

Sharon Bladholm, Artist

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Biography

Sharon Bladholm has pursued her artistic vision through the steady acquisition and command of a variety of disciplines, including cast glass, bronze, and ceramic in the sculptural realm, as well as stained glass, printmaking and works on paper. The recurring theme in Bladholm's work is the interface of people with the natural world, integrating the sciences of anthropology with biology and botany from the plant world. She has participated on expeditions with the Field Museum, Conservation International and Andes to Amazon Biodiversity Program to the Brazilian, Venezuelan and Peruvian Amazon, documenting the life ways of the Yanomami people through her art, and exploring conservation of endangered plant and animal species in isolated communities. She has run Opal Glass Studios since 1983 and continues to complete many important commissions and show her work in galleries and museums, as well as creating public art such as installations at the Garfield Park Conservatory and Museum of Contemporary Art in Bordeaux, France, as well as Suite Home Chicago, Amazon Rising for Shedd Aquarium, and a Cool Globe sponsored by the Chicago Botanical Garden. She recently completed sculptural works in glass and bronze for the Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum. This year she is working on another public art piece for Openlands new Lakeshore Preserve based on amazing microscopic soil creatures! She also revisited the Peruvian Amazon in Nov 2009 and is creating new works of art for based on her involvement with the Andes to Amazon Biodiversity Program.

Artist Statement

My sculpture is a response to a long term investigation into the transient nature of the human figure and the natural world, especially botanical forms. My starting point in the creative process begins with simple materials such as wax, plaster and clay and after a process of maturation is finally formed into glass, bronze and ceramic.

I believe that the figure and organic form become an appropriate vehicle allowing me to address the larger concerns of the human condition. It is very important that my work reaches across social, economic, and cultural barriers reaching back to that time when art was not a separate function of life and spoke a more universal language.

My time spent in the living libraries of Latin American jungles, amidst various indigenous peoples has profoundly influenced my art. My participation on scientific expeditions has allowed access to remote and pristine ecosystems where people still live in direct interface with nature. Numerous onsite sketches of the botanical exuberance in rain forested areas becomes an internal deposit of plant anatomy, leaf, stamen, stem, seed, blossom and thorn, creating an inherent intelligence that informs and infuses my work.

Through my artwork I intend to visually engage the viewer and communicate the importance of human relationships and interaction with the biological wealth that delights, surrounds and sustains us. I hope to integrate the sometimes separate disciplines of art, science, conservation and the natural world into a seamless visual experience that can affect a subtle shift in perception.

Curriculum Vitae

Expeditions

Artist, Andes to Amazon Biodiversity Program Expedition, Peruvian Amazon, 2009
Artist, AquaR.A.P. Expedition, Conservation International and Field Museum, Rio Pastaza, Peru, 1999

Artist Chicago Rainforest Action Group Expedition State of Roraima (Yanomami area), Brazil, 1991
Artist, Chicago Rainforest Action Group Expedition, State of Amazonas (Yanomami and Piaroa areas), Venezuela, 1990
Museum Research, Paris, Rome, Florence, 1992
Artistic Research, Costa Rica, 1989
Artistic Research, Mexico, Belize and Guatemala, 1980, 1982, 1985
Publications
Illustrator, writer and photographer, Chicago Rainforest Action Group, 1990-1994
Illustrator and writer for "Mountain Call" newspaper, John F. Kennedy Foundation Fellowship, West Virginia, 1976.
Photographer (rebuilding church article), Chicago Tribune, Chicago, IL, 1997.
Photographs of the Yanomami for The Teaching Company
Photographs of the Yanomami for McGraw-Hill social studies textbook

Reviews & Media

CS Interiors, "Factory Whirl", 2009
Time Out, "All Access Art, Peek Inside The City's Hidden Studios", 2006
Chicago Magazine, "Urban Chic", 2005
"The Paper", "News Register", (Reviews of one person show), Galesburg, IL 2005
"500 Bowls" Contemporary Explorations of a Timeless Design, Lark Books, 2003
"Urns and Ferns" (article) Chicago Tribune, 2003
"Body & Soul", (review of one person show), Peoria Journal Star, Peoria IL, 1998.
"Tree of Life", (review of exhibition), Grand Rapids Sentinel, Grand Rapids MI, 1994.
Education
Independent studies in ceramics under Tom Malone, Illinois State University, 1998-2000
Independent studies in glass casting under Bill Carlson, University of Illinois, 1996-1997
Multidisciplinary studies in painting drawing printmaking and sculpture, School of the Art Institute Chicago 1990-1995
Printmaking and Drawing, Columbia College, University of Illinois, 1977-1978
Onsite Archeological studies, Northwestern University, 1972-1973

Teaching & Visiting Artist Experience

Barrington High School, Juror and Lecture, Barrington, IL, 2005
South Suburban College, Keynote address for Arts Conference, 2001
Visiting Artist, Illinois Wesleyan University, Bloomington, IL. 2000
Artist in Residence, Glenbrook South High School, Glenview, IL. 1999
Visiting Artist and Lectures, School of the Art Institute, Chicago, IL. Ongoing since 1994
Instructor, Drawing & Sculpture, Sun Foundation, Peoria, IL. 1998 -2010
Sculpture Instructor, Suburban Fine Arts Center, Highland Park, IL. 1996
HONORS AND SCHOLARSHIPS
Roman Atelier, Evergreen, Colorado, 1994
Pilchuck Glass School, Seattle Wash. Scholarship Awards, 1992
Smith Scholarship, Art Institute of Chicago, 1990
Robert F. Kennedy Foundation Fellowship, Writer and Illustrator for "Mountain Call"
"West Virginia 1976
Delphi Glass Design Competition, 1984

