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Artist Member Q & A with Donna E. Perkins

Submitted by STintern1 on Wed, Oct 17th at 12:05 pm

Hello everyone! This week we chatted with the wonderful artist **Donna E. Perkins**. After earning a Master's Degree from the University of Houston at Clear Lake, Donna went on to teach art in public schools for 20 years. Today, she is a full time artist, showing her work at many venues in and around the Houston area. You might recognize her latest sculpture series "changelings" from Lawndale Art Center's Big Show over the summer!

Donna was kind enough to answer a few questions regarding her work process and inspiration.

Paper Dance sculptures created for Venturing Out in collaboration with Jhon R. Stronks,

Big Range Dance Festival 2011, in Studio B of Barnevelder Arts Complex.

Q: Who first introduced you to art and at what age?

A: I started drawing when I was young enough to stand in the church pew. I was given pencil and paper to keep me quite during services. I was given oil paint in Junior High. I've been drawing and painting ever since.

Changeling sculptures for Venturing Out in collaboration with

Jhon R. Stronks, Big Range Dance Festival 2012, in Studio A of Barnevelder Arts Complex

Q: How did you first get started in your career?

A: I taught art in public schools for 20 years. It was a struggle during that time to find the time and energy to do my art. I took classes at Glassell for years. These classes provided wonderful instructors, the companionship of others interested in art and a place to paint.

Two Changelings hanging in Studio A

Q: What inspires your work? Are there any common themes that run through your work?

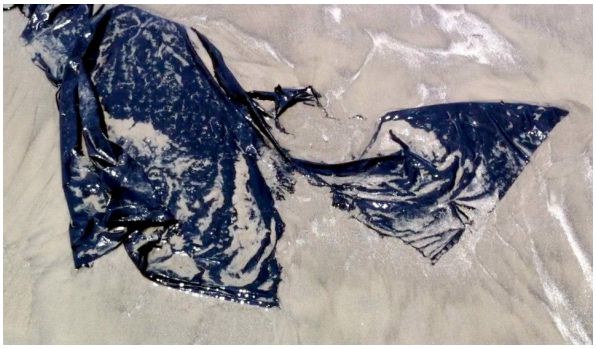
A: I steal lines and choreograph them into abstractions. The structural lines for my drawings and paintings are collected from my reality. I love drawing from dancers dancing. While I focus in the edge of a dancer's body to begin a line, the dancer moves and my line takes off after that movement. I collect lines quickly and scatter them across the paper or canvas. I'm fascinated by movement, by bodies, by plants and other organic forms.

Photographs printed on metal from Corporal Vistas series

Q: Can you talk a bit more about your latest sculpture series, "changelings" and the piece you submitted for Lawndale's "The Big Show"?

A: The sculptures (There are actually two mingled together at the suggestion of the juror)in the Big Show are titled "Changelings: WS2.12:VO6.12 long and short." While my work is abstract and usually lacks a narrative, these paper sculptures have a history. The title references this history. Both were in my February 2012 show at Wagner Sousa Modern Art in Galveston. In that show they hung from the ceiling. Both were also in the Venturing Out, June 2012, as part of the Big Range Dance Festival, Program C. In Venturing Out these sculptures were stiffened with glue and positioned on the floor. Dancers interacted with them. These sculptures owe a debt to my collaborations with choreographer/dancer jhon r. stronks. These sculptures have a history, they will not last long. While they are only crumpled paper and glue, I find them beautiful. I love the play of light on their uneven surfaces.

My video "Beached Bag" is 3 minutes of surf action on a black plastic bag deeply embedded in the sand at Galveston beach. While this is "trash" I find it to be beautiful as the surf covers, uncovers and changes this shape. There is sound on the video from the surf and from unseen children. This video owes a debt to David Perez who build my computer and walked me through the steps of making two earlier videos.



A frame trimmed from the video Beached Bag, Galveston in Lawndale's Big Show, 2012

Q: What do you wish to accomplish when showing your work? Is there a certain message/emotion you'd like to convey to the audience?

A: It would be great if my work evoked a pause in the viewer's attention. I would like the viewer to experience something of the fascination I have of the visual world.

Q: What do you find are the most rewarding & challenging components of having a healthy art career in Houston?

A: I love how active, generous and supportive the art community is in Houston. Glassell, Lawndale Art Center, Diverse Works and Spacetaker/Fresh Arts have all provided me with important experiences and opportunities. Houston has such great museums and art venues. I feel very fortunate to live here.

Q: What are your future plans as an artist?

A: I want to continue to explore and collaborate in an amoebic manner.

To find out more about Donna E. Perkins, visit her **Fresh Arts Profile** or visit her website: **www.donnaeperkins.com**.

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