



by Cheryl Dunbar Kahlke

*If you enjoy what I create,
we will enjoy beauty together.
We will communicate, without words,
and you will know me.*

This quote is from Sharon Way-Howard's unique artist's statement. Sharon Way-Howard, now in her fifties, has become a seasoned *pleinairist*. Loosely translated from the French, a *plein air* artist works on site, out of doors, as opposed to inside a studio. "I usually do oils or pastels and some watercolors. Due to the quickly changing conditions when working outside, generally my *plein air* work is smaller than my studio pieces. *Plein air* is my favorite way to work since you are surrounded by sense of place - all the sounds, smells, weather conditions add to the work being done. When I work on site, even if it's only a quick sketch, all the memories and feelings of place come rushing back."

Fortunately for those who love Fire Island, much of Sharon's *plein air* work occurs on Fire Island. "Fire Island to me is a compilation of all my past and present times. After the winter I desperately need the feel of the beach again - I'm like a well that is starting to run dry and needs to be filled again. It feeds my creative spirit." She is drawn toward natural locations, such as the dunes at Watch Hill, Ho-Hum Beach (a local name for Old Inlet), Atlantique, Sunken Forest, East and West Islands, the various boats moored in Clam Pond, and the Fire Island Lighthouse. Of course, back on the mainland, Long Island offers many water-scapes. She humorously notes, "And whenever we travel, it seems to be near water and coastlines. There's a theme here!"

"I think Fire Island gets into your soul; I know it's in mine," says Sharon, who began coming to Fire Island with her father when she was a little girl. They would go to Sunken Forest before the boardwalks were installed. Because of the mosquitoes, they'd wear long pants and long sleeved shirts. "But it was a magical place to me then. It didn't sound or smell the same as any other place at the beach, and the bugs were horrid. Going

Sharon Way-Howard ARTIST

there with my dad made me feel like an explorer."

When the marina at Atlantique opened, her parents started to stay over on their boat with their family. "I haven't missed a year vacationing at the beach, mostly Atlantique, since I was twelve. I can't imagine a summer without staying on the beach." After Sharon married Bill Howard, they had no boat for a few years. Instead they rented in Kismet at the Camelot when it was a motel. "Now we spend time on our boat at Atlantique or Watch Hill each summer." They are up to their fifteenth boat, a 28-foot Phoenix sport fisherman. Their previous boats have run the gamut from a houseboat to sailboats. They have purchased their sixteenth, a 1930 George Frank Carter catboat, which is in need of loving restoration.

Sharon Way-Howard is a life-long resident of the south shore of Long Island. She grew up in Bay Shore and Sayville and now lives in East Islip, where she has her home and studio. Her father, the late Richard Way, owned the Bayberry Boatyard in Bay Shore with her uncle, the late Fred Rogers. In Sharon's case, she worked at the "old-flavored" boatyard from the age of twelve until she was in college. She loved it, whether she was pumping gas, working at the ship's store or the snack bar, or escaping from the stresses of life. Then, when she was an Advertising Art and Design student at SUNY Farmingdale, Sharon recalls, "I meant to go into a commercial art career. But then I got married

The classes were a great success. In her home, this artist has a specimen end table with many shallow drawers, each overflowing with colorful ribbons symbolizing awards that she has won at national and regional juried shows. Her work is in private and corporate collections throughout the United States and abroad, and she is represented by quite a number of galleries. On the opposite side of the spectrum, Sharon has juried several shows for local art organizations. Additionally, she has taught art at Sayville and West Islip Adult Education Classes and is now exclusively teaching eight-week art classes at the Islip Art Museum. This educator/artist began writing and sending a semi-annual newsletter in 2003. In it she informs the reader about her art life, updates her schedule for shows and classes, and prints a few of her latest paintings.

Sharon Way-Howard is a United States Coast Guard artist for COGAP (the Coast Guard Art Program). In this interesting program, Coast Guard artists donate their works of fine art to help COGAP immortalize the story of the Coast Guard Service's missions, heroes, and history. This is accomplished through public displays at museums, galleries, libraries, and patriotic events. Each year the Coast Guard accepts into its growing permanent collection of more than 2000 pieces, a few of the submitted original works from professional artists. This is the fourth year in a row that Sharon has been granted this prestigious recognition.

Sharon is a member of local art organizations including the Art League of Long Island, the South Bay Art Association, and the Wet Paints Studio Group. She is also a member of the prestigious Salmagundi Club in New York City, the National Association of Women Artists, the National Art League, Audubon Artists, and the Pastel Society of America. Her pastel, "Young Gull," was featured in a 2002 issue of *Pastel Artist International Magazine*. Her acrylic, "Summer's Reflection," was the cover art for the June 2003 issue of the *Fire Island Tide*, and the same piece was used for the Family Gallery Guide of the Heckscher Museum in Huntington.

As Sharon Way-Howard says, "Art is what I do." She participated in the first exhibition at the new 2006 location of the Barbara Ann Levy Gallery on the dock in Cherry Grove on Fire Island.

Owner and curator Barbara Ann Levy noted, "The passage of time and reverence for nature are the themes of Sharon Way-Howard's artwork... She invites the viewer to join her in a moment of quiet reflection and discovery." Make an attempt to view some of her work at the plethora of outdoor art shows that will dominate her very busy summer show schedule. The full schedule is on her website www.sharonwayhoward.com where her works are also available for sale. As she wrote in her newsletter, "Nothing makes an artist feel better than when you choose a piece of their work to be a part of your life." ■



and had kids and it went onto the back burner." Fortunately, the 1990s were the time for Sharon to turn to art as a full-time profession.

The late John Lee accurately pointed out that Sharon Way-Howard is a "representational artist of great delicacy." Her renderings pay close attention to detail, which she modestly attributes to when she resumed her art by carving birds. "My love of birds introduced me to wildlife carving which I did during the early 1990s. The details required for carving birds made me start drawing again to better understand what I was trying to carve, which led to taking various art classes."