

ARTS

Potter thrills in creating artistic marvels out of mud

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An architect with clay, potter Brian Bachman, takes a design-driven approach to his ceramics, though, he smiles and humbly admits that his favorite pieces of art in his home aren't his own. By his front entrance sits a glass piece by Lesley Nolan, Kathy Wilcox's enamels are prominently displayed outside his bedroom door, and Robin Rodgers' pottery proudly sits in a display cabinet mixed with vintage and contemporary pottery. This balance between old and new work really comes across in Bachman's collection of prized pieces by Julie Guyot that utilize vintage decals.

"Every time I look at them I'm just reminded of our friendship and collaborations," said Bachman. "I remember where I was when I got a piece and that point when you put it up in your home and realize that it's the perfect piece for that place."

He strives to leave a similar impression with his own work both in hand building and throwing clay on the potter's wheel. Bachman is inspired by form and shape in his ceramics. He might look at a tabletop and envision

how it could be transfigured, turned upside-down, and shrunken on a smaller scale to become an eye-catching platter.



Bachman

A member of the Tallahassee Clay Arts organization, Bachman revels in the opportunity

to come out of studio isolation and bounce ideas, problems, and inspirations off other artists in a supportive environment. He's looking forward to seeing Tallahassee's immense clay talents highlighted in the upcoming Tallahassee Clay Arts Studio Tour. As a participant, Bachman will share a studio with the artists featured in his home, Nolan, Wilcox, and Rodgers, on the "Under One Roof" stop in Saturday-long tour, Nov. 19, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

As a potter, he sees a kind of timelessness in the work that is made and feels an affinity towards the makers of pieces whose work is now featured in museums. Whether it's medieval European pottery, early American pottery, or a piece from another era, he shares a similar sentiment that somebody could pick up one of his own pieces in a thousand years and wonder about the person that made that piece.

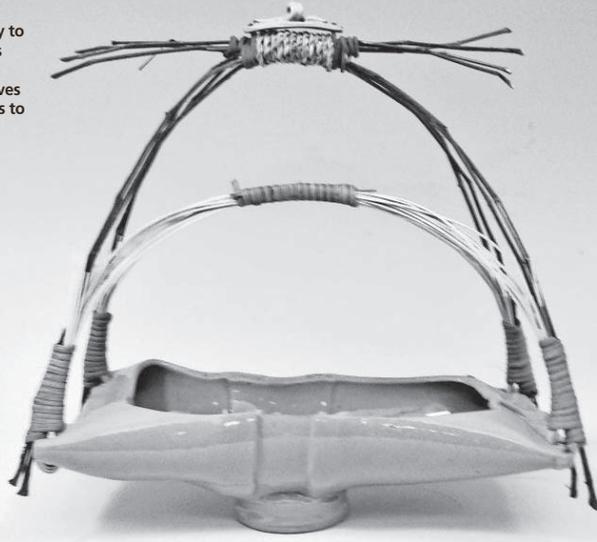
"As potters we take mud and we turn it into something extraordinary," describes Bachman. "You're taking material that's been buried in the ground for thousands or millions of years, subjecting it to heat and fire, and decorating it. I really think there's a resurgence in longing for people to have interesting handmade work in their homes again."

He takes in the energy from these art seekers at shows and considers it affirmation that what he's done as an artist has spoken to them in some way. One of his favorite pieces has continued to speak to him: a pitcher that he considers to be as close to perfect as he probably ever made, a pot that was formed when he was still a high school student.

Bachman is a firm believer that early success when first learning a skill is a very strong motivator for

BRIAN BACHMAN

Brian Bachman: "I always try to identify the everyday rituals people go through in their daily, weekly, celebratory lives and create interesting things to fill those needs."



continuing, and that is what has driven him as an artist. As a student at Rickards High School, he selected pottery for an elective thinking it would earn him at least an average grade. Now he thanks the school's exemplary arts program for turning him onto a love for clay that would stay with him for the next 40 years.

