

Ceramics Southeast: The Figure

Gina Bobrowski,
Bunkie, Louisiana

Joe Bova,
Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Christine Federighi,
Miami, Florida

Frank Fleming,
Birmingham, Alabama

Tom Lee,
Marks, Mississippi

Lanier Meaders,
Mossy Creek, Georgia

Ron Meyers,
Athens, Georgia

Andy Nasisse,
Athens, Georgia

Tom Rippon,
Smithville, Tennessee

Tom Suomalainen,
Walnut Cove, North Carolina

"CERAMICS SOUTHEAST: THE FIGURE"

Catalog design: Sam Yates

Published 1986 by the Ewing Gallery of Art and Architecture at the
University of Tennessee-Knoxville

Introduction

Ever since God made man in His image out of a lump of river clay, man has been making things in his own image. As Ron Meyers so aptly put it, "The figure is everywhere." The desire and need to make human likenesses out of clay has existed for as long as there have been human beings. Magic and religion have been the traditional motivations for making and decorating clay figures. The ten artists in this exhibit have all tapped into and are eloquently continuing this proud tradition. They are story tellers, social critics, and poets. They are object makers who use clay and fire to tell their story.

Ted Saupe
Assistant Professor of Art
Cocurator of Exhibition

Figurative ceramics has a rich tradition. From Minoan fertility figures, Egyptian tomb figures, and Chinese horse figures made thousands of years ago to the individualistic forms of contemporary artists, clay has an extensive history as a sculptural medium. Its immediacy has allowed it to achieve an expressive quality unlike any other medium.

Ceramics also has a rich tradition of objects for utilitarian use. Early ceramicists decorated the surface of their pottery with visual images and storytelling. Etruscan, Greek and numerous other cultures produced masters at drawing the figure and other objects from nature onto their ceramic vessels. The combination of vessel forms and figurative forms emerged from other cultures as illustrated by Eskimo, Peruvian and pre-Columbian art.

After the Renaissance and Della Robbia's religious terra cotta figures, the sculptural use of clay diminished as a major medium for Western artists. It was not until the 20th Century when Robert Arneson's figurative ceramics achieved national prominence that other artists working in this manner were re-discovered. Unlike Miro, Chagall and Picasso, Arneson's major medium is clay.

In recognition of the historical resurgence of the figure in ceramics, this exhibition was organized. Its purpose is to show the continuance of this rich tradition as it exists in the Southeastern United States today. Ten artists from a seven state region were asked to participate and to comment on the effects of living in the Southeast and the use of the figure in their work.

The Ewing Gallery of Art and Architecture is grateful to the Visual Arts Gallery at the University of Georgia for its cosponsorship of this exhibition. We also thank all the participating artists for the support given "Ceramics Southeast: The Figure."

Sam Yates
Director, Ewing Gallery of Art and Architecture
Cocurator of Exhibition

Gina Bobrowski

Athens, GA and Bunkie, LA
Born: 1958, New Orleans, LA
M.F.A.: University of Georgia, 1985

Selected Exhibitions:

"Artists in Georgia", Georgia
Museum of Art, Athens
"September Competition", Alexan-
dria Museum of Art, Alexandria,
LA, 1985

"No Place Like Home", Solo Exhi-
bition, University of Georgia Visual
Arts Gallery, Athens, 1985
"24 x 24", Atlanta Arts Festival,
Atlanta, GA, 1984
Athens Area Clay Artists, Lyndon
House Arts Center, Athens, GA,
1983
NCECA Invitational, Nexus, Atlanta,
GA, 1983

Statement:

I come from a family of musicians and storytellers who live in New Orleans, a world of its own, surrounded by the swampy mysticism of South Louisiana. For the past four years, I have lived in Athens, Georgia, a creatively spinning environment untouched by commercial concerns. In Athens, profound expression carves its unique identity among layers of native mores and superstitions. I now reside in Bunkie, Louisiana — the promised land.

My work revolves around a flood of images through which I perceive and question. It is narrative in a rough stream-of-associations, rather than in a specific, illustrative sense. The figure serves dual roles as the dominant image of vision, and as the strong visual armature on which I can work various levels of secondary images, thoughts, and sensations. Clay articulates this with direct velocity.



