

Top: Akamu's 8-foot model of *Il Cavallo* in plaster, with the 24-foot clay model in the background (1998).

Left photo: The Royal Collection © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. Right photo: © 1998 Artida.


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relation and balance of all its body parts, the tension of its muscles, the fullness of its shapes, the curve of its neck, or the impetuous, though controlled, look in its eyes—is intended to express a readiness for action. Akamu wishes that “*Il Cavallo*, whose vision is focused and directed on a distant goal, can be seen as a metaphor for the force and momentum of creative energy.” Her perception of *Il Cavallo* seems to echo Leonardo’s own conviction that a figure “will not in itself be praiseworthy if it doesn’t express, as fully as possible, the passion of its spirit in action.”

On August 29, 1998, the enlarged, 24-foot clay model of *Il Cavallo* was finally unveiled at the Tallix Art Foundry in Beacon, New York. After the first bronze casting is finished by Tallix this summer, the monument

will be shipped to Milan, its final destination, in seven sections that will be bolted and welded together on a steel armature. On September 10, 1999, exactly five hundred years after the French invasion of Milan, the work will be presented by a group of American citizens as a gift to the people of Italy and an homage to Leonardo. A second, slightly smaller cast, also executed at Tallix, will be unveiled on October 1 in Grand Rapids, Michigan, at the Frederick Meijer Gardens and Sculpture Park.

From its conception by the Italian master five centuries ago—at the time of the European discovery of North America—to its first contemporary rendering by a Pennsylvania ex-pilot and its final execution by an American sculptor of Chinese and Japanese descent, *Il Cavallo* certainly has had an unusual destiny that transcends

time and space. It is no surprise that Leonardo, whose creativity responded to a limitless range of scientific and artistic challenges, was associated with such an odyssey. With enthusiasm and determination in the midst of struggle, Charles Dent and Nina Akamu were able to rewrite what once seemed a tragic ending for Leonardo’s horse. To pay tribute to Leonardo and Dent, who were not able to see their dream of *Il Cavallo* come true, Akamu engraved their names in the eyes of the monumental horse that united their vision in such a mysterious and intimate way. 

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