Missiles of Peace:

Benny Bufano's Message to the World

By E. Breck Parkman

In 1958, during the height of the cold war, San Francisco's quixotic sculptor and modernist, Beniamino "Benny" Bufano, visited the Soviet Union as part of a delegation of artists.[1] He carried with him a four-foot-tall model of a statue that he envisioned creating and dedicating to world peace.[2] Upon his arrival in Moscow, Bufano's hosts asked him what he would like to do while there. He replied that he would like to talk to Soviet Premier Nikolai Bulganin. A week later, to the surprise of the other members of Bufano's party, Bulganin telephoned Bufano. During their conversation, Bufano requested Bulganin's permission to construct a 400-foot-tall version of the peace statue in the Soviet Union. Bulganin politely denied Bufano's request, noting that if need be there were plenty of Soviet artists who were capable of creating such a work.

Years earlier, Bufano had constructed a 34-foot-tall peace statue for the 1939 Golden Gate International Exposition in San Francisco. As he worked on his sculpture, the real world boiled with the violence of the times—the bombing of innocent civilians in Guernica by Spain's fascists, Hitler's antisemitic policies in preparation for the "Final solution," Stalin's bloody purges, Japan's infamous rape of Nanking[3]—making it a difficult time for idealists dedicated to world peace. Bufano's peace statue was the artist's response to a world on the verge of catastrophe, and it was a call to action. Bufano revealed his purpose when he described the sculpture as a "projectile" for enforcing peace:

> I sculptured "Peace" in the form of a projectile, to express the idea that if peace is to be preserved today it must be enforced peace—enforced by the democracies against Fascist barbarism. Modern warfare, which involves the bombing of women and children, has no counterpart in a peace interpreted by the conventional motif of olive branches and doves.[4]

After Bulganin rejected Bufano's offer to sculpt an immense peace statue in the Soviet Union, the artist asked for permission to construct a smaller version of the sculpture at the United Nations Headquarters in New York on the Soviet Union's behalf. Again Bulganin refused. He told Bufano to contact President Dwight Eisenhower if he truly desired to bring about peace. When Bufano returned home to California, he wrote to Eisenhower, only to receive a form letter shortly after informing him that the president of the United States did not respond to the intermediaries of foreign leaders.[5] Thus, the sky-scraping peace sculpture envisioned by the diminutive artist was never constructed in Russia or New York City. Instead, Bufano erected a somewhat smaller version of it four years later at Timber Cove, ninety miles north of San Francisco.

The Timber Cove peace statue, which Bufano named *The Expanding Universe*, was begun in September 1962, just weeks before the Cuban

In the creation of these peace missiles Bufano captured the promise of peace and, in so doing, embraced the future at a time when many others feared it.

Missile Crisis.[6] The 93-foot-tall concrete, lead, and mosaic sculpture is adorned with elements of the Madonna, Universal Child and a large, open hand—themes of peace that Bufano previously had employed.

From Bufano's perspective, *The Expanding Universe* is undoubtedly a symbolic "projectile," recalling the cold war's intercontinental ballistic missiles that in 1962 threatened life on earth. But whereas the Soviet and American missiles were agents of global destruction, Bufano's missile stands for peace, its hand, poised high atop the sculpture, as capable as any missile's warhead of delivering its message. Perhaps as the leaders of the East and West contemplated unleashing their missiles of death upon the earth, Bufano dreamed of creating a visual reminder of the consequences of not choosing peace:

> "Maybe if the world gets frightened enough, we'll have peace." Benny Bufano, the five-foot dynamo, sighed a deep-down sigh. Then he said, as an afterthought: "Man is a stupid beast. He seldom learns unless he is shocked into thinking. The greatest good to thinking has been the invention of atomic fission. It is terrible in its worst aspects, but God has seen fit for it to happen so that mankind can be saved. The great force of atomic fission has blown man out of his convenient nationalism into international thinking. If it is fear that must awaken man to brotherhood and humanity . . . then let's scare the hell out of him!"[7]

From an early age, Bufano believed in peace, but he was not the typical "peacenik." He was eclectic, suspicious, egotistical, occasionally hostile, and often given to exaggeration if not outright lies. People either loved him or they hated him. Herb Caen, San Francisco's beloved newspaper columnist, was quite fond of Bufano and regularly featured him in his daily columns, an exposure that helped elevate the artist to celebrity status.

While it is no secret that Bufano was seriously flawed as a family man, his celebrity assured him an almost saintly stature in the Bay Area.[8] He had few friends and only rarely did he associate with other artists. But he was well known and beloved by many people, including the writer Henry Miller, who once predicted, "He will outlive our civilization and probably be better known, better understood, both as a man and artist, five thousand years hence."[9] This was probably wishful thinking on Miller's part; contemporary art critics have all but dismissed the relevance and importance of Bufano's art, relegating him, perhaps, to a cultural phenomenon rather than influential artist. Yet, Bufano's sculptures still survive and, given their hard material constituents and public ownership, will for years to come. In the creation of these peace missiles—monumental sentinels that remind us of Bufano's challenge to remain vigilant in our defense of democracy, to cherish world peace, and to honor and protect the planet's children—Bufano captured the promise of peace and, in doing so, embraced the future at a time when many others feared it.

