

## Elaine Langerman



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Elaine Langerman has been making art in one form or another since second grade, when she won a prize for drawing. In her early teens she spent Saturdays and summers taking classes at the Corcoran. During middle school and high school she won thirteen awards in the form of gold keys in the annual National Scholastic Art and Writing competitions. (This program has an impressive legacy dating back to 1923 and a roster of past winners includes Andy Warhol, Sylvia Plath, and Richard Avedon.)

Not one, but two colleges offered Elaine scholarships—Georgia and Syracuse University. She opted for the latter, but after one year of its rather insular cliquiness, she transferred to American University, earning a B.A in 1960. She then gave public school art teaching a two-year try, but found she hated it. She resigned and went to Europe for a month of immersing herself in art. Then followed six years of bearing and mothering two children, with no room for art in her life. Once the children were in school Elaine returned to her art studies.

She earned a B.A. in art at American University in 1960, and then entered Maryland University in 1973 to study studio art (earning her MFA in 1978. Ann Truitt was her

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and off she goes into another small universe.*

*At first all fun and colorful joy, until  
you look again.*

thesis advisor for her MFA. In 1976, facing a spousal move to Colorado, and with 6 credits lacking for a degree, she continued under Truitt's mentoring via slides and correspondence about her ongoing work. This consisted mainly of painted fabric sculptures, reflecting a feminist proclivity. In 1983 she returned to Washington, leaving her wood sculptures with Sebastian-Moore, a Colorado gallery that has since closed its doors.

Back in Washington in 1985, Elaine reestablished her relationship with Ann Truitt who proposed as an exercise that she create a series of 3"x3"x3" universes, each its own little self-contained world. Thus was launched the Elaine we have come to know. Until her death in 2004, Truitt continued to mentor Elaine from time to time.

Many of us are familiar with the little dioramas that hang or stand, or occupy Elaine's hand-made books. These are populated by lavishly colored people, animals and plants. At first glance they seem lush, and jolly and amusing. But take another look: some of her creatures have missing limbs or heads; they rarely interact or look at each other; they are just there in the moment, carefully hiding their feelings, if they have any. Think: Hopper on LSD. The viewer is permitted to look, but not neces-

sarily invited to enter. Most of these worlds are constructed of meticulously painted and collaged dimensional celastic (a material used by taxidermists), paperclay, styrofoam, found images and/or objects, glitter and other paints.

Elaine is the recipient of eight DCCA grants and is represented in many private and public collections including museums, libraries and universities. Her lengthy resumé lists many solo exhibits, critical acclaim and juried shows. She has enjoyed a rewarding career: Komei Watchi and Mark Moyens of the much missed Gallery K both exhibited

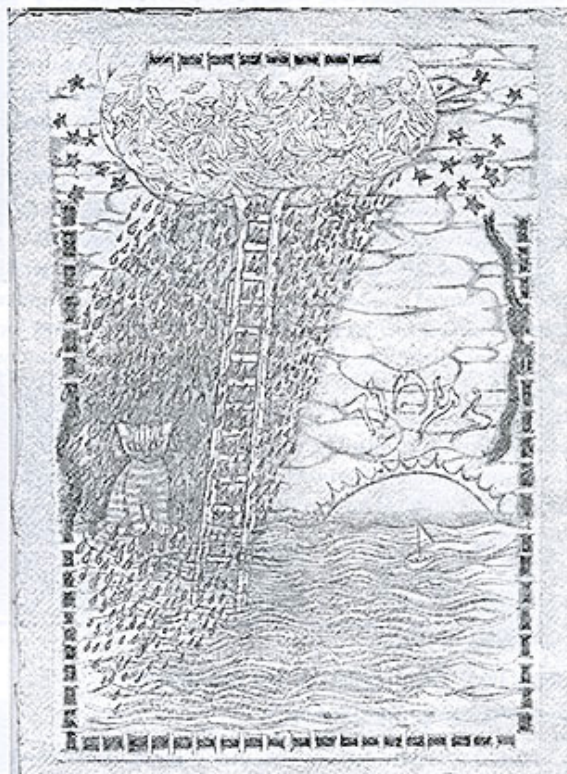


Doll Head





Jungle



My Lings #2 Rainy Cat

and collected her work for seventeen years. After its closing, Elyse Harrison carried her work at Gallery Neptune for three years until it closed. Currently, her drawings are with Neptune Fine Art. George Mason University bought eleven of her handmade books for their permanent collection and her *Alice in Wonderland* book series was purchased by the University of Southern California's Library, Lewis Carroll Collection. She is collaborating with Ori Soltes, a poet who was Chief Curator of the B'nai B'rith Klutznick National Jewish Museum, and who is now Goldman Professorial Lecturer at Georgetown University. The project is to complete ten paintings inspired by ten of Dr. Soltes' poems and, together, to show them and to produce a book with both the poems and the paintings.

A bit of a mystic, Elaine explains, "I explore miracles—the miracle of memory, the miracle of dreams and the miracles described in

fairy tales, poems and mystical interpretations of our history and beginnings." She doesn't plan her pieces, they self-propel into her consciousness. One element will appear, suggest another, and off she goes into another small universe. At first all fun and colorful joy, until you look again.

Recently Elaine has returned to a very early form of her expression, pure drawing. This threatens to completely alter the look of her work. Starkly two-dimensional and without color, using various types of metal point, it is as though she has pared down to the essence informing much of her work: a lean, spare perspective that she had hitherto



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wildly embellished (camouflaged?) with color and dimensionality hinting at what some might perceive as a darker, almost macabre, perspective.