

SHARON KOPRIVA

ARTIST



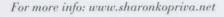


SHARON ORTMAN KOPRIVA was born in Houston, Texas, where she went to school at the University of Houston, receiving a Master's degree in painting in 1981.

Kopriva, well known for her mixed-media contructions of human figures and animals, was raised in Houston and still continues to maintain a studio in the Houston Heights. Kopriva who was raised a Catholic explains that Catholicism is and has been a major creative influence, but in addition, a trip to Peru, in 1982, has also had a major creative impact on Sharon and her work. Of this, she herself writes, "Nearly a quarter century ago an adventure in Peru transformed everything about my art: content, materials, color and form. Having recently completed coursework on a fine arts degree in painting, my soul was searching....and it found."

Death and spiritual transcendence are often present in Kopriva's art, mixing the present with the past, as in her Joan of Arc of 1988, and her Catherine's Wheel, of 1996, both of which now reside in The Menil Collection.

Deborah Colton said it best when she wrote of Kopriva's work that "Through her mysticism, we experience dreamlike, surreal backdrops that she luxuriously layers to create mythological scenarios. Her work goes deep in our inner houses, referencing our own personal being, while also conveying a sense of history, place and society."





Hallowed Hall 2010 66 x 44 x 3 inches oil, mixed media on photo canvas



Rite of Passage 1991 80 x 132 x 148 inches papier-mäché, bone, mixed media



Sharon Kopriva



Matrimony 2001-2012 74 x 48 x 48 inches papier-mâché, mixed media

4 Joan of Are 1988 62 x 31 x 17 inches papier-māché, burned wood, mixed media



Alchemist Tree 2010

Sharon Kopriva



The Witnesses 2010 64 x 44 x 2 inches, oil, mixed media on photo canvas

Sharon Kopriva

▼ Art

Capsule reviews by Jim J. Tommaney

"Jim Seigler: My Life With the Circus" Jim Seigler began designing for the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus in the early 1950s. He designed sets, floats and costumes, but there's much more — Seigler is also an accomplished ceramicist and a sensitive portrait artist. Hyde Park Gallery presents "Jim Seigler: My Life With the Circus," documenting Seigler's range of talents in its cavernous spaces. Seigler graduated from The Ringling School of Art in Sarasota, Florida, which developed in him an affinity for vivid colors and dynamic figures. A notable exception is three charcoal portraits from 1949, which offer compelling glimpses of lives fully led and indicate a sympathetic bonding with humanity, in all its frailty. There are sketches of spectacular pageantry, revealing an intriguing grace that approaches elegance. Some works are solitary sketches for garments, but Seigler shapes them to life, showing the wearer as well as the garment. There are clowns and ringmasters galore, and girls riding elephants, and a Harem Girl sketch for a pageant that reminded me of Aubrev Beardsley's work, Elephants on Parade is elaborate in wit, with the elephant wearing a hat with nine large globes and the rider wearing a cape with a huge train. There are brightly colored ceramic sculptures, often of clowns with witty, exaggerated hats; these are delightful. Come see this most colorful and engaging exhibition, Through June 21, 115 Hyde Park. 713-524-6913, picturesplusartgallery.com, — JJT

"Sharon Kopriva: Illuminations" Sharon Kopriva has a summer home in the mountains, and her artistic journey has been strongly influenced by northern Idaho, much in evidence in her solo show,



Photo courtesy of William Reaves Fine Art

where forest scenes frame cathedral windows in several paintings. The Deborah Colton Gallery seems to be an arboretum pulsing with life as Kopriva's paintings have evolved into sculpture, incorporating leaves and moss, twigs, and branches, enriching the texture and welcoming us into the mysteries of nature. Cathedral Green dominates the gallery, both with its size and its power, as the forest threatens to overwhelm us, but we gain hope as light cascades through its Gothic window. Gothic Green uses the arching of tree branches to form the shape of an invisible cathedral window, and the light here seduces us into its encouraging embrace. Emancipa-

