

Fables, Foibles, and Fairy Tales... The Bronzes of Susan Read Cronin come to Sturgeon Bay

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by Deborah Rosenthal



STURGEON BAY, WI - Nineteen cast bronze sculptures by Vermont artist [Susan Read Cronin](#) will cavort their way into the galleries of the Miller Art Museum in Sturgeon Bay for the exhibition's opening reception Saturday, March 20, from 2:00 -3:30. Visitors will enjoy Cronin's playful sense of humor as they imagine exactly what the story is behind each person's or animal's escapades captured in bronze.

Why is that fellow wearing a cooking pot on his head, one might well ask, or, how will that rabbit survive dangling from a diving board?

"Bronze, a seemingly serious medium, offers the perfect foil for immortalizing moments, thoughts and gestures and giving a sense of humor a sense of permanence," says the artist.

Susan Read Cronin creates her sculptures at her home studio in Manchester, Vermont. They are cast and assembled at foundries in Vermont and Massachusetts.

"Originally being an English major, I get many of my ideas from plays on words," Cronin said. "...Frequently, I amass my materials first, making separate items and then seeing how they relate to each other."

For example, a work may have started as two separate pieces that she then put together to make a visual mixed fairy tale. She earned her B.A. in English at Williams College in Virginia where she claims to have developed her passion for art, "because the reading was minimal and no papers were due."

During the 1980's the artist founded and operated Suzo, a mail-order company that designed, manufactured, and marketed costumes for children (Ms. Magazine named one of Cronin's creations, *Suzo's Bat Cape*, one of the 10 Best Toys of 1985).

In the 1990's Cronin felt the need for a new direction. She began studying ceramics at Frog Hollow Vermont State Craft Center, and sculpture with noted sculptors Jane B. Armstrong and Walter Matia. Cronin brings the same creativity, joy, and craftsmanship to her bronzes that she did to her fabric designs. She seeks to engage and amuse the viewer of her art and argues that art should be lived and played with, as she often does herself when devising new compositions and groupings for her work.

Cronin reminds us, too, that we should not be fooled by the lightheartedness of her subjects. "Creating art is my essence. I take my work very seriously."



Pig Pile Bronze
13 1/2" x 8" x 10" H
2,000

Her works are meticulously composed and rendered down to the one-of-a-kind wrought iron stands that become an integral part of each piece picking up on a gesture in the sculpture. As sculpture titles such as "Pig Pile," "Butter Up," and "Sometimes I Feel Like a Nut" indicate, the artist continues to enjoy a fine sense of humor and the ridiculous.

Sometimes I feel Like a Nut

Bronze
15 1/2" x 10" x 11 1/2" H 2,000



There are multiple layers and depths to her work, too, visible in the eye-catching compositions, beautiful surface patinas, and accompanying wall text about bronze casting technique written by Susan and illustrated by her father A.D. Read.

The exhibit continues through April 27, 2004. Accompanying Cronin's sculptures is the "**Alphabet of American Printmakers**" from the Miller's Permanent Collection. Made up of vigorous and lively artwork from some of America's best fine art printmakers, this group of donations represents a unique donor/institution relationship.

Since 1983 Mr. R. Charles Lyons, as director of the Paint Box Gallery in Ephraim, has donated

prints by significant printmakers - one artist for each letter of the alphabet. "A" is represented by internationally known Harold Altman who taught in Milwaukee; "C" is for Warrington Colescott of Madison, a superb Wisconsin printmaker who also has an international reputation and who taught at the University of Wisconsin for years.

A public gallery talk about the "Alphabet of American Printmakers" collection will be presented Thursday, April 8, at noon by Mr. Lyons.