Koni, Nicolaus
1947-51

Koni

April 16, 1947

Dear Mr. Lie:

Mr. Nicolaus Koni is a well known artist who served in the war and who has therefore been more or less forgotten and is trying to get back.

He had asked to present my husband with a wood carving of the Pieta but since my husband's death, he has offered it to me. He would like to have it given to the United Nations as he feels it has a close connection with human rights.

I think the carving is very fine and I hope you will send some one to see it at his studio, 41 East 60th Street, New York City, whose judgment you can trust and who knows what your plans are for the buildings. You could then decide if you care to accept it as a gift from Mr. Koni.

Very sincerely yours,

ORIGINAL RETIRED FOR PRESERVATION

April 3, 1947

My dear Captain Witherspoon:

I shall be glad to visit Mr. Koni's studio on April 15th at 11 A.M., if it is convenient.

Very sincerely yours,

ORIGINAL RETIRED FOR PRESERVATION

GRAMERCY 5-2860

Koni

GRAND LODGE
FREE AND ACCEPTED MASONS
OF THE
STATE OF NEW YORK

MASONIC HALL
71 West 23rd Street
NEW YORK 10, N. Y.

COMMITTEE ON
SERVICE AND REHABILITATION
For Veterans and Servicemen

April 2, 1947

Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt
Apartment 6A
29 Washington Square West
New York, N.Y.

My dear Mrs. Roosevelt:

I have your letter of March 26th.

Mr. Koni has just returned to New York after finishing the portrait bust of General Bradley. He will suit his time to yours when you will be able to come to Mr. Koni's Studio and make the formal presentation of the Roosevelt Pieta.

Mr. Koni will be in New York for the next four weeks and I would appreciate your advising us the date and time of your visit in order that we may inform Mr. Koni to prepare his Studio and work.

With best wishes, I am

Sincerely,

H.H. Witherspoon

H.H. WITHERSPOON
Capt. (ChC) USN (ret)
Executive Director.

11 pm 15th

HHW/ma

busy just now
have been away
When does Mr A
return to NY

March 6, 1947

Dear Capt. Witherspoon:

Your letter of March 2nd has been received. At present Mrs. Roosevelt is out of town and is not expected back until the end of this month.

She will not be able to set a time to visit Mr. Koni's studio until sometime in April.

Very sincerely,

Acting Secretary

GRAMERCY 5-2860

GRAND LODGE
FREE AND ACCEPTED MASONS
OF THE
STATE OF NEW YORK
MASONIC HALL
71 West 23rd Street
NEW YORK 10, N. Y.

COMMITTEE ON
SERVICE AND REHABILITATION
For Veterans and Servicemen

Indef.
Eek
Where does
when?

2 March 1947

My dear Mrs. Roosevelt:

We were happy to receive your gracious promise to visit the studio of Nicolaus Koni to accept the Roosevelt Pieta. We realize the difficulty of fitting an engagement into your crowded schedule, but when you can set a date, I hope you will let me know. In ten days Mr. Koni goes to Washington to do a bust of General Bradley, but of course he can return for your visit to his studio, should you be unable to come before the ten days.

We trust that a public presentation will be agreeable to you: it will be of necessity a small and informal affair because Mr. Koni's studio is most compact, but attractive. Our viewpoint is not mercenary, nor even Masonic - simply that Mr. Koni is a fine artist whose health and career were hurt by war, and because he is a symbol - a young man whose experiences have given him an almost frantic faith in the Roosevelts and the Commission of Human Rights. His story will highlight for many the importance and the practical value of the United Nations.

Should you be able to spare the time, we should like to entertain you and anyone you might like to bring with you at luncheon, tea or dinner - whichever is nearest the hour of your visit to the studio.

With kindest regards, I am

Sincerely yours,

M. M. Witherspoon

M. M. Witherspoon
Capt., ChC, USN (Ret)

Executive Director

Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt
Apt. 6 A, 29 Washington Square West
New York 11, N. Y.

