

## ABOUT SHERRY



Sherry Housley Lowry (born July 10, 1950) is an American sculptor. Her medium is clay and she finds artistic inspiration in the Native American culture. As a child she became interested in, and was inspired by, the home life and struggle of the Cherokee Indians, who once lived in the fertile valleys nestled among the mountains where Sherry grew up. The earth was rich with artifacts of vast villages and hunting and fishing grounds where the Cherokee once roamed. As a young girl she would go on field trips to collect Indian arrowheads and other artifacts with her father. She dreamed of how life must have been in the villages for the warriors and maidens, as folklore only painted sad songs and tragic endings to their lives. She drew pictures of cowboys and Indians and, as a teenager, loved westerns. She had posters of John Wayne and Gary Cooper on her walls. As she got older she began studying the history of the American West, specifically the different regions, tribes and customs of the Native American Indians. She became fascinated and enchanted by earth clay sculpting and pit firing and began making replicas of ancient pots and jars that she saw in museums, collections and books. She soon started producing her own designs and began doing functional hand built pottery and traveled around the country showing her work at art shows. She was drawn to other forms of art but always came back to the ancient spirits that seemed to whisper "Tell my story in your clay." Her art transcends race and, even though the piece may be ancient Native American or African or Aztec, it has been said, "When you pick up a piece of her art you can't help but smile or reminisce about a favorite grandmother or aunt who has imparted some wisdom to you in the past and with whom you wish you had spent more time and listened to more closely." Or you may be mesmerized by the intensity and strength you find in the eyes or musculature of her other pieces. The ancient elder's faces she creates certainly seem to speak to her and, through her in her work, to give messages of wisdom, of hope and faith and love. These are things every soul seems to yearn for especially as we get older. We wish once again for someone to guide us and watch over us and remind us to stay on the right path. Many feel this is what is portrayed in the images that, as she says, "emerge from my clay". Sharon Marcella Thomas was born in Spruce Pine Clinic in the mountains of NC to creative parents, who lived in a small mining town in the North Carolina Mountains

called Micaville. Her parents Luther and Beatrice Thomas were artists in their own rights. Luther crafted bark berry baskets and single piece hearth brooms and Bea painted landscapes and memories in oil paints. Luther also collected rocks and minerals from NC and around the world and was known in the mineral society as an expert on NC mines and minerals. His voice can be heard at the Spruce Pine Mineral museum telling what it was like to work in the feldspar and mica mines in the area. He also collected Native American Indian arrowheads and artifacts. Their crafts and art was shown in many fairs and shows along the east coast. Luther was also featured and participated in the local Burnsville Craft Fair that has been on the first weekend in August for over 50 years. He had participated every year from the first one.

Sherry flourished and grew up in this atmosphere and was the 4<sup>th</sup> child of the five Thomas children. She attended Micaville Elementary and East Yancey High School and graduated from high school in 1968.

In 1970 she married Robert Housley and moved away to Annapolis, Maryland and Bob soon left for duty in the US Navy. Their son Matthew was born in Maryland and they enjoyed their first years of marriage on the shores of the Chesapeake Bay, which is also rich in the Native American culture that continued to haunt her. Soon after Bob got out of the Navy, the small family moved to Clearwater, Florida and set up house there. Bob worked as a boiler technician at night and Sherry worked at the local bank and later in the office for a construction company to pay the bills and make ends meet. After hours she began working at home on her sculpting, all the time improving her technique and experimenting with different clays. The Seminole Indian history was celebrated there and Sherry took note. She exhibited her early work at the North Carolina State Fair along with her father, who also did handmade brooms and baskets, arts handed down to him from his mountain family, who were heavily influenced by the local Cherokee methods of survival.

In 1975 Sherry began working in polymer clays and was drawn for a while to making elves, dragons and fairyland characters and displaying at Renaissance Fairs around Florida.

During this time the different work schedules between her and Bob began to take its toll on her marriage and soon they separated and ultimately divorced. She met Ross Lowry, a WWII veteran, originally from Indianapolis, IN, who had retired from the railroad and moved to Florida. They were married a few years later.

In 1985 she began making "one of a kind" doll art and in 1987 was accepted into the prestigious NIADA (National Institute of American Doll Artists), which is a worldwide organization that promotes the art of original handmade dolls. Several celebrities collected her outstanding creations and multiple articles were written and appeared

in doll magazines and local newspapers, always highlighting her awesome male dolls that seemed to be real characters stepping right out of women's fantasies. Among her creations the Native American family was still depicted as well.

In 1996 she was under contract with Middleton Doll Company in Ohio to design prototypes for their company. She also designed for the Bradford Exchange as well as Ashton Drake Company. Some of her dolls can still be found, here and there, on the internet as collections are sold off.

In 1997 Sherry returned to her NC mountain roots with Ross, bought a house and opened a Gallery in the small "artsy" community of Black Mountain, NC. She named the gallery Back Tracks. This was a place where she could highlight her art, carry other artists' work and make a living while she created. In 2003 Sherry took some days off to go to Santa Fe, New Mexico, to display at a NIADA doll art show. She fell in love with the artist life style there and longed to be a part of this world. The next year she signed up again to display her work in Santa Fe and invited her younger sister to join her there for a vacation and to explore the area. In 2005 the sisters teamed up and went again to explore further out and up into Taos, NM where they found rest and renewal at a small rental called "Casa Galina", which had the flavor and feel of the home Sherry had been looking for and they continued to go there for the next 2 years. This connection with another area rich in earth tone hues and spiritual energy set her creative juices flowing and she began to work long hours into the night and morning creating many beautiful pieces of art. Every piece she made sold as soon as it was placed for public viewing. Also, during this time her husband began developing health problems and had to have several operations, her parents were getting old and her mother had Alzheimer's disease and had to go into a nursing home. This caused her a lot of worry and health problems as well. In 2006 she lost both parents. After all this she found that managing a gallery and keeping books and waiting on customers drained her and she had no time or energy to create her art so she sold the gallery and moved back to the old home place where she grew up and to her Native American muses. She lives there now with her husband Ross Lowry and just up the road a mile away lives her son Matt and his wife Lisa and her 2 beautiful granddaughters, Olivia and Caitlin. And she is creating wonderful art again ...

Sherry is now represented by Canebranch Inc, an organization focused on bringing exceptional art to market worldwide.