

Artist talk Abington Library

I graduated Penn State with a BFA in painting and drawing and went on to teach at a small Catholic high school for about 11 years and during that time teachers were required to take act 48 credits which is a way for teachers to stay sharp on their teaching skills as well as broaden their knowledge in their chosen field. This led me to take a jewelry class and that is what eventually lead me to the path of felting garments and the art dolls.

I realized when I took the jewelry class that you could make something highly personal in a small scale that still had a great impact. I also loved the idea that this object could be worn on the body. There is something amazing about wearing artwork. For me it also becomes infused with the energy of the wearer and that can bring a whole other layer of meaning to the piece.

I started out with jewelry. I incorporated crochet techniques with wire and began to make sculptural pieces. They were very whimsical, fantasy oriented and generally had a quality of fun, excitement and had a life of their own. I love the process of making this type of work. The repetitive nature of crochet and the way the wire can hold the shapes and the colors. I loved that this type of work is really like wearable sculpture. It makes a bold statement and is also light and airy.

This led me to want to pursue my own work more so I applied for graduate school and this is where my work really took an interesting turn. I had the opportunity to be around other amazing artists who inspired me to try new materials such as wool. Working with wool and ceramics. After my explorations with the sculptural aspects of the crochet wire both wool and ceramics were also wonderful sculptural mediums that enabled me to move into the direction I was being called to move into.

Working with the wool was an amazing eye opening experience. Here was a soft, very playable material that you could manipulate into whatever you wanted. I was able to connect with this material on many levels as an artist and it even brought me back to connect with my childhood because I have this deep love, admiration and respect for animals. So working with a material that was directly connected with an animal was very special and meaningful to me. It just awakened my inner child and this inevitably opened the door for my connection with the dolls as an art form as well.

I began here with my connection with the object as a wearable piece of art. I am not a fashion designer and have no formal training with garment design so this was really exciting to begin the learning process with both making the wool as fabric and constructing garments for the body.

I think sometimes when you do not have the formal training that you may have a advantage in pushing creativity because you are free to do anything since you do not know any of the rules. I always tell my students that it is my job as a teaching artist to inform them of the rules and it is their job as an artist to learn them then to break them.

I began making patterns for simple wearable garments and felting the patterns I made. Size began in interesting challenge because the wool shrinks 30 to 50 percent during the felting process so it has been a learning process, and I am still learning the secrets of garment construction with the wool.

I started with ceramics and began working with forms in clay with slab heads. These were probably the beginning of the birth of the art doll forms I am currently working with now. They embody personal struggle, expression and possibly an unsettling feeling. I am very sensitive and I often have strong emotions and I think the

heads were a way for my to try to understand strong emotions as well as to tame them. During this time I met another artist who was working with sort of doll forms and I was struck by how much I connected with the doll forms. As a child I was not into dolls, but I had a very strong connection with stuffed animals, so this really resonated with me on a deep level.

The dolls represent a way to express a spiritual experience living as a human being within the larger context of this universe.

I have always loved mixed media so the dolls are a perfect way for me to incorporate all of these aspects of my personality and expression. The ceramics, wire, wool and other materials work very well in this form of expression. The dolls started out with an idea on my part then it was a matter of executing the idea.

This art doll represents my recent trip to Ireland which was a very spiritual and personal journey for me. Every material used to make this doll is relevant to tell my story from this trip including the fact that it is stuffed with rocks, so every material is well thought out and important to the piece.

Somewhere along the way the dolls have been presenting themselves to me, so they want to exist. For example, the head of Daniel Emilfork was an unconscious effort on my part. I was planning to make a series on circus performers and this head was to be part of that series, but after it was fired and glazed I realized that I recognized the face. After some research I found Daniel Emilfork. I started reading about his life and I really felt connected to his story. Originally I put holes in the head to felt spikes out of the head, but after I read about him I decided to felt a city inspired by Paris. After I was working on the city I was looking online at photos of him and saw this photo of him from a 1995 film he was in called City of the Lost Children. This has a very similar look and feeling to the felted

city. So this is like a form of channeling that can happen when an artist engages in the creative process.

