



# UNEARTH

JUDY ONOFRIO

UNEARTH | JUDY ONOFRIO  
*The Rochester Art Center*







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## FOREWORD

Megan Johnston

Rochester Art Center Executive Director

With this exhibition, *Unearth* by Rochester-based, nationally recognized artist Judy Onofrio, Rochester Art Center is proud to announce the celebration of our 70th anniversary.

The exhibition highlights RAC's commitment to presenting signature solo shows by artists regionally, nationally and internationally. For more than 25 years I have worked closely with artists on significant new bodies of work, creating space for risk and support. At RAC we continue this legacy, building on our history as a flagship art center in Minnesota and the Midwest. The exhibition, catalogue and auxiliary programming with *Unearth* underscores our commitment in supporting artists, engaging our communities and being a creative hub for everyone. We are making



an intentional turn towards being more open and engaging. While we celebrate 70 years of fostering creativity in our community, with more than 1 million people served, we are also registering eleven years sited on the banks of the Zumbro River and at the heart of a city.

In this context, the exhibition *Unearth* by Judy Onofrio not only highlights this change but also a re-connection to our specific context. For many of us in Rochester and Minnesota, Onofrio serves as a matriarch and beacon for art practitioners in our efforts to live a creative life. As you will see in the following pages, this exhibition celebrates a creativity and artistic practice that has developed and deepened over decades—like the Rochester Art Center itself—ever evolving, ever stretching, always critically examining, and continuously creating.

The show comprises more than 80 works, presented on two floors and in four galleries. This new work emphasizes Onofrio's life-long interest in form and materiality. *Unearth* is an exhibition about the spiritual idea of digging, finding, uncovering, and revealing the beauty of both life and death through earth and bone. Onofrio's work embodies a transcendence of spirit. The sculptures seem to float between worlds—both physically and spiritually.

So much of this kind of work—an exhibition and scholarly catalogue—cannot be accomplished without collaborators, partners and supporters. A great thanks goes to the writers in the catalogue Garth Johnson and Jennifer Onofrio Fornes as well as the photographers Rik Sferra, Gus Gustafson, Jeremy Kilkus and Chris Delisle.

The exhibition and catalogue are supported by three Inaugural Partners—Mayo Clinic, Think Mutual Bank and Rochester Area Foundation—in addition to the continued and essential support of our annual funders such as the Minnesota State Arts Board, the McKnight Foundation and the Jerome Foundation. Specific funding for the catalogue has been made possible by Burton Onofrio, Davies Printing and the Elizabeth Firestone Graham Foundation. RAC is indebted to these funders who make creativity and art available to tens of thousands of people in Rochester and beyond.

Special thanks is necessary for the loans for the catalogue and exhibition from the Bush Foundation, Connee Fuller Cowles, and Ted Bair and Harvey Filister and of course the artist herself Judy Onofrio. In addition to the invaluable support of Onofrio's studio

assistants, Jeremy Kilkus, Tyler Forland and Chris Delisle, our own RAC staff and Board of Directors have played an important part in making the exhibition, catalogue and opening day and night a special event for our community. I am personally indebted to them.

Today, we celebrate. RAC has turned towards the community of Rochester, southern Minnesota, the state and region and beyond. We welcome you!







*“Art cannot be taught, it can only be found.”*

- PABLO PICASSO

## MATERIALITY, TEXTURE AND FORM: A LIVED PRACTICE IN THE WORK OF JUDY ONOFRIO

Megan Johnston

As a curator, walking into the studio of Judy Onofrio feels surreal. There is the tangible atmosphere of creativity, a vibe of collaboration and an intensity of making everywhere. The visual inventory is visceral and exciting; bones are contained momentarily in clear boxes while others lay on the floor; sculptures catch your eye as they hang on the walls. As you glance over your shoulder, you see Judyland—a garden of earthly delights both natural and artist-made just outside the studio behind Onofrio’s house. You are in the presence of both a master of making and one who embodies living a creative life.

The exhibition by Onofrio, entitled *Unearth*, comprises more than 80 artworks created over three decades. It focuses on her new bone works, which emphasizes Onofrio’s life-long interest in form and materiality. *Unearth* is an

exhibition about the spiritual idea of digging, finding, uncovering, and revealing the beauty of both life and death through earth and bone. Yet to think the work is about death is far too simplistic—indeed that would be a surface reading. Like all great artists, Onofrio is presenting us with something far more complex and intriguing.

### MATERIALITY, TEXTURE & FORM

Always a master of material, Onofrio has for decades undertaken a playful yet rigorous investigation into an immeasurable number of materials—from clay and dirt, vintage beads, bottle caps, glass and found objects to bones, teeth and epoxy.

Materials, texture and form are central in Onofrio’s practice. The exhibition reflects this exploration of material with nods to other

work. For example, *Bun Benches* (2012) meet audiences in our foyer space. They are strong soft looking, organic bun-like forms taking shape as concrete seats that glitter with silver mica. In the Mayo Grand Lobby sit three large early works by Onofrio, which share a playful and autobiographical nature of the work. Although ambitiously large in scale and multifarious in materials, these circus-inspired sculptures also impart a mischievous feeling: Onofrio asks us to look deeper into the work. The Accent Gallery reflects transitional work, highlighting the meandering use of materials between the early and later work. Here we still see the woman on boats of bone holding found object fish in *Voyage* (2009) and *That Peach is Pretty Nice, Too* (2008). They are on a journey, to another place; another useful material in evolution.

In the new work located in the main gallery space, there is a further investigation into a material that accompanied Onofrio for years—a varied and immense number of bones and teeth. Since the 1980s, bones have occupied space in her studio and her psyche. She is enthralled and curious about the material, ever evolving how to use it in her mind. As early as 2008, Onofrio began to integrate bone and teeth into her sculpture, focusing on it as a material. The curved lines suited its use as a kind of conceptual and visual container for her women; they added dimension and a quiet intensity. By 2009, Onofrio's work contained bone and flowers—an interesting and complicated combination. Still symbolic, fruit and other objects found their way into the self-referential work. But the sculptures eventually became quietly monochromatic, losing their



colorful surfaces. This shift asks a closer and deeper read on the part of the viewer, situated within the context of materiality within the overall body of Onofrio's work. This shift asks a closer and deeper read on the part of the viewer.

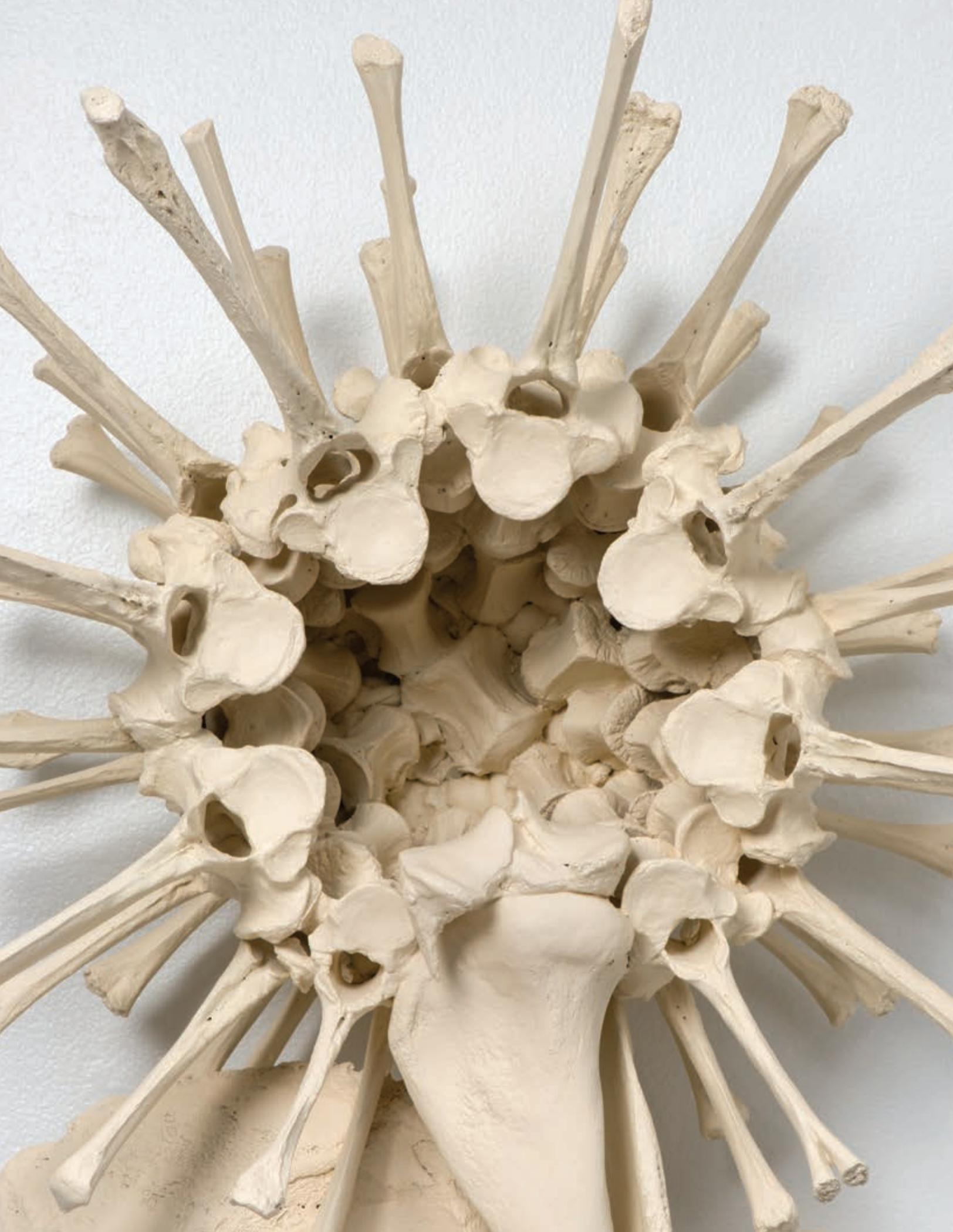
To this end, *Oasis* (2009) is a visual masterpiece, combining form and fluidity; intimacy and intensity; bone, found material and carved and cast pieces. The texture is emphasized with the monochromatic application of hand-mixed, warm colored paint. The bones are gathered, scrubbed, chiseled, marked and painted. Combined, they are carefully constructed into a sculpture that give emphasis to the overall artist's intention. Onofrio has always had a fairly positive obsession with the investigation and love of texture—we can see that as a visual continuity. It is entirely this obsession that transcends the playfulness of materiality to an exalted expertise of materials. The materials become metaphors for memory and connectedness. *Flux* (2010) pg 13 is an outstanding example of Onofrio's intentionality. The selection and assemblage of objects here is on one hand intricate and delightful; and on the other hand intense and sublime. The curves and lines are full, drawing the viewer in. The seductiveness of the fleshy colored flowers and voluptuous nature of the carved pieces fit salaciously side by side with the distinct, bold angles of the bone.

