

An Interview with Beatrice Wood

This was her last interview before her death.

Words: Sara Eaker

As I drive down highway 150 to Beatrice Wood's home, I glance at the bouquet of pink roses seated beside me as a gesture to acknowledge her adoration for the color pink. As I follow the serpentine road, I am reminded of the day when her assistant, Ram Singh, informed me that I was granted permission to interview her. I remember crying hysterically as I was in absolute shock. My mystification lies in the fact that Beatrice Wood rarely grants interviews, and when she does, the interviews are designated for esteemed journalists. This rare journey up through the rolling mountains to meet this fascinating, reclusive artist is an honor.

Beatrice Wood is 104 years old. She is severely hard of hearing and has little energy. Because of these circumstances, it is necessary that I visit with her at her home in Ojai, California. After entering her driveway, my car is instantly submerged by her display of pottery pieces amongst an endless array of plants and succulents aligning her doorway. It as though the Museum of Modern Art has descended their collection of her highly acclaimed artistry on her front lawn. I knock nervously with a knock devoid of all rhythm on her front door. I am greeted and lead into her living room by, Ram Singh, a tall, handsome and lanky man of Indian descent. As I slowly approach Ms. Wood sitting in a pink chiffon armchair shrouded in silence the incredible history of her life enlivens my mind.

Her magnificent biography floods my mind as I imagine the various prominent artists and distinguished persons that have surrounded her. From Krishnamurti, the

vital spiritual guru of India, to Ghandi and Anais Nin, all of whom have been touched by Ms. Wood's soul. Upon first site with Beatrice Wood, it is apparent that she is first and foremost an artist. She sits enmeshed between numerous pieces of her artwork representing her world-renowned gifts as a ceramist, painter, and sculptor. From a brightly glazed vase engorged in metallic coloring to an abstract landscape portraiture hanging overhead, her works can be found from the Santa Barbara Museum of Art to the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Ms. Wood continually creates art even at the age of 90. Her passion for art remains as she continues to work at the dawn of each day on new projects. She emanates inspiration. Her biography of artwork exemplifies the definition of a successful career as an artist, a career overflowing with endless passion and devotion.

Her passion however, is not only expressed in her art, but also, in her love of chocolate. It is known within her circle of admirers that upon visiting with her, it is a requirement to bring her a delectable treat. As one of her many admirers, I gently place a colorful box of golden foiled Belgium chocolates into her lap. Her face illuminates as we begin.

SBE: Do you believe that having an aristocratic Mother who had such a hold on your life helped in an antagonistic way to influence your ability to take risks?

BW: My mother did not know how to dream.

SBE: What elements truly seize your attention and inspire you?

BW: Nothing is more beautiful and timeless than nature. Nothing inspires me more than using my hands because there is nothing more creative than creating a piece of art work with your body as the instrument in which you create.

SBE: Did you find that art allowed you to express yourself more so than acting?

BW: Well, the first problem with acting was that I did not like to depend on others to create. Pottery, ceramics, and watercolors are only up to my expression and perception of what art is and can become.

SBE: How has Krishnamurti influenced your life?

BW: His spirit is the closest to human enlightenment.

SBE: What is your opinion on the endless consumption of television?

BW: Television is the anti-Christ.

SBE: If you were to live another 100 years, what would you like to accomplish?

BW: I don't know...some children, and perhaps the ability to hold on to one young lover. But, if I had the strength I had at 50, I would produce twice the amount of work because I truly learned the meaning of time.

SBE: Are there any dreams you wished you fulfilled?

BW: I wish I became a teacher. Not only to give back to so many others who so graciously gave of themselves to me, but also, to learn from the students, who would teach me more about art than any other resource.

Beatrice is beginning to lose energy. Her words become few and far between as she struggles to maintain her breath while her eyes plead to connect with mine. She gently points above her shoulder with her long, fragile pink nail-polished fingernail to a bulletin board with a postcard of several men donning thong underwear lined up in a row on a beach in Miami. She giggles and says, "Now, this is what interests me these days." I join her in her girlish giggles that beam off of her rosy cheeks and lip-sticked magenta lips.

I watch her bony hands reach to open up the box of chocolates. She slowly unwraps the package and hands me a chocolate champagne truffle and quietly leads me wrapped in her pink knit afghan to her courtyard. She smiles as she notices a hawk flying low above us. As we sit in silence enjoying our chocolates underneath the warm sun, I realize that I am the closest to human enlightenment.