

National Portrait Gallery | Face to Face blog

February 20, 2014

Portrait of an Artist: Carole Feuerman

This is a continuing series of interviews with the forty-eight artists whose work was selected for the Outwin Boochever Portrait Competition. The third OBPC exhibition opened on March 23, 2013, and will run through February 23, 2014.

Carole Feuerman, who participated in our interviews last autumn, created the work General's Daughter for this competition.



General's Daughter / Carole Feuerman / Oil on resin, 2011 / Collection of the artist, courtesy Jim Kempner Fine Art, New York City

Q: Where are you from, where do you live now?

A: I was raised in Hollis Hills, Queens, and Liberty, New York. Now I live in Soho and in Fort Lauderdale.

Q: *What medium(s) do you work with?*

A: I work with a variety of mediums, including bronze, resin, marble, and paints of all kinds, as well as printmaking, photography, and video.

Q: *Tell us about your technique and creative process.*

A: My work never just mimics the human body. I want the work to take the body to another level. The model's emotions embody the story that I am trying to tell. After a model poses for me, I both sculpt and life cast a sculpture of his or her body as a starting point. By hand, I then sculpt it until I have reached the image I have in my mind, and the story I am trying to tell becomes a reality.

Q: *Tell us about the piece you submitted to the competition.*

A: General Ragin is a man I have known for over twenty years. He works as an attendant in the parking lot I use near my home. I witnessed firsthand how the birth of his daughter Syntonia instantly transformed his world. She was a gorgeous baby and lit up his life.

I knew from the time she was an infant that I wanted to make a portrait of her. When she was three-and-a-half years old, I attempted to have her pose for me; however, she could not sit still. I watched her grow up, waiting until she was old enough to pose for me again.

Finally when she turned sixteen, she came to my studio again. My sculpture *General's Daughter* captures that special moment when she changed from a young girl to a young adult. The experience has resonated with Syntonia and inspired her to state, "I came to an understanding of who I am and that I love artistic work."

Q: *Tell us about your larger body of work.*

A: Physicality is a huge part of my work. The hyperrealistic style of my art is what creates the physicality for which my sculptures are known.

The realism stems from my desire to portray real emotions and physical states of being—from peaceful serenity to energy, equilibrium, and vigor. My focus is on bathers and swimmers because I feel that the element of water reinforces the physicality of the work.

Q: *What are you currently working on?*

A: My newest works will be collectively on view for the first time during a spring solo exhibition at Jim Kempner Fine Art. The exhibition will include *The Golden Mean*, my sixteen-foot bronze diver, which will be in the gallery's sculpture garden; *Quan*, a five-and-a-half foot monumental painted bronze and stainless-steel sculpture; and *Infinity*, my first sculpture to hang from a ceiling.

During the summer of 2013, I returned to the Venice Biennale to showcase my latest monumental works at the entrance of the Biennale with the Concilio Europeo dell'Arte and with an additional exhibition at the historic Palazzo Bembo with the Global Art Affairs Foundation.

I am also working more and more on outdoor and public sculptures. I just received a commission for a *Double Diver*, which will stand thirty feet tall; I will make it in my sand-casted painting with fire technique. This is when I pour, drip, splash, and spray a variety of molten metals at two thousand degrees into the sand casts to create an organic one-of-a-kind work of art.

I also just received a commission for create the portraits of two children riding on a four foot stainless-steel swan. I am going to cast the children in stainless steel and paint the steel in my hyper-realistic style. The piece will be installed in the middle of



a lake and will look like the children are floating on the swan atop the lake. I am very excited about both commissions.



Quan by Carole Feuerman

Q: Tell us about a seminal experience you've had as an artist.

A: John T. Spike invited me to exhibit two monumental sculptures for public exhibition at the 2007 Venice Biennale. I had never created a monumental sculpture before. He chose two of my early swimmer sculptures for me to make monumental in size.

This was a great opportunity to show my work publicly. Two hundred and fifty-five thousand people saw my work in the Biennale. People even waited in line to see it. It was the beginning of my working with public art.

Q: What inspires you?

A: People inspire me. Great artists inspire me. Perseverance inspires me. Achieving grace and balance in life inspires me. I make my sculptures about people who are comfortable in their own skin. As the art historian John Spike said, "Feuerman knew that the flipside of junk-food culture was a new awareness of 'wellness.'" The World Health Organization stated in 1970, the decade in which I began making my sculptures, that health embraced a total package of "physical, mental, and social well being, not merely the absence of disease or infirmity": in other words, a sound mind in a sound body.

Forty years ago, showing a healthy, intelligent woman was a radical departure in contemporary art. Now it is a widely accepted ideal, yet most contemporary artists don't explore this topic—at least not in figurative art. My realistic style allows me to present a universal moment to which every viewer can relate.

I explore emotional dimensions where the sculpture depicts not just one frozen second but an infinite and universal state of

being. Underlying the realistic daily activities depicted in my sculptures are common threads of experience that connect us to one another. Life inspires me.



Survival of Serena by Carole Feuerman


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