My Life in Clay

PNWS Featured Artist: Sara Swink

My love of clay goes back to the influence of a next-door neighbor who had a fabulous pottery studio. She somehow instilled in me, as an 8-year old, a feeling of confidence about clay. In high school I learned to throw on the wheel and felt very connected to the ceramics classroom. I bought a wheel with money I earned cleaning houses and dragged it around to all the places I moved during college. I finally sold it and moved on to publishing and graphic design. About 20 years later I took a ceramics class and it was like coming home.

One class led to another, and I took a 2-week workshop called Art & Spirit, which focused on creative process with an emphasis on clay sculpture. It was exactly what I was looking for. After that, I worked with the teacher, Coeleen Kiebert, for a number of years, learning and then teaching, her approach. This approach, which is grounded in Jungian psychology, is the foundation for my artistic practice today. During those years, I returned to school taking many, many classes in ceramics and art history, as well as drawing, 3D design, metal fabrication, casting, printmaking, and art theory. I started at Foothill College in Los Altos Hills, CA, then did 2 years at San Jose State University, then completed the first of a three-year MFA program at San Francisco State University.

I decided not to continue the MFA program for a number of reasons, thus freeing my long-time partner, Harold, to retire, and with my younger child out of high school, we moved to West Linn in 2006. Before we moved, I found Portland Open Studios online, applied and was accepted. We arrived in May and the event was in October. Did I mention we bought a fixer? Needless to say, the studio building needing fixing fast, but that’s another story. I established Clay Circle Studio, started meeting people right away through Portland Open Studios, sold a few things at the event, began teaching small classes and workshops in my studio and set about getting established.

My approach to making work is very intuitive, which makes clay a great medium for me. I get ideas a number of ways. I sometimes start with magazine collage, I sketch a lot, I lift words and phrases from things I read, whether fiction or psychology books, I record my dreams, and I am very much influenced by my surroundings. I doodle on paper and in clay. I peruse my library of handmade image journals and sketchbooks. Sometimes I get titles first, sometimes I make something having no clue what I’m doing until it’s done and the narrative starts to reveal itself. These days it seems like one sketch stands out among the rest and that’s the one that wants to be made next. I use a robust sculpture clay that allows me to build quickly. It has such a rough surface I’m not sure if I have any fingerprints anymore. I use oxides, underglazes, and glazes fired to mid-range temperature (cone 5). I’m not quite as experimental as I once was with glazes as I’ve found the ones I like.

These days, more often than not I am working toward a gallery show, so I try
President’s Message

Meetings are the heart of us. Over the 6 or 7 years that I have been involved with PNWS, our meetings have been one of the brightest highlights of being a member. We hold the meetings in some of the most interesting studios in the Northwest, as well as in foundries and galleries. The meetings just keep getting better. Where do we find all these incredibly creative, warm people who become members? How does that happen? I am not sure how it comes about, but I am sure that it does.

The meetings are one of the places that it all comes together. We get to experience other artists’ work as many people bring their portfolios or sculptures to share. Conversations can be heard about the most incredible ideas and knowledge is shared pretty freely. What an amazing gift to be able to leave our studios, our wonderful and often isolating studios, to gather together with other 3D crazed people.

If you’re missing the meetings, you are missing a lot of the heart of PNWS. One of the most common things said about us is that we are a warm and inclusive group. There seem to be new members at every monthly meeting; did you know that we now have over 155 members? Meetings usually draw about 35 to 60 of us where there is lots of sculpture talk, networking, and sharing of ideas; even some collaborations get set up. It is hard to think of a better way to spend an evening than in the company of other artists! If you arrive with your juices a little slow, they will be in full flow when the night is over.

Lately, we have had quite a bit of brain storming going on and out of that have come some wonderful ideas. For example, Steve Farris, a new member, came up with putting together a web page where PNWS members can sell, trade or barter anything art related! Steve has got some members works into the “Street of Dreams”, 6 of us all together. Hopefully, we can find our way in for a few more sculptors next year; this is a good beginning though!

The members who made it in all had a picture that I could lift and print from our website gallery page. I put together a little presentation folder based on what kind of art they said they wanted and used those pictures that I lifted. So if you don’t have anything on our gallery page, it might be time to do so. It is paid for by your dues with no extra charge!

Are there any ideas that you have? Any directions you’d like to see PNWS travel in? Come to a meeting and get others excited about it.

