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Commission work in bronze, clay or stone

ARTIST STATEMENT

My professional art career began in August of 1972 after finishing course work for a Master of Fine Arts (MFA) degree. Since then I have made my living through studio work, teaching or various combinations of both. In 1985 I began a full time teaching career as a professor of sculpture and pottery. The position provided a steady income and more time to experiment with clay and other processes related to glass, stone and bronze. My teaching philosophy was simple, give as much to the students as you could and always realize the student/professor relationship is a privileged position. My responsibility included providing a depth and breadth of knowledge regarding; contemporary and historical art forms, technical and aesthetic concerns and artist's business issues. Simultaneously, I encouraged them to find their own personal means of expression and pushed them into discovering how they could use information, life experience and artistic talent to contribute to the greater whole. Philosophically there is little connection between the studio work of an artist and the act of teaching art. Both are noble and rewarding activities but in truth the intellectual cause and effect implications generated are very different. I really enjoy the multiple benefits of teaching, including what I learned from the students. However, in early 2007, and after being in the same position for 22 years, I decided to pursue full-time studio work once again.

My interest in making art has always been rooted in self-expression and the personal desire to challenge myself. I have also harbored enough business sense to be mindful of how they affect reality. This, I feel, has been paramount to any success or failure I have experienced. Ultimately, I am aware that I make things, as we all do, that have value to me and that express my overall knowledge base at any given time. Most of the objects I make originate as a result of observation and/or research. They may materialize because of an interest in ancient art and history or they may express issues that are personal. Some are simply a result of a desire to explore interesting concepts, techniques or visual phenomena. It follows, however, that the primary concern is self-expression through exploitation of a language that is universal. At its best the visual result exemplifies a message that transcends definition and at the same time begs for it.

I like the process of making things and often think it has little to do with art and more to do with self-gratification. When there is a project under way and I have a direction, there is no place I would rather be than in the studio. Obviously, it is not all roses and truthfully there is

little magic in being an artist, just a lot of hard and rewarding work. Working in the shop is a bumpy ride. The real challenge is to maintain ones interest level. I do that by pushing the creative process and aesthetic progress in a constant forward direction. That's not always easy.

Clay, bronze and stone is generally my materials of choice. Which one I use is determined by the nature of the concept, why, where or to whom the piece is made. Concerns might include durability for bronze, stone because I like the nature of it, clay when plasticity is useful and glaze when functionality is important. Each material demands different treatment and delivers a different aesthetic. They each present durability issues and at the same time an array of surface texture and color possibilities. I also seem to gravitate to materials that require heat for their final transformation. I don't know why, it's just the way it is.

To date my output has led me in several directions. Early on I exploited functional stoneware, salt-glazed stoneware and porcelain, using high temperature glazes and oxidation and reduction atmospheres. In the late 1970's and through the 80's, I pursued Raku, an earthenware process. I have always worked in series producing bodies of work that were based on a theme or concept. Many were related to my life or inspired by my surroundings. In the later 1980's I began experimenting a lot more with sculptural form in glass, bronze and later stone. At the same time I became fascinated with historical references and a lot of my work began to reflect it.

Currently, I am pursuing studio work in the USA and in Norway. The work is once again in a developing stage but not without direction. My clay projects have been my "bread and butter" and some new approaches are just over the horizon. During the past several years I managed to complete a few sculpture commissions in the US using bronze, and one in Japan using stone. Commissions excite me for two reasons. They provide vital contact with the public and an opportunity to create new works on a larger scale that I might not have the reason to do otherwise. Equally important, commissions push me in new directions. All in all it's an exciting time and I am looking forward to exploring the possibilities ahead and letting the work speak for itself. Important progress will be posted.