A LIFE OF ARTISTIC PASSION

Beniamino Benvenuto Bufano was born in San Fele, Italy, perhaps on October 14, 1898,[10] the date most often referenced in published sources. Throughout his life, he devised his own truths to serve his immediate purpose, and as he grew older his birthdate progressed in time with him. According to his wife, Virginia Lewin, Bufano was born in 1886, but his parents differed as to whether he had been born in March or October.[11] His death certificate lists his age as seventy-nine and his birthdate as October 15, 1890.[12]

Bufano was the youngest of fifteen children.[13] When he was three his family moved to New York City, where he spent the remainder of his childhood. Educated by private tutors, he later attended the Art Students League (1913–15), where he studied with the famous sculptors Herbert Adams, Paul Manship, and James Fraser. Having traveled to San Francisco in 1915 to work for Manship on the Panama Pacific International Exposition, he produced the medallions that decorated the Court of the Universe's main arch.[14] One medallion depicted "art guiding the child to nature for inspiration,"[15] suggesting, perhaps, a theme Bufano later explored. Unable to afford his own studio, Bufano worked in the San Francisco workshop of the noted craftsman Dirk Van Erp.[16] Following the exposition, he returned home to New York and set up shop in his own Greenwich Village studio.

Shortly after President Woodrow Wilson declared war on Germany in 1917 Bufano accidentally severed his right index finger while cutting wood.[17] He seized upon the idea of mailing his severed "trigger finger" to President Wilson as a response to the declaration of war. Supposedly, the young artist packaged the bloodied finger and sent it off with a note to Washington but never received a reply. Over the years Bufano would fuel the rumor that he had severed his finger in protest of war.[18]

Bufano married his first wife, Marie, in 1918; soon afterward the couple moved to San Francisco, where that same year he met Colonel Charles Erskine Scott Wood, a lawyer and man of letters renowned for his liberal beliefs, and his wife, Sara Bard Field. A short time later, Bufano abandoned his wife and infant daughter and departed for a two-year stay in China to study ceramic glazes, a trip financed in part by Wood. He returned home with a special blue glaze that he used on a sculpture commissioned by Wood for the courtyard of his second home in the hills of Los Gatos, fifty miles south of San Francisco, which depicted a couple sitting beneath the Tree of Poetry.

In 1913, sculptor and acclaimed numismatic artist James Earle Fraser (1876–1953) was commissioned by the U.S. Treasury Department to design a new five-cent coin. Minted from 1913 to 1938, the design showcased the American West, featuring a buffalo on one side and an Indian chief on the other.

The design of the Indian head has been attributed to three models, two of them identified by Fraser as Cheyenne Chief Two Moons, who fought at the 1876 Battle of the Little Bighorn, and Chief Iron Tail of the Sioux Indian Nation, a survivor of the 1890 Battle of Wounded Knee. The identity of the third model remains uncertain, but Bufano, who served as Fraser's apprentice, claimed that he was Fraser's model, an assertion that was never substantiated despite the similarities between the profiles.

San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library (detail)

Courtesy of the United States Mint

Bufano's humanitarianism, populism, and high profile in political and social affairs contributed to his wide popularity and notoriety in the Bay Area. Flanked by Jerusalem Mayor Teddy Kollek (left) and San Francisco Mayor Joseph Alioto (right) at a dinner at the San Francisco Hilton (ca. 1969), Bufano accepts congratulations for his gift to the state of Israel of two sculptures: a fifteen-foot-high penguin with its young and a large cat.

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In 1926 Wood and Field befriended the young Ansel Adams, a year after the budding photographer had met Bufano and the two had begun their lifetime friendship.[19] A few years later, Adams made portraits of both Wood (1931) and Bufano (1933).[20] In 1939 he assembled a photographic portfolio of Bufano's sculptures.[21]

Bufano spoke often of his association with influential people. For example, he claimed that during his first visit to China, he had stayed in the home of the Chinese revolutionary leader Sun Yat-sen, by whom he had been befriended.[22] While Bufano did in fact meet Dr. Sun, it is not certain that he stayed in his home. In 1937, while employed by the Works Progress Administration's Federal Art Project—part of President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal, whose cultural programs in writing, theater, music, and the visual arts employed thousands of unemployed artists—Bufano created a fourteen-foot-tall stainless steel and red granite statue of Sun Yat-sen, called by one observer "the most beautiful man-made thing in the city."[23] The statue is located at St. Mary's Square Park in San Francisco's Chinatown, where Dr. Sun once lived prior to becoming China's first President.[24]

Years after his China trip, Bufano took his second wife, Virginia, around the world on their honeymoon, traveling to Japan, China, Thailand, Cambodia, India, France, and Italy. He later claimed that while in India, he had lived and worked with Mahatma Gandhi. While he does appear to have visited Gandhi's ashram, it is doubtful that he met Gandhi himself. Like so many of Bufano's accounts, this one was apparently a figment of his imagination.[25] However, he did create a 3 by 6 foot mosaic of the Indian nationalist leader.[26] He also assembled mosaics of others whom he respected, including John F. Kennedy and family, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Albert Einstein, and Dr. Louis Pasteur.[27]

In 1921, Bufano returned from China to the United States and settled in San Francisco. He taught briefly at the San Francisco Art Institute, where Sargent Johnson, the brilliant African American sculptor, spent a year as his pupil. Proving too modern for the more conservative faculty, he was dismissed in 1923. Many years later he taught at the University of California at Berkeley (1960) and the California College of Arts and Crafts in Oakland (1964–65).

In 1938–39, still employed by the Federal Art Project, Bufano sculpted *Peace*, a 38-foot-tall stainless steel and black granite projectile that for years greeted visitors to the San Francisco International Airport. His federally sponsored work also included many of the rounded and abstract animal sculptures for which he is well known.[28] Highly polished and smoothly curved, they utilize a minimalist geometry to achieve their goal.