As is PNWS custom, there will be no meeting in December.
Sculpture Highlights at Portland Open Studios
by Bonnie Meltzer

There are many opportunities to watch sculptors at work during Portland Open Studios, a tour of 100 artists’ workplaces all around metro Portland on October 10, 11, 17 and 18. See examples of sculpture made in the following materials and methods – additive and subtractive; molded, pinched, carved, welded, sewn, crocheted and blown; glass, wood, clay, thread, metal, and stone; delicate and substantial; intimate and of grand scale; precious materials, and plain old junk.

PNWS members Susan Gallacher-Turner, Bonnie Meltzer, Joni Mitchell, Cynthia Morgan, Teresa Sullivan, Sara Swink and Jill Toberson are participating artists. Twenty-three more sculptors are on the tour including the winner of our New Member Award, Andy Paiko and last year’s Kimberly Gales Scholarship winner, Maggie Casey. Both young artists are recognized nationally and locally. Andy shatters preconceived notions of glassblowing. He builds glass machines and graceful vessels that make us ponder the nature of objects. Maggie builds volume with hundreds of stretched threads.

Mask maker Susan Gallacher-Turner is a “digital” artist in the most basic way. Her fingers are useful tools for pushing, pulling, and pitching flat copper sheets and metal screening into three dimensions. Traditional repoussé techniques utilize the elastic nature of the copper to create raised surfaces. Simple tools, often from her kitchen utility drawer, which she describes as sticks with different shaped heads, are used when she can’t get her fingers into a space or she needs more pointed power. The results are charming sculptural stories of mythical characters, personified animals and creatures from dreams.

Joni Mitchell finds the figures in the pieces of stone she carves. The grain and markings of the stone lead her to make a particular turn of a cheek or the curve of a shoulder. She begins with hand chisels and hammers to knock off big pieces of stone then continues with pneumatic and electric tools with diamond blades to shape the work. She returns to hand tools to obtain the final smooth finish. The results are lyrical abstractions of people and animals that appear to grow out of the stone.

Tom Soule also uses the subtractive technique of sculpture but only after he laminates planks of wood together. He layers various colors of wood into cantilevered shapes that are vaguely figurative with a feeling of flight. He also carves stone but the long thin wing shapes in his current series would be too fragile in stone.

Cynthia Morgan’s glass portrait sculptures are made with the ancient Egyptian technique of pate de verre (glass paste). It is a cast glass technique which has similarities to the lost wax process of casting bronze. She begins by sculpting a clay model from which to create a silicon mold which will be used to reproduce another model in foundry wax. The wax model is imbedded in plaster. After she melts the wax out of the plaster mold she can finally pack layers of colored glass powders into the mold which is then fired for three weeks. The last step is the grinding and polishing. She has captured her subjects at exactly the right moment giving the portraits physical and emotional depth.

When Cynthia Morgan describes the glass she uses she referred to forms of sugar. Peggy Alter is a culinary artist who refers to glass blowing to describe her process. She uses a material we all know and love; but not one that is thought of as an art material – sugar. It would be informative to see how her techniques are similar and different from other ways of sculpting.

I have only highlighted a few sculpture techniques here. From the large assortment of PNWS artists and those who are not yet members, you can draw your own conclusions about the commonalities between the various sculpture processes. On the tour you get to discover for yourself the depth and breadth of their subject matter.

To go to Portland Open Studios you will need the $15 Tour Guide which comes with 2 tickets good for all days, maps, and artwork pictures. It is available at Art Media, New Seasons and other stores listed on www.portlandopenstudios.com. Children attend free.
Member News

Julie Martin Participates in Lake Oswego Gallery Without Walls

Julie Martin participated in Lake Oswego’s Gallery Without Walls program in August. Her sculpture “A Boy and His Dog”, a life-size bronze piece, was one of 14 new sculptures on exhibit in Lake Oswego’s rotating biannual show. As stated on the descriptive plaque, the sculpture is ‘a tribute to the enduring friendship between children and their pets’. View more of Julie’s artwork at www.juliemartin.net.

Joni Mitchell’s Work Featured in Three Shows

Sequoia Gallery—Joni is a member of the Sequoia Gallery located in downtown Hillsboro. Her work in stone was featured during Sept. The show runs through Oct. 3. The gallery is located at 136 SE third, Hillsboro, OR 97123. Gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday 10-6. As part of the exhibit Joni gave an artist talk on Thursday, Sept 3. For more information go to www.sequoiaartgallery.com or www.jonimitchellart.com and click on news.

