

Figuratively Speaking | Phyllis Mantik deQuevedo

Phyllis Mantik deQuevedo believes her introduction to sculpture was by design. Since the earliest experiences of seeing an image take shape from a lump of clay, she has delighted in creating. Out of this personal joy she realizes a responsibility; to create work that adds value to



our existence, to evoke a smile; to touch someone's heart and to capture a momentary emotion. Her hope is that the transforming experiences in life such as tenderness, intimacy and spirituality will enable artistic growth and provide the inspiration for her sculpture.

The youngest of three girls, Phyllis was born in the small town of Wainright, Alberta, Canada where her father managed a nearby farm. Her earliest memories are of party line phones, rides on the tractor and learning to ice skate on the neighborhood rink in their back yard. As she recalls, *“We made most of the cold Canadian winters, but upon the first signs of spring we would head out to the fields collecting a skirt full of crocuses as they poked their heads out of the mounds of snow.”*



First Signs of Spring
10”H X 8” W X 7” D

She spent endless hours lost in creative interests of sewing, crocheting and hand-crafts. Other favorite activities revolved around music, playing piano and singing in the choir. *“My mother came from an artistic and musical family. I remember family get together and reveling in long evenings of singing and playing instruments, resting only to trade instruments with a sibling before going onto the next song.”*

Farm life was hard though and didn't offer future opportunities for her parents. Each of them was the eldest of very large families that didn't have the benefits of education Phyllis received. They worked very hard and little by little improved their lives and those of their children. When Phyllis was six, the family moved to the city of Edmonton. Her mother cleaned houses several days a week and her father worked as a carpenter at a rehabilitation hospital. *“My dad was creative in his own way; had he been given the opportunity he might have been an engineer or architect. He had a gift for numbers and it seemed to me he could build any-*

thing,” she says, remembering the gift of a drawing table in Art College. *“He was detail oriented and a fine craftsman.”*



Daisy Dance
14" H x 11" W x 9" D

The family moved frequently, if not far, each move came with a new school and new friends. In the 9th grade, Phyllis again started a new school, one that didn't have a band class, so she traded in her flute for a sketchbook and pencils.

It was a year of discovery for Phyllis as she experimented with drawing, painting, clay and welded metal. As the year closed, her teacher encouraged her to enter a citywide art contest that she won

receiving bursary to be used for further art education. At 15 she attended an evening life-drawing class at the University of Alberta. *“I'm so appreciative of the teacher who worked with me and saw a talent and nurtured it,”* she says. Preparing herself through high school, she determined to go on to Art College.

She graduated with a major in Visual Communications from the Alberta College of Art and Design (ACAD) in Calgary,

Alberta, Canada. The opportunity to move to Oklahoma came several years later. She accepted what she thought would be a temporary position as a Graphic Designer for an international traveling music group based in Tulsa. However, it wasn't until 10 years into her professional art career, now living in Oklahoma City, that she received her first introduction to sculpture while working as an Art Director at a Public TV Network. She describes

her delight in watching a sculptor on TV one morning while preparing for work, "*His portrait of the host was honest and exciting and I loved that he left his imprints in the*



Flower Bed
7" H x 23" W x 8" D



Haven
25" H x 10" W x 10" D

clay." She looked into the classes that were offered but they were expensive and would have to wait. As good fortune would have it, within a few weeks, that same sculptor approached the television network where Phyllis worked with an idea for a *How to Sculpture Show* and Phyllis was invited to contribute to it. In order to write the proposal, she was invited to take a series of classes and quickly became enamored with clay and all its possibilities. "*I had experimented with every kind of painting media, fabric arts and crafting but soon, every other type of media was set aside as I focused on becoming a sculptor.*"

Starting with fired clay she eventually moving to oil based clay, she cast her first piece in bronze. "*Since that time I've been*



Angie Debo
4'H x 3.5'W x 3' Deep (figure)
Commissioned by the Stillwater Public Library

fortunate enough to sell numerous small sculptures and have also received commissions to produce monumental works of art for private clients, churches and cities.”

Phyllis' technique has evolved over the years, as have the materials. She realized that water-based clay was limiting in the type of detail she could obtain with complex figurative works. Studying the figure continuously, with a variety professional sculptors she continues to refine her art. *“It wasn't until a trip to Hawaii that I became fixated with the idea of sculpting flowers.”* Flowers are full of color and vitality which gives her opportunity to explore patina in ways she hasn't until previ-

ously. Struggling with a significant change in subject matter and how it might be perceived to her collectors, but unable to let it go, she settled upon the idea of merging the two interests.

Phyllis deQuevedo chooses figurative and botanical subjects because of the fluidity of motion and range of expression. Her current work focuses on figurative interpretations inspired by botanical shapes and their human metaphors, titled “Metaflors.”

She cites many influences, but remembers most that of her mentor and friend Rosalind Cook. *“She generously shared her knowledge, encouraging me to great-*

er things.” *“Her sculptures are uplifting and full of the joy of life. I left every encounter with her more inspired.”* She also notes the work of artists such as Michael Talbot and Richard MacDonalds for their excellence in figurative anatomy and sensitivity.

When Phyllis started to really notice other botanical sculptures she came across the work of Stephen Robin, his sculptures have a bold and unexpected simplicity compared to what are typically delicate, fussy and highly detailed forms. *“While his influence may not be directly evident in my own work, the realization of other possibilities of subject matter helped me to examine a new direction.”*

Her first major art commission, resulted from a call for entries for the Boston Avenue Methodist Church in Tulsa, OK. This beautiful church, on the National Registry of Historical Buildings, is recognized for its Art Deco ornamentation. Phyllis created a pair of 16-foot bas-relief panels for the church columbarium and 2 years later was commissioned to create a second monumental sculpture for the park adjacent to the church building. Other major works in-

clude a larger than life sculpture of Oklahoma writer and historian, Angie Debo, for the Stillwater Public Library.

Phyllis and her husband live in Oklahoma City where she maintains an in-home studio. Together they enjoy traveling which she feels gives her a deeper connection to the world around her. They take pleasure in gardening and the lessons learned from maintaining it throughout

“The role of the artist in society is to lift the spirit, to somehow let us see the goodness in things.”

Architect, Samuel Mockbee

the year.

Phyllis has had a full career as a Graphic Designer and Marketing Manager. *“Working with other creative individuals keeps me motivated and current.”* She regularly shows in the Women Artists of the West National Exhibition. She has been featured in several Oklahoma publications along with her monumental commissions. Phyllis is a 20 year member of the Oklahoma Sculpture Society and the Oklahoma Visual Arts Coalition. She is an Associate Member of the Oklahoma Art



Tulip Pose
6" H x 6" W x 14" D

Guild, the National Sculpture Society and Women Artists of the West (WAOW).

Phyllis is a studio artist at Xanadu gallery.com. Her website is mantikstudio.com.