tion of the Topiaries is a dreamlike work, referencing Hieronymus Bosch, as monstrous apparitions feed — the evil side of the forest primeval, as doglike creatures of the night escape their chains. There are a number of self-portraits, a new arena for Kopriva, and Isense these are experiments in which she's feeling her way. There is a self-portrait sculpture of her titled Taking Flight, half woman and half broomstick; that is powerful and witty, and the work of a master confidently in control. In her spiritual journey, the new group of cathedral-like forest scenes is called Verde, and there's an earlier phase called Terra where browns rather than greens

dominate. The works here are equally powerful, illustrated by three wall sculptures I think of as the "canoe" series; the sculptures have figures nestled — or imprisoned — in spaces as in a dugout. *Joan of Arc* has a young woman clinging to a cross as she struggles above a network of faggots and kindling wood. Through June 26. 2445 North Boulevard. 713-869-5151. — JJT

"The Texas Aesthetic VII: Minding the Texas Tradition" William Reaves Fine Art specializes in Texas artists who are influenced by and carry on the traditional portrayal of Texas landscapes. This is the seventh year of an annual group show, with 16 such artists exhibiting. One striking work by Laura Lewis is Boogie Woogie Blues - Cotton Harvest, featuring a vibrant sunset with the foreground filled with thousands of cotton bolls, and light and shadow playing on the plants tinged with richly rewarding blues. Jon Flaming's Abandoned Texaco. West Texas conveys a gentle sense of loss as the hustling modern world leaves behind a small-town single gas pump, once valued, now lonely and isolated. Jeri Salter's Alley View shows a dirt road and the backs of commercial buildings, as old-fashioned telephone poles lead one's eve into the drab distance, while red paint on some of the buildings provides relief from the grayness. Houston artist Erik Sproghe's Ruminations provides rolling hills in the background, reclining cattle on a field in the foreground and the skeletal head of a steer nailed to a fencepost, warning us of some possible calamity. William Montgomery's Long Billed Curlew fascingtes with a finely detailed portrait of a placid curlew in the foreground and an oil refinery in the distance, posing the contrast between nature and development. Randy Bacon gives us Gonzalez, a portrait of a red-brick building of unusual proportions and details. It is aware that its chimneys are beautiful, its entrance welcoming, its balcony graceful and its sturdy elegance admirable. Mary Baxter is showing an intriguing work, Contrabando, depicting a waterway that has dried up, with orange-red buildings on distant hills. It becomes difficult to lament the drought when it can create such beauty. Through July 12, 2313 Brun, 713-521-7500, www.reavesart.com. - JJT



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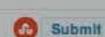
Visual Arts

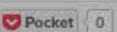
Sharon Kopriva: Illuminations Offers an Arboretum Pulsing With Life

By Jim J. Tommaney Mon., Jun. 2 2014 at 11:00 AM Categories: Visual Arts

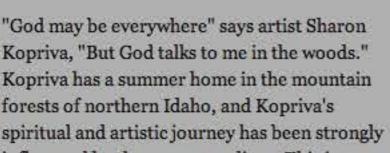












influenced by these surroundings. This is very much in evidence in her solo show at the Deborah Colton Gallery, as forest scenes frame cathedral windows in several paintings, and the

Gallery assumes elements of an arboretum.

This is an arboretum pulsing with life, as Kopriva's paintings have evolved into sculpture, incorporating leaves and moss, twigs, branches, enriching the texture and welcoming us into the mysteries of nature. "Cathedral Green" dominates the gallery, both with its size (81x126x2.5") and its power, as the forest threatens to overwhelm us, intimidate us, but we gain hope as light cascades through a cathedral window with its Gothic arch.

A viewer would expect that the triumphant power of this large work would diminish the impact of "Forest Window", a smaller version



Photo courtesy of the Deborah Colton gallery "Taking Flight" is a witty self-portrait by Sharon Kopriva

(60x44x6"), but this work involves us deeply because the light is even more entrancing.

"Gothic Green" uses the arching of tree branches to form the shape of an invisible cathedral window, and the light here again seduces us into its warm and encouraging embrace. The smaller "Spirit Tree" has a truly massive trunk, and is reminiscent of The Tree of Souls in the film Avatar.

