

# THE ART OF TRUTH

WRITER/SARAH GLASER • PHOTOGRAPHY/ERYNN JAMES

When Phyllis Toburen closes the door to her studio she enters a place where time does not exist. As classic rock music permeates the air around her, Toburen feels the constraints of the world melt away. While the rhythm of the music draws Toburen deeper within herself, she is enveloped into her own creative realm. Here is where Toburen's masterpieces are brought to life.

Limits cannot be imposed on Toburen's desire to discover nonconforming uses of materials. Combining beads, fabric and layers of acrylic paint with her innovative technique, Toburen creates a colorful acrylic resin that lifts from the canvas at will. The resulting effect is a 3-dimensional juxtaposition of planes in the artwork that is often mistaken for enamel, ceramic or glass.

Classic rock music is an essential component in Toburen's artistic process. "Rock music is my muse," she said. "When I paint, music becomes an ambience that allows me to gain a deeper understanding of the message the singer or songwriter wishes to convey. Often I honor those artists that moved me during my creative journey by naming my works after them, their songs, or their albums."

Toburen feels that her creative potential always lay dormant within her inner-self. Only after graduating from the University of Wisconsin-Madison with a degree in History did she feel comfortable exploring these long hidden talents. She learned to crochet, and pursued batik, fabric design and other fiber arts. In time, Toburen found herself thrust into the world of fashion design. She began her own business designing and selling couture one-of-a-kind women's formal attire and evening gowns. Toburen acknowledged that "even as a fashion designer, I was an artist. I painted on my garments as if they were canvases." Soon enough, her ingenuity was noticed. Phyllis jokes, "my clothing got into places I never could have gotten into myself."

Always desiring to explore new artistic paths, Toburen eventually learned to paint on canvas. Under the supervision of several influential mentors, she was encouraged to work professionally. "I did not consider myself a true artist until I opened my own gallery to display my own work. After my first Gallery Night, I realized how intrigued people were by my original technique. They had so many questions that they wanted answered which kept them thinking about my art. The mysterious aspect of my art seemed to keep people coming back to take another look." Toburen continues to astound viewers while currently showcasing 20 of her original works of art on the cream city brick walls of Palms Bar and Bistro, located in a historic landmark building in Milwaukee's Historic Third Ward. Additionally, an extensive collection of Toburen's wall art, art glass, multimedia sculpture and furniture is displayed at Cranston, also located in the Third Ward.

When describing her own work, Toburen stresses that her art must express the truth she sees. It must be a valid and open expression of her life experiences in order to be successful. For this reason, Toburen covers the totality of her gallery-wrapped canvases, including the sides, with a clear, colorless, protective resin. She does not want to hide anything from the viewer. Furthermore, Toburen does not suggest her paintings be framed. These artistic decisions allow the viewer to have a multi-sensual art experience while both viewing and touching Toburen's artwork.

Toburen considers herself incredibly fortunate to be an artist. She feels that as a visual artist she does not need an audience to be fulfilled. The act of creating is fulfilling in and unto itself. "I believe that I will always be happy because my creativity has no boundaries. My art has become a visual history of my life that I can share with the world for generations beyond my own. In that sense, my art is timeless."



TO STAY UPDATED ON PHYLLIS CHECK OUT [WWW.PHYLLISTOBUREN.COM](http://WWW.PHYLLISTOBUREN.COM)