Koni
41 EAST 60th STREET
NEW YORK 22, N. Y.
Reg. 48367

March 3, 1947

Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt
29 Washington Square West
New York 11, New York - Apt. 6A

My dear Mrs. Roosevelt:

Captain Witherspoon has told me that you will be kind enough to visit my studio in order to see my wood carving "Piata". I will be very happy to place my time at your disposal, and will be delighted to welcome you at any time you find convenient.

I believe Captain Witherspoon will write to you.

Your suggestion to place this wood carving in the Library at Hyde Park is a good one; however since this work symbolizes Humanity itself, and the Spirit of the late President Roosevelt, it would be most appropriate to place it at the U.N. Headquarters of Human Rights. However, we can discuss this later.

Looking forward to the pleasure of seeing you, I remain

Very sincerely yours,

Nicolaus Koni

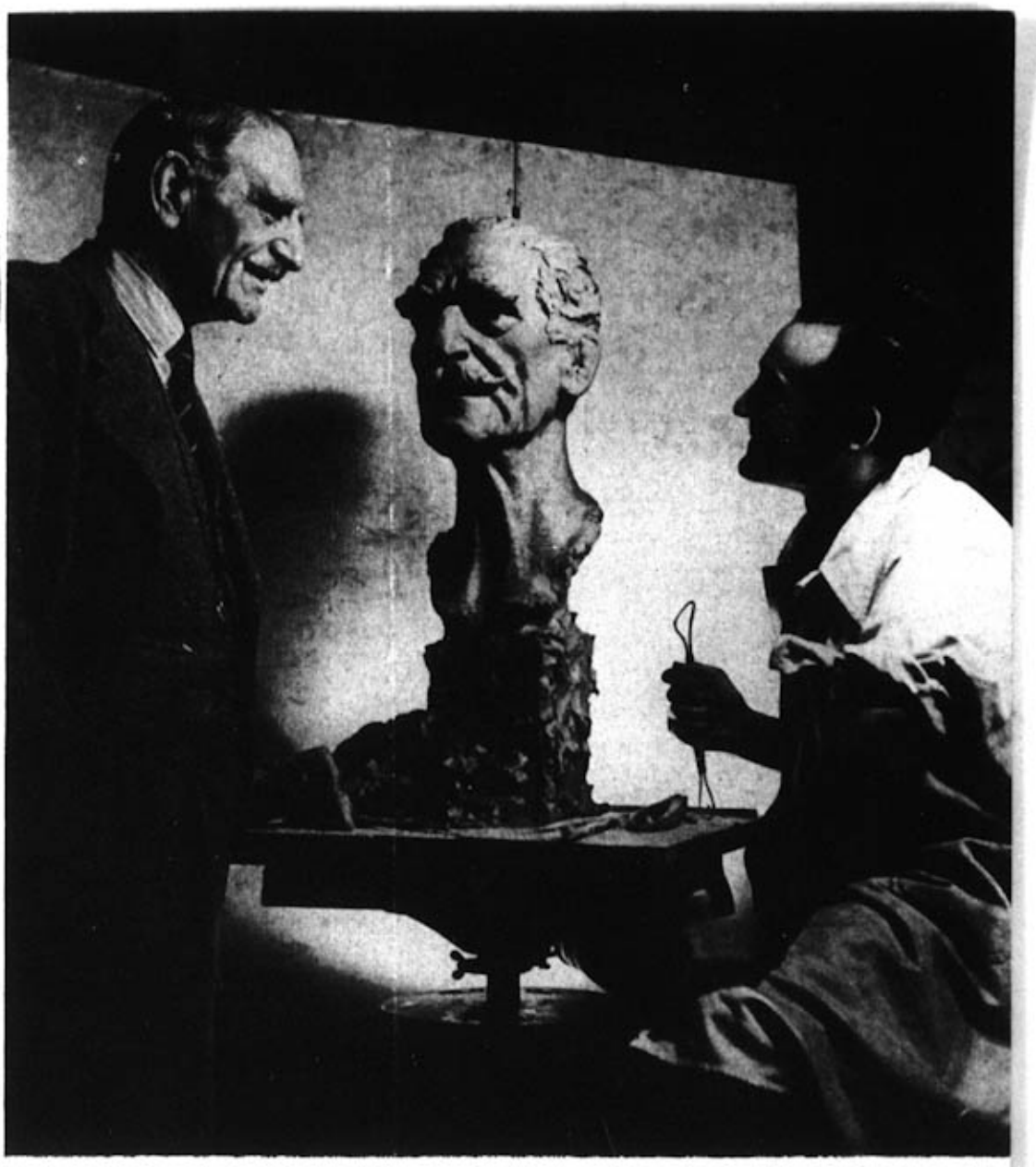
Nicolaus Koni

NK:HW

[illegible] gladly go to see
the carving the first
opportunity, I know. Perhaps
Mr Stone would like to
give it to the
FDR library at HP

Nicc

Yes see ad



Nicolaus Koni,

Sculptor

Marshal Pilsudski (Stone)
Brooklyn Museum

Crucifixion (Walnut)
"Koni seems to have grasped . . . Christ's suffering." Gustave Dumas, S. J., Fordham University

Tribute to the Soldiers of Humanity
Rockford Museum

Nicolaus Koni has been sculpturing professionally for the past 21 years and his works of more than 1,600 pieces are scattered throughout the world in museums and private collections. These works include monuments and portrait-busts of famous people, and were made at different periods in the studios he maintained in Vienna, Salzburg, Switzerland, Paris, London, Ireland and New York.

Born in Transylvania, Hungary, *Koni* began to sculpture at the age of six. At twelve he entered a wood-carving school in Hungary and six years later left the land of his birth to study in European art centers, including the Vienna Academy of Fine Art.

