Sculpting Without Boundaries

When I was in first grade, I won a silver dollar for a crayon entry in a Halloween contest. Last year, I was awarded a Blue Ribbon for a three-dimensional mosaic sculpture at the Lake Oswego Festival of Arts. Through the media of pottery, painting, pastels, and presently, mosaics, the shy little girl with crayons has evolved into the woman I am today.

In 2001, the silver lining from breast cancer came in the form of a gift bestowed by the universe: mosaics. Self-taught from books and advice from friends, I feel like the caterpillar who has been transformed into a butterfly, bringing forth my own creations as I swoop with wings unfurled. I've learned that life is short: Why hold back, especially for art's sake? What attracts me to mosaics is that it has no boundaries: The shards are as limitless in choice as are the forms—just like life itself. I utilize mosaics with an unbridled style that challenges the complexity of direction with the simplicity of the form.

My technique has been developing for nine years, architecturally in tile but mostly in three-dimensional forms that are altered sculpturally from the inside out. My pieces make use of andamento, the visual flow and direction within a mosaic produced by the placement of tesserae (individual tiles). When I create, my focus is to force the eye to flow with the piece, whether it travels within the grout lines or follows the directional path of the shards within the composition. Ultimately, I'm trying to lead the viewer to take a visual "walkabout," which, upon completion, should evoke an emotion.

The Torso and Creature Series, which will be showing at the Guardino Gallery from June 24 to July 27, is the first time that I've presented a series of related work. The Torsos and Busts interpret seasons, stories, and celebrations. The Creatures emerge from another world: fantastical, playful, and driven. The interplay of this grouping will stir the imagination and speak a language of composition and expression.

One of the pieces in The Torso and Creatures Series is "Pauline." "Pauline"'s base is a vintage mannequin. She sat in my studio for months begging for my attention. After studying her lines, the composition and materials began to surface and soon my worktable was inundated with ideas. A supply of slingshot pellets immediately called out for bosom placement. The nipples, well, I didn't want this piece to speak "ordinary" so they took on their own personality. Perhaps being a breast cancer survivor has something to do with it?

I use glass cutters (my favorite tool) to carefully cut each shard of stained glass and china. It's a time-consuming process but well worth every second.

I gave her "dress" a Mardi Gras treatment of color and splash by using marbles. Aqua stained glass for the skin just seemed a natural color for her, as she is definitely not of this world. The color conveys movement as does the placement and direction of the shards. I decided to use tumbled stained glass cutters.

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Greetings all.

Carole asked me to say a few words this issue... and those of you who know me, know I've always got a few words to say. Actually there are occasions when I am rendered speechless, especially when I see the incredible talent that surrounds me in the PNWS Guild. It seems every time I open the newsletter, attend a member's show, or see the latest piece of public art by one of our own, I am once again astonished by the tremendous gifts exhibited by our comrades in art.

When was the last time you wandered around Lake Oswego? On almost every corner downtown, there is a piece of art by one of the guild members: Alisa Roe, Maria Wickwire, Devin Field, Jim Demetro, Julia Voss-Andreae...the list goes on. Visit www.lofa.org to see everyone's work. I love to walk around downtown L.O. to see the creative diversity. It inspires me to shoot for the stars. I would also encourage you to visit members’ websites. Get to know who's working with what and where; it's a valuable resource for connecting with one another.

Every time I have the opportunity to chat with a Guild member, I learn something, I'm amazed at the scope of knowledge and everyone's willingness to share. More than just learning about materials and techniques, I love to hear about thought process and inspiration. These are the stories that take you right into the work or the mind of the artist.

Not everyone is fortunate enough to have direct access to our artists or to have the willingness to contact them and ask the questions that will make the art come alive. That's where being a Guild member comes in handy: Use the PNWS website to scroll through our newsletter archives and read stories about our artists, or check out the blog and become more familiar with someone's work or techniques. Members who may not be familiar with a specific artist but who are seeking information about a specific style of art can see who's doing what. That's why it is so important for you to take advantage of your membership; Provide us with a photo and a link to your website, send in articles or announcements to the newsletter, or write a blog entry. These are all benefits of membership that are just waiting for you.

