

# JOYCE WERWIE PERRY

getting the paint to move

words  
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There are no smiles, rather a calm resolve. Fourteen coal miners huddle together, weary but not broken, two loyal hounds at their feet. *Mining America*, a 72" x 100" diptych, remains one of Joyce Werwie Perry's favorites after decades of painting. Men who spent the majority of their lives in darkness and anonymity are now displayed and appreciated in the light. Part of the permanent collection at The Westmoreland Museum of American Art since 2011, the life-size work based on a photo from the past draws out deep emotions in the present.

"I can get emotional talking about it. I couldn't stop thinking about those poor men working in the mine. I'm painting them and wondering how I'm going to get people to feel that."

The greens and blacks she chose convey the burden they bore as well as their soldier-like camaraderie. The paint ran down as the emotions welled up.

"I'm proud of it because people remember them. Remembering people is part of it. That's how it all started with the old photographs. The dignity of a simple life and the link we have to others from both our past and our present have always been at the center of my work. It's the reason for our existence. I've been told that my paintings evoke what is universal yet personal. The emotional response and intimate connection to my paintings are very satisfying to me."

Though Perry didn't start painting until she was a thirty-something mother of three, her work has been selected for numerous awards and prizes, including the 2018 Art Comes Alive Polly Magazine Award, sponsored by Art Design Consultants.

After starting with brushes, she now paints with knives. And though her style and subjects are always evolving, moving people through moving paint remains at the heart.

"I can get the paint on, move it around, scrape it off, borrow it, scratch into it. Taking it off is just as much a part of the technique as putting it on. So it's about getting the paint to move. I'm still pushing myself to try to make it move even faster, to get it to look even more emotional."

Owner of Le Poire Fine Art Studio & Gallery in Pittsburgh, Perry uses the space to work on new pieces as well as teach her knife technique to fellow artists. She relishes the moment when her students break through to new levels of confidence and execution, pushing both themselves and Perry to continue growing and going.

"I continually strive to express this in a more extraordinary and intriguing way, developing my technique intelligently to allow the viewer to experience not only the finished product but the improvisation in the process of abstraction. I feel my creative desire and the challenge to discover new avenues to express it will always be with me. Is a true artist really ever satisfied?"





A Little Birdie Told Me



Boardwalk Amusements



Mining America



Layover