



Monday, May 19, 2014

DESIGNER SPOTLIGHT: Catherine Latson Organic Narratives



Natural materials take central stage in Artist **Catherine Latson's** work. She takes cues by nature's intrinsic properties and allows her organic materials to inform her work. What really caught my eye was the natural structure, patterns, and textures of Catherine's garment series at the 2014 Architectural Digest show.... In amazement I had to step closer to understand what I was looking at. In her garment series, she explores the language of clothing and each piece explores different personalities - reaching corrosion, imperfection, and decomposition. Catherine Latson adds, "these personalities are the making of good stories. Ultimately, my work is designed to complement any space that welcomes whimsical use of natural materials."

I'm excited to share an interview with Catherine Latson today:



SIGNATURE STYLE

Weaving stories using unconventional materials in unconventional ways is, I suppose, my signature style. The Garment series explores the language of clothing. Clothing is a uniquely human experience and I want to turn that experience on its head by offering unconventional versions of the packages we put ourselves in and, perhaps, too often define ourselves by. While the forms I offer are recognizably human, they are twisted, abstracted, seemingly decomposed. The materials confuse the situation even more. I want to keep the viewer guessing. I reach for the imperfect and corroded. Those are the makings of good stories.

DESIGN PHILOSOPHY

I don't get caught up in concept. My work doesn't preach. I have a penchant for the whimsical and hope my work offers something a little different.



CREATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING PROCESS

I let my materials take the creative lead. I am drawn to organic "stuff", to natural textures and structures. I spend much of my time gathering, dismantling, and concocting new ways to assemble the crazy things I find. I plan very little in advance. Materials are pushed and pulled until something unfolds and I run with it.



GOALS I SET

Balance. Not taking oneself too seriously. Prying myself from producing work to do the business of an artist (PR, etc.) more often.



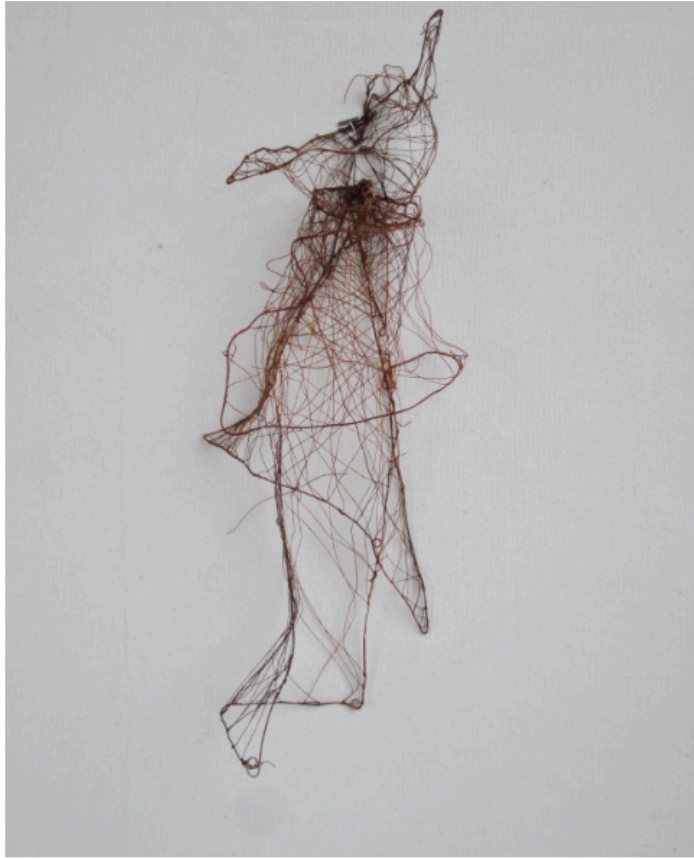
THE 'A HA' MOMENT

I started taking notice of framed antique clothing, everything from christening dresses and wedding veils to military uniforms and undergarments. What a strange trend. While I respected the sentimentality of these keepsakes, there was something haunted about them. There was no narrative, no story, no "who". They were shells of human stories, little souls frozen in time, stained and frayed. That's when I decided to weave stories.



LESSONS LEARNED IN THE GARMENT SERIES

Avoid fragile. Some of the most beautiful organic materials are also the most delicate. While the finished product looks great, they don't tolerate a lot of moving around. Mother nature wins every time. I used a pile of dry (or so I thought) seed pods in one piece. Midway through making the piece, the pods opened, releasing fuzzy, milkweed-like fluff. It was actually pretty cool, but imagine if it happened after the piece was purchased. Sell to buyers with a sense of humor.



BIGGEST DESIGN IMPACT

While the fashion industry is not a place I look to for inspiration, Alexander McQueen was a brilliant mind. He made the grotesque beautiful and broke all the rules with theatrics. He loved the mechanics of nature. He didn't create costumes, he created creatures. His exhibit, Savage Beauty, at the Met was breathtaking. Each piece had a haunting story. I was transfixed.



MOST IMPACTFUL SPACE

Twin Knolls. This private Vermont family retreat was designed and built in the 20's by Paul Thayer (famous for the Long Trail Lodges). It is an earthy, magical place. Hearths you can walk into flank the two-story main room. Birch bark lampshades, twisted root drawer pulls and door handles, and bark covered railings, bed frames, and structural beams are just a few of the details that make this place unique. Bench swings hang inside from timber rafters. Porches wrap the place with views of the Green Mountains. Critters come and go, but we share the place on good terms. Our family has spent 50 years there and it hasn't changed an ounce. It is a rustic work of art. It is a gem.

DESIGN ADVICE UNDER THE GUN

Ask yourself if you want to be working for someone who has you under the gun.

MANTRA OF LATE

Seek quiet and simplify. It is such a noisy world. Everyone is talking. We need to turn off the machines and listen.



Thank you Catherine!!