Yet there is more than material and texture at work here; there is also a particular attention paid to form. It is a central thread throughout Onofrio's work and is emphasized in the newer pieces. For Onofrio, form is an

unrepentant companion in all of her work. It is one of the elements of art and is, in its most basic definition, about three-dimensionality. In the work of Onofrio, the curved line, the organic subtly and the interconnectedness of the additive sculptural elements combine to produce something magical. It is in the creation of this mosaic of materiality, the process, that sets her apart from other artists.

For example, in her *Botanical Series*, Onofrio transcends the representational form of traditional rendering of flowers—which are lifelong companions for the artist and can be found covering the hills of Judyland. Instead, these botanicals are an intense study in form. All from 2011, the works *Crux*, *Crop*, *Spray* and nearly a dozen others from the *Botanical Series* hang together in the gallery and collectively draw us in. Are they an attempt to capture nature's creation and evolution? Maybe. Rather, they are most likely about an artist's activated and meticulous investigation into form. They may also be about rebirth, growth, and beauty within our grasp.

In its broader definition, form is about the entire artwork, the visible elements and the way those elements are united. We can see this in *Connection* (2015) and *Hold* (2015), with the subtle and organic integration of various animal bones as they become nearly a recognizable, living form. In *Crown* (2016) and *Whirl* (2016) we see that Onofrio has taken the materiality through a rigorous exploration of form, texture and materials. They twist, turn, battle, and coalesce into exciting and engaging work.





Ambition of scale is clearly found in Onofrio's process—from the newly commissioned *Portal* (2016) to the site-specific work in the exhibition entitled, *Presence* (2016). Again there is a layered complexity found in the work. Her ambition of scale is embedded conceptually in the smaller works in more subtle yet equally powerful ways. The feeling is more than vastness of scale. There is an intensity of emotion and concentrated intricacy. Look deeply at *Orchid* (2014), for example, and you will find yourself overwhelmed with the sublime, emotive reflection in the work.

In addition to form, texture and intricacy the works are indeed also deeply personal.

*Ouch* (2012) is an excellent example of the masterful use of form—the bone has been cajoled into the shape of a shoe and encrusted with green gems and teeth. Overtly and simplistically the work looks like a shoe; subliminally and complex readings reflect more about Onofrio's dreams of wearing the late fashion designer Alexander McQueen's savagely beautiful stilettos.

This possibility—the chance that we might see differently—is exactly the essence we find in Onofrio's work. What will the artist unveil for us? What will we see? Do we bring our own memories and ideas into viewing the work, or do we see the artist's thoughts?

## LIVING A CREATIVE LIFE

One of the most striking observations about Onofrio's work is that it is embedded in a creative life. The early clay work *Untitled* (1974) shows a surprising resemblance to a later work entitled *Breathe* (2015). The influence of Onofrio's earlier work in clay underscores this decades-long investigation into form, as understood through a lived practice of engaging in materials, texture and clay. Another classic image is of Onofrio in her studio in 1974. Found in the *Studio Potter* archives at Arizona

State University by Garth Johnson, the image rang true to form for an artist who lives her practice.

*“In addition to form, texture and intricacy the works are indeed also deeply personal.”*

With foundations in the field of ceramics, this is

not surprising as Onofrio lives the life of an artist. She learned that life from those working not in the art world of MFAs or New York galleries but with artists from the Midwest and ceramicists/artists colleagues throughout the USA. We build the world we want to see. In this way the various examples of her bone baskets such as *Cauldron* (2014) and *Chance* (2014) secure the exhibition, holding onto the craft connection of the utilitarian use of the vessel but also allowing us to re-imagine that form. In turn, Onofrio makes seductively and fierce tactile baskets that hold imaginary items.

To visit Onofrio's studio, her home, Judyland or even to spend time with her forces us to reflect on how we are living our lives. The work gets under your skin and stays there. So does Judy. As eloquently described in the essay by Jennifer Onofrio Fornes, the artist lives and breathes creativity. Like the title of the show, *Unearth*, the creativity comes from somewhere deeply connected to life. The exhibition reflects an unearthing of material and of creativity, which in turn becomes art. The material is memory that becomes universal. As artists we make artworks, engage others in that creativity and

build more creative lives. To recognize how and why Onofrio uses material, texture and form allows for a deeper understanding the work. With more than seven decades of living and creating, Onofrio embodies a conceptual enigma of a highly sophisticated self-taught artist who far exceeds the realm of the possible with material, ideas, complicated narratives, and extensive use of varied material. Therein lies the brilliance: Onofrio's practice has the ability to embrace the complexity of materiality and of life through not merely making, but living, art.



Onofrio in her studio, 1974.

Image courtesy of *Studio Potter* archives at ASU Art Museum Ceramics Research Center.