Him, low fire clay, 6" x 22" x 16", 1985

Joe Bova

Baton Rouge, LA
Born: 1941, Houston, TX
M.F.A.: University of New Mexico,
Albuquerque, 1969

Selected Awards:

N.E.A., Southern Arts Federation, 1985
Louisiana State Arts Council Grant,
1984
NEA/SECCA Southeastern Artists
Fellowship, 1980

Selected Exhibitions:

National Crafts Invitational, Kent
State University, OH, 1981
"American Coffee Cup", Rochester
Art Center, MN, 1984
"Echoes", Nelson-Atkins Gallery of
Art, Kansas City, MO, 1983
"Ceramics '82", California Craft
Museum, Palo-Alto, CA, 1982

Statement:

*My work is about reality; the reality of the clay and the reality the image has for me. Sometimes my reality appears as fantasy to others. I try to fuse these two things so the work has a certain prescence. . . . a power. . . . to capture anyone interested enough to look. To be true to my material and to my subject matter separately and simultaneously without resorting to a trompe l'oeil realism is my goal. The subjects I use — animals and people — are often from my daily experience and frequently are also traditional subjects of ceramic art, i.e. **intimate** and **conventional**. I have been influenced by many of the cultures of the past which have great ceramic traditions, particularly pre-Columbian Peru (Mochican).*

Dionyse International, Ghent
Museum, Belgium, 1981
The Mask as Metephor, Contem-
porary Artists Invitational, Craft
and Folk Art Museum, Los
Angeles, 1980
Continental Clay Connection,
MacKenzie Art Gallery, Regina,
Saskatchewan, Canada, 1980
Scripps Annual Invitational, Clare-
mont, CA, 1980
Viewpoint Ceramics, Grossmont
College, El Cajon, CA, 1979
The Great American Foot, Museum of
Contemporary Crafts, New York,
NY, 1978
Crafts Invitational, Southeastern
Center for Contemporary Art,
Winston-Salem, NC, 1977
Artists in the Southeast Invitational,
High Museum of Art, Atlanta, 1976



Storm Dog, terra cotta/terra sigillata, 11" x 8½" x 17", 1985

Christine Federighi

Miami, FL
Born: 1949, San Mateo, CA
M.F.A.: Alfred University, New York, 1974

Solo Exhibitions:

Esther Saks Gallery, Chicago, IL, 1985
Stetson University, Deland, FL, 1980
Valencia Community College, Orlando, FL, 1980

Awards:

Max Orovitz Art Grant, University of Miami, 1984
NEA/SECCA Southeastern Artists Fellowship, 1981
Florida Fine Arts Council, Individual Artist Grant, 1979
Art and Humanities Grant, University of Miami, 1979

Selected Group Exhibitions:

Emerging Artists Exhibition, Galveston, TX, 1985
Newport Harbor/Ceramic Invitational, Newport Beach, CA, 1984

Statement:

My work during the past three years has gone through a process of looking ahead to new ideas as well as pulling together past thoughts and imagery. Some of the imagery is recycled to new visual forms. Its a process of simplification and complication.

At times I'm close to the essence of the idea — then very far away.

