

LEW CARSON
Artist's Statement

After teaching art at a university for many years, I began volunteering at Creative Growth, an art center for adults with disabilities. The clients are free of art world conventions and egos: I found this inspiring. Each week I saw many examples of visual expression that were fresh and heartfelt. Benefiting from this exposure, I learned to take more chances with the focus of my own art work and more risks with its execution.

About six years ago I found a large envelope with diagrams of body parts. They were an invitation to me to explore the human form which I found familiar, complex and mysterious. Shortly afterwards, I began to use illustrations from Gray's Anatomy as source material. The more I examined this book, the more possibilities presented themselves.

Drawings of an ear, heart or thyroid offer me a starting place to explore scale, shape, texture and color. As I work, the information in the drawing becomes altered and reinvented. My goal is to create an aesthetic puzzle, ambiguous and open ended. Sometimes I make images using the non-dominant hand. I utilize stencils during my process.

While I have fairly specific ideas for a piece when I begin, chance elements often occur. Then a negotiation between intention and accident happens. The pieces in Portfolio I are on panels, about 3 x 4 feet, start with a narrative inscribed into the surface. In the finished piece, occasional words may be seen but much of the text is obscured by imagery and the words exist mostly as texture. The pieces in Portfolio II and III are painted on pages of an old atlas. Each format combines layers of content. If the viewer understands that he or she is looking at an aspect of the body, then issues of fitness, aging, illness or healing may occur.

A compelling aspect of art is its potential to transport us from ordinary emotional states to the ecstatic, a heightened state of clarity and bliss. With many steps, stumbles, calculations and leaps of faith, the ecstatic is part of my studio experience. Coffee cools. Gospel and R & B play. I sort through the infinite choices. The experience is nerve wracking and exhilarating. Here, it is all palette knife all the time. I stretch, pace, ruminate – all part of the ritual in this church/fortress/playpen. Treasured blocks of time when I seek new discoveries and old truths.