

Artist Statement: Martha Jackson Jarvis

My work explores issues of conservation and our relationship to natural materials and landscapes. I draw uncommon analogies between disparate forms, objects and materials to construct narratives of real and imagined landscapes. My memory and enchantment with nature spring from early encounters in the southern landscape of my childhood. I grew up in rural Virginia in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains. This landscape is indelibly inscribed in my mind's eye giving consciousness to feelings, ideas, and perceptions of scale, stories, familial knowledge and memories of a distinctive southern place. The sticks, stones and red clay of the southern landscape travel with me in my work. I explore the energy in materials, their emanating auras, textures and sources of power. Stories humans tell are narratives of survival, identity, power, success, and failure, they are stories of origins and creation that reach into ancestry and simultaneously extend a path and direction to future generations.

I am interested in ethno biology, ecosystems and cultural identity. These concerns are translated within the context of urban and rural spaces. The energy and verve of memorable Southern environments still informs my work. I am interested in forces that bind inanimate and animate objects in symbiotic relationships that influence life and define our place on Earth. In my work, I explore the energy in materials, their emanating auras, textures and sources of power. Encapsulated in my symbolism is the idea of a transformative creative force that I set in motion. Organic elements reference the fundamental character of the feminine as the great round that contains the universe. Elements of impermanence and enduring cycles of change and accumulation and decay are revealed in my use of stone, glass, concrete, steel, wood, rubber, and fiber.

As an artist, I am interested in the compelling possibilities of public art that reflects the diversity and wealth of cultural influences apparent in contemporary life. I am interested in elements of identity and culture that survive, strengthen and compel humanity forward. I use history as a reservoir to distill expressive and meaningful symbols that link cultures one to another. These signs and symbols made visible have the power to resonate in the hearts and minds of generations to come. I believe it important to discern underlying currents in the physical and social environment that reflect the distinctive characteristics of a community. Stories humans tell are narratives of survival, identity, power, success, and failure, they are stories of origins and creation that reach into ancestry and simultaneously extend a path and direction forward to future generations. My artistic challenge is to bring these epic stories to the fore in a poignant and poetic way in my sculpture.

Receipt of the Anonymous Was a Women Award will be an extraordinary affirmation of purpose and catalyst for continued exploration of sculpture projects that engage the natural environment and speak to the human heart.