CROWN | 2016

65"h x 30"w x 18"d





CONNECTION | 2015

54"h x 38"w x 9"d





**WHIRL** | 2016  
20"h x 78"w x 12"d





**HOLD** | 2015

49"h x 41"w x 12"d



**TABLET** | 2015

29"h x 22"w x 10"d



FLORA | 2014

38"h x 28"w x 15 1/2"d





**BREATHE** | 2014

48"h x 34"w x 7 1/2"d





CHANCE | 2014

13"h x 34"w x 34"d



CAULDRON | 2014

20" h x 34" w x 34" d



ORCHID | 2014

27"h x 18"w x 10"d





REITZ BASKET | 2014

28"h x 28"w x 28"d





PASSAGE | 2013

16"h x 90"w x 14"d





**BASKET** | 2013

32"h x 36"w x 27"d



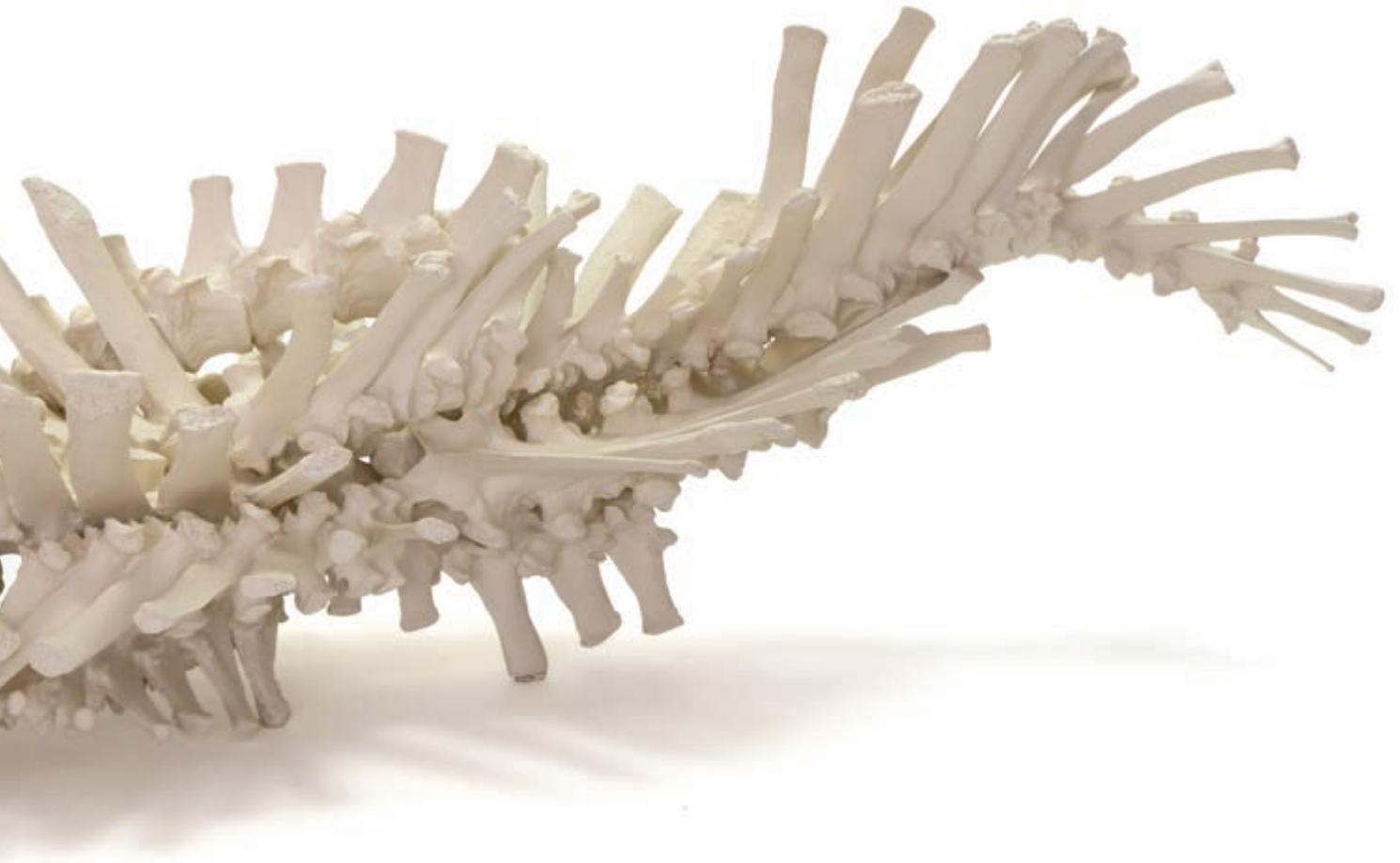


**BUNDLE** | 2012

18 1/2" h x 32" w x 16" d

Opposite page, *Bundle* (2012) front view





SHIFT | 2013

19"h x 79"w x 24"d





**VESSEL** | 2011

22 1/2" h x 17" w x 17" d



**TWIST** | 2012

43"h x 27"w x 13"d

Courtesy of Ted Bair and Harvey Filister



SPIN | 2012

31"h x 27"w x 26"d





OUCH | 2012

10"h x 15"w x 5 1/2"d



WAVE | 2012

24"h x 36"w x 15 1/2"d



**BURST** | 2011

31" h x 15" w x 12" d



**STALK** | 2011

27 1/2" h x 11 1/2" w x 9" d



**ROOT** | 2011

34" h x 15" w x 9 1/2" d



**CRUX** | 2011

22"h x 22"w x 10 1/2"d



**BLOOM** | 2011

28" h x 15" w x 9" d



**BOUQUET** | 2011

20"h x 14"w x 9"d



**FISSURE** | 2011

20" h x 11 1/2" w x 8" d





**FLUX** | 2010

73"h x 36"w x 36"d





OASIS | 2009  
36"h x 55"w x 16"d



VINE | 2010

45"h x 11"w x 1 1/2"d



**THRIVE** | 2010

44"h x 11 1/2"w x 9"d



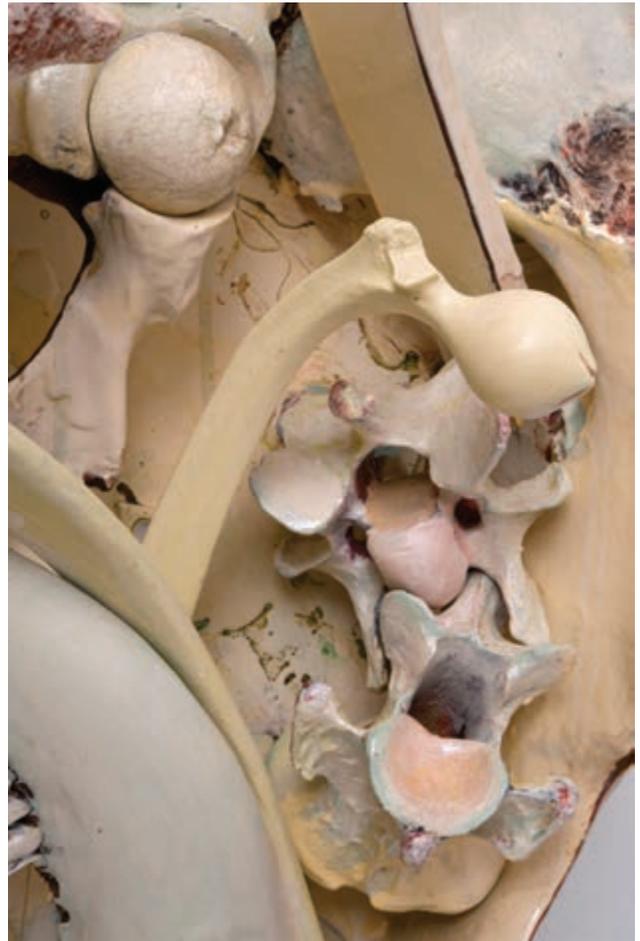
**RARE VARIETY** | 2010

20"h x 14"w x 9"d



**HABITAT** | 2010

20 1/2"h x 11 1/2"w x 9"d





**HYDRANGEA** | 2009

42”h x 28”w x 16”d

Details on left hand page





**SCEPTER** | 2009

44"h x 24"w x 11"d





MEMORY | 2009

31"h x 35"w x 15"d



**TWIST OF FATE** | 2008

43"h x 21"w x 10"d

Courtesy of the Bush Foundation



VOYAGE | 2009

28"h x 38"w x 12 1/2"d



**THAT PEACH IS PRETTY NICE, TOO** | 2008

21”h x 23”w x 15”d

*Courtesy of Connee Fuller Cowles*



DANCE | 2009

32"h x 45"w x 14 1/2"d





PULSE | 2009

42"h x 31"w x 14"d





JUNGLE DANCE | 2008

48"h x 60"w x 26"d



AN IMPORTANT MOMENT IN THE LIFE OF TEETH | 2008

27"h x 30"w x 17"d



**DEEP WATER** | 2000

89"h x 49"w x 33"d



**YOUR WISH IS MY COMMAND** | 1998

96"h x 43"w x 36"d



ACTS OF AUDACIOUS DARING | 1998

96"h x 32"w x 32"d

## UNEARTHING MATERIALITY AND MEANING IN THE WORK OF JUDY ONOFRIO

Garth Johnson

*The Church says: The body is a sin.*

*Science says: The body is a machine.*

*Advertising says: The body is a business.*

*The body says: I am a fiesta.<sup>1</sup>*

-Eduardo Galeano

To enter Judy Onofrio's exhibition *Unearth*, one must pass through a monumental gateway of bone—a dizzying composition of baroque spinal columns and ribs that echoes the experience of passing through the portal of a cathedral. In lieu of a last judgment on the tympanum, is a rhythmic display of compositional virtuosity that swoops and arcs skyward. Ribs radiate, vertebrae vibrate. The entire structure is covered with gold, relieving the viewer of any notion that the work is about death in any literal sense.

The keystone of the arch is a pelvic bone. That a symbol of birth and feminine power is essential to the

structure is no accident. Over five decades, Onofrio has created a vast body of work that explores her role as a woman, mother and creator.

*Unearth's* gateway utilizes the visual vernacular of *ossuaries* and *charnel houses*—chapels with elaborate structures and decoration made from human bones. These ossuaries may seem uncomfortable or startling to contemporary viewers. Death has been ritualized, sanitized and separated from the living in ways that our ancestors could not have imagined. Western culture has established a firm line separating the living from the dead, but it was not always thus.

