

Steven Sylvester

Art of the Form: Contemporary Clay Art



“I use the unexpected medium of clay, commonly fashioned into utilitarian vessels and dinner ware, to symbolize the diversity of roles assumed by women in the 21st century. From the safe harbor of home to an arena of mass appeal, women, what they pursue and where they find themselves in the world are reflected by this series of dresses. This post-feminist observation of female identity ranges from the private domain of a gardener who lovingly nurtures plants to grow to the nationally televised public humiliation of pop singer Janet Jackson during the country’s most widely watched sports event.

Ceramics and wire are manipulated into representations of what woman accomplish in and out of the public eye. As fantasy abstractions of this form, my dresses respectfully acknowledge all that women accomplish, whether they are connecting with nature or dancing onstage.”

Born in Detroit, Michigan, in 1954, Steven Sylvester was mesmerized by the city’s public art at an early age. Sylvester recalls feeling excited anticipation about going downtown for any reason that would take the family car past several prominently displayed pieces of large scale outdoor public art. As an adult pursuing an art centric life he is grateful that his parents enjoyed an appreciation of the visual arts. They exposed him to museum art throughout his childhood and teens. Sylvester states that he has always held museum space to be sacred grounds for nurturing the spirit and the mind.

Still proudly in possession of the first two clay items that he made, he occasionally includes them in Show & Tell type discussions. They are a small hand crafted whale on waves with blue colored glaze, made at age 8 and an ashtray made at age 10. Driven by an appreciation for uncommon uses of materials Sylvester continues two avenues of his work. His current work-in-progress series of life size ladies dresses made from clay and wire continues to amplify this drive as it develops into the travelling museum show for which it is slated. In addition, Sylvester became a member of Architectural Ceramic artist Peter King’s StoneHaus Team. Along the side of world renowned artist Peter King, Sylvester worked on numerous public and private commissioned art projects, thus further feeding the drive for uncommon material use in addition to large scale public works.

In contrast to many artists, Sylvester embraces the business skills required for success as taught to him by Artist as Entrepreneur Institute. He frequently shares his business knowledge and enthusiasm with fellow artists. He frequently attends workshops to further not only his craft as a

clay artist but participates in workshops dealing with the professional growth and development of an artist's career.

With participation in numerous art exhibits, several television appearances, teaching through ArtServe and The Coral Springs Museum of Art, an apprenticeship, several residencies, along with participation in fund-raisers and charities Sylvester is, as an adult, pursuing what mesmerized him as a child.

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