In 1938 Bufano fashioned sculptures of a seal and a toad for San Francisco's WPA-constructed Aquatic Park Bathhouse. He later led a successful effort to ensure public access to the building following its lease to a private commercial enterprise.[29] He is especially known for his bear sculptures. One of them, *Bear Nursing Cubs* (1930s), graces the Tenth Street entrance to the Oakland Museum of California.[30] Additional castings of this Depression-era granite sculpture are found elsewhere in the Bay Area.[31]

Married and divorced twice, Bufano had a daughter, Aloha, with his first wife, Marie. With his second wife, Virginia, he had a son, Charles Erskine Scott Bufano, whom Virginia named after her husband's friend and patron and who, following his father's death, headed the Bufano Society of the Arts, which Bufano founded in 1946.

Bufano disavowed his marriages and disowned both of his children.[32] The paradox raised by his personal failures as a husband and father cannot be fully explained or excused by his eclectic personality and fame.[33] He espoused love, world peace, and respect for the planet's children, yet he turned his back on those who loved him most. Consumed with an artistic passion, he was obsessed with his own personal vision and work, often to the detriment of those closest to him.

Bufano often was involved in transporting his sculptures to their many locations in and around the Bay Area. Of particular delight to the public are his animal sculptures—a bestiary of rabbits, cats, penguins, mice, owls, porcupines, camels, giraffes, dogs, and bears. These whimsical creations were made to be experienced, and countless children have crawled, stood, and sat upon them since their unveilings.

San Francisco Chronicle Collection, California Historical Society, FN-28825

Bufano died alone at his Minna Street studio in San Francisco on August 16, 1970. His body was discovered two days later. William Goetz, his friend and volunteer assistant, who was asked to clean out the artist's studio, collected Bufano's letters, telegrams, photographs, newspaper clippings, and brochures. These items are compiled in ten notebooks organized by Goetz and now curated in the Archives of American Art at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C.

Bufano is buried at the Holy Cross Cemetery in Colma, California, beneath a statue of St. Francis of his own creation. The sculpture is decorated with a Tree of Life motif and is alive with birds. Traditionally, the Tree of Life denotes continuation of life, rebirth, and regeneration, while the birds often are perceived as symbols of transcendence.[34] Perhaps beneath the saint's watchful gaze, Bufano hoped to transcend the pain of the world and find the eternal peace he had long sought.

"PINT-SIZED, PUGNACIOUS STONE CARVER"

Years after Bufano's death, Ansel Adams noted that, "He had an extraordinary ability to create in his sculpture almost invisible edges that could be felt as sharp, defining transitions of form."[35] And Thomas Albright wrote of Bufano's art:

> Perhaps because Bufano's sculpture so adroitly combined this Art Deco formality with broadly Social Realist subjects (*St. Francis, The Mother of Peace, Sun Yat-Sen*), he became, for many people, the personification of what a "modern artist" should be. In his more ambitious sculpture, Bufano often spelled out his gospel of social unity with embarrassing bluntness, particularly when (as in *The Mother of Peace*) he added little mosaics of wide-eyed children to the larger works. In his animals, however—bears, walruses, horses, or snails, their form stripped down to the barest essentials—he more often found the simplicity and self-containment appropriate to the sense of uncomplicated innocence and childlike wonder that he sought to express.[36]

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"Pint-sized and pugnacious," Bufano stood only five feet tall, but he envisioned art on a monumental scale. While traveling in Asia, he had been greatly impressed by the magnitude of its monumental sculptures, and it was there that he decided to combine "the ancient art form with the technical development of modern New York skyscrapers."[37] In addition to his monumental art, Bufano also completed many smaller works, including sculptures, paintings, and ceramics, many of which are housed in Bay Area museums. For example, the Oakland Museum of California collection contains seven sculptures, three paintings, and one ceramic piece[38] and the Museum of Modern Art in San Francisco is home to sixteen sculptures and one ceramic piece.[39] While Bufano is best known for his smaller works, it was the monumental art about which he was most passionate.

The Expanding Universe, the immense, 93-foot-tall peace statue at Timber Cove, was small compared to some of Bufano's other plans. His unrealized ambitions included the installation of an 800-foot steel arch on Alcatraz Island in the middle of San Francisco Bay and a St. Francis mosaic that would have covered the face of El Capitan in Yosemite National Park.[40] Ansel Adams, a lifelong defender of Yosemite's natural beauty, would have been mortified to hear this. Once, when the two friends were hiking at Yosemite, Bufano scared Adams by telling him of his desire to carve President Franklin Roosevelt's head on the face of El Capitan and his plan to call Eleanor Roosevelt for support.[41] He also envisioned erecting a 191-foot-tall sculpture of St. Francis on Twin Peaks above San Francisco.[42]

Bufano was a modernist but his eclectic style is difficult to classify beyond that. He subscribed to no one tradition and was little influenced by other

artists, especially later in life. What can be said is that his modernism was born in the years separating the two world wars. The First World War shocked Bufano's sensibilities, as it did most artists living on the East Coast and in Europe. Shortly thereafter, he left New York and moved to the West Coast, where the realities of the Second World War deeply affected the provincial city of San Francisco.[43] The result was a modernist style that defied adequate description or explanation. As Peter Plagens has noted:

> Modernism, laboring far from Paris or New York under a Gully Jimson/Jack Bilbo/*Savage Messiah* complex without benefit of a real movement of its own, produces phenomena like Beniamino Bufano and Anton Refregier. Bufano, a pint-sized, pugnacious stone carver, spent his years on a giant figure of St. Francis (realized) cut from a thirty-ton block . . . and a monumental US/USSR aviator atop a hundred-foot shaft (unrealized).[44]

THEMES OF PEACE

It is not surprising that Bufano chose to be buried beneath a statue of St. Francis; the sculptor felt a connection with the saint and identified with his life story. Known as the "little poor man of Assisi," St. Francis was born in Italy in 1182. According to legend, he was mocked and teased by his friends, was thrown out of the family house by his father, and lived the lifestyle of a beggar. Founder of the Order of Friars Minor prior to his death in 1226, he is said to have treated the birds and beasts as his brothers and sisters, and his name is associated with peace.

