

NH Craftsmen's Fair 2012

79TH ANNUAL CRAFTSMEN'S FAIR SAMPLER by Ann St. Martin Stout



"Sailboats" by Susan Beere

SUSAN BEERE Clay Tile Artist

Susan Beere was introduced to ceramics in her first and second year of college. She may not have known it would be her life's work and expression, but inside, she always knew that she would be an artist. In fact, Susan says, "I love what I do; the bottom line is I could not do anything else."

Susan's body of work, including more than 1200 free-hanging individual pieces, as well as 150 installations and commissions of larger pieces and murals, is a testament to her creative life. The routine part of the process begins with rolling of the clay into slabs on a large slab roller; and then the more creative carving, firing, glazing, and re-firing take place. To keep the tile completely flat during the firing process, Susan has developed a special treatment for the back of the tile as well as other techniques used during the firing itself.

When the creativity wanes, Susan looks to nature for inspiration. The majority of her subjects come from nature. Birds are a favorite subject, whether it is the chickadees and blue jays that come to her backyard feeder, or the less common birds such as blue heron and egrets found in wilder places. The stylized plants, wildlife and scenes are traced from a sketch on paper to the clay slab.

A scene might be divided into multiple panels or sections, such as the round "Migration" hanging, one of the artist's favorites. "The reason I like "Migration" is that the two birds are in high relief," says Beere. Flowing cut-lines enhance the flight of the birds, the water beneath them and the sky behind, adding movement to the piece.

"Another work in high relief of two egrets was on the cover of the U.K. edition of Handmade Tiles (David and Charles Publ., 1995)," says Susan. "Many consider this book to be the standard for teaching tile making in schools and colleges."

She goes on to explain, "Relief is a method of molding or carving in which the image stands out from the surface; if to a greater degree it is called high relief, or a lesser degree, bas relief."

Susan spent much of her life in California and graduated from Palomar Junior college near San Diego. "My father was a physicist and my mother an artist mother, so there was always creative thought going on in the home," recalls Susan. She moved to Warner, NH, seven years ago, where she lives with her husband of 30 years. "I love Warner and would never want to move back to California."



"Geneva & Roselyn" by Susan Beere

NH Craftsmen's Fair 2012

She was juried into the League of NH Craftsmen soon after she arrived in the area. Susan comments, "Since I have been in the League, I have perfected and refined my work." The positive feedback and encouragement, and her relationship with other league members, have been very positive experiences. She admires and owns the work of other League members.

"Creativity doesn't happen all the time," Susan observes, "it ebbs and flows. It requires turning off of the mind and absorbing nature." When she needs this inspiration she may watch the birds, or take in the blossoms of the front yard magnolia tree, or consider the couple's backyard garden tended by her husband, Hugh.

One of Susan's favorite artists is Henri Matisse. Elements found in his work, such as a window looking out on the world, a vase of fresh flowers, and bold color, inspired Susan to create an oil painting, "Homage to Matisse". This scene and theme has been popular as one of her tiles, and she will continue to turn this scene into tiles. But whenever she creates multiples of the same tile theme, each is different. Each is hand carved (she does not use a mold) and each is hand-painted. The carving or painting will vary in some way – each work is an original.

Susan will have work in *Shop at the Fair* this year, and will be available to talk about commissions to interested parties.

CHRIS NORDLUND Non-Metal Jewelry Artist

When Christine Nordlund sits in the front room of her 150-year-old farmhouse in Hillsborough, NH and "plays" with her art materials, she often does not know what the results will be. Her materials include a strong, supple fishing line, beading needles, a variety of beads from Japan, the Czech Republic, and elsewhere, including briolettes - a faceted bead; charlottes - a type of seed bead, and other shimmering beads in a variety of colors, sizes and shapes.

Add to these elements a healthy dose of beading knowledge, a willingness to try new designs,



Freeform Necklace by Chris Nordlund

and a fondness for the peyote stitch- both flat and in three dimensions - and Chris will come up with designs and beaded elements that will then be used to create complex jewelry pieces.

Chris's goal in life was to be an artist and a mother. "My painting in oil (beginning at age 13) has moved into painting with beads," she comments. And as for motherhood, her five sons, ages 10 to early twenties, come and go from the farmhouse while she beads. One of the sons learned to bead when he was a child, and although he no longer beads, he can provide Chris with a reliable critique of her work when needed.

Several years ago, Chris and her mother opened *Bead It!* in Concord. For the past decade, they have taught classes and provided quality beading supplies, and have advanced their own skills in beading.

