The Evolution of an Artist

Shaped by years of creative instinct, experimentation and perseverance, **Lori Horowitz** fuses a wide variety of media in her sculptural works.

By Doreen Manning



Primarily a mixed-media sculptor, New York artist Lori Horowitz continues to evolve with every piece she creates. Her current sculptures—made from paper, cloth, encaustic wax and photographic prints—emerge as layered, dimensional forms that transcend flat surfaces and traditional frames. Her journey has always been driven by intuition, experimentation and a refusal to stand still—both physically and artistically.

Trained in traditional fine arts and shaped by decades of experience in commercial art and set design, the artist's work resists easy categorization. Seamlessly blending sculpture, photography and painting, she notes, "The materials I use evolve over time."

A LAYERED BEGINNING

In her early creative days, Horowitz was happiest when painting in layers—one on top of the next—realizing her process was inherently three-dimensional. That realization made her first job out of college, working as a set designer, the perfect fit. She started out on TV commercials and film projects, eventually joining the United Scenic Artists union. "It was like I had a huge canvas," she recalls. "I'd work in a 65x20-foot space, creating three-dimensional paintings for scenery."

LEFT TO RIGHT
Venus Amongst Her Treasures
(mixed media, 30x24x12)

Growing Up
(mixed media, 80x32x20)

Escape
(mixed media, 7x5x2)

From there, the artist moved into exhibit design and professional sculpture, working on everything from Marvel's "Spider-Man" to gigs on Fifth Avenue. "That's when I learned to master all kinds of materials, and discovered there were no limits to what I could create," the artist says. "The skills I learned from scenic artists were completely different from those I learned from painters, sculptors and illustrators yet, somehow, it all came together in my own way. It was a win-win in terms of training."

As her art continued to evolve, Horowitz moved fluidly between painting, sculpture and photography—often capturing moments that would later serve as references for future work. "I have hundreds and hundreds of photos from the early days," she says. "I painted from them to help remember places and moments."





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At one point, Horowitz shifted her focus to commercial work, but she says it left her creatively unfulfilled. To reconnect with the art world, she opened a nonprofit gallery, ArtSpace, that showcased more than 400 artists over four-and-a-half years. Running the space left little time for her own practice, however, so she pivoted again, returning to her studio to focus on large outdoor sculptures made of wood, stainless steel, metal and concrete. While exciting, the physical demands of the work became too much over time for the now 64-year-old artist.



A CHANGE IN APPROACH

That shift led to yet another evolution. Horowitz began creating paper-maché relief sculptures—figurative works that explored human connection. Then the pandemic hit, and everything changed. "The figurative work became anonymous because I didn't have models," she says. "They became shrouded figures. It was all about body language, movement and the emotional state we were all living through."

This chapter moved Horowitz out of the studio and into the woods. "I started taking walks and came upon these root formations called cedar knees," she recalls. "They looked like bunches of people—like an exodus." Those formations became her characters, and they paved the way to something more abstract. "The characters moved out, nature moved in," she says. "The subject matter evolved—and so did the materials."

She returned to paper-maché, a medium she had learned in theater and display work. "It's lightweight, easy to form and just feels natural to me," the artist says. That's also when her photography left the sketchbook and became something more. "I started creating large prints of my nature photographs and drawing on them," she notes. "One day, I tossed a rejected print into a batch of paper-maché paste—and suddenly realized I could sculpt the photo. That was my aha moment. I took it out, worked my magic, pushed and shaped it, and it became three-dimensional."

Her latest obsession is deeply hands-on and time-consuming. It involves constant experimentation—



LEFT TO RIGHT
Heart Broker (mixed media, 72x30x20)
Milkweed Study 1 (mixed media, 32x20x6)
Emergence (mixed media, 72x24x48)
Sarracenia Study 1 (mixed media, 22x15x6)





testing which fabrics and papers hold up, deciding on images, managing the right balance of encaustic wax and ensuring adhesives don't smudge her work. She uses everything from heat guns and dental tools to dyes and pigments. "I'm actually painting with the photos," she explains. "It's all experimentation. And when something works—it's magic."

A PERFECT PRODUCTION

When asked if she ever sees herself stopping this constant evolution, Horowitz's answer is telling. "I always think it would be nice to just be a painter—take a rectangle and paint on it, not having to worry about breaking the edge or whether the piece has to self-support or hang a certain way," she admits. "There are so many structural requirements—sometimes they feel more important than the concept, content or process itself."

Horowitz blames her love of theater for her multilayered way of working. "When you have a perfect production, you've got acting, lighting, scenery—all working in concert," she says. "I think sculpture is the same. When the concept, materials and mood all align—and I create a narrative, a conversation or an emotion—that's when I know the piece is successful."

Massachusetts-based writer Doreen Manning is a regular contributor to Artists Magazine *and other arts publications.*

MEET THE ARTIST

Lori Horowitz serves as president of the New York Society of Women Artists and as the exhibition chair of Long Island Craft Guild. Since 2016, she has had 13 solo exhibitions; participated in more than 85 national gallery and museum group shows; and produced 25 shows. She continues independent curation.

▶ VIEW THE ARTIST'S CURRENT WORK AT LORIHOROWITZ.COM.