

CARLA MOSS, SCULPTOR & CREATOR

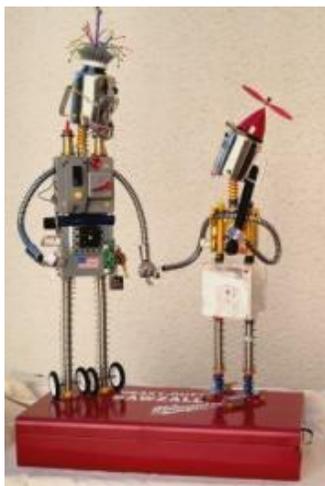
WWW.BLACKDOGDESIGNSTUDIO.COM

WWW.CARLASFINEART.COM

“WHO’S WHO IN THE WEST”, “WHO’S WHO IN AMERICA”, “AMERICAN REFERENCES”

How did a girl from Montana get this far? Well, I’m sure she never expected it nor did she even know it was possible to do much while enjoying a profession as a

sculptor! She said it has been hard work, often “back breaking” but her passion won out. When I asked her what WAS hard work she told me it was studying, college deadlines, paperwork, getting the “grades”. She began studying for a degree in Art Education at Montana State University, Bozeman. Then, Years later at the age of 48, she



“A Day at the Park with Dad”

39” tall x 24” wide

An ART-bot

returned to college and received a BA in Studio Art from San Jose State University. All this she managed to do, and always made the Dean’s List, while holding down a full time job as an administrator for large property Management Company in the Bay Area. At this time, she was also creating a Public Art piece for the City of

Milpitas, CA, “*The Flute Player*” which is located at Milpitas City Hall. Earlier, she had completed certification in Graphic Design, and later certification in Architectural Drafting and Mechanical Drafting, both with AutoCAD, and a certification from the North Light Art School.

Hard work! Yes, but now she feels “hard work” is getting into galleries and museums. Hard work is teaching art to elementary children. Hard work is continuous learning. Hard work is making a living. However, the fun comes from the **DOING** of all of these things as a means to an enjoyable life. No wonder she has a large poster of Super Girl on her studio wall!

ORIGINS ...

Well, it began a while ago in San Francisco, California where Moss’ Mom and Dad came to live, where they worked, and where her father went to Med school.” My Dad became a wonderful Podiatrist and my Mom, was/is a brilliant, loving woman. They had a wondrous daughter named Carla Ann Erickson, born at St. Francis Hospital. She would grow up creating what she saw and what she experienced and all that interested her. “*Our big, 3- story Victorian looked out over the beautiful city and Golden Gate Park near Haight-Ashbury. Then, Mom and Dad decided, while she was still a baby, to move back home to Montana to begin our new lives.*”

So, Carla Ann Erickson grew up in Kalispell, Montana.

ABSORBING ALL THE ATMOSPHERE...

To make it perfect, Glacier National Park was only 30 miles away. *"It was like heaven—once I was old enough to realize it! I grew up fishing and hunting similar to any*



other kid in the west. I could shoot a bow like a pro by the time I was 12 and won many prizes. I could shoot a .22 rifle like Annie Oakley—well, my Dad was great about encouragement".

Glacier National Park, Montana

"My playground was the park and all the adventures in Northwest Montana that one little girl could find! We rode our horses like our Native American Brothers and Sisters, in and out of the forests and neighborhoods galloping "hell bent for leather" thru fields and streams. We fished, hunted, and ran barefoot in grass and through stickers and rocks, tough little kids...having the best, most innocent adventures that any kid could have! It was sheer joy and a little 'Huckleberry Finn-like', too. We were very lucky kids!"

GROWING UP FREE...

"We had animals; animals like dogs, horses, chickens, rabbits, and, one time, a weasel, a skunk, and Fred, the turkey! We didn't live on a farm but the area was so wonderfully open and new that we could have these things and still be near town. I rode my horse, Knobby, everywhere. I took him fishing, following my black lab, Sheba, along the dirt roads and paths, into new adventures, carving sling shots from willow trees, knocking down hornet's nests while galloping at full speed, trying to hold a big stick, like a sword, overhead, like a knight in shining armor!...and I was only 8 years old! It was a time of catching frogs and snakes, riding for miles and miles just to run my horse on the race track at the county fairgrounds—late at night! Playing hide and seek in the woods, playing Cowboys and Indians. I always wanted to be the Indian so I could ride my big horse bare back and with just a piece of twine in

his mouth. I loved to whoop and holler in the open fields while Mom and Dad tried to call me to dinner."

