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Judy Onofrio

"Fish Wish", 1997

Mixed Media
39"h x 25"w x 12"d

Collection: Dr. Harold F. Daum

The daughter of a three-star admiral, Onofrio grew up on the Atlantic seaboard scouring the beach for shells, sticks and other treasures. Both of her parents were avid collectors and this love for amassing objects became an obsession with Onofrio. Her great-aunt Trude was another influential family member that shared her obsession. She fondly recalls the magical garden that Aunt Trude created from the many objects she had amassed over a lifetime.

The playful and total lack of reverence evident in California artist Robert Arneson's work appealed to Onofrio and was a major influence upon her career. This unorthodox approach led the artist to incorporate fantasy into her mixed media pieces. Her work became much more passionate as she relaxed in a style that fit her perfectly. After more than twenty years of working in ceramics, soft sculpture, performance, installation and fiber art she had finally discovered her true passion for constructing imaginative works from her own collection of accumulated treasures.

Onofrio received the Arts Midwest/National Endowment for the Arts Regional Fellowship Grant in 1994, the Bush Artist Fellowship in 1998 and the McKnight Foundation Fellowship in the Visual Arts in 1995. She exhibits both nationally and internationally and has her works in the collections of museums such as the Copper-Hewitt Museum, the Smithsonian's National Museum of Design in New York and the Arabia Museum in Helsinki, Finland.

According to the artist, this mystifying mixed media creation titled Fish Wish is actually a metaphor for putting yourself in a gambling situation. Onofrio states that, "it is about the fantasy of fishing and having no idea what you are going to catch." The situation requires searching and being involved with change. Onofrio adds that "this can refer to the process in my studio with my work and in my everyday life or with any situation that comes up." The lavish embellishments all over this figurative work literary dazzles the eye of the viewer as it stimulates the imagination.

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