



THE ARTS PART OF THE SOLUTION

CHAPPELLE LETMAN

Always an Artist

Chappelle Letman was a successful painter and printmaker until 1992, when at age 41 he lost his sight to glaucoma. Rather than give up on his life as a visual artist, Chappelle turned to sculpture. He chiseled limestone, marble and alabaster, and used his fingers to feel what he'd done. He said he trusted his hands to tell him if he'd reached his goal. Above all, he remained true to himself. "I didn't let my disability interfere with my life's calling," he said. "I've always been an artist. My job is to be myself as an artist and I want to inspire others to be themselves and not set limitations."

Today, Chappelle's sculptures are collected nationally. He describes his work, often abstract and organic with graceful loops and openings, as a "spiritual, tactile interpretation" of his environment. Though most sculptors sketch a piece on paper before setting tool to stone, Chappelle draws on memories of color and nature from a lifetime of living and working outdoors. He also finds inspiration in the smells and sounds of everyday life.

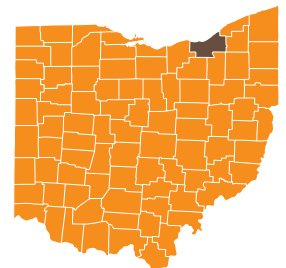


When he's not sculpting in his studio in Cleveland, Chappelle speaks to children, both with and without disabilities, about the value of transcending your limitations—and the importance of creativity and expressing oneself. "If I can do it," he says, "they can too." He believes that no matter what, you still have the ability to bring light and beauty into the world.

Chappelle is on the Ohio Arts Council's Visual Artist Registry, as well as the national VSA Artist Registry—one of only 63 artists who are blind to be listed, and the only one from Ohio. He has exhibited in New York and served as an artist-in-residence at the Studio Museum in Harlem. In 2007, Chappelle won first place in sculpture from the American Printing House in Louisville, KY. A disability may have changed how Chappelle used the arts to express himself, but it certainly didn't change who he is. "I'm determined to continue in making art because it is my purpose in life," he says. "Even though I'm considered disabled, I'm still an artist."

Creativity and Imagination

CUYAHOGA COUNTY
Cleveland, Ohio



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Chappelle Letman, Artist