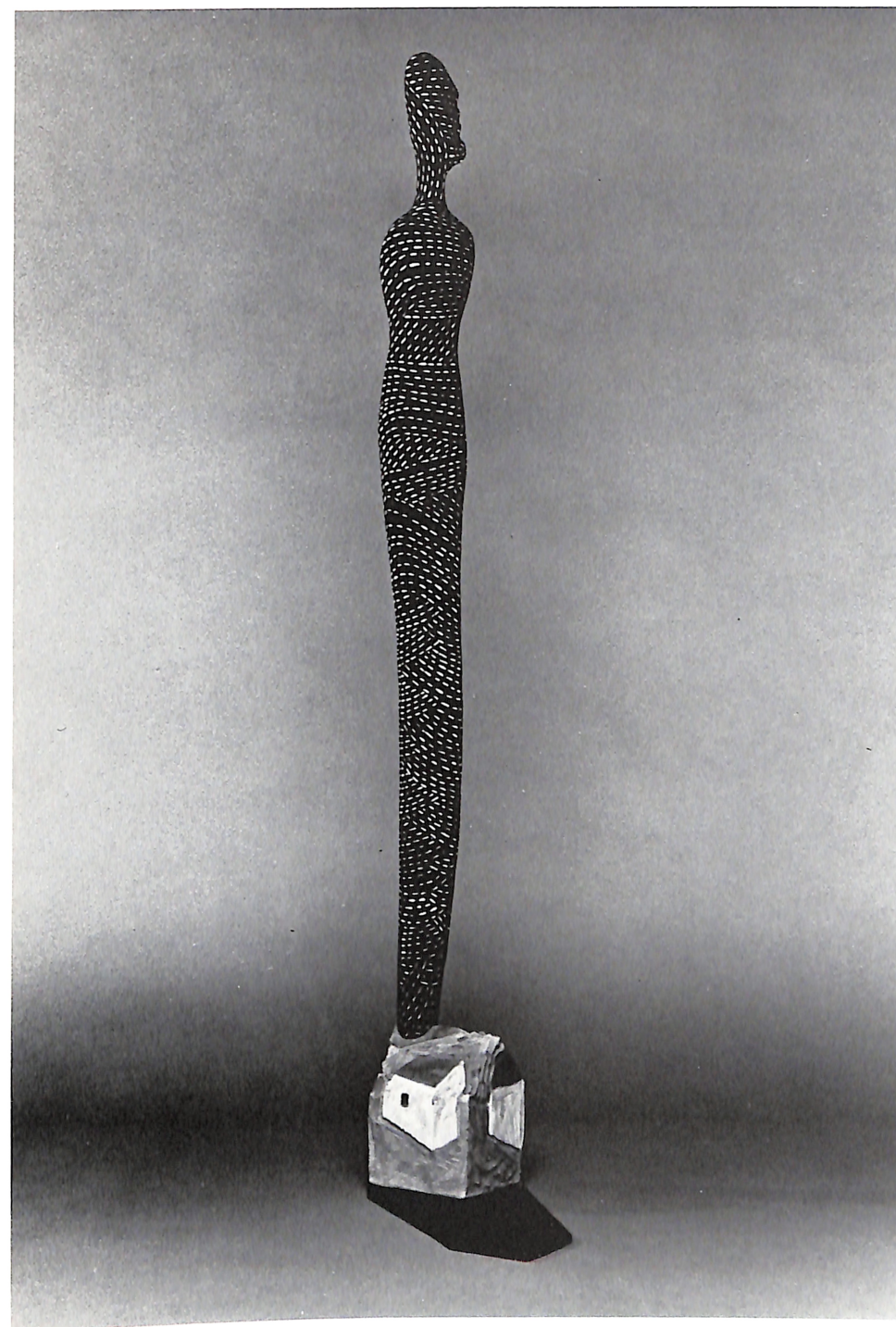
The horse, rider and house... "Horse House Rider" series has been the dominant theme. Currently the figure is undergoing a transformation. The figures have become contained, almost bound, by the "dot" patterning on the surface of the piece. The horse and house have diminished, becoming merely a fixture in relation to the figure. The house and horse are still important in their symbolic relationship to the figure... they help with the story.

The stance, posturing and surface decoration is important, seeming to resemble a "thumb print" or "ticking of time". To read the figures' story all these symbols must be accounted. It reveals itself through line, form, shape — much like someone reading the "body" language of a pedestrian on the street. It's a silent communication of past and future roads — and much of that is about me.

Scripps Invitational, Claremont, CA, 1981
Paint on Clay, John Michael Kohler Art Center, Sheboygan, WI, 1981
Animal Imagery, Renwick Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., 1981
Viewpoints, Grossmont College, El Cajon, CA, 1981
Regional ACC Ceramic Invitational, University Museum, University, MS, 1981
Ceramic Sculpture, Towson State College, Towson, MD, 1981
NECA Supermud Invitational, Pennsylvania State University, University Park, 1979
Ceramic Invitational, Ohio University, Athens, 1977

Collections:

Art in Public Places, Animals for Dade County Zoo, Dade County, FL, 1980
Art in Public Places, Women's Detention Center, Miami, FL, 1976



Night Drifting, terra cotta with slips and stains, 56" x 9" x 17", 1985

Frank Fleming

Birmingham, AL
Born: June 17, 1940, Bear Creek,
Alabama
M.F.A.: University of Alabama

Selected Solo Exhibitions:

