



Practice Spotlight | GRATITUDE

featured sculpture of Eoín Burke from the
Champion | Peace Artist Series

Founder's Welcome

Any noble vision must be accessible. If a big idea is not able to be approached or accessed it will remain just another good idea (and how good is it really, if you can't apply it?). There are a bunch of good ideas and intentions that remain in the space above the clouds; these good things seldom reach the ground of our lives and their promises remain unrealized. Talk of peace is often in the clouds. Talk of peace can be grandiose rather than grounded in our real lives. This is a problem because peace is possible. Peace can be practiced.

Through the monthly spotlight we will focus each new month on the featured practice. In the course of 2021, the monthly spotlight will feature the twelve sculptures that Eoin Burke created as Peace Right Here's first artist in the **Champion | Peace Artist Series**. We have used Eoin's work to teach peace at Yale University in a lecture series and also at Baylor University in a semester-long course. Many have been inspired and blessed by this unique collaboration and we hope the same is true for you.

In the next seven days you will be invited to observe a sculpture, ask questions of it, and consider your own responses to the figure. Along the way you will hear from the sculptor, Eoin Burke, to learn more about his intention for each sculpture. Additionally, certain days you will have questions and ideas to contemplate. Other days, you will have an activity or exercise to put into action. At the end of these seven days you will have three questions which will allow you a chance to reflect on the practice at hand and decide what the respective practice might look like in your life as you go forward.

Blessings and peace,

Paul Gorrell
Founder | Peace Right Here

GRATITUDE



GRATITUDE | Introduction

Maya Angelou wrote a poem for Oprah Winfrey's fiftieth birthday; which is featured in Maya Angelou's book *Celebrations*. In the midst of this poem, Angelou images gratitude as she writes about her wishes for Oprah:

To let gratitude be the pillow
Upon which you kneel to
Say your nightly prayer

As you notice in both Angelou's poem and in Burke's sculpture there is a lowering of one's self; most notably one's head. And in each image we also see stillness; with Angelou's words we see a kneeling position and in Burke's sculpture a person in a sturdy upside-down yoga pose. These are simple observations, but simple things can be transformative.

In the practice of gratitude it seems that there is a need for an alteration in our perspective and in our pace. Our perspective must be reoriented to train our eyes, emotions, and spirit to see what may be hidden or hard to see. Also, our pace must reach a point of pause so that we have the time and space needed for formative reflection and response. If we move quickly through a landscape we may notice green leaves surrounding the path. However, if we move slowly through this same landscape; we will notice the unique colorations of each leaf. The dark green leaves with yellow spines. The smooth and shiny leaves. The rough and insect eaten leaves. We see more as we linger.

Through the practice of gratitude a substantial work is done in our relationships. Gratitude, rightly, positions us in each area of relationship. In the practice of gratitude we are reacquainted with the beauty and goodness that surrounds each of our lives. In the practice of gratitude we search our world for places, people, and moments that cause our hearts to expand and our vision to refocus the whole nature of our being as we live in this world.

DAY 1 | The Sculpture & You

First observe the sculpture. Here are some questions and ideas to consider as you take your time getting new perspectives on the sculpture. Feel free to record your own ideas and ask any other question that seems fitting.

- What is this figure doing?
- What emotions do you believe the figure may be feeling due to the position they are in?
- From toes-to-head, consider the experience of each body part (toes/feet, legs, core/stomach, arms and hands, and head).
- What do you think any of the answers to the questions above or any other thoughts you have about this have to do with the practice of gratitude?

DAY 2 | Artist Notes

Watch the following video where Eoín Burke describes the features of this sculpture and how it makes sense of the practice of promising. As you watch this video consider Eoín's rendering of this practice and work to see his perspective while also making room for your own perspective and ideas on this practice. Below the video will be some key takeaways from Eoín's words on gratitude.



- If you're filled with gratitude it is hard to be filled with anger or envy.
- Standing on your head, in this sculpture, is a metaphor for seeing things differently.
- Gratitude, in this piece, is pictured as structurally strong; like a pillar.

DAY 3 | Contemplation

Can you remember a time when you experienced an overwhelming sense of gratefulness?

- What was the situation?

- Why were you grateful?

- As you think of the story again; do you feel any residual feelings of gratitude or does it feel like a distant memory?

- How often do you remember this story when you felt so grateful?

- Did any insights on gratitude come to the surface? If so, describe your insights.

DAY 4 | Action

Speak your gratitude aloud. It may be with your family, co-workers, an acquaintance, a stranger, your own self, it may be to a higher power that you recognize in your life, or even to an aspect of the natural world. The invitation is to mobilize the gratitude that you notice, sense, and feel inside into one of your relationships. This invitation requires noticing what gratitude bubbles up and it also requires the willingness to share that gratitude.

DAY 5 | Contemplation

Who has been your greatest teacher for what it means to be grateful?

- What was it about this person that taught you about gratitude?
- Where at in their life did you see the shaping power of gratitude?
- What about this person's life do you wish for yourself?
- Did they do anything in particular that made gratitude a unique feature in their life?
- Where do you sense this person's influence in your life inviting you to grow?

DAY 6 | Action

Perspective and pace are simple pieces to pay attention to as you grow in the practice of gratitude. In the poem by Maya Angelou gratitude is pictured as a pillow one kneels upon. Eoin Burke's sculpture shows a person upside down; communicating that gratitude comes from seeing things differently. These are both images to express the idea of looking at things differently to see what is not always easy to see.

Design a way for yourself to gain a different perspective on your experience of life. You may kneel. You may lay down. You may go to a special place in your home or city. You may do any number of creative things. And as you do this give yourself a pause from the pressures and busy nature of life that crowds out the time and space needed to process and discern what in our life is worthy of gratitude.

DAY 7 | Reflections & Going Forward

Question: What has this practice looked like in your life up till now?

Prompt: Describe something from the past week that you have learned or something that has been meaningful to you, regarding this practice.

Question: How would you like this practice to be a part of your life going forward?