"Emancipation of the Topiaries" is a dreamlike work, referencing the works of Hieronymus Bosch, as monstrous apparitions feed - perhaps this is the evil side of the forest primeval, as doglike creatures of the night escape their chains.

There are a number of self-portraits, a new arena for Kopriva, and I sense these are experiments, as she is feeling her way. But there is a self-portrait sculpture of her, titled "Taking Flight", half woman and half broomstick, that is powerful and witty, and the work of a master confidently in control.

In her spiritual journey, the new group of cathedral-like forest scenes is called "Verde" and she identifies an earlier phase of work as "Terra" where browns rather than greens propagate. The works here are equally powerful, illustrated by three wall sculptures I think of as the "canoe" series; the sculptures are of figures nestled - or imprisoned - in spaces like a dugout. One, in the Menil collection, is titled "Joan of Arc" as a young woman, in torture, clings to a cross as she struggles above a network of faggots and kindling wood.

Two others are titled "Vessels". One has a man with a broad oar, clutching a cross, confined to a dugout, but escape by paddling is not possible, as branches have pinned both man and oar to their destiny. The third has another man also clutching a cross, with the wrap-around dugout almost a shroud; this sculpture is perched on a ladder. All three are somber, and their implicit passion indicates how deeply the Catholic faith has etched itself into Kodiva's psyche.

The Gallery is also showing the works of Linda Hofheinz, which are colorful and exciting. There are two large companion works, "Birdsong I" and "Birdsong II", each 54x40", with a female dancer in one and a male dancer in the other. They are dressed in Asiatic garments, and have physical beauty and terpsichorean energy. Decorative, indeed yes, but rising to the level of art. Hofheinz has a wicked sense of humor, and I especially liked "In Dreams I Soar", as a man gazes ahead with steady intensity, with the back of his head feathered, to allow his imagination to take flight.

Sharon Kopriva: Illuminations continues through June 26, Deborah Colton Gallery, 2445 North Boulevard, open 11 to 5, Tuesday through Saturday, For information call 713-869-5151 or visit deborahcoltongallery.com.

Location Info



Map Data Terms of Use

Deborah Colton Gallery 2445 N. Blvd., Houston, TX Category: General



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Beyond Physical: Sharon Kopriva Speaks Virginia Billeaud Anderson

She spoke of visiting the Capuchin Catacombs in Palermo, and it was fun to imagine Sharon Kopriva examining the artistic possibilities of centuries-old Sicilian corpses.

Monday, June 16, 2014

following:

In the same breath she said it wasn't until she went to Palermo that she understood her grandfather's garden. He planted orange trees, and fennel, and other plants she discovered to be in abundance there in the city of his birth.

Sharon Kopriva, Riding the Pices Moon, 2013, Mixed media on photographic print, 42 x 49 (Courtesy of Deborah Colton Gallery) It was unnecessary for <u>Art in America</u> to call our attention to forest imagery in Kopriva's art. For years it's been evident that nature is on an equal footing with the

Virginia Billeaud Anderson: After a number of years of incorporating nature into your work, the landscapes should now be thought of as established orthodoxy. Self-

longstanding themes of death and Catholic religious mythology. Arguably, forest landscape intermingled with gothic cathedral architecture has precisely the same connotations as sculptural mummified religious figures. They serve as referents to actuality that is inexplicable and transcendent. On a recent studio visit I learned the

portraiture on the other hand, numerous examples of which appear in your solo exhibition Illuminations (at Deborah Colton Gallery through June 26), is relatively new. It's my assessment that depictions of your flying nude body in paintings such as Time Traveling and Riding the Pisces Moon, similarly to those of dogs that fly through forests and gothic cathedrals, originate from something buried in your psyche. This will probably piss a few people off, but have you ever floated out of your body? **Sharon Kopriva:** Only one other person has ever asked me that - Walter Hopps.

