

A single day holds an infinite amount of opportunities. Syracuse-based artist Paula R. Harwood's current series explores the concept of what happens on a sunny day. A sunny day can bring joy, renewal, or the thrill of anticipation. Ultimately it is the unknown that Harwood investigates in these paintings. Lincoln was shot on a sunny day, as was Kennedy. The prospect of possibilities, both good and bad, is at the crux of this series.

Bright, emblazoned script races across the panel on her painting #122: "Capital," "Starvation," "Punishment," "Racism," and "Unemployment." Red, green, and blue blocks offset these vibrantly shaded words. Stacked on top of a subtly smeared cream background, their content and the ferocity with which they are written evoke feelings of desolation and hopelessness. Although war is a common theme in this series, it is balanced by playful maxims that reveal the humor behind despair. She presents the dual nature of life; happiness paired with sadness. The chaos that characterizes war is mimicked in the art's frenzied, graffitied appearance. Still, in every piece, "there's a juxtaposition of materials, a degree of precision and contemplation. As unorganized as it might look, it's very controlled," Harwood said.

In all her work, Harwood uses media, subject matter, and various platforms of production as tools to explore the notion of artistic universality. The work she is creating now is a result of the art that she has created throughout her life. It is the culmination of her artistic career to date.

In the 1960s, she studied metalsmithing and glass blowing at the Penland School of Crafts in Spruce Pine, North Carolina. After graduating, Harwood began work as a goldsmith, but transitioned into painting when the medium left something to be desired. "A

fine piece of jewelry is beautiful, but it wasn't enough of an expression to represent me," she explains. "I had more to say."

Having rid herself of this gilded medium, Harwood was free to pursue large-scale projects in collage and acrylic painting. Elements of Russian Constructivism, German Expressionism, and Synthetic Cubism weave in and out of her artworks. Kandinsky and Rodchenko informed much of what she created earlier in her career. With an emphasis on geometric shapes, these initial paintings serve as studies in form and color. They intermingle shredded pieces of paper and paint. Each hints at a personal iconography, while revealing some greater truth.

The painting will take you to a point, and then it's up to the viewer to decipher its meaning. For Harwood, her ability to convey reality through her art has come with age. "I understand the human condition," she says. "The pain and suffering of silence - life made me understand." At 55 years old, Harwood has the personal freedom to have her art say whatever she wants it to. With age, she has gained perspective, wisdom, and a new aesthetic.

Throughout her life, Harwood has reveled in media experimentation. Her artwork now is a conglomeration of thoughts and materials. Each surface is laden with newspaper clippings, text, metals, paint, and foils. Every one is absorbed in technique and dimension, glowing with layers of color. She creates not just for herself, but for her audience. She creates to imprint her stamp on the art world and to engage in a real dialogue with the public.

Words take the place of geometric shapes in her newer pieces; she now guides the viewer with text. In her later numbered paintings, words and phrases serve as jumping-off points that inspire what she refers to as "universal truisms."

Now at the peak of her artistic arc, she is developing different ways of disseminating her artwork. In an effort to reach out to a broader audience, Harwood has initiated a poster

project entitled, RIN (Reality in) Poster Art. The posters bring socially aware art, dealing issues like poverty, hunger, love, and the power of positivity, to people's homes through a more accessible avenue. Where it used to take 200-250 hours of work with little break to execute one painting, Harwood now has the ability to create hundreds. Each print will bear the artist's hand-written signature. Though duplicated and mass-produced, they will still have the mark of an original.

PTW (Painting to Wear) by PRH aims to strip art from the walls and cloak people in it. Art appears in museums, galleries, homes, parks, and print, but it is noticeably missing from the individual. The human body is the most immediate yet readily ignored artistic venue. Harwood is creating wearable art by treating objects of clothing with the same care she would a painting. One's body becomes the canvas, and the outfit, the masterpiece. And unlike tattoo art, you can take Harwood's sculpted garments off. With each day comes the potential to embody a new work of art. As if peeled from a graffitied wall, one can wear a custom painted pair of blue jeans that moves with the dynamic turn of each brushstroke.

Harwood's studio looks into the artistic potential of any object. In conjunction with her poster campaign and clothing project, she is looking to furniture as a more substantive base for her art. Painted coffee tables will now take on the responsibility of holding coffee as well as existing as functioning art pieces.

Through her artistic entrepreneurship, Harwood is bringing her works to the forefront of the art world. Stacks of carefully preserved newspapers rest in the corner of her studio perched for future use. Chosen for their elegant script, the headlines await their opportunity to join an ensemble cast of candy foils, paints, and other found objects, where they will assuredly reveal a message deeper than words they spell. Whether they are destined for panel, poster, cabinet, or pants, one thing remains constant: the vision of the artist.

-Bonnie Rosenberg, Arts Critic and Journalist