Garth Clark Gallery, Los Angeles, CA,
1985
Holsten Gallery, Stockbridge, MA, 1985
University of Georgia Art Gallery,
Athens, GA, 1985
Morgan Gallery, Kansas City, MO, 1984
Heath Gallery, Atlanta, GA, 1984
Huntsville Museum of Art, Huntsville, AL,
1983
Montgomery Museum of Art, Mont-
gomery, AL, 1983
Moody Gallery, Houston, TX, 1983
Holsten Gallery, Palm Beach, FL, 1982
Morgan Gallery, Kansas City, MO, 1982
Birmingham Museum of Art, 1982
Alexander F. Milliken Gallery, New York,
NY, 1981
Fendrick Gallery, Washington, D.C.,
1981
Morgan Art Gallery, Kansas City, MO,
1981
Hunter Museum of Art, Chattanooga,
TN, 1980-81

Statement:

As a Southerner and having Southern blood run thru my veins and universal thoughts come from my brains, I choose to continue living and working in the South. I happen to find the medium of clay (porcelain) the most satisfying means to express myself, which is usually figurative. This probably stems from my being raised on a "real farm" — not a so called sissy gentleman's farm. My basic understanding of nature gives me a large and never ending sketch pad from which to work. I find that living and working away from the "big art centers" offers me a pure-simple-means of expression in my work — be that good or bad, it nevertheless is like myself, being what I am because I am where I am doing what I do because where I do what I do is a direct result of the region with its distinct culture, lore and climate and all this directly affects what I do, where I do what? But, I could probably do this in Cleveland, Ohio, but certainly not Omaha.

Selected Group Exhibitions:

"Realism", Heath Gallery, Atlanta, GA,
1985
Blount Corporation Invitational, Mont-
gomery, AL, 1985
Surrealism, Garth Clark Gallery, New
York and Los Angeles, CA, 1985
"Off Center", Birmingham Southern Col-
lege Art Gallery, Birmingham AL,
1985
"Feet of Clay", Lill Street Gallery,
Chicago, IL, 1985
Alabama Craft Council Touring
Exhibition, State of Alabama, 1985
"Southern Exposure", Alternative
Museum, New York, 1985
"Alabama: The State of the Arts",
Contemporary Arts Center, New
Orleans, LA, 1985
"Animal Imagery", San Francisco, CA,
1985
Return to the Narrative, Palm Springs
Desert Museum, Palm Springs, CA,
1984
Beasts, Sioux City Arts Center, Sioux City,
Iowa, 1984
Still Life, Fendrick Gallery, Washington,
D.C., 1984
Spoleto Festival, Charleston, SC, 1984



Hand of Justice Being Devoured by Morality, porcelain, 13¾" x 11¾" x 7⅞", 1985

Tom Lee

Marks, MS
Born: Brownwood, TX
M.F.A.: University of Mississippi,
Oxford

Selected Exhibitions:

The Artist's Self, Travels for SECCA
and the Southern Arts Federation
(Atlanta, GA), 1986
Open Air Gallery, Southeastern
Center for Contemporary Art,
Winston-Salem, NC, 1985
Group Show, Alice Bingham Gallery,
Memphis, TN 1985
Two-Person Show, Galerie Simonne
Stern, New Orleans, LA, 1985
Wabash College Group Invitational
Ceramic Exhibit, Crawfordsville, IN,
1985

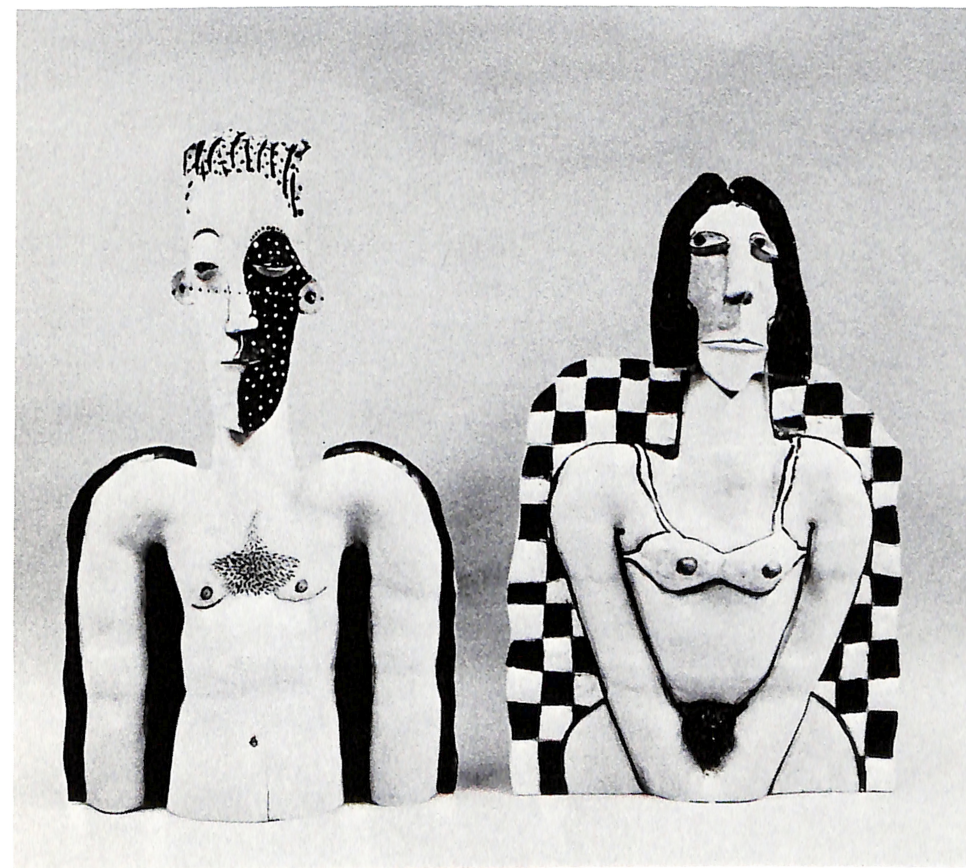
Statement:

