



EPIPHANY 32 x 32 x 4.5 inches black walnut / dogwood

FALLS CHURCH WOOD TURNER LYNDA SMITH-BÜGGE

## ART *in* NATURE

BY NATALIA MEGAS

Most of us see them every day. They provide protection, shade and beauty. But for woodturner and sculptor Lynda Smith-Bügge, street trees are much more than that. They are an endless source of inspiration.

"I see holes, cracks, wounds and then I think about that and I day, "What can I do with those to transform them?" says Lynda, Falls Church artist who uses fallen bits of wood from street trees as her primary medium. "Trees as a reflection of human nature, she notes, "Maybe the holes, cracks and wounds are almost like a person."

Integrating geometric form with organic shapes in her sculptures and turnings, she strives to make others aware of the exquisite beauty found in common trees outside their windows: "I create from what's around me. That's my job—I find art. I want to connect people to nature in a spiritual and subtle way."

The child of missionary teachers, Lynda was raised in Popayan, Colombia, an area known for its arts and crafts. Her upbringing in the Andes among the Guambiano Indians taught her to appreciate nature's brilliant hues and surrounding culture. "I soaked up the beauty of the land and people of Colombia and Ecuador," says Lynda. "Nature was the source of sanity and comfort for me."

She has always found comfort in the beauty of trees: "My sculpture connects people to a particular locality, since the source of my material is limited to a specific area. My intention is to draw the viewer into colors, textures, undulating surfaces and interiors of the wood. Natural shapes, juxtaposed with constructed form, invite a person to meditate."

Inherent in all her works is a reassuring sense of peacefulness and a respect for the natural form. "I find that the form of the wood itself is so interesting. I let nature guide me," says Lynda. "I hope my works have a healing and meditative affect. Just by looking at art, that creates serenity and appreciation for nature. It brings you back to your roots."



A NEW DIRECTION 18 x 22 x 8 inches maple/ poplar/birch

Lynda earned degrees from Hunter College and Bank Street College in New York City. She also studied at the Corcoran's School of Visual Arts and The Art League in Alexandria. But during her initial studies, she resisted the popular interest in minimalism that surrounded her.

"It just didn't grab me. I was more of an expressionist. I didn't have any school of thought to limit me," she says. "My artwork was abstract . . .

Some is functional, some is playful and interactive, and some is pure sculptural form.”

Relying on power tools like those she first used in college, Lynda shapes, turns and finishes each piece of wood and enhances it with other materials such as copper wire until “it evokes design, a movement of a metaphor.”



*Lynda Smith-Bügge standing with artwork CLOUD, LIMINAL SPACE and BEACON 74 X 48 X 16 inches Burled Maple / Walnut /Gold Leaf / Lighting*

A former museum director, Lynda has also taught art in the public schools and served as education consultant to the Library of Congress, the Smithsonian and the Society of Woman Geographers. A woodworking program she taught in Catskill, New York, encouraged her to experiment with woodturning and helped children “to imagine, explore and build with wood collected from the forest.”



*MENDING 32 x 16 x 16 inches cherry / walnut / copper /laminated wood*

It wasn't until she joined the Capital Area Woodturners, who awarded her a scholarship to study woodturning with artist Christian Burchard at the Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts, that she began to study woodturning seriously.

The most difficult part of being an artist, she admits, is “putting a price on my work. The business end of things is the hardest.”

Lynda recognizes that she has a gift for responding to the environment, something that elicits a strong response in viewers: “I love to explore nature, to build, create. I'm bringing my art training in design in with my technical skills. I like to be able to see a final product. The beginning of an idea.” British sculptor Henry Moore was great influence on Lynda's work: “I was immediately drawn to his organic forms and the way his sculpture attracts others to touch it.”



CLOUD 12 x 52 x 4 inches burl maple

While viewing some of Moore's works on display one day, Lynda noticed "kids were climbing all over. [Moore] took the organic forms of the body and made them huge. Naturally, this drew the kids to the sculpture. This is what I want my work to do—draw people in. Stop them in their tracks and say, 'Wow!'"

She encourages fellow artists to persist and advises them to exhibit their work; "Each exhibit inspires you to keep going. Of course, it helps when people buy your work as well. Also, meeting with other artists helps. Success needs hard work. Every piece I sell is just one brick and I appreciate that and build more."



LANDSCAPE TABLE 30 x 36 x 12 inches  
Oak w/Bark Intrusion/ Black Walnut

Lynda has been juried into numerous exhibitions and has received several awards. The late J. Carter Brown of the National Gallery presented her with the second-place prize in sculpture/mixed media for MENDING during the Arts Council of Fairfax County's 1998 open exhibition.



INTERACTIVE U'S each U 10 x 3 inches apple / magnets

That piece was also accepted into an exhibition at the National Arts Club in New York City. One of her wall sculptures was selected by the Art in Embassies program for the U.S. ambassador's residency in Azerbaijan. She has also demonstrated woodturning at the Renwick Gallery exhibit sponsored by the Wood Turning Center in Philadelphia (élan, Oct. 2002) and the Yale University Art Gallery. She recently received a fellowship to the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts.

Bolstered by her successes and accomplishments, Lynda says that her goal now is to become financially sufficient with her art: "Five years from now, I'd like to be creating sculptures for people's atriums, sacred places and office buildings.

Lynda is currently working on several sculpture commissions and is teaching woodworking and sculpture in the after-school and summer programs at Burgundy Farm County Day School in Alexandria. She is available to teach sculpture and woodworking classes to both children and adults who would like to learn about wood, tools and basic woodworking of sculptural objects. For children's woodworking classes, she will travel to a site convenient for families. For more information on her classes and artwork, contact the artist at [smithworks4art@juno.com](mailto:smithworks4art@juno.com) or 703-534-6316.