When making a piece, Chris creates only originals. She never repeats her own design exactly, though she may use similar ideas (She uses patterns only when she teaches.). Each piece, sometimes taking as many as 40 hours, is "an

NH Craftsmen's Fair 2012



Wall-hanging bracelet by Chris Nordlund.

evolutionary process, creating anew each time,” explains Chris. Recently, she has also turned wearable beaded sculpture into a wall hanging to allow the piece to be displayed as art when not being worn.

When asked what inspires her, Chris half-jokingly says, “Oh, the same thing that inspires everybody else: nature, the seasons...” But then she concedes, “I think the flowing quality of my creations may have taken its root from a very early memory – sitting under the neighbors’ weeping willow tree, you know, the kind that comes all the way to the ground. I like to think that much of my work has that same feeling – long, draping and flowing.

In 2005, Chris was juried into the League of NH Craftsmen. Bringing her best creative beading work, and following some simple advice from another juried member, Chris put her best foot forward in both creativity and professionalism. She was juried into the league in the non-metal jewelry category on her first try. More recently, she has taken on the role of a juror for the League in the non-metal jewelry category.

Says Chris, “As jurors, we try really hard to find the good in the artwork and express that to the artist. We look for a uniqueness in the work that expresses the spirit of the maker – something that differentiates this artist’s work from another’s work.” She continues, “If we do not accept someone on their first time we suggest that they go and keep working, keep playing with their creations, and keep developing their own style.”

The jurying process is to assure quality work in the League, but also to encourage and provide feedback for potential League members. So whether judging or exhibiting, Chris looks for the uniqueness in her work or the work of others. Keeping the work fresh and original is always the goal.

MONA BROOKS Mixed Media Artist

For Mona Adisa Brooks, life, art, and heart are all completely connected. There is no separation. When she talks about her mixed media creations, using porcelain, wood, cloth and wire, Mona is talking about her art; but where can this art be found – within the word “heart”, and in her own heart, as well.

“My art, and all real art, moves from the interior to the exterior,” observes Mona. The creation of her characters is a sharing of her spirit. “If the soulful spirit isn’t there when the piece is created, then the finished piece is not pleasing.”

Because of this critical link from the interior to the exterior, Mona has strived, through the years, to “keep clean and clear of the mandates of making a living.” And while this is challenging, she feels it is necessary in order to create art that speaks both to her as the artist and to the customer who is destined to own the piece.

Through her 47 years as an artist Mona has moved from painting, to clay, and now to porcelain. “Now I am a mixed media sculptor,” she says. “I move from medium to medium depending on how I feel.” It begins with porcelain and then moves on to wood, wire and fabric.

“Porcelain has no form. You have to take command of the lump of porcelain clay. You put

NH Craftsmen's Fair 2012



"Franz & Bottom" by Mona Brooks

it in the form of what's in your heart." When Mona is working in porcelain, she creates faces, hands and feet for her 3-dimensional characters. Using as inspiration "all of us," she kneads stain and pigment into her clay to achieve the desired skin tones, and then sculpts to imbue spirit into her characters. After drying the pieces for five to six weeks, and when the kiln is full, Mona begins the firing – only three or four times a year. "I take seriously my goal to have a very small environmental footprint." The firing process lasts a week.

Mona lives in Peterborough, in view of Mount Monadnock, and enjoys its natural presence. "Its spirit is something that cannot be captured in a painting," she says of the much-climbed, often-depicted landscape.

When she moved to this area from upstate New York, Mona was pressed by life's circumstances to sell her art on short notice. From a craft fair in Woodstock Vt., then to membership and shows with the American Craft Council in Maryland, to accepting commissions and selling at other national shows in the east, Mona presents those who sit around and offer humanness

in their foolishness." And it is that human foolishness that she finds inspiring in "all of us."

Mona still sells at shows throughout the east, but also exhibits and sells at the Craftsmen Fair at Mount Sunapee. "I wanted to bring my work home to the people of the area. I live in the state of New Hampshire, it is my home." She has been at the annual Fair for the past several years, after a single appearance many years ago.

But Mona's "heart containing her art" has taken her on to other creative endeavors. She is currently working with Rob Germeroth, an area stone sculptor, to open a gallery in downtown Peterborough. The difference? This will be a people's gallery. "So many people have creativity brimming over but have no outlet to express it. The expression of that vitality is needed to move forward in this world and culture." The gallery will be located at 20 Grove St. in Peterborough and is set to open in early June 2012.

Another area of heart-sharing that Mona undertakes is her work in *Art Source*, as a creative guide and consultant helping others define their career goals and creative paths. Mona is also head puppeteer and owner of *Talk it Up*, a puppet theater company.

Whether it is the characters she's creating, the ladders and chairs she carves, or offering heart, art and puppets to the community, Mona sums it up with this Balinese proverb, "We have no art – we do everything as well as we can."



"Playing Poker" by Mona Brooks