession (although I am loath to call it such) with this titanic genius, this giant among men, Beethoven. But I am not interested in presenting here an in-depth,
A scholarly study of these other works. Rather, it is my intention to disclose my own opinions of a select number of Beethoven portraits by other artists, discussing what I think about the medium used and why the works do or do not appeal to me.

The numbers in the following text refer to photocopies of the artworks by other artists that I have selected for discussion. The copied works are included at the end of this essay.

1. “Bust of Beethoven,” bronzed plaster, c.1812. Franz Klein. It is thanks to the commission from the piano maker and Beethoven’s friend, Johann Andreas Streicher, that Beethoven’s actual image at age forty-one has been preserved. Streicher commissioned the Viennese anatomical sculptor Franz Klein to make a bust of Beethoven, to be included with bust-portraits of other famous musicians which adorned his private concert hall. The composer was reluctant to comply with the artist’s request to make a gypsum mold of his face, fearing he would suffocate during the process. After one failed attempt, the second mold-making session was a great success, creating a priceless legacy for posterity. (1-a) It was this mask and a poor, smoothed-out, but nevertheless welcome cast of it that I used as reference for my Beethoven bust. Comini says: “With the literary and life-mask portraits firmly ensconced in our visual memory, let us now evaluate the major effigies for which Beethoven sat during his lifetime. What will prevail? Realism? Idealism? Caricature? Or Fantasy? The one factor in common is that they are all different. Even during his lifetime the visual Beethoven was a theme with intriguing and independent variations.” (34)

In November 1998 I made a pilgrimage to the Beethovenhaus in Bonn, Germany, where Beethoven was born, and saw among other works the Klein-Streicher plaster bust.
It is of course the most accurate visage because Klein utilized the actual plaster cast. It is my impression that the neck is too long and the shoulders not broad enough—a bit of tidying-up of the master, perhaps. But the Klein bust is quite fine, and thank God for the life-mask.

2. "Beethoven," plaster, c.1820s. (unavailable first name) Dont. This figure was made by the brother of a cellist named Dont, who was a friend or acquaintance of Beethoven. The photograph of this work is the frontispiece for the book Musical Performance in the Times of Mozart and Beethoven: The Lost Tradition in Music, Part II, by Fritz Rothschild. Until I acquired this book in 2005, I had not seen a reproduction of this piece. It had apparently been in a private collection in Vienna and was accidentally, and irretrievably, broken many years before the 1961 publication of the book. According to the subscript, the likeness was considered to be most representative of Beethoven, both in appearance and spirit. As yet, I have been unable to find any reference to the brothers Dont, for whom no first names are given in the Rothschild volume. They are not even mentioned in the Forbes edition of Thayer’s Live of Beethoven, Volumes I and II, which, as earlier mentioned, is widely regarded as the most thorough and reliable account of the composer’s life and times.

This bust is, in my opinion, a stunning portrait of Beethoven. Even in this photographic reproduction, it exudes introspective, contemplative spirit; from it emanates a singular impression of his sensitive nature, which so many other images lack. Dont’s treatment of the torso is far more extensive and detailed than is usually done. I am drawn to it because of its consistency with the accounts of the composer’s build and demeanor, as related by many of his more reliable contemporaries. The book’s black and white
photograph was utilized courtesy of a Dr. Peter C. Goldmark, who was also a dedicatee of the book, but about whom I know nothing. It is my desire to learn more about this Beethoven portrait and the artist who created it.

3. “Beethoven,” 1902, bronze. Emile-Antoine Bourdelle (1861-1929). As a student, I had the good fortune to visit the Bourdelle Beethoven Museum near Paris, France. The entire body of work, if I remember correctly, on display in an inside gallery and an outside courtyard, consisted of bronze portraits of Beethoven, many of them cast as one-piece head and pedestal sculptures. Bourdelle first saw a bust of Beethoven in a bookstore when he was a child and immediately became obsessed with the man and his music. As an adult, he fancied a resemblance between himself and the composer, and at the age of twenty-six he completed his first Beethoven image, “Beethoven with His Head Resting on His Hand.” He continued his efforts throughout his life, leaving more than forty-five drawn and sculpted images, and creating his last Beethoven work, “La Pathétique,” in 1929, the year of his death.

When I first learned of these sculptures as a teenager, I was thrilled to know about an artist who devoted so much of his life to someone who meant so much to me as well. (It is still intriguing for me to learn about an artist’s obsession with his subject, particularly if that subject is Beethoven.) The bronzes, which are the only works of Bourdelle’s that I recall having seen (except for a self-portrait), have the mythical, superhuman quality that has been so frequently imparted by artists as they render a Beethoven image. Bourdelle’s enthusiasm and dedication resulted in an impressive output, although they are much in accord with the myth-making which began in the 1820s and earlier. The real man and his character become artificial—even lost—when given these
exaggerated attributes. Bourdelle at times combined strong religious themes with his Beethoven works, including the use of crosses. I regard the bronzes as an admirable effort; but the artist seems to have been carried away in the myth.