Portland Open Studios—Joni will open her studio to the public on Oct 17 and 18 as part of the Portland Open Studios Tour.

Sara Swink in Local Shows

Portland Open Studios—Ceramic artist Sara Swink is one of several PNWS members participating in Portland Open Studios in October. Sara will open her studio both weekends, October 10 & 11 and 17 & 18. 10 am to 5 pm. For more info, visit www.portlandopenstudios.com.

Primary Elements Gallery—On November 6, 7, and 8 Joni will be part of the Stormy Weather Fall show at the Primary Elements Gallery in Cannon Beach Oregon.

Devin Laurence Working on Oregon Commissions

PNS member Devin Laurence Field is working on five new commissions in Oregon. One of these in the Eugene/Springfield area includes monumental sculptures in stainless steel and glass being built for the new Lane Transit District EmX Gateway extension. The sculptures reflect themes taken from the early history of the Springfield area, will be from 14-16’ high and will be illuminated at night using colored LED lighting. In addition to the sculpture just completed for the Capital building of Xinjiang Province in Urumqi, China, Devin is working overseas on sculptures for Ordos, Mongolia and Abu Dhabi, UAE. See Devin’s work at www.devinlaurencefield.com.

Jim Talt Environmental Art Installed in Newberg

Jim’s one million cubic meter juried environmental art installation, “As Eye See It” has been installed on Parrett Mountain in Newberg Oregon. The installation uses abstract elements to punctuate five natural forest settings thereby creating environmental vignettes for the viewer’s consideration. The goal of “As Eye See It” is to bring the casual observer to a greater awareness of the natural artistic composition and beauty found in the forest and microenvironments of the Parrett Mountain Farm historical preserve located in Newberg, Oregon.

Pictured here is the view through the octagon portal of “Heavens”. Visitors stand inside the simple 8-foot tall structure. Geometric patterns lead the eyes upward to the octagon opening the underside of which bears the words: “We Should Look To The Heavens More Often”.

Framed in the octagon opening is the kaleidoscope pattern of trees and sky along with the above reminder that most of us are preoccupied with our eye level world.

The installation opened on Sept. 19th and is available for viewing year-round, weather permitting. Contact Parrett Mountain Farms at 503 625 6821. Visit www.jimtalt.com for contact info and to view other work by Jim Talt.

Sara Swink in Local Shows

OCAC Retail Gallery—The Holiday Show runs from November 13 to December 12, includes a silent auction of shrines by 100 artists to raise funds for the center. Visit www.theartcenter.net.

Correction

Our apologies to Denice Sirchie who was not mentioned as one of the artists participating in the Street of Dreams events.

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PNWS News

PNWS Sculptor’s Exchange
Did you know PNWS now has an art supply and tools exchange? You now have a place to trade or sell all that stuff cluttering up your studio or loft. It is assumed the art supplies or tools you want to post are in usable and in reasonably good condition.

How does it work?
Step 1. Send Steve Harris an email at sculptorfarris@gmail.com with a) a brief description of the item and a photo (optional) b) the price, c) contact information (name, address, phone number). You can view your posting at the Sculptor’s Exchange link www.sites.google.com/site/sculptorexchange.

Step 2. Respond to any inquiries that you get about the item you have posted. Note: it is your responsibility to arrange payment, delivery and transfer of your items.

All information on this site is only as accurate as the information received. Let Steve know if you have comments/improvements about your posting.

The Sculptor’s Exchange link and a preview of what is available on the link will be shown in Carol’s regular “Call to Artists” emails.

PNWS Resource Directory
Do you have a job or skill (professional or otherwise) that you would like to market through PNWS?

Well you can now do that using the PNWS Resource Directory. The PNWS Resource Directory is a listing of what some of us do for a living; what we do on the side as our “day jobs.” Let’s support each other, especially now that the economy begins to get better.

A hardcopy of the directory will be available for viewing at each monthly meeting. The link to the directory spreadsheet will be provided in Carol’s regular “Call to Artists” emails. If you have anything to add to this directory, please contact Jill Perry Townsend at Jillperrytownsend@gmail.com

PNWS Offers New Category of Membership for Families
We have a new category of membership for couples and families. The first membership is the regular price ($55 annually) and the second one half of that. The total amount for a family membership (a couple) will be $82.50. Please indicate on the membership form that it is a family membership and include the second name and email address.