Throughout his life, Bufano sculpted, painted, and honored St. Francis. He was pleased to live in a city named after his favorite saint and created numerous sculptures of him while living in San Francisco. Perhaps the most controversial was his *St. Francis of Varenne* (1927–28), a twelve-foot-tall granite sculpture carved in Paris.[45] After languishing there in storage for a quarter of a century, it was finally shipped to San Francisco and installed at the Church of St. Francis of Assisi at Columbus Avenue and Vallejo Street in 1955. In 1960 a new reverend complained that the sculpture interfered with wedding and funeral processions entering and leaving the church and insisted it be moved. The sculpture eventually made its way across San Francisco Bay to a business site in Oakland in 1961 and a year later was returned to San Francisco by Bufano's friends at the International Longshoremen's Association. Today, it stands in front of Memorial Hall near Fisherman's Wharf.

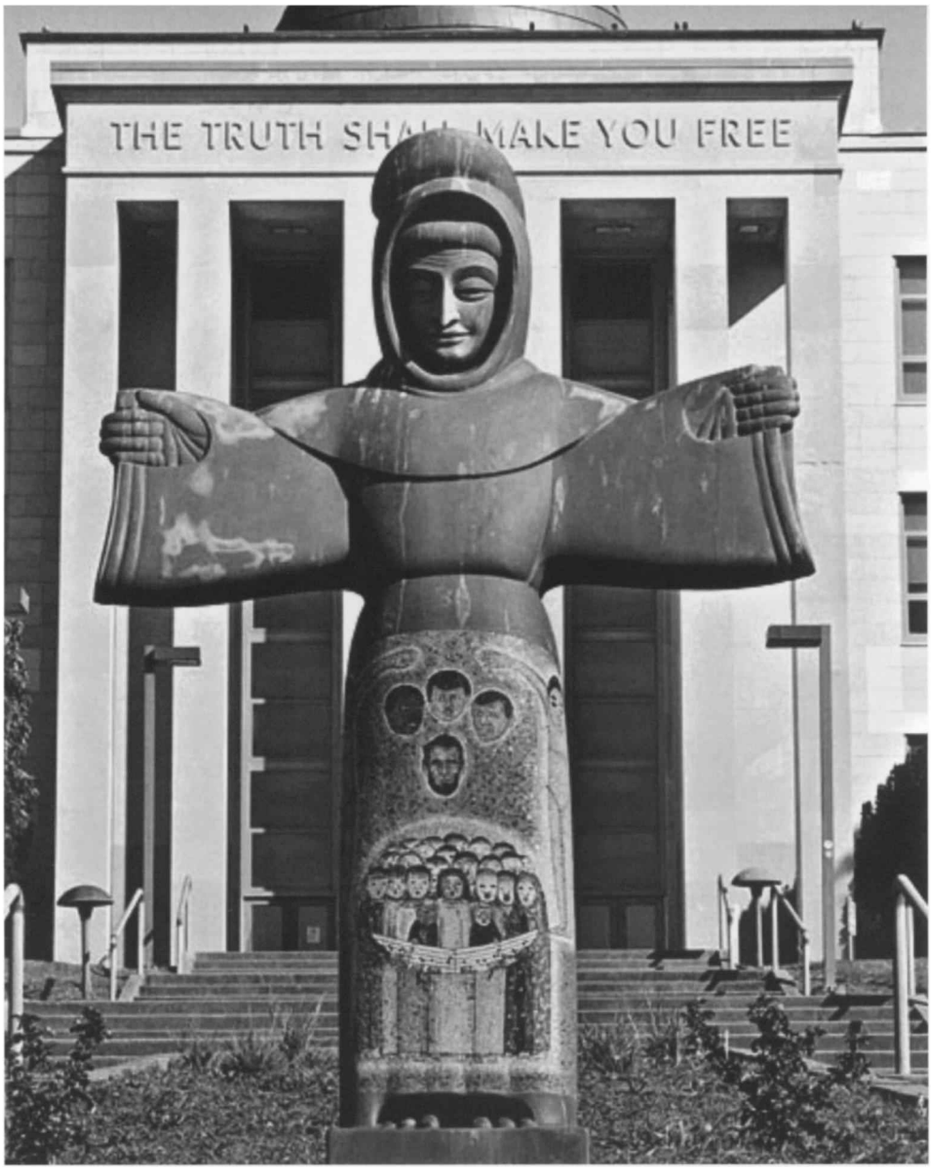
One of Bufano's most compelling sculptures of St. Francis is *St. Francis of the Guns* (1968), located at City College of San Francisco on Phelan Avenue, which he fashioned from melted-down street guns. A mosaic on the base of the sculpture depicts the Children of the World singing and, above them, the portraits of Abraham Lincoln, John F. Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, and Martin Luther King—all victims of assassins' bullets. Perhaps for Bufano, the wisdom of these slain leaders would help sustain and protect the world's children.

Because Bufano was very young when his family moved to New York he recalled little about life in Italy.

> Benny had only scraps of memories relating to his early years in the land of his birth. His memory was vague about the house where he was born, but he remembered clearly the figure of the Holy Mother standing in a niche in the wall. She was part of the family's everyday life, of every meal, of every experience. She was lodged in the background of all their thoughts. She was the family spirit, the meaning and security of their home.[46]

Like St. Francis, the Madonna remained with Bufano, becoming a defining element of his art. His missile sculptures depict her, as do various other works.

