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The Public Building Commission of Chicago was formed in 1956 for the purpose of managing public building construction projects, and the very first project undertaken by the commission was the development of a new Civic Center for Chicago and Cook County. Designs for the new building began in 1960 and construction began in 1963.

In 1965, the Chicago Civic Center was completed in the center of Chicago's Loop on the block bounded by Clark, Dearborn, Randolph and Washington Streets. The 31-story building, which was renamed the Richard J. Daley Center in 1976 in honor of the late mayor, is home to several city and county offices as well as over a hundred courtrooms of the Circuit Court of Cook County and two courtrooms for the First District Appellate Court of Illinois. Building details, such as the spandrels, columns and window mullions, were constructed using Cor-Ten steel, a self-weathering steel that naturally oxidizes to a rusty brown color. Many believe the Chicago Civic Center was the first skyscraper to be built using Cor-Ten technology.

Even before the building was completed, however, the Public Building Commission wanted to have a monumental sculpture to form the centerpiece of the plaza in front of the Civic Center. The story goes that the commission threw names of artists into a hat to help decide who to approach for such a project, but everyone threw in the same name -- Picasso.

After receiving approval from Mayor Richard J. Daley, architect William E. Hartmann was chosen to approach the Spanish artist. Hartmann was a senior partner in Skidmore, Owings and Merrill, just one of the architectural firms collaborating on the Civic Center project.

Picasso was 82 when Hartmann visited him at his home in the French Riviera. Hartmann presented the artist with a White Sox jacket and a check for \$100,000 from the Public Building Commission to pay for the design, but again, the story goes that Picasso returned the check to Hartmann saying, "This is my gift to the people of Chicago."

Picasso's design for the sculpture resulted in a 42-inch model, incorporating elements from some of the artist's earlier work. U.S. Steel in Gary was then charged with constructing the finished sculpture, building it using the same Cor-Ten steel used for Civic Center building.

The completed work, which was 50 feet tall and weighed 162 tons, was unveiled in a public ceremony on August 15, 1967. Mayor Daley famously announced to the thousands that attended the unveiling, "We dedicate this celebrated work this morning with the belief that what is strange to us today will be familiar tomorrow."

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Controversy initially surrounded the sculpture as people variously believed the work resembled either a

woman's head or was inspired by one of Picasso's pet Afghan hounds. The sculpture is actually untitled, although it has become known as simply the Chicago Picasso, and today is a beloved symbol of the city.

When Picasso passed away in 1973, Mayor Richard J. Daley and the City Council honored the artist by stating, "Pablo Picasso became a permanent part of Chicago, forever tied to the city he admired but never saw, in a country he never visited, on August 15, 1967. It was on that day that the Picasso sculpture in the Civic Center Plaza was unveiled; it has become a part of Chicago, and so has its creator Picasso."

Resources

Under the Picasso.

Every weekday at noon, weather permitting, the City of Chicago's Department of Cultural Affairs sponsors the "Under the Picasso" series. The daily event includes singing, dancing, music and a variety of cultural activities. Check out the website above for the current May schedule.

On-line Picasso Project.

This comprehensive website is the complete online catalogue raisonné for Pablo Picasso. Created by Enrique Mallen, in the Department of Hispanic Studies at Texas A&M University, the site includes over 7,000 catalogued artworks, divided by the year they were created. The site also includes extensive biographical information, a bibliography, and a list of institutions and museums holding works by Picasso. ?



