

Excerpt from article on Susan Low-Beer, ceramic artist 1998.

Susan Low-Beer draws on her roles as wife, mother, artist, teacher, friend to create multi-layered works of art. Like a novelist she uses her own experience as a catalyst for weaving complex stories depicting psychologically dynamic relationships. Her cast of characters include both historical and contemporary references embroiled in the universal struggle for understanding self and others.

It is this struggle which both motivates and grounds Susan. In her incessant explorations of relationships, the intangible becomes real in the subtle interplay of movement. The simple gesture, a hand across an eyeless face, suggests underlying emotions. Newspaper photographs, postcards and daily images record small quirky details, clues or reminders of past experience. They lead one deep into the psyche.

Cycles of time mark the regressive and progressive characteristics of personal growth. The stages of one's life seem to shift and reorganize like layers of earth. Both are formed through time. In the act of reaching back or going forward stories can be reinvented.

Images replicated in a progression of continuously evolving sculptures engender a sense of recognition for maker and audience. The magic of Susan's work is the opportunity she presents each viewer to identify personal connections and make discoveries.

"I don't suppose you do know precisely what you are after. I don't think in the creative process anyone quite knows. They have a vague idea _ a beckoning, an inkling of some truth _ it is only in the process that it comes to any clarity. Sometimes, indeed often, we work on a theme with an unformed idea, and when it has passed through the process, its final result is something we could never have predicted when we commenced of course there must be the urge, the indefinable longing to get something into terms of plastic presentation, but results are nearly always unpredictable." Growing Pains by Emily Carr

Schklar: Can you describe the process you go through in developing your work?.

Low-Beer: There are a lot of times when all is confusion. It's as if I am working in a fog, a dream, a so called wasted time. It's incredibly unclear and tricky. I feel depressed, terribly incompetent and lost. Yet I stay with it. I keep playing or dealing with whatever the material may be, although I have a hard time seeing exactly what I'm doing while I'm doing it. I try to discover something that strikes a chord, that resonates inside, a tenuous ambiguous pursuit. I know after many years of working in this way that the search or the hunt and the accompanying confusion are what is intriguing and give me the most intense experiences.

Schklar: In *The Courage to Create* Rollo May talks about the creative encounter and the ensuing anxiety that occurs when we confront our relationship to the world as we've known it. He sees this anxiety as a way of turning chaos into order. What is it that enables you to remain patient enough to persevere through your confusion and anxiety?

Low-Beer: Blind faith. There are threads that give some indication of what follows, like an archaeological dig . When I am in the midst of it I don't have a clue about what is actually going to happen. It's only in retrospect that I can see the continuity in the evolution of the work. I take comfort in reading about other artists' processes. In *Creators on Creating* many of the artists speak metaphorically. One woman talks about walking through the woods and being aware of all that is around her. All her senses are involved in this walk. She sees a morel mushroom. Everything becomes focused on this one mushroom so her whole perception of the woods is altered. All her energy is directed towards finding other morel mushrooms. The contrast between the broad feeling of being attuned to many sensations and the narrow concentration of one particular thing causes her to lose sight of the larger experience. And so "the woods disappeared".