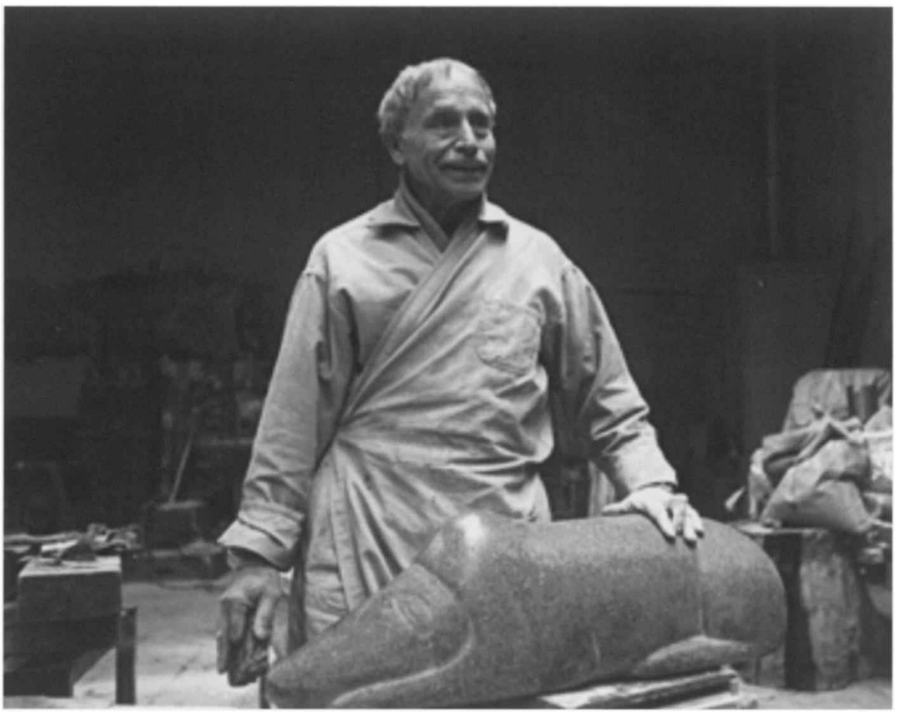
With St. Francis and the Madonna of his childhood watching over him, Bufano's art began to focus on themes of peace, especially the human



In St. Francis of the Guns *(1968), Bufano combined his love of his adopted city's patron saint with his support of arms control. Created from nearly two thousand guns turned in to Mayor Joseph Alioto in response to the political assassination of Robert F. Kennedy, the sculpture paid tribute to John F. Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, Martin Luther King, and Abraham Lincoln, whose likenesses appear on the statue's mosaic base.*

Bufano received the gunmetal in small pieces from an iron works warehouse. The metal was then sent in three fifty-gallon drums to a foundry in Petrasanta, Italy, where it was cast. Arriving on January 18, 1969, aboard the Italian freighter Cesare D'Amico, *the graceful, nine-foot-high figure was later joined to its five-foot pedestal. It was dedicated on May 12, 1977, at the City College of San Francisco by Mayor George Moscone, who himself would become a victim of assassination. The ceremony preceded another handgun turn-in drive on May 20. In 1982, Mayor Dianne Feinstein presented to Pope John Paul II in Italy a thirty-inch-high statue of the saint that Bufano had cast, along with a ten-inch-high cross made from fifteen melted-down pistols turned in under the city's new pistol law, recalling Bufano's eloquent reuse of the material years earlier.*

Photograph by Philip Adam



Bufano supported student protestors at the University of California, Berkeley, by donating a polar bear sculpture to the Academic Senate in December 1964 to help raise funds for the Free Speech Movement (September 1964–January 1965). Bufano often publicly backed freedom of expression, including appearances at the 1957 obscenity trial of Allen Ginsberg's Howl *and at the 1961 victory party of House Un-American Activities Committee protestor and Berkeley student Robert Meisenbach.*

hand as a peace symbol. This preoccupation seems to have started after Bufano lost his finger in 1917 and perhaps was stimulated by the accident and the constant reminder of his loss. Indeed, the incident initiated a mystique that surrounded the artist for the rest of his life and that surrounds him still: Bufano wove the symbol of the hand into much of his art and it played an increasingly important role in his ideology. In "The Hand is the Father of the Brain," he wrote:

> Blessed be the hand, the co-symbol of the mind's eye. The hand is the symbol illuminating the heart . . . .It is my prayer, my hope, and my will that the hand is man's will to peace, reaching out and calling to man to abandon man's inhumanity to man and to abandon the cruelties of war. Such is the hand, the divine symbol of oneness, the spiritual tears and song of peace reaching out to the family of man.[47]

The open hand, known to Buddhists as Abhaya Mudra, is an internationally recognized sign of peace. As a young man living and traveling throughout Asia, Bufano visited many of the ancient Buddhist monuments—including the temples at Ajanta and Elephanta in India, at Yunkang and Lung-men in China, at Nara, Nikko, Kamakura, and Kyoto in Japan, and at Borobudur in Java[48]—and would have been very familiar with Abhaya Mudra.

During the course of his career, Bufano produced many small versions of a sculpture he entitled *Hand of Peace*.[49] In 1967 he created one of his largest hand sculptures, also entitled *Hand of Peace*, a thirty-foot-tall copper, mosaic, and stained glass work located on Quail Court in Walnut Creek.[50] The sculpture is a large open hand, in the palm of which rests a mosaic image of the world's children standing beneath the words, "The children of the world shall inherit the earth." Bufano often decorated the palms of his sculpted hands, recalling the Buddhist art he had seen in Asia.

