

# zan

*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 constructions 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." 

For more info: [www.sharonkopriva.net](http://www.sharonkopriva.net)



*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-mâché, bone, mixed media



Sharon Kopriva



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

4 *Joan of Arc*  
1988  
62 x 31 x 17 inches  
papier-mâché, 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

## 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 Aubrey 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,



*Boogie Woogie Blues - Cotton Harvest* is by Laura Lewis

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 Topiaris* 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 I sense 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 eye 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* fascinates 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

1 Comment

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"God may be everywhere" says artist Sharon Kopriva, "But God talks to me in the woods." Kopriva has a summer home in the mountain forests of northern Idaho, and Kopriva's spiritual and artistic journey has been strongly 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 (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 Kopriva'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](http://deborahcoltongallery.com).*



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

### Location Info



#### Deborah Colton Gallery

2445 N. Blvd., Houston, TX

Category: General

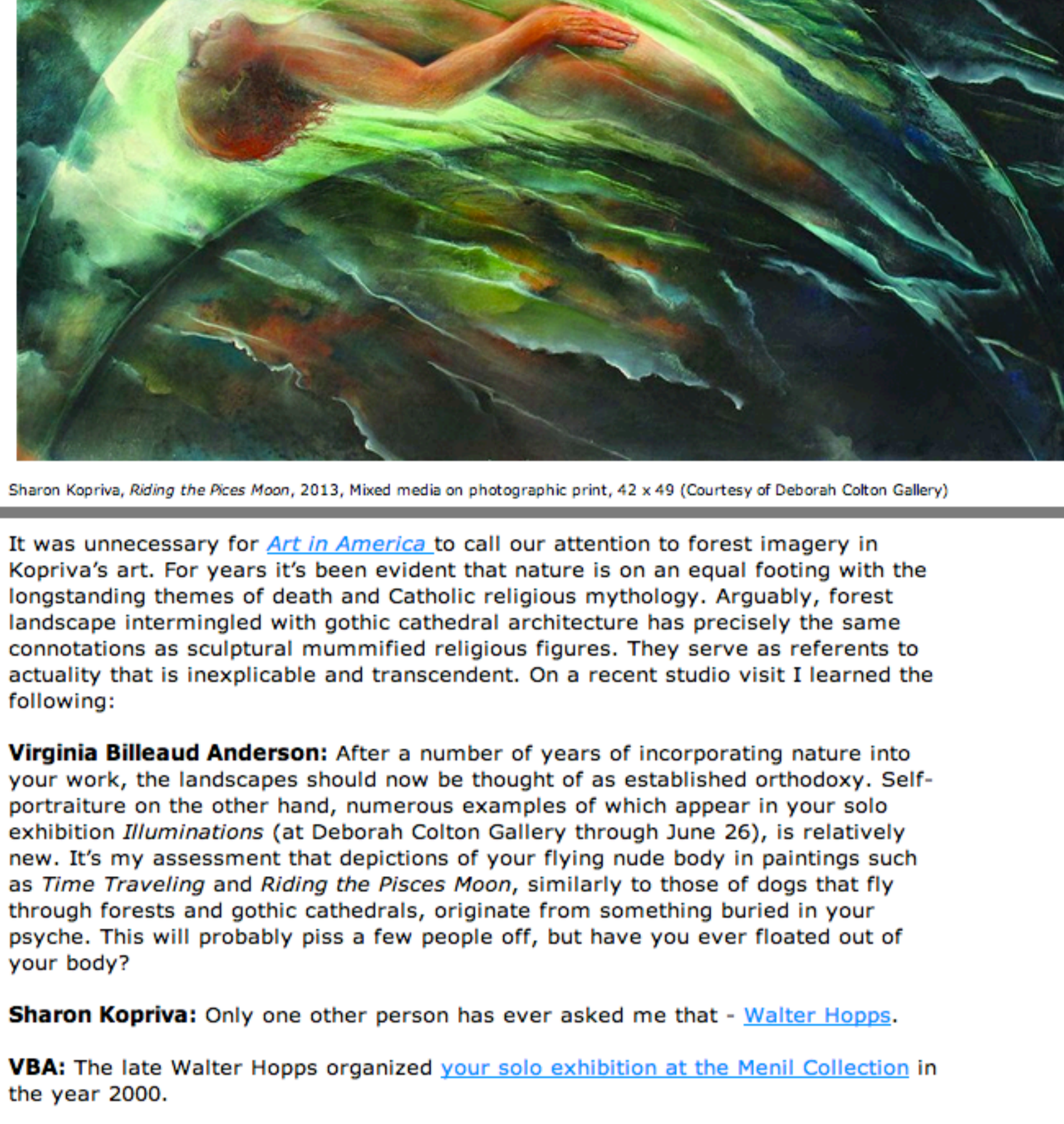


THE GREAT GOD PAN IS DEAD

Beyond Physical: Sharon Kopriwa Speaks

Monday, June 16, 2014

Virginia Billeaud Anderson: The spoke of visiting the Capuchin Catacombs in Palermo...



