

# ASMA JOURNAL

## Notes From Brush Hill

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Sixteen years ago, this column started with articles addressed to ASMA members noting (thus "Notes") the tools, innovations and inventions I employed in my studio here at "Brush Hill" (the name given this modest pre-Revolutionary farmhouse in Eighteenth Century deeds). Over the years the audience has remained the same but the focus for more than a decade has been on what our members have to teach us by their life example, professional techniques and approaches. The thorough presentation and documentation in these articles of the lives of our Society's artists have prompted the Smithsonian, the Library of Congress, the T. J. Watson Research Library at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, and other institutions to collect them for the public and posterity. In order to enhance the reading experience while still providing the expected documentation, I present credits and references as endnotes (designated alphabetically) at the end of the article while I keep matters related to the story conveniently located and in large font as footnotes (designated numerically) at the bottom of the page.

In the last issue we met Signature Member Jim Griffiths whose highly detailed and thoroughly researched gouaches are fascinating especially for any artist interested in painting water. In this issue we introduce you to Cathy Ferrell, a highly energetic sculptor who works in several mediums and Bob Lagasse who travels the world chasing



"ABACO HOGFISH" • Stone, unique • 14" x 14" x 10"

down the next subject for his sculpture in wood. The Society has long had sculptor members and seeks to encourage more to join for the seas and rivers and the air above them offer endless possibilities for this art form.

### CATHERINE KLEMANN FERRELL

As an artist, Cathy Klemann Ferrell is an observer but, unlike most artists, she keeps a journal and records what she sees and thinks. In it she wrote a while back, "A life is not solely about making art, but the art of making life. Each of us has our own body of work to do and a life to live. As long as we stay true to our individual work, we have joy." This she practices but it makes it difficult to write



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about Cathy since she has filled her life full of fascinating facets – any one or one hundred of which would interest our readers but our space is limited.

For instance, a 36" x 36" x 24" **Great Blue Heron** bronze sculpture Cathy did in 2000 adorns the entrance to the E. Craig Wall, Jr. Lowcountry Center at the Brookgreen Gardens, the famous national landmark in South Carolina that was created by a couple but inspired by the woman – who very much lived by her own version of the “art of making life.” The 9,000-acre property was originally a winter home for industrialist Archer Milton Huntington and his wife, the well known sculptor Anna Hyatt Huntington (1876 – 1973)<sup>1</sup>, who happens to be one of Cathy’s sculpture “heroes,” but they soon decided to open it to the public as a sculpture garden and wildlife sanctuary. Today it is the oldest and largest sculpture garden in the United States containing more than 550 examples of figurative American sculptures by such artists as Frederic Sackrider Remington (1861 – 1909) and Daniel Chester French (of Lincoln Memorial fame 1850 – 1931) but with a heavy representation of women sculptors. Just as Cathy’s **Great Blue Heron** appears naturally in a pond setting, all of the works are carefully set within garden “rooms” and outdoor galleries graced by sprawling live oak trees, colorful flowers, and peaceful ponds. With over 9,000 acres, there is room for Brookgreen’s many other features including a wildlife park, an aviary, a cypress swamp, nature trails, and an education center.

Cathy has other direct connections to the Gardens and indirect ones to the Huntingtons. From 2000 to 2001



GREAT BLUE HERON IN REEDS  
Multi-color patina • Bronze • 36" x 36" x 28"

she served as Sculptor in Residence at Brookgreen and is an Associate Member of the National Sculpture Society, an organization Anna Hyatt Huntington was very interested in and which the couple funded with a very significant \$100,000 contribution in 1929, helping it survive the financial troubles ahead. The organization is the premier not-for-profit organization in American sculpture circles. It was founded in 1893 by leading American sculptors including Daniel Chester French and Augustus Saint Gaudens (1848 - 1907), who happens to be another of Cathy’s “heroes.”

