

PETER WOYTUK BIOGRAPHY

It is not often that a young artist is proclaimed “the greatest animal sculptor of the Western world in the closing years of the 20th century.” This type of bold statement tends to follow an artist, positively or negatively, for many years to come. But such is the opinion of *The International Herald Tribune* of sculptor Peter Woytuk, who currently works out of both Santa Fe, New Mexico and Thailand.

Peter, however, is taking it all in stride. He does not even consider himself an animal sculptor, let alone the greatest one in the Western world. The fact remains that Peter is often drawn to certain animal forms and often sculpts them. As he explains, “there are a lot of anthropomorphic qualities you can suggest through animals. I haven’t found that kind of freedom in human figures.” He also finds animal subjects ideal for exploring the elements of form, color and texture. It is precisely this masterful combination of form and character that separates Peter’s work from his peers and draws the attention of such a discerning publication as *The International Herald Tribune*.

Born in 1958, Peter Woytuk was submersed at a young age in the architectural properties of form, space and art. His mother is a talented textile artist and his father was a prominent Boston architect who designed the Citicorp Center in New York. Together, they took the family on numerous trips to Europe to seek out great art and architecture. Peter later went on to major in art at Kenyon College in Ohio where his focus was in photography. However, he was not introduced to the formal art of sculpting until he apprenticed with Connecticut sculptor Philip Grausman in the early 1980s. This experience helped Peter develop the technical knowledge and skills needed to transform his artistic vision into sculptural form.

Ultimately Peter found himself fascinated with sculpting the various forms of animals, birds in particular. He has since developed a highly original range of styles that explore a unique sense of volume and suspended motion. His impressionistic ravens, for example, demonstrate remarkable liveliness. “I’ve done some research on them. They spend a good 90 percent of their lives playing because they’re so adept at survival,” he says. Peter’s ravens, totaling over 50 individual sculptures, play off the inquisitive, mischievous nature of these birds. Also of note are Peter’s abstracted representations of hens. Their brightly patinaed, ovoid shapes are whimsically reminiscent of Easter eggs.

In recent years, Peter has been experimenting with life-size and monumental sculpture. His group of bulls, in particular, were first selected because he was attracted to the “sprawl of mass” displayed by seated and reclining bulls on the farms surrounding his former studio in New England. In his interpretation, Peter has somewhat altered their shapes. As he explains, “they’re basically large volumes of simplified bovine forms. Their backbone contours, the overlapping silhouette lines of bull groupings, mirror the shapes of the hills surrounding my studio. I kind of like to think of them as the cow as landscape.” Ultimately for Peter, the end result is not only the objects themselves but also the way other people respond to and interact with them. He is pleasantly surprised that the bulls have “become sort of a playground for children. They’re inviting and great to climb on,” he explains.

Peter's decision to create large-scale sculpture has brought about an interesting dilemma - where to have such enormous work cast. For his larger sculptures, Peter has been using foundries in Thailand and China. According to Peter, these facilities, which are used to "working on twenty-foot Buddhas," have "the ability to pour very large-scale sculpture. They're almost unique in their capacity to melt and pour a great amount of metal." The resulting product is finely crafted under the scrupulous direction of the artist.

In the tradition of historical animal sculptors, Peter has chosen to keep his bronze editions small - usually limited to just eight castings. This break from the current trend to produce work in large editions further distinguishes Peter from many of his peers. Peter continues to set himself apart by creating work that creatively challenges his and our interpretation of animal form. Currently his sculpture is displayed in such collections as Dean Witter Reynolds in New York, Diane Von Furstenburg in New York, Grounds for Sculpture in New Jersey, the Hotchkiss School in Connecticut, Kenyon College in Ohio, the North Carolina Zoological Park in Ashboro, the Weisman Museum at The University of Minnesota in Saint Paul and Texas Tech in Lubbock.

PETER WOYTUK ARTIST'S STATEMENT

My work has developed and moved from an interest in abstract imagery to a more representational exploration of natural form. For me, the subject matter is highly fertile ground, suggesting endless possibilities for three dimensional interpretation and invention.

Past sculpture has been concerned with a distillation of animal shape into simpler forms and the resulting interplay of concave and convex masses. This dialectic is intensified by placing animals in groupings, creating environments where the negative space and the relationship between sculptures are as important as the sculptures themselves. I consider the grouping to be one unified sculpture that the viewer is able to walk around and within.

In recent work, "natural forms" in the shape of sticks, limbs and splittings from the backyard woodpile, along with man-made objects such as cast iron pieces, screw and the like have become the components – the sculptural building blocks – in assembling a piece. Once cast into bronze, these new pieces are a dynamic mixture of objects, textures and color suggesting a variety of animals.