4. Bourdelle’s teacher, Auguste Rodin (1840-1917), also got into the act, with his “Portrait Medallion of Beethoven,” 1871-1877 (probably bronze). Rodin’s relief sculpture was made for the Royal Conservatory of Music in Brussels. When I first saw this image in Comini’s book, I thought it had to be an incorrectly labeled mistake. It looks like a cross between Voltaire and Wagner, with a little Dante thrown in for good measure. Comini has this to say about the piece: “Rodin’s grimacing Beethoven is old and frazzled looking; vitality has passed from the long, limp hair to the cloak that arches about the shoulders of this still realistic if remote image.” (338) “Remote” is barely the word; and the image is hardly realistic. It is a wonder that the conservatory accepted this work. “Well, we have our Rodin, but where’s the Beethoven?”

5. “Beethoven Monument,” 1902, various colored marbles, ivory, precious stones, polished gold, and bronze: Max Klinger. Klinger was a German sculptor, painter, and printmaker. It was his intention to revive monumental painting by sometimes combining classical style with Christian beliefs, but to later audiences, his works appear pretentious and base. The very brief entry on Klinger in the Oxford Companion to Art, states: “His attempt to revive polychrome sculpture in the manner of the Greeks resulted in a theatrical statue of Beethoven modeled on the Zeus of Phidias (Leipzig).” (629) This massive, gaudy work was made for the Max Klinger Beethoven Exhibition of 1902. The artist overshot his mark. As evident in the face detail (figure 5.a), this portrait is of someone smug, self-satisfied and vainglorious. This may have
been Klinger’s intent, but one must ask why.

There are as many different Beethoven visages as there are artists who made them. But the paintings and drawings to which I am most attracted include the following:

6. “Beethoven,” 1803, miniature on ivory: Christian Hornemen. This is certainly unlike other miniatures of the day, in which men have perfectly coiffed hair or were even still wearing wigs. The young Ludwig, with his black hair cut a-la-Titus, looks at the viewer; I see an extremely sensitive man.

7. “Study of Beethoven’s Face,” 1818, pencil drawing: August von Klöber. And 8. “Study of Beethoven’s Face,” 1818, charcoal with chalk, (disappeared, 1945): August von Klöber. Both of these renderings are riveting. The sparing use of pencil in #7 describes the absolute character lines of his visage—the eyes, the hair, the wonderful lines in his face; the approach is so assured, that I immediately believe that this is Beethoven. Apparently the artist used the same sketch to render the image in #8, taking it further, adding more values, and thereby executing a more complete drawing. This is also an extremely sensitive and accurate portrayal of Beethoven’s character and spirit.

9. “Portrait of Beethoven,” 1819, oil: Joseph Karl Stieler. This painting I saw in the Beethovenhaus in Bonn. Although it has hero-like overtones, I like to believe it presents the composer more realistically than many portraits.

10. “Portrait of Beethoven with Lyre,” ca. 1804, oil: Willibrod Josef Mährer. While in Vienna, I saw this portrait, of which I am particularly fond. It depicts the young pianist-composer as a strikingly handsome and intense man, so unlike pictures of other men from that time.
11. “Portrait of Beethoven,” 1823, oil: Ferdinand Georg Waldmüller. This portrait was destroyed, perhaps during World War II. It is not an image as true to life as some, but there is something about the strength of this aging man that draws me into the painting.

Then there are portraits that, in my opinion, fall short—or flat.

12. “Portrait of Beethoven,” 1818-1819, oil: Ferdinand Schimon. I think this is the piece that was painted after Beethoven drank fifty-bean coffee, which is purportedly why his eyes are glazed over. This painting almost satisfies me, but there is something lacking, something too impersonal, about it.

13. “Beethoven: Contemporary,” 1821, plaster: Anton Dietrich. I am not sure what Dietrich was up to here, but this slab of plaster is rather ludicrous. Although he apparently referred to a realistic image to create this piece, Beethoven’s character and true self seems to have been left behind. The hair looks like a wig. Dietrich’s “Beethoven: Classical” (#14) of 1822, also made of plaster, misses the mark as well. One wonders why Dietrich chose to mount these images on oversized monoliths.

15. “Beethoven,” 1814, engraving after a pencil drawing by Louis Letronne: Blasius Höfel. According to Anton Schindler, this portrait was most like Beethoven. But given Schindler’s cloudy reputation, one is inclined to believe it wasn’t. The Letronne original (#16) is also rather unbelievable.

