

artla

magazine



June 2014



Leap of Faith, Bronze, 46 x 12 inches

A Conversation With Tanya Ragir



Rolling Hills, studio wall, Mixed media, 18 x 32 inches

By Susan Hepplewhite

Tanya Ragir is an artist of consummate precision, persistent passion, and delicate appreciation of the female form. Her sculptures represent the emotional battlegrounds and serene opportunities that her personal experiences and perceptions have afforded her. She is creatively sensual, as well as embodying

a profound sense of the human experience. Ragir is one of the few contemporary artists that is able to create geometrical masterpieces that magically divert the viewer away from a focus on the technical, and into a pensive, emotional and reflective state of mind that circulates around the brain like a beautiful fever. We recently conversed with Tanya Ragir to try to discover more about the figure behind the figures.

ArtLA Magazine: What was your first creative experience?

Tanya Ragir: I was always creative. I remember sitting in the car when I was 7 or 8 years old and saying to my mom, "I don't know what I'm gonna do...I can dance, I can sing, I can write." Although it's true that some people are specifically gifted at one area (like Mozart), most creative people that I've come in contact with through the course of my life are multi-talented. One of my greatest challenges was coming to the realization that I was going to have to say no to some things in order to say yes to other things. So the specific answer to the question is, I was creative in many realms from as early as I can remember.

ArtLA Magazine: You work in a variety of mediums, does each one possess it's own emotional quality for you?

Tanya Ragir: Clay is the essential medium for me. It's dirt, it's the earth, it's responsive. And although I wind up casting in resin, bronze, aluminum, stainless steel (and early on, I had some experience with plexi-glass and welding), I love clay. The decision about what the final medium will be has to do with what the piece "asks for."

ArtLA Magazine: What is it about the human form that appeals to you?

Tanya Ragir: Please...where do I begin. There's a movie that just came out titled "The Artist and the Model." In the movie, there's a phrase at the end that goes something like, "God is expressed in the form of a women." I love women (not on the sexual side, but

more from a creative perspective). One of the things that makes my work unique is that I am a woman that sculpts women. Having been a dancer, I understand movement from the inside out. There is a sense of collaboration with my models. Through the process of working with many of them, they have become my closest friends. It is an intimate experience. Artists that go back hundreds of years, but more recently—Georgia O'Keefe, Edward Weston—just to name a couple—reference the feminine form as landscape allegory. This has been a shared vision in my work.

ArtLA Magazine: What is the meaning behind your work titled "Leap of Faith"?

Tanya Ragir: Risk, Trust, Surrender. I sat at my daughter's college graduation three years ago and heard a phrase spoken by an extraordinary woman (her name is Sheryl Sandberg... maybe you've heard of her). She said, "Don't let your fears overwhelm your desire. Let the barriers you face—and there will be barriers—be external, not internal. Fortune does favor the bold. I promise that you will never know what you're capable of unless you try...Go home tonight and ask yourselves, what would I do if I weren't afraid? And then go do it!"

ArtLA Magazine: You have won many awards and accolades, is there one that stands out for you?

Tanya Ragir: The love, trust and respect of other human beings...especially my children.

ArtLA Magazine: How do you see the future of art marketing, given the advent of

art commerce internet facilities?

Tanya Ragir: The whole game is changing. Had I been an artist that was represented by a blue chip gallery, it would be much more of a game-changer than it is. So in a certain way, the fact that I have been my own champion, it opens a lot more doors for artists like me. It also means that I have to put a lot more time into my own marketing, but that is contingent on my ability and willingness to do so (and how tech and social-media savvy I have worked to tirelessly to become....or hire a 25 year old). The doors are actually more open than they were before for every artist.

ArtLA Magazine: Who has been the most influential person in your life?

Tanya Ragir: There isn't one person. I am who I am because of the many people that have touched my life. But since my daughter is helping me type this, I'll just say her.

ArtLA Magazine: What cultures are most interesting to you?

Tanya Ragir: I'd like to say something exotic and politically relevant...but unfortunately, I think I just have to go with America. We're a pretty diverse bunch of humans.

ArtLA Magazine: What event in your life has had the most impact?

Tanya Ragir: Most recently, I would have to say the death of my father. I'm aware of my own mortality in a way I have never been before. Life is short. The time is now.



Totem III, Mixed media, 11 x 30 inches

Before that, I would say my divorce. Strange...I would think of bad things. However, I think how we grow, how we integrate, how we recover from, what we take from, how we move through pain, tragedy, shock and grief is really what becomes the fabric of who we are as human beings and artists.

ArtLA Magazine: What advice would you give to an emerging artist?

Tanya Ragir: First, and most importantly—decide! Is this the work that needs to be made? Is this the story you need to tell? If it isn't, don't do it. If it is, never give up!

For more information about this extraordinary artist, please visit <http://www.artla.com/tanyaragir/dashboard/gallery>