

World-traveling Motorcycle Artist's Work Goes on View at Cherryhurst House in Houston

Heather L. Johnson traveled 38,000 as part of her project "In Search of the Frightening and the Beautiful." The Cherryhurst House artist in residence creates watercolors, paintings, drawings, and photographs in response to her life on the road.

Houston, TX ([PRWEB](#)) July 19, 2016 -- In the Spring of 2015, artist Heather L. Johnson took to the road on her Yamaha XT250 motorcycle in pursuit of her quest "In Search of the Frightening and Beautiful (ISFB)," and rode through the United States, Mexico, Central and South America for ten months. Embroideries, watercolors, drawings, and photographs created both during and in response to her journey will be on view at [Cherryhurst House](#) in Houston from September 24, 2016 to February 19, 2017.

A petite woman, Johnson encounters concern more often than encouragement when she reveals her plans for solo motorcycle travel into territories unknown. But the journey ignites her passion. By increasing her strength and speed, the motorcycle becomes an extension of the artist's body. When she stops along the road she sometimes leaves behind hand embroidered art works of motorcycle parts, accompanied by Spanish phrases describing experiences she has had on her travels thus far. She places the embroideries in select locations in the landscape with the hope they will be encountered, taken, and kept. Since the start of ISFB in 2013, Johnson has traveled over 38,000 miles and left 47 artworks in her wake.

While the embroideries, painstakingly made, serve as conversation starters and map markers, her photographs and watercolors unravel stories from the journey itself. Cinematic images depict uncanny subjects ranging from a roadside brush fire to a family battling torrents of rain with a picnic umbrella; from a barbed wire-lined wall of concrete stained with streaks of blood-colored rust to a cemetery's Virgin Mary locked in her own glass house; from a shipping container painted with ecstatic dancing people surrounded by piles of rubble to a scraggly tree whose ultra-long roots cling for dear life to a tall clump of earth. "This project is all about embracing spontaneity, random interactions and occurrences that testify to the 'frightening and beautiful:' the coincidences, contradictions, and struggles that reveal the essence of human experience."

As artist-in-residence at Cherryhurst House, Johnson has returned to Houston to distill her experiences into this latest body of work. "Heather spent part of her youth in Houston and has a unique independent spirit. Her motorcycle journey and art project challenges prevailing apprehensions about women in the traditionally male arena of solo exploration," explains Barbara Levine, curator of the exhibition. "This is by far the most ambitious chapter of Heather's ongoing project. The work in the exhibition, including her hand sewn embroideries and refined watercolors, speak to the nature of her unprecedented experience." Cherryhurst House, the brainchild and private home of Dallas McNamara, is a new art space that cultivates site-specific experiences and exhibitions, and encourages artistic process and exchange. Located at 1603 Cherryhurst Street in Houston's Montrose neighborhood, the house will be open on Saturday and Sunday from 12 to 5pm and by appointment, and Johnson will be available to conduct tours through November.

"By then it will be time to go," Johnson says. "I grew up moving frequently, having lived in many places. [In Search of the Frightening and Beautiful](#) has taught me to embrace a nomadic existence, living simply, experiencing as much as possible and passing what I see, hear, and learn on to others through art. In this spirit I am committed to continuing this project around the world."



Born in 1969, [Johnson](#) has shown her work in galleries, museums, and in the public realm throughout the U.S., Europe, Japan, and Mexico. She has lectured on her work at Cal Poly (San Luis Obispo, CA), Moravian College (Bethlehem, PA), and other venues, and has curated several exhibitions and collaborative projects including "Cracks in the Pavement: Gifts in the Urban Landscape," involving artists from around the world, and "Love Letter," a collection of site-specific works presented in New York City and Paris.



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