VBA: The late Walter Hopps organized your solo exhibition at the Menil Collection in the year 2000. **SK:** I floated through the walls. My out of body experience took place almost twenty years ago when I was in the hospital. I realize now that if I had not been there in the hospital I probably would not be here today. The thing I remember most as I look back was an incredible freedom, and I recall having absolutely no fear. It is the only time I remember flying THROUGH anything, and it was different than any dream I have ever had. It was very real. I do remember hearing my name called, and called again, and I came back to a doctor who looked more anxious than I was.

VBA: My father did that when he was a kid. He slipped through an inner tube, and

the older kids who were supposed to be watching him crying and screaming. Then he was back in his body vomiting water and crying. Surely Hopps recognized this in your art.

He sometimes called in the middle of the night. For him time was eternal.

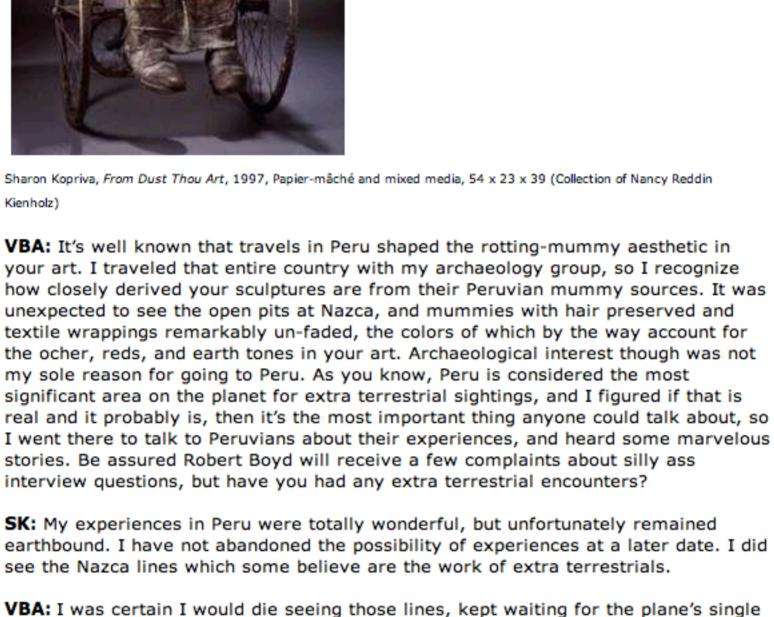
SK: That conversation with Walter was a very brief but memorable moment when he asked me if I had ever "traveled." Walter was special, on the edge of many things.

found himself up in the sky looking at his body on the pier, and he told me he saw

VBA: Even if you hadn't admitted to floating around the hospital, openness to extradimensional reality is easily detected in the sculptural dead, decaying and mummified figures, and paintings of ghosts and phantom dogs. Have you experienced other things not of this world? **SK:** Pop, the man who raised Gus, appeared to me after he died. I saw him clearly. He had something important to tell me. It was very personal, advice I followed. I think we all have these opportunities to communicate. Most of the time, we do not

in my life when I reached beyond the physical. They are being revisited in my memory.

allow them to happen. Your questions have allowed me to think about the few times



propeller to malfunction.

about Peru with you, and although I have not seen extra terrestrials, I believe I experienced an earlier life, which might have been in Peru. We saw the mummies when we first went there in 1982, an elderly guide took us to the burials, and we saw bones, bleached by the sun, thrown everywhere. There were whole limbs, hair,

There is a picture of it in my New Orleans Ogden Museum exhibition catalog.

sculls, and of course, missing was the pottery the thieves took, and the wonderful woven cloths. On our next trip almost 25 years later, that spot was "cleaned up," there were still a few bones off in the distance, but the site was suddenly organized.

