



Christopher Slatoff on the making of “Fr. Electrico” A work created in collaboration with Ray Bradbury



Ray Bradbury with Christopher Slatoff and clay sculpture of “Fr. Electrico”

installed at Mission San Diego, and after several great conversations over wine and cheese; Ray told me the story of his own *Pieta*.

The image evolved as he told the story of his father carrying him home after a very long day of going to two circuses. Knowing Ray, one circus would have been heaven for him at age thirteen. Well, two circuses must have been an emotional overload, and indeed it was. Not owning a car, and despite Ray being a thirteen-year-old adolescent, his father carried him home for a mile and one-half.

From the front of the sculpture is a *Pieta* of a father carrying his son, but when you turn to see the back, the father becomes Ray Bradbury’s ‘*Illustrated Man*.’ The muscles of the back turn into twisting figures, taken from Ray’s stories, as well as my own images developed from our conversations. As Ray says, the illustrated man is the metaphor for his never-ending imagination. So just as Ray’s biological father literally carried him home, the *Illustrated Man* figuratively carried him through his career.

People always ask me what Ray and I talk about when we are together; I always say the same thing, “FATHERS.” For me the image will always reflect that last comfortable sleep of boyhood in your father’s arms. Around the corner lurk those images of adventures and fears that is adolescence. This fantasy and delight tinged with fear and the unknown is what Ray captures so

In 2007 renowned sculptor **Christopher Slatoff** formed a relationship with celebrated author **Ray Bradbury** who remarked that “Slatoff sculpts from the heart.”

Slatoff explains in his own words:

I met Ray Bradbury through mutual friends, **Carol and Richard King**, and as Ray does so often, an instant friendship was formed. I begged to sculpt his portrait, but he had something more imaginative in mind. He was very taken with my life-size bronze, *Pieta*,



Ray Bradbury Pieta
Bronze Maquette (original sketch) 14" x 6" x 6"



The 3-foot bronze sculpture of *Fr. Electrico*, received wide acclaim as it won the **2008 Gold Medal for Best Sculpture** at the *California Art Club's 97th Annual Gold Medal Juried Exhibition* held at the **Pasadena Museum of California Art**. CAC president **Peter Adams** and vice president **David Gallup** presented the gold medal to Christopher Slatoff. Also in the photo is the sculptor's son **Jamie Slatoff**, who modeled for his father as the young Ray Bradbury.

boy when he struck Ray's forehead with the flat side of an electrically charged sword and said, 'Live forever!'

Ray's creativity and friendship has picked me up and carried me. Our relationship has truly been one of the most touching experiences of my life.

Christopher Slatoff

masterfully in his books. On the sculpture, some of the tattoos of stars creep down the Illustrated Man's arm onto the boy's flesh. I always say that this is what everyone experiences as they come into contact with Ray, his imagination—the stars, spread to your own flesh. On another level, Ray has become a second father to me, and this sculpture represents him and his stories that personally carry me.

The title *Fr. Electrico* comes from another one of Ray's stories. We couldn't think of a title, and then, late one night, I got a call from Ray who related a story to me of his 'creative' father, *Mr. Electrico*, a magician he wrote about in his book, *Something Wicked This Way Comes*. This idea suddenly added a new dimension to what I already thought of as a deep concept. Now, the work related to birth fathers as opposed to inspirational fathers.

So who is really carrying the boy sleeping from his overdose of creativity, Mr. Electrico or father Bradbury?

Ray explained that on the actual day he met Mr Electrico, it was the day he began his 'birth' as a writer. Mr. Electrico inspired the thirteen-year-old



Fr. Electrico
Clay to be cast in bronze for U.S. Public Libraries
8-foot