In his comprehensive 2011 cultural study of ossuaries and charnel houses, *The Empire of Death*, Dr. Paul Koudounaris writes “while we tend to think of death as representing an unequivocal, non-negotiable, and irreducible status, its definition and interpretation are matters of context. In the modern Western world, we

have come to consider death as a boundary. In many other cultures it is not—it is conceived simply as a transition, and a dialogue between the living and the dead forms a meaningful part of social discourse.”<sup>2</sup>

That Onofrio’s recent sculptures are made of bone is not incidental—the material has a resonance for the artist—but they are transformed by her deft touch. Onofrio’s acute sense of visual order creates form, balance, rhythm, dynamism and stability. Morbid associations are swept away as the viewer is caught up in the artist’s own curiosity.

*Unearth* is an exhibition of more than 70 works of art by the noted Minnesota-based artist Onofrio. Known as a self-taught artist, with deep roots in ceramics, Onofrio’s latest work are substantial, signature sculptures made of bone. And they are as adeptly intimate and intense as they are monumental and ambitious.

The use of bone as a material in her work coincides with a struggle with cancer. Onofrio is matter-of-fact when discussing this chapter of her life. “At the time, I was recovering from surgery, and I kept thinking about the bones in my studio. Jeremy [Kilkus], my studio assistant, gathered them for me and had them all over the floor of my studio. In this work, I’m talking about mortality. I’m talking about celebration of life—two very opposite things.”<sup>3</sup>

The bones become a metaphor for memory. During her recovery, Onofrio found solace in her studio. As an artist who has always balanced intellect and intuition, she knew that both as objects and metaphors, bones held a special power. As the cancer cells in her body were methodically targeted and destroyed, her use of bones began to replicate, eventually becoming the singular focus of her work. In recognition of the bones’ primal power, she

purged every element that detracted from that power. Colors became more muted, and gradually fell away. Beads and found objects disappeared too. Scale, ambition and Onofrio’s fierce attention to form and materiality remained.

#### AMBITION OF SCALE

The word *tour de force* is often used to describe Onofrio’s work, and this is no accident. She has always worked on an ambitious scale, collaborating with studio assistants and other artists to make her audacious ideas come to

life. *Passage* is no exception. Measuring more than seven feet across, the sculpture balances the formal structure and rhythm of Baroque scrollwork with the gesture and fluidity of Zen calligraphy. The bones arc and overlap, drawing the viewer’s eye to the sculpture’s delicate edges, then back again in ossified eddies and ripples.

Onofrio’s virtuosity can be seen in the range of expression in her work. Working without a roadmap,



she allows the bones to speak for themselves, improvising relationships and building structures. Some assemblages teeter on the edge of chaos, with dozens of chattering vertebra vying for attention. *Orchid* (2014) is evocative of its florid moniker. Onofrio uses the complex, undulating shapes of spinal bones to great effect, allowing them to twist and turn in space. Their petal-like flat edges cluster together and radiate rib filaments from the center out.

Alternately, a pile of bones can inspire order. In many of Onofrio's compositions, bones tetris themselves into orderly, logical compositions. *Cauldron* (2014) uses meticulously chosen rib bones of different sizes to create a vessel form, which brings the work full circle to reference her first love: clay. The flat surfaces of the ribs all face out, creating a meticulous exterior. Inside, the bones curve and overlap, creating a contrast between inside and outside. *Cauldron's* title displays Onofrio's love of wordplay and ambiguity. The curious vessel's roiling interior hints at the powers within.

It is useful here to think about the notion of the sublime as it is more traditionally understood—as an awe-inspiring experience. In its eighteenth-century definition, the sublime was a blend of terror, delight, dread and relief that French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard characterized as “the unrepresentable.”<sup>4</sup> Standing in front of an artwork that is sublime in its truest sense should send a shiver up one's backbone and provoke a sense of existential dread at being dwarfed by the sheer

vastness of the universe.

Alongside the intensity of experience lay moments of quiet suggestion, intense reflection and complex composition. Onofrio's bone sculptures are every bit as acrobatic as her earlier figurative work. In place of cantilevered circus performers, bones pirouette in dynamic clusters. Increasingly, the sculptures seek to envelop the viewer. As with her previous bodies of work, the bone sculptures multiply in power when shown together.

### MATERIALITY AS MEMORY

By design, Onofrio's sculptures resist a single, definitive reading. Multiple levels of narrative and allegory come together to allow the viewer to tease out meaning and connect on a personal level. Through more than four decades, Onofrio has bravely pressed forward, creating one body of work after another that hews to their own internal logic—and that of their creator, rather than aligning themselves with fashionable art trends.

“By design, Onofrio's sculptures resist a single definitive reading.”

The term *materiality* has gained prominence over the past decade as a way to come to terms with the overwhelming variety of materials that are being used by artists today. Rather than viewing materials as a closed, self-referential system, materiality is a way to locate materials within a web of meanings. Artists like Onofrio recognize that material has meaning. That material is meaning. Through the years, she has been insistent that her mixed media approach not be seen as recycling.

Instead, the materials used by Onofrio represent



the flotsam and jetsam of American culture. When asked about the materials in one of her mixed media pieces, she can instantly recall the source of each component. More often than not, there is a story attached. Her bone sculptures in particular can be linked to Victorian mourning culture, with its emphasis on objects linked to the deceased. From the 1870s onward, it was thought that memories could migrate from the mind and attach themselves to objects. It was believed that objects hold memories, passing them from one person to another.<sup>5</sup> Onofrio's work does this for the viewer, passing old memories while opening up space for us to connect with our own cerebral recollections.

Some people have an innate ability to pick up an object and intuit its significance. Author/potter

Edmund de Waal has a material sensitivity that borders on synesthesia. When asked by BBC presenter Alan Yentob about the Japanese netsuke collection that inspired his book *The Hare With the Amber Eyes*, De Waal answered, "These netsuke hold an extraordinary amount of other people's touch within them, and that's something I'm really passionate about... the idea that you can read other people's lives through objects". One might find this with Onofrio as she incorporates found objects into her sculptures not out of a sense of horror vacui or compulsion. Instead, she has a curious knack for telling the history and meaning for all of her materials, down to the Czech crystals, which were purchased in New York City before the Velvet Revolution. In fact, each of her sculptures becomes a form of memory palace—every object triggers a story or a memory.



The power that bones hold over Onofrio is even more pronounced. While healing from cancer treatments, her longtime friend, artist and jeweler Gallen Benson, a committed practitioner of qigong, the ancient Chinese system of holistic health care spoke with her at length about the spiritual aspects of using bone.

“It was the first time I considered that material had karma to it. We talked about that. That also included looking at the source of the material or sourcing through the material. Looking in one’s third eye or imagination, sourcing back through the bones to where they came from. You see living animals, them in context to a farm/farming... even the greater context of agriculture. With that view, there are all these positives and negatives, all this karma, carried in the bones as experience and the way things were done”.<sup>6</sup>

This level of commitment to materials is a constant throughout Onofrio’s career. Her conversion to ceramics in the late 1960s was marked by a total commitment to the ceramics community. Though self-taught, she formed lifelong friendships with many of the greatest artists in the field, including Warren Mackenzie, Don Reitz, James Tanner, Paul Dresang and Curtis Hoard. In fact, bones in her later sculptures and vessels were sent by Reitz from his ranch in Arizona shortly before he passed in March 2014.

Sensitivity to materials has always been a constant for artists, but since the dawn of modernism in the early 20th century, critics have had a far easier time dealing with art that utilizes language and writing than they have with art that speaks through material. In her introduction to the 2015 Whitechapel Gallery

anthology *Materiality*, writer Petra Lange-Berndt lays out a common sense methodology for unpacking and thinking about materials. She highlights the ongoing debate around materials as conduits of meaning in central Europe, including efforts by many scholars to ‘enable the material to talk’. Artists are in the vanguard when it comes to probing material for meaning, and writers and critics are only starting to catch on.<sup>7</sup>

Traditional views of material hold that material is inert, and is only activated through human agency. An understanding of materiality leads us to understand that material can have a life of its own, calling for collaboration with an artist. Onofrio’s process gives agency to materials. In the studio, she begins with an object, slowly and methodically adding others until a tension, or vibration emerges. Her studio is filled with many pieces that take months—even years to complete. While audacious large-scale works that require elaborate planning take shape, smaller improvisational pieces fill in the gaps.

