

Kathleen Skeels

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Gallery Representation: Gallery IMA, Seattle



Underwater Séance (self-portrait)

Kathleen Skeels grew up on Capitol Hill in Seattle and still lives there. From early childhood onward, without ceasing, she has drawn and painted. In 1990 she fell in love with clay. Clay took her work into the third dimension. From that time to the present, Kathleen builds sculptures with clay and draws and paints on clay.

My sculpture 'Young Woman' comes from memories of my years at Garfield High School in Seattle. It is a tribute to the courageous young women who worked for justice, self-determination, and joy—the beautiful women who contributed so much to my city. Their revolutionary spirit opened my eyes to the nature of our country and its history. It formed the basis of my understanding of this world. I am forever grateful for this education.

Resume

Years ago I was having trouble with painting with egg tempera. I had seen a retrospective of paintings by Jacob Lawrence and knew that there was a short period when he worked in egg tempera. Since he was a former instructor of mine I called him up for advice. He answered the phone immediately and explained to me how to work with this medium. This was very helpful, but at the end of our conversation he added, 'Egg tempera is a difficult medium, I had trouble with it myself'. I'm glad I quit egg tempera and switched to clay.



Artist Statement

For me my art is an alternate world, a place of possibility and discovery where I am at my most capable and where the rules are of my own making. Through my art I make intangible worlds tangible. Art gives me a serious playground that holds me enthralled for as long as it takes to complete the work. Drawing is basic to my art, drawing in black

and white and color. It's play. It's memory. It's a refuge. On another level, it serves as a tool for examining the world directly, and for thinking through ideas and projects.

Clay is a versatile and challenging material. I work in clay to sculpt and use it as a ground for drawing and painting. It is a versatile and challenging material. Porcelain's fine texture is perfect for small sculptures and complex drawings. Colors are at their most brilliant on top of porcelain. A heavy duty stoneware clay works well for creating my large scale sculptures. I create my figurative sculptures from imagination informed by my studies from life. Often these three-dimensional pieces double as grounds for my drawings.

My artwork is eclectic. I use whatever I need at the moment, color and tone, 2D and 3D, giant and tiny. Often opposites attract, for example a sculptural volume that flattens into a drawing, going from 3D to 2D and back to 3D again, or a twice life sized figure that contains a miniature world.

I design and construct gardens as well, sometimes using my ceramics to create the hardscape. Gardens take time to experience and time to develop. Gardens are space sculpted by form, form made of a composition of hardscape and nature, that can only be experienced through movement and time.

These are the three art mediums I work with: drawing, sculpture, and space.

