

Jennifer Zurick

"I aspire to create simple, elegant woven vessels that possess a richness of spirit and a presence embodying the soul of the tree from which they came."

Jennifer Zurick is a self-taught artist specializing in black willow bark, which she has been harvesting and weaving into baskets since 1980. She began working in fiber arts as a young girl, when she discovered inkle-loom weaving. She graduated to a large floor loom and built up a small herd of sheep - raising, processing, and weaving their soft fleeces. When she began experimenting with basketry, she was especially drawn to fibers that she could harvest in her home environment in the Kentucky foothills near Berea. Her fiber of choice is willow bark, harvested from trees growing along the Kentucky River. Although she is strongly influenced by Native American basketry, her approach to basketry is also rooted in the experiences she has had with indigenous basket makers in places like Laos and Nepal, where she visited with her geographer husband, and in the lush Ecuadorian Amazon, where she traveled as a Kentucky Arts Council Cultural Exchange Artist. Perhaps the strongest influence on her work is the forested creek valley, where she lives, surrounded by the sounds and fragrances of forest and garden -- the organic elements that inspire her work. She has received two fellowships from the Kentucky Arts Council as well as the 2010 United States Artist fellowship.