The past decades of mixed media work have served as a boot camp for the intricate, deceptively difficult construction of the pieces. After carefully improvising different arrangements for her compositions, the bones are connected by carefully drilling and connecting with screws. As her longtime assistant, Jeremy Killus notes, “she is a grand master of no less than 43 different kinds of glue.”<sup>8</sup> The careful application of two part epoxy putty disguises any errant construction marks, preserving the illusion of perfectly connected bones, defying gravity and ready to face eternity in their newly rearranged forms.

### TRANSITIONAL WORK

A female figure reclines in a position that manages to be half leisurely and half theatrical. She nestles

odalisque-like in a bovine pelvic bone, offering a rather yonic pomegranate, bursting with seeds, to the viewer. As odalisques go, she is more Manet than Ingres—her posture more guarded and powerful than come hither. As with most of Onofrio’s sculptures, the figure’s face is a stylized mask. It’s hard to tell exactly which emotions lurk beneath the eye shadow, rouge and lipstick.

Although it is made purely of the bleached ribs and long bones of cattle, *Passage* (2013) bears much in common with *That Peach is Pretty Nice, Too*. Gone are the figures, fruit and found objects of her earlier work, all purged as she cleared her studio and began to focus solely on bones. Onofrio meticulously arranges the bones in a similar arrangement that calls upon Baroque ornamentation and the fluidity of Arabic calligraphy.

Even though she proudly defines herself as a self-taught artist, every Onofrio sculpture is a master class in art history. *That Peach is Pretty Nice, Too* is no exception and represents a transitional work. This sculpture contains all of Onofrio’s signature elements.



Flea market finds commingle with laboriously hand-modeled and carved figures and objects. Delirious pops of color punctuate the surface, which is also festooned with beads and other glittering embellishments, harking back to Onofrio's earlier circus figures sculptures.

One imagines Onofrio gleefully ransacking Art History textbooks in the same way she lays waste to a flea market, lifting from a German limewood carved altarpiece here, a Dutch memento mori still life there. Her curiosity leads her to Baroque salt cellars, Surrealist mash-ups, visionary Folk Art, Dresden figurines and Rococo scrollwork.

*That Peach is Pretty Nice, Too* is quintessential Onofrio. The fruit-bearing figure is surrounded by a fraught harvest of fruits, vegetables and other bounty that play out like

a miniature soap opera. Front and center, a banana appears poised for action as it brushes against a bunch of conveniently placed cherries. The titular peach perches atop an S-shaped scroll that hugs the edge of the mirrored cartouche that serves as the sculpture's background.

Even at their most florid, Onofrio's sculptures temper their carnival atmosphere with something darker and more complex. Aside from the figure, *That Peach* contains all of the hallmarks of a 17th-Century Dutch still life, which sought to balance images of luxury and beauty balanced with the moral dangers

of overloed.<sup>9</sup> Onofrio's leering pickle and carnal fruits share space with several actual bones—the jawbone of a cow, as well as the aforementioned pelvic bone. The Dutch excelled at vanitas paintings, which balanced luxury goods with skulls, decaying food and timepieces.

## BONE EVOLUTION

To view the works in *Unearth* is to be privy to Onofrio's process. In her transitional work featuring bones like *That Peach is Pretty Nice, Too*, the bones hold their own in their respective tableaux. In her early 70s and still grappling with illness, Onofrio realizes the power of the bones and wastes no time thrusting them into center stage. The figures have disappeared, leaving only the bones. Gone are the fruits and the occasional snippet of scrollwork on oval cartouches. Even color disappears, leaving only bone. Bits of paint and iridescence remain, but they often are purged too as the artist comes into her full powers, finally trusting the bone to convey her message.

To fully understand the scope of Onofrio's work, we must return to *charnel houses* and *ossuaries*—chapels that utilized human bones (and in some cases, mummified bodies) as decorative elements. Arguably, the grandest is the Sedlec ossuary in the Czech Republic. Beginning in the 16th Century, the Cistercian monks at Sedlec used at least 40,000 bodies, mainly of the poor, to decorate their chapel.<sup>10</sup> Sedlec is a soaring space punctuated by countless

“Even at their most florid, Onofrio's sculptures temper their carnival atmosphere with something darker and more complex.”

skulls and bones tracing its architectural elements. The centerpiece is a giant chandelier that is said to contain every bone in the human body. The bones at Sedlec, unlike many other contemporary ossuaries, have been bleached using chlorinated lime. In an article for *The Times of London*, mystery writer John Connolly reflects on the power of the ossuary, writing that “They have become folk art, and something more; for the chandelier, the candelabra and the monstrosities have all been assembled so lovingly, and with such care and imagination, that they function as more than merely a reminder of our mortality, or as a macabre display to amuse tourists. In its recognition of the beauty of this flawed, temporary body that we inhabit, and its realisation that part of this beauty lies in its very transience, Sedlec is a silent hymn both to God and to the human form He created.”<sup>11</sup>

Like the soaring Sedlec, Onofrio’s golden gateway offers the viewer an opportunity for sublime contemplation; our memories flood back to us. As with all of her work, the emotional impact of the piece is as direct as meaning is complicated. On a formal level, the gate is breathtaking—cattle bones transmogrified into a soaring, gossamer arch. Golden surfaces stand in stark opposition to the bones beneath. Through the work in *Unearth*, Onofrio fully explores material, form and memory as only she can.

It must be noted that the bone sculptures are of a piece with her earlier figurative work—she has merely taken a more direct route by using figurative elements (bones) as her material. Though she approaches digging up bones and assembling them into sculpture with childlike curiosity, Onofrio is fully aware

of our society’s fraught relationship with bones, and all that they entail.

As Onofrio herself has pointed out, her bone sculptures attempt to reconcile two very different things. They use the materials of death to celebrate life. Her bone sculptures also bring her work full circle—picking up on themes first established in her ceramic work of the 1970s. Early ceramic works like *Untitled* (1974) explore the body through clay and constraint. In the case of *Untitled*, an exterior triangular boundary is established. The triangle is spanned by eight voluminous rolls of clay, deftly attached with no effort to refine or disguise the natural manipulation of the clay. As the horizontal





bands rhythmically descend the form, they succumb to gravity, drooping and sagging slightly. The volume on the bottom of the triangular form overflows the picture plane like a muffin top escaping from an elastic waistband.

Onofrio's work of this period serves as a feminist rejoinder to the hard-edged geometric minimalism of Frank Stella and Donald Judd. The concession to clay's fleshiness and susceptibility to gravity adds a touch of levity to an otherwise stark sculpture. Many of the late bone works that populate *Unearth* mark the artist returning to this formal language. In place of the puckering and cracking clay, bleached bones seek to establish rhythm and form.

Measuring nearly four feet from top to bottom, *Breathe* (2014) echoes the triangular composition of *Untitled*. That the sculpture is made from close to thirty scapula bones descending in size and carefully

nested together like Russian dolls defies logic. *Breathe* is the culmination of Onofrio's sensitivity to form and material that is given shape through a lifetime of obsessive collecting.

*Unearth* is the culmination of five decades of work as a professional artist. Onofrio's sculptural feats of derring-do with bones surpass the scale and ambition of the mixed media figurative work that she is best known for. The language of bone is universal, spanning different cultures and epochs, connecting us with our most distant ancestors. These sculptures are a striking testament to the power that one human being can have over bones. Thanks to Judy Onofrio, any viewer with an open heart can reflect on the power that bones can have over us.

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  6. Benson, Gallen. "Judy Onofrio." Message to the author. 27 Apr. 2016. E-mail.f
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  11. Connolly, John. "The Lovely Bones." *The Times* (London) June 11 2005.





*“Those who are willing to be vulnerable  
move among mysteries.”*

- THEODORE ROETHKE

## “...I WAS SO MUCH OLDER THEN I’M YOUNGER THAN THAT NOW.”

- Bob Dylan

*Jennifer Onofrio Fornes*

When we visit Mom and Dad, my husband Karl and I sleep in the basement guest room. Cookie jars line the shelves to one side of the bed. The other side is dominated by a narrative ceramics piece entitled “The Night the Turnbuckles Melted—or—Hurry Back My Boobs Are Burning!” The piece tells the story of a night when a kiln was firing so hot that the turnbuckles began melting. Donned in a leopard skin robe, Mom held the structure together with kiln mitts and some chain while a friend ran for backup. The piece captures the motion of the moment—melting turnbuckles, Mom’s hair akimbo and her knowing smile. What might be a crisis for others is always an opportunity for her.

With Mom, the world of play connects home and studio. As kids, we would often come back to our house, disappear to the back hill, create strange worlds, and perhaps, bake mud pies. Noting our

affinity for creation, Mom occasionally suggested a much larger “mud” activity. She presented a kiddie pool full of brown mud water and suggested that my brothers and I stomp around in it. We didn’t hesitate. Little did we know, we were making super mud—clay.

