

**Artist Statement.**  
**Sharon Virtue**

My childhood was steeped in Catholic rites and ceremonial circumstances. Growing up, I was fascinated with religious iconography; in the realms of my imagination, spiritual images and stories were transformed into magical beings, signs and portents.

In art school inspiration came from the bewitching exoticism captured in the work of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century Orientalist and Pre-Raphaelites painters. The color, illusion and light conjured something deeply familiar, the same feeling one experiences when remembering dreams.

In my quest to learn more about indigenous art, myth, alchemy, and magic, I have traveled around the world. Inspiration comes from African sculpture, ancient Greek ceramics, Japanese Jomon pottery, and Oceanic art and sculpture. This imagery has evoked an intricate labyrinth of visual stimuli. Motivation to create with clay emerges at the intersection of the unique but related influences of art, mythology and dreams. Combining the elements of earth, air, fire and water, my sculpture is infused – physically and metaphorically – with magic.

This primordial material- embodying the spirit of our ancestors- enables me to bring to life my interpretations of myths, retelling and reinventing timeless tales into a contemporary context. I give them form, texture, color and design. Hieroglyphs and symbols are etched into the surface of the figures; they are clues to the stories of who and why they are. They recall a time when myth and ritual were intrinsic to everyday existence, and we were innately connected to the natural cycles of life.

My surreal figures narrate stories of shape shifting, initiation, metamorphosis and power. They are mythological beings, which exist amidst the veils of humankind, the natural world and the supernatural.

The viewer is invited to walk between worlds, to encounter the magical places and beings that inhabit my imagination: to explore, decipher and be immersed in an atmosphere of contemplation, calling attention to their own personal mythologies and the things that are being lost and devalued in our modern world.