

[Search](#)[Recent News](#)[Archives](#)[Web for](#)Welcome **Guest**[Sign Up](#) | [Sign In](#) | [Member Benefits](#)[Philly.com](#)[Back to Home](#) >

Tuesday, Feb 01, 2005

[Today's Inquirer](#)[Sports](#)[Today's Daily News](#) [email this](#)  [print this](#)

CLASSIFIEDS

Posted on Wed, Jul. 02, 2003

## Bernard Fernandez | Art of the matter

### BOXING SCULPTURE ENVISIONED

By **Bernard Fernandez**  
[fernانب@phillynews.com](mailto:fernانب@phillynews.com)

In Philadelphia, boxing sculpture begins and ends with the Rocky statue in front of the First Union Spectrum.

Carl LeVotch looks at the 9-foot bronze movie prop, commissioned for use in 1982's "Rocky III," and feels...nothing. Great art, LeVotch said, should aspire to something loftier than promoting an action flick at your local multiplex. It should reach down deep inside those viewing it and touch the fabric of their souls.

"It's all right for what it is but, let's face it, it was created for a movie," LeVotch said of the bronze memorial to fictional heavyweight champion Rocky Balboa. "It's an image of a person [actor Sylvester Stallone] that actually exists. It doesn't move me.

"A true piece of art is capable of moving the man on the street. It is an instrument to inspire. It's been that way since antiquity. I have a great affinity for Rodin. His 'The Thinker' is a sacrament, if you will. It's an outward sign of an inner grace."

Lest you think that LeVotch, 53, is some pointy-headed intellectual who can't relate to "Rocky," or to boxing, he's a longtime gym rat who trains several times a week at Augie's Gym in South Philadelphia. And he believes there is enough room in town for a serious boxing sculpture to go with that "Yo, Adrian" pop cultural icon that provides so many photo-ops for tourists who don't know the difference between Auguste Rodin, the French sculptor, and Rodan, the Japanese movie monster.

In 2000, LeVotch - inspired in equal parts by former South Philly heavyweight Roger Russell, Rodin's "The Thinker" and "Pugilatore/Boxers Immortal," a statue in a Roman museum that dates back to the first century A.D. - decided to create a piece of art he called "The Spirit of Boxing." It is a depiction of a hooded, faceless fighter on his way into the ring.

"I'm one of those guys who believes boxing is a metaphor for life," said LeVotch, whose unair-conditioned studio in South Philly, which he shares with girlfriend/collaborator Anna Krukles, might best be described as spartan. "I also think of it as an art form. Those who do it well are, in their own way, artists. What I wanted to do was to capture the history and the emotion of boxing."

LeVotch admits to having been inspired as a young man by Russell, who defeated Leotis Martin and drew with Zora Folley early in his career only to wind up an opponent after he was force-fed, before he was ready, to the imposing likes of George Foreman, Floyd Patterson and Mac Foster. Russell, LeVotch said, always was the guy after whom he'd pattern his boxing sculpture, if and when he got around to doing it.

That dream came into sharper focus early in 2000 when LeVotch, through the intercession of Thomas Foglietta, then U.S. ambassador to Italy, was granted a 5-hour private photo shoot of "Pugilatore/Boxers Immortal."

LeVotch took his sources of inspiration, tossed them into a mental blender, and the result was a 17 ½-inch wax

[City & Local News](#)[Sports](#)[YO! Features](#)[Opinion](#)[Columnists](#)[National News](#)[Obituaries](#)[Top Jobs](#)

sculpture of "The Spirit of Boxing." He since has sold 17 like-sized models in cold-cast bronze at \$485 apiece.

"I bought three of them," said Center City attorney and former Pennsylvania boxing commissioner George Bochetto. "I'm talking to my partner [Gavin Lentz] about us buying a big one [5 feet], but it's \$38,000. I think I've almost got him convinced. It's a bargain at that price. I think it's worth a lot more. Carl has created the best statue I've ever seen."

What LeVotch really wants to do is to create a 7 ½-foot bronze of "The Spirit of Boxing" for display in Fairmount Park, on or near a trail known as the Boxers' Run. He has some supporters for the proposed \$200,000 project, most notably Dennis Waller, deputy director for the Fairmount Park Commission, and Haverford attorney Frank Thomas, who is on the Fairmount Park Conservancy.

### **Thai'ing one on**

North Philadelphia's Israel Crespo, a 17-year-old light flyweight, will compete at the 2003 World Amateur Championships in Bangkok, Thailand, July 4-13.

Crespo, originally from Puerto Rico, won National Junior Olympic titles in 2001 and '02.

---

Send e-mail to [fernanb@phillynews.com](mailto:fernanb@phillynews.com)

 [email this](#)  [print this](#)

**REAL  
cities** Click here  
to visit other  
Real Cities sites

[The Inquirer](#) | [Daily News](#) | [Sports](#) | [Entertainment](#) | [Shop Local](#) | [Classifieds](#)  
[About Philly.com](#) | [About the Real Cities Network](#) | [Terms of Use & Privacy Statement](#) | [About Knight Ridder](#) |  
[Copyright](#)