That was the childhood my brothers and I shared.

Mom taught us early that exploration and discovery were always available, but we had to look for them. I recall my first walk alone to school. I was filled with anticipation about the day ahead—“What will I learn? Who might I meet?” Once there, I realized school was an ordinary endeavor relative to my extraordinary home life. When I visited friends, I wondered, “Where is all the stuff? Where are all the people? Where is the music?”

I became aware of the world my Mom was creating

and how fortunate I was to be part of it. Mom’s world is a visual and social circus, a constant flow of new faces and strange and interesting happenings. I did not want to leave it. I was surrounded by constant visuals—floor-to-ceiling artwork, objects, colors, elaborately patterned wallpaper and upholstery, and collections ranging from Hall teapots to antique cookie jars.

Sand boxes and swing sets were for the other kids; this was my playground.

Her first studio was carved out in the basement laundry room in the early 70’s. Mom and I would spend hours talking, listening to music, and making work together. Although the studio barely allowed a person to turn around, she made large-scale sensuous clay forms that echoed the yeast buns with which she covered the kitchen counters. Those forms made their way into many collections and onto the back hill where they became a part of what would later become Judyland. “Cream Beach,” a large-scale installation, was also birthed in that studio. Constructed from the end bolts of cotton t-shirt material, she sewed huge forms resembling clouds, palm trees, and soft terrain. The piece later became the environment for her studio assistant’s first album cover. I can’t help but wonder if her proximity to the washer and dryer played a role in her choice of cotton materials. There’s no question that her lint installation was a direct response to her working space and raising three kids. The dryer lint piece became an artifact telling the story about the three of us. One was full of burrs, one full of horsehair, one full of macerated paper, and another speckled with leaf and twig parts. Lint was art.

And I learned that anything was possible.



Weekends were road trips. I recall one Saturday when we were sidetracked—although “sidetracking” was really the point—by an old man at the edge of his field brandishing a sign that said “Special Art.” Surrounded by cast offs from a plastic extrusion device that appeared to be plastic cow pies, he sold big pies for fifty cents and little ones for a quarter. An hour later, the van was full and it became clear to me that any material was fair game.

One piece of a cast off material was not enough but an accumulation of the same material might tell a story. This sentiment was reflected in our regular trips to Hattie’s Antiques and Junque. I would lose myself wandering the dark, dusty aisles to gaze at the precariously towering stacks of tins, magazines, and other assorted oddities.

Every time, Mom left with multiples of something, anything. Her haul would become art or incorporated into the hill or stashed away for the artists teaching classes at the Total Arts Day Camp, an art camp that she founded at the Rochester Art Center that has left its mark on children and artists alike.

Her dream of building a committed studio space at the house came to fruition in the early 80’s. It was out of this space that Judyland was born. The French doors in her studio look out on the hill, and the glass door connecting the studio to the rest of the house allows for a visual and conceptual connection between her living and working spaces. Perhaps more than ever, she was able to move fluidly between the

spaces, each offering insight to the other. How can the flora and fauna outside find its way inside? How can the considered arrangements of materials from inside frame and accentuate the hill? And how can the house be a source of inspiration? Today, mirrors cover the outside of the studio reflecting the beauty of Judyland and further reinforcing the connection of all spaces. Versailles lines its halls with mirrors to bring the outside in; Mom lines the outside walls with mirrors to bring the studio out.

*“Her dream of building a committed studio space at the house came to fruition in the early 80’s.”*

Our home is a constant flow of people bringing random materials or simply expanding the community that she nurtures. Most let themselves be known by standing at the base of the stairs and yelling “Judy?”—a man with an offering of rusty gears, a woman with boxes of buttons, another woman with bucket of nuts, a man with four-foot plants from another world. The daily flow

of individuals grows to masses during celebrations, openings, and parties and the sense of community and family is palpable. The events are not mere parties; rather they are collaborations for which everyone brings food and stories that reflect a wide range of palettes and histories. The coffee flows freely, as do the stories conjured by each ceramic mug. The aesthetic is the conversation and an opportunity for memories shared.

How fortunate I am to have grown up in such a place. A place where everyone is welcome, new ideas are shared, and anything goes.

From the stacks of freshly pressed and powdered

pizzelles meticulously wrapped in cellophane and ribbon to architecturally arranged bowling balls in Judyland, everything reflects an attention to detail, a sensitivity to material, and an understanding that all of those decisions are of equal importance. The house and the gardens are lifelong organic works that are redefined year-by-year, month-by-month, day-by-day. The objects and artwork that fill the space, while amazing to look at, reflect a complex history of interaction among a community of artists and friends.

Mom's art is born of a mindset that exploring

something new is essential. Everything is an opportunity for exploration, a time for a new thought, and a chance to investigate the unknown. Mom's work defies categorization as she is always reinventing herself. While the trajectory of her work has yielded a wide range of aesthetics, they all share a desire to push the edge, to ask the next question, and to chart new territories. Much like the kiln event, she approaches all of the obstacles in her life with confidence, perspective, and presence. Her studio has been, and continues to be, the place where everything is right by the world.





*“To practice any art, no matter how well or badly, is a way to make your soul grow. So do it.”*

- KURT VONNEGUT



## JUDY ONOFRIO

### Resume

**Birth Place:** New London, Connecticut

**Education:** Sullins College, Bristol, Virginia



#### GRANTS AND AWARDS

- 2005** McKnight Distinguished Artist Award, McKnight Foundation
- 2001** Minnesota Crafts Council Lifetime Achievement Award
- 2000** Rochester Art Center Lifetime Achievement Award
- 1999** Bush Artist Fellowship, 1998-1999
- 1995** McKnight Foundation Fellowship in the Visual Arts, 1994-1995
- 1994** Arts Midwest/NEA Regional Fellowship Grant, 1993-1994
- 1993** Minnesota State Arts Board Career Opportunity Grant
- 1983** YMCA Women of Achievement Award, Rochester, MN
- 1978** Minnesota State Arts Board Fellowship Grant

#### PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

- 2004** Panel Member, Minnesota Artists' Exhibition Program, Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Minneapolis, MN  
Panel Member, Exhibition Committee, Rochester Art Center, Rochester, MN
- 2002** Minnesota Artists Exhibition Program Panel, Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Served 1972-1974, 1979-1981, 1986-7, 2002-2004 Search Committee, Member University of Minnesota
- 1997** Minnesota Percent for Art in Public Places Site Selection Panel 1989-1999
- 1995** Clay National, Juror, National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts

- 1987** Visual Arts Panel, Minnesota State Arts Board, Minneapolis, MN, Served 1972,1974,1986,1987
- 1987** Visual Arts Panel, ARTPAPER, Served 1985-1987
- 1987** Final Critique for Art Education Exhibition, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN
- 1981** Minnesota Artists Exhibition Program Panel, Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Served 1976-1978
- 1978** Chair, Visual Art Advisory Panel, S.E. Minnesota Arts Council, Rochester, MN Served 1976-1978
- 1977** Founding President, Minnesota Crafts Council, Served 1974-1977
- 1975** Editorial Board, Craft Connection

## SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2016** *Leap of Faith*, Edwardsville Art Center, Edwardsville, Ill
- 2014** *Full Circle*, Sherry Leedy Contemporary Art, Kansas City, MO
- 2013** *Full Circle*, Thomas Barry Fine Arts, Minneapolis, MN
- 2012** *Earthbound*, Sherry Leedy Contemporary Art, Kansas City, MO
- 2011** *Acts of Audacious Daring, The Circus World* of Judy Onofrio, The Plains Art Museum, Fargo, ND
- 2011** *Judy Onofrio*, University of Wisconsin, Lacrosse, WI.
- 2011** *Work of the Moment*, Swan Song Gallery, Maiden Rock, WI
- 2010** *Stories of Reclining Women*, Solo Exhibition, Mayo Clinic, Rochester, MN
- 2010** Judy Onofrio, University Center, Rochester Art Gallery, Rochester, MN
- 2010** *Arabesque*, Flaten Museum, Judy and Jennifer Onofrio, St. Olaf College, Northfield, MN
- Reclining Women*, Mayo Clinic, Rochester, Mn
- Judy Onofrio*, Rochester Community and Technical College, Rochester, MN
- 2009** *Jungle Dance*, Sherry Leedy Contemporary Art, Kansas City, MO
- 2008** *Ringmaster: Judy Onofrio, and the Art of the Circus*, Chazen Museum of Art, Madison, Wisconsin
- Stories of Reclining Woman*, Thomas Barry Fine Arts, Minneapolis, MN
- SOFA: Sculpture Objects and Functional Art*, Chicago, IL, Sherry Leedy Contemporary Art, Kansas City, MO 1995-2008
- 2007** *Voila!* Sherry Leedy Contemporary Art, Kansas City, MO.
- 2006** *Come One, Come All*, Traveling Exhibition 2005-2006
  - Daum Museum of Contemporary Art, Sedalia, MO
  - Arkansas Arts Center, Little Rock, AK
  - Rochester Art Center, Rochester, MN
  - The North Dakota Museum of Art, Grand Forks, ND
- 2004** *New Sculpture*, Thomas Barry Fine Arts, Minneapolis, MN
- 2003** *SOFA, Sculpture Objects and Functional Art*, Chicago, IL, Sherry Leedy Contemporary Art, Kansas City, MO, 1995-2003
- 2000** *The Greatest Show on Earth*, Sherry Leedy Contemporary Art, Kansas City, MO
- 1995** *Temptation*, Gallery, Sherry Leedy Contemporary Art, Kansas City, MO
- New Sculpture*, Thomas Barry Fine Arts, Minneapolis, MN
- Judyland*, Laumeier Sculpture Park and Museum, Saint Louis, MO
- 1993** *Judyland*, Minnesota Artists Exhibition Program, Minneapolis Institute of Art, Minneapolis, MN
- Judyland*, North Dakota Museum of Art, Grand Forks, ND
- 1992** *Bejeweled Brooches and Shrines*, MIA Gallery, Seattle, WA
- Temple of Jewels*, Gallery, Sherry Leedy Contemporary Art, Kansas City
- 1991** *Button Shrine Installation*, Ann Nathan Gallery, Chicago, IL
- 1990** *Recent Work*, Eugene Johnson Gallery of Art, Bethel College, St. Paul, MN
- Fire Performance*, Rochester Community and Technical College, Rochester, MN
- 1988** *Altered Planes*, Rochester Art Center, Rochester, MN
- 1987** J. Furlong Gallery, University of Wisconsin Stout, Menomonie, WI
- 1986** *Fire Performance*, Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville, IL

- 1985** *Clay Paintings*, College Center Gallery, Rochester Community and Technical College, Rochester, MN  
*Fire Performance*, North Dakota Museum of Art, Grand Forks, ND
- 1984** *Reconstructions*, Peter M. David Gallery, Minneapolis, MN  
*Fire Performance*, Drake University, Des Moines, IA
- 1983** *Installation*, Waterloo Municipal Galleries, Waterloo, IA  
*Fresh Paint*, Callaway Galleries, Rochester, MN
- 1982** *Installation*, Conkling Memorial Art Gallery, Mankato State University, Mankato, MN  
University Art Gallery, Wisconsin State University, Stevens Point, WI
- 1980** Talley Gallery, Bemidji State University, Bemidji, MN
- 1978** Catherine G Murphy Gallery, College of St. Catherine's, St. Paul, MN
- 1977** University Art Gallery, Winona State University, Winona, MN
- 1976** The University Center Gallery, Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville, IL  
Furlong Gallery, University of Wisconsin Stout, Menomonie, WI
- 1974** Sordoni Art Gallery, Wilkes College, Wilkes Barre, PA  
Octagon Art Center, Ames, IA  
University Galleries, Illinois State University, Normal, IL
- 1973** Gallery 118: An Art Gallery, Minneapolis, MN
- 1972** University Art Gallery, University of Wisconsin, River Falls, WI  
Smith Park Gallery for Craftsmen, St. Paul, MN
- 1971** Rochester Art Center, Rochester, MN

## GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2015** *New Works* by So and So, Instinct Gallery, Minneapolis, Mn
- 2014** *Make Garden*, Instinct Gallery, Minneapolis, MN
- 2014** *Made in Minnesota*, Catherine Nash Gallery, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN
- 2007** *Cheongju International Craft Biennale*, Cheongju City, Republic of Korea
- 2006** *Folk Nouveau*, Metro State University, St. Paul, MN  
*The Art of Whimsy*, Olmsted County Historical Society, Rochester, MN  
*Evermore*, Minnesota Museum of American Art, St. Paul, MN  
*Tooth and Claw: Creatures Imaginary and Real*, Tory Folliard Gallery, Milwaukee, WI  
*Art Chicago*, Chicago, IL, Sherry Leedy Contemporary Gallery, Kansas City, MO  
*Art Chicago*, Chicago, IL, Tory Folliard Gallery, Milwaukee, WI
- 2004** *SOFA*, Sculpture Object and Functional Art, Chicago, IL, Sherry Leedy Contemporary Art, Kansas City, MO  
*A View from America: Contemporary Jewelry* Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, Melbourne Australia  
*Play Ball!* Thomas Barry Fine Art, Minneapolis, MN  
*Art Chicago*, Chicago, IL, Tory Folliard Gallery, Milwaukee, WI  
*ARTForm*, West Palm Beach, FL, Tory Folliard Gallery, Milwaukee, WI
- 2003** *Greatest Show on Earth*, Sherry Leedy Contemporary Art, Kansas City, MO  
*Women On The Edge*, Duane Reed Gallery St Louis, MO
- 2002** *Of and About Clay*, Gallery Hertz, Louisville, KY  
Northern Clay Center, Two-Person Exhibition, Minneapolis, MN
- 2001** *Minnesota with a Twist*, Fredrick R. Weisman Art Museum, Minneapolis, MN
- 1999** *The Figure in Contemporary Sculpture*, The Tweed Museum of Art, Duluth, MN  
*A Bountiful Beginning*, Frederick R. Weisman Art Museum, Minneapolis, MN  
*Woman in the Weisman*, Collection: Spirit of Seneca Falls, Frederick R. Weisman Art Museum, Minneapolis, MN  
*Brooching it Diplomatically, a Tribute to Madeline Albright*, International Traveling Exhibition  
*Attitude and Action North American Figurative Jewelry* Birmingham Institute of Art and Design, Birmingham, England  
The Jewelry Gallery at DESIGN yard, Dublin, Ireland

- Beadz! New Work by Contemporary Artists*, American Craft Museum, New York, NY  
*Bright Bold & Beaded*, Tory Folliard Gallery, Milwaukee, WI  
*Beads and Baubles*, Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY  
*Pure Vision*, Traveling Exhibition, 1995-1999  
 Fuller Museum of Art, Brockton, MA  
 Lowe Art Museum, Coral Gables, FL  
 Lamont Gallery, Exeter, NH  
 Philbrook Museum of Art, Tulsa, OK  
 Decorative Arts Museum, Little Rock, AR  
 Boise Art Museum, Boise, ID  
 Pensacola Museum of Art, Pensacola, FL  
 Union Art Gallery, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA  
 Rochester Art Center, Rochester, MN  
 Sherry Leedy Contemporary Art Gallery, Kansas City, MO
- 1998** *Narratives* International Jewelry Art Exhibition, Museum of Art and Design, Helsinki Finland  
 Joyce Scott & Friends, Mobilia Gallery, Cambridge, MA  
*Passionate Obsessions*, Phipps Center for the Arts, Hudson, WI
- 1997** *In Full Bloom*, Sherry Leedy Contemporary Art, Kansas City, MO  
*Myths and Magical Fantasies*, California Center for the Arts Museum, Escondido, CA  
*American Art Today/The Garden*, The Art Museum, Florida International University, Miami, FL  
*Birds*, Thom Barry Fine Arts, Minneapolis, MN  
*Embellished*, National Surface Design Conference, The Lawrence Art Center, Lawrence, KA  
*Essentially Beads*, Tempe Arts Center, Tempe, AZ
- 1996** *Schmuckszene* 1996, Handwerkmesse, Munchen Germany
- 1995** McKnight Artists, MCAD Gallery, Minneapolis College of Art and Design, Minneapolis, MN  
*Brilliant Stories*, Arts America Program of the United States Information Agency  
 Touring 1992-1995, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Morocco, Pakistan, Egypt
- 1994** *Holiday Exhibition*, Sherry Leedy Contemporary Art, Kansas City, MO  
*Boxes*, Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, NE
- 1993** *International Shoebox Sculpture Exhibition*, University Art Gallery, University of Hawaii  
*A View from Australia*, Gold Treasury Museum, Melbourne, Australia
- 1992** *Day of the Dead*, Ann Nathan Gallery, Chicago, IL  
*Language of Jewelry*, Helen Williams Drutt Collection, Rohskka Museum of Arts and Design, Goteborg, Sweden  
 Museum of Applied Arts, Helsinki, Finland, Taideteollisuusmuseo  
*2nd Oregon Clay Invitational*, Renshaw Gallery, Linfield College, McMinnville, OR
- 1991** *Collage/Assemblage*, Gallery I/O, New Orleans, LA  
*Slippery When Wet*, Invitational, Olson-Larson Galleries, Des Moines, IA  
*Artist's Choice*, Objects Gallery, Chicago, IL  
*Objects*, Olson-Larson Galleries, West Des Moines, IA
- 1990** *American Dreams/American Extremes*, Museum Voor Hedendaagse Kunst Het Kruihuis, Hertogenbosch, The Netherlands  
 Provinciaal Museum Voor Moderne Kunst, Oostende, Belgium  
 Two Person Exhibition, Peter M. David Gallery, Minneapolis, MN  
*Art for the Holidays*, Sherry Leedy Contemporary Art, Kansas City, MO
- 1989** *Body and Soul*, Three Person Exhibition, St. Steensland Gallery, St. Olaf College, Northfield, MN  
*New Art Forms*, International Exposition, Chicago, IL, Sherry Leedy Contemporary Art, Kansas City, MO  
*Vision and 3-D Representation*, Coffman Memorial Union Gallery, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN
- 1988** *Arresting Form, Love of Media*, Katherine Nash Gallery, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN  
 Two Person Exhibition, Peter M David Gallery, Minneapolis, MN  
*Fractured Images*, Two person exhibition, Tory Folliard Gallery, Milwaukee, WI
- 1987** *Constructed Images*, Sherry Leedy Contemporary Art, Kansas City, MO  
 Two Person Exhibition, Peter M David Gallery, Minneapolis, MN