For the past fourteen years I have had the opportunity to work with several art foundries in Asia. In some cases, these facilities have the capability of melting up to 10,000 pounds of bronze into a single pour. As a result, my work has grown larger and larger in scale. This trend has manifested itself in pieces such as the *Five Large Bulls*, the *Large Elephant Pair*, the *Large Can Construction* and the *Large Sheep Pair*.

COMMISSIONS:

- 2003 -*Bearcats*, Hotchkiss School, Lakeville, CT
- 2000 -*Double Bench with Ravens and Apple*, Bing Nursery School, Stanford University, Berkeley, CA
- Rooftop Mounted Crows*, Ranson Hall, Kenyon College, Gambier, OH
- Special commission of six small pieces, Sun Valley Wine Auction, Sun Valley, ID
- 1998 -*The Elephant Group*, North Carolina Zoological Park, Asheboro, NC
- 1995 -*Singular Raven*, Weantinogue Land Trust, Litchfield, CT
- 1993 -*Peace Globe* (a 16' fabricated globe), World Peace Prayer Society, Tokyo, Japan. Installed in Amenia, NY

PUBLIC COLLECTIONS:

- American Red Cross, Bangkok, Thailand
- Audubon Society – Randall Davey Center, Santa Fe, NM (loan)
- Ballantyne Corporate Park, Charlotte, NC
- Children's Hospital, Bangkok, Thailand
- City of Palm Beach, Palm Beach, FL (loan)
- City of Santa Fe, Santa Fe, NM (loan)
- City of Spartanburg, NC
- Dean Witter Reynolds, New York, NY
- Ghost Ranch – Santa Fe Campus, Santa Fe, NM (loan)
- Grounds for Sculpture, Hamilton, NJ
- Huntington's Children's Garden, Huntington Botanical Gardens, San Marino, CA
- Kenyon College, Gambier, OH
- Hotchkiss School, Lakeville, CT
- Houston's Restaurants, Atlanta, GA
- Museum of the Southwest, Midlands, TX
- North Carolina Zoological Park, Asheboro, NC
- La Posada de Santa Fe Resort and Spa, Santa Fe, NM (loan)
- San Francisco Plaza, Santa Fe, NM
- Teleflora Plaza, Los Angeles, CA
- Texas Tech University, Lubbock, TX
- Weisman Museum, University of Minnesota, St. Paul, MN

LECTURES:

- 2002 -“Making of the Bulls”, University of Minnesota, St. Paul, MN
2000 -“Elephants, Asia and 6-Ton Pours”, 18th International Sculpture Conference, Houston, TX
-“Elephants, Asia and 6-Ton Pours”, Santa Fe Council for the Arts benefit, Owings-Dewey Fine Art, Santa Fe, NM
1999 -“The Art Work of Peter Woytuk”, AIA Conference, Duluth, MN

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY:

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-*Wildlife Art*, “Scales of Balance”, by Chelsie GawneMark, July/August 2004
-*Art Talk*, “Animal Magnetism”, by John Jarvis, January, 2003
-*Sun Valley Guide*, “An Exploration in Natural Forms”, by Pat Murphy, Summer 2003
-*The Palm Beach Post*, “Gentle Giants Lift Spirits of Passerby”, April 8, 2002
-*South Florida Sun-Sentinel*, “Elephants Enter Downtown”, by Jennifer Peltz, April 8, 2002
-*Desert Post Weekly*, “Birds of a Feather”, by Eric Olson, December 20, 2001
-*Minneapolis Star Tribune*, “New Art Presents the Percent”, by Mary Abbe, September 23, 2001
-*US Art*, “25 Artists You Should Know More About – Peter Woytuk: On Solid Ground”, by J.N., August, 2000
-*Owings-Dewey Fine Art*, “Peter Woytuk Sculpture”, 2000
-*Santa Fean*, “The Sculptor’s View”, July, 1999
-*Southwest Art*, “Animation and Repose”, by Norman Kolpas, July, 1999
-*New York Times*, “A Gallery Season Closing Down in Kent”, by William Zimmer, December 15, 1996
-*Bangkok Post*, “Bronze of Bestial Grace”, by Apinan Poshyanada, March 20, 1995
-*International Herald Tribune*, “Contemporary Culture in Leafy New England”, by Souren Melikian, September 4-5, 1993
-*New York Times*, “Birds and Beasts Inhabit Mattatuck Show”, by Vivian Raynor, January 7, 1990