Sharon Kopriwa, Riding the Pisces Moon, 2013, Mixed media on photographic print, 42 x 49 (Courtesy of Deborah Colton Gallery)

It was unnecessary for Art in America to call our attention to forest imagery in Kopriwa's art. For years it's been evident that nature is on an equal footing with the longstanding themes of death and Catholic religious mythology.

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

Sharon Kopriwa: 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.

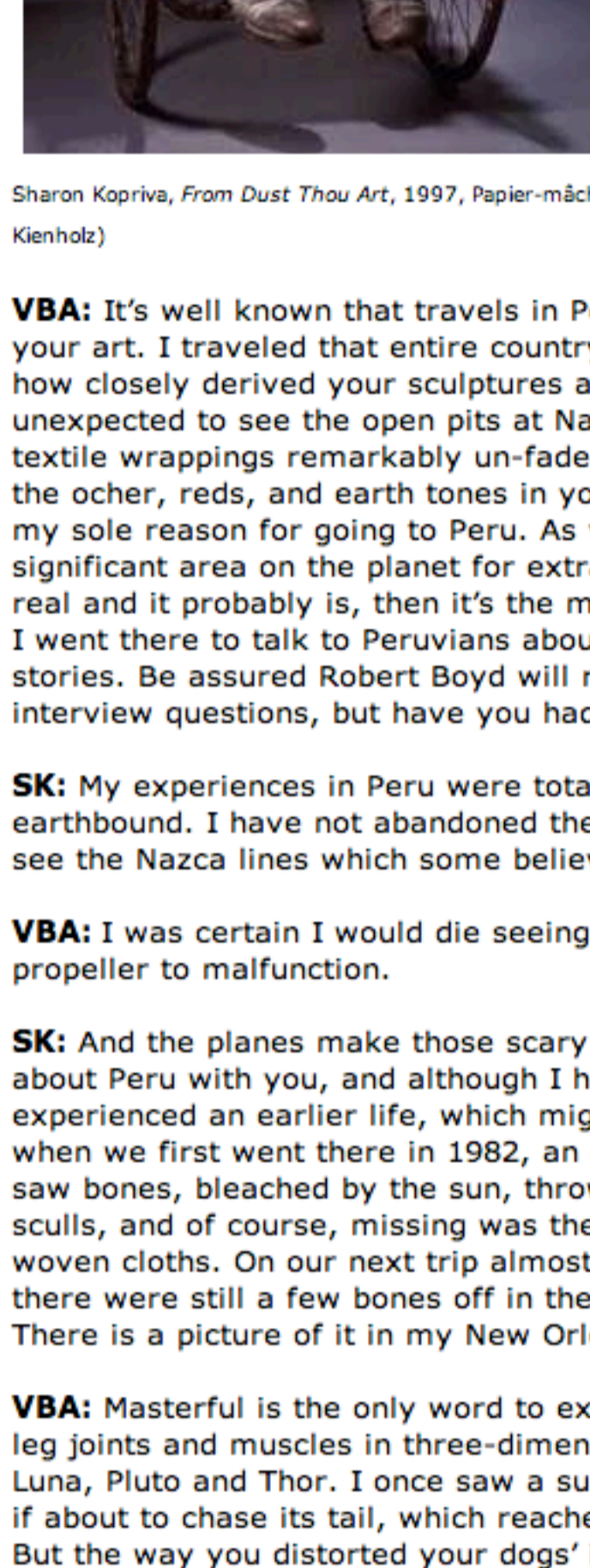
SK: I floated through the walls. My out of body experience took place almost twenty years ago when I was in the hospital...

VBA: My father did that when he was a kid. He slipped through an inner tube, and found himself up in the sky looking at his body on the pier...

SK: That conversation with Walter was a very brief but memorable moment when he asked me if I had ever "traveled." Walter was special...

VBA: Even if you hadn't admitted to floating around the hospital, openness to extra-dimensional reality is easily detected in the sculptural dead...

SK: Pop, the man who raised Gus, appeared to me after he died. I saw him clearly. He had something important to tell me...



Sharon Kopriwa, From Dust Thou Art, 1997, Papier-mâché and mixed media, 54 x 23 x 39 (Collection of Nancy Reddin Kienholz)

VBA: It's well known that travels in Peru shaped the rotting-mummy aesthetic in your art. I traveled that entire country with my archaeology group...

