

# Artist to Collect Beverly Owens



## An ancient art form is creating new excitement

*written by Debra Usher*

Beverly Owens' career is as filled with energy and excitement this year as it was when she first burst onto the art scene.

She created a lot of buzz with a record bid for one of her works at the prestigious silent art auction Snap!08. At Snap!09 her work was up for live auction with Ritchie's auction house. Her piece went for twice its estimated value, just behind the bid for an Edward Burtynsky. Owens was awarded second prize at the critically acclaimed The Artist Project Toronto 2008 and, in October 2009, she received the Curator's Choice Award at The Elaine Fleck Gallery.

Beverly continues to be a highly collected Toronto artist. Her works are found in collections throughout Canada, the US and Europe. Lately, she has found collectors in the corporate world as well.

Beverly grew up around the art and business of printing. First trained as a sculptor, she studied under different masters of the art in her younger adulthood. She attended the Ontario College of Art and Design (OCAD) and took seminar studies with The Canadian Film Institute. Beverly gained her reputation and popularity as part of an experimental art collective in Toronto. She left the collective to open her own art studio-gallery on Queen West in the heart of Toronto's Art and Design District.

Her love of art cinema (one of her favourite directors is Michelangelo Antonioni) helps to explain the process which has led to her unique style. Critics use terms such as "coolly elegant," "open ended," "haunting yet familiar." She recreates haunting, humorous and all-too-poignant memories from the past, and



*Captain S And His Crew*

streamlined images of a present you might miss as you race through your day. Owens makes the viewer stop and think. She fossilizes a memory forever in an expressive shroud of wax, and we perceive the past through her non-narrative lens. Her work, although beautiful, is not pretty. It combines simplicity in imagery with a powerful emotion.

It wasn't until a fellow artist came into her sculpture studio and introduced her to encaustic painting that Owens was able to combine her

love of photography and sculpture. She studied the technique of encaustic at OCAD. Using mixed media photography and encaustic, she creates her particular effect through her skilful use of a blow torch. Beverly states, "To me it has been a journey of a new language with this medium and I have been a happy participant."

The Beverly Owens Project is one of the best places in the city to view encaustic, an ancient art form that is enjoying a resurgence due to its unique qualities and to advances in technology.



*Heat*



*Drifting Boys Of Summer*

In fact, Owens has two studios. "I have a large studio where I live and that is where I do most of my pieces. Living in my studio space is fantastic. It allows me to focus at any hour. I can have an idea that might work for a piece and instantly can start with it. I also have studio-gallery space at 1140 Queen St. West in Toronto which I recently opened and it is called The Beverly Owens Project. The idea was to work in a space with the public where I could show my works." However, with the success of the gallery Owens has had to

refocus. She has hired a project manager for the gallery and studio so that she can concentrate on her work at her home studio.

About her creative process, Beverly comments, "Exposure as a child really starts that part of your brain working. You learn to see things differently. I cannot remember a time when I did not see things differently than others – like the beauty of a neon gas station sign in the rain. I suppose I am inspired by everything and everyone and although people constantly say