VBA: Masterful is the only word to express the manner in which you capture knotty

Luna, Pluto and Thor. I once saw a superb bronze of Thor with the figure twisted as if about to chase its tail, which reached to Degas' level of observation and nuance. But the way you distorted your dogs' images in the <u>Seven Deadly Sins</u> installation at Project Row Houses in 2011 was shameful. Spread through the row house were dog sculptures meant to represent the seven human transgressions. In the rear of the

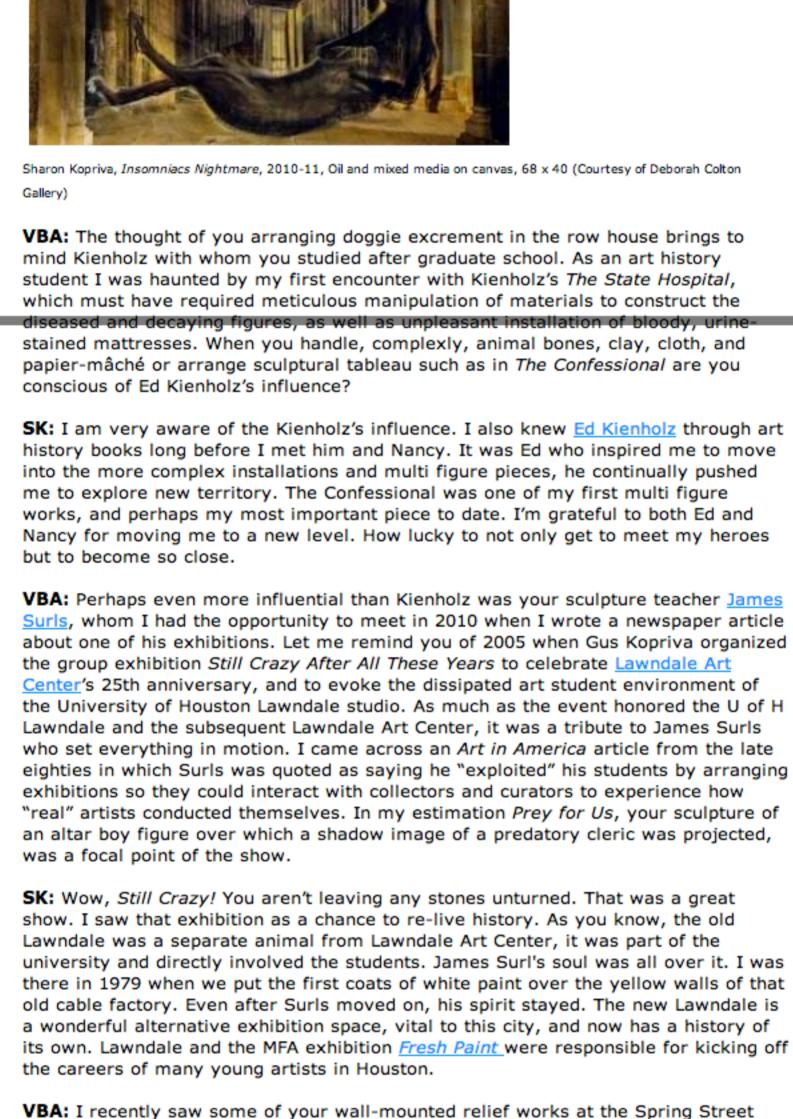
house was Gluttony asleep on the floor, in the form of an obese stingray, surrounded

leg joints and muscles in three-dimensional renderings of your Peruvian hounds

by Frito bags, Big Mac containers and dog shit. You disgraced those animals.

SK: And the planes make those scary loops and turns. I would love to talk more

SK: One day I'll do another sculpture series of the dogs, probably in bronze. Gus and I are forever watching our dogs spin around and interact with each other. Long ago we decided they have all the same qualities as humans when dealing with each other. So when I was invited to do an installation at Row Houses, it was Gus who actually suggested I use my sculptured dogs as actors to demonstrate the sins. What fun. I managed to reserve the only house still divided into rooms, and off we went. Humor is good. I have so often seen my dogs demonstrate envy and greed, of course gluttony and lust. And I have seen anger and vanity.



