

ARTIST STATEMENT 2007

"Kraft builds indoor tile murals, hand built vessels and sculptural pieces from an earthenware clay and uses an earthy color palette. He seems to be the sort of artist who practices working with the material itself. From that work, eventually, comes the development of his forms. I am most drawn, myself, to the vessels"

Helen Bates "Surfing with Helen Bates"
-May 8, 2006-Netherlands, Canada, France, USA
<http://www.potters.org/subject93523.html>

My work in clay has been a succession/evolution of ideas over a thirty year period. I take certain elements that "work" in one series and often build the next series based on those elements. That could include the color of the clay body, the colors of the surface treatment, the texture of the surface, the form or the building technique.

I enjoy working with the idea in mind of smaller parts making up the whole. Tiles covering a wall. Vessels made with coil and brick-like pieces, or cut and torn clay parts that make a vessel look basket-like. The vessel form appeals to me on a level that I don't understand. It is a sort of mystery. When I am out in the world and see such a form I am immediately drawn to it. As much as I am concerned with surface texture it is ultimately the simple form of a vessel that appeals to my eye.

I would like to think my work, and the act of making the work, connects me with past cultures who used the same materials to make vessels for ceremony or everyday use. I like the idea of being a part of the long history of people making things with their hands.

TECHNICAL STATEMENT

Dry colorants are rolled, using a rolling pin, onto a 25# slab of clay on a canvas covered "ware" board (thick plywood).

Next day. Strips are cut from the clay slab, sections are torn from the strips and building is started. Or, for the coil sections, clay is hand extruded from a wall mounted extruder, rolled in dry colorants, sections are torn off and building begins. Only ca. eight inches can be built each day as time is needed to allow the clay to set up enough to handle the weight of the next day's work. Three, four or five pieces are built at a time.

While building, each torn piece is adhered to the piece beneath it with a "mortar" made of 50% clay slip and 50% clear glaze. During firing the glaze addition helps the small sections fuse together, making the piece stronger. Each torn piece is also adhered to the piece beneath with a "divit" or two pushed through with a thin wooden skewer. Like a plug going partially through and connecting the top to the bottom piece. An internal rebar of clay.

After the building process is complete the object must dry completely which can take up to two weeks depending on the humidity in the studio. Then it is bisque fired to cone 04.

Removed from the kiln the object is painted with a dark brown clay slip.

Next day, when the slip has dried, it is wiped off with a sponge and water. This slip stays in the cracks of the clay and accentuates the texture and adds more color.

Next day three coats of clear glaze are brushed on the interior of the object. One coat of clear glaze is brushed on the exterior.

Next day when the glaze is dry it is wiped off the exterior with a sponge and water. Enough of the glaze stays in the cracks and on the surface to give it life, but not gloss.

Then it is fired one more time to cone 04.

Next day it is removed from the kiln.