

ADIRONDACK

L I F E



Gourdgeous

SERENA KOVALOSKY
IMPROVES ON NATURE'S ART

by Ed Cyzewski

ance in the space where her photographer father Bruno Matte once worked, in the house where she was raised. Kovalosky begins carving gourds, her medium of choice, into what she calls forest pods, tree bowls and earth vessels—forms that look as though they were discovered along the trail. “The Adirondacks has a special energy that I want to bring into my work,” she says. The shapes and textures of her pieces “mimic the wild landscape.”

The 53-year-old spent almost two decades working in the travel industry before moving to Montreal to explore her French-Canadian roots and her artistic side in the city’s Saint-Henri district. There, Kovalosky experimented with clay and stone, but found that “there’s a lighter energy to gourds,” she says. After realizing she needed to approach her art “from an organic point of view” and go back to where she began, Kovalosky returned to her hometown in 2004. “It took 15 years of intense trial and error, but now I’ve created work that resembles me and my love for the Adirondacks more than anything else.”

Because of this region’s short growing season, Kovalosky’s raw materials come from Southern California, where they grow large and thick-skinned. Once she chooses a gourd to sculpt, the artist sketches a pattern, cuts away with a drill, and hollows the gourd with a scooping tool—a process with no margin for error. “I almost never have an idea of what I want,” she explains. “If it feels right that’s when I know I’ve got it.” She then applies copper, or gold- or silver-alloy leaf inside her pieces for a glowing effect reminiscent of a campfire in the woods. “Everyone is drawn to a campfire,” she says.

Kovalosky’s *Woodland Temple* was recently exhibited as part of the Artists of the Mohawk Hudson Region juried show at the Hyde Collection in Glens Falls. Her gourds have also been featured at galleries in Montreal, Saratoga Springs and throughout Washington County, where she founded the biennial tour Open Studios of Washington County. Her sculptures can be seen at www.kovalosky.com, and include pieces from four inches to three feet high, ranging from \$100 to \$3,000.

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March/April 2011 Photographs by Jim McLaughlin

Serena Kovalosky walks the Whitehall woods snapping photographs and picking up stones, bark and the occasional feather to inspire her back in her studio. With the natural world fresh in her mind she sits upstairs in the space where her photographer father Bruno Matte once worked, in the house where she was raised. Kovalosky begins carving gourds, her medium of choice, into what she calls forest pods, tree bowls and earth vessels—forms that look as though they were discovered along the trail. “The Adirondacks has a special energy that I want to bring into my work,” she says. The shapes and textures of her pieces “mimic the wild landscape.”

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