**“Mind Over Matter”**

September 2015

*Wood Type*: Honduran Mahogany. I chose this type of wood for its beautiful color, grain patterns, and because its firmness is optimal for easy and enjoyable carving.

*Weight*: 1.13 pounds (0.51 kilograms); for comparison, the weight of an average human brain hemisphere is in the range of 1.43 to 1.54 pounds (0.65 to 0.70 kilograms).

*Modeled After*: A brain hemisphere displayed at the Science Museum of Minnesota.

*Location:* My teacher’s *Artistic Wood Carving Studio* in Minneapolis, MN.

*Time Period:* It took me a total of 62 hours (Fall 2014 to Fall 2015).

*Carving Tools*: Only hand tools (a dozen of different types of gauges and a mallet) were used throughout the carving process.

*What Led Me to Carve It?*

Prior to this project, I carved two other brain hemispheres. As a Gerontologist and Dementia Behavior Specialist I use my wood carved brain hemispheres as educational tools when I educate family members and professionals about person-directed approaches for caring for elders with Alzheimer’s disease and other forms of dementia. I use it primarily to raise awareness about one of the most ancient parts of the brain – the amygdala. This part of the brain is responsible for attaching emotions to memory. In Alzheimer’s disease, the ability to feel the full range of emotions we all feel remains relatively intact in many people much later than the ability to remember (short-term memory), speak, and understand. Proactively meeting the emotional needs and validating the subjective experiences of elders with Alzheimer’s disease (such as by using the communication techniques of the Validation Method) often has a calming effect on these individuals and is critical for optimizing their psychological well-being. However, these human needs and experiences are often overlooked or insufficiently met at home and in long-term care homes, which commonly leads these individuals to experience emotional distress, anxiety, fear, and develop various forms of distressing and risky behavioral expressions.

I am thrilled and honored to have my wood carved brain hemisphere displayed at the Cushing Center of Yale University and hope that you will enjoy seeing and holding it. My hope is that it may encourage you to pursue your own aspirations in the intersection between neuroscience and the arts.

*Credit To My Teacher*: Konstantinos Papadakis, an old world wood carving master, started carving wood when he was 9 years young on the island of Crete. He is now 80 years old. He recently used the following question when he reflected on his early years in Greece and the deep feelings he experienced when he first learned about woodcarving: “*Have you ever fallen in love?*” To visit his website and see his wood carvings, go to: <http://konstantinospapadakis.com>

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