

Artist Statement | KATRINE HILDEBRANDT

I grew up in Verona, NJ. My mother was and still is an art teacher and my father owned his own steel company. Countless hours were spent either in the garage building with my dad's tools or in the basement of our house raiding my mom's art supplies. I knew right away that I wanted to pursue art and they supported me 100% from the very beginning.

I attended Hartwick College in the Catskills of New York to receive a BA in studio art with a focus in Glass and Sculpture. It was there that I was first introduced to Buddhism and other Eastern Religions and philosophies. Concepts such as attachment, impermanence, re-birth and mindfulness challenged my religious upbringing and shed new light on my own existence. These philosophies began to form the very beginning of my art making practice.

I remained in the NY area for another year afterwards to work for a sculptor who made very large-scale outdoor metal sculptures. This experience helped fine tune my craft (from cutting out large pieces of aluminum/copper/brass, to welding and assembling them together). I learned how to take a small model/mockup and make it into a huge encompassing outdoor sculpture. This experience also enabled me to gain a better understanding of what it meant to be a professional artist, organization, planning, etc.

From there I attended Massachusetts College of Art to study sculpture. The work I did there aimed at gaining a better understanding of those eastern philosophies I began studying in college. My thesis project "Ashes to Ashes, Dust to Dust" involved collecting dust from my apartment for a whole year and cataloging it. I created troupe l'oeil watercolor paintings of each day's findings from an entire month. I found the correlation between evidence of my own existence (particles of my skin, hair, clothing) and the worthlessness of the dust to be

completely freeing. It was an exercise in impermanence.

After grad school I moved to the Bay Area where I directed an art gallery for a year. During that time, I refrained from doing work myself and instead networked and gained a better understanding of the art world. While I enjoyed this work, I missed working with my hands and it wasn't until a year later when I moved with my husband to Maine that I began doing artwork again. Living on the coast, I began collecting waste again, this time collecting findings from the ever-changing tides.

Drifting in and out leaving behind evidence of other people and things existences I began collaging these materials together along with cut paper elements. There was something about the cut paper process that felt right to me at the time. Perhaps it was because I could draw something on paper two dimensionally and then cut it to create something three dimensional. I also loved the fragility of it, it felt Impermanent.

Cutting paper was meditative and the more I did it the thinner the lines got, and the more fragile the paper became. How much could I cut away before the paper couldn't hold its shape? I loved the balance of control I felt over the material, it reminded me of the days in the glass blowing studio where I would create a vessel and think I was almost done but then get the glass too hot and it would slump and loose it's form.

It occurred to me one day that burning the paper after I had spent countless hours cutting it would be the true test of understanding impermanence and assist me in letting go. This study began a now 7-year exploration into using fire, smoke and burning to create my work. I left my full-time job as a Senior Display Coordinator for Anthropologie, a women's apparel and home good retailer where I was responsible for conceptualizing and executing window and store displays. This experience taught me an even greater skill set where each day we were challenged to work with various materials such as fabric, paper, wood... often times transforming the ordinary into extraordinary. It also taught me a great deal about time and project management, which has given me the discipline I utilize every day in my studio practice.

Today I continue to explore mindfulness, impermanence and meditation through my work. Using volatile processes enables me to challenge my ability to let go. At times I am seconds away from setting a work on fire, while the end result seems completely controlled and resembles a systematic map or diagram. The compositions often times layer shapes and forms one upon another...Each layer is a test of my endurance and consciousness. Sometimes the layers are clear and concise, while others get lost or blurred together.

While the process is extremely important to me the composition and end result are equally so. I aim to create patterns where there is an entry way to draw the viewer in and balance forms and lines to take the viewer on a journey through the work... Similar to Buddhist mandalas which are utilized as meditation tools, I aim to challenge the viewers own awareness, perception and existence.