

Pauline JACQUES // “*Pauline-aux-zoizeaux*” (*Pauline over the moon*)

Pauline Jacques has been playing with wood since she was a young girl. She can't count the number of pieces of furniture she's built over the years for family and friends: sideboards, old-fashioned cupboards, captain's beds, tables, shelves - always in white pine and using the ancestral method of herringbone and mortise.



Now retired, this Eastern Townships-born *beauceronne* discovered woodcarving and took several years of master classes with Richard Caton. Her first ducks already testify to her dexterity, and over the years she has expanded the repertoire of birds she has created. She now counts over twenty species: kestrel, blue jay, chickadee, hummingbird, heron, puffin, mockingbird, cedar waxwing, goldfinch, boreal owl, owl and more.

She takes her inspiration from the natural world where she lives and observes on a daily basis, with or without her binoculars. Each piece requires many hours of work and several tools: from the bench saw and the band saw to the paintbrushes, knives of various sizes and the multi-headed dremel, not to mention the original drawing and the rulers.

Pauline Jacques' sculptures are naturalistic in that they faithfully reproduce the particularities of each bird, in terms of dimensions, proportions, number of feathers and colors. Her preferred wood is tupelo, a softwood native to the banks of the Mississippi River in the southern United States, which has unfortunately become much less accessible since Hurricane Katrina. She also uses a local wood, basswood, which presents certain difficulties, not least because of the knots that have to be worked around.

This nurse by trade devotes many hours to sculpture, which she regards as a meditation, an art of living and a hobby. She has refused to exhibit until now, and has occasionally agreed to sell her sculptures for special occasions; she mainly reserves them as gifts for loved ones.

After some twenty years sculpting countless birds, Pauline Jacques recently decided to carve a turtle out of a block of limewood, both for the challenge of the project and the pleasure of dabbling with something different. But she assures us that she will never stray from the birds so dear to her heart.

The *Art en jeu* exhibition gives her the opportunity to join other artists represented by Arts Culture Massawippi, and to establish contact with the public who appreciate her work.

Text and photo: Armande Saint-Jean, Ph.D., retired journalist