

PATI STAJCAR

A transplant to the West from Pennsylvania, Pati Stajcar's art was born out of the need to liberate the mental and physical tension she experienced working for a major airline. Little did she know, relief would come in the form of sculpting. "I had always sketched and painted," Stajcar recalls, "but after taking a decorative woodcarving class in 1980, I turned the corner into 3-D and knew this was where I wanted to live for the rest of my life." Now, constantly inspired by the abundant wildlife and expansive vistas that surround her Golden, Colorado, home, Pati uses her art as a vehicle to express her love of all things natural.

Devoting herself full time to sculpting in 1985, Stajcar credits generous teachers like Gerald Balciar and a supportive artistic community with converting her from a hobbyist to a professional. Though she specializes in wildlife figurative sculpture, Pati doesn't feel her art strictly reflects any particular style. "I started in tight realism, but loosened to stylized and impressionistic representations, and try to incorporate a bit of abstract along my journey," she says. "I simply try to give each piece what it needs to tell its own story." *Surrender* is just one example of Stajcar's talent for depicting animal forms while eschewing the limitations of working in any one style.

What inspired this piece?

When I look at a piece of wood I try to see what it can be in my imagination. In this I saw the ruffled feathers of a flamingo.

What prep work and techniques went into this sculpture and how did they contribute to the success of the finished piece?

I was quite fortunate with this piece. Other than flattening the bottom for orientation, there really was no prep work involved. I did stop often during the process to closely examine the wood and try to find the piece inside the piece. I used chain saws, grinders, chisels, knives—whatever would remove the excess wood, leaving me with the desired form.

What was your greatest challenge in creating this piece?

Showing the delicacy without showing the support structure required patient and careful handling on my part. At times, I had to revert to precision tools like tiny knives, gouges and pencil grinders to achieve the desired effect. I also found creating the transitional spaces and knowing where to stop a big challenge. I continued to look for subtlety, so as not to push the piece too far too fast and lose the flow.

What is your favorite part of this piece and why?

I always like to save the part of the wood that inspired the piece in the first place. A gentle transition from the raw wood into the polished shows both where my thought process began and where it ended.

Why do you consider this one of your most significant works?

This sculpture is a graceful interplay between two entities in more than one way: First, between the two birds, and second, between myself and the wood. As one half of the equation, I hope that I can maintain this nuanced relationship between artist and medium.

Did this sculpture turn out the way you had envisioned, or were there some unexpected yet pleasant surprises?

I will gladly admit that I have never made a piece that ended up the same way I envisioned it. I call them *happy accidents*. Whatever the piece presents, it makes me work harder to create an even better sculpture than I perceived. Actually, when I work in clay, I start with a quick clay sketch, and maybe ten to fifteen clay sketches later the piece evolves into the start of the final product. It's always a work in progress—just like us.

SURRENDER Pati Stajcar Wood 50" x 37" x 16" (127cm x 94cm x 41cm)

from Saks Gallery, Denver, Colorado