Studios exhibition and witnessed how their mysterious quality silenced a few viewers. You achieved the meditative intensity required to re-direct thoughts to life, death and the nature of reality, which for you obviously stretches beyond the physical. **SK:** The four small works at Spring Street were done originally for an exhibit in

India. I think we all have the capacity to think or be "beyond physical." I also feel most of us do this intuitively rather than consciously. And I think that many things come forth through art that may not have through the spoken word. Images do come that are sometimes totally conscious and sometimes not. I'm especially interested in art that is beyond real, surreal and most often spiritually motivated. I love the art historical trail through romanticism and symbolism, and believe many of the artists were reaching into metaphysical states in their visions, in search of the spiritual and

VBA: You are speaking about the 2011 Mumbai gallery exhibition Phantoms and

Milestones in which the ghost dogs appeared with depictions of historically significant events related to struggles for liberty. I've not yet been to India, but I'm drawn to the Hindu notion of an energy or force that connects all living and inanimate things, and one day hope to see Banaras where Hindus go to prepare for passage to the

unknown reality beyond the borders of life, and pray to escape rebirth. Sharon, you already mentioned a possible past life in Peru and in a 1996 interview you stated "everything cycles." Explain more about how reincarnation fits into your philosophy.

SK: Cycles of life interest me probably more than any other condition of our existence. I think all of my art is related to cycles in one way or another. Long

the sublime.

form and cycle again.

9/11.

Gallery)

the shoes.

of awareness.

my life and my art.

before India I saw the cycles clearly in Peru. The mummy forms in my sculptures come out of the cycles there. In Australia, I also saw evidence of transformation and cycles in the aboriginal life and art, as I did in India. I do not know if all people reincarnate, but I believe some might. I do not know if I will, but I believe I could. There might be complicated reasons about why and how, but I do believe it happens. Matter is not created or destroyed, it is transformed and recycled. But that's the physical part. There are places where I have stepped where I feel I have been before, particularly in Peru. That's the spiritual part. In Australia, beings are believed to move in and out of inanimate objects. I find that fascinating. A rock may possess the spirit that will become a person and a person's spirit may yet become one with a rock or a tree or an animal. I didn't have much time to spend in India but hope to return and experience more of that land and culture and learn more about how it fits into the "whole" picture. I do not believe the spiritual part of a person disappears. Some think we just cease to exist, some we either go to Heaven, Hell or Purgatory. I think we might not all do the same thing. I believe the souls of some

float around earth, some because they cannot figure out where to go, some because

they choose to or have unfinished business. I believe some might take on a new

Sharon Kopriva, Joan of Arc, 1988, Papier-mâché, burned wood, mixed media, 72 x 36 x 28 (Menil permanent collection) **VBA:** The years haven't dimmed my memory of your Menil show. Why did the sculpture Joan of Arc unsettle me? **SK:** The *Joan of Arc* sculpture is one of three of my works that entered the Menil Collection. I think Walter and Mrs. de Menil chose this work together to be donated by Edward and Nancy Kienholz. Mrs. de Menil was especially moved by the female martyrs. She personally chose Catherine's Wheel to have a permanent home at the museum. And I think of the series of martyrs whose legends found their way into my studio in the mid to late 80's, Joan was my favorite, and she is most people's favorite. It's her story, her role as an early, strong feminist that moves us. She was caught up in politics, first a hero, then proclaimed a heretic and burned at the stake in her teens, thanks to the Catholic Church, then 400 yeas later, proclaimed a Saint. Surely she had out of body experiences, had to be in a trance when she led the

army into battle and when she was ablaze. In fact, don't you think all of our martyrs experienced religious induced trances? I think Joan's story is so compelling because she is in regular history books. That puts a mark of "TRUE Reality" on her that I do not believe others have. As part of the process of making Joan I actually set her on fire. A faint smell of that burn remains. Martyrs have always held a special place for me. As a child, I wondered and hoped if put to the test, I could risk my own life for a cause. I have seen real martyrs in my life, like those who acted to help others without thinking of their own safety, silently without needing glory, such as those in

VBA: Not martyred, but known for bizarre self-mortifying, was Rose of Lima, on whom you based an important sculpture. It seems her head is in the Basilica in Lima, "uncorrupted" like the head of Catherine in Siena, which I saw a few years ago. Rose wanted to suffer at the saintly intensity of Catherine, so she wore a

surprisingly by 31, after which the required miracles made her the first saint to be

SK: Of course, Rose of Lima is so loved in Peru. Yes, I visited the beautiful Church which houses her relic. I have visited it twice. The people are very proud of their special saint. The Cathedral was filled with worshipers the times we went. Rose was

decomposed, I have a book, I think it is *The Incorruptibles* . My Saint Rose of Lima

spiked crown on her head to endure a crown of thorns, and was dead not

a beautiful woman who worked hard to destroy her beauty. You mentioned Catherine, and there are many saints whose bodies are believed not to have

sculpture is in the collection of the museum in Lima. Love that city!

canonized in the Americas. Did you see Rose in Lima?