Benefits of membership include:
- Bi-Monthly Dimensions newsletter
- Invitations to monthly meetings (visit great studios and other places of interest to sculptors)
- Invitation to yearly picnic
- Opportunity to participate as a member at respected Northwest art shows
- Opportunity to show your work and web link on the PNWS website
- Discounts at sculptor and art supply stores and sources
- Call to artists email notifications specific to sculptors for local and other competitions and opportunities

Membership forms are available on the PNWS website at www.pnwschancers.org.

Welcome New Members!
The following artists joined PNWS between May and September. Welcome!

Jhaya Worthington—brass, concrete, recycled, and found materials
Dan Green—metal
Ben Dye—metal
Zelda Weisbart—clay
Stephan Seable—brass, clay, fiberglass, metal
Melody Rasmor—wire, welding, mixed media
Steve Farris—metal
Tim Conley—stone and bronze

Using Podcasts to Promote Your Art Work

By Patrick Gracewood

The number of skills an artist must acquire to promote their work seems endless. It’s not enough to make your sculpture; it’s also necessary to promote your art work. That’s what was so enjoyable about having PNWS member Susan Gallacher-Turner interview me on what it means to live as a working artist. What began as a casual conversation is now a podcast I can use. It’s a wonderful and very useful way to promote your art.

A podcast is an interview or program that you can listen to after downloading from the internet. There are three ways to listen to the interview on the website, Voices of Living Creatively. Click the red play button and listen on your computer. Download it directly to your computer. Or download the interview via iTunes and listen to it on your iPod.

We talked for over an hour about my art and how I’ve earned a living as an artist. Susan questioned me about my first art job, what I’ve learned from 30 years as a professional sculptor and how that influences my current art. I didn’t know what to expect from the interview other than using it to practice talking about my art and myself. Susan and Michael Turner, her collaborator on Voices of Living Creatively, took the interview recording and turned it into a very professional podcast. The podcast and transcribed web article are great ways to promote your art. It was so nice to NOT do all the work myself. If you’d like a podcast about your art, check out Voices of Living Creatively.

Susan Gallacher-Turner is an artist, writer and teacher. Michael Turner is a writer, professional voice talent and audio producer. Putting their interests and talents together they’ve created Voices of Living Creatively to tell the stories, struggles and successes of people who love their work and their lives. Their mission is to listen and learn; then they produce a web article and podcast that an artist can use to promote their art. The stories can be an iTunes podcast, or be read on the blog, Voices of Living Creatively, http://voicesoflivingcreatively.blogspot.com and heard on the website, www.voicesoflivingcreatively.com.

Susan Gallacher-Turner can be reached at susangt@comcast.net.

Patrick’s blog spot is located at http://shadowsonsoestone.blogspot.com.


Contact Patrick at pmg@gracewoodstudio.com.
to find some thread that ties the work together. In November I will be a featured artist at Guardino Gallery, so I’m working with the overarching idea of empowered objects. This includes charms, milagros, fetishes, special hats and objects imbued with magical powers. This body of work will consist mostly of figurative pieces that are engaged with power objects in one way or another. I allow myself a lot of freedom to make whatever I want, but I also try to reign myself in a bit by having a broad theme. When the work is done, I will put together my own little catalog with pictures and write about the work. This is where the meaning of the work in the context of my life is more fully revealed.

In terms of the work itself, I think my main objective is to connect deeply to myself. The process of art-making allows an ever-deepening connection to a person’s core. This is certainly my approach in teaching, too. If someone can work with imagery that has meaning to them, the piece they make can become a symbol that carries their energy and individuality, no matter what their level of technical ability. This is a great starting place, though it is not always easy for students to accept their own work in the early stages. I encourage students to recognize their style and not fight it, but to let it develop.

Sara will open her studio for Portland Open Studios two weekends in October and will be a featured artist at Guardino Gallery in Portland from October 29 to November 22. For details, see Member News on page 4, and for more info, visit www.claycircle.com and Sara’s blog, www.claycircle.wordpress.com.

Blog Like Me
by Lisa Strout

I’m pretty familiar with marketing techniques, but I am the first one to admit I’m a total technophobe. It’s because of that fact I believe I am exactly the right person to suggest you create a blog...if I can do it, anyone can. Consider the benefits of blogging: it’s an easy, interactive contact with your clients, peers, and fans that doesn’t require a subscription (like Facebook); free web presence, and online portfolio. This article is not for early adopters, or even those who jump on the second generation bandwagon...I’m writing for those of you like me — who do their shopping on Christmas Eve — who live with a “never too late” attitude.

