

## Artist Portrait: Jeanne Drevas

A Capitol Hill artist and writer, Jim can be reached at [ArtandtheCity05@aol.com](mailto:ArtandtheCity05@aol.com)

Jeanne Drevas reaches into the roots of human art experience. She looks at the very ordinary things – the bark on a poplar tree, loblolly pine needles, golden acorns in the woods, a bamboo thicket – and sees forms and figures that can be transformed into another meaning, a meaning only possible when co-created with the human mind and imagination.

She expresses her emotional and visual reaction to nature by constructing 3-dimensional forms: large sculptures and even habitats. Her eye and imagination have taken her in multiple directions since graduating from the University of Connecticut College of Fine Art: sculpture, like the 10-foot “Bark Shrine” you can enter, pottery in which plant motifs come alive with color, installations, “basket forms” and, of late, the exploration of the human figure in tree branches – with what she calls “Twiggies.”

Jeanne always loved the sensation of building with her own hands and was drawn to constructing shelters, like tree houses, as a child. Over the years, she has built her own home in the mountains of Rappahannock County, Va., with things found in the woods. Locust trees support a roof, a stripped tree trunk becomes a column without losing its identity, twisted honeysuckle vines become a railing. The house is of the same origins as her art ... a show of how a traditional home can be built with non-manufactured components. Art is built into the structure—not just



hung on the wall.

Jeanne Drevas is not making a political statement; she is not trying to lead a movement. She makes art from what she sees and loves and teaches others who share her vision. You can see her work this month at The Corner Store, the small delightful gallery and art place at the corner of Ninth Street and South Carolina Avenue SE and on [www.jeannedrevas.com](http://www.jeannedrevas.com).

### Jim Magner's Thoughts on Art

There are many people (you know who you are) who believe unequivocally that everything natural is a work of art. Who can't argue that flowers, trees and water bugs are beautiful? But sorry, a rose does not a masterpiece make. OK. Maybe it can be the image of the gods, but it's not human art. For it to be Art, a fragment of nature has to be transformed, and the human mind has to be

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ABOVE: “Bud” – White pine bark, long leaf pine needles, sweet birch pines, waxed lines. Photo: Jeanne Drevas.

LEFT: “Spiral IV” – Tulip popular bark, sweet birch pines. Photo: Jeanne Drevas



“Square Hole, Round Peg III” – Various barks, sweet birch pegs.  
Photo: Jeanne Drevas

a co-conspirator, at least. We get no credit for an iris, but a painting of irises can be the real thing.

Actually, just recognizing natural beauty in itself was a great leap forward into humanness. Then came its transformation in the human mind – a meaning – a connection to something. Even the simple things, a tree branch or a face-like shell on the beach triggered human imagination and the explosion of visual symbols. A drawing of a bison could create mystical significance out of a

big tasty quadruped. The painting of an angel could capture a spiritual sensation that is otherwise difficult to visualize.

Jeanne Drevas (see Artist Profile) reaches into the roots of human art experience. She sees the ordinary things around us – the stuff we barely notice anymore, the substances we grind up or pave over and she savors them – honors their true value by making art with them.

Ironically, the art we could fashion from the willing natural world has true economic value, one that has been wasted extravagantly. This isn't a goofy artsy-craftsy fantasy. It may be that we will be forced to come full circle and understand that the art derived from the living world brought us into intellectual dominance – and soon may be the last thing of value ... for those smart enough to recognize and prepare.

## At the Galleries

### 'Landscapes'

Capitol Hill Art League

545 Seventh St. SE

Sept. 19-Oct. 1

CHAL opens its first show of the 2009-2010 season, Sept. 19, 5-7 p.m., with a reception and gallery talk for the public. This is an “all media” show, and the theme, “Landscapes,” is examined from a wide range of approaches and techniques. All work is for sale. The juror for the show is Kate Fraser, an award-winning photographer and owner and director of the Fraser Gallery in Bethesda, Md. 202-547-6839, [www.chaw.org](http://www.chaw.org).

### 'Thirteen'

Goethe-Institut FotoGalerie

812 Seventh St. NW

Sept. 9-Oct. 30

“Thirteen” (Dreizehn) is a series of portraits by Janina Wick that catches young girls at that particularly confusing moment in their lives where they teeter between childhood and the adult world. The photos try to capture the conflict between the person the girl is and the person – the woman – she would like to be. The faces of the models reveal the shaky balance “between staging and insecurity.” The opening is Sept. 9. 202-289-1200, [www.goethe.de/washington](http://www.goethe.de/washington).

### 'Color, Texture and Mood'

Touchstone Gallery

406 Seventh St. NW

Sept. 9-Oct. 4

Michele Cormier's acrylic and mixed media paintings are inspired by her native French Canadian culture, and range from simplified contemporary abstracts to realist-based compositions of landscapes, nature and water. This water series captures the human figure in motion in the transparency of water, and captures water as an embodiment of lines and curves existing in complete harmony. Sharing the main gallery is the new and color-intense “Mirage Series” by Steve Alderton. The reception for both is Sept. 11, 6-8:30 p.m. 202-347-2787, [www.touchstonegallery.com](http://www.touchstonegallery.com). ★

## Photography on Barracks Row

### 'Windows on the Hill'

CHAW

Barracks Row Main Street

Sept. 12 through Oct. 12

It is always a treat to stroll Capitol Hill's “Barracks Row” to visit the shops and get a bite in the array of fine restaurants and sidewalk cafes. That treat becomes treatier with “Windows on the Hill.” The Capitol Hill Arts Workshop (CHAW) kicks off a terrific exhibit of photography by children who were enrolled in CHAW's Youth Arts Program over the past 10 years. The opening is Sept. 12 from 3-5, at CHAW's 545 Seventh Street gallery. That's just the beginning – hundreds of photos will be displayed in the windows of over 20 retail businesses reaching from Pennsylvania Avenue to M Street. The exhibit is co-sponsored by the Capitol Hill Association of Merchants & Professionals (CHAMPS) and with additional local grants. It is curated by Bruce McKaig, chair of CHAW's photography department and Kent Gay.

Children care about different things and see things differently than adults – you find that in their pictures. So, take a walk on the child side for another view of the places you think you know. 202-547-6839, [www.chaw.org](http://www.chaw.org).