Public Artworks & Exhibitions

"Mysteries of the Marsh", Bronze and Glass, Peggy Notbeart Nature Museum, 2008
"Urns and Ferns", Four Installations in the fern room at the Garfield Park Conservatory, including "Biophilia", "Why the Caged Fish Sing", "Ghost Fish", 2003
"Amazon Rising: A River of Art", "Amazonian Arawana." Shedd Aquarium, 2000.
Suite Home Chicago. "Amazonian New Species." Garfield Park Conservatory, 2001.

Collections

Ethel Rosenthal Collection, Wilmette, IL
Bachman Collection, Wilmette, IL
Dobson Castle, Glasgow Scotland
Douglas Korsland, Chicago, IL
Roman Wiel, Chicago
Robyn Lee Brooks, Chicago IL
Randall Mattheis, Chicago IL

Exhibitions

"Bladholm 5: Family of Artists" Swedish Museum, Chicago, 2011
"Form in Flora", Garfield Park Conservatory, Chicago, 2010
"Art Loop Open", Chicago 2010 "Artifacts and Ideas for a Nature Inspired Architecture",
Chicago Mosaic School, 2010
"In Bloom:Floral Interpretations" Jackson Junge Gallery, Group Show,Chicago, 2010
"Touch of the Poet", Irish American Heritage Center, Group Show, Chicago, 2010
"Sharon Bladholm:Fierce FLORA & Fiesty FAUNA",Contemporary Art Center, Peoria, 2010
"Made in Illinois", Robert Morris Gallery, Springfield IL, group show, 2009 and 2010
"Sharon Bladholm", Brushwood Gallery, Ryerson Woods, one woman show, Deerfield,IL 2008
"Inspiration in Andersonville",Swedish Museum, group show, Chicago IL, 2008
"Drawn to Peoria" Contemporary Art Center, group sculpture show, Peoria IL 2008
"Made in Illinois", Robert Morris Gallery, Springfield IL, group show, 2009
"Sharon Bladholm" Clair E. Smith Art Gallery, Barrington High School,Barrington, IL, 2006
"Amazonian Impressions", one woman show, Aspen Pond,cLakeside, Arizona, 2005
"Ghost Fish-Ghost Forest"Installation, MuseeD'Art Contemporain de Bordeaux, France,2005
"Sharon Bladholm", one woman show, Galesburg Civic Art Center" Galesburg, IL. 2004
"Materials Regional",South Bend Regional Museum of Art, South Bend, Indiana,2004
"Encore! New Works by Illinois Millennium Artists", Cedarhurst Center for the Arts, 2004
"Eyes Wide Open", Loyoloa University, Chicago,IL, 2004
"Biophilia", one woman show South Suburban College, South Holland, IL,2004
"The Nude", Kentucky Art League" Lexington , Kentucky, 2004
"Flights of Imagination", Chicago Cultural Center, Chicago IL 2003
"Ceramics: New Perspectives", Function and Art Chicago IL. 2003
"Femme Fatale", Steppenwolf Theatre, Chicago IL 2001
"Plant Form Series", one woman show, Illinois Wesleyan Gallery, Bloomington, IL. 2000
"Millennium Platter Exhibition", Ceramics Art And Perception, Sydney, Australia, 2000
"North American Glass 2000", Guilford Handcraft Center, Guilford CT. 2000 University
"Invitational Ceramic Exhibition", University of Illinois at Springfield, IL. 2000
"Sextablos Show", Hyde Park Art Center Chicago and other locations
Illinois Women Artists, "The New Millennium", National Museum for Women in the Arts ,
Washington, DC, and Illinois Museums,1999-2001
"Through the Looking Glass of Art", Steppenwolf Theater, Chicago IL 1999
Chicago Art Open, Chicago Artist Coalition, Chicago IL 1999
" Velvet Show", Cafe Bacci, Chicago IL 1998
"Body & Soul" one woman show, Center for Contemporary Art, Peoria, IL 1998
"Pandora's Box", Wood Street Gallery, Chicago IL. 1996
S.O.F.A. with Portia Gallery, Miami, FL. 1996
"Best of Illinois", Portia Gallery, Chicago IL, 1995
"Emerging Woman In Glass", Portia Gallery IL, 1995
Group Monotype Show, Gallery 451, Rockford, IL, 1994
Enid Oklahoma Gallery, Chicago, IL, 1994
"The Human Condition", one woman show, Wood Street Gallery. Chicago IL, 1994
Group Glass Show, The Ark Gallery, Saugatuck, MI, 1993
" Rooftop Series", One woman show,Southport Gallery, Chicago IL,1991
" Species" Synergy Gallery, Chicago IL, 1990
Prairie Avenue Gallery, Chicago, IL 1986
Northern Illinois University,DeKalb, IL 1983