

Peculiar
PROFESSIONS



ICE SCULPTOR



Paul Germain is a rare sculptor. He creates a “vanishing art” envied by other artists, as few can craft and entwine such emotion within the artwork as he does — sentiments that remain with Germain’s clients for a lifetime.

For 30 years — since his first sculpture at the age of 18 — Germain has perfected the art of ice sculpting. As a child, he had a fascination with diamonds,

— a “thorough knowledge of how water reacts in its solid, liquid and gaseous states.” Germain explains that carving in a freezer would be ideal, but low temperatures make the ice too brittle. At room temperature, though, the melting rate creates a race against time. Because his sculptures tend to be the focal point of important events, he may spend hours or maybe months brainstorming ideas for his client.

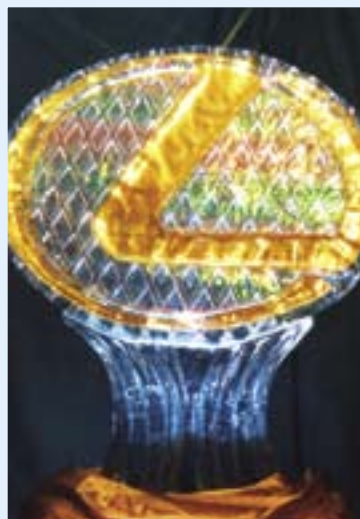
This Page: Germain has created diverse ice sculptures for an array of clients from churches, Lexus to Anlin Windows.

Opposite Page: (Top Left) A bride-to-be commissioned Cinderella’s castle for her husband on their wedding day. A real guy’s guy who happened to like Disneyland, the groom was moved to tears at the sight of the ice castle.

(Top Right) A wedding gift from another bride-to-be, Elvis was sculpted for groom Rodney Grant, an actor in *Dances with Wolves* and other films, as a surprise on their wedding day. Grant is known for his love of everything Elvis.

(Bottom Left) Germain gives direction of his creative concept.

(Bottom Right) One of Germain’s largest sculptures to date, this 12-foot-tall arch flanked by eagles with wings spread was created for a political fund-raiser/birthday party. The ice display weighed several thousand pounds.



crystals and other sparkling treasures that over the years grew into a passion to create gorgeous ice sculptures for his clients. “It’s like treating them to a diamond beyond compare, if only for a moment,” says Germain. “Clients have discovered that a custom ice sculpture is the ultimate way to make someone feel valued and appreciated.”

Germain is the founder and owner of Ice Sculpture World, which provides ice displays for events ranging from weddings and parties to fund-raisers and grand openings. Located in Fresno, California, his ice sculptures have been featured in over 75 local and international publications, TV talk shows and art museums.

Like most artists, Germain’s talent and inspiration come from a variety of spiritual and life experiences. Before venturing into ice carving, he held several jobs that contributed to his creative and business skills: chef, house painter and restaurant manager, to name a few. In fact, for many years, he worked two full-time jobs simultaneously in order to get his business off the ground and be marketable. In addition to a bachelor’s degree in general studies and a master’s degree in instructional leadership, he has roughly 20 years’ experience teaching art, three-dimensional design and public speaking. He also attended a theological seminary for a time, which accounts for his passion in presenting Gospel-oriented ice carving demonstrations (www.gospelice.com).

His love of teaching led Germain to establish the Academy of Ice Carving and Design (AICD). “There is so much potential for ice sculpting as an art and profession that I believe the time has come to pass along the mantle to others,” he explains. “Our unique program includes hands-on training in many of the highly specialized ‘secret ice-carving techniques’ developed throughout my 30 years of experience in pushing the limits of ice.” AICD offers a chance for chefs and career-oriented ice carvers to achieve gallery-quality skills in the art of ice sculpting.

How does a block of ice turn into a masterpiece? It starts with chemistry

In addition to creating a design, it is critical to factor in how long the sculpture will be viewable by guests, the ambience of the location, transportation and set-up conditions. Once he gathers these details and is confident of his design, Germain sits down to draw a life-size image of the final product. He leaves nothing to chance, as there is no room for error when the artwork tends to melt away during the carving process. Finally, Germain says he has learned to pray before beginning any carving. “I am amazed how much easier it is to carve when I do. When I complete a particularly challenging sculpture, I can’t help but look at it in awe because I know God answered my request to give me the ability to make it possible.”

Using tools ranging from chainsaws, razor-sharp chisels, torches and an assortment of rotary power tools and bits, Germain’s job is anything but simple and safe. The carving process takes anywhere from five hours to two weeks, as most of the sculptures require multiple blocks of ice weighing 300 pounds each. For the large, elaborate showpieces it is essential for an ice sculptor to be able to separate and move the pieces individually and then know how to fuse them back together safely at the event location. In 30 years, Paul has only had to repair three sculptures and has never let a client down.

As with many professions, commercial ice sculpting can be a venture to make millionaires out of the entrepreneurs who are ready to explore and market its possibilities. “I experience tremendous satisfaction from knowing that I have created works of art that bring joy to those who are being honored with my sculptures,” says Germain. “Many people ask what it feels like to watch something so beautiful just melt away after so much passion and energy has been put in it. I have this slogan: ‘The vanishing art that leaves a lasting impression.’”

Visit www.icesculptureworld.com and www.academyoficecarving.com for more information.