



Artist of the Week – Mary Kroetsch

March 19th, 2012 - <http://haliburtonschoolofhearts.wordpress.com/>

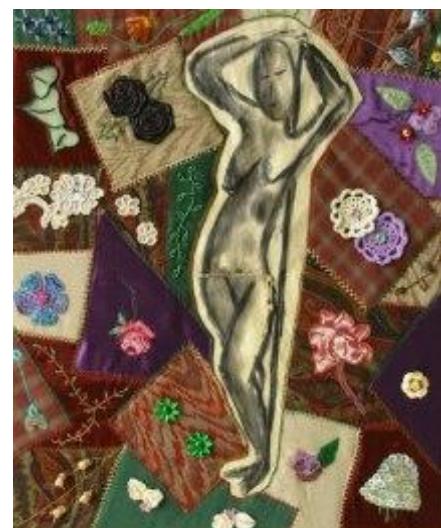
She's an artist, a student, an entrepreneur, and exceptionally talented. Not only has Mary Kroetsch graduated from the Fibre Arts program at HSTA in 2004, but she has also expanded her horizons with courses from George Brown, the New Brunswick Arts & Crafts College, and the Stratford Festival of the Arts. Her work is displayed internationally.



This week, we were lucky to catch up with her as she was preparing for the *Big Art Book Digital Anthology* Launch Party on March 1st.

Better than anyone, Mary can tell you how important storytelling is to her; it inspires her, it shapes her artwork, it pulls people closer together and weaves a grand tapestry of nostalgia.

And so her story begins, not with “once-upon-a-time” as so many stories do, but with a sewing class. Yes, that’s right, a sewing class. At the tender age of ten years-old, Kroetsch’s mother enrolled her in a sewing class, never dreaming that it would become a life-long passion for her daughter. Her father, an amateur photographer, has also greatly influenced Mary’s work. “It is the 100 plus years of forgotten family life in the albums and shoe boxes I have in my possession, that spurs me on to reclaim forgotten memories,”

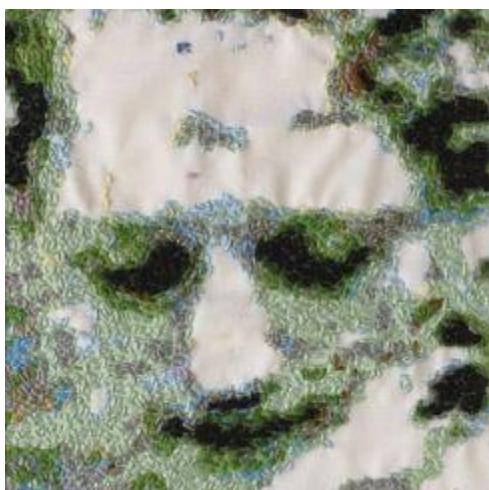


Kroetsch shares. "By bringing memories out of the box and incorporating them into a contemporary art piece, I give the viewer permission to reach out and touch."



And *Please touch! No white gloves required!* could be her war cry... She explains that textile art is often seen as fragile and precious; viewers are afraid to interact with the pieces. She urges viewers, however, to interact with her work. She carefully pulls us once more to the shoebox of inspiration: "Our memories are fragile and precious, too. If we don't constantly, and lovingly, fondle memories, they soon become forgotten in an old shoebox." She wants viewers to know that art is both friendly and accessible; it can result in an amazing experience for all involved, from artist to gallery-goer.

Over the past few years, Kroetsch has had the privilege of installing some exceptional and interactive pieces. One of them, *The Fractoral Heart* project, allowed people to spend time walking the emotional labyrinth she created – contemplating and remembering the emotions that made them smile and hurt. Another, titled the *Take a Memory – Leave a Memory* project, required that visitors be gifted with a photographic memory in exchange for a letter sharing a personal remembrance, inspired by the photograph.



She reveals that her glorious plan to "make it big" in the Art World within five years of graduating at the college, didn't quite work out. Priorities have changed, experimental directions were taken and now she quite simply says, "I make art – full stop. I [don't] want my work to be categorized as Fine Craft or Textile Art." And in such a competitive industry, labels are a dime a dozen.

Her parting thoughts to us are, in fact, advice for any art student: aspiring, current, or graduated:

“Don’t waste the education you are getting with HSTA. It is easy to be disillusioned by a teacher you don’t care for or even distracted by a topic you feel has no value to your art form. Everything that is being shared with you has value – if not now – then later. And ask questions. Your teachers are working Artists. Try and coax their secrets for their success out of them. It might save you some time if you

are looking to make art your life.”



*To see more about the Big Art Book, go to
<http://scarborougharts.com/2012/03/big-art-book/>*



For more information about the artist, please visit Mary’s website at www.textile_mixedmedia_artist.cachelan.com/

She can also be reached via phone at 519-265-0666, as well as by email at talisman-fibre-arts@live.ca