



Mac Photobooth selfportrait

## Arkansas Delta artist Norwood Creech

Photos courtesy of Norwood Creech  
Story by Marissa Holiman

Norwood Creech is a very unique resident of Lepanto.

She has traveled all over the United States, but it wasn't until 1999 that she moved to the small agricultural town in Northeast Arkansas. The wife of well-known Lepanto native, Tri Watkins, Creech is an artist and a true visionary of landscapes.

"Landscapes have become my primary subject — it captivates me and inspires me," Creech said.

However, it wasn't always just strictly landscapes. After graduating from Skidmore College in Saratoga Springs, N.Y., in 1985, most of her artwork focused on painting still-lives.

"I would set up bottles, vases, fruit and so forth, on a horizontal plane, nearly at eye level," said Creech. "I was determined to get at the essence of what I was seeing."

She would use a variety of media and in a variety of styles, greatly varying the sizes to express the excitement she felt about recreating something so dull.



**Night Scene Looking to Robinsonville (painted on location at Horseshoe Lake, Arkansas)** — oil on luan panel, framed size: 15.5" x 17.5" (The painting is housed in a custom 18K Bucks County Pennsylvania style frame)



**Yellow Field, St. Francis / Little River, Poinsett County, Arkansas** — oil on canvasboard, image size: 9.75" x 19.75"

Moving to Memphis in 1994 led to a new perspective in her artistic perceptions.

"Seeing the flatness of the Mississippi River Delta, I saw a familiarity in the trees, ditches and row crops on this horizontal plane that related to my still-lives," said Creech.

She decided to leave the studio and began exploring the levees of East Arkansas. As an artist, she really began observing the landscape through the changing

seasons, weather and light.

"Now I still do spend my energy processing and internalizing images of local fields and tree lines at different times of the growing seasons attempting to capture the landscape's essence through drawing, painting and printmaking," said Creech.

Creech's works of art portray agricultural buildings, gins and warehouses, as well as forgotten cemeteries and abandoned shacks that line the countryside.

"For me, this rural landscape represents a piece of the myth of the South, Southern agriculture and its heritage, with stories of small lost communities, the history of cotton, and the apparent effect that the evolution of technology has had on the agricultural community, the landowners and the farmers who still work the land."

- Norwood Creech



**Landscape in a Box** — acrylic and graphite on paper, image size: 20.5" x 31.5"



**Watertowers at Lepanto** — pen/ink, pastel, marker and graphite on paper, image size: 9" x 12"

"For me, this land represents a piece of the myth of southern agriculture and its heritage," said Creech. "It's the stories of the farmers, the history of the cotton and the effect of the evolution of the technology."

After living in such places as just off the South Carolina coast, on the coast of Southern California or in Southeast Arizona next to Mexico, it would seem that Lepanto might appear somewhat mundane — but not to Creech.

"I never dreamed I would live here in the floodplains," said Creech, "but I am most grateful to be here, to connect with this land and to share its sense of place."

Hanging on the wall of her studio are lists highlighting various principles of art which were first taught to her by her grandmother, K. Doyle Ford. These include the seven elements of design, three properties of color and eight principles of design.

Her mother, Millicent Ford Creech, an artist as well, received numerous prizes and awards for her work. She combines elements of classical portraiture with subtle and elusive qualities in fine art.

While learning the ways of an artist through her mother and grandmother were beneficial, Creech has been well-educated in her craft through traditional instruction.

Her real art education began after high school. In 1985, she received her bachelor of science in studio art at Skidmore College and then moved on to the Arts Education Forum of Art and Design in 1987 in Savannah, Ga. She took part in the National Arts Educators Convention in Los Angeles in 1988, Arts in the Schools Institute and the Memphis Arts Council at the University of Memphis in 1994. She also was involved with Simply Arts with Dr. Warren Newman, Crittenden Arts Council in West Memphis in 1997.

"Like I've said before those principles were taught in the classrooms as well," Creech said. "The goal is for each and all of the elements and principles of design to be successfully and effectively engaged, individually and collectively."



**Greenwood Cemetery, Lepanto, Arkansas** — black and white digital photograph, image size: 8" x 10"

Although she learned this through her family and school, she doesn't think that students currently are being taught these methods.

"In my opinion, I do think they have been lost in today's teachings," said Creech. "I have found these simple principles can be applied to nearly everything and certainly any art form. They transcend reality with their individual themes."

Creech has expressed herself through many forms of art, from painting to printmaking, but will continue, as she has in the past, to be willing to try anything new to keep her art fresh and innovative.

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**Milo Through the Trees** — monprint on paper, a form of printmaking to produce a single print, image size: 6" x 4"

"When I see this land I am captivated by the endless compositions and nuances in the patterns of row crops and ditches and the horizontalness of it all. I explore farms and levees, looking over crops of cotton, soybeans, rice and milo, watching the tree lines define the space, and watching how it changes through the seasons. While I am working on location, I actively take in my surroundings, watching the light, breathing and feeling the air, the weather, the humidity, smelling the dirt and doing my best to imprint that sense of place on my own sense's memory. Once I feel saturated with the experience of being in the setting, and feel I truly internally understand it, I take the image to the studio."



**Milo on Location, St. Francis/Little River, Poinsett County, Arkansas** — oil on linen, image size: 15" x 20"