



Sutter Buttes 23T x 17 D x 53.5c



Timeless 10T x 16 D 475c



Midnight Owl 17T x 16.5 D x 52c

Carla Marie Bratt

MULTI MEDIA ARTIST

BY MARCELLE CECCHIN

CARLA MARIE BRATT IS A BRIGHT, vivacious woman who describes herself as a multi-media artist, mother, and wife. She creates art work in several different mediums, but her primary and on-going passion is fine art gourds. Her work is highly detailed and covers a wide range of themes from Asian motifs to the "laughing antics of a cherished pet."

"If you want to know who an artist is" she says, "look at that person's work. If you really look and pay attention, everything about that individual is in his or her creation." If an artist's personality is truly reflected in his work, then Carla's pieces reveal whimsy, delight, spontaneity, and an exquisite sense of curiosity and thoughtfulness.

These attributes can easily be seen in her fine art gourds. One of these, in a group called a South West Series, is covered with what appears to be pot-shard fragments etched with Native American Symbols and bits of turquoise randomly scattered. Another, in the same series portrays a startled desert owl below a starry, starry night. Still others depict Southwest colors, textures and scenes.

Before starting any series that depicts a culture or area, Carla conducts in-depth research into that culture's symbols and values. Her desire is to produce work that is authentic and in-context. "I try to stay true to the icons and beliefs of other people. I learn as much as I can about their societies before I use their designs or themes. It seems disrespectful not to."

"I've always made things," she says. "Growing up I didn't quite connect with

school so I'd spend my time drawing or creating art work. In doing that, I found that I really like to know about people. Knowing them really feeds into my work. That's what I do. I create things. When a piece is done I have no interest in keeping it and having it collect dust at home. My work wasn't meant for me. It needs to go out there for others to enjoy."

Eighteen years ago, Carla took her initial gourd art workshop at Berkeley, California. It was there she started her "love affair" with gourds and their endless creative possibilities. Each had its own shape, size, color, and surface. "Each had its own soul." After the course, Carla single-mindedly focused on learning techniques, sometimes inventing her own, to help refine her hand-crafted art. The result is a wonderfully crafted work that expresses the timelessness of the ocean, or the wistfulness of a remembered scene.

Now, Ms. Bratt has achieved recognition and acclaim in this particular art form and her work is sold throughout the United States. She has been chosen by Barnes and Noble as a featured artist in books that highlight that medium. Her work is shown extensively in the West Coast.

Carla creates art in mediums other than gourds, although that is her primary passion. Several years ago, at San Francisco's Steinhart museum, she became fascinated with Gyotaku, an ancient Japanese art form of fish printing. She learned how to make this stylized art. Inked rubbings of fish are printed on wrinkled rice paper to produce detailed, intricate patterns. Ms. Bratt then uses her creativity to further enhance the

print by hand coloring the image with water colors, inks or acrylics. Sometimes she adds small, random tidbits. The finished piece reveals a blend of nature and the artist that is truly unique.

Encaustics are another form that has intrigued Ms. Bratt. This procedure has a history that goes back to Egypt, Greece and Rome. Encaustics were even used by ancient Australian Aboriginals for their cave painting. This process uses beeswax, resin, and color pigment to create layered, textured or carved images. Carla became interested in the subject and immersed herself in learning all that she could. As a result, she developed her own beeswax formulas and her own hand-ground pigments. Now, she creates collages on canvas or boards using this process. Often, she'll add bits of paper, small objects, and historical photographs to form interesting, meaningful pieces.

Ms. Bratt is a dynamic artist with a wide range of artistic talents and work, her favorite being fine art gourds. She lives and works with her husband in Fiddletown, California where her studio, Laughing Fish Studios, is located. For information on where to buy Ms. Bratt's work, upcoming events, or further information go to her website laughingfishstudios.com, or contact her at 209-245-5518. Many of Carla's gourd pieces are showcased at the Old Town Gallery located at 218 Washington St., Auburn. Her work is also featured at The Old Church Gallery, Utah as well as in two Lark Publication books: *Beyond The Basics: Gourd Art* and *Gourd Art: Southwestern Techniques*.