

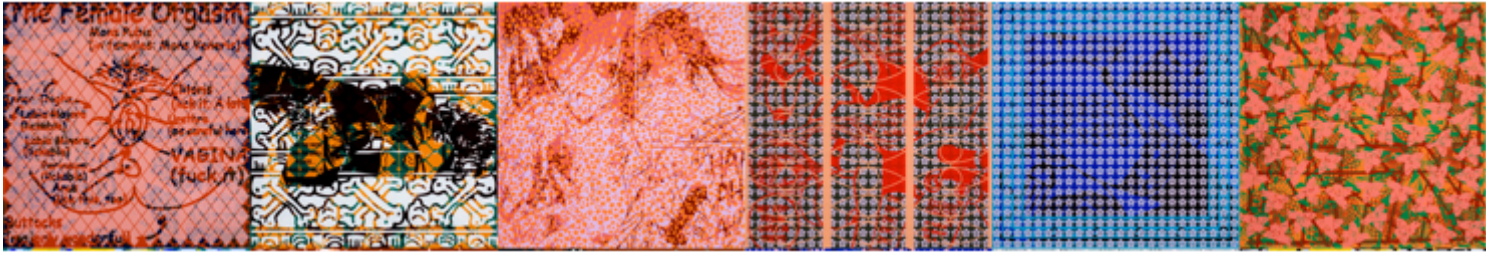


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CAROLE FEUERMAN: IN THE SWIM

Carole Feuerman is a sculptor of astonishing drive and talent. I always see her work www.carolefeuerman.com at the big, international art fairs and they're always showstoppers. I wanted to know what's involved in creating her contemporary masterpieces and it's abundantly clear; she is one busy lady...

"After 56 years of creating swimmers, I continue to be fascinated with the figure in the water with water patterns on them."

MICHAEL: Hi Carole, Your work is incredible. I'm always stunned by it at the big art fairs and so is everyone else. Your beautiful, super-contemporary sculptures seem to be a celebration of beauty, athleticism, form and humanity. How do you view your work?

CAROLE: I love to create beautiful, super-contemporary sculptures - mostly swimmers - that celebrate the joy of life. My hyper-realistic style of art creates the physicality for which my sculptures are known. The realism in my art stems from my desire to portray real emotions and physical states of being - from peaceful serenity to energy to equilibrium and to vigor. I make my sculptures about people who are comfortable in their own skin. I promote the idea of total health. The World Health Organization stated in 1970, the decade in which I began making my sculptures, that health embraced a total package of 'physical, mental, and social well being, not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.' A sound mind in a sound body, in other words. This is one of the defining aspects of my realistic style.

MICHAEL: And many if not most of your sculptures are women.

CAROLE: Forty years ago, showing healthy, intelligent women was a radical departure in contemporary art. Now it is a widely accepted ideal, yet most contemporary artists don't explore this topic - at least not in figurative art.

MICHAEL: I love the aquatic theme. It's so fresh and forward-thinking.

CAROLE: Swimming and water have fascinated me for as long as I can remember, and as a result, have become the essence of my inspiration for my pieces. I loved the beach as a child and many of my fondest memories are of playing in the sand and jumping the waves at Jones Beach on Long Island (New York). I remember with great detail how the delicate water droplets covered my arms and face after returning from a swim and the patterns that formed on my skin captivated me. I noticed how the human figure radiates a healthy glow while in the water and coming out and how the water seemed to rejuvenate the body while instilling a sense of harmony, both internally and externally. It was for these reasons that I started drawing swimmers in the second grade and in the fifth grade, had asked my parents to sign me up for private art lessons on Saturdays. It was both the swimmers and the water that kept my attention from the beginning, and still to this day.

MICHAEL: I find it interesting how well you've really explored this theme. I mean, the sculptures are similar and yet so different.