Koni's first exhibit in the United States took place in New York City, in May, 1942, under the sponsorship of the British Ministry of Information, following which he was invited by the American Federation of Art in Washington, D. C. to exhibit his works throughout the East. After this tour he was admitted to the National Sculpture Society of America in 1943 (of which he is the youngest member.)

Koni's technique shows mastery over all mediums, from the sphynx-like monumental stone head of Marshal Pilsudski to the powerful Crucifixion, carved in walnut.

Koni IN THE NEWS

THE SENTINEL, TUESDAY, APRIL 11, 1944

World Famous Sculptor Now Camp Grant Medic

A sculptor of international renown, artist of portrait busts of world-famous people, Pvt. Nicholaus Koni, Hungarian-born, has been assigned to Camp Grant, Illinois, where he will be employed in his profession. Pvt. Koni was formerly detached from his basic training at Camp Grant, Ill., to Camp Grant, Illinois, where he will be employed in his profession. Among his early works were studies of Kaiser Franz Joseph, Pope Pius, the chancellor of Austria, and Chaliapin, Opera Singer, and other famous Opera Stars of the Salzburg Festivals. Pvt. Koni was also the sculptor of the Mozart Fountain in Salzburg, Austria, and his studies in Salzburg, Vienna, Munich, Amsterdam, Paris, London, Switzerland, Ireland and New York.

Koni came to this country in 1941 under sponsorship of the British Ministry of Information to exhibit some of his work. Within a year he was exhibiting in various world capitals and exhibiting in the British Isles, and last March he was in Ireland and Switzerland. Pvt. Koni's background in plastic surgery and his degree in anatomy, which he received while in the Medical Corps of the British Army, helped him in his work. He was assigned to the Medical Department and sent to Camp Grant for basic training.

Started Work at 4

Born in Transylvania, Hungary, 33 years ago, Koni has been sculpturing since the age of 4. At the age of 13 he entered a sculpture school in Hungary at the age of 16 he entered a sculpture school in Budapest, art capital of Hungary, and graduated at 18. Although he never studied in Munich, Koni has lived there and in Paris, and he speaks French, German, and English.

