

ARTIST'S STATEMENT - SHERRY SMITH BELL

My artwork - mixed media, printmaking or painting - is based on my memories of the earth under intense blue skies in my home state of Oklahoma. I remember fields of grain stretching for miles along the prairie's great plains. The elemental utilitarian barns, gates, fences and clapboard homes are all part of my remembered visual landscape. My love of the land and the people who care for it are reflected in my full and lush painterly color palette. My grandmother's wheat farm is a heritage farm that has been in the family for over one hundred years. As a child, I learned to care for livestock, ride horses, tend chickens and eat vegetables from her grandfather's garden.

I always wanted to be an artist from an early age. Images serve as my visual diary throughout my career. I earned a BFA from Ohio Wesleyan University and a MS and MFA from the University of Wisconsin in printmaking and drawing. I mentor artists in my studio at Lafayette Printmaking Workshop in Lafayette, California, and in my studio in the San Juan Islands, Washington.

My press, aptly named Blue Sky Press, publishes original print portfolios based on current societal themes. Respected artists from across the United States are represented in these limited editions: The Trilogy "Of Time and Place; A Millennium Project 1999 – 2000 By Printmakers From Across The Nation," "Wild Women, A Solar Etching Portfolio 2001 Celebrating the Independent Spirit," and "Brave New World: A Print Odyssey 2004." My recent portfolio is "Translations; The Reproductive Print Re-Interpreted In The Twenty – First Century 2006."

My work is in numerous public and private collections. I actively promote the arts in my community. I am past president of The California Society of Printmakers, the Berkeley Art Center, and a board director of the Printmaking Council for the state of New Jersey.

I am never more alive than when I am working in my studio. My work represents an innovative approach to mark making. I experiment with new matrices, solar plates for etchings, collagraph prints built in layers using painting mediums, and appropriated materials in my collage drawings. Raking light creates shadows across my prints, drawings and paintings creating pathways for my mark making.

Often my love of words will find its way into my work from a poem I have written:

"The Trail Beckons"

I desire to walk on the trail wherever it may be.

To open a pathway is necessary

But to keep it open

Requires constant tending.

The unwanted noxious weeds require vigilance

To forestall their encroachment.