"Mom and Dad would pack up the old car and all 7 of us (yes, eventually I had 4 other siblings) would squeeze into the old beater and head for Polebridge, Glacier Park, or one of the many lakes around us. We'd sleep in tents or the old cabins with a cook stove and a few bats flying around at night. Once in a while a pack rat would scuttle around up in the attic!

At night, we'd fall asleep listening to the lonesome call of the Loons on the lake (still my favorite wild bird) have sour dough pancakes for breakfast, then catch fish for dinner.



Main Street, Kalispell, Montana

We would jump into the icy lake or river and run back to the hot fire to roast marshmallows, or a hot dog.

Once, when I was about 8, while hiking I used my sling shot to kill a Grouse! It was actually a "Fool Hen"—and it tasted great that night in the little cabin."

Moss goes on: "Oh, But the winters, in Montana; it was VERY different than the warm hot summers! I had to wear SHOES!!! I read adventure stories, enjoyed 'Little Lulu' and 'Outdoor Life', drew pictures, built little odd things in the basement, and painted stuff. I made new things for my horse and wrote stories. Life was a blessing. I hated school and wanted the long winter to be over so I could once again be riding my horse."

"Summers! It was like Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn and the gang, going rafting and wading in swamps with a can of Vienna Sausages in my back pocket! We swam in the icy, glacier lakes all around us. We loved waterskiing. We fished for salmon, and raced motor boats! But then it was winter--again! We went skijoring with our horses, got pulled on sleds and skis behind the old Chevy, and made snow forts. We bravely careened down dangerous hills while sledding with friends. Life was a blast."



"Charlene, The Chameleon"
16 "tall x 23 "long
An ART-bot

THE ORIGIN OF THE STORY...

Yes, growing up for Carla in that special place was wonderful. The outdoors, the changing seasons, the people, the wildlife, the camping trips with her big family and relatives were so important, as were the strong values and hard work they instilled. However, growing up had a few challenges now. School and life itself began to replace this idyllic heaven.

Moss says she took a couple of art classes in high school from that wonderful man, Mr. Bailey, but never considered BEING an artist, let alone going to college. Although many of her friends were thinking of college, she wasn't. It just didn't seem feasible or affordable and yet, she wanted to explore other avenues in art and design. She loved drawing...*"my dad used to give us the white cardboard from his shirt packages and I'd draw on them. Dad would draw rabbits! It was my first 'paper', that I had to draw on!"... and so she decided to find out more about being an artist. "Besides, I hated math and thought that I wouldn't have to DO math. Ha! Was I ever mistaken! It was NOT to be so easy! I had to learn math to become an artist...."*

At Montana State University, in Bozeman, Montana, Moss studied industrial design, graphic design, and took courses in architecture. Someone once told her (her mom?) that she'd better become an **ART TEACHER** not an architect. So, she, being so naïve, began studies along that path. She did not like it! She still took interior design, drafting, and drawing but kept up with the OTHER educational requirements to become a secondary art instructor. However, she found out that the design and drafting was more fun.

THE AWAKENING—NOW SHE NEEDED A JOB!...

Now, as graduation approached, Moss realized that she'd better find a job and be independent. So, she heard about a couple of doctors in Kalispell who collected Montana Art and other "deceased" Artists' work. They were opening a new gallery and it was even located right in Kalispell! It was about a mile from her home! She didn't hesitate and applied! She got the job. Success!
Really?



Glacier Gallery, Kalispell, Montana

Nothing in college prepares most of us for the world. Montana State University was no exception. Moss had wonderful grades and the "book skills" of Art History. She could tell you all about Michelangelo or DaVinci or Picasso's Blue Period and she had some retail experience from summer jobs. Moss knew about the various processes of making art. At least she felt she did, BUT shockingly she had NO knowledge of American Western Art, western artists, or knew of any artists that painted and sculpted the American West. Strange that a Montana university didn't teach any of that-- being so "western"! Well, **Glacier Gallery** was all about this! Oh my!

LEARNING MORE THAN THE COLLEGE BASICS...

