

SHERRY OWENS biography

The artist works and resides in Dallas, and was born in Mt. Vernon, Texas, 1950.

SELECTED EDUCATION & AWARDS

- 2014 Artisan Award, AIA Dallas
- 2010 West Texas Triangle Artist
- 1999 Moss/Chumley North Texas Artist Award
- 1972 BFA, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas

SELECTED ONE & TWO PERSON EXHIBITIONS

- 2017 *Sherry Owens: Fabric of Life*, Art Museum of Southeast Texas, Beaumont, Texas
Confluence of Earth & Mind, Martin Museum of Art, Baylor University, Waco, Texas
- 2016 *Sherry Owens and Suzi Davidoff: Nature Gathered*, Octavia Art Gallery, New Orleans, Louisiana
- 2015 *Natural Resources: Sherry Owens and Greg Reuter*, Beatrice M. Haggerty Art Gallery, University of Dallas, Irving, Texas
- 2013 *Texas Tough: Origins*, Blue Star Contemporary Art Museum, San Antonio, Texas (catalogue)
- 2010 *Sherry Owens: A Survey - Rooted in the Earth*, West Texas Triangle, San Angelo Museum of Fine Arts, San Angelo, Texas (catalogue)
Sherry Owens: Sculpture and Paint, West Texas Triangle, Ellen Noel Art Museum of the Permian Basin, Odessa, Texas
West Texas Triangle: Owens, The Grace Museum, Abilene, Texas
West Texas Triangle: Owens Sculpture and Drawings, The Old Jail Art Center, Albany, Texas

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2017 *Drawing Room*, Cedar Valley College, Lancaster, Texas
From a Distance: Contemporary Texas Sculpture, Monchskirche Museum, Salzwedel, Germany (catalogue)
- 2016 *O What a Night!*, Ogden Museum of Southern Art, New Orleans, Louisiana (catalogue)
- 2015 *Texas!*, Lalit Kala Academi, New Delhi, India (catalogue)
Texas Somewhere in Denmark, Galleri Roedhusgaarden Pandrup, Denmark
Texas Contemporary Art Fair, Octavia Art Gallery, George R. Brown Convention Center, Houston, Texas
- 2014 *Mirrored and Obscured: Contemporary Texas Self-Portraits*, Art Museum of Southeast Texas, Beaumont, Texas (catalogue)
A Panoramic View, Lawndale Art Center, Houston, Texas
- 2013 *Flight Deck Public Art at DFW and Love Field*, The Gallery at UTA, Arlington, Texas (catalogue)
transFIGURATION: SOAP, Big Medium/Canopy, Austin, Texas
Hecho en Dallas, Latino Cultural Center, Dallas, Texas

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS, continued

- 2012 *Western Sequels Art from the Lone Star State*, Athens School of Fine Arts, Athens, Greece (catalogue)
- 2011 *The Texas Chair Project*, Ohio Craft Museum, Columbus, Ohio
- 2010 *Earthbound: The State of Sculpture*, Art Museum of South Texas, Corpus Christi, Texas (catalogue)

SELECTED PUBLIC COMMISSIONS & PROJECTS

- 2016 *Buffalo Thunder*, Ben E. Keith Company, Dallas, Texas
- 2013 *Sands of Time*, Main Street Projects, Houston, Texas
- 2012 *Back in a Moment*, Love Field Airport, Dallas, Texas

SELECTED PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

Ben E. Keith Company, Dallas, Texas
City of Dallas Public Art Collection, Love Field Airport, Dallas, Texas
Meadows School of the Arts, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas
State Foundation on Culture and the Arts, Honolulu, Hawaii
Texas Sculpture Garden, Hall Office Park, Frisco, Texas



Waterhole, 2017, crepe myrtle, dye and wax, 24 x 36 x 36 in., loan courtesy of the artist, photography by Harrison Evans Photography, Dallas, Texas

Cover: *From the Heart* (detail), 2007-17, crepe myrtle, dye and wax, 15 x 23 x 29 in., loan courtesy of the artist, photography by Harrison Evans Photography, Dallas, Texas