Another example is Bee Man. I originally made this piece about a year ago. The idea was again for the same series of circus performers, but it also took on a life of its own. Recently I was beginning to work on this piece and realized that the man was Quasimodo from The Hunchback of Notre Dame. It was very important at the time I made this doll that he was in fact a bee man, so I did another search for Notre Dame Cathedral and bees and learned that they did in fact have bees in the bell tower (where the fictional Quasimodo hung out) and that the bees also survived the fire!

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The bees living on Notre Dame's roof survived the fire

By Saskya Vandoorne and Gianluca Mezzofiore, CNN

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CLAUPIERES VIRGINE/PARIS MATCH VIA GETTY IMAGES

The beekeeper Nicolas Geant settled three hives on the roof of the sacristy of Notre Dame.

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Paris (CNN) — The bees that live on the roof of Notre Dame are alive and buzzing, having survived the devastating fire that ripped through the cathedral on Monday, the beekeeper Nicolas Geant confirmed to CNN.

"I got a call from Andre Finot, the spokesman for Notre Dame, who said there were bees flying in and out of the hives which means they are still alive!" Geant said. "Right after the fire I looked at the drone pictures and saw the hives weren't burnt but there was no way of knowing if the bees had survived. Now I know there's activity it's a huge relief!"

Notre Dame has housed three beehives on the first floor on a roof over the sacristy, just beneath the rose window, since 2013. Each hive has about 60,000 bees.

Geant said the hives were not touched by the blaze because they are located about 30 meters below the main roof where the fire spread.



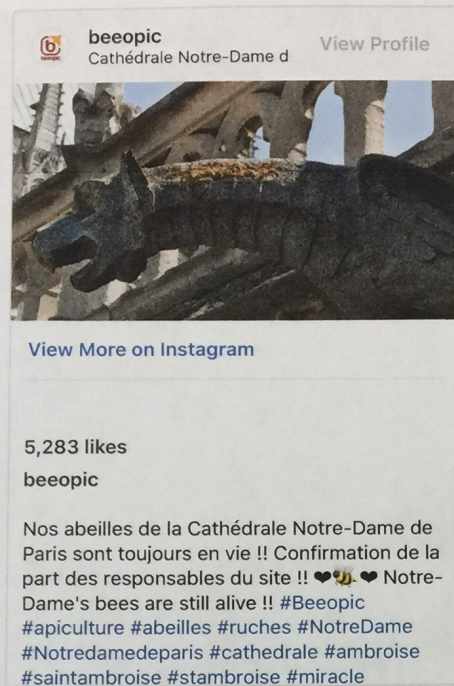
"They weren't in the middle of the fire, had they been they wouldn't have survived," Geant said. "The hives are made of wood so they would have gone up in flames."

"Wax melts at 63 degrees, if the hive had reached that temperature the wax would have melted and glued the bees together, they would have all perished."

While it is likely that the hives were filled with smoke, that doesn't impact them like it would with humans, Geant explained.

"Bees don't have lungs like us," he said. "And secondly, for centuries to work with the bees we have used bee smokers."

A bee smoker is a box with bellows which creates a white, thick cold smoke in the hives, prompting the bees to calmly gorge on the honey while beekeepers do their work, Geant said.



Geant said he wouldn't be able to tell whether all of the bees are alive until he was able to inspect the site, but he's confident because the hives didn't burn, and because bees have been spotted flying in and out.

"I was incredibly sad about Notre Dame because it's such a beautiful building, and as a catholic it means a lot to me. But to hear there is life when it comes to the bees, that's just wonderful. I was overjoyed," he added.

"Thank goodness the flames didn't touch them. It's a miracle!"