"But, after all that art education in school, I finally began earnestly learning "real life" things AFTER coming out of Montana State University: Real art WORK that never could have been taught. I began my art career by being hired to work at Glacier Gallery in Kalispell. Lucky for me, the owners were enthusiastic collectors of some of the most well-known artists from the past and even new, emerging artists. They were very willing to teach me—as it would benefit them also. I loved every minute! I met artists that most people had only read about. I saw and was able to touch works from Nicolai Fechin, Albert Bierstadt, C.M. Russell, and Maynard Dixon, Ace Powell and Fredric Remington! So, many Artists from

the Southwest and the Northwest came in! I pulled etchings for Joe Beeler and worked with Fred Fellows. Tom and Sherry Sander were my best friends. I was learning what no school could teach. “

She worked long hours at Glacier Gallery; every day except Sundays. She enjoyed the many lovely tourists who came to the gallery, and listening to stories from the famous artists who sat at the big round table where the coffee flowed unceasingly, learning from them...a practical, very important, business-like, education. She studied more about Lewis and Clark, Kit Carson, and Charley Russell and all those that came to Montana in the very early times. Stories and books of history and adventure, careers of sorrow, and unbelievable happiness came from these artists and writers, people she had only heard of and now she listened and absorbed it all. This was A REAL education, at last! And she was being paid to be there! Unbelievable.

MAKING A LIFE-ALTERING DECISION...

“Northwest Montana was alive with all of this creativity and, as I learned later on in my life, it was a place that called to painters and sculptors and writers... a Mecca for creativity”.

*“Along this path, I was beginning to paint small watercolors and being juried into many art festivals and art shows. I saw what could be done and pursued it. I painted the old barns and homesteads which now have gone to dust in order to make room for condos. I painted and painted. I sold and sold. I was working and learning. It seems the artists’ colony in the Flathead Valley was growing and it was amazing that I could sit and have coffee with these amazing people! They talked, I listened. People from Disney and Marvel studios drank coffee with ME!!! I took their advice seriously. I took painting and sculpture lessons. I took criticism. I took a new look at my life and began to think of this as a possible real career! I became part of **THE** group!”*

These artists told Moss to draw, draw, and draw more! Draw animals and study animal anatomy, draw trees, know what color was, and how to describe it to another artist using just the names of the colors of paint.

“Whether I was sitting for hours, painting a moose in Glacier National Park, or sitting face to face with wild wolves—behind a chain link fence!-- I was at peace in this place. I watched deer and eagles, buffalo, fish, and horses. I was sketching and taking pictures. We lived

near the Blackfoot, Flathead, and Kootenai, reservations so I even was exposed to REAL Native Americans. We attended Pow Wows and festivals, listening to the rhythmic, beat of the drummers, and the tinkling of silver bells that covered the gorgeous costumes. I sat in on movie sets and met actors and directors, learning what costumes and props were needed. My little sewing machine sewed many moccasins for one particular movie filmed in the Flathead Valley! The time spent was invaluable-- to be able live and work within this type of environment was true excitement and I loved it.”

THE FIRST OF MANY SCULPTURES...

During this time, in the early 70’s, Moss was asked to come to work at Powell Bronze Casting Foundry in Kalispell. She began at the bottom, chasing waxes and doing basic work with air tools. Later, she was “promoted” to patinas and learned all about chemical coloring or bronze and other metal. She was sent to work with Sculptor Bob Scriver in Browning, MT for a few days at as time on his Rodeo Series. He lived on the reservation! He was a very famous artist in a very famous studio! She learned welding, soldering, and doing the majority of the patinas. *“I poured molten bronze, made the rubber molds, and traveled to artist’s studios, helping them with their waxes and patinas.”*

“My first sculpture was a moose cow and calf, about 10” tall and 14” long—a real undertaking! I had so much fun working out the anatomy and giving the piece some personality. I cast it in a limited edition in bronze and added a beautiful walnut base. It sold out in an edition of 15! I learned about copyright, certificate of authenticity, contracts, and gallery shows. From the passion I got from creating this one piece, I went on to do many wildlife sculptures. The galleries loved them and I loved the galleries.

I think Carla had gotten “the bug” now and the art world would be even more important to her and her future. Struggling with her inner voice as to whether to work exclusively on her own or continue to work at Powell Bronze Casting was a dilemma she didn’t want to face. However, after much soul-searching and advice from those other artists, she wisely decided that it would be far more advantageous to learn as much as she could about sculpture and casting before attempting to go it on her own. It turned out to be excellent advice! Learning your craft never stops and with the advice from experts, a “newby” artist will know when it’s time to give it a try.

THEN, A MAJOR WORK OF MONUMENTAL SIZE...

"Mountain Majesty" became a permanent bronze sculpture at **Glacier Park International Airport** in Kalispell, Montana in 1984. It was Moss' first commission and **BIG**. It was 17 feet tall and replicated 2, full-size Bald Eagles snatching a Chinook Salmon from McDonald Creek in Glacier National Park. This was at a time when mostly men did this monumental work. Needless to say, Carla was so proud that she, herself, had done this!