Bufano's donation to the Free Speech Movement was not the first time one of his bears found its way into university hands. In 1941, he donated a three-foot statue of a golden bear to the campus newspaper, the Daily Californian. *In 1953 a small California grizzly bear—the emblem of the university—was purchased for $350 by the class of 1948 of the university's School of Law in memory of a classmate. The bear sits on a terrazzo pedestal inside Boalt Hall, where it was installed in 1955, and where, allegedly, students pass to rub the bear's nose for luck prior to taking exams.*

PHOTOGRAPH BY PHILIP ADAM

Bufano produced Peace *(1938–39) under the auspices of the Federal Art Project. In an essay written for the FAP's unpublished report, "Art for the Millions," he wrote: "Long before the WPA/FAP came into existence, I offered my services to several communities at day-labor wages if they would supply the materials and let me work. . . . Movements like a government art project are not an accident; they come from great needs, the need of the artist to give something to the world as much as from his need to survive."*

Photograph by Philip Adam

THE ART OF PROTEST

In a photographic essay of Bufano's final years, a young disfigured Vietnamese girl is pictured intently watching him at work in his studio.[51] Badly burned by napalm, she had come to San Francisco for corrective surgery. During her stay, Bufano befriended her. Enraged by her condition, he quickly penned an essay entitled, "We Are All Murderers," which he opened with this decree:

> It has become the fashion for the people of the United States to refer to the Vietnamese War as "Johnson's War," "The Pentagon's War," "The CIA's War," etc. Is this supposed to remove the guilt from ourselves? If so, then we are the only people taken in by this pseudology. The world knows whose war it is, and so should we. Our capacity for national self-deception has become pathological.
>
> In this election year 1968 the time has come for us to remove our mask of hypocrisy. To cut out all the fakery and self-righteous flim-flammery, and admit whose war it is. It is our bloody war. We are not fighting for the right of self-determination and democracy for the Vietnamese peasants. Hell no. We are conducting warfare for our own economic and political interests in Vietnam.[52]

The Vietnam War was contrary to everything Bufano believed. In numerous photographs taken by Randolph Falk during the last three years of Bufano's life, the artist wears a button that reads, "Yes, Peace."[53]

Bufano began to explore the symbolism of peace early in his career. He entitled one of his early sculptures *Head of Peace* (1916), which is reminiscent of the Madonna that would grace many of his later works. In *The Bear and the Virgin* (1930s), a Depression-era sculpture in black granite, he depicted a California grizzly looking over the Head of Peace,[54] denoting the peaceful coexistence of the fierce bear and the gentle Madonna. The art critic Sam Fusco described the sculpture as having "the reassuring feminine face of the Virgin placed at the paws of the

snarling bear to show that it is really harmless and cannot hurt anyone."[55] The sculpture recalls the story of St. Francis pacifying the fierce wolf, a tale Bufano had heard often as a child.[56] Bufano explored a similar theme with his sculpture *Cat and Mouse*, also from the 1930s,[57] showing a mouse resting comfortably on the back of a cat.

Bufano's first peace statue—of the Madonna and the Universal Child—was produced in 1938–39 for San Francisco's Golden Gate Exposition. He entitled it *Peace*, but often referred to it as *Miss Peace*.[58] The sculpture was never installed at the exposition, and it remained in storage for many years. Finally, in 1958, it was mounted at the San Francisco International Airport, where it welcomed visitors for almost four decades. As a result of the airport's expansion, however, the sculpture was moved in 1996 to its current location in the city on Brotherhood Way near Lake Merced.

Fashioned from stainless steel and black granite, the 38-foot-tall sculpture represented for Bufano a "projectile" in protest of the unabated spread of fascism.[59] Unlike his later sculptures recalling the intercontinental ballistic missiles, *Peace* resembled (albeit subtly) the large artillery shells that were common in the First World War.

Beneath the Madonna stands the Universal Child, Bufano's representation of the totality of earth's children. As is the case with many of Bufano's renditions of the Universal Child, this one is marked with the symbolism of duality and binary opposition. The child is light-skinned with the hands of a dark-skinned child resting on his shoulders, suggesting that a second child of a different race stands behind him. Additionally, his forehead is painted brown on one side and yellow on the other, and there is another set of eyes immediately above his own, further evidence of a community of children represented by the Universal Child.

The bust of the Madonna adorning the top of the statue is fashioned from black granite, suggesting to some the Black Madonna.[60] Images of the Black Madonna are common in Europe, where

The Madonna of The Expanding Universe, *begun in 1962, peers out across the sea, watching and waiting silently for peace. Her vigilance is captured in Walt Whitman's memorable poem, "Facing West from California's Shores"* (Leaves of Grass, *1891–92*):

> Facing west from California's shores,
> Inquiring tireless, seeking what is yet unfound

Courtesy of E. Breck Parkman

Bufano and an assistant work on a scaffold to rectify the installation of The Expanded Universe *(ca. 1970). Bufano's response to the erroneous orientation of the Madonna's head was the installation of a new face of mosaic tile on the statue's east side.*

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they date from medieval times. But while it is conceivable that *Peace* is a representation of the Black Madonna, it is unlikely.[61] Bufano himself stated that, "*Peace* is one of my finest works. The simplified head could belong to any race."[62]

United in Peace, the peace statue model that Bufano brought with him to the Soviet Union in 1958, also is suggestive of the Black Madonna. Sculpted in stainless steel and granite[63] it depicts a projectile-shaped Madonna with two people at her feet standing face-to-face and holding hands as if in peaceful negotiation. Their glaze is blue while the Madonna's is brown. Like a lot of the modern art of the time, Bufano's creation was elegant in its simplicity. Today it is part of the collections of the Kremlin Museums.[64]

Shortly before his death, Bufano created the projectile-shaped granite and mosaic sculpture *The Madonna of Peace* (1970), located in San Francisco on Laguna Street near Bay Street in the Great Meadow at Upper Fort Mason.[65] A mosaic rendering of the Universal Child stares out from the base of the statue. Like *Peace, The Madonna of Peace* is marked with the symbolism of duality and binary opposition.[66]

Bufano further expressed the Universal Child theme in his sculpture *Universal Child* (1965), located on the grounds of the Santa Clara City Hall near the intersection of Warburton and Lincoln, directly across the street from the Triton Museum of Art. This 85-foot-tall projectile of stainless steel, cast stone, and mosaic is undoubtedly a rendition of an intercontinental ballistic missile. Like *The Expanding Universe*, it was created in the aftermath of the Cuban Missile Crisis and was almost certainly influenced by that event.