The Vice President for Collections and the Curator of Sculpture of the Brookgreen Gardens, Robin R. Salmon, has known Cathy for many years and

insightfully describes the woman whose art includes *the art of making life*. “The first time I met Cathy Ferrell,” Robin Salmon reflects, “I was struck by her intensity and her joyfulness . . . (Since (then) I have learned that her intensity comes from passion and her joyfulness is fueled by spirituality and a life well lived . . . I have never ceased to be amazed by her sources of artistic and personal inspiration, boundless energy, and perennially positive outlook on everything. Joyfulness pervades her work.”<sup>^</sup>

Closer to Cathy’s home, Lucinda H. Gedeon, Ph.D. and Executive Director of the Vero Beach Museum of Art (which hosted the ASMA 13th National Exhibition in 2004)

says of Cathy, “Her greatest inspiration is nature and her detailed portrayals of dolphins, fish, and Sandhill Cranes are evidence of her sensitivity to the physical world she inhabits, living as she does on an island between the Atlantic Ocean and the Intracoastal Waterway in Florida. Working in bronze and stone, her working methods require time and process and thus are not spontaneous, but rather deliberate and exacting. These demands seem to belie Cathy’s personal passion and the energy she exudes when she talks about her creative life and work.”<sup>B</sup> This curious combination of the deliberate and exacting with personal passion and seemingly endless energy is the hallmark of her family on both sides. As to her mother, Elizabeth Wilcox

## (Footnotes)

<sup>1</sup> The Huntingtons, whose wealth came initially from Archer’s father, Collis Potter Huntington who was one of the “Big Four” who built the Central Pacific Railroad as part of the first U.S. transcontinental railroad. But he went on, with his sons, to connect rail lines from the coal belt of the Ohio Valley to export facilities in Newport News, in effect creating the city and Newport News Shipbuilding and Drydock Company. Archer Huntington and his wife founded more than a dozen museums including the Mariners Museum in Newport News in 1932 that boasts of being the nation’s largest maritime museum. (The museum was an important early supporter of ASMA, hosting one of our first ASMA National Exhibitions.) Another is the

Hispanic Society of America, a large Beaux Art complex established in 1904 in New York City featuring an equestrian statue of El Cid by Anna Hyatt Huntington in the courtyard and a rich collection of other Hispanic works, including a large gallery of stunning murals by Joaquim Sorolla y Bastida (1863 – 1923). And, yes, it happens that Sorolla is another of Cathy’s “heroes” in the world of painting.

<sup>2</sup> Cheoy Lee built over 4,500 vessels in Hong Kong from the 1950’s thru the 1980’s based designs from leading naval architects around the world. These soundly built, classic craft still enjoy an active following.

<sup>3</sup> The Norton Museum of Art was founded in 1941 by Ralph

Hubbard Norton and his wife, Elizabeth Calhoun Norton, and initially housed their extensive collection of art. Hubbard was a successful Chicago businessman who had a winter home in Palm Beach.

<sup>4</sup> The former air base, which had not been used for years, provided spacious grounds for FAU campus with sufficient land left over for a new airport, Boca Raton Municipal Airport, still actively used today. The University currently has a faculty of over 1,000 teaching a widely diverse enrollment of over 28,000.

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Crapo, a beautiful Vassar graduate, one can trace her people back sixteen generations first to England and then to Seventeenth Century New England where they were successful in shipping and finance and apparently had academic ties to Yale over the years. More recently the family put down roots in Michigan, initially engaged in timber but eventually expanded into shipping - this time on the Great Lakes. Art figured prominently – both as creators and as collectors. And a similar pedigree is found on her father's side but going back to Germany. Robert Bryon Klemann was a pilot in the China/Burma theater in WWII under the colorful Claire Lee Chennault who created and commanded the famous Flying Tigers with their distinctive shark-faced Curtiss P-40 Warhawks. He then served on the Joint Chiefs of Staff in Washington, D.C. "Deliberate, exacting, personal passion and endless energy" – he is now 92 and she 86 yet they continue to camp and hike in Montana and they both still hunt. And all the while they maintain an active social life in Florida. Thus it comes as no surprise that the family believes that the American Joshua Slocum, who first sailed around the world alone in 1895 – 98 in his 37' sloop, *Spray*, is somehow related to them!

