

# STEVE MURPHY Biography

The artist works and resides in Houston, and is represented by William Campbell Contemporary Art Gallery in Fort Worth and Davis Dominguez Gallery in Tucson.

## EDUCATION

1975 B.F.A., University of Houston, Houston, Texas  
1973 Lamar University, Beaumont, Texas

## AWARDS

1999 PASTA Grant (Temporary Public Art), Cultural Arts Council of Houston/Harris County, Houston, Texas  
1997 Creative Artist Grants Award, Cultural Arts Council of Houston/Harris County, Houston, Texas  
1975 Flaxman Scholarship Recipient, University of Houston, Houston, Texas

## SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2016 *It's All Come Down to This*, Art Museum Of Southeast Texas, Beaumont, Texas  
*Steve Murphy / Sculpture Month Houston*, Houston City Hall, Houston, Texas  
*All The Words Have Been Spoken*, William Campbell Contemporary Art, Fort Worth, Texas  
*It's A Conversation / Arts Brookfield*, Heritage Plaza, Houston, Texas  
2015 *A Walk On Gilded Splinters*, Houston Baptist University Contemporary Gallery, Houston, Texas  
*Steve Murphy*, Davis Dominguez Gallery, Tucson, Arizona  
2014 *Awakened in Mid-Air*, Anya Tish Gallery, Houston, Texas  
2013 *Steve Murphy*, Davis Dominguez Gallery, Tucson, Arizona  
2012 *Steve Murphy*, William Campbell Contemporary Art, Fort Worth, Texas  
2011 *Steve Murphy*, Davis Dominguez Gallery, Tucson, Arizona  
2008 *Steve Murphy*, Wade Wilson Art, Houston, Texas

## SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2016 *Live Anew*, William Campbell Contemporary Art, Fort Worth, Texas  
*Above & Below / Sculpture Month Houston*, Decorative Center of Houston, Houston, Texas  
2015 *Texas Abstract*, Galveston Arts Center, Galveston, and Rudolph-Blume Fine Art / ArtScan Gallery, Houston, Texas  
*WET, Fresh Fictions*, Williams Tower, Houston Texas  
2014 *Another Layover*, Alliance Gallery, Houston Arts Alliance, Houston, Texas  
*A Panoramic View*, Lawndale Art Center, Houston, Texas  
2013 *Fresh Dozen*, Red Arrow Gallery, Dallas Texas  
*In - Depth*, Art Car Museum, Houston, Texas  
*Dimensions Variable*, Anya Tish Gallery, Houston, Texas  
*Hot Mix*, Davis Dominguez Gallery, Tucson, Arizona  
2012 *Miami Project Art Fair*, Miami, Florida, William Campbell Contemporary Art Gallery, Fort Worth, Texas  
*God*, Art Car Museum, Houston, Texas

2011 *Texas Chair Project*, by Damian Prior, The Ohio Crafts Museum, Columbus, Ohio  
*Itchy Acres #1*, Gallery Nord, San Antonio, Texas  
2010 *Earthbound, The State of Sculpture*, Art Museum of South Texas, Corpus Christi, Texas  
2009 *Beneath the Seen*, Wade Wilson Art, Houston Texas  
*The Great Texas Sculpture Roundup*, Art Car Museum, Houston, Texas  
2008 *Texas Chair Project*, Austin Museum of Art, Austin Texas  
2007 *Art on the Green*, Kemp Center for the Arts, Wichita Falls, Texas  
2006 *Close Proximity*, Wade Wilson Art, Houston, Texas  
*Sculpture Now*, Williams Tower, Houston, Texas

## SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Edwards, Jim and Michael Paglia. *Texas Abstract: Modern / Contemporary*. NY: SF Design, LLC / FrescoBooks, 2014.  
Rooney, E. Ashley with Julie Sasse. *Contemporary Art of the Southwest*. PA: Schiffer Publishing, Ltd., 2013.

## SELECTED COLLECTIONS

University of Houston, Houston, Texas  
Johnson Supply, Houston, Texas  
State National Company Incorporated, Arlington, Texas  
University of Arizona, Tucson, Arizona  
Sysco Corporation, Houston, Texas  
Encana Corporation, Plano Texas  
Noble Energy, Houston Texas



*Can You Feel It?*, 2016, polished stainless steel, 21 x 26 x 5 1/2 in., loan courtesy of the artist

Cover: *Under The Influence*, 2015, oxidized steel, 47 1/2 x 71 1/2 x 19 in., loan courtesy of the artist

This exhibition is generously funded, in part, by the City of Beaumont, the Wesley W. Washburn, M.D. and Lulu L. Smith, M.D. Endowment Fund, the Texas Commission on the Arts and the C. Homer and Edith Fuller Chambers Charitable Foundation.



Art Museum of Southeast Texas  
500 Main Street  
Beaumont, Texas 77701  
(409) 832-3432 • www.amset.org



# STEVE MURPHY

## It's All Come Down to This

Art Museum of Southeast Texas  
December 10, 2016 - February 26, 2017



*Willful Suspension of Disbelief*, 2014, oxidized steel, 42 x 112 x 27 in., loan courtesy of the artist

## STEVE MURPHY It's All Come Down to This

The following text is from an email interview between the artist and AMSET curator of exhibitions and collections, Sarah Beth Wilson, November 23, 2016.

