

Just Pretending - Judy Onofrio



Title: *Just Pretending*

Creation

Date: 1995

Century: 20th Century

Dimensions: 86 in. x 50 in. x 32 in.

Artist Name: Judy Onofrio

Artist Dates: (Connecticut, 1939 -)

Curator: ,

Marks:

Medium and

Support: mixed media

Dedication:

Comments: This work is narrative dealing with male and female relationships. The artist, Onofrio, says it involves a fantasy and has several levels of meaning. The title refers to the central figure, a mermaid with a snake encircling her body and outstretched arm. "Is she intended to be real or is she simply an outfit that she can put on or take off?" muses the artist. The snake, she says, serves as a "protector" and while traditionally it may have an "evil" connotation, Onofrio likes to think of her snake as a benevolent male figure. Onofrio is influenced by folk and outsider art and enjoys the stream - of - consciousness construction process where she never really knows where her ideas will lead her. The initial idea becomes so layered, encrusted, and embellished that not only the form but the meaning change as well.

Keywords: Artist:North American:American

Class:Decorative Arts:contemporary object

Bibliography:

Onofrio's work is filled with fantasy and exuberance. She draws her inspiration from "folk art," often called "outsider art," acknowledging artists who feel compelled to express themselves with no formal art training in their backgrounds. The best manage to find a remarkable variety of imaginative statements, often utilizing a similarly remarkable variety of unconventional materials. Onofrio also credits her great aunt, Trude, who she remembers from childhood as a wonderfully eccentric free spirit. Though the artist would describe her work as essentially narrative in character, there is rarely a single story or simple meaning behind the plethora of forms. Male and female relationships are often explored, but the artist admits there are subplots as well. In *Just Pretending*, for example, we might wonder if the mermaid is real, imaginary or just a costumed figure. Other images carry the weight of symbolic intent, like the serpent, which here is an icon for good, a male protector. The fruits and flowers are intended to be sexual, with a quiet, seductive intent. There are personal references as well, in the artist's love of swimming. Most of the material that embellishes the form comes from the artist's frequent excursions to flea markets. They serve to provoke

memory and nostalgia in the viewer's mind. In a sense the objects have had a history but are now being put to a new use; a bottle cap for a specific brand of beer, now becomes fish scale on the mermaid. Judy Onofrio was born in New London, Connecticut in 1939 and was educated at Sullins College, Bristol, Virginia. She originally began her artist career as a ceramist. She now lives in Madison, Wisconsin. Her backyard is known as Judyland.

Object Description:

Mermaid figure with snake encircling body and outstretched arm. The whole covered with bottle caps, buttons, beads, mirrors, and plastic fruit and flowers.



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