"Conversation with Jerry Wind"

Bridgette Mayer: Most people don't get to have the artist's spouse's perspective on their work and career. Thank you for taking some time to meet and discuss some of my questions. My hope is that people will learn more about Dina and her work and as you were very intimately connected with it, get to learn more from your perspective.

BM: When you met Dina and got married was she a working artist?

Jerry Wind: Not in the conventional definition of an artist. We met as students and at the time she did not paint or sculpt. But everything she did – the clothes she wore, the way she furnished our apartment…was artistic and creative with a great sense of color, composition, and an eye for challenging aesthetics. In our first apartment, for example, she defied tradition by painting the walls dark grey instead of the usual white. Then in the 1970's, we were the only purple and orange house on the block! Her personal style was similarly independent and dramatic, always a mix of elegant and funky.

BM: How did she decide to become a sculptor and start working with welding and steel?

JW: It was a natural evolution. Dina started as a painter in the 1970's, studying in Philadelphia with Sam Feinstein who had been a student of Hans Hoffman. But his dogmatic approach – the only way to paint was the Hans Hoffman way, made her move on. Next she took classes with Tom Gaughan, working through a hard-edge phase and then a beautiful body of color field paintings.

At the same time Dina was pursuing her Masters Degree in communications from Penn, focusing on communications and aesthetics. She also completed the two-year Barnes Foundation program, studying with the now legendary Violette DeMazia.

Around 1980 a friend introduced her to welding, and she was intrigued. She began studying with sculptor Leon Sitarchuk at the Cheltenham Art Center, and it was a perfect fit. She soon gave up painting and shifted her focus exclusively to welded sculpture. By the mid

1980's she was ready to move on and into her own studio, first in Manayunk and then in South Philadelphia.

The freedom of the studio was a great catalyst for her freedom and creativity. She loved discovering "interesting" scrap metal, car parts and tools, and assembling them into lyrical *drawings in space*. She had clearly found her medium.

BM: How did you feel about her working with these materials, as most people would have considered them very masculine and maybe even dangerous…welding torches, etc.

JW: The Beauty of Dina's sculptures is that at first look you hardly see the dangerous industrial materials but rather are attracted to the beauty and complexity of the composition. Then you start discovering the components… I vividly recall audiences at her various openings trying to figure out the year, model and brand of various car parts, or the satisfaction of a viewer who recognized tools he once owned and used!

After the aesthetic appreciation and cataloging of materials often came a third key facet of Dina's sculptures – the conceptual, with observers discovering more philosophical themes and messages in the work.

So with all that, I never really focused on the 'masculine' or 'threatening' nature of the materials. There was so much more going on.

BM: What do you most love about her sculptures?

JW: Most of all I love the fact that they were made by her. They reflect her creativity, artistic eye, social concerns (especially with works such as Black Islands which Lee is writing about in his essay) and multidimensionality. Over the years she had a number of styles and while a shift to a new style was always accompanied with an element of surprise, all of them carried her creative signature. I love their aesthetics, the lightness of the compositions despite their heavy components, their message to the audience and the way they speak to each other.

BM: How did Dina being an artist impact your life together?

The most obvious impact has been on our passion for art. We traveled a lot as part of my professional life and we always stayed an extra day or two to explore the local art scene. Much of our travel also centered on art events. We have been to over 20 Venice Biennales, about 6 or 7 Documentas , and every Art Basel Miami until Dina passed away last year. We were both passionate art collectors, and most likely because of her influence, shared a strong preference for 3 dimensional work in almost any medium. But her influence on our lives was not only through her role as an artist; it came through her intellectual curiosity, love of culture, of politics, of family, and of life in general.

BM: What was your most favorite exhibition(s) that she put together during her career?

JW: I really loved *all* her exhibitions. Dina believed that each show should introduce a new body of work. And each had its exciting and surprising elements. But if pressed to name one, I'd say her 1983 exhibition at the Faculty Club of the University of Pennsylvania. It was her first solo show and she sold out! This is the show that gave her the boost of confidence she needed as she became a professional artist.

BM: Do you have a favorite sculpture and why and did Dina let you give her feedback on her work?

JW: Like her exhibitions, I love the vast majority of her sculptures too… And I live surrounded by them in our home and garden, as well as my office at Penn. In fact for years I had very mixed feeling every time she sold a sculpture – both delighted that collectors loved and wanted to live with her work and sad that I lost one of them….

As to feedback, she loved getting it after completing the work. She worked very intuitively (never had a drawing before starting a piece) so it was most meaningful for her to discuss a work once it came into being.

BM: How did your career and interests impact her work?

JW: We were fortunate that my career allowed us to travel the world , spend a lot of time in the major art capitals, have remarkable experiences and meet incredible people (artists and non artists) that shaped both of our lives and Dina's life as an artist.

BM: Is there something most people don't know about Dina and her sculptures that would surprise us?

Most likely her incredible sensitivity, care about others and passion for a better, more just world. To me Dina's artwork reflects these traits, sometimes directly and sometimes very subtly.

Also, if one is looking for a more Freudian understanding of her passion for car parts and tools, few people know that throughout her childhood, Dina's father owned a gas station/garage. There are probably connections there, though it's not something Dina dwelled on.

BM: Is there anything else you would like to share about her work and her vision as an artist?

JW: I hope that especially after reading the wonderful essays in this catalogue by Bill Valerio and Lee Stoetzel, the reader has a new lens through which to see and appreciate the depth, creativity and complexity of Dina's sculptures.

I was fortunate to spend 55 years with her, enjoying and growing through her artistic vision…. and am eager for others to be inspired as I was.

BM: What do you hope people will take away from the grouping of works we have curated to show in my gallery?

JW: Dina would have hoped that viewers be able to interact with the sculptures in the show individually and collectively, allowing them to add richness and meaning to their lives. Of course I hope that some collectors will " fall in love" with a specific sculpture. But most of all this is an opportunity for those who both knew and were not familiar with Dina's work to get a fuller insight and window into this remarkable and talented artist.

BM: Thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts and insights!

JW: It's been a pleasure. Thank you, Bridgette, for such great questions. And most of all, for embarking on this journey with me and the family, for responding so strongly to Dina's work, and for seeing its ongoing relevance.