

Lorelei Stumbo – Fire Sculpted Art

“Nature produces straightforward beauty. No analysis necessary. Even allowing for the perversion of nature due to environmental changes, the textures and compositions created by decay, repair and rebirth still inspire me.”

Born in Columbus, Ohio in 1960 Lorelei Stumbo grew up in the Midwest. Her art training started early as the daughter of an art professor. As a teenager Lorelei helped her father, Hugh Stumbo, in creating for herself a cylindrical cabin modeled after her father’s Grain Bin house in Cedar Bluff, Iowa. Still unfinished after 30 years, Lorelei is hoping to convert the cabin into an “Earth Ship” type residence.

Lorelei studied art at the University of Iowa as an undergraduate. There she worked mainly in sculpture and “found object” art. The objective was to find an art that had the smallest impact on the environment. She loved iron work but did not pursue that craft because of the toxic fumes. She worried that many of the materials used to create art were toxic and carving away at things seemed wasteful.

Later, experimenting with a technique learned from an art teacher from Normal, Illinois, she began burning salvaged plywood as raw material for her art. This wood was scrap and bound for the landfill or was rotting in a farmyard. So, burning it only created particulate in the air which does eventually settle. Living in a rural setting she went about creating art with fire, linseed oil and oil paints. The acrylic paint she uses is salvage from friends and family’s painting projects. So far, it is only the linseed oil and oil paints that are purchased new (requiring those nasty new manufacturing pollutants). But the paints are used sparingly, just to stain the wood, and thus have only been purchased once in her college years and two replacement tubes recently.

This process of burning, wire brushing, and dry brush painting with acrylic house paint produces an exaggerated grain texture. Much like looking into the coals of a campfire, these distressed pieces of wood show forms that mimic the shape of landscapes or animals. Then by applying color strategically Lorelei can accentuate those shapes to share with the audience.

Now living in Nederland, Colorado she believes her fire sculpted art is a celebration of everyone’s innate power of imagination. Even though she may “see” a scene in the wood and try to develop it, it is her desire that each observer view the piece without prejudice of knowing her design intent. In this way, as with most human interaction, individuals create their own reality. So, please, enjoy the pieces before looking at the titles.