

Misha
Malpica -
Mixed Media
Sculptor
Extraordinaire

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Misha Malpica

A gift sublime

BY LUCINA SARBER
EDITOR ¡VAMONOS!



Mixed Media Sculptor, Misha Malpica works on "Shaman."

In 1995, the year before she moved to Ruidoso, artist and sculptor Misha Malpica was invited by the White House to decorate the nation's Christmas tree with her unique sculptures. She was commissioned to create several pieces for the White House and her work remains in the Permanent Collection of American Artists in Washington, D.C.

By the time the White House discovered her, Misha already had built a successful home-based business creating Christmas ornaments and Santa Clauses from nylon stockings, stuffing, polymer clay and beads for eyes.

In the early '80s, as a young mother of three children, living in New Hampshire, she had wondered at how to make a living. Her husband was employed at the municipal water plant, and they had a comfortable life, but Misha was driven.

Completely self-taught, by 1985 she'd expanded her business, hiring her friends and neighbors to "stuff bodies," she says with a twinkle in her eyes. By now she was making very intricate, high-end Santas, and displaying her work at various shows like the "Made in the USA – New York Gift Show."

"I found a sales rep who worked the gift shop and tourism industry and she took my pieces all over New England. My little cottage industry was allowing me to

employ housewives and give them a hand up, something I'd never had. I didn't want to see them struggle as I had."

Misha's roots in the southwest, however, were tugging. On her father's side, her Irish ancestors, (the Medfords) were the first settlers of Hico, Texas. "My grandmother, Miss Lillian, told stories of Comanche Indians raiding their horses, of her father George Medford, a Texas Ranger, and 'cousin Billy the Kid,' who hid out at the family home.

"I think she was talking about the gentleman from Hico, known as 'Brushy Bill,' who claimed in 1950 that he was the outlaw—I was fascinated by her and her tales made me yearn for the Southwest."

Misha continues, "Miss Lillian played the banjo and told me stories of the Wild West, like shooting at rattle snakes, riding in a covered wagon and marrying a saloon keeper in Bisbee who was killed, shot through the heart.

"After that, she left Hico and went to Roswell where she married Frank Ingle, a linotype operator at the Roswell Daily Record. Their son, my father, was born in Roswell in 1916 and, unable to make a living in Roswell, they all moved to New York City in 1925. I was born and raised in a suburb of New York, years later."

At 19, Misha met and fell in love with Anthony Malpica in New York, married him and began a new life in New Hampshire. They lived near Dartmouth College and over the years she built her business, established her reputation as a mixed media sculptor, and began to enjoy recognition on the national art scene.

In 1996, Misha was doing a signing at the White Dove Gallery and making day trips around the area. "It all struck me like I'd been here before but the visit to the Valley of Fires was overwhelming – I definitely knew I belonged here. I went back home to New Hampshire and told Tony, 'we have to leave!' And we did, moved out here permanently."

Misha and Anthony opened up Spring Canyon Gallery and her impressive output of mixed media sculptures over the years, garnered her growing praise, exposure and awards. In particular, her unforgettable images of Native Americans captured the imagination.

Transforming clay, furs, beads, feathers and textiles into magnificent reminders of the people who roamed North America for millennia.

She has received every major award imaginable; including the prestigious "Award of Excellence," and "Best Artist," from the Hubbard Museum. Thunderbird Artists of Arizona, presented Misha with the "Mark Wroe Award of Excellence in Art."

Recently, El Paso International Airport and the Museum of Art selected her sculptures for the exhibit "Art Windows of El Paso," on display through Aug. 31. In advance of the state's celebration of its centennial, the New Mexico Centennial Project has selected Misha's design for the special celebration. The Museum of New Mexico Foundation, selected her "Shadowbox," a ceramic jewelry design, as the 2012 commemorative piece.

Avid collectors of her work include actress Demi Moore, the late Lucille Ball, and famed author ("Interview with a Vampire") and New Orleans resident, Anne Rice, as well as others worldwide.

The miracle is how Misha captures the emotional life of a subject. Whether it's a warrior, a child or a mother with eyes sad with grief and loss, Misha is blessed with a gift rarely seen, an affinity for capturing the interior landscape and soul of the human life she seeks to honor.

When you look at "Crow Warrior," laden as he is with feathers and sumptuous fox fur and turquoise amulets, you are haunted by his eyes, his entire demeanor evoking the pride and dignity of a people nearly annihilated, if never forgotten.

Her remarkable attention to detail itself reflects her other-worldly sensibility: "Each tribe's regalia is sacred to them since much of it was worn during religious ceremony, so I never try to copy it, instead I dress them as I imagine myself to have looked."

This from a tiny blond with soulful, golden eyes that speak volumes of a life lived good and hard. She laughs, demure like a shy schoolgirl, as she shares an anecdote, an ironic signpost in her life, given how it all turned out.

She went looking for a loan more than twenty years ago, wanting to expand her business and she remembers the individual at the bank going on and on, and finally dismissing her with, "I can't help you — just go on home to your little hobby."

But Misha was and is unstoppable. Nothing has ever fazed her, not even the horrific car accident she emerged from with a broken back and other serious injuries. She couldn't get a cop to stop and call her an ambulance—it was after all, in the middle of New York City—so she grit her teeth through the pain, got up and began the very long walk home. Miss Lillian would've been proud.

Contact Misha at: 575-973-1490 or at
www.mishasart.com



"Crow Warrior Chief."

Aug. 12 - Aug. 18, 2011



"Winter's End."



"Tribal Dreams."

¡VÁMONOS!