

GINA HERRERA

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## Artist Statement

I have always felt a strong affinity for nature. Growing up in Chicago, I found the most beauty in the trees, the singing birds, the sky above. As a visual learner with a multicultural heritage, I have been influenced by my father's Tesuque culture and my mother's Costa Rican heritage. While cultural art fascinates me, experiencing beauty of great European art collections while stationed in Germany early in my military career inspired my professional pursuit of art.

While serving in Iraq, amid the devastation of combat, I was moved by seeing miles of mountainous trash heaps. I viscerally experienced the global extent of the systematic destruction of the planet, exploitative, unsustainable, and perhaps worst, careless, unconscious, accidental. This led me to question my own practices, hoping to lessen my environmental impact. I began to build three-dimensional forms out of discarded and natural objects. I am engaged in an aesthetic and spiritual ritual to channel and honor Mother Earth, to seek connection and communion with a power greater than myself.

Everywhere I go, I gather materials, finding inspiration in my surroundings. Like a scavenger, I play an interventional role in removing garbage from the landscape, preventing it from doing further damage. I am also drawn to natural materials and organic forms—branches, rocks, cocoons, nests. My process is meditative and

intuitive—each step revealing a new aspect. Figures emerge, in gravity defying postures on the brink of movement, alive with possibility. Their haunting spiritual presence reminds us they have not gone back to the earth, but asks us to question our connection with our world and the choices we make in our daily existence. My greatest objective is to awaken individual and societal consciousness; to examine and heal our relationship with Mother Earth.

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**GINA HERRERA** was raised in Chicago and currently resides in California. She has a BFA in Art Education from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. In the course of her studies, she was deployed overseas in support of several war contingencies with the United States Army. Once her final tour was complete, she obtained her MFA from the University of the Arts in Philadelphia. Herrera is a multiple Art Slant Showcase Winner and has received grants from both the Chenven Foundation and Puffin Foundation. She has also received several awards and fellowships throughout the United States.



A Salutation to All

77" x 50" x 19"



Nurturing the Uncharted

78" x 44" x 31"



A Belle of Consequence

76" x 44" x 47"



Jaunting for Restitution

74'' x 47'' x 18''



Matrimony

65" x 25" x 18"



Rocking for the Future

85" x 54" x 21"