



**LEFT: Marcus with examples of his work
BELOW (L-R): Valerio Romeo, Jason Billin,
Christine Levine, Eugene Levine, Marcus
Levine, Paul Bozson and Kristina Levine**



GOLD STANDARD

Susan Preston reviews a debut to remember.

It seems Marcus Levine is an artist with the Midas touch; his first ever public exhibition, staged in Leeds, has won him a commission to do one of his unique and stunning nail paintings in 18 carat gold nails.

The exhibition at the Radisson SAS Hotel attracted lots of interest and brought Marcus not only the commission for the gold nail painting for a Yorkshire penthouse, but also the sale of some of his other nail works. More importantly, it gave Marcus the opportunity to show his work to the public for the first time and get acceptance for it.

His nail art, a series of one-off life size and larger pieces depicting nudes using thousands of nails, gained a rapturous response from exhibition visitors. Some of the comments made were: "Simply delicious"; "They're beautiful"; "They seem to come alive as the light changes in the room", and: "The memories of seeing these works will live with me forever".

This is strong praise indeed and Marcus was delighted to hear it as it validated his belief in himself as an artist and proved he was right, at the age of 42, to take his work to the public for the first time. Before the exhibition he had never even sold a piece of his work.

When interviewed earlier in the year by Northside, Marcus revealed that he had struggled for years trying to conform to society and family pressures and was only now starting to explore his creativity through his art. For years he played to an audience of family and friends with

traditional artworks, some of which were on show at the exhibition, before finally feeling able to experiment with the nail art and more abstract works. His exhibition featured all his latest work, including a yin and yang series (Andy Warhol style) and a set of morphing nudes in metallic leaf and acrylic.

Marcus, who lives in Bingley and who has worked in his family's printing machinery business in Bramhope for 18 years, is now planning to take his work to the BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art in Gateshead, Tyne and Wear, and the White Cube in London. He has also been approached by an A-list celebrity and is in discussions with them to produce a nail painting portrait of them which will be centre stage at the London show. Marcus has promised to keep us up-to-date with this one.

The exhibition was a great weekend for Marcus and bodes well for his future as an artist. His father, who at one time tried to discourage his son's desire to be an artist, was perhaps his most proud exhibition visitor.

It is true that Marcus has suffered for his art, not only in the pain caused by the hammer when he is creating his nail paintings (each painting takes him around three weeks to create and features over 6,000 nails), but also in his self development and belief that it is a path he can follow and be accepted in. The Leeds' exhibition should have finally hammered home the message to Marcus that he can succeed.



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