

# ARTIST'S STATEMENT

*Karen Nemes, La Grotesquerie*

For as long as I can remember, I felt inadequate: broken, defective, not-good-enough.

Over time, I have worked hard to accept myself, to substitute compassion for recrimination and despair.

The gift of this journey is a sense of empathy, the ability to commiserate deeply with those who also struggle.

At best, this allows me to see the potential and celebrate the uniqueness of others.

At worst, this draws me to people who are incapable of receiving my love and thus unable to give me love in return.

I've come to realize that, on some level, I had sought to heal myself by fixing others.

Recently, I was struck by an insight that brought me to my knees.

In the work that I still struggle to call "art," I am continually drawn to the broken, damaged, often mangled forms of animals whose lives have been cut short, often in violent ways.

When I am able rescue these lifeless forms and create something new, it feels like a personal triumph.

And when I make too many mistakes, or the creature is too badly injured to salvage, I feel as though I have profoundly failed.

Each creature I touch is a little piece of my soul.

You may see something morbid, disgusting, and broken; I see the potential and opportunity that hides beneath the battered bodies.

Working with blood, flesh, and bone is an intimate and organic process.

In the hours I spend with each dead animal, a personal connection develops that borders on love.

Every time it works—when something is preserved and made new—my soul claims a victory.

I heal myself with every scrape and stitch.