Koni's first exhibit in the United States took place in May 1942, at the American British Art Center in New York, following which he was invited by the American Federation of Art to Washington, D. C., to exhibit his works throughout the East. After this tour he was admitted as a citizen. Recently he

Arthur was formally dedicated in New York by the general's mother, Mrs. Arthur MacArthur. In Washington, Mrs. MacArthur presented the Purple Heart Medal to a soldier for the Treasury Department.

One of Koni's outstanding pieces of work during his stay in the United States is a bronze medallion of the two Japanese Peace Envoys who came to America to sue for peace in the Russo-Japanese War. In Australia Koni made a bronze medallion of the Duke of Gloucester, brother of the King, and a bust of Premier Curtin. In Ireland he made a bronze medallion of President de Valera, and a bronze medallion of the Prince of Wales. In Switzerland he made a bronze medallion of the Polish national hero, Paderewski.

In 1938 he went to England to visit his brother who was then stationed in the British Army. Since he was a sculptor he was asked to do a bust of the Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, which he did. Later he was asked to do a bust of Winston Churchill, which he did. Later he was asked to do a bust of Lord Halifax, which he did. Later he was asked to do a bust of Lord Beaverbrook, which he did. Later he was asked to do a bust of Lord Mountbatten, which he did. Later he was asked to do a bust of Lord Louis, which he did. Later he was asked to do a bust of Lord Montgomery, which he did. Later he was asked to do a bust of Lord Alexander, which he did. Later he was asked to do a bust of Lord Tedder, which he did. Later he was asked to do a bust of Lord Portal, which he did. Later he was asked to do a bust of Lord Cunningham, which he did. Later he was asked to do a bust of Lord Harris, which he did. Later he was asked to do a bust of Lord Ismay, which he did. Later he was asked to do a bust of Lord Hankey, which he did. Later he was asked to do a bust of Lord Brooke, which he did. Later he was asked to do a bust of Lord Wavell, which he did. Later he was asked to do a bust of Lord Alanbrooke

Among his portrait-busts are a dramatic study of Marian Anderson, a brooding bronze of Count Frederick Ledebur, and an imposing study of General MacArthur. During *Koni's* stay in England, he did portraits of Winston Churchill, members of the Royal Family, and many other prominent Britons.

But one should not think of *Koni* merely as a successful portrayer of the rich and famous. He is first and foremost a humanitarian who abhors war and all forms of prejudice. As a participant in the London blitz, and as a soldier in the United States Army, *Koni* knows the frightful devastation, the uselessness of war. He believes that we must fight even harder for peace. His contribution toward this end is the creation of works such as "Tribute to the Soldiers of Humanity" (dedicated to the Medical Corps, and now in the Rockford, Illinois Museum); "The Soul of Rotterdam", and others. Pierre Bourdelle, in describing the work and the artist, says "as an artist *Koni* is guilty of an unforgivable sin: he is human."

Marian Anderson
(Bronze)

Princess Natalie Paley
(Bronze)

Sra. Aloysio de Salles
Rio de Janeiro

GRAND LODGE
FREE AND ACCEPTED MASONS
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STATE OF NEW YORK

MASONIC HALL
71 West 23rd Street
NEW YORK 10, N. Y.

GRamercy 5-2860

COMMITTEE ON
SERVICE AND REHABILITATION
For Veterans and Servicemen

3 February 1947

I'll gladly go
tomorrow at 2 P.M.
F.D.R. Jr.

My dear Mrs. Roosevelt:

One of our disabled veterans who, we feel, has talent - even genius - asked me to represent him in carrying out an offer he made to President Roosevelt, and which was accepted by him as you will note in the enclosed correspondence.

