



JIM COLLINS  
**WATCHER**

I am primarily a Public Art sculptor working in a figurative manner, best exemplified by the long running series the *WATCHER*. My sculpture style is characterized by the use of silhouettes of people and animals.

The *WATCHER* started with a pen drawing on the back of the monthly issue “Minutes of the last meeting” during a particularly boring faculty council meeting at the University of Tennessee in 1977. As I recall, a lesser member of the administration was giving out the party line on why the annual budget did not include adequate funding to bring faculty salaries within a living wage. I resigned my Professorship from the university in 1983 and decided to devote full-time to my art. In 1974 I did a copper silhouette called the *DRIVER* and in retrospect this is probably the father of the *WATCHER*.

The *WATCHER* sculpture design started in 1978, and began as a series with two figures in half-inch thick mild steel. Over the years I have added *WATCHERS* in wood, copper, brass, stainless steel, painted steel and aluminum. Each *WATCHER* is unique either by material, color, size, or location. The peaceful figure of the seated man has progressed to more than 100 different individual sculptures and can be found in both public and private collections in the United States with the majority located in the Southeast. Plus, in 2004 ten members of the *WATCHER* family went international with an invitation from the Kilkenny Arts Festival to show in Ireland as a tribute to the James Joyce book, *Ulysses*. Of this lot four made Ireland a permanent home: Black and Amber *Watcher* perched above Langton’s Pub in Kilkenny Ireland, two *WATCHERS* at the County Council Building in Limerick and another in a private collection.

There are three main hat styles plus one bird. First, the Ball Hat or Trucker’s Hat as some call it, has become an international model, which can be found on the heads of thousands of people in every part of the world, the Top Hat, and Straw Hat. While browsing in a local bookstore in 1987 I discovered the book: *Movies of the 1930’s*

filled with photographs of movie stills. This started me to thinking about different hats for the *WATCHER*. It occurred to me that by simply changing the chapeau a new identity could be given to the seated man.

So, a new series was born, Hats of the 1930's. For a time, I had great fun returning to painting. Being the practical person that I am, I worked on paper because it is faster and far less expensive than fabricating maquettes or full sculptures. I did 30 or so paintings and drawings, freely adding colored pencil for detail and texture to watercolor paintings. There were hats of about every style: 10-gallon cowboy hats, homburgs, sailor hats, even the addition of the funnel hat of the Tin Man from the Wizard of Oz. From all of the painting, only a few hat styles ever made it to a sculptured figure. The *WATCHERS* in straw and cowboy hats are unique in that they break away from the traditional silhouette form and progress into three-dimensional space with the addition of a hat brim. This adds an interesting effect of shadow, which accents the head and face.

The use of diagonal lines on many of the *WATCHERS* is a recurring theme in my sculpture and more than a few of my mixed media collages. The diagonal lines set up a visual tension causing the viewer to give the artwork more than a casual glance. Seeing the lines causes one to respond in much the same way they do upon seeing warning signs and barricades long the roadway. With the diagonal, there is a sense of activity or impending motion that is absent in compositions with horizontal or vertical lines.

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GPS numbers indicate Public Art for either permanent collections or on loan locations. Red title indicates artist's collection.  
No city or GPS number indicates the works' locations are unknown.

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