The flagship of our organization is this newsletter. It not only keeps us informed about what members are up to, but we also use it as a marketing tool to attract new members and catch the attention of potential venues and collectors. As such, it is extremely important for it to “be all it can be.” With that, I have the privilege of introducing our new editor, Lynn Lustberg. Lynn comes to us with a long list of credentials in the publishing world. She's managed book projects, been a magazine editor and is a freelance writer. I'm guessing she’ll keep us on our toes and continue to build on the good work of our previous editors. Being the editor of this newsletter is a big task, so let's help make it an easier one by sending in information and articles she can use. Welcome, Lynn! We're lucky to have you.

It's a true privilege to be on the Board of Directors of such a great organization. All the board members are working hard to keep PNWS moving forward. We’d love for you to come to a board meeting, voice your opinions, and give us feedback and suggestions. If you can’t come to a meeting, email one of us. It’s your organization, and we value your ideas and input.

Happy sculpting!

—Lisa

Upcoming Meetings
Potluck (if you can’t bring food, come anyway); portfolios and works-in-progress always welcome!

June Meeting
Wednesday, June 16, 7 pm
Hosted by Fortunato Ramirez
2516 NW 29th Ave, Portland
(Corner of 29th & Industrial off NW Nicolai)
Look for PNWS sign
(503) 341-7705
www.fortunatoartworks.com
Host Fortunato Ramirez will talk about “In the flow” and sustainability at the June meeting in his studio.

July Meeting
Wednesday, July 21, 7 pm
Hosted by Wendy Dunder
1377 SW Taylors Ferry Ct.,
Portland
(0.6 mi)
Turn right at SW Taylors Ferry Rd., (Taylors Ferry Cl. is a loop. You will see the wrong end of the gravel loop first. The turn would be 13th, but the small sign says to Marsh Park.) 0.5 mi
Turn left at SW Taylors Ferry Cl.; go straight, not down hill.
We are the third house on the left (Orange house behind two large Deodora cedars)

From the South
Take exit 295 for Taylors Ferry Rd. (Taylors Ferry Cl. is a loop.)
Slight left at Taylors Ferry Rd.
The cross street is 13th. Watch street numbers.
Turn right on Taylors Ferry Cl.
Go straight, not down hill.
We are the third house on the left (Orange house behind two large Deodora cedars.)

Dimensions: Pacific Northwest Sculptors • June–July 2010 • page 2
On the Role of Nature in Northwestern Art
by David Lochtie

Is there a unique aspect of art that emanates from the Pacific Northwest? Some have argued that there is a transcendent treatment of nature, with wild beauty upstaging and even eclipsing human concerns. This has been most clearly articulated in the descriptions of the “Northwest School” of the mid-twentieth century, but a case can be made that sublime landscapes and uncivilized places still affect the art of this region in a profound way. The definitive artists here seek their inspiration primarily from the landscape, the argument goes, and are seized by indigenous shapes and patterns that burst from their hands.

Add to this the mythology of the place: a wonderland settled by pilgrims; a mecca for back-to-naturists, outdoor adventurers, and Ecotopian theorists. Throw in the fact that Oregon has become a headquarters for the Green Movement, and you have a culture that you might say necessarily rubs off on residents, artists or otherwise, and may lend weight to an aesthetic of ecology in the local artwork.

But before claiming that it is the face of nature that appears anew and unique in the quintessential Northwestern painting or sculpture, we must consider the obvious rebuttal: Artists everywhere are affected by culture that you might say necessarily rubs off on residents, artists or otherwise, and may lend weight to an aesthetic of ecology in the local artwork.

I have chosen these artists because each made the Northwest his or her home, and each displays in their work compositional and textural qualities that sing of the landscape here. They have, in their different approaches, succeeded in reproducing the energy of relationships—between trees and stones and among hills and furrows. Time and again, they have captured the sub-surface essences of forests or beaches or mountains or plateaus without losing the visual anchors that hold our recognition. So I will treat them as the kinds of Northwest artists I am talking about, and see if it’s just a coincidence, or whether there is an ingredient of Place essential to their work and to their overlapping styles.

