

## Career Narrative

Jim Felice

My background as an automotive restorer has informed my approach to sculpting. Industrial objects including raw steel and aluminum, scrap metal, fiberglass, machines, and paint have served as building blocks for my work for the past 40 years.

My initial career path was that of a musician. I performed in small combos and attended Berklee College of Music in 1971. Shortly thereafter, the need to make a living led me to a job in auto body restoration. In 1975, I opened my own auto body restoration facility. Along with restoring automobiles came the opportunity to work with local sculptors, including finish application and fabrication of sculpture. The proficiencies required for these tasks came from the skill set of an automotive restoration specialist.

It was fortunate that my workshop/studio was in Westchester County, New York, home of many well known artists, some of which became instrumental in the development of my work as a sculptor. Those who passed through included such personages as Ken Noland, Virginia Dwan, Robert Whitehead, Zoe Caldwell, and Jim Rosenquist. Two men, however, stand out as true mentors: Charlie Schucker and Ray Donarski. Charlie was retired from teaching at Pratt when we began our friendship. He would visit my studio, and I his in Katonah, New York. That's where the magic was, a broken down house with a large open room, no electricity, no screens on the windows a very raw environment. On one end was a counter covered with paint, empty cans and an apparatus Charlie made to hang his canvas at any angle for his painting process. On the other, there was a cot, table and chair, a dresser and a wrist watch hanging by a nail at the entrance way. I asked him one day if he would teach me to paint. He said, "No, I gave that up some time ago, but you can come by anytime and we can talk." I was taken aback by this, as I hadn't meant to offend him. I kept coming back, and we'd have tea and talk. He would speak of his time as a student at the Maryland Institute with his friend Morris Louis and their visits to the Cone Sisters in Baltimore. He spoke of viewing art in their living room that had been brought back from Europe. He would speak about growing up in Pennsylvania, and how to look at rain drops as they sat on a leaf. Days had passed by since he said no to me, but what I realize now is that he was teaching me. He was teaching me that there was infinitely more to the creation process than the application of paint to canvas. Those were very important days in the forward movement of my life as an artist.

Ray Donarski would visit my studio often, and always with a critique of my work. On one occasion, he brought along his friend Jim Rosenquist, Needless to say, I was speechless. The two went about looking at my work; and we had a conversation about what I was doing. This was typical Ray. He'd come in, ask what I was up to, talk about the work and move on; always leaving me with gems to ponder. These visits and critiques are how I learned about making art.

Another important figure in my development as a sculptor was Crosby Coughlin. Crosby was an assistant to Alexander Liberman; and was given my name for the purpose of doing some paint work on a Liberman sculpture. We quickly became friends. Through Crosby, I have had the opportunity to perform restoration work for the Liberman estate and to work on many more

Lieberman pieces owned by different collectors. He also introduced me to Jackie and Cameron Wilson of Wilson Conservation; which lead to a connection with Sotheby's and the Tallix foundry in Beacon NY which now has merged to become Polich Tallix. These associations have given me added opportunity to acquire considerable insight and experience as regards the fabrication of three-dimensional objects. The ability to engage in exchange with highly skilled artisans and various artists while working on a piece is priceless. I have completed the paint application on important pieces Roy Lichtenstein, Marisol, Claes Oldenburg, Botero, Henry Moore, Alexander Calder, Keith Haring, Robert Indiana, and many others. Over time, this has lead to association with various galleries in New York, including, but not limited to the Kouros Gallery (which has moved their operation to their Sculpture Center in Ridgefield CT), Paul Kasmin Gallery, Matthew Marks Gallery, and the Gagosian Gallery. I have provided services such as the repair of damaged sculpture, and have assisted on occasion in the creation of a new work; most recently in 2010, when I worked with Dan Colen in the creation of a piece for his "Poetry " show at Gagosian. My task as project manager was to obtain and build or customize thirteen Harley Davidsons to recreate motorcycles owned by Hells Angels members. "Cracks In The Clouds" has since been displayed at the Seagram's Building in New York City.

In addition to the work I have done for and with others, my own pieces have received some recognition:

In 2010 I was awarded a commission to create a sculpture for a Kohler/Time Inc. project. The completed sculpture was on display in the Time Warner building New York NY.

In 2000 I received Award of Excellence in Sculpture", Northern Westchester Center For The Arts, Mt. Kisco, NY Juror Harry Philbrick, Director, The Aldrich Museum, Ridgefield Ct.,

In 1994 I was awarded 2nd Prize in Painting, Stamford Art Association, Stamford Ct., Juror, Claire Garcia Faculty Silvermine School of Art

1993 I was awarded 2nd Prize in Sculpture, "Faces and Figures" Stamford Art Association, Stamford Ct., Juror, Cynthia Roznoy, Whitney Museum, New York, NY

1991 - Best In Sculpture, "Artists Choice, Stamford Art Association, Stamford Ct., Juror, Marguerite Strop, Director Stamford Public Art Program

I have also been juried into a number of exhibitions in Westchester and Fairfield counties including Art of the Northeast at The Silvermine Guild