Chicago Authors: First Lines

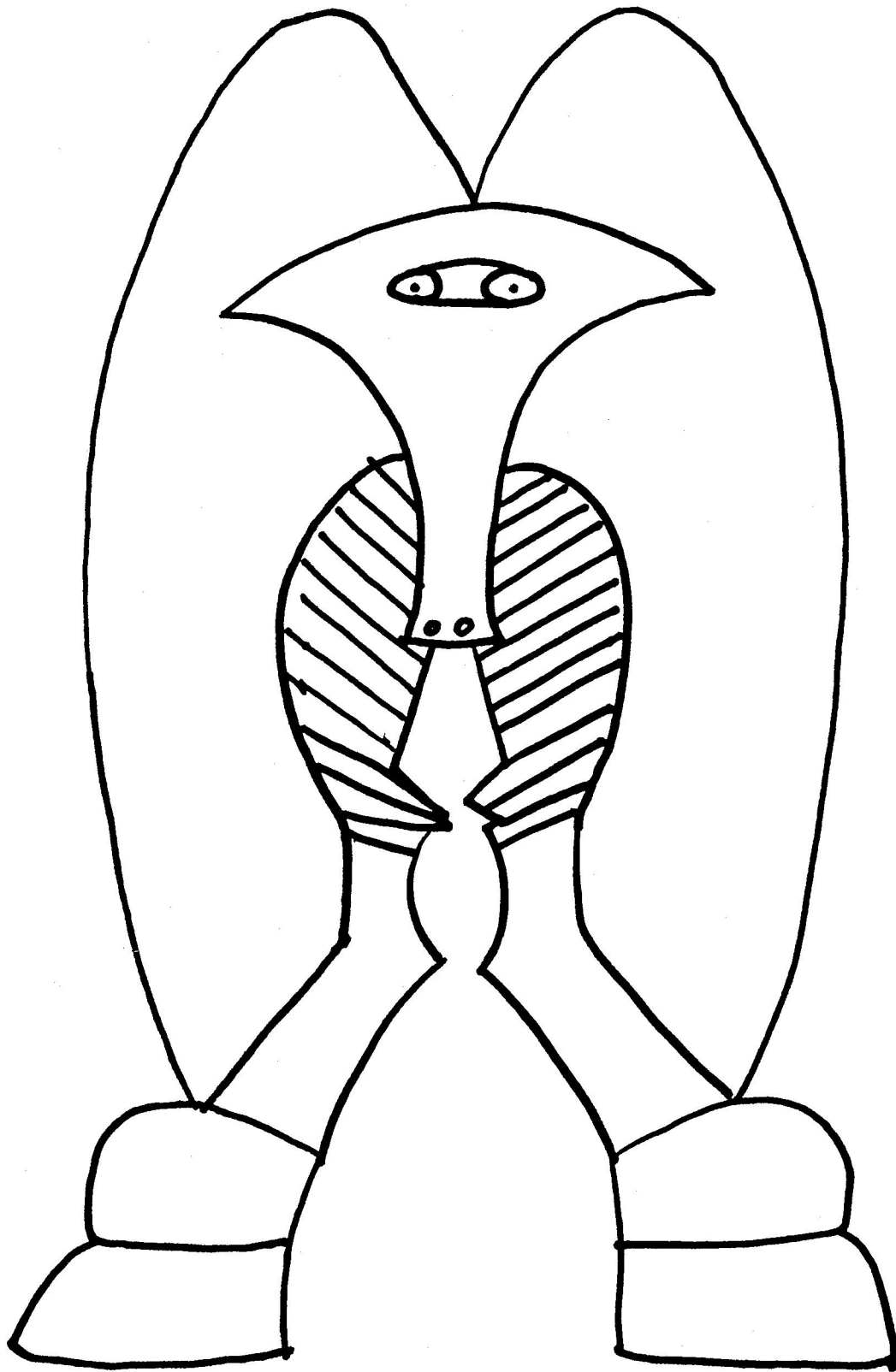
When the world ends
a great spider will rise like a gray cloud
above it.
She will rise and swell, rise and swell
Until she covers green earth, brown rock,
and blue water.
she will seize Creation inside herself
when the world ends
in the last days between the fire and the cold
--Angela Jackson, from "Transformable Prophecy" in *Dark Legs and Silk Kisses*

Angela Jackson was born in Greenville, Mississippi in 1951 but grew up on Chicago's South Side. She attended Northwestern University and was an active member of Chicago's Organization of Black American Culture (OBAC) Writers Workshop. *Dark Legs and Silk Kisses: The Beatitudes of the Spinners*, a collection of poetry from which the above selection was taken, won the 1993 Chicago Sun-Times Book of the Year Award in poetry and the 1994 Carl Sandburg Award for poetry. Her more recent collection, *And All These Roads Be Luminous: Poems Selected and New*, was nominated for the National Book Award for 1998.



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http://gapersblock.com/airbags/archives/the_chicago_picasso_a_gift_from_one_of_the_gr... 4/17/2008



Pablo Picasso's gift to Chicago can be seen at the Richard J. Daley Plaza.
The statue is fifty feet tall and was dedicated August 15, 1967.
The statue is not titled, what would you call it?