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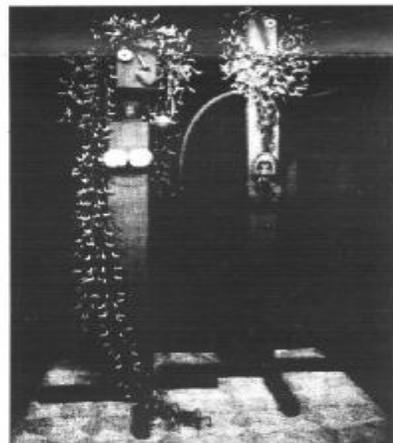
The Robb Report

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ART & ANTIQUES

Art in Motion

Artist Carley Craig has been involved in an ongoing love affair with art for the past 20 years or so, and she makes no attempt to hide it. According to this costume designer turned sculptor, there are more than 200 of her pieces "growing" out of the ground, sitting in the paths, climbing, romping, hanging, wading in the creek, and peering through the windows of her wooded hillside garden and studio/home in Atlanta, Ga.



"It's hard, dirty, physical work, but sculpture [gives] me an exciting new vocabulary," says Craig. "Most people just have words. I can bend a shape more readily than I can shape words into meanings. [Perhaps I can make people] smile at my "People Toys" or birds—perhaps relax and just enjoy, with my kinetic pieces moving gently in the breeze—maybe even dance vicariously with my shadow sculpts."

Though a woman of few words, Craig clearly isn't lacking in communication

skills or creativity. Her art emphasizes vitality and evokes quite a reaction when seen for the first time.

Although she has converted an old garage into a studio, Craig does almost all her work outside in her yard. "My equipment is very primitive, but I manage to turn out things that are well-received," she says. "A lot of the things [that I make] outdoors are metal and they sparkle in the sun."

In fact, most of her pieces are made entirely of metal, though once in a while she'll use a metal armature as a base and build on top of it with other materials.

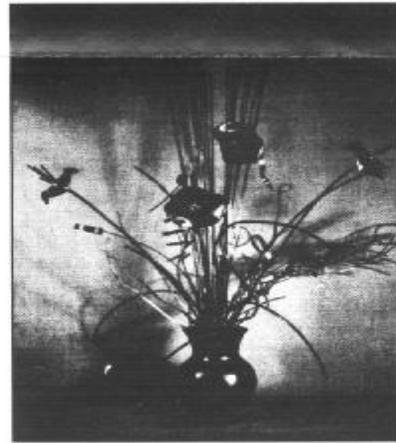
Included on her menu of art forms are shadow sculptures, People Toys, stainless steel strips, and outdoor collage paintings. In her backyard stands a wall, 20 feet long and 12 feet high, on which she displays her shadow sculptures.

Artist Carley Craig (below), with a steel skyscraper, is the creative mind behind art forms such as People Toys (left) and a multi-media flower arrangement (right).



"They cast shadows and take on a completely different look," she says of these kinetic stainless steel works, which bend in the breeze. These unique creations—*Shared Moments*, *Lady Bird*, *Maestro*, *Attitudes*, and *Zambra*, to mention just a few—tend to name themselves. *Maestro*, for example, a 7-foot steel depiction of a music conductor, moves rhythmically in the air and appears to be conducting the sculpted music scores that are a part of the display.

"I don't follow the trends," says Craig.



"I do my own thinking. So if I seem to be out of step with the downbeat of some main-stream contemporary art, it's because I am listening for the rousing upbeat of a 'maestro' drummer."

Next on her repertoire are what Craig refers to as her People Toys. These are larger-than-life human caricatures made of pieces of square metal tubing so heavy it takes three men to lift one. One long piece represents the body; two separate pieces are the neck and head. The exceptional aspect of People Toys is their facial

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characteristics. The mouths and eyes, made of railroad spikes and round steak bones respectively, are connected to the bodies with magnets, allowing for the rearrangement of facial expressions. In addition, the hair, made of brazing rods, and the chains around the necks are simply sitting on the structures, so they too can be changed at will. Craig herself changes their personalities by altering their appearance every so often, which usually generates a good laugh out of those who view her works.