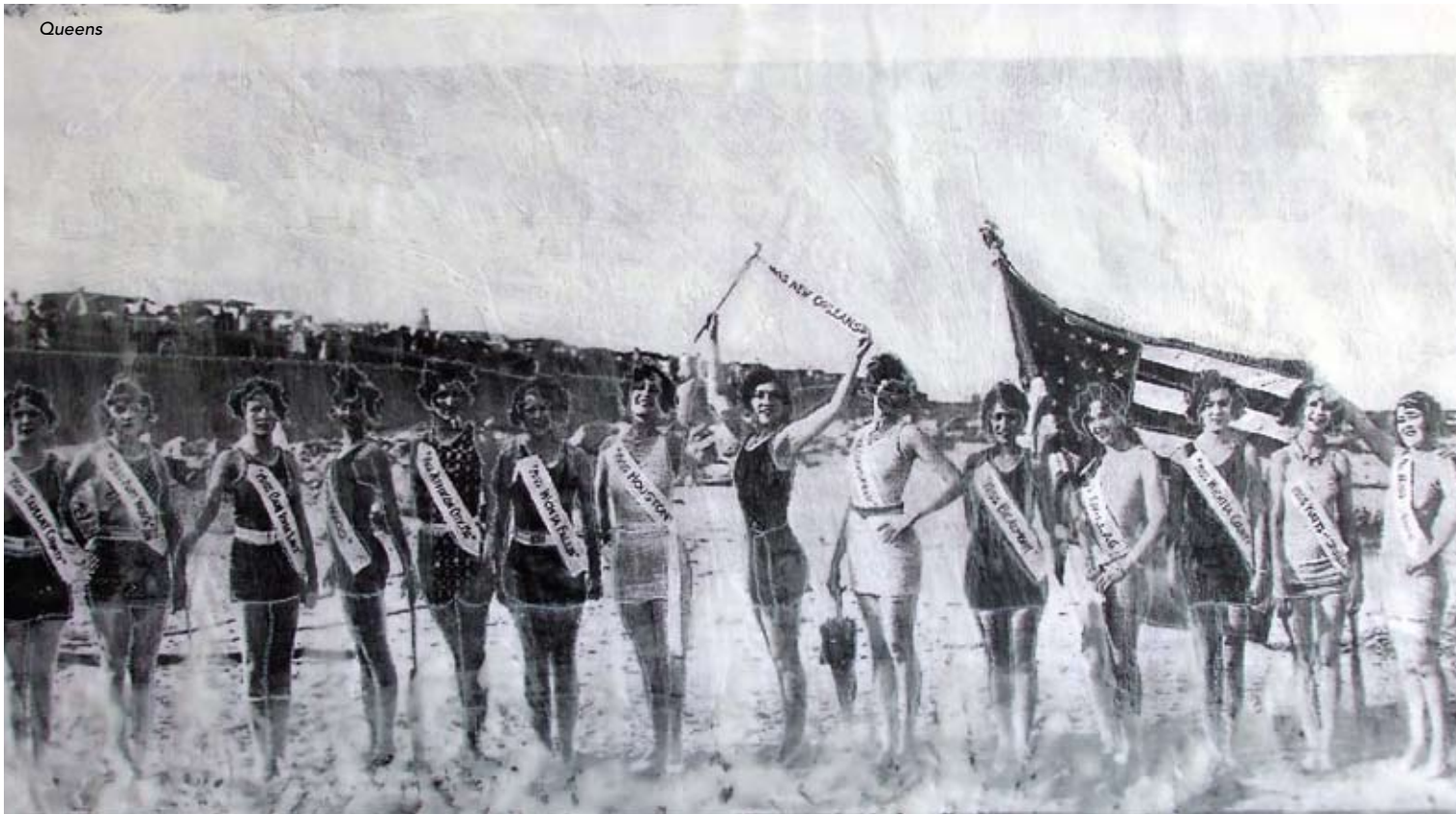


*Desert Orange*

Misty Morning



Queens



I Will See You Then

my work is unique, and I believe it is, although I think originality is a myth. We are all always reinventing the same stuff as a culture." Beverly is not inclined to resort to a "cute" saying or an "inspiring" picture. She believes that artists should put themselves into spaces that are uncomfortable at times and use that experience to create more depth in their work.

Her studio is where the work takes shape, where it starts. The inspiration comes when elements she has been toying with, arranging and rearranging, take shape on her work table.

The process is intuitive. Beverly is inspired by image, texture and the story of empty space. She uses sculptural tools, a blow torch, oil paints, pastels and encaustic.

Owens observes that "The most difficult thing about my craft is to express a lot with less, to employ the use of restraint. The ideas formulate over time. Sometimes a lot of time passes during this process. It could be a year, but generally a good month or two outside the studio. After all of this I go into the studio and let the art become part of the dialogue.



*Mermaids*

“Currently I am working on a new medium with metal and photography. It has taken me over a year to develop. I love it. It doesn’t have the sculpture essence of my encaustic work, so I will always be doing encaustic, but the metal is quite stunning and inspiring.

“I love the freedom of working on what inspires me but I also love the collaborative process of working with clients on a project.”

Beverly sometimes steps back from her studio. “Occasionally I like to escape from it all, get out to the countryside of Prince Edward County, spend time with my niece Milly and travel with my camera, try new wine.”

She advises artists at the beginning of their careers to create the proper studio space. She has both a working studio and a working gallery where she invites other artists to show their work.

When Beverly is not working in her studio she likes to relax with an old movie and a glass of Châteauneuf-du-Pape. She also loves a good Australian red. Her favourite foods are a fresh herb salad and salmon on the barbeque.

Paris, the Alps and Quebec call her to visit.

She has two favourite restaurants – Jean’s Vegetarian Kitchen in Toronto, which has great Thai food, and The Drake Hotel where she loves



*Into the Mystery*



*Stillness*

to dine on beef brisket with mash. When she is doing the cooking, she makes homemade macaroni and cheese from a recipe dating back to her Grade 7 class. Even a very contemporary artist needs good old fashioned comfort food. The Beverly Owens Project is located at 1140 Queen St West (steps from The Drake Hotel) in Toronto, Ontario, telephone 647.402.3570, [www.thebeverlyowensproject.com](http://www.thebeverlyowensproject.com).

# AD Space