



# ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

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## Sculptor among eight picked for T.O. show

Stephanie Thiessen  
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Bronze sculptor Candice Raquel Lee swore she'd never make a mermaid. They seemed overdone, and didn't pique her interest in the least.

So when a tail seemed to practically fashion itself from the lump of clay in Lee's hands, her reaction was one of exasperation.

"I was fudging around with the clay, saw a tail and said, 'Ah no! Okay, I'll make a mermaid.'"

In Lee's eyes, she had no choice. Soon, she said, the clay spoke to her, telling her the mermaid's story -- she had lost her child and believed she'd never see him again.

So that's what Lee sculpted.

It's typical of how Lee's pieces often come to be -- she doesn't create them, they create themselves via her hands, Lee explained. "They always take on a life of their own. The story's never what I want it to be," she said from her Nassagaweya home, which serves as a studio for her many creations. "I let them do what they want to do."

Most of them are nude female figures -- various characters in Greek and Hebrew mythology, as well as from the Bible -- that embody Lee's thoughts on what it means to be a woman, then and now. Later this month, she'll show one of her bronze sculptures in the annual Emerging Sculptors show, sponsored by the Canadian Sculptors' Society.

It'll run from July 25 to August 18 at the Canadian Sculpture Centre in Toronto. Lee was one of just eight artists picked from across Canada to participate.

Each of her pieces is part of a quest to understand the myth it's based on. Myths are important because they're based on human themes and what the society of that day held sacred, she said.

In particular, Lee examines the role of women within those societies.

"I want women to remember they were goddesses and they were sacred," Lee said, explaining in her work she tries to figure out how our society got to where it is today -- a society in which, she said, women and men aren't equal. "I'm trying to find my place in the world as a woman and as a human being."

The sculpture she'll be exhibiting later this month is entitled 'Eve's Awakening', and shows a female -- Eve -- lying on top and struggling to break free from a male, Adam, based on the Biblical account of creation.

The piece depicts Adam holding on to her as she pushes away from him -- which Lee said symbolizes the fears we must overcome. "This is her moment of self awareness," Lee explained.

Not content to simply identify problems through her sculptures, Lee also provides some answers, both simple and complex. Among them are for women to remember they're sacred and to treat themselves accordingly, she said. Also, she urges females to take back their power and refuse to let themselves be degraded.

The sheer number of sculptures Lee has completed or has in the works would make any visitor believe she's been a sculptor for many years. In fact, each and every piece has been made in the past 10 months. That's when Lee committed herself to doing what she loves.

Lee has been crafting with clay since she was just a child. "The first time I met clay was when I was six years old. It was a profound experience -- like I was meeting an old friend," Lee said.

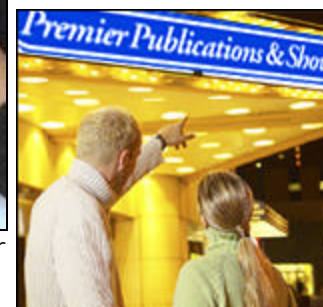
But when she grew up, art gradually took a back seat to other pursuits, including her career as a teacher.

It was while watching an episode of Dr. Phil last year that Lee began to re-examine her life. "He

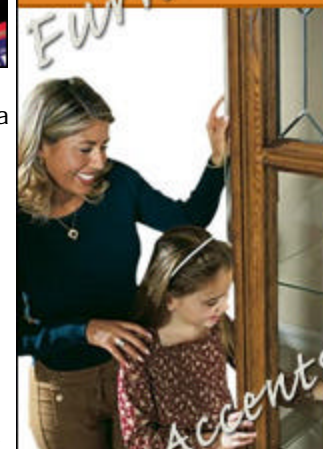


Graham Paine, Champion photographer

Candice Lee poses with her creation 'Athena Birth of Wisdom'.



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said something about 'finding your bliss' and I kept trying to figure it out," she said.

Her husband, Chris, encouraged her to try writing and when that didn't work, he urged her to pick up sculpting again. The rest, as they say, is history.

The process of creating a bronze sculpture is painstaking and requires many steps.

First, Lee sculpts her pieces out of clay. Once it dries, she takes it to a foundry, where a rubber mould of the piece is created. Wax is poured into that mould, and is taken out of the rubber. The wax is then dipped in wet ceramic, heated, melted out and finally coated in bronze and a patina is applied to colour the metal.

When Lee sculpts, she works hard and fast, pouring everything she has into the clay before her.

"I feel memorized," she said. "It's almost like being in a trance."

The nudity of her sculptures is meant to convey the beauty and sacredness of the female body, and isn't sexual, she said. "When the human body is battered around so negatively (in society), to see it made beautiful and sacred in art (is important)."

As a child, Lee was taken to lots of museums by her mother, who was an art lover. "Nudity and sex weren't equated," Lee said of her thoughts as a child. "Nudity and art were."

Now that she's fully immersed in sculpting, Lee said she finally understands what Dr. Phil was saying.

"'Find your bliss' -- I've found it," she said. "I've found the thing I want to do for the rest of my life."

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