Hilda Morris came to the Northwest from New York: first to Spokane, then Seattle, and finally to Portland. Though her origins were urban, her bronzes from clay are some of the most organically potent and true in posture of any to be seen. Encountering Morris’ sculptures, an exhilarating feeling rises up, as the viewer understands a creation that does not exactly mimic nature but contains the tendencies of nature, the personality of rock in the natural world. Do these ring true for us because we have seen the basalt columns of the Columbia Gorge? Are we accustomed to gazing upon the stone figures, weird and wind-worn, that dot the Cascade foothills? Is it only because we walk around the battered asymmetries of Lake Missoula boulders, which arrived millions of years ago, that we are thrilled to encounter their echoes in her giant bronzes? You could say that any rocks anywhere have the same significance, same appearance, same inspirational possibilities. In any case, few sculptors have captured them so well.

Hilda’s husband, Carl Morris, was born in California and displayed the same compositional genius in his work. His subjects are groupings of shapes, reminiscent of stones, fallen leaves, or shingles of bark on trees. His work evolved from angular and somewhat industrial enclosures to rough islands of light that speak back and forth across the ground of the canvas. Of his transition to abstraction, Morris said this: “My work has always been based in my experiences, my environment. I started out going out and doing landscapes at the site. It’s a long time since I’ve done that but still the landscape has been a strong part of my work. This is one of the reasons that I’m so enthusiastic about going fishing because of all the experiences that I am exposed to in the country. The work took on an abstract form–abstract interpretation of these experiences both emotionally and the visual

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Member News

Busy Summer for Steve Eichenberger

Steve Eichenberger has been invited to exhibit his work at both the Bellevue Arts Museum ArtsFair (BAM) and Portland’s Art in the Pearl. BAM ArtsFair will be held July 23, 24, and 25 in Bellevue Square, Washington, and Art in the Pearl will be held Labor Day weekend in Portland’s North Park blocks. Steve is very excited about these opportunities! BAM and AIP will be his first shows, meaning he will have to come up with a booth design, pedestals, crates, lighting, signage, literature and so on, in addition to running a five-person tile business and seeing if, on top of all that, he can find time to create enough high-quality ceramic sculpture to fill a 10 x 15 booth before BAM! We wish him luck. He’ll need it. Follow his progress on his blog at SteveEichenberger.com

Eichinger’s Summer Showings

Martin Eichinger’s works Bird in the Hand and Seeing in the Dark are included in Sculpture Walk 2010 in Sioux Falls, SD. The sculptures are on outdoor display from May 15 to September 30. Eichinger will also travel to Loveland, Colorado, for the Sculpture in the Park show August 7 – 8. The show and sale draws hundreds of sculptors and thousands of collectors to the sculpture-filled weekend.

Holzman Showing at Geezer Gallery

On Friday, June 4, from 5:30-8:30 in Multnomah Village, Eileen Holzman will show her aerated cement sculptures, mixed-media paper sculptures, and abstract watercolors at the Geezer Gallery. This is the first show for this new gallery located at the Loaves and Fishes Building on Capitol Highway and Multnomah Boulevard. The Geezer Gallery features the work of creative artists age 60 and older. Everyone is welcome to attend.

Jim Tait at the 47th Annual Lake Oswego Art Festival

The 47th annual Lake Oswego Festival of the Arts runs June 25, 26, and 27 and is expected to attract 25,000 visitors. This year’s cornerstone exhibit, Luminous Layers: Exploring Contemporary Encaustic, is an international juried and invitational show of encaustic art and will be the most comprehensive exhibit of encaustic paintings and sculpture assembled in the Pacific Northwest. Encaustic is one of the oldest forms of painting where beeswax, resin and pigment are layered and fused to produce a luminous surface that captures and transforms light. Nationally recognized artists melt, layer, scrape, and sculpt, creating their visions in wax. Encaustic art is most frequently 2D, however, seven artists will present 3D works: Cari Hernandez, Deborah Kapoor, Lisa Kaser, Brenda Mallory, Catherine Nash, Jim Tait, and Daniella Woolf.

For more info visit: www.lakewood-center.org or call the Lakewood Center for the Arts, 503-635-3901

Mardie Rees First Honor Award Winner at International Portrait Competition

In April, Mardie Rees was selected as one of the finalists in the 2010 International Portrait Competition hosted by the Portrait Society of America in Washington, D.C. Over the past 12 years, this competition has grown to become one of most prestigious events in the field of portraiture. Over 1,300 images were entered in this year’s competition, and only 16 artists were selected as finalists. Mardie’s portrait bust, Truth Beloved, was judged on skill and technique as well as aesthetic and emotional content.