As if genes were not enough to explain Cathy's "Type A" high-grade performance in life, she is also a first-born, arriving in Detroit, MI on April 29, 1947. A sister, Martha, and two brothers, Thomas and William followed. "We are all very different and have pursued divergent careers – my sister is married with a family, my brothers are licensed captains, ship carpenters, boat builders and fishermen while I am an artist." Well, true enough but not to be outdone, Cathy is also a U. S. Coast Guard licensed captain, a qualification she needed for a number of years when she delivered vessels from one port to another (mostly in the Caribbean) for their owners. She also skippered her 36' Choy Lee sloop *Eurydice* for many years.<sup>2</sup>

When she was a young girl, her family moved from Michigan to Naples,



*Cathy Ferrell with Sandhill cranes, a clay model under way in her studio*

FL and then Del Ray Beach, FL where she attended the Palm Beach Day School and was first introduced to art and sculpture. Cathy remembers clearly her frequent visits to the Society of the Four Arts and the Norton Museum in Palm Beach and, in particular, its collection of Asian art and sculpture. Her fascination in later life with Asian art and design springs from these visits.<sup>3</sup> After high school she attended the university of Michigan, Ann Arbor for three semesters before returning to the warm air and sun of Florida. Her father had been instrumental in advancing a project championed by a leading business man, Tom Fleming, to convert the 2,000 acre Army Air Base at Boca Raton into a new branch of the Florida state university system. With the chant "Florida U in '62" followed by "Open the door in '64" Florida Atlantic University officially came into existence in the fall of 1964 with President Lyndon Johnson officiating.<sup>4</sup> The timing was perfect. After a couple of years of "sea trials," FAU was ready to receive Cathy who transferred in 1967. She followed

her graduation in 1969 with a MA degree from the University of Miami in Sculpture in 1971.

While in college, Cathy married George Norman Otto and a year after getting her MA degree, their daughter, Adrienne, arrived. A son, Peter followed in 1976. The former, now Adrienne Shifflett, has two children and teaches in Michigan while the latter, also married, has been living in Laos for many years working for a NGO in community development. The couple divorced in 1985 and Cathy was later reconnected to William "Tuck" Ferrell by her daughter's Latin teacher. They had been friends as part of the young group in Delray in the 1960's. He collected art but - to quote Cathy- "he ended up collecting the artist." They married in 1987. As Cathy's children grew, she had more time for her art. She had painted in oils from the beginning, inspired, as usual, by the beauty in the world around her. In a way her children introduced her to watercolors; she found it difficult enough to paint in oils on a sail

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boat but with two energetic kids running about she realized she would have to simplify the process dramatically – thus watercolors. She continues to paint, now mostly in oils, for she explains,



"CELEBRATION" • Bronze • 26" x 18" x 11"

"Stone and bronze offer a limited color palette and where I live there is such an exuberance of color – in the plants, landscape not to mention the blues and greens of the water – that I periodically need my 'color fix.' And I do a lot of drawing as part of creating a sculpture so there is a commonality for me in the two mediums."

Cathy started her career in sculpting the hard way – with stone. She soon came to realize what her teachers – like sculptor George Jenkins used to teach her at Palm Beach Day School – meant when they said a sculptor had to be open to what the material wants to do. Each has its own structure and composition and vary from one type of material to another – granite verses alabaster, etc. – and each piece has its own individual characteristics and one

has to be sensitive to these as well. And Cathy has worked in many of them – from marble in Pietrasanta, Italy<sup>5</sup> to a beautiful piece of strawberry alabaster alive with subtle colors from which she carved

**Abaco Hogfish** using the grains of the stone to enhance the liveliness of the fishes' appearance, to the highly polished **Sailfish** carved out of black Virginia Steatite, to a massive three-ton abstract work in granite **United in Peace** commissioned for the United World College in New Mexico.