- 1984** *Artists' Choice*, Minnesota Gallery, Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Minneapolis, MN  
*Outdoor Art*, Behind the Brewery Gallery, La Crosse, WI  
*Iowa Objects*, Olson-Larson Galleries, Des Moines, IA  
*Signals for Territories and Secrets*, Two Person Exhibition, Minneapolis Institute of Art, Minneapolis, MN
- 1982** *Sweet Hearts and Classical Geese*, Rochester Art Center, Rochester, MN  
*Temples of the Midwest*, University Art Gallery, Iowa State University, Ames, IA  
*Clay on the Walls*, Rochester Art Center, Rochester, MN  
Three-person exhibition, University Art Gallery, Wisconsin State University, Stevens Point, WI
- 1980** *Invitational*, University Art Galleries, University of South Dakota, Vermillion, SD
- 1981** Two Person Exhibition, University Art Gallery, University of Wisconsin, Whitewater, WI  
*Arizona Clay AZ Art IV*, Gallery of Art, Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff, AZ  
*National Clay Invitational*, Hartford School of Art, University of Hartford, Hartford, CT  
Two Person Exhibition, University Art Gallery, Winona State University, Winona, MN
- 1979** *Famous Finger Hall of Fame*, Super Mud Conference, Visual Arts Gallery, Penn State University, University Park, PA  
*Women Artists, National Invitational*, Springfield Art Museum, Springfield, IL  
*Ceramics Invitational*, Macalester Galleries, Janet Wallace Fine Art Center, Macalester College, St. Paul, MN  
*20th Midwestern Invitational Exhibition*, Plains Museum, Moorhead, MN
- 1978** *Women Artists, Fiber, Clay, Metal*, Touring Exhibition 78-80 Bronx Museum of Art, NY  
*Women in the Arts*, University Art Gallery, Northern Michigan University, Marquette, MI  
*Frog Hearts and Lima Beans*, Two Person Exhibition, Catherine G. Murphy Gallery, The College of St. Catherine's, St Paul, MN
- 1977** *Birthday Celebration Invitational*, John Michael Kohler Art Center, Sheboygan, WI  
Focus '77, National Crafts Invitational, Coffman Memorial Union Gallery, University of Minnesota, St. Paul, MN  
Two-Person Exhibition, Visual Arts Gallery, St. Paul Academy and Summit School, St Paul, MN  
Northwestern Exhibition, South Dakota Memorial Art Center, Brookings, SD
- 1976** *Cornbelt Goes Country*, College Art Gallery, Coe College, Cedar Rapids, IA  
*Fibers Invitational*, University Art Gallery, University of Wisconsin, River Falls, WI  
*Five Minnesota Ceramicists*, College Art Gallery, North Hennepin Junior College, Minneapolis, MN  
Two Person Exhibition, Visual Arts Gallery, St. Cloud State University, St. Cloud, MN  
*Sweethearts and Classical Geese*, Two-Person Exhibition, Rochester Art Center, Rochester, MN
- 1975** *State of the Arts: Art of the State*, Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Minneapolis, MN  
*Extraordinary Vehicles*, John Michael Kohler Art Center, Sheboygan, WI  
*Art in America*, Centennial Train Touring USA 1974-1976  
*36 Flavors, Invitational*, Janet Wallace Fine Art Center, Macalester College, St. Paul, MN  
*Foodstuff*, John Michael Kohler Art Center, Sheboygan, WI  
*Sculptural Directions*, University Art Gallery, University of Wisconsin, Lacrosse, WI  
Two Person Exhibition, Johnson Gallery of Art, Bethel College, St. Paul, MN
- 1974** *Six Artists/Two Nations*, College Art Gallery, Moorhead State College, Moorhead, MN  
*Plastic Earth/National Ceramics Invitational*, John Michael Kohler Art Center, Sheboygan, WI  
*Soft to Hard*, Priebe Gallery, Wisconsin State University, Oshkosh, WI  
*Warren Mackenzie and Some of His Friends*, Rochester Art Center, Rochester, MN  
*Group Show*, Nancy Lurie Gallery, Chicago, IL  
*Women's Work*, Catherine G. Murphy Gallery, College of St. Catherine's, St. Paul, MN
- 1973** *Women in Clay*, National Invitational, University Art Gallery, University of Wisconsin, Whitewater, WI  
*Crafts Invitational*, Priebe Gallery, University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh, WI  
*First Annual December Mystery Show*, 118:An Art Gallery, Minneapolis, MN  
*Group Exhibition*, College Art Gallery, Carlton College, Northfield, MN  
*See, Touch, Feel Invitational*, Rochester, Art Center, Rochester, MN  
*Women's Erotic Art Show*, Guild of Performing Arts, Minneapolis, MN
- 1972** *Craft Exhibition*, Invitational, Jewish Community Center, Minneapolis, MN  
*Christmas Plate Invitational*, L'Atelier Gallery, Milwaukee, WI

*Ceramics Invitational*, Eppley Fine Arts Building, Morningside College, Sioux City, IA  
*Wisconsin Crafts Invitational*, L'Atelier Gallery, Milwaukee, WI  
**1970** *Craft Commitment*, Rochester Art Center, Rochester, MN

## GALLERY AFFILIATION

Sherry Leedy Contemporary Art, Kansas City, MO

## PERMANENT COLLECTIONS

**Australia** The National Gallery of Victoria, Australia  
**Canada** Montreal Museum of Decorative Arts, Montreal, Canada  
**Finland** Arabia Museum, Helsinki, Finland  
**Germany** Die Neue Sammiung, Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich, Germany  
**Netherlands** Museum of Contemporary Art, Voor Hedendaagsa Kunst Het Kruihuis, Hertogenbosch  
**Russia** The Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, Russia  
**USA** The Renwick Gallery, The Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C  
Daphne Farago Collection, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA  
Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, TX  
Arizona State Art Museum, Tucson, AZ  
Helen Williams Drutt Collection, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, TX  
Frederick R. Weisman Museum, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN  
The Minneapolis Institute of Art, Minneapolis, MN  
North Dakota Museum of Art, Grand Forks, ND  
The Plains Art Museum, Fargo, ND  
Joan Mannheimer Collection, Des Moines, IA  
Laumeier Sculpture Park and Museum, St. Louis, MO  
McKnight Foundation, Minneapolis, MN  
Daum Museum of Contemporary Art, Sedalia, MO  
Fuller Craft Museum, Brockton, MA  
Hallmark, Kansas City, MO  
Cooper-Hewitt Museum, New York, NY  
Decorative Arts Museum, Little Rock, AK  
Greenville County Museum, Greenville, NC  
Minnesota Museum of Art, St. Paul, MN  
National Endowment, National Council on the Arts, Washington, DC  
North Hennepin Junior College, Minneapolis, MN  
Norwest Bank, Rochester, MN  
Rochester Community and Technical College, Rochester, MN  
State Foundation on Culture and the Arts, Art in Public Places, Hawaii  
University of Wisconsin, Lacrosse, WI  
University of Wisconsin, River Falls, WI  
Minnesota Museum of American Art, St Paul, MN



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- Judy Onofrio

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**Onofrio Studio Assistants**

Jeremy Killkus (2001-2015)

Tyler Forland (2002- present)

Chris Delisle (2001 and 2016- present)

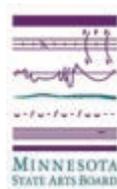
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