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# EXCEPTIONAL



MAGAZINE

*People*

**Mona Purdy**

**Saving the World Two Soles at a Time**

**Rosalind Sedacca**

*Should You Forgive?*

Six Steps to Releasing the Past

**Artist and Visionary**

**OSPREY ORIELLE LAKE**

The International Cheemah  
Monument Project

*COVER*

*STORY*

*Extraordinary Profiles*



*Osprey Orielle Lake*

*A Visionary of Mother Earth*





## Osprey Orielle Lake

### Artist and Visionary of Mother Earth



It is through her vision as an artist that Osprey Orielle Lake has used her extraordinary talents to bring us closer to nature.

Lake is one of a small number of females who design monuments. She infuses a reflection of cultural diversity, nature and a sense of connection into her designs. Through her work, she allows citizens of the world to see the true beauty of nature. She addresses how “narrative artworks can bring balance, connection and hope into the hearts of our cities and homes.”

Through her statutes, Lake attempts to foster within each of us a deeper personal and societal appreciation for the land in which we live.

It is often said that beauty is in the eye of the beholder. When one gazes

at the intricate details of her magnificent art, each piece tells a unique story and one can only be inspired to appreciate the natural beauty of the world.

Lake explains, “I was drawn to create nature-themed art in order to create a bridge that could remind us of the vital relationship we have to our living planet, and the importance of celebrating and protecting our earth’s beauty, ecosystems and bountiful gifts. I think when we embrace our connection to the natural world and to each other, and combine that with the lessons our ecosystems are teaching us, we have a better capacity to find answers needed in our efforts to create sustainable living models. In fact, I think it is completely necessary to connect to nature if we want an enduring and truly viable civilization. In this sense, the mystery, wonder and elegance of the earth have been at the core of my artistic inspiration.”

As a sculptor, teacher and public speaker, Osprey has inspired others to connect with the beauty that nature offers, allowing them to create their own masterpieces.

She serves on the adjunct faculty of two San Francisco universities and volunteers locally and internationally to assist environmental and social change organizations.

She also serves on the Board of the Praxis Peace Institute in Sonoma, California and is the Director of the Women’s 2020 Climate Change lead-

ership Caucus with the Senate World Forum. Osprey is the founder and designer of the International Cheemah and Mari Monument Projects.

Lake shared with Exceptional People Magazine her extraordinary vision as an artist and her desire to instill a deeper appreciation for the earth and all that it has to offer.

**EPM:** I understand that you have been a lifelong advocate for environmental and societal issues, which led you to diverse but compatible professions. You are a sculptor working internationally with bronze statues and you are also the Director of the Women’s 2020 Leadership Caucus focusing on climate change issues. What inspired you to devote your life to designing sculptures and monuments?

**Osprey:** My mother was an amazing painter and printmaker and she has always been a deep source of guidance and encouragement for me. Early in life, I was inspired by the northern coast of California where I spent much of my childhood hiking along remote beaches and among the redwoods. This beauty deeply touched me and I knew that I wanted to do all that I could to protect these special places and to bring more awareness to the need to protect nature. I understood this early on because I had experiences of seeing the devastating results of magnificent old growth forests that had been clear-cut, forests that I loved and knew were irreplaceable. It broke my heart. The words of Rachel Carson also guided



me at that time, especially when she wrote, "I believe that the more clearly we can focus our attention on the wonders of the universe about us, the less taste we shall have for destruction."

I think what people see and experience on a daily basis influences both societal direction and cultural well-

being and protecting our earth's beauty, ecosystems and bountiful gifts.

**EPM:** Can you tell us about the physical aspect of your sculptures?

**Osprey:** In addition to nature-themed artworks, I have been very interested in the tradition of female sculptural

works convey. Secondly, it's the composition lines, how to create feeling and movement that express the deeper narrative.

**EPM:** When did you realize you had the vision and talent to design sculptures and monuments that could inspire global change?

**Osprey:** Well, I would be honored and delighted if in fact my art does inspire global change. This is something I certainly aspire to do. I'm not sure these kinds of things are ever "realized" by the person doing them. It is more a sense of feeling compelled to create something--to "write" an epic love poem to life in the form of sculpted bronze and a deep desire to contribute to making a better world for current and future generations. I had the great fortune of having many long-time supporters who have believed in my work. I greatly appreciate each of them.

**EPM:** What message or messages do you wish to convey in your sculptures?

**Osprey:** My smaller sculptures and monuments honor cultural diversity, integrated with an appreciation for nature and they create a sense of belonging and connection. I believe one way we can change our communities and the way we live is by encouraging and exploring a new cultural narrative. The outer landscape of our world will change, particularly as we transform our inner landscape, culturally and individually. To do this, I think a new narrative is needed, one that is based on loving and protecting our shared earth, all the earth's people and all species. I think it is necessary for us to have the courage to acknowledge what is happening to our world. We need courage to protect what we can and the courage to grieve losses--



*Mari, Waters of Life*

being. With the earth's population living primarily in cities now, it has become more difficult for us to focus on our natural environment. We have become susceptible to a sense of disconnection from nature. We are not separated from the natural world, we are absolutely a part of it, but this sense of separation can cause a great deal of imbalance, both personally and as a society. I decided to create nature-themed art to remind us of the vital relationship we have to our living planet and the importance of cele-

images that have inspired people all over the world throughout history -- to name a few, the Statue of Liberty, Mother Russia which overlooks the Volga River, the Kuan Yin goddesses throughout Asia and Liberty on the Arc de Triomphe in Paris.

