

Print this Page

Art Maker: Carolyn Webb | Sculptor, printmaker

Thursday, July 16, 2015

(Published in print: Friday, July 17, 2015)

Carolyn Webb, a sculptor and printmaker, says she sees her two artistic practices as related and complementary forms.

"I approach printmaking as a sculptor, always thinking in terms of making an object, not just a 2-dimensional image, says the Williamsburg artist. Webb's most recent work, currently on view at Smith College, includes wooden sculptures and three recently completed works on paper that involve woodcut printing, encaustic drawing and resist washes.

Hampshire Life: What is your creative process like?

Carolyn Webb: Most of my new work starts with a deep ache, a question, a need to realize a form followed by a slow process of working toward a truthful solution.

For example, the latest exhibit of large works on paper, "Of Two Minds," is based in tree imagery, but started with the question, "How do I know anything without considering its inverse or opposite?" I made a drawing of a stick, mirrored it, carved it into a large woodblock plate, printed it in several colors and different orientations (throwing out many test proofs along the way), drew multiple versions with encaustic medium on another sheet of paper, flooded this layer with an acrylic wash, then layered this over the printed images.

H.L.: Does the work ever start with a "Eureka!" moment?

C.W.: Not necessarily, but two significant "light-bulb moments" that continue to feed my work everyday are: No. 1, witnessing an amoeba split into two new beings under my microscope when I was about 6 years old. I felt as if I were present at day-one of creation. And, No. 2, seeing the empty eyes of a cadaver when I was a

student at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art. As a student of the figure, this experience prompted me to look for what is NOT there and a desire to make art based in observation of the natural world, but not bound by its obvious external manifestations.

H.L.: How do you know you're on the right track?

C.W.: It's hard to answer this, but I just know. When it is right, the work pulls me along for the ride with a deep sense of joy and exultant power that never lasts long because every completed piece prompts a dozen new questions and desires.

H.L.: What do you do when you get stuck?

C.W.: Often, I set work aside for a while. There are always multiple pieces in process in the studio, some with dust from many years. I think of my life as an artist as walking a spiral path. At the heart of the work there is a deep curiosity about the natural world and a need to find forms simultaneously expressive of a sense of joy and loss. The gravitational pull of this essential question pulls me back over and over. Each time the forms I find and use for new work relate to prior pieces, but evolve in new iterations.

H.L.: Why do you keep doing this work?

C.W.: Making art is the only way I know to try to make sense of the world, to investigate my place in it.

— Kathleen Mellen

Carolyn Webb's work is on view, along with works by Betsey Garand and Kathryn Fanelli, through Aug. 21 at the Jannotta Gallery in Hillyer Hall at Smith College in Northampton.

Source URL:<http://www.gazettenet.com/artsentertainment/hampshirelife/17131029-95/art-maker-carolyn-webb-sculptor-printmaker>