

You Can't Judge the Art by the Chicken.....by deborah fagan carpenter



An enormous silver chicken glistening in the pouring rain caught my eye as I motored down highway 231 near Brundidge, Alabama. The artistic fowl announced the existence of *Art`wurks*, located in an unassertive block building, and in which I assumed I would discover a collection of local folk art.

The chicken was revealed to be a 13 foot rooster made of car bumpers, and upon closer inspection, I discovered that the art inside the unassuming building was extraordinary and world class work by multi-faceted artist Larry Godwin. Cathy Culpepper, the curator and well-versed authority on Godwin guided me through the small building, which was overflowing with one fine example after another of creations

showcasing the breadth and proficiency of this amazing artist. Expertly executed and colorful abstract oil paintings were accompanied by numerous examples of contemporary metal sculpture, alive with movement, and stack after stack of drawings and prints, which disclosed a lifetime of devotion to his passion.

A series of uncomplimentary, satirical clay figures of lawyers filled a stair-stepped wooden structure in the studio. The disappointing outcome from a family legal battle inspired Godwin to pursue in-depth legal knowledge, which in turn prompted him to create the series. The unflattering, but whimsical busts revealed in vivid detail his disdain for the profession. It is unclear as to whether or not the legal judgment Godwin received was just, but he no doubt worked through much of his "scorn" during the creation of the disparaging statues.



How was it possible that I had never heard of this remarkable artist or seen any of his exceptional work? I managed to recover from the embarrassment at my ignorance to learn that he had begun a lifelong love affair with the arts, when at an early age he was introduced to paint by a childhood teacher. During his high school years he created large animal sculptures for parade floats, which served to advertise his father's feed business, and subsequently became the "go to" person in the area for all creative projects. Godwin earned a Bachelor of Applied Arts degree from Auburn University in 1957, and after a tour in the army and some time spent in Europe, returned to the Brundidge area to work fulltime as an artist and to spend some years teaching arts in the local school system.

Godwin's work, which encompasses concrete, copper, bronze, steel, aluminum, water, clay, paint, charcoal and smoke, continues to evolve. A fascination with fountain technology and the environment has insured that his designs be included in the



beginning stages of many architectural projects throughout the state of Alabama.

A stainless steel replica of the Wright Flyer at Maxwell Air Force Base was perhaps his first significant sculptural creation, but many more were to follow. There are also a number of sculptures around Montgomery to his credit. They include the Equinox concrete

and aluminum sculpture at Alabama State University that measures 50 feet square by 24 feet high; the Wall of History in downtown, which depicts the history of the city of Montgomery in six bronze panels; an 11-foot high sculpture at the Montgomery Cardiovascular Institute; and sculptures and fountains at the city's Eastdale Mall. Mr. Godwin has also created work for Walt Disney World, The Hard Rock Café in Chicago, Ill., and the city of Headland, Ala., and one of his favorite sculptures is the statue of Wilbur Wright at Wright-Patterson AFB.

Larry Godwin's *Art'wurks* Studio is located 3514 Highway 231, Brundidge, AL. (334) 735-2347