Mardie, along with her husband, Jeremy, and six-month-old baby, Jasmine, flew to Washington to attend the 2010 Art of the Portrait Conference and the Award Ceremony Banquet for final judging. Her sculpture was on view at the Hyatt Regency Hotel over a four-day period, allowing the judges and attendees of the conference to view the work. Out of the 16 finalists, Mardie’s work was the only 3-D sculpture (the rest were paintings). Mardie was awarded “First Honor” at the banquet on April 24. Mardie says it was a great honor and privilege to be recognized along with the nation’s leading portrait and figurative artists.
Questions for artists
Recently I read an interview of an artist in a magazine and I noticed that the questions posed might be good ones to ask myself when writing about my art. These might be useful in formulating an artist’s statement, bio, or preparing for an interview.

What was your childhood like?
Do you come from an artistic family?
Describe a memory that you attribute towards your passion for art.
When did you discover your talent? Was it something that you always wanted to do?
How did you get into using [your medium]?
Why did you choose this medium?
Are you professionally trained as an artist?
What other mediums do you use?
What is your motivation for creating?
Where do you find inspiration for your art?
What artists have influenced you and why?
Describe the process of creating your art/particular types of pieces.
What is the atmosphere of your work space?
What are your hours/work schedule?
What is the most fulfilling part about your work?
When is it not enjoyable to work on a piece of art?
How do you overcome creative blocks?
Describe your style.
What is your favorite subject?
What is the largest project you have created?
Talk about a moment in your career that you will never forget.
Is it different when you turn a hobby into a career?
What do you hope to accomplish through your work?
How has your work been received by the public?
What quotes or mottos are you fond of that pertain to your art or life in general?
If you weren’t an artist, what would you be doing?
The other thing about the interview that caught my attention is that the answers to the questions were concise and relevant to the topic at hand. So when you’re done writing, don’t forget to edit!

—Sara Swink
Getting Creative with Your Tools
by Patrick Gracewood

How do you model sculpture that is symmetric and accurate? Sheer labor and time are often not enough. The secret is in your tools and how you use them.

I recently designed and sculpted an enormous Corinthian Capital for Caesar’s Palace Convention Center in Las Vegas, Nevada. Creating architectural-scaled sculpture requires different skills than studio work. Being able to work quickly and with accuracy is important because you are always under a deadline. Over the past 30 years in my work on big sculptures, I've developed techniques and refined my tools in ways that have helped me in my own fine art, and they might work for you, too.

Measurement calipers are helpful, but you can’t apply clay with them. When using them, you’re constantly picking up and putting down tools. A quicker and better option is to make use of every aspect of the tools you have. For example, I use the tip of a simple wood tool for a combed texture and the palm of it for applying clay. Any aspect of a tool’s length or width can be used as a unit of measurement. The rounded handle end is used to create voids, dark holes that are undercut free. Employing the same tools throughout your work also establishes consistency and unifies both the forms and surfaces of your work. One simple tool can have many functions. Play around with and practice using your tools to discover the many functions they can serve.

I started out with purchased sculpture tools. Some worked, but most did not. The ones I use now are all handmade for specific purposes. Over time, you will find that you have a few favorites that never leave your hands. Other tools will be used less often but will be perfectly suited for a specific purpose. I have a set of small wooden tools that I use solely for finishing detail work. Each has a specific width to smoothly draft recessed areas. Results are clean, leaving no undercuts in the mold and crisp surface areas of light and dark.

I made aluminum rakes to carve and shape styrofoam into a large sea monster. I found these rakes are great for modeling clay. They lay out big forms quickly. These are coarse tools for what I think of as “low resolution” modeling, similar to a pixilated photo, which gives you an overall impression but no details.

It’s important to spend the time giving your sculpture a good foundation: Accurate proportion and a good balance of light and dark are key. There is often an ongoing temptation to jump to the pretty parts, the finishing details. But it’s important to spend time using the coarser tools to get the structure correctly laid out. When that’s done, it is surprising how easy refinements become, as details fall into the right spot with each successive pass.

For a quick method of checking measurements, I use a bright nylon string stapled to the mid-line of the project. I then wrap the string around a pencil, pull it tight, and swing it from side to side to see how things are lining up. It’s a fast and easy way to ensure sculptural balance.