SK: My experiences in Peru were totally wonderful, but unfortunately remained earthbound. I have not abandoned the possibility of experiences at a later date...

VBA: I was certain I would die seeing those lines, kept waiting for the plane's single propeller to malfunction.

SK: And the planes make those scary loops and turns. I would love to talk more about Peru with you, and although I met him and Nancy...

VBA: Masterful is the only word to express the manner in which you capture knotty leg joints and muscles in three-dimensional renderings...

Project Row Houses in 2011 was shameful. Spread through the row house were dog sculptures meant to represent the seven human transgressions...

SK: One day I'll do another sculpture series of the dogs, probably in bronze. Long and I are forever watching our dogs spin around and interact with each other...



Sharon Kopriwa, Insomniacs Nightmare, 2010-11, Oil and mixed media on canvas, 68 x 40 (Courtesy of Deborah Colton Gallery)

VBA: The thought of you arranging doggie excrement in the row house brings to mind Kienholz with whom you studied after graduate school...

SK: I am very aware of the Kienholz's influence. I also knew Ed Kienholz through art history books long before I met him and Nancy...

VBA: Suris, whom I had the opportunity to meet in 2010 when I wrote a newspaper article about one of his exhibitions...

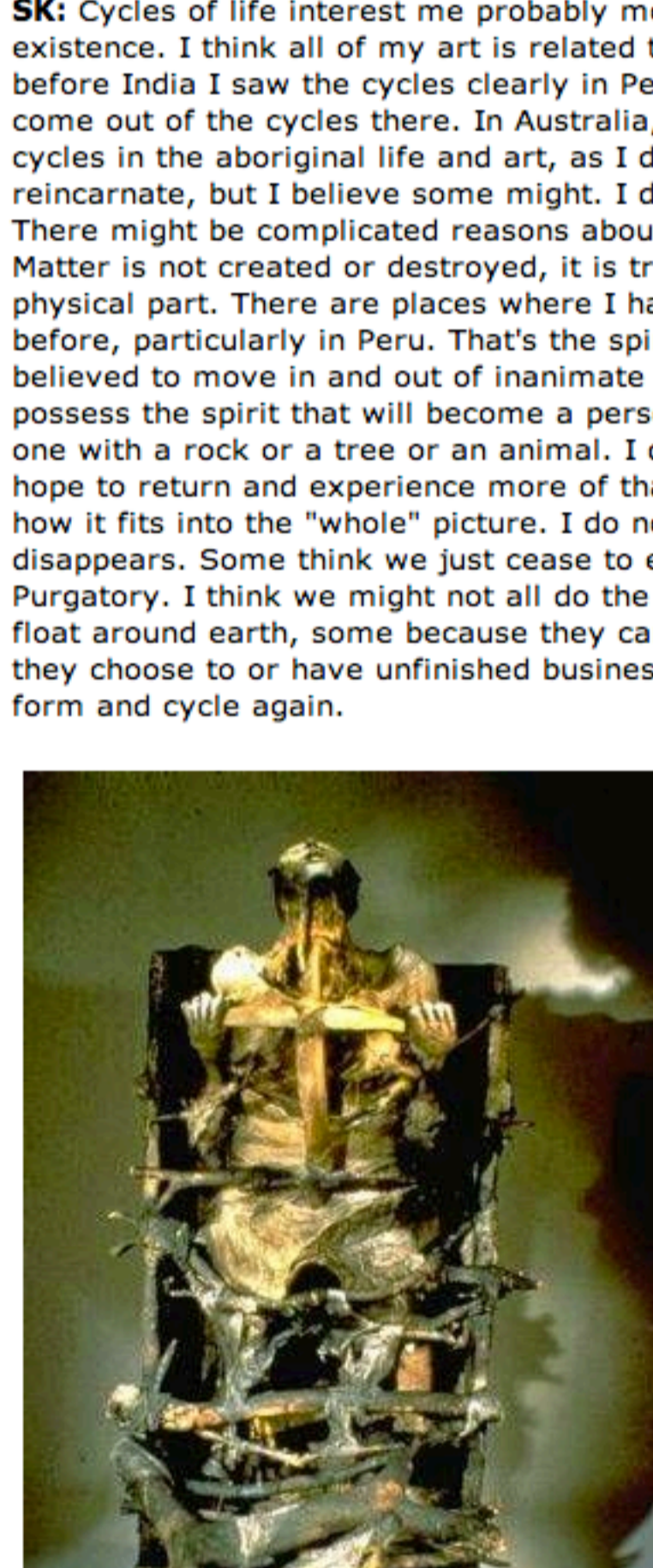
SK: Wow, Still Crazy! You aren't leaving any stones unturned. That was a great show. I saw that exhibition as a chance to re-live history...

