

When I was a young girl living near Toronto, my uncle owned a stationery store where he sold art supplies, craft kits, and paint-by-numbers. I often received these kits as gifts and would pass many hours playing with them, discovering. Eventually I took art classes in painting and drawing, but outside the classes I would tie strings around nails or make boats out of Styrofoam and sticks found in a local dumpster.

Despite - or perhaps due to - being raised in a large city, I became drawn to the natural world and I desired to live in the country. As a teenager I knew that I needed to represent nature, and I began landscape painting, my influences being the Group of Seven and David Milne. But I was also introduced to the notion that humans construct straight lines against an organic environment, and that these lines represent an attempt to control nature. Since then, the contrast and fusion with nature of man-made lines and urban forms and structures has been a foundation to any form of art I have created.

Over the years my interpretation of beauty has evolved from being a lover of traditional romantic images to an artist who wishes to explore the conventional and unconventional forms of beauty presented to us as consumers. In reaction to these forms, I explore the aesthetics of line and colour, of shape and texture hidden in the traditionally non-aesthetic.

My education includes fine art and craft disciplines such as painting, drawing, sculpture, and printmaking, as well as in clay and glass. Since 1996 I have had a tremendous opportunity to develop as an artist by making a living as a full-time professional studio potter and painter. From this rich exposure to art materials and processes I have developed a body of work that blends my interest in drawing, fibre, painting, and printmaking with that of clay. In clay, artists who have influenced my work are Bruce Cochrane, Kayo O'Young, Diane Nasr, Jim Smith and Joan Bruneau; in drawing, Betty Goodwin and Rick Burns; in photography and architecture, Ed Burtinsky and Frank Ghery. I am a modernist, inspired by line, colour, and the fluid, impressionable, and sensual nature of clay as a canvas or a vessel.

I often use text and images from everyday life to respond to, and to readjust, our framework of accepted notions of beauty. I challenge the expected use of art materials for art purposes by using recycled materials (metals, fabric, paper) to further explore unconventional art processes and to stretch our understanding of what art and craft can be. Recently I have been compelled to create beauty from images and objects discovered in such places as shopping malls, recycling yards, and in places in states of disrepair.

The arbitrary placement of materials in the hierarchy of art-making needs to be examined. Perhaps tying strings around nails is a good place to start.