17. “Beethoven,” 1815, oil: Willibrod Joseph Mährler. This is the same artist who painted “Beethoven with a Lyre” around 1804 (#10). This sensitive picture is apparently rendered with great care. I am unsure about the likeness, and would love to know if it is a true one. But looking at the Klöber drawings (#7 & #8) on the pages
beside it, I find that the images are quite different. In my opinion, the painting is not as realistic as the drawings. Beethoven would have been about forty-four years old, just three years after the life mask was made, and comparisons between the two don’t add up very well. Still, one can feel incredible empathy and affection for the man in the painting.

18. “Bust of Beethoven,” 1827, plaster: Johann Nepomuk Schaller. What was on this gentleman’s mind? What a goofy portrait! Not worth talking about.

19. “Beethoven Figure for the Bonn Beethoven Monument,” 1845, artist’s drawing for the bronze statue: Ernst Julius Hähnel. This sketch really fits in with the heroic mythical figure distortion: Beethoven towering at about 6’ 5”, instead of 5’ 5” (exact measurements aside, by this I mean that the proportions are way off: Beethoven was a short man). He is wrapped in heavy folds of curtain-like material. And he has a silly, glowering expression on his face. The subsequent rendering of the bronze monument (#20) shows Beethoven in a more believable light, but still garbed in miles of fabric. I saw this monument in Bonn, from a little distance, since there was considerable road work and construction going on around it at the time.

21. “Beethoven,” 1820, oil on copper: Johann Heinrich Ramberg. It would appear that this is actually a portrait of Ebenezer Scrooge as he readies for bed that fateful night.


THESIS EXHIBIT

Landscapes of Beethoven’s Signature

Bevier Gallery, RIT

March, 2002
Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) was one of the most remarkably gifted geniuses who ever lived. A man of great integrity and dignity, he overcame the devastating effects of deafness and other illnesses to bestow upon mankind his exceptional and magnificent gifts of music. A creator who has never been nor will be equalled, his influence has affected all capable composers since. There is considerable information available about Beethoven, through his notebooks, manuscripts and writings by his contemporaries. Over 400 conversation books (used to communicate with the deaf composer) existed at the time of his death. I have created conversation books to accompany this thesis. They include quotes by the composer and others, as well as reproductions of his signature. A few of Beethoven's notes, which provided inspiration for my work, include the following -- "I always have a picture in my mind when I compose, and follow its lines,"; "No one loves the country more than I,"; "I love a tree more than a man." In a synesthesia from hearing to seeing, as Beethoven translated what he saw into music, I have striven to convey how the beauty, energy and intensity of his music visually relate to nature in my heart. This effort is the beginning of a life-long desire to translate this love of Beethoven's music into art.
From 1795 until his death on March 26, 1827, Beethoven suffered terribly from illness and deafness. Doctors could neither diagnose the problems nor help the composer. In (c.) 1997, a chemical analysis was performed on a lock of Beethoven’s hair. The results showed that he had lead poisoning at least during the last years of his life, and possibly earlier. His symptoms concurred with this finding. By nature a vigorous, strong and powerful man, he fought a continuous battle with a sickness that resulted in his untimely death at 56. (Please note the accompanying book on the shelf behind this sculpture, which reproduces an impression of the composer’s countenance written by a contemporary, Joseph August Rockel, 1806.)
Beethoven experienced the first signs of deafness in his late 20s. As his hearing worsened, he desperately sought help from doctors and inventors of hearing aids. Despite the variety of contraptions made for the composer, nothing proved helpful and he was faced with total deafness in his last years. It is truly astounding that during these final years he produced his greatest work.
Dedicated to the memory of my father

Fred D. Martin

and in honor of my mother

Shirley Martin
PORTRAITS OF BEETHOVEN

By Other Artists
1-a. Franz Klein - plaster life mask, 1812

1. Franz Klein - bronzed plaster, 1812
6. Christian Horneman - miniature on ivory, 1803

9. Joseph Karl Stieler - oil, 1819

10. Willibrod Joseph Mahler - oil, 1804
4. August Rodin - bronze, 1871-1877

15. Blasius Höfel - engraving, 1814

21. Johann Heinrich Ramberg - oil 1820

16. Louis Latronne - pencil drawing, 1814
Kaspar Clemens Zambusch - bronze, 1878
- bronze & granite, 1880

Johann Stefan Decker - chalk, 1824
Johann Friedrich Drake - plaster, 1836

Ernst Julius Hähnel
19. drawing
20. bronze, 1845

Josef Danhauser - oil (detail), 1840
What I have in my heart must come out; that is the reason why I compose.
Joseph Eduard Telltscher
pencil, 26 March 1827

Josef Danhauser ~ oil, 28 March 1827