

## Pushing the Boundaries of Sculpture

by Judith Pratt

The Washington Sculptors Group is always happy to welcome a new member with a unique approach to sculpture. Emerging artist Makeda Smith definitely fits that description. Originally from Florida, Makeda received her undergraduate degree from Stetson University there, and then earned her master's degree in art from Lesley University in Cambridge, MA. After receiving her degree, she moved to DC in 2015 to begin a teaching career. Once she settled in the nation's capital, she began to see possibilities that the DC arts community had to offer, and it rekindled her love of sculpture.



Makeda Smith

As Makeda continued to pursue her own work in ceramic sculpture, she also began collaborating with AJ, a member of the creative team of Andie and AJ, who shared a mutual interest in pushing the boundaries of sculpture and fashion as art. As the project developed, the team grew to include members from Boston, Washington (DC), Miami, and New York, and because of the geographic distances between them, the creative team collaborated almost entirely via email and video chat on the project. They quickly developed an exhibition concept that originated with Makeda's sculpture, which then developed further by applying the shapes, colors, and textures of her sculpture into "wearable art" constructed of "thrifed," or recycled clothing. This sculpture-as-fashion concept with awareness for sustainability echoes similar exhibitions over the past five years mounted by major US museums, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, and the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts.



The resulting exhibition and event, titled *Th3funktion*, debuted in November 2019 at Studio 52 in North-east DC. The exhibition and fashion show combined the art of ceramic sculpture with the art of what we wear in our daily lives, emphasizing

the power of sustainability, diversity, identity, and inclusivity. Makeda also learned that by using her initiative as an artist, she could go beyond the challenges of being an emerging artist in the gallery and nonprofit art world. As she rediscovered the importance of her sculptural practice in the DC arts community, she also rediscovered the value of connecting with other artists throughout the country. WSG looks forward to supporting Makeda's efforts in the future, and seeing how she will continue to push the boundaries of sculpture.

## Tribute to Elsabé Dixon

by Steve Wanna

Elsabé Dixon served as President of the Washington Sculptors Group (WSG) for two years. In 2019, she resigned in order to accept the prestigious position of Executive Director of the Danville Museum of Fine Arts & History in Danville, VA. In her years as president, she brought tremendous energy and vision to the group, and her leadership will be sorely missed. We thank Elsabé for her service, and wish her continued success in all her endeavors. We look forward to seeing what she will bring forth next.

I've known Elsabé for a number of years, initially as an acquaintance. I mostly saw her at gallery openings and other art-related events. At the time I still wasn't identifying as an "artist" and thought of my work as mostly something I did on the side. I became a member of WSG as a way to connect with the local community. From the very beginning Elsabé was always encouraging, and it's not an exaggeration to say that her support contributed directly to my decision, several years later, to become a full-time artist. About a year ago, Elsabé recruited me to join the board of WSG as the Chair of Exhibitions, and I was very fortunate to have her as a mentor for a few months. Her energy and generosity are contagious, and her can-do attitude about almost anything made the work seem easy and enjoyable. Her natural ability to connect with people and to make them see possibilities made the work seem effortless. Her seemingly boundless energy meant that she was able to fulfill her duties as President of WSG while maintaining a thriving practice, being a successful teacher, writing articles for local and regional publications, and hosting other activities in which she is involved. In the short mentorship I had with her, I learned a lot about how to do this job, but also how being a generous and present human cultivates all kinds of good energy. She taught me that by simply being herself, which is a true gift.