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## NEWS FEATURE

### DEER ISLE

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### At 71, Deer Isle artist reflects on 48-year journey

by Anne Berleant

Before she began her life as an artist, Lynn Duryea visited Deer Isle in 1970 with her father, a seafood dealer from Montauk, N.Y., supplied, in part, by Island fishermen. She was 23 years old and in graduate school when she stepped onto the tarmac at the Stonington Airport.

“I just fell in love with the place,” she said. “At that point, Stonington was untouched. It was like driving into a time capsule.”

Back in school, Duryea enrolled in a pottery class and, wanting more, asked her teacher where she could further her learning. The answer was Haystack Mountain School of Crafts.

Realizing she was moving in a different direction than her graduate program in art history and museum studies, Duryea attended a session at the Deer Isle crafts school. She returned in 1973 and moved to the Island in 1974.

“It was not without a certain measure of fear,” she said. “I didn’t know anyone, really. About a year after I moved there, other artists started showing up.”

Duryea was drawn to the island by its culture and geography, and the “feeling of being on the edge,” she said. Having Haystack nearby was a plus.

She ended up in a studio in the Tewksbury Building, the current home of the Harbor Café, and, like many new artists, made do as best she could. “I mixed clay in the bathtub,” she said. “Everything was borrowed or came literally from the dump.”

Focusing on decorative, functional ceramics, Duryea opened a small gallery with a partner in 1975 and established Eastern Bay Cooperative Gallery in Stonington with other local artists and craftspeople in 1976, which lasted for a quarter-century.

By 1981, Duryea was creating ceramics for stores like Tiffany & Co., and in 1982 she bought and renovated her home in North Deer Isle, while also helping to establish Watershed Center for the Ceramic Arts in Newcastle. In 1986, she joined three other artists in creating Sawyer Street Studio in South Portland.

But, by the late 1990s, she felt in a dead end in her work, she said, and decided to enroll in graduate school. She was 52 years old when she began studying sculpture at the University of Florida.

“I was just at a point where I knew more was possible,” she said. “I’d been doing [ceramics] full time but going to graduate school just gave me a different way to think about what I was doing. I started seeing how it was that I could access what matter to me visually.”

After earning her Master of Fine Arts degree, Duryea taught in Texas for one year and then at Appalachian State University in North Carolina, spending summers on Deer Isle. She retired as a full,



Sculptor Lynn Duryea works on “Slants” in 2018, a terracotta and kanthol wire sculpture 24” tall.  
*Photo courtesy of Steve Mann*

tenured professor in 2016, and returned to Maine, splitting her time between South Portland and Deer Isle.

Her sculptures combine ceramics, tarpaper and riveted steel sheets in pieces inspired, in part, by the working waterfront: “its pilings, its docks, its boats, its winches,” she said. She layers liquid clay and glaze for a dull matte finish over the shiny glaze she used in her earlier decorative work. She even created her own equipment, called a SlabSling, to help the clay slab process she uses in her sculptures.

Locally, Duryea’s work is shown at Turtle Gallery in Deer Isle and further down the coast at the Craft Gallery in Rockland and Corey Daniels Gallery in Wells.

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## [GALLERY — Lynn Duryea sculpture](#)



“Insert,” 2018, terracotta, steel, wood, 6”x8”x5”.  
*Photo courtesy of Ken Woisard*



Sculptor Lynn Duryea works on “Slants” in 2018, a terracotta and kanthol wire sculpture 24” tall.  
*Photo courtesy of Steve Mann*



“Clamps,” 2017, terracotta and kanthol wire, 6”.  
*Photo courtesy of Ken Woisard*

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