I design my pieces to be dynamic, to express movement. My sculptures range in height from 16 inches to 46 inches and my public artwork ranges in height from 10 to 18 feet. My first consideration is the story that the art-





recognition and grief can be powerful motivators for change. It is difficult to care for something we have no relationship with, so fostering a connection to each other and the natural world is important to caring. Through my art, I introduce images that celebrate cultural diversity and nature and I hope to encourage people to think about creating a responsible and compassionate future. I hope that my art will serve as a reminder of this amazing place we call home.

**EPM:** It is often said that art is a common denominator that crosses all boundaries. How do your sculptures and monuments bring cultures together?

**Osprey:** I love what Kofi Annan said about artists when he was the Secretary-General of the United Nations: "Artists have a special role to play in the global struggle for peace. At their best, artists speak not only to people; they speak for them. Art is a weapon against ignorance and hatred and an agent of public awareness. Art opens new doors for learning, under-

standing and peace among peoples and nations."

I see art as a universal language and I think most artists strive to change our views on how we perceive the world and each other. All cultures have incorporated art as a statement. A great deal of what we know about ancient cultures, we know through their art. Art often reflects who we are or want to become as a society. In this sense, creativity is perhaps one of the most distinctive attributes of the human spirit. Our creativity and ability to innovate survives under the most stressful conditions. I would suggest we remember that the ability to imagine and create is an unstoppable force.

To answer your question about cultural connections, I often incorporate symbols from cultures around the world in a single piece of art, so people can experience a sense that although we are wonderfully diverse, we also share in human adventure.

**EPM:** You combine your work with the concept of going green and sup-

porting global concerns. How do you incorporate these concepts into your designs?

**Osprey:** At the moment, I am working on the *Drop of Water, Drop of Life* project. The idea for this artwork was to create unique water fountain sculptures that celebrate our local watersheds and create a way to revitalize a personal connection to water. Each fountain is a one-of-a-kind, region-specific fountain designed from a water crystal. The water crystal is "grown" from a water sample collected at a local watershed where the fountain sculptures are to be installed. My intent in creating this type of design is to link communities directly to their local watersheds in a lively, artistic and educational manner. Citizens will see what the water coming from their taps looks like in a crystallized form. Our bodies are 70% water and we cannot live without it. Making the connection between our daily needs and the local watershed can be a powerful way to create water awareness and protection.

**EPM:** How are you using your vision and works to inspire others to follow their dreams or enhance their communities?

**Osprey:** As young children, we mostly dream of a future that brings us success, adventure, loving relationships and meaningful experiences. This dream never really dies but it can be forsaken in the tumult of societal and personal challenges. The question is how do we revive and cul-



tivate these dreams? I strive to combine images, stories and symbols from the past and present them in works of art that are transcendent, that recognize the time in which we live and mirror the things that we hold most precious. As many wise people through the ages have indicated, we should keep our dreams alive. I believe when a piece of art touches someone, it can help them recall their dreams.

I like to make presentations at inner-city schools, conferences and universities, encouraging people to follow their dreams, participate in civic processes and become involved in whatever they are passionate about. I am deeply heartened by young people who have great energy to live full and meaningful lives and we should support them.

**EPM:** Speaking of the civic process, can you tell us more about your work as the Director of the Women’s 2020 Leadership Caucus?

**Osprey:** The Women’s 2020 Leadership Caucus is a branch of State of the World Forum, a non-profit organization based in California. For many years, I have been involved with environmental and societal change organizations. My most recent direction with this involvement has been as the Director of the Women’s 2020 Leadership Caucus. This gives me an opportunity to collaborate with extraordinary women in the U.S. and other countries. We are developing alliances that can assist the most vulnerable communities in Africa that are currently dealing with climate change.

**EPM:** What is your next big creative project?

**Osprey:** Actually it is something different from sculpting but it continues the same “song”. I have a book coming out this autumn. The working title is *Uprisings for the Earth: Reconnecting Culture with Nature*.

**EPM:** What has been most rewarding about your life’s work?

**Osprey:** There has been so much it is hard to pinpoint. I think for me, as it is for many people, the reward comes from giving -- giving to others and expressing appreciation for the earth’s magnificence. I’ve had the opportunity to help artists in Russia, Europe and China, as well as here. It’s always wonderful and invigorating to connect with artists and support their efforts. Through the Women’s 2020 Leadership Caucus we are connecting women in many diverse fields and this is exciting, as I look toward the coming years and the many things we will do together. So in addition to giving, I would say collaborating with others is also a wonderful reward. When our hearts connect with others, we have so much more to share and to give of ourselves. I think collaboration is the key to navigating through the challenging times ahead. ♦

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*Tree of Life*