*I have always been influenced by the people and society around me. My art
has been, and continues to be, self-directed and, therefore, insulated, to a
large degree, from stylistic influence labeled as Southern.*

American Ceramic National Exhibi-
tion, Downey Museum of Art,
Downey, CA, 1984
Images '84, 1984 Louisiana World
Exhibition, New Orleans, LA, 1984

Awards:

Merit Award, Birmingham Biennial,
Birmingham Museum of Art, Birm-
ingham, AL, 1985
Best in Show, First Place in Sculpture,
and Purchase Award, Arts in the
Park Juried Exhibition, Memphis
Brooks Museum of Art, Memphis,
TN, 1984
Winner, Sculpture Installation Com-
petition, Montana State University,
Bozeman, 1980



Clay Couple, clay, 28" x 60" x 6"

Lanier Meaders

Mossy Creek, GA

Born: 1917, Mossy Creek, GA

Selected Collections:

The Smithsonian Institute

John Burrisson Collection

Artist's Statement made during a phone conversation:

"Tin cans and glass bottles wrote the demise of stoneware pottery."

"I make portraits of people who are a little bit out of the ordinary because it's easier to get a likeness, like politicians."

"If you can use it, they don't want it. If you can't use it, they'll pay anything for it."



Face Jug

Ronald Meyers

Athens, GA
Born: 1940, Buffalo, NY
M.F.A.: School for American Crafts-
men, Rochester Institute of
Technology, Rochester, NY

Selected Exhibitions:

35 Artists in the Southeast, High
Museum of Art, Atlanta, GA
A.C.C. Southeastern Invitational
Crafts Exhibition, Greeneville,
Museum of Art, Greeneville, S.C.
Tribute to Hands, Springfield Art
Association; Springfield, IL
Columbia Museum of Art,
Columbia, SC
Ten Georgia Clay Artists, Museum of
Arts and Sciences, Macon, GA
Functional Pottery of the Southeast,
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and
State University, Blacksburg, VA
"Glove Show," Valencia College
Museum, Orlando, FL

Statement:

I don't feel my work relates to the South or any other region. I have enjoyed living in the South and have learned to appreciate the culture, environment, Southern clay tradition, naive artists, etc., but it has not been an issue or influence in my work. The figure is everywhere.

Extension — Students of Frans
Wildenhain, Memorial Art Gallery,
Rochester, NY
Valencia Community College, "The
Vessel: A Continuing Tradition"
"Clay Invitational," Creighton Univer-
sity, Omaha, NE
Functional Ceramics, Columbia
Museum of Art, Columbia, SC
Ulman Gallery, Berea College,
Berea, KY
Claywork Gallery, Atlanta, GA
Ceramics: The Oriental Influence, Art
Council of Wilson, Wilson, NC

Collections:

Columbia Museum of Art,
Columbia, SC
High Museum of Art, Atlanta, GA
Lamar Dodd Art Center, LaGrange,
GA
South Carolina Arts Commission,
Columbia, SC
Georgia Arts Council, Atlanta, GA