### **SBW: Walk me through a “typical” day in your studio.**

SM: I do not have a studio routine, even though I do many repetitive tasks in my production. Each day is a different set of tasks depending on what is on my work bench. I have to thoroughly plan every piece. Currently, I am at a lull in my 40+ year engineering career, which began simultaneously with my art career. When working on an engineering project it's typically a 40 to 60 hour work week, so my studio time is very limited. I have to work smart and in an efficient manner. My wife claims that I used to make art in 20 minute segments. I would enter my studio with a specific task in mind, and typically, a very well thought out approach to completing that task, all predetermined by earlier planning and with required materials at hand so that I could “get to it.” The task would be finalized quickly without sacrificing structural integrity or accuracy. It might, for instance, be the band-sawing of timbers, glue up for an open form fabrication, a rough cut of a lead sheet or spraying on a sealer coating. Tasks complete, I often join my friends and family for dinner, or simply enjoy some down time after a busy day.

Later I would return to the studio to clean up and prepare for the next day's required task. I typically have several pieces in progress in varying stages of completion. I try not to mix up working pieces of different mediums. My studio is not large enough to have multiple work stations for different materials.

More recently, I enter the studio between 10:30-11:00 AM and begin my day. I've usually completed the more complicated tasks by 5:00-6:00 PM. Later in the evening I return to evaluate my progress, maybe work on some layouts on my computer for future pieces, and prepare for the next day's work.

### **SBW: There are 16 pieces in this exhibition, created between 2007 to 2016, featuring a range of scale, shapes and media. What drives you to explore these differences in your work?**

SM: There are several directives to determining what the next works might be. Upcoming exhibitions are great motivators. I do some of my best work under pressure. An exhibition requires multiple types of pieces that range from large scale, freestanding steel or lead, to wall pieces and table top works in a variety of materials. If I'm in a less schedule driven period, I work on pieces with materials that I have in the studio. It's all about what you can afford to make. In these less driven times, I try to follow the path of least resistance and work with materials at hand. I'm continuously looking for something new to introduce to my visual vocabulary. Recently I've explored with the gilding of wood forms.

If I know that I have a show coming up at a later date, I begin developing large, steel pieces that I know I will need. I begin refining profile layouts on my computer that I know will fit in the exhibition space (this is critical). I try to keep tabs on existing inventory and work to fill in where I might be seeing a shortage of certain types of pieces.

I tend to rework ideas into different scales, materials and orientations, reformatting and swapping selective elements between pieces. Sometimes, I get an idea for a series of objects and run with it until something changes my direction – unexpected commissions are nice “series terminators.” Often they just play themselves out. Sometimes I see these ideas reoccur much later in a different type of work.

### **SBW: Your sculpture, *Always Drink Upstream From The Herd*, was created specifically for this exhibition. Discuss your process with this work and what about AMSET appealed to you for the creation of a new sculpture.**

SM: When you and I started discussing the exhibition, we talked about the potential for a retrospective format. I knew I would have several recent pieces and a substantial group of older works. I realized that there was plenty to select from this current body of work. That also signaled the title of the show: *It's All Come Down to This*. The focus of my current body of work is represented in this show. I wanted to use available pieces – not work from private collections. I knew there were enough pieces to select from without tapping that group. I also knew that I wanted at least one new work for the exhibition, a sort of anchor and focal point. At the time, I was working on a small graphite commission. The client wanted a graphite table-top version of an earlier large, steel piece entitled *Under The Influence*. I realized that the new form was so strong that it needed to be developed into a large, free-standing steel sculpture. So I went back to the original steel and fabrication method using the new layout and decided it would be worthy as a focal piece for the AMSET exhibition. The scale of the gallery and material size limits were the deciding size factors for the production of *Always Drink Upstream From The Herd*.

### **SBW: You have poetic titles. What relationship do they have with the object, and what comes first – the title or the work?**

SM: The titles and the pieces are developed simultaneously. I keep a running list of phrases and snip-its from song lyrics that I am always collecting – somewhere over 250 to date. These titles need to have multiple levels of meaning, or are open to alternate interpretations. Sometimes the titles get associated with a piece early on. Other times a group of pieces get finished untitled, so I select a group from the titles list. My wife, Paula, and I go down the list eliminating some, but eventually every piece gets a title. One of the things a good title will do is get you a few more seconds of viewing in a museum or group show. The piece is encountered; the viewer then reads

the title and often returns to the piece to attempt to make that new association between object and word. I realized many years back that more poetic forms of art are often more approachable and allow viewers to respond to the impressions they bring to the viewing. First there has to be something intriguing to the viewer in the work, and then the appropriate title can reinforce and possibly sustain that connection.

### **SBW: This exhibition shows a wide range in scale, from small works such as *Your Lies Are Only Wishes*, to rather large pieces, like *Willful Suspension of Disbelief*. What are some of the challenges of working on both a small and large scale? And rewards – why do you do it?**

SM: The large scale steel pieces are by far the most challenging. Upon finalizing the development I contact my fabricator for bidding and to check his work load to determine when he can fit me into his shop schedule. These are the most expensive pieces and require some financial planning for funding so as to fit the fabrication schedule. I often make maquettes in my studio prior to fabrication to prove the geometry and the overall form from all views. All of my maquettes belong to my wife. Some smaller, graphite and gilded pieces present finishing issues that require more time and effort than anticipated. The finish of the wood form must be very fine prior to the application of the gilding and graphite coatings. These two finishes show every blemish on the wood surface.

### **SBW: If you had one word to describe your artistic philosophy, what would it be?**

SM: Reduction.



*Your Lies Are Only Wishes*, 2014, graphite on wood, 13 x 10 x 5 1/2 in., loan courtesy of the artist