Loving stone as she does, she nonetheless sought greater expression and wished greater latitude in rendering negative and positive spaces. So did her collectors who wanted to commission larger works for outdoor display. She also saw first hand some of the practical limitations of stone sculpture when a carrier accidentally smashed a number of her works while in transit. So she took up bronze and has used it to depict a wide range of subjects from portraits of individuals and their families to her pet rabbit and a client's dog. She has cast bronze versions of

earlier stone works, using multi-patinas finishes to mimic the liveliness of the stone. The **Abaco Hogfish** is an example (page 7). It went on to win the Anna Hyatt Huntington Award from the prestigious Catharine Lorillard Wolfe Art Club in New York.<sup>6</sup>

Her bronzes range from figurative to bas-reliefs and the abstract, from the whimsical to the philosophical. Some, like **Celebration** and **Rejoice II** reflect her sense of joy with life. While her abstract **Annunciation** has a deeper message. Depicting a somewhat amorphous woman with her hands held up, Cathy describes the work as, "Mary . . . embraced by the radiance of God, and human attributes are not necessary to tell the story. The sculpture was a thought

that emerged into a figure . . . She was first exhibited in New York City following the events of September 11, 2001 and brought hope to people who remarked on the power of the piece." Her finishes vary widely from that of the **Great Blue Heron** to the more traditional found on **Eagle Eye**.

Cathy's Flying Tiger pilot father counseled her when she was setting off in her world of art to challenge herself – or as Cathy phrases it, "Move out of your comfort zone." He was referring to putting herself in the company of those who were better than she was so she might learn. This she did by entering national competitions, getting accepted, traveling to meet the other accepted artists and getting to know them and their



"REJOICE!" • Bronze • 16" x 10" x 10"

work. But she has also applied this advice to her own quest to advance by pushing the limits of the material she uses or by finding new ways to do what hasn't been done before. For instance, she wanted the negative space and sense of flight to be conveyed in the **Great Blue Heron** but

traditional materials couldn't support the wings' clay cast so she researched the matter ("I love to research.") and found that a high tensile strength, light-weight perforated aircraft aluminum worked perfectly.

A "surprise" for Cathy was the new group of accomplished friends she met as she performed on a national stage and broadened her association with national



"EAGLE EYE" • Bronze • 14" x 5" x 6"

organizations. ASMA was an example. "My first awareness of ASMA came

through Kim Shaklee, a fellow Signature Member of the American Academy of Women Artists<sup>7</sup> which was one of her favorite groups of people. I had juried into one of the Mystic Seaport (CT) exhibitions and met many artists who were members of ASMA and was struck by the fun and camaraderie of the group. At Kim's urging I applied and was accepted and have enjoyed the quality of the work and spirit of ASMA members as well as their generosity. It is an honor to be among them and a great sense of encouragement."

Having met new artists as the result of being in national organizations, Cathy accepted the opportunity to travel with them and get to know them and their art better. She signed on as crew for the Society's first attempt at this when Dick Moore led a group on board the schooner *Victory Chimes* some years back. As a member of the historic New York organization, the Salmagundi Club, she joined Tom Picard when he led a group on a river trip to Paris. Earlier this year she went in the other direction when she joined thirty artists from across the United States (sculptors and painters) on a week-long field trip to San Carlos in Sonora, Mexico on the Sea of Cortez to create a body of work that will be exhibited by the Arizona Sonora Desert Museum Art Institute in 2013. "I find joy and adventure in this sort of international travel where one learns more about art and artists making art."

Given Cathy's conviction that she learns more by surrounding herself with experienced artists, it is not a surprise to find her affiliated with a number of artist



"NOAH'S MESSENGERS" • Bronze • 26" x 17" x 14"

organizations in addition to ASMA and the aforementioned Salmagundi Club, the Catharine Lorillard Wolfe Art Club (Elected Member), the National Sculpture Society (Associate) and the now-defunct American Academy of Women Artists where she was a Signature Member. Others we have not mentioned include: American Women Artists (Signature Member)<sup>8</sup>, American Artist Professional League (Fellow)<sup>9</sup>, the Pen and Brush (Professional Member)<sup>10</sup>, Audubon Artists of America<sup>11</sup>, the Society of Animal Artists (Associate)<sup>12</sup>, the Knickerbocher Artists

#### (Footnotes)

<sup>5</sup> She has plenty, noting, "I still have quite a few tons I selected and shipped home from Italy in 1983."

