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## Frederick Fraleigh [Biography and Statement]

Frederick

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My name is Frederick Fraleigh. I was born in Milledgeville, Georgia. When I was about seven years old my family moved to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where we have remained ever since. For four years I attended the Rhode Island School of Design, and on June first 1996, I graduated with a B.F.A. Having just completed my college education and having been a full time student, I am currently unemployed.

The work that I seek is always art related, whether it be commission work, internships, or teaching positions. One of my most memorable teaching experiences was last summer, when I taught a puppet and mask making workshop to young children at the Looking Glass Theatre Arts Camp. In both 1994 and 1995, in the spring, I worked as a teacher assistant for the RISD Creature Creation class. During the summers of 1993 and 1994 I was an art instructor at Marquette University for a high-school summer program. The internships and many of the commissioned jobs that I have done have been theatre related. Last summer I worked for the BIG NAZO Puppet Studio. I built and repaired puppets and costumes. I also created masks and some very large puppets for a production of Beauty And The Beast by Theatre By The Sea. Just this past spring I interned at Jim Henson Productions. I worked in their New York City workshop, building and grooming puppets and costumes.

When ever I can, I try to keep doing my own art work.  
I consider my work to be a growing series of studies, experiments  
and observations made manifest. They, in different ways,  
expresses my understanding of the things that make up the world  
around me and that have meaning for me. I get inspiration from  
different sources. Sometimes I am driven by a certain idea,  
while at other times I have been inspired by the materials alone.

*Frederick  
Frost*

I feel that nature and my surroundings have a large influence on my work. Although I have not yet found an exact direction in which to focus my work, I have found a few areas that I would like to explore. I believe that it is important to experiment. I have always enjoyed working with animal forms and organic shapes rather than other, more geometric forms. I usually prefer uneven, rough, weathered surfaces to smooth planes and finished edges. I find beauty in things that are earthy and aged. I like things that are irregular, unrefined and that have raw texture. My favorite materials to use in my sculptures have most always been found. For a few years now, I have been constantly collecting and searching for just the right pieces of rusted metal or scraps of plastic. Parts of some of my found object sculptures have come from home, Providence, and other places that I have traveled to at different times. Each small part has its own history, which I feel gives the work its own kind of spirit or energy. A great deal of my inspiration comes from what I see around me. Things like a pile of used tires behind a gas station, the roots of an old tree heaving up through the sidewalk or the tangles of dusty pipes in my basement spark ideas and other images. I am also fascinated by animals particularly those which have adapted to their surroundings in strange ways. I like The ways that they move and their unusual features and behavior.

I have been interested in art for as long as I can remember. I have done much drawing and painting in the past. Eventually though, I became almost entirely devoted to working with my hands to create and assemble things. Most of my time at RISD has been spent exploring and experimenting with form and texture. I was not often interested in conveying any kind of message or meaning through my work. I did, however, want to provoke thoughts from those who viewed my work and I hoped that they could appreciate my work in the same way that I did, on a purely visual, aesthetic and sometimes tactile level. In a way, I wanted the viewer to see what I saw. When I would or do use certain materials or create certain images and forms it is because they are beautiful to me in one way or another.

I wanted to share my experience of the materials or the subject matter with the viewer. I was not often very successful though, because people seemed to look for metaphors within the work, which were usually not there. I am always aware that the found objects that I use have pasts and "baggage," but they appeal to me and go into my work for different reasons. Sometimes I will have a particular idea or theme that I am working with. One such idea, for example, was that of combining natural materials with those that were man-made. I was taking two objects from completely different worlds and joining them together in such a way that the transition from natural to synthetic was as subtle and seamless as possible. I was attempting to put two things together, from opposite worlds,

had been wearing like a kind of armor.

Since I was very young, I had known that I was supposed to attend church. Throughout my childhood, in school and out of school, I had been taught the ways of Christianity and how to conduct my life. I was a devoted christian for many years. Toward the end of grade school I began to question my faith. I did not feel completely satisfied and I needed to know why. After thinking about it for a long time, I realized that my heart was not in it. My head was full of thoughts of where I might spend eternity but not of God. I was actually afraid of what would happen to my soul after I died. With religion, there is a kind of security. All of your questions about life and the after-life are answered and you feel safe knowing that you will be taken care of. This was not a good enough reason for me to stay devoted to my faith. So I made the decision to move on to a new phase of my life, without religion. I was no longer lying to myself and I felt less confused and more free.

Both the color and the split back of the figure refer to the shedded skin of a cicada. For me this insect represents change, living part of its life under ground and then, shedding its skin to begin a new life as a creature of the air. The figure lies curled up tightly for protection and, with the strips of armor plating, resembling those of an insect. The armor is woven into itself, around the body the way I had gradually

and make it seem as though they belonged together. I worked with this idea in mind for most of my junior year and still from time to time.

These pieces were most often hand-held objects and, after a while, I wanted to make larger work. I also thought that it was time that I try using symbolism and metaphors again. Until my final project at the end of last semester, I had been avoiding dealing with the metaphorical content of the materials I was using. Were before, I was only interested in creating things that were visually interesting, I wanted to know if I could create something that could communicate a strong message. This project was about my spirituality. I wanted to illustrate my feelings toward my religion, or rather my lack of religion. The piece was a human figure, representing my self, wrapped tightly in a kind of armor or cocoon. The figure was lying on its side in an almost fetal position. Amber-colored armored plates were woven between each other over the entire surface. The surface beneath the amber lacquer was carefully covered with pages from The New Testament. The words were arranged in such a way that they became a pattern that followed the angles and curves of the form. The text was legible beneath the varnish and, in some cases, was specifically placed over certain parts of the figure. The head, for example was wrapped in the revelations. There was a lengthwise opening down its back, revealing an empty interior. I had carefully thought out each detail. The piece was about my shedding of my faith which I

woven my religion around my self. I feel that this piece was an important step for me in terms of self expression.

I have not yet determined my plans for the future. When I graduate there will be a number of options available to me. I have had much experience working with different theater groups, doing such things as set design or the designing and creation of masks, puppets and costumes. this has sometimes involved the fitting of masks to individual performers. I have often thought that I might enjoy working with theater after I am finished with school. When I used to paint and draw more, I had considered the possibility of doing illustration work. I have done some illustration in the past as well as drawing story-boards for a film. Last year I became aware of a place called the Bio-Design Studio at Duke University. There, they study animal locomotion and anatomy. Their work involves the study of animal movement, and the fabrication of models and machines that mimic their movements to aid in a better understanding of how they work. This kind of research could only have a positive effect on my work and increase my observational skills. I have sent them slides, a resume and drawings and am keeping in touch. I have also sent a resume, drawings, slides and letters to Jim Henson Productions. This and other efforts have lead to an internship with them in their workshop in New York City. As for my own art, I have a lot of ideas which I will continue to work with.