I started mine because I am a terrific failure at keeping my website updated. That would entail collecting photos and related information and getting all that into the hands of the person who designed my website...and doing it on a regular basis. Don’t even think about telling me to do it myself (see first sentence). If you’re one of the lucky few who can update and maintain their own website and does so religiously, you can probably skip this; but if you need a way to stay current on the web, a blog is the way to go.

My website is static and doesn’t really “say” anything about me or my work. My blog, on the other hand, is a much more effective marketing tool — I can write about a particular work, explaining my thoughts behind it; everyone knows purchasers of art love a good story. They want to make a connection to you and your work. I’ve had people contact me who own a piece of my work just to say they’re following what I’m doing now. People who’ve seen shows I’ve been in start to visit the blog to see what I’m doing now. That connection is vital.

I managed to put up a blog in an afternoon and I can add to it on a regular basis. In addition to the front page, I’ve got a gallery page, a page I can list my classes on, shows I’m in, and an “about the artist” page. There are all kinds of pages you can add; mine is definitely a work in progress. The great thing about it is I can do it whenever I have time or something new to add and it’s completely FREE.

I have had many more people contact me from seeing my blog than I have from website hits. My blog is tied to my LinkedIn profile so my latest blog entry is encapsulated there. I’ve had people from my different LinkedIn groups sending me emails about my work (OK — so no actual sales yet, but hope springs eternal).

There are all kinds of places to sign up; just Google “free blog hosting”. I only have experience with the Wordpress version of blog-
The Fire & Earth Art Center

- 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 both ears 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; it’s a form of aerated cement. The blocks are available for purchase ($25 for a full block) and the tools, patina materials and other sculpting supplies are readily available and included in the class price, (eight weeks of classes, $200.). (There is a sliding scale for those who are looking for a job or have other financial difficulties, just email me.) (Classes that are already running will continue.)

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

Classes are held on Sunday afternoons, 2:00 to 4:30pm and Tuesday evenings, 6:30 to 9, for the eight-week sessions. 10% off all classes for PNWS members.

Cost: $200 plus materials.

Phone – 503-235-7233, sculptor@CaroleMurphy.com

http://www.teachstreet.com/teacher/carole-murphy-studio/reviews-about/2

Classes, Editing and Podcasts with Susan Gallacher-Turner

Classes & Workshops
Create sculptures and masks using clay, metal and collage. Classes open for children and adults. For more information and locations email susangt@comcast.net or call 503-590-2356.

Editing Services for Artists
Receive professional help writing or editing your artist statement, website, and brochure or blog copy. See above for Susan’s email and phone number.

Podcasts for Artists
Let your website visitors hear about your art with a professional produced podcast. Website visitors can listen to an interview with you, hosted by a professional radio talent. Includes interview, audio editing and professional voice over.

Classes & Workshops with Sara Swink
Creative Process Workshop
A great way to start the new year! January 16–17, 10 am–5 pm, West Linn; $150 includes materials. Cultivate connections of vocabulary and style, mine the riches of the unconscious, play and explore, and deepen your artistic practice. Valuable for practicing artists, but no art experience needed.

Open Clay Studio, Saturdays, 1–4 pm, West Linn. All levels.

For a description, click on Classes at www.claycircle.com. For more info, please email sara_swink@verizon.net or call 503-638-9890.

The Earth & Art Center publicizes programs for free on its website and will link to artist’s sites if desired. The space has been used for a variety of Portland Community College classes and is cooperative with other art organizations. Scheduling and pricing information is available through Kirk deFord, 503-781-4956, or kirkdeford@clear.net. Visit www.fireandearth.org.

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Deadline for the Oct-Nov issue is September 1.
I am a native Oregonian, and my love of art has been ever present from childhood. I believe art allows entree into heart and home of our fellows. It is truly the “tie that binds.” I was inspired to create El Paso after sorting through photographs from my grandfather’s album – his travels through El Paso, Texas, in 1905. My sculpture brings to life one of the photographic images he captured during his travel through El Paso.

Currently, another one of my bronze sculptures is a juried piece that will be exhibited at the Tarleton State University 13th Annual Juried Rio Brazos Art Exhibition in October. This exhibition is in Granbury, Texas and features artists from across the US. Denice can be reached at www.tarleton.edu/~langdoncenter/rbae.

El Paso Bronze, 12” x 6”

Bobbie Carlyle’s vision of “Self Made Man” is a man carving himself out of stone, carving his character, carving his future. See more of Bobbie’s amazing figurative sculpture at http://bobbiecarlylesculpture.com