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Gwen Fryer: Carving A Present Out Of The Past

The daughter of a petroleum geologist, painter and sculptor Gwen Fryer spent most of her formative years in Tripoli, Libya. She and her family were there for Six-Day War in 1967 and the Libyan Revolution following in 1969. Fryer was sixteen when she came to the US.

Clearly the land and culture left an indelible impression on Fryer, both in her choice of palette and her sense of the scope of history—and conflict. Her 25 pieces exhibited June 8th thru August 30th at the Women's Resource Center in Sarasota, draw upon this larger sense of history and a personal one in a very physical way. Fryer constructs her assemblages from such diverse elements as stone remnants from a church torn down near her Philadelphia studio, Arabic texts, sea-worn terra cotta scraps from Carthage and dry boughs from the North African desert. "These works are an assemblage of history," says Fryer, "not only from my own life, but of life passing through my awareness."

Many of her works are covered with her painstaking drawn and painted designs, which either echo or complement the sculptural forms they cover. While this can be interpreted many ways—a graphical representation of the passage of time (year upon year upon year), an homage to the craftsmen of the ancient world--the repetitive nature of small acts of love comes the most strongly through. While Fryer states that she seeks to "create an assembly of disparate histories into one unifying statement of forgiveness" referencing the conflict between Islamic and western worlds there is deep feeling that the act of forgiveness is personal one too.

There is also the sense of her many years spent as a critical care nurse. An impression of dark doorways and overhead lights rhythmically punctuating the stillness of a 2am hospital corridor surfaces in her work. Pieces in this exhibit remind you that Arabic is hauntingly similar to EKG patterns, seeds and root systems could be hearts and veins. Perhaps, really, there is no difference.

"Fragments of My Heart" opens June 8th with a reception from 5p.m. to 7 p.m. at the Women's Resource Center 340 South Tuttle Ave. The show consists of 25 mixed-media sculptures and paintings. Show runs June 8th to August 30th. The WRC is open 8:30a.m. to 5:30p.m. Mon.- Fri. with some limits on gallery hours. Please call 366-1700 for gallery hours.