Betty LaDuke (1933-)

Oregon artist and writer Betty LaDuke has gained an international reputation for her murals, paintings, and sketches. Her work tends to express socialist progress and life's continuity, from images of America's civil rights struggles, such as *Play Free* (1968), to women's struggles for survival in war-ridden, spoiled lands, such as *Eritrea/Ethiopia: Where Have All the Fathers Gone* (1998). Other thematic elements in her work include animals, rituals, and celebrations, which LaDuke uses to illustrate similarities among geographically and traditionally disparate cultures.

Born in 1933 in the Bronx, New York, to Jewish parents Sam and Helen Bernstein, LaDuke knew she would be an artist by the time she was nine. At age sixteen, she enrolled in the High School of Music and Art in New York, and she continued her education at Denver University, the Cleveland Institute of Art, and the Instituto Allende in Mexico. In 1963, she graduated from California State University in Los Angeles with a special secondary art teaching credential and a master's degree in printmaking. Betty LaDuke's daughter, Winona LaDuke, a Native American writer, activist, and environmentalist, was born in 1959. Winona's father, Vincent (Sun Bear) LaDuke, customarily enrolled her as a member in his White Earth tribe.

Betty LaDuke taught at Southern Oregon University (SOU) from 1964 to 1996, the university's second woman art teacher and, for eighteen years, the only woman in the Art Department. In an effort to raise the profile of women and international artists, she initiated "Women and Art" and "Art in the Third World" courses at the university. Her exhibitions highlighted these themes, including one at Willamette University in 1977 titled *Landscape: A Feminine Mythical View*. LaDuke also published a series of books documenting the art of non-European women, including *Compañeros, Women, Art, and Social Change in Latin America* (1985) and *Africa: Women's Art, Women's Lives* (1991).

From 1975 to the 1980s, LaDuke devoted her research to exploring world art and documenting the experiences of women in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. She traveled extensively to develop a series of sketchbooks that formed the basis for her larger works and exhibitions. She was commissioned by the Mexican government to paint the outer walls of one-room schools in the 1950s, and she received commissions to create murals such as the 100-foot-high sequence *Dreaming Cows* (2009) for Heifer International, whose mission is to end world hunger and poverty.

LaDuke and her husband live in the home they built in Ashland over forty years ago. She is the recipient of the Oregon Governor's Award in the Arts (1993) and the National Art Education Association's Ziegfield Award for distinguished international leadership (1996).

Written by Kristi L. Russell

Further Reading:

Betty LaDuke: An Artist's Journey . http://bettyladuke.com.

LaDuke, Betty. *Africa through the Eyes of Women Artists*. Trenton: Africa World Press, Inc., 1991.

LaDuke, Betty. *Women Artists: Multi-Cultural Visions*. Trenton: The Red Sea Press, Inc., 1992.

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