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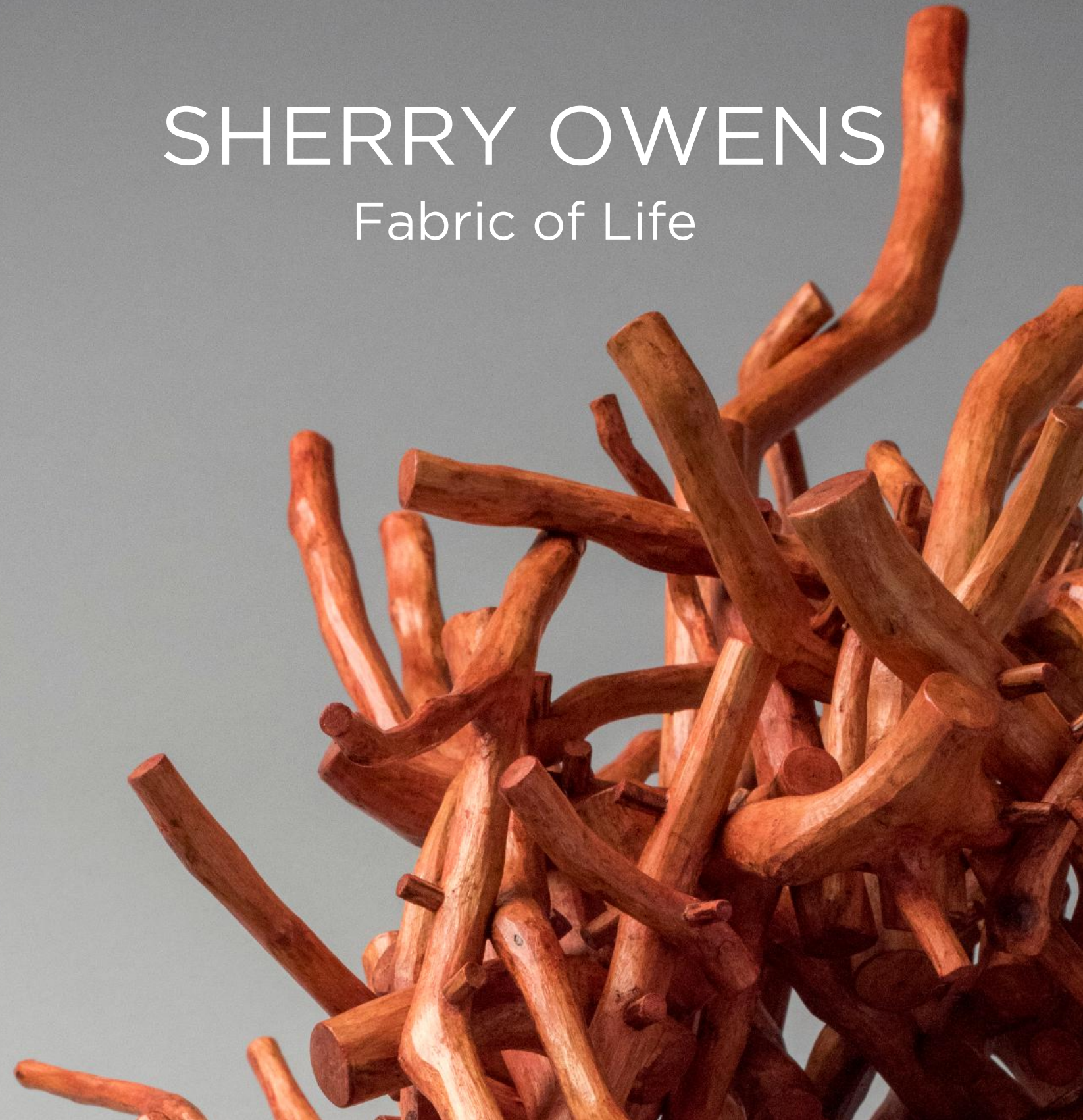


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SHERRY OWENS

Fabric of Life



Speaking Through the Branches The Work of Sherry Owens

Art Museum of Southeast Texas
June 10, 2017 - September 10, 2017

The first time I walked into Sherry Owens' studio, I was overwhelmed by the space. It was as if I had stepped into a petrified bramble, a nest of wooden bones, a temple for a tree goddess. Completely surrounded by pieces of crepe myrtle – bound, piled, whittled, waxed and stained – I felt I had stepped inside of a Sherry Owens sculpture, and I had no desire to leave.

