

LYN BELISLE – Wanderers: *enigmatic figures wrapped with handcrafted grace and spirit*



Introduction

These small sculptures grew out of a spirit doll workshop I taught several years ago. They have become part of my own three-dimensional work as well as a most beloved mixed media instructional process. The figures have a slim elegance that belies their humble underpinnings. These Wanderers can take you to deeper destinations in your own mixed media work.

History and Background

Across time and cultures, iconic figure sculptures have been created as objects of reflection, humanity, and protection. Early figures were very simple creations, often made from such materials as clay, rags, wood, or bone. The manner in which they were placed indicates that they were cherished items of devotion.

Based on the notion of spirit dolls and santos, the unadorned Wanderer figure provides a tabula rasa for your own expressions of meaning and message. There are infinite versions of the basic armature. This eight-part class covers the basic structure as well as variations in surface finishes and body design.

Related Resources

Folk Art Figures

[Santos and bultos](#)

[Santos from the Vatican](#)

[Museum of International Folk Art](#)

[Neo-Santos: New Interpretations of Folk Art Saints and Angels Workshop](#)

Spirit Dolls

[The Healing Doll Way, Barb Kobe](#)

[Spirit Doll Intro and Course](#)

Materials

For the basic Wanderer:

- Twigs of various weights and sizes, about 12"-18" long
- [Air Dry clay to make the face \(optional\)](#)
- Low-temp hot glue gun and glue sticks
- Cardboard tube (toilet paper cores are the perfect size)
- Cheap lightweight aluminum foil
- Small straight shish-kabob skewers to attach head
- Mat board scraps
- Hole punch or awl (optional)
- [Plaster-infused gauze bandages – one roll should be enough for two figures](#)
- Acrylic or craft paints
- Metallic acrylic paint or metallic wax
- [Walnut Ink](#) (can substitute diluted Raw Sienna tube watercolor, diluted, in a spray bottle)
- Journal or notepad (and a pen or pencil to write an intention)
- Scissors
- Glue sticks (the tube kind) for touch-ups

Suggested adornments – choose from what you have

- Twine, upholstery thread, waxed linen, or imitation
- Fabric Scraps of various sizes, colors, and textures
- Ribbon and trims
- Beads, buttons, wire
- Needle and thread (optional)
- Ephemera and found objects

Sources of materials:

Use sticks from places are meaningful to you – don't cut live branches. Gather leaves, as well, and moss or any other natural materials that seem to attract you. For fabric, think like a quilter and use scraps of old garments that have been worn and loved. Use jewelry and ribbons that you've worn or made.