"Mountain Majesty"
Bronze- 17 feet tall

Later, during the Governors National Convention in Kalispell, at the airport, when the Montana governor unveiled her first work of public art. *"My Mom and Dad and family and friends came as well as many dignitaries and business people. It was a major event!"*

"Mountain Majesty" still stands proudly at Glacier Park International Airport in Kalispell in the arrival and departure terminal. Small, 14" replicas continue to be sold—in a limited edition-- and can be purchased by contacting Moss directly. A large section at the base of **"Mountain Majesty"** is covered with small brass name plates, individually engraved with the names of all the people and businesses who have purchased the small eagle replicas.

By the following year, Anchorage, Alaska's Arts Commission requested a piece be designed for a school in Eagle River. It was a "Call to Artists" throughout the U.S. They accepted Moss' bald eagles! She was asked to make some alterations so she re-configured the 17 foot bronze statue to withstand the 100 mile per hour winds that come down through the Palmer area and into Anchorage. It was then placed at the Ernest Gruening Junior High School in Eagle River, Alaska! *"How many people have yearned to go to Alaska? I now had gotten this chance to go! A great cultural experience, too, but seeing the places I had only read about-- well, that was the adventure."*

Public Art became Moss' goal and priority from then on. Even though she continued to produce small, limited editions in bronze of people and wildlife, Moss'

excitement came from the designing and planning of specific requests for sculptures. *"It was a very difficult undertaking because these are national or international competitions to win a public art commission. It is "against all odds" to win. I've had private commissions of life-size Jesus and Child, Great Blue Herons, many animal sculptures and several Public Art Commissions involving 3 Cart Wheeling kids (my siblings), a Flute Player, (my sister) and other smaller sculptures of figures and historical pieces. Using my graphic design background and mechanical drafting skills helps me in that I can design and produce wonderful and historical subject matter for public art using my computer."*

A CHANGE IN SCENERY...

Along the way, Moss and her husband moved to the island of Maui. "This became one of the best decisions I had made—learning about our 50th state and its people." And NO cold, cold winters!

As a SCUBA diver, Moss studied the beautiful subjects underwater now, and created whales, manta rays and sharks, shipping the clays to Walla Walla, Washington to be cast in bronze. *"I was very active in the Arts on Maui and even had a hand in building the only bronze casting foundry on Maui. It became a special place up "da jungle", casting for famous artists who live on all the islands. I am so grateful to have met these wonderful artists and can say that this was one of the greatest cultural adventures I've ever had."*

NEW IDEAS EMERGING...ART-bots!

How did Carla come to this point, now, in her creative career? What kind of changes can one see now in the current work she diligently creates? How has her life changed over past events that influenced this jump"?

What are **ART-bots** and why does she create them now? What led her to this new adventure in a previously successful professional life in bronze sculpture? What has her personal life added to this phase of her creative life?

Being the personality that she is, she has to try new things, solve new problems. She's making and creating **ART-bots**. These one-of-a-kind sculptures are made from "found" materials, recycled parts, and computer trash. She calls them **ART-bots** because they are **Artfully Recycled Treasures**". From all the parts and pieces of Carla Moss' life and experiences, these are "pieces of

her life”, and, ironically, she is making these fun and very crazy sculptures from the parts and pieces of other people’s lives, too; Pieces and parts that have been discarded or sold, or abandon.

She is, indeed, on the way to showing her inner humor, being much more creative, and proving what can happen “Outside the Box”. From her choice of objects such as sprinkler parts, computer parts, old plumbing parts, and vintage items, she is happily discovering that new and wonderful ideas are leading her away from the traditional bronze sculptures. She is now creating a uniquely designed sculpture that has a great deal of personality! These brightly colored “people, animals, and “strange beings” that once would have been peoples’ little treasures, are now creations from old clocks and watches, lamps and antique items, and found objects once old and broken, now new.



“Sam, The Avenging Night Hawk”
28” tall x 10” wide - A night light!
An ART-bot, too

“I won’t stop doing bronzes all together,” she states. “I’m still excited about working on public art or special commissions that lends itself to bronze and metals. I’ve done quite a few of them. Those types of sculptures will always be available from me, too. If someone wants a large bronze, then we can talk—or how about a huge ART-bot?!”

AND NOW...

Currently living in Milpitas, CA Moss is building upon all she’s learned. She never stops studying! The City of Milpitas, CA has 3 public art pieces that were chosen from many artists submissions. She is grateful to have worked with wonderful people here and she really loves this town.