Craig also does work with stainless steel strips, which are perfect for outdoor display because of their flexibility, and collage paintings—also shown outdoors—which can include as many as five or six metals.

All of Craig's art is flexible, with the exception of *People Toys*—and even these allow the movement of facial parts. "Movement is a symbol of life," she says. "I never make anything static."

Craig's outdoor pieces are built on spikes, which give them the appearance of growing out of the ground. She maintains the metals' original colors by waxing them with ordinary floor wax. The exception is copper, which when it oxidizes, turns a beautiful blue color that she often leaves unwaxed, allowing the forces of nature to create their own beauty.

It would seem that Carley Craig was born to be an artist. It took many years, though, before she came to realize her talents. Raised by musician parents, she was forced to take piano lessons, and recalls sympathetically the "poor teachers" who were hired to instruct her.

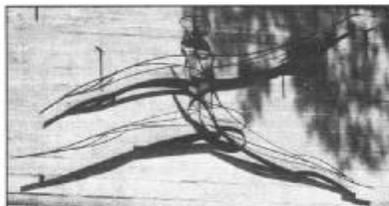
In the 1920s, the early days of the movies and the heyday of Hollywood, Craig's family moved to the West Coast, where she got caught up in the notion of working in the theater. By what she describes as "sheer accident," she was thrust into a career as a costume designer with major motion picture designers Edith Head and Orres Kelly at Paramount Studios. This job, she says, was a grueling and selective procedure. Her drawings had to be approved by the star, the director, the front office, and the budget office before they could be used. At the same time, she was also sketching occasional fashion caricatures for the *Los Angeles Times* and *Variety*—all this despite a background of formal training that consisted of only half a dozen lessons in fashion designing.

In any extra time she could find, she studied life drawing with S. McDonald Wright in Los Angeles. It was while doing this that she met her second husband, Jim Craig.

During World War II, Craig, who was working and raising two small children alone while her husband was out of the

country with the Army Corps of Engineers, started her own dress-designing business, which she named for her daughter. Her husband returned home just in time to take over the production end of what became a popular line of children's wear, carried by leading department stores across the country. All this ended abruptly, however: A new partner, who had invested growth capital in the young business, squeezed them out, putting an end to Kim's California Dresses.

Packing kids, pets and belongings into their car, the Craigs started driving and ended up in Santa Fe, N.M., where Car-



"Jump For Joy" is one of the shadow sculptures Craig has on display.

ley Craig was able to set up a small dress shop. Finally, three years later, her husband was offered a position that took the family to Atlanta, Ga.

There being no costume designing industry for her to jump into, Craig began studying at what is now the Atlanta College of Art, later going on to Georgia State University. She became adept, then commercially successful, at watercolor sketches; later she moved on to egg tempera and collage. When her husband

passed on and her children were grown, Craig had reached the critical turning point in her career.

As her collages got thicker and heavier, they began assuming three-dimensional proportions. Realizing her need to expand artistically, she returned to school to study sculpture, learning how to create shapes that would stand on their own.

"I strive for lines of stressed movement that give vitality to a figure or a composition," she says. "Through the visual 'metaphors' of my sculpture, [I can] carry on a one-to-one dialogue with an audience I probably will never get to meet or communicate with in person. My subject matter, whether people, animals, flowers, or completely nonobjective, takes on the quirky mannerisms of people rather than [mirroring] physical appearance. I love things to have movement—to look alive."

Craig does little to promote her artwork (though she has participated in many art shows and exhibitions), relying instead on word of mouth. "If somebody gets one [piece of art], they'll always come back for more," she says. Recently, longtime admirer and collector, Marge McDonald, has started representing Craig publicly.

Although she works in both Georgia and California (where her family lives), Craig shows her art almost exclusively at her home. Her works are displayed in both private and corporate collections in the United States, Europe and Australia.

For more information on Carley Craig and her sculpture, contact Marge McDonald, P.O. Box 568091, Atlanta, GA 30356; telephone (404) 394-0672.