Most of us don’t need to create giant Corinthian Capitals, but we can all pay more attention to devising ways to use our tools efficiently (this includes creating new ones!) so you can focus on creating your art.

Patrick Gracewood is a professional artist who has created sculpture for film, television, and architecture. He writes about sculpture on his blog: http://shadowsonstone.blogspot.com/. His website is http://GracewoodStudio.com.

Sculptor’s Tip
Use a thumbnail-size drop of silicone glue (caulking, plumber’s goop) to stabilize sculpture in an exhibition. I put the silicone glue under the base to keep the object from sliding and tipping. This works for both small and large objects. It's amazingly strong and easily removed by twisting the sculpture (don’t try to pull). Residue can easily be removed with a thumbnail or spatula. Try it on a common object and see.

—Robert McWilliams

Sculpting without Boundaries, continued from page 1

The Dancer by Denise Sirchie

The Dancer

Website: www.mosaicsnw.com
Show information: Guardino Gallery, June 24 - July 27
Opening Reception: June 24  6PM - 9PM
Offered by PNWS Members

Sculpting Classes with Carole Murphy
Classes are held at Carole’s studio at 1404 SE Stark, Portland, 97214. Classes include absolute beginners up to established artists. All you need to bring is your enthusiasm and play clothes. It’s my job to bring out the “creative” in you and it is your job to relax, play and let the stress and bothers of life float away. You’ll be sculpting in an atmosphere that invites laughter and lightness of being and at the same time fosters your creative juices.

The media you will be carving in is considered a ‘green’ building material that begs to be carved, aerated cement.

Gallery of student’s sculptures http://www.carolemurphy.com/studentgallery.htm

Gallery of Carole’s sculptures http://www.carolemurphy.com/

“I love the encouragement and advice she (Carole) provided me with...Plus, the material...is to die for! —Samantha Christie

She (Carole) offers instruction and suggestions as gentle nudges to your own creativity... I am grateful for finding her...—Jere Fitterman

Classes are held Sundays 2pm to 4:30pm and Thursdays from 6:30pm to 9pm. 8 week sessions. $200 plus materials. (10% off for PNWS members.) 503-235-7233, sculptor@CaroleMurphy.com

Come be part of it!

Nature, continued from page 3

experience. The more abstract I became the closer I felt I was getting to nature.”

Morris resisted the lure of New York, where he was known and sought after, resigning himself to lesser fame, even as he was called one of the best painters in America. Of his adopted home and his process he said, “I choose to be in an environment that excites me as the Northwest does. The trips that I do into the mountains, the desert or the beach, wherever, are experiences that are not recorded directly as landscapes—I do not sketch them when I am out; I don’t work directly from nature at all. Often the experiences are the material of my paintings. They come back to me as much a surprise as they do to other people. I suddenly see on a canvas, I’ve been there. The canvases may be entirely finished by the time I recognize where it came from.”

So, with Carl Morris, his art was an unconscious expression of the wild beauty he stored in memory. “No matter how abstract an artist is, if you are sensitive at all, you are going to express your environment.”

This article will be continued in next issue of Dimensions.

—David Lochtie
www.davidlochtie.com

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After graduating from Portland State in 1972 with a major in sculpture, Denny Boone moved to Berkeley, California, to seek his fortune in art. As sometimes happens in life, things just didn’t work out as planned.

In 1984 Denny, his wife, and baby moved back to Portland where he spent the next 25 years raising a family and working in construction. Two years ago, with his second child out of the house, Denny renewed his love for sculpture.

“Wingman” is one of his first pieces since resuming creative work. This piece evolved over time from a small abstract sketch to its exaggerated, whimsical human form. The piece is finished in cast bronze measuring 45” tall and 28” wide. From a pencil sketch, Denny moved to an aluminum armature for the structural frame. He covered the frame with a screen to take the basic shapes and then covered the screen with plasticine to create the final piece. Denny’s goal was to make something different and unique, and most of all, to have fun. What he likes about the piece are the shapes. Denny says that the head didn’t feel right by itself so a helmet became the solution. The wings are intentionally too small for the body. “The poor fellow isn’t perfect (like so many other figurative sculptures), with one long leg and small wings. But he does have advantages: While his flight is difficult, hard work, at least he can fly, which is better than most. We all have been given talents and advantages and we all have endured handicaps and hardships; “Wingman” is a novice attempt to show both.”


—Jim Ayala