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## Artist Statement

I have been an independent studio ceramicist since 1976. I produce one of a kind sculptural vessels and sculpture, in clay and mixed media, about nature, culture, and society. My work can be figurative, abstract, symbolic, or humorous, or all of the above. I aspire to create objects that “make sense” visually and physically, that present technical and artistic challenges, and carry a visual narrative.

Clay has long been acquainted with human hands. Its tactile quality, and endless capacity for transformation, has borne the imprint of many aspects of humanity’s social, technological, and spiritual evolution. The human impulse to create art is evident in the most ancient artefacts, and clay prompted some of the earliest applications of artistic expression.

Clay contains traces of everything that once existed, single-cell organisms, complex life forms, mountains, dust of distant stars, ground together by time and geological events. It embodies history and continuity, engaging the mind in technical and expressionistic challenges that require the exploration of aesthetics, physics, and engineering concepts. Making objects in clay is a testament to that history and a link in the story of human culture.

I learn by looking, by recognizing or tracing connections, from the architecture of living and inanimate forms, to social structures and dynamics. This flow of information feeds and shapes my personal “data bank”, and infuses my brain with a potent brew of “possibilities” that finds its expression in my work.

Currently, the subject of my work is the underlying architecture of natural and, sometimes, human-made forms, interpreted and imagined into new forms in ceramics, metal and mixed media. In this exploration, using elemental materials, I re-imagine small, complex things, and intangible and ephemeral moments: frost and wind, networks of light and shadows, water and rust, erosion and decay.

This concept has long been an interest in my work, and has resulted in increasingly abstracted forms. The format transforms small, often microscopic, sections of structures into large, ethereal and abstracted forms. These are individual pieces, or linked elements that sometime make use of light and shadow as an evocative tool.

I find beauty in odd things, and I communicate this in my work. My work is grounded in the Fine Craft ethic, and the vessel is the foundation of my practice. Every thing that has life is a vessel, and that continues to be my subtle connection to traditional ceramics. That said, I’ve pursued an aesthetic that doesn’t quite fit in the fine craft tradition. I like broken old things, erosion and rust, wrinkled, fossilized remains.

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Artist Statement *continued*

I use materials and techniques that document, not only in appearance but also in process, the changing nature of living things: growth, maturity, decay. This is done by using materials that are transformed by fire, water and chemical reactions during the building and firing cycles.

Increasingly the leftovers of natural processes such as growth and decay are mixing in with the leftovers of human activities, metal, plastic, wood, the discarded skeletons of synthetic life. The two often combine in anachronistic assemblages that, thanks to the elements, take on a new sensibility of form.

Piles of rocks, lichen and mossed, harbors of insects and reptiles; coils of discarded barbed wire, trellises for grasses and wild cucumbers, all slowly sinking back into the earth...

Using nature as a metaphor for the human experience is not a new concept, but where else but in nature will a person find reason and purpose, and make peace with the business of being alive, or how to grow and age with beauty and grace?

I do not ascribe magical powers to the natural world. It is enough for me that the unfolding of its secret mechanisms sustains a lifetime of wonders. I strive to give form, with respect and honesty, to the visual information and enquiries elicited by the observation of natural processes and transformations, throughout a day, a season, through many years of my lifetime.

Nature teaches me everything I need to know about the world, and how to live: my human identity, how to be of this earth and not just on this earth, my guiding principles of social and environmental justice, appreciating and learning from the beauty of the essential, and the processes of life, decay and death.

This is what underlies the art I make, a long and deliberate journal of what I learn about the world, and about myself as a creature in this world, among many others.

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Artist Statement *continued*

The following excerpts describe recent exhibitions.

**“Stilled Lives/Nature Morte”**

(the work “black dog” proposed for selection is one of this series)

*“ ...dead animals in the ditch... The bodies on the highway are a clear and unequivocal lesson: bad timing, an ill considered move, are sometimes all that stands between a vibrant package of intelligence and skill, raised at considerable cost, alive and beautiful, and...gone. My initial response: grief and anger. As I watch the process of transformation that occurs over the weeks (from a bloody mess to a competitive feeding ground for all kinds of creatures), I am comforted by nature’s infallible economy...”*

**“Personified”**

*“... reflections on age, wisdom, being human, imperfect. The characters display the physical and emotional imprints of a lifetime. There is humour, acceptance, pride, in these portraits of maturity: the less than ideal body, the broken heart, the hunger and promise unsatisfied, and the “child within”, still up to some mischief...”*

**“Small Wonders”**

*“...explores the role played by the natural world in imagination., Metaphor, myth, solace or nightmare, nature is the archetype for emotional imagery...As humans lose their connection to the natural order shared by all species, and forget communal memories, alienation and social dysfunctions ensue...”*

**“The Bones of Things”**

*An exploration of shapes, thoughts and materials inspired by the stark remnants, in winter snow and light, of a variety of structures, accidental and deliberate: twigs, grasses, reeds, and gnarled bundles of fencing wire.*

**“Material Grace”**

The works “Blue Flags” and “Rock Garden” proposed for selection are from this series.

*In this particular body of work, I draw inspiration mostly from the skeletons of plants and animals, when the leaves, seeds, flesh have gone, and what is left are the bones, tangled and stark, kept alive visually by the action of light and wind. The work also acknowledges the interface between man-made and natural objects, and how their remains interact and become new organic, though anachronistic, forms.*