

Baltimore's Sculptor-Poet Captures the

Spirit of St. Louis

By George A. Rosette

THE mighty, swelling symphony of the Universe resolved itself into an epic theme, and on the crest of this music rode the Spirit of St. Louis—rode right into the heart of the world and into history, with the boy Lindbergh, as pilot.

While myriad worlds glittered their awe, a score of millions of human beings lifted its voice in a paen of praise that surged about the pioneer. Kings and Presidents, aristocracy and commons, men and women and children of high and low degree—all paid homage to the flesh-and-blood partner in the now famous firm of "We."

But it was left to Baltimore's great sculptor-poet to spear the heroism and the symbolism of the deed, and impale it in a masterpiece.

The fragile delicacy of Louis Rosenthal's art was never before so breath-taking in its beauty as it is in his Lindbergh memorial, now rapidly taking form. This work is eliciting the wonder of the privileged few who have been permitted to view its beginning.

If Lindbergh's achievements breathed into timeless space a new melody, then Rosenthal has transfigured it and preserved it, wreathed in poetry, for future generations.

Out of a whirlwind of ardent emotion was born the inspiration for this masterpiece—a production as precious as the metals in which Rosenthal will cast it, when finished six months hence. At that time it will be presented, under proper auspices, to Lindbergh on the anniversary of his epochal flight.

To peer into the soul of Rosenthal is to see a dreamer and mystic—a transcendentalist whose metaphysics take the form of matter; who in his tiny, exquisite figures most gloriously achieves the paradox of magnitude.

We ordinary mortals well remember the thrill that we received with the news that Lindbergh had landed in Paris. To Rosenthal this news came with a force that stirred the very core of his being. His great, roving imagination saw in it a pearl dropped into the lap of a worshipping world. The greatness of the deed and the engaging modesty of Lindbergh filled all his thoughts; it grew upon him until he knew that he must express himself through his art.

Out of the maze of ideas that filled his heart and brain came the completed poem that henceforth must fill his waking hours until cast in imperishable metal. Under the fingers of genius his modeling wax took a form that will rake Lindbergh's memory long endure, and will definitely place Rosenthal among the immortals.

Rosenthal's intellect is a fitting mate for his genius. For him mythology and history—man and the gods; the forces of land, sea and air; the mysteries of life—these do not exist merely as things to be treasured in the memory or stored in the brain as facts. When they become his they are touched with the magic wand of poetry; for him all things have a subtle and lovely significance.

To properly understand and appreciate Rosenthal's art, one must know that he is alone in his field; that there is no other in the entire world capable of producing the perfect tiny figures and groups—many of them but half an inch high—every one carrying an appeal entirely out of proportion to its size. One must remember that by special decree of King George V of England the Royal Society of Miniature Painters was changed to the Royal Society of Miniature Painters and Sculptors, solely to invite and admit Rosenthal to its ranks.

In the Lindbergh memorial an angry wave of the sea gathers the

terrors of the deep and flings them aloft in an impotent hatred, while a little further to the rear the waves have assumed an air of peace, as symbolized by certain beautiful groups: this accents the cooperation of the elements to insure the success of the flight. Neptune, incredulous and amazed, gazes above. In an ecstasy of admiration he offers his crown to Lindbergh. Meanwhile four wild sea-horses draw his chariot.

On the opposite side, perched on a pedestal in the ocean, there is Columbus, enchained—a dramatic contrast between the first crossing and Lindbergh's!

Rising from the spray there is a globe, while above this, thirty inches high, there towers a noble column, round which wreath and entwine figures later described. Above the base of the column there are panels. On the front side, above the panel, there is a symbolic figure of History inscribing an account of the deed. On the opposite side there is a figure bowed in deep grief and mourning for the memory of Nungesser and Coli. What heart could not be anguished at the sight of these marvelously wrought figures? On the third panel are the elements: Water, Fire, Earth and Air; from these rise a foggy mist that give birth to the Dance of the Winds above. The fourth panel faces Lindbergh as he lands in France, and is a bas relief depicting his father, and noting the latter's biography briefly.

Let us look to the left of the group, where is the coast of America. As we look, the Ryan monoplane becomes the American Eagle, whose attitude epitomizes the pride of America. Naught can be seen now of the monoplane except the propeller and the fuselage; while draped over the Eagle's back is the American Flag. And who is this beatific, yet alert and eager infant perched on the eagle's back? It is none other than the child Mercury, reaching for his yet untried wings!

With a fidelity to detail that will be appreciated by the historian, Rosenthal has beautifully sketched a scene showing General Washington greeting the French Admiral De Grasse as he lands on our shores; near by are Generals Rochambeau and Lafayette. One discovers Thomas Jefferson carving the Constitution—three noble pillars of Equality, Justice and Religious Freedom. Beneath these pillars, almost forming the foundation for them, can be seen the American Indian. Then comes the figure of Daniel Webster, the American Demosthenes, who once delivered a magnificent oration on Art; there is also a noble sketch of Lincoln freeing the slave. All are poetic interpretations of the progress of American idealism from Washington to Lindbergh.

Now Lindbergh is in full flight and we can see the monoplane speeding towards the rising sun. The propeller cannot be seen because of the speed with which it whirls, but we can almost hear its hum. Above the monoplane hovers the Spirit of Victory, in whom we may discern Lindbergh's mother. With what a gesture does she brush aside all obstacles from his path! Let us follow the composition to the top of the column. In the finished production this column itself will be minimized; it is to be cast in sand-blasted silver to achieve this end. Above the column, in an exquisite spiral, are the figures depict-

of the French people, Lindbergh and Lindbergh's mother's face will be cast in gold; the balance will be cast in silver and bronze. It will be one of the world's masterpieces of sculpture. In it, Mr. Rosenthal has done a wonderful thing.

He has captured the Spirit of St. Louis!



Louis Rosenthal

ing the Dance of the Winds madly pirouetting above the plane, yet not blocking nor menacing its passage. At the peak of the column one sees the tiny figure of the American Mercury, perched on an eagle's back, reaching with a palm of victory to the very peak of achievement. On close scrutiny, this Achievement is disclosed as Lindbergh himself!

Now to France, where the plane, once more changed by Rosenthal's magic into an eagle, has come to rest. There is something in its bearing that sings of its success in crossing. Here we see the modest figure of Lindbergh, obviously undesirous of all the hero worship, being directed towards him. Surging forward is a throng of Frenchmen, bearing wreaths; their countenance shining with rapturous joy.

Continuing around toward the rear of the composition, we see the intertwined flags of America and France, while beneath their folds there is a wraith—on closer examination this is found to be Jeanne d'Arc astride her charger, representing the Women of France. A thrilling scene is that of Benjamin Franklin embracing Voltaire, with Rosseau, Rodin and Pasteur completing the symbolism. A figure to represent the spirit of Art pays homage to the revolution under which Art flourished.

As a composition Rosenthal's Lindbergh memorial is superb. One views it at first with a feeling of peace and satisfaction; to the eye and to the artistic sense it brings a rare delight. To those who will see in each tiny figure a wonderfully alive portrait it will bring a sense of amazement. Completed, this memorial will have upwards of eighty tiny figures. Those