CAROLE: My swimmers have their own personalities and tell their own stories. Their stories are my stories, sometimes autobiographical and sometimes stories I just need to tell. While their outward appearance is often one of beauty and

tranquility, these elegant faces mask a deeper meaning of heroism, triumph and liberation. Their titles are derived from islands around the world that I have visited and gained inspiration from over the years. For example, in 1976, I went to the Isle of Capri, Italy, in the Mediterranean Sea and created a sculpture called "Capri" named after that special island. In 1979, inspired by the blue horizon of the Pacific Ocean, I envisioned a swimmer emerging like a phoenix from the sea with water droplets streaming across her face, which took form in my creation of "Catalina." She appears as a proud survivor, beautiful and strong. In 2005, I made a monumental version, "Grande Catalina," which John Spike installed in the center of Florence and that was the beginning of my major public sculptures. In 1981, I created "Innertube," a contemplative sculpture of a swimmer resting peacefully on an inflatable tube. This serene and meditative sculpture led me to create "Survival of Serena" for the 2006 Venice Biennale. She was named after the Island of Venice "the Serene Island" and was created on a monumental scale. One of my more recent pieces, "Next Summer," is named after a very special Island in Michigan called Summer Island. I am currently working on "Double Diver," a monumental forty-foot bronze male diver in a handstand with another diver holding his feet. While it isn't named for an island, it speaks of persistence and the will to succeed, exemplifying integrity, trust and teamwork.

After 56 years of creating swimmers, I continue to be fascinated with the figure in the water with water patterns on them.

MICHAEL: Wow. The work that you're doing is heroic in itself. There must be so much involved in creating a single sculpture especially like the one you're working on now. What is involved? You must have a sizable staff, no?

CAROLE: Every sculpture involves a team of people to see it through to completion. Years ago, I made very small pieces. Now, my sculptures are painted bronze. Many are monumental in size weighing sometimes 1 to 2.5 tons. They are labor intensive, detailed and time-consuming to make. I make the maquette in one of my two studios depending on the size of the sculpture and then a mold of the maquette must be made so that I can send the mold to a foundry to be cast in bronze. This part of the process can take anywhere from a year or two. When the bronze is finished, it must be chased in a hyperrealistic manner. The foundries must be taught to work this precisely. I work on the pieces both in wax and in bronze in the foundry. When the bronze is finished, it gets shipped to my studio for further detailing, chasing, two coats of primers, painting and finishing. Then a crate is built and it gets shipped to a show or client. This entire process usually takes one to three years. Many times, engineers are involved to design armatures, landscape architects are involved to design the cited landscape for the finished piece, permits are needed, contracts must be agreed upon and signed and teams of helpers from many professions become involved. I have my own "A Team" of about eight assistants: two fabricators, two office assistants, two painting assistants, one intern and one independent contractor sculptor when needed.

MICHAEL: What is the feeling that you feel when you have completed a work? Also, do you feel better when a work is completed or unveiled to the public?

CAROLE: I feel fantastic when I complete a work. Also, it makes me ready for the next work. As far as unveiling a completed work in public, that's what it's all about. I love this, the feeling and the chance to show my work to the public.

MICHAEL: In terms of creativity and insight, sculpture - of human figures - comes closer to being Godlike than any other genre. I mean, just the study of human anatomy alone must take years to truly master. Thoughts?

CAROLE: I study anatomy every day in many ways. I watch people move, watch how their bodies move, observe them when they touch. I love to see the subtle differences in a body lying down and a body standing or sitting. I observe their skin colors when they touch or when they are cold or hot. I observe how the body changes when people are happy, angry, lying, or sincere. I love to observe and sculpt people and their emotions, their feelings.

MICHAEL: I would imagine technology has significantly changed sculpture. I mean, are there major differences between what you do and what Michelangelo did with David? And finally, what do you want people to take away after having seen your work?

CAROLE: Technology has changed sculpture today, but when all is said and done, the sculpture the artist creates must speak to the viewer. Technology can help to create a perfectly proportioned sculpture, but that won't make the sculpture a great work of art.

It will only be a digitized blow up or reduction. When I create a work, I want the viewer to feel touched. I want it to speak to the viewer and I want the viewer to have a response. Many artists throughout time have used technology to cut down on the time it takes to enlarge or make a miniature.

These techniques can be helpful, but won't guarantee that the artist will make anything meaningful or everlasting.

Check out Carole Feuerman at www.carolefeuerman.com.

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