

Profile of An Artist

A Spiritual, Emotional,
and Professional Journey

by Stacy D. Lintz (W395
and W364)



Professor Susan Moffett



Grianan of Aileach; County Donegal
Color reduction Woodcut, 2010
Susan Moffett

Encircled by students at drawing benches and bathed in light from above, the figure disrobed and began to model. The nude form took on many poses, changing every thirty seconds. Each student's work developed through seemingly effortless movements in simple lines on the drawing pads. Repeatedly, as the model altered her pose, the silence would give way before frenzied scrapings of charcoal across paper. "Consider yourselves gestural minimalists. All you want to do is find the lines, just get down the lines," instructed Susan Moffett, Professor of Fine Arts in Drawing and Printmaking.

Moffett, a former Dean of Arts and Letters, has been teaching at IU Southeast for more than thirty years. Despite working daily with students since beginning her career, Moffett has also achieved continued success as a professional artist. Her works have been on display in such diverse venues as Poland, Ireland, and Australia. She practices many forms of art, but stresses that one of her favorite types of expression is figure drawing, using charcoal and pastels. She explains that figure drawing is especially fluid, requiring the artist to find the

rhythms of lines. She illustrates this by having models portray "more active poses," imperative in teaching artists who are trying to capture lines instantaneously in the field.

However, she can't decide on just one favorite piece among her own works. "At certain points in my career, I believe that I've done a drawing where it all comes together." She is actually the model in several drawings that she feels are "very powerful": oil pastels of a mask molded from the professor's own face. These drawings allowed her to work through her own life experiences in a process of ongoing investigation and self-discovery. She relates the opportunity to her recent sabbatical, which included trips to Ireland, Costa Rica, and Lake Superior, Wisconsin. She explains, "I took a year to regroup and recharge myself artistically."

One such renewal involves blurring the line between teacher and student: Moffett is drawing on a regular basis for a figure-drawing class that she took in the spring of 2010 through the Louisville Visual Art Association (LVAA). She proclaims, "This has been an opportunity

for me to be a student and to switch roles a little bit." She goes on to say that the class has further benefited her by getting her drawing, allowing her to observe other teaching methods, and providing her with feedback from a new instructor. While Moffett understands busy schedules and how easy it is to let your art go when times are tight, she also believes that it is important to practice art often. "I like to be drawing some, all the time. Even though I'm drawing more now, when I'm drawing, I wonder: Why am I not drawing more?"

Moffett has received several awards for drawing and teaching; however, when asked about the greatest honor ever bestowed upon her, she doesn't name any award. Instead, she states that a particularly satisfying accomplishment was her 2008 one-person show, *Journeys*, exhibited at Louisville's PYRO Gallery, which she co-founded in 2003. "I was able to get a body of work together and have a solo exhibit, and that was a big accomplishment for me because I had the whole gallery to myself, and I managed to fill it." She adds that the show had been so named because much of the work was completed while she was traveling during her sabbatical the year before. The show included charcoal drawings inspired by large, ancient rock formations that had bewitched her in Ire-

land; large pastels and woodcuts, in which she attempted to capture the grandeur of such stones; expressions of inspirational trees from Costa Rica; landscapes from the Wisconsin shore of Lake Superior; and the mask paintings, which she states, "reflect my journey through professional wounds and my journey toward mortality."

This quote emphasizes that the show wasn't just about physical journeys, but also about her emotional, professional, and spiritual journeys during that same year. She explains that one particular physical journey was health-related, brought about by a cardiac electrical flaw, rather than travel. Moffett admits that facing surgery to implant a pacemaker had a profound effect on her work for the show, as this was one factor that forced her to realize her own mortality and affected her emotionally and spiritually, inspiring the personally meaningful mask drawings.

Moffett is grateful to have had the opportunity to take the sabbatical, travel, and compile her work for PYRO. Ultimately, she views the experience of her journeys as a means of discovering her own "tenacity, power, and commitment to the creative process."



Dark Flowers
Charcoal 2010
Susan Moffett



July Sunflowers
Pastel 2010
Susan Moffett