

Abraham Lincoln by Robert Berks

Robert (Bob) Berks was born in Boston, Massachusetts, in 1922 and, from 1935-1942, he studied at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. Working as a painter and sculptor, he moved to New York in 1948. Four years later he and Dorothy (Tod) Martin were married. In 1967 they moved his studio to Orient on the North Fork of Long Island.

A number of viewers of this display will know of Bob Berks's work, and may even have known Berks personally. But many others will not have heard of the artist, who died in 2011. This small exhibition is therefore a remembrance of, and an introduction to, one of the most important artists who has lived in our local community. Not only was Berks a skilled sculptor with a distinctive style, but many of the people he modeled—most often in bronze—are figures who have impacted the world in significant ways.

One of those figures is Abraham Lincoln. We are thus thrilled to display a Berks sculptural portrait of the former president in unison with the library's other current exhibition, "*My Affair with Abraham Lincoln*" by Roz Dimon. The two shows are complimentary not only in subject matter, but also in technique. In both Dimon's drawings and Berks's sculpture the subject is clearly Lincoln, yet the representations are highly impressionistic and spontaneous in execution.

It is this animated style that gives such a sense of life to Berks's sitters. He observed his subjects closely and from different angles to truthfully capture their likeness and personality. To further convey the power of Berks's vital technique, a number of photographs of some of his other sculptural portraits are included alongside his Lincoln bust. These photos also reveal the range of historically-significant figures who are memorialized through Berks's distinct hand.

Floyd Memorial Library is indebted to Deborah Sellers and PJ Dobbins, the Robert Berks estate trustees, for the loan of this Lincoln sculpture. I am also personally grateful for their generous access to, and information about, Berks's work, including the gift of *Biographies in Bronze: Portrait Sculpture by Robert Berks*. This catalog of a 1989 exhibition at The Lyndon Baines Johnson Library and Museum was invaluable in the research for our own modest exhibition honoring Berks.

Sally Grant, Art Exhibits Curator