"I fell in love with it and spent most of my free time in the studio from that point on," said Bachman. "I think that most people are in this because they get some sort of a positive feedback from many levels of the process. As a kid, in high school, and even now I enjoy pinching off a little bit of clay, manipulating and twisting it, because there's something about the tactile feel of it that provides pleasing feedback."

After graduation, he felt fortunate to land a job in Railroad Square as it was emerging as a burgeoning artist community. At the time there were still light industrial, construction, and car repair companies inhabiting the warehouses, but Bachman arrived every day at the pottery supply business of Paul and Ginny Anthony. He learned a balance of both design techniques and business from the couple, crediting Paul Anthony with his architectural approach to clay, and worked in their studio for many years.

This introduction to the professional pottery world and early experiential education came in handy while earning his Bachelor of Fine Arts in ceramics from the University of Florida. Bachman describes having a more functional experience in college as he was aware of the process it took to make, sell and produce while being exposed to the finer craft elements in terms of pushing conceptual boundaries from a design point of view. When he returned to Tallahassee, Bachman ventured out

to open his own studio and create work in his own style.

"I always try to identify the everyday rituals people go through in their daily, weekly, celebratory lives and create interesting things to fill those needs," said Bachman. "I can remember which potter made the mugs, bowls, and serving pieces I collect from various shows. They become like friends in your house, so I try to create pieces that do that for other people."

During the day he works as an inventory and production manager for the company GTO, Gates That Open, and spends the rest of his time in his home studio working with clay. Clay can be a technically demanding material to work with, and Bachman notes that firing techniques can be unforgiving at times, finding ways of humbling him. In his artistic process—whether it's as simple as a cup, a mug, a serving bowl, or a platter—he determines the approximate size and shape of a piece and breaks it down into smaller elements.

Next, he determines if there will be a simple or complex glaze, the color and finish of a ceramic work, depending on the amount of surface movement or design on the exterior. His home studio space features a series of pivot points around the main work table that provide added mobility, minimizing extraneous time spent moving materials around. His retail space, Bachman Studios, combines his wife's love of antiques and vintage items with Bachman's pottery, with aims of connecting people to their living spaces via unique pieces that will complement their familial, inherited items.

"The studio is finding a way to show people that all those pieces can co-exist," states Bachman. "A lot of times there's a hesitancy by a particular customer to say, 'I like this, but is it the right size, shape, or color, and will it really speak to me in that space the way that it does here?' So the store is displayed in a way that combines these things like an old antique dresser that

If you go

What: Tallahassee Clay Arts Ceramic Studio Tour

When: 10 a.m.-5 p.m., Saturday, Nov. 19

Where: Various Addresses & Locations (For Bachman's "Under One Roof" location, 6460 Justin Grant Trail, contact 850-942-1252)

Cost: Free

Contact: For more information, call 850-766-2157 or visit www.tallyclayarts.com/studiotour2016.

will have a couple of vintage pieces plus some artwork on it."

He said the tour is different from a craft show or a gallery setting because an attendee can get a feel for how artwork featured in artists' homes might look in a similar space in their own home. Bachman says even if someone doesn't find a piece they like in their stop, they can take a look at the map and experience a variety of other studios, including live demonstrations and ceramics sold by clay artists of all backgrounds and ideals. He also sees the tour as an opportunity to gain one-of-a-kind backstage access into the artists' homes and studios.

"In this day and age, we're so removed from the source of things that surround us," said Bachman. "You can go to a warehouse and buy a board and never have to consider the tree or go to the grocery and never consider the farm. In that same way you can go to an art show or gallery and miss out on the source and understanding of what that artist was striving for when they produced that piece or the space that they produced the piece in. It's a really interesting opportunity to get that extra level of insight and understanding from the artist."

Amanda Sieradzki is the feature writer for the Council on Culture & Arts. COCA is the capital area's umbrella agency for arts and culture (www.tallahasseearts.org).