Sharon Kopriva, Saint Rose of Lima, 2006, Papier-mâché, mixed media, approximately 50 x 30 (Courtesy of Deborah Colton

VBA: Those shoes! You're never more perverse then when devising shoes for the religious figures. When I was a kid in Catholic school, the nuns wore black leather lace-up shoes beneath their floor length habits, which to me looked ridiculous. And the priests' heavy leather shoes seemed ill-suited to their long robes. Comment on

SK: It is getting harder to find those nun shoes. All the kids are now in sneakers. The priests' etc., are a bit easier to find. Once Gus left a pair of damp shoes outside the door to dry out and when he came home they were on a bishop. (I thought he was throwing them away) They looked great on my sculpture and Gus got a new pair of shoes. I have actually spent a great deal of time working on and making correct clothing, rings, shoes and even the belt buckles on my Catholic figures. I have a very good friend who is an ex-nun and enjoys helping me research these details. It

VBA: We know from statements you've made that the religious sculptures are not a

critically asserted, and that to interpret the art as a denouncement of the church and your Catholic upbringing is overly simplistic. You did say the figures are frozen in time performing rituals that you witnessed when younger, and that in each piece you are searching to try to understand yourself. Essentially, the mummy sculptures, akin to your fantasy landscapes, invite us to contemplate the ultimate enigma, where do

condemnation of the church's canon as dead or stuck in the past, as has been

we come from and where are we going, simply put, they encode our spiritual search. In that bodily putrefaction, recycling, consciousness, and the eternal

imagination are part of the universe's energy, the artworks facilitate deeper levels

is important that they be correct, and I love the research.

SK: Yes, the figures are frozen in time. I liken them to the bodies of saints that refuse to decompose. Years ago the Church sucked us in with ritual and fear, bells rang and we beat our chests and felt holy. All of that fear and ritualistic participation are in my religious figures. They are frozen in time performing their acts of religion. They similarly denote the death and ritual close to the surface in primitive societies. The art signifies my search for self knowledge, an attempt to reach a higher state. My forests as cathedrals, with tree branches superimposed over church architecture, reflect broadening of my religion, an expansion of my spirituality.

Sharon Kopriva, Cathedral Green, 2012, Oil and mixed media on photo canvas, 81 x 186 x 2.5 (Courtesy of Deborah Colton Gallery) **VBA:** In 2012 the Ogden Museum of Southern Art in New Orleans mounted From Terra to Verde: The Art of Sharon Kopriva, a survey of works created between 1982 and 2012. At the time curator Bradley Sumrall wrote that the exhibition reveals "the breadth and unity of her career." Was it fine to look back on thirty years of artistic expression? SK: It was so wonderful to look back at thirty years, all in one spot, one clean, lit spot. Bradley did such a wonderful job in preparing the exhibition, he worked on it for a full year, even traveled to my home in Idaho where we hiked my favorite trail and he really "got" the place and understood how it became such an important influence on me in the last ten years. Back to the question: I was looking at the path my life and art had traveled through thirty years and decided to arrange the show to begin in the early 80's underground in beautiful, spiritual Peru, move through my examination of my life and religion, and end with nature imagery represented by paintings such as Cathedral Green. It clarified where I am and where I had been,

and the lovely closure was that it mentally created space for whatever comes next, in my own time. There were works in that exhibit that I had not seen in many years and reunited with. I guess we should call it the family reunion, when all the kids come home. Virginia, some might find it surprising that I publicly discussed those personal out of body experiences, but what the heck! Those experiences are part of