Earthenware Plate, engobe, stains, transparent glaze, 19" wide, 1985

Andy Nasisse

Athens, GA

Born: 1946, Pueblo, Colorado

M.F.A.: University of Colorado

Selected Awards:

Georgia Council for the Arts

Individual Artists Fellowship, 1983

Awarded *Creative Research Medal*
at The University of Georgia, 1982

Architectural Commission for Atlanta
Hartsfield International Airport

Ford Foundation *Research Grant*
under Faculty Enrichment Section
of Visual Arts Department Grant,
1978

National Endowment for the Arts
Regional Fellowship

Selected Exhibitions:

"Dark Humor in the South", Invitational,
New Orleans Museum of Contemporary Art,
Alexandria Museum, and SIU-ILL Art Museum,
1984

Artists in Georgia, Lamar Dodd Center,
LaGrange, GA, 1983

"Eccentrics", 20 Southeastern Artists,
Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art,
1983

"New Epiphanies", National Invitational Show of Contemporary Religious Art,
Traveling Show, 1982

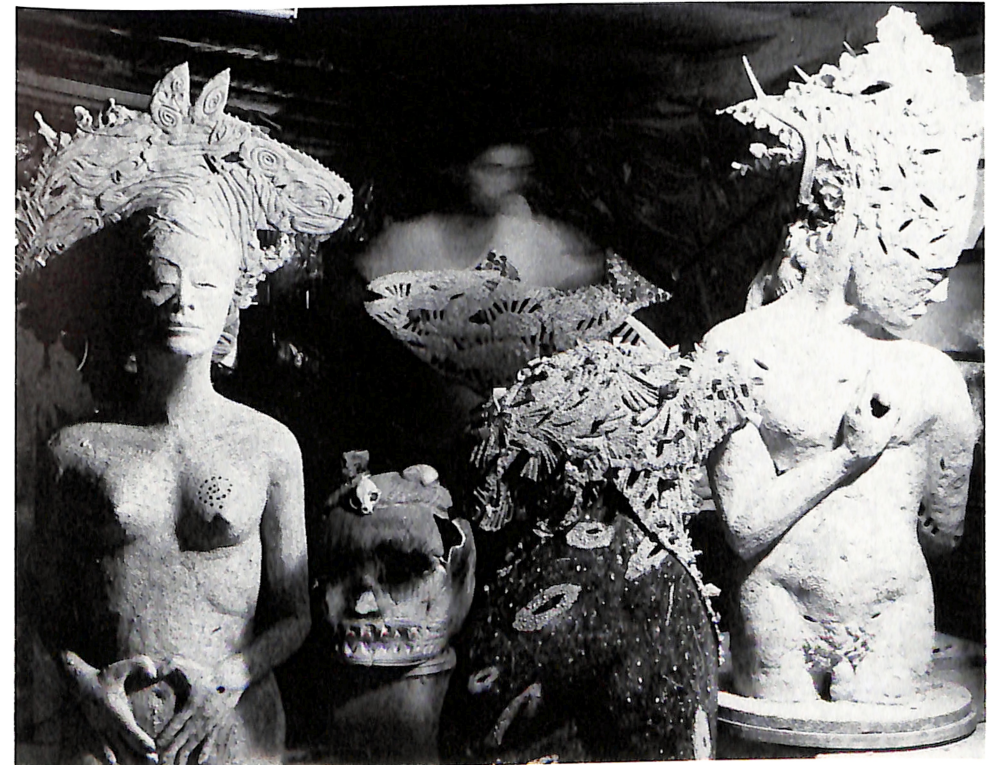
National Collection of Fine Arts,
Smithsonian Institution, Artists of Appalachia, 1981

Statement:

In my work I aspire towards an emotional, intellectual, and spiritual level which, if it works, should transcend local or regional influence and national trends in the art world market place. I might even hope for connections which dive deeper than personal ego concerns and evoke images of a more collective nature.

This is a complex electronic age, and influence can come from anywhere and from any time period. However, living in the South has been fertile for my interest in untrained visionary and outsider artists, especially blacks. The trans-Atlantic African traditions have affected virtually every aspect of modern American culture, which has to do with matters of the spirit. From break dancing to baton twirling, from Tina Turner, to the Holy Ghost revival, one can find roots in the African religious spirit. The South may support more individuals who are on the social fringe; individuals who have little interest in white middle class values and who are looking for direct religious experience through music, dancing, art, religion, etc. This allows a certain eccentricity which I love.