<sup>6</sup> Catharine Lorillard Wolfe (1828-1887) was a prominent New York philanthropist and art collector, and the only woman among the 106 founders of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. In addition to bequeathing her painting collection to the Met, she sought to encourage young women artists in New York City. With the assistance of friends and her own leadership and generosity, after her death the Catharine Lorillard Wolfe Art Club was established in 1896 to provide aid, counsel and exhibition opportunities to young women artists living in the City at that time. Since then its purview has grown to encourage women across the country.

<sup>7</sup> An organization that flourished for a number of years but with poor leadership and too expensive dues has

disappeared.

<sup>8</sup> Dedicated to the inspiration, celebration and encouragement of women in the visual arts, the organization dates back to 1990 when the Tucson Museum of Art in Arizona organized the first AWA exhibit. Since then it has exhibited throughout the country.

<sup>9</sup> In 1928 a couple dozen members of the Salmagundi Club established this organization to address the increasing interests in traditional realism in American art.

<sup>10</sup> This is a respected New York club established in 1894 dedicated to women in the visual, literary and performing arts.

<sup>11</sup> In 1940 a group of artists from the Washington Heights part of New York City met to discuss art, hear lectures, etc. and adopted the name Professional Arts Group of Washington Heights. Finding others throughout the city

interested but their name too restrictive, they adopted the name Audubon Artists when they happened to be meeting at the site of the John James Audubon house a couple years later. There is no other connection between the organization and the man whose name they took. Interest continued to grow and soon Audubon Artists had a national membership, although remaining New York City focused in terms of their exhibitions. In 1997 the Salmagundi Club on lower Fifth Avenue in Greenwich Village (founded by Jonathan Scott Hartley, the son-in-law of the American painter George Inness in 1871) hosted the Audubon Artists Exhibition and it has done so ever since.

<sup>12</sup> An Organizational Member of the Salmagundi Club in New York City with a business office in Berthoud, CO.

<sup>13</sup> Another Organizational Member of the Salmagundi Club in New York City.

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(Associate Member)<sup>13</sup>, the South East Sculpture Association (Charter Member) and the Museum of Women in the Arts (Charter Member).

In addition to the Anna Hyatt Huntington Award from the Catharine Lorillard Wolf Art Club cited earlier, Cathy has received awards from the National Sculpture Society, the Academic Artists of America, the Salmagundi Club and a couple from the Pen and Brush Club. Her work is found in the collections of museums, including the Norton and the Cornell, and has been exhibited widely and frequently – including over a dozen solo exhibitions across the country and she has engaged in dozens of national competitions, including our own Fourteenth National Exhibition (Thirtieth Anniversary Exhibition) in 2008 and 2009. Last year the Cornell Museum of Art and American Culture in Delray Beach, FL hosted an exhibition of her work and a catalog of that exhibition is scheduled to be on their website ([www. www. oldscool.org/cornell.asp](http://www.oldschool.org/cornell.asp)) as this article goes to press. In October of this year the ASMA 15th National Exhibition opens at the same museum and will include Cathy's **Rejoice!** This summer Art of the Sea Gallery in South Thomaston, ME will feature Cathy's **Great Blue Heron** plus six other works in their 2011 **Gathering of Marine Masters Exhibition**.

Looking at the creative experience, Cathy reflects, "In art for me, the idea takes form with an overall concept and, as I work, the technical challenges often suggest or force change. At that point I may find myself working on a new level with new materials or skills. This evolution in the art occurs, but I may not understand the jump at the time. It is interesting to look back on a body of work and notice where the growth points occurred." She confesses with joyous enthusiasm, "I love the challenge and surprise, rather like a 3D puzzle. I don't know where all of this is taking me but I'm having a great time getting there!"