Near the top of the statue is the stylized face of a child and far below, near the base, is a mosaic of children. Representing the races of the world, they stand shoulder to shoulder, in unison, looking straight ahead and smiling. An anthropomorphic figure, perhaps the Madonna, stands behind them, enveloping them in her embrace. And peering from just above her head and shoulders is the profile of a bird's beak and wings. The bird is depicted as if flying up the sculpture and thus powering the missile on which the children are transported. This same theme of children on the wings of a bird appears elsewhere in Bufano's art.[67]

Bufano did not create his art for the pleasure of the critics. Instead, his work was the product of an inner conviction that had little to do with the desire for commercial success or critical acclaim.

Much of Bufano's art—especially certain of his later works—is eclectic. Some critics have found it naive and outright disturbing, others ludicrous and grotesque.[68] But Bufano did not create his art for the pleasure of the critics. Instead, his work was the product of an inner conviction that had little to do with the desire for commercial success or critical acclaim. Both the *Universal Child* and *The Expanding Universe* were born of such belief. Indeed, both works stand as mute testimony to Bufano's commitment to peace. *The Expanding Universe* is especially important given its public ownership and visibility.

THE EXPANDING UNIVERSE

Whereas cosmologists had long assumed that the universe was static, Albert Einstein's General Theory of Relativity (1916) provided evidence that the universe was either expanding or contracting. A few years later, Alexander Friedmann used Einstein's equations to formulate his Big Bang Theory (1922), which suggested that the universe was expanding. In 1929 Edwin Hubble forever changed cosmology by successfully demonstrating an expanding universe.

***The Expanding Universe* can be considered anything but a failure. As a state-owned monument, it will be protected and interpreted for the inspiration of all Californians, including the citizens of the future.**

In September 1962 Bufano began work at Timber Cove on *The Expanding Universe*. It would take him seven years to finish and would be one of his last completed works. Timber Cove was then, and remains today, a very isolated area on California's north coast in northern Sonoma County. Whereas Bufano's previous sculptures graced city spaces and urban museums, the Timber Cove sculpture was designed for the country. Of course, Bufano's decision to create a peace statue at Timber Cove was primarily the result of those in the north coast community who helped fund his work, and not necessarily of the artist's philosophical beliefs about the rural landscape. But while his earlier works invited closer viewing, the Timber Cove sculpture was intended to be seen from afar.

Years earlier, in 1946, Bufano had established the Bufano Society for the Arts in order to facilitate the management of his business interests.[69] The organization was composed of a dozen locally prominent men who were genuine supporters of his art, one of whom was Richard Clements, Jr., a businessman who in 1961 purchased the old Gualala Hotel in the town of Gualala, twenty miles north of Timber Cove.[70]

Clements began his plans to construct the Timber Cove Inn in 1962, just months after home fallout shelters became part of the country's real estate landscape. He commissioned Bufano to create the peace statue at Timber Cove in part to develop interest in the inn and to highlight the beauty of California's rugged north coast. In typical Bufano fashion, the artist sculpted the statue for free, and in return, Clements agreed to fund a scholarship for young sculptors,[71] an arrangement consistent with the author's frequent practice of bartering his art for the essentials of life and things important to him.[72]

Clements had also hired Ansel Adams to document the inn's creation on film. For several years (1962–64), Bufano and Adams kept rooms at the Gualala Hotel. Bufano used the hotel grounds as an outdoor studio while working on the sculpture. However, the sculpture's head and hand were produced in his San Francisco studio and then carefully trucked to Timber Cove.[73]

Ken Frost, a civil engineer from Tiburon, just north of San Francisco, designed the foundations. Columnist Herb Caen reported that when Frost told Bufano that his monument would last for a hundred years, Bufano replied, "Is that all?"[74] A few months later, Bufano wielded a pneumatic drill and bored the first hole into the sandstone outcrop to anchor the sculpture.[75]

The Expanding Universe's "hand" was carved from a single block of redwood and weighed two thousand pounds when completed. Bufano covered it with Mexican tiles. Alphonso Pardinas, a Bay Area ceramist, assisted him in applying the mosaic to the sculpture's head.

After erecting the sculpture's 68-foot-tall concrete and lead base, Bufano ran into difficulties placing the 7-foot-tall head and 18-foot-tall hand atop it. Calculating the head to weigh approximately 3,000 pounds, he originally had planned to lift it by helicopter to affix it to its base. However, upon weighing the head, it was found to be 5,900 pounds, a load only the most powerful helicopters of the time could lift. Unfortunately for Bufano, such helicopters all were on their way to the escalated war in Vietnam. Unable to lift the head atop the sculpture, Bufano left it and the hand resting on the ground near the base of the monument for the next five years. Thus, when the Timber Cove Inn opened in 1963, only the skeleton of Bufano's sculpture was completed.[76]

In 1969, while the artist was at his studio in Pietrasanta, Italy, and Clements was head of the Peace Corps in the Dominican Republic, Bufano's friends and members of the Bufano Society of the Arts decided to take action. Assuming that Bufano intended the Madonna to look out across the ocean, they hired a large crane to position the head and hand at the top of the sculpture.[77] However, when the head finally was lowered onto the base, the workmen noticed that it did not fit. Because Bufano's friends felt certain of his intent (Bufano had told Randolph Falk during their many visits to Timber Cove that the sculpture was to "look out over the ocean as a friendly gesture of peace"[78]), they ordered the workmen to make the necessary changes in order to install the head facing west. It took some doing, but eventually the framework was modified and the Madonna was secured firmly to the sculpture's base. Upon placing the hand atop the Madonna's head, the sculpture was complete, or so everyone thought.