Artists through the ages have looked at a piece of wood and seen something within, something that they feel needs to be brought forth by the artist's hand. From ancient African and Asian cultures into the New World, root carving has been practiced throughout history. In the American South there is a strong tradition of vernacular art based in this animistic practice of exposing the spirit within the wood, including artists like Ralph Griffin, Thornton Dial, Bessie Harvey and Jesse James Aaron. "Trees is soul people to me," said Bessie Harvey. "Maybe not to other people, but I have watched trees when they pray, and I have watched them shout, and sometimes, they give thanks slowly and quietly."¹ These artists approached the medium with reverence, and Owens shares that spiritual view of nature. She brings her own contemporary aesthetic, however, to the process – a post-minimalist aesthetic tied to the Texas landscape and environmental concerns.

The recent work of Sherry Owens is a continuation of a longstanding exploration of expression through line and texture. With roots firmly planted in weaving, her practice moves through painting and drawing and into sculpture, allowing her to engage form, space and narrative in new ways, and to great effect. Her choice of material for the past twenty-six years has been primarily the crepe myrtle tree. "I keep thinking



Coming Forth, 2015, crepe myrtle and wax, 24 3/4 x 17 x 12 3/4 in., loan courtesy of the artist, photography by Harrison Evans Photography, Dallas, Texas

I will move on to another material," she recently told me, "but I am just not done with all the ways to use it." Through deconstructing the trees, whittling the branches, waxing, dying and manipulating the surfaces, she arrives at a place of pure gesture with the material, essentially drawing in space with the branches. It is a process-driven practice, constructed with pegs to highlight that process. It is narrative, though, that drives the composition of each piece – a narrative that ranges from the most private emotion to a transcendent awareness of mankind's place within

the natural world. "I can speak through the branches," says Owens.

Perhaps there is something instinctual at work in her practice, like a bird building a nest, but hers is a nest built on storytelling, a woven wooden narrative. "I can't just go in to the studio and start putting sticks together," she recently said. "I have to have a story to tell to know what to do." After choosing the sticks based on size, shape, texture and form, she makes complex compositional decisions to bend them to her will. She may choose to leave the bark on and wax over the dirt to create a natural story, as in *Coming Forth*, carving into the surface to convey new growth. She may dye the wood to remove it from the natural, transforming it into something new, as the coral in *An Ocean Between Us*. Just as the forces of nature defined the sensual, expressive forms of the crepe myrtle trees, Owens' process of deconstruction and transformation serves as a metaphor for the flux of creation itself, the continuous unfolding of loss and growth.

With her works on paper, she is engaged in mankind's most primal form of expression – a form of language that predates writing and offers an almost immediate

transmission of thought – drawing. Her drawings are gestural, intuitive and raw. Her mark-making shows a practiced hand, unflinching and confident. That same intuitive gesture is given form in space through her crepe myrtle sculptures.

The full potential of her narrative ability through sculpture is realized in her more complex installation pieces. In works such as *Every Breath You Take*, *Mantle*, and *The Big Four + One*, she conveys complex ideas through an economy of form. As with all great art, these pieces are the beginning of a larger dialogue. They pose more questions than provide answers. What is this natural world we live in? What are we doing to it? Where do we go from here? Perhaps, in these works she has given us a guide to protect the systems that sustain us here on earth, or perhaps the answers lie in the patinated crepe myrtle bumps of *Mapping the Presence of Water on the Moon*.

Bradley Sumrall
Curator of the Collection
Ogden Museum of Southern Art

¹ Carr, Simon. "Trees is Soul People to Me." *Portraits from the Outside: Figurative Expression in Outsider Art*. Eds. Betsey Wells Farber, Sam Farber, Allen S. Weiss. New York: Groegfeax Publishing, 1990.



Every Breath You Take, 2009, crepe myrtle, steel, wood, mixed fibers, corn soda ceramic, paint, thread, 146 x 93 x 104 in., loan courtesy of the artist, photography by the artist