VBA: I recently saw some of your wall-mounted relief works at the Spring Street Studios exhibition and witnessed how their mysterious quality silenced a few viewers...

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."

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...

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...



Sharon Kopriwa, 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...

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...

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...



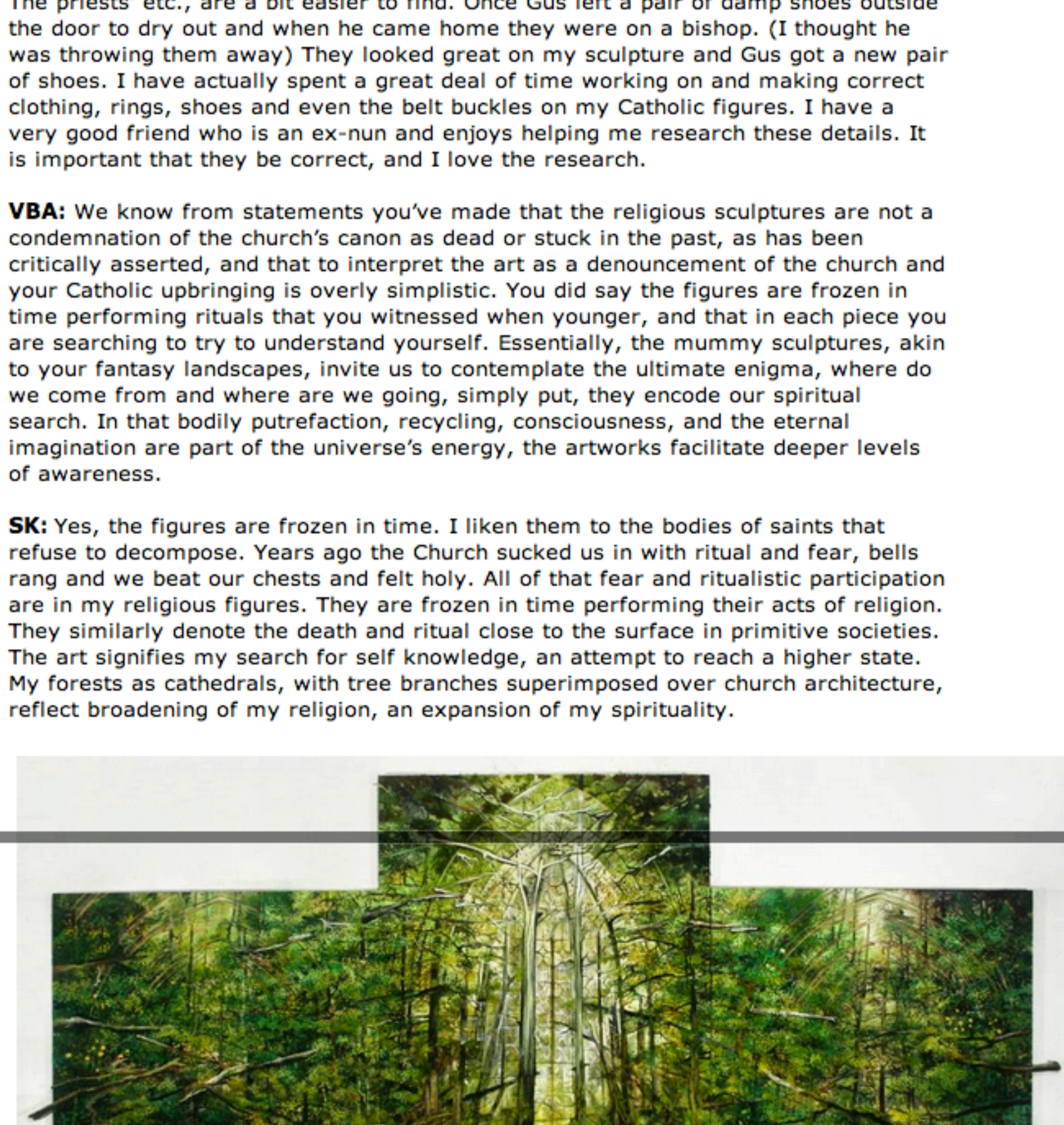
Sharon Kopriwa, Saint Rose of Lima, 2006, Papier-mâché, mixed media, approximately 50 x 30 (Courtesy of Deborah Colton Gallery)

VBA: Those shoes! You're never more perverse than 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...

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...

VBA: We know from statements you've made that the religious sculptures are not a condemnation of the church's canon as dead or stuck in the past...

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...



Sharon Kopriwa, 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 Kopriwa, 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..."

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...