The sculpture now in place, Bufano received a telegram in Italy: "Surprise. Head and hand put on Madonna; Peace. Timber Cove."[79] He replied that he would return later that week and looked forward to seeing the completed work. Of course, he was anything but happy when he visited Timber Cove and viewed his sculpture.[80]

Bufano's solution to the dilemma posed by the incorrectly placed head was to create another face on the sculpture's east side. He asked Anthony Stellon, with whom he often had worked, to assist him. Together, they made a new face, a representation of the Universal Child, in bright mosaics on the floor of Stellon's studio. With no fanfare, they installed it on the back of the Madonna's veil in February 1970—an undertaking that led Herb Caen to conclude, "Peace is now two-faced."[81] After installing the second face, Bufano left the sculpture's scaffolding in place because he believed that there was more work to do on the monument.[82] Unfortunately, he died before any additional work could be accomplished.

"It is my prayer, my hope, and my will that the hand is man's will to peace, reaching out and calling to man to abandon . . . the cruelties of war."

While it is unclear how Bufano planned to alter *The Expanding Universe*, the sculpture does suggest some degree of incompleteness. For example, several large concrete blocks on the monument's east side may have been constructed to anchor the scaffolding. If so, then one can assume that Bufano planned to remove these features. It is also conceivable, however, that two of the blocks represent the sculpture's "feet."[83] Additionally, the rectangular niche in the base on the east side, located at chest height, appears to have been made to hold a small plaque, perhaps part of a plan to bear the monument's name.

On the west side of the sculpture is a door-sized opening about fourteen feet above the ground. The opening grants access to the interior of the monument, which still retains a wood floor for each of its seven stories, connected by a wooden ladder. Because the opening also allows the harsh elements of the coastal weather to penetrate inside the sculpture, it is likely that Bufano planned to cover this point of access.

According to longtime local residents, Governor Pat Brown was to have formally dedicated *The Expanding Universe* to world peace. This never happened, perhaps due to the five-year delay in the placement of the sculpture's head and hand. It should be noted, however, that it was during Governor Jerry Brown's administration that the sculpture became the property of the state of California. Whereas Pat Brown had failed to dedicate the monument, his son, Jerry, managed to protect it for posterity.

In 1982 the state acquired a sixty-foot-diameter plot of land surrounding *The Expanding Uni-*

verse. Named the Bufano Peace Statue Monument, it became a unique property of the California Department of Parks and Recreation,[84] the second smallest California State Parks unit after the Watts Towers of Simon Rodia State Historic Park in Los Angeles. In many ways the Watts Towers park is analogous to the Bufano Peace Statue Monument. The life and artistic vision of Sabato (Simon) Rodia, the creator of Nuestro Pueblo (Watts Towers), are strikingly similar to Bufano's. Like Bufano, Rodia came from Italy, was estranged from his wife and children, and integrated deeply personal elements of his own culture and traditions into his work.[85]

Rodia reached for the sky with his towers and so did Bufano. Standing 93 feet tall, the Timber Cove sculpture was larger than anything Bufano had ever created. Unfortunately, it was the only one of his more than five hundred creations that Bufano considered a failure, due to the misplaced head.[86] From the advantage gained by the passage of time, however, *The Expanding Universe* can be considered anything but a failure. As a state-owned monument, it will be protected and interpreted for the inspiration of all Californians, including the citizens of the future.

While Henry Miller was overly kind when he said that Bufano's fame would survive for the millennia, *The Expanding Universe* itself may remain witness to Bufano's vision when other of our modern-day constructions are long gone:

> . . . he belongs neither to the past nor the present. His spirit is of the future, the spirit of a world yet to come, the world of brotherhood, of peace, harmony, beauty, ...One of the singular aspects of Bufano's work is the kind of materials he chooses to work with. "The man of hard materials," I called him. Granite, marble, stainless steel, combined with bronze, cement, mosaics. Durable materials and difficult to combine. His monuments will outlive our time. He will be there, Bufano, in the 25th century, when we and our puny efforts will have been long forgotten . . . .Centuries from now, he will be known as the man who challenged the hard materials. Centuries from now, he will be hailed as a man of monumental vision. . . . If he does not affix his signature to his sculpture, it is not out of false modesty but in full awareness of the divine nature of creation, in full awareness that he, Bufano, is but an instrument of creation, that it will not matter a thousand or two thousand years hence whether people know that it was he, Beniamino Bufano, who created them; what does matter, in his opinion, is that they should enjoy his creations and be inspired to further all creation.[87]

BEACON OF PEACE

Bufano sculpted *The Expanding Universe* in the twilight of his long career. Perhaps, then, it is fitting that the statue faces the setting sun. Posed toward the open sea, the sculpture broadcasts Bufano's message of peace to all the people of the world rather than just those fortunate few traveling along the Pacific Coast Highway—a beacon for all who would approach the shore.

Like Moshe in Elie Wiesel's *Night*, Bufano attempted to warn us of the horrors of war, but few listened.[88] In the end, the "failure" of *The Expanding Universe* is perhaps Bufano's greatest success. In the illumination of the setting sun, visitors to the Bufano Peace Statue Monument might envision Bufano himself standing as the Universal Child beneath the Madonna, facing west from the California coast. He still will be standing there, as Henry Miller said, when the rest of us are gone and forgotten.

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