She can create just about anything with her large supply of forgotten treasures and old materials! One of her latest is a 6 foot dragon made with a vacuum, umbrella, vegetable steamers, car parts, and garden implements. “ It’s a real challenge, keeps me thinking, sketching, planning, and looking for just the right parts in order to make them into something entirely new and colorful. I spend more than a just few hours on a piece—some are close to dozens of hours and many days on end. I may let a piece “rest” for days, while I think and just until I can dismantle something that will fit perfectly into the whole scheme. “

MOVING FORWARD..

“After 3 years of creating sculptures in this wonderful series, I know I’m on the right track. I love it. I love the search. I love the imagination it takes. I have to be clever in order to make things look like they belong where it should go: there as an eye, a foot, a claw, or a face on an upside down coffee creamer”.

Moss has had several awards such as **“Artist of the Year”** from the Milpitas Mayor, and has been invited to many special events that have come her way. She has even been referred to in a Science fiction novel, **“Gabriel’s Watch Book One: The Scrapman Trilogy”** *“ I have to give credit to the talented author, Noah Fregger for referring to my “Flute Player” bronze as he describes all that has been lost in The City. After reading this fabulous book, I loved the idea of perhaps creating robots in my art.”*



“Tom Trotter, World Traveler”
32” tall x 20” wide-- A lamp
An ART-bot

She says she’s still learning, researching, sketching, and still finding out about what it is that makes her and her collectors happy. She has shown in many galleries, national venues, at well-known art shows in many parts of the country, and at private parties. She has received many commissions, and been able to show others how to do what she does. She still lectures and

demonstrates both in the lost wax area and teaches art at an elementary school.

Her new **ART-bot** collection is fresh and eclectic. It's fun and also a sort of scavenger hunt. Movie, science fiction novels, and outer space stories give her ideas.

*"Kids give me ideas. I am having a good response from collectors and the general public. Little children love these. I've even designed a special 14 foot **ART-bot** for a park. I've earned awards on my new path. **ART-bots** are what make people smile and wonder. I'm so glad this is happening! It's so refreshing to show a gallery!"*

"I am not one to join many "clubs. I want to put my time into my work. However, I was on the ARTS Commission for Milpitas, CA and I belong to a few art groups. I am a signature member of WAOW, Women Artists of the West, now belong to the Olive Hyde Art Guild, Fremont, CA, have been a member of Los Altos Art Guild, Los Altos, CA, ARTworks Downtown in San Rafael, CA and a couple of others as well as a member of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. "

SOME THOUGHTS ON THE "JOURNEY"...

Over many, many years, Moss has been known for her wildlife bronzes and graphic design. Her animal art conveys her intense feelings and experiences of her Montana surroundings and the life at the "front door" of Glacier national Park. Moss worked for decades in conventional and representational parameters with her sculpture, alongside some of the best artists of that era. While holding down full time, non-art jobs, she somehow managed to work at her art being accepted and traveled coast to coast to most of best art shows in the nation.

She now, however, is evolving into a new, more exciting part of her exciting career; one that shows more color, more imagination, more uniqueness, more creativity, and much more fun than any bronze work she's ever done. Moss is challenging herself to think more and figure out more than ever before.

Carla Moss' wildlife bronzes, such as "**Mountain Majesty**", the 17-foot flying bald eagles at Glacier Park International Airport (1986), or a tiny flock of bronze mallards, or her unique and whimsical ART-bots, all are unique to Carla's art style. Her graphic design skills have designed public art pieces using colorful images of history preserved in acrylic and steel as is

Magazine articles and videos are part of that journey in her amazing career in art. Teaching kids and volunteering for community sponsored "art days" or serving on art commissions are also important to this journey. These "bits and pieces" of LIFE continue to shape her, to shape her art. This is how her fascinating environment, her sense of the bizarre and often sarcastic humor, her quirky, awesome siblings and all her family, influence the outcome of the years of work and her career. How could it not? All the ideas and projects remain true to her thoughts and feelings. She continues without excuses not apologies. Her love of creating moves forward.

*"Vince, The Invincible Dragon"
6' long x 30" tall
An ART-bot*



All these wonderfully designed creations reflect years of accumulation from her marvelous "story". All the people and places in Hawai'i, in California, and many other places, remind her of her life and experiences. These are subconsciously embedded in her art work. Every bit of clay and metal, every little computer part and every carefully placed nut and bolt, funnels down into what Moss is now. Religious pieces that were commissioned, silly pieces such as dancing rabbits were made, and the public art work selected from international submissions; all are award winning works from a sculptor who has had her ups and downs, yet still optimistic about the very next "masterpiece".

"Creating Art for People and Their Environment"

fetch@blackdogdesignstudio.com