Nicolaus Koni has the Pieta at his studio at 41 East 60th Street, Phone REgent 4-8367, and he would like to make a formal presentation to you. Mr. Koni would like to have his carving called "The Roosevelt Pieta," since he feels it symbolizes the spirit of the late President. It is his thought that you might want to have it placed in the headquarters of the Commission on Human Rights, because as often quoted, "President Roosevelt was truly the father of the United Nations, and the Commission on Human Rights would probably have been closest to his heart."

With your sensibility, I know you will feel there are two important elements in this matter: your late husband's desire to have the carving, and the impetus it will give to American art.

Your formal acceptance of the Pieta would be a "beau geste" to a disabled veteran of our Army, and a Legionnaire. Having had first hand experience of war's destruction - he was a fire watcher during London's ordeal - he feels the importance of creating beauty. Spiritual strength marks his work. Like so many of our veterans he is seeking to reestablish himself, and needs our encouragement.

Sincerely yours,

M. M. Witherspoon

M. M. Witherspoon
Capt., ChC, USN (Ret)

Executive Director

Yes be address &
Secretary

COPY

6 October, 1944

Miss Grace Tully
Secretary to the President
The White House
Washington, D.C.

Dear Miss Tully:

May I recall to your memory the day in November, 1942, when I had the pleasure of visiting you in the White House with the introduction of Mr. Robert Sherwood? At that time I brought with me a few photos of my sculpture work.

This composition was inspired by our President's speech after Pearl Harbor. I was restless until I had created this work of mine, which I entitled "The American Pieta". It is a life-sized wood carving, base-relief of two figures symbolizing, one, the human struggle of nations, and the other, the humanity of America. Originally I dedicated this work to the President, as I believe he is one of the greatest of the humanitarians of today.

I shall be extremely happy if the President will accept my modest offer, especially at this occasion when the world realizes that his leadership and presidency are vitally important for the American peoples and for the rest of the world.

I would be indeed grateful to you if you would kindly convey my desire to the President and let me know his decision towards my work. I believe that all the civilized world will agree with an artist's expression toward the great spirit of a living humanitarianism, which this work of mine symbolizes.

I enclose a camp newspaper in which you will see that since I visited you I have volunteered to the armed services. Unfortunately, at the present time I am a patient in this hospital, but I believe it will be possible for me to visit Washington, D.C. in the near future.

May I thank you for your kindness? Hoping to have the pleasure of hearing from you, I remain

Sincerely yours,

Pvt. Nicholas Koni, 42076676
Ward 101 - Newton D. Baker General Hospital
Martinsburg, West Virginia.

COPY

THE WHITE HOUSE

Washington

October 23, 1944

My dear Private Koni:

I have been pleased to call the President's attention to the generous offer you made in your letter of October sixth to me. He asks me to tell you that he would indeed be delighted to have the carving which you so interestingly describe.

With all good wishes for improvement in your health,

Very sincerely yours,

Grace G. Tully
Private Secretary

Private Nicholas Koni, 42076676
Ward 101,
Newton D. Baker General Hospital,
Martinsburg,
West Virginia.

JOURNAL AMERICAN 1/29/47

Ex-Medical Corpsman Has New Medium of Painting

Nicolaus Koni works on the figure he has titled "Rondo Capriccio." Behind him is another called "Sca Aloysia de Salles."

Journal-American Photo by Art Miller.

Discharged from the U. S. Medical Corps because of a back injury, Nicolaus Koni was forced to give up temporarily the sculpturing which made him world famous.

But that handicap could not halt his artistry.

"I decided to take up painting," he said today in his studio at 43 E. 60th st., "but I wanted to create something new—something never done before in painting."

As a result, he worked out a new medium of painting which he will introduce this Spring in a one-man exhibition. It consists of watercolor, pastel and tempora.

Hungarian-born, Koni came to the United States from London after surviving the blitz. He joined the Medical Corps as a private in 1943 and while getting basic training at Camp Grant, Illinois, suffered the back injury.

He managed to finish, however, one of his best-known statues—"Tribute to the Soldiers of Humanity"—which he dedicate Medical Corps.