*The landscape in Georgia, as opposed to the Colorado plains, where I grew up, is more closed in and dominated by plant life. The amount of space one has to deal with at any given time is more on a human scale. One man or woman can profoundly transform his environment. A good example of this would be the Reverend Howard Finster who filled in a two acre swamp with a shovel and a wheel barrow, then transformed it into his fantasy "Garden of Eden". Peculiar things flourish in the South — things like walking catfish, kudzu, Spanish moss, limestone caverns, mysterious sink holes and the Okefenokee swamp, snake handlers, Holy Ghost hollers, **The Temple of St. Eom**, Sister Doris' Healing Chapel, the B 52's, REM, Fetchin Bones, Clifton Chanier, The Devil and the Drinking Man, The Shoe that Rode the Howling Tornado, Wise Blood, TuTu and the Truthetts, Pee Wee and the Psalmsters and Heavy's Barbaque — it's a unique place on earth.*



Artist's Studio, 1985

Tom Rippon

Smithville, TN

Born: Sacramento, CA

M.F.A.: School of the Art Institute of
Chicago

Selected Exhibitions:

Quay Gallery, San Francisco, 1985
Drake University, Des Moines, IA,
1985

Betsy Rosenfield Gallery, Chicago,
1984

Brentwood Gallery, St. Louis, MO,
1983

Betsy Rosenfield Gallery, Chicago,
1982

Quay Gallery, San Francisco, 1981
Betsy Rosenfield Gallery, Chicago,
1980

Rochester Art Center, Rochester, MN,
1979

Anhalt-Barnes Gallery, Los Angeles,
1978

Quay Gallery, San Francisco, 1977
Helen Drutt Gallery, Philadelphia, 1975
Quay Gallery, San Francisco, 1975

Awards:

National Endowment for the Arts
Fellowship, 1981

Nelson Raymond Fellowship, Art
Institute of Chicago, 1979

National Endowment for the Arts,
Fellowship, 1974

Church Fine Arts Award, University of
Nevada, Reno, 1974

Crocker-Kingsley Award, Crocker Art
Museum, Sacramento, 1972

Kingsley Art Club Award, Crocker Art
Museum, Sacramento, 1971

Collections:

San Francisco Museum of Modern
Art

Kanazawa-Shi, Hokkoku Shinbun,
Kyoto, Japan

Antonio Prieto Collection, Mills
College, Oakland, CA

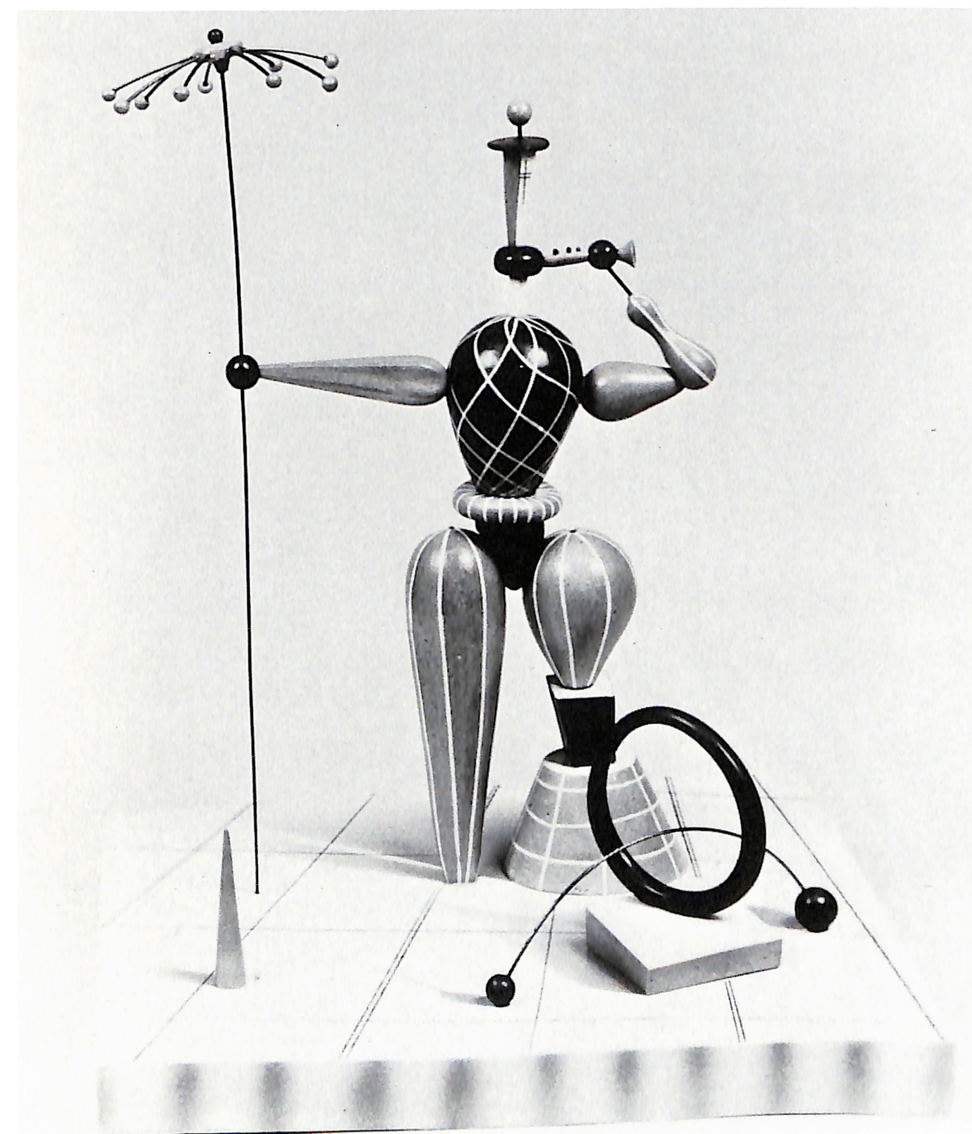
Crocker Art Museum, Sacramento,
CA

Museum of Fine Arts, Salt Lake
City, UT

Church Fine Arts Gallery, University of
Nevada, Reno

Kohler Art Center, Sheboygan, WI
Renwick Gallery, Smithsonian Institu-
tion, Washington, D.C.

Erie Art Museum, Erie, PA



Scene From An Unseen Ballet #2, porcelain, luster, and enamel, 17¼" x 14",
1984

Thomas Suomalainen

Walnut Grove, NC

Born: 1939, Duluth, MN

M.F.A.: Tulane University, New Orleans, LA, 1963

Selected Solo Exhibitions:

Signature Shop and Gallery, Atlanta, GA, 1986

Summerhill Gallery, Durham, NC, 1985

The Arts, Chapel Hill, NC, 1984

Hodges/Taylor Gallery, Charlotte, NC, 1984

Awards:

The North Carolina Prize, The New York Times Company, 1984

NEA/SECCA Southeastern Artists Fellowship, 1984

Statement:

*The Mother Maybelle Carter and family,
Doris Ullman photos, "Easy Rider" and "Deliverance",
Southern Highland Handicraft Guild and Piedmont Craftsmen, Inc.,
And Presnell dulcimers hum and pulse in my system,
The Beat of the Earth, the Beat of the Heart
The silent ring of Blue Ridge after Blue Ridge,
Yes, I did follow my ears to North Carolina:*

*In North Carolina the earth hums here
It is sometimes the earth's great OM
It is the clay forming in my hands
or breaking under my shovel.
The clay forming tangible evidence
of manifest myths, earth tomatoes, cukes and lopes.*

*The Earth, IT IS
Brilliant moon and pre-dawn dog language
The earth and sky I find myself embracing.*

Blowing Rock, NC, Nov. 9, 1984

(on occasion of receiving the North Carolina prize)

Selected Group Exhibitions

"Ten Years/Ten Artists", Green Hill Center for North Carolina Art, Greensboro, 1984

"U.S.A. Portrait of the South", Palazzo Venezia, Rome, 1984

Selected Collections:

R.J. Reynolds Industries, Inc., Winston-Salem, NC

Weatherspoon Art Gallery, University of North Carolina at Greensboro
North Carolina Department of Commerce, Raleigh

NCNB National Bank, Charlotte

Wachovia Bank and Trust Company, Winston-Salem, NC

Old Salem Incorporated, Winston-Salem, NC



Pedarge, ceramic/stoneware, 37" x 9¼" x 12½", 1985

January 10-26, 1986
Ewing Gallery of Art and Architecture
University of Tennessee-Knoxville

April 1-30, 1986
Visual Arts Gallery
University of Georgia-Athens

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