



Ewing Gallery of Art & Architecture

Art

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1986

## Ceramics Southeast: The Figure (Exhibition Catalogue)

Sam Yates

*The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, samyates@utk.edu*

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## 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*

## *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

"CERAMICS SOUTHEAST: THE FIGURE"

Catalog design: Sam Yates

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

## 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 Exhibi-  
tion, 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 presence . . . 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

Scripps Invitational, Claremont, CA, 1981  
Paint on Clay, John Michael Kohler Art Center, Sheyboygan, 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

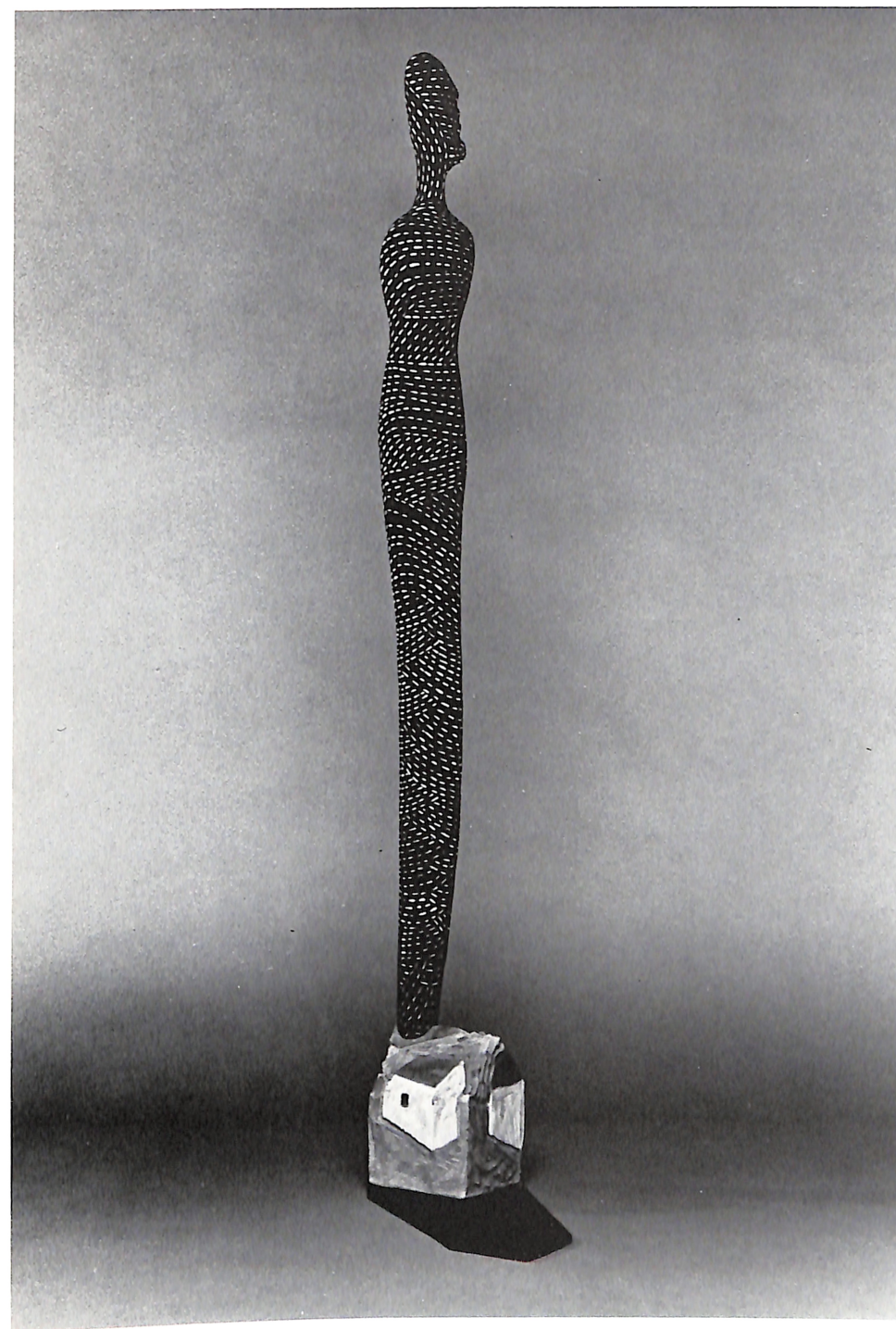
### Statement:

*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.*



*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, 13 $\frac{3}{4}$ " x 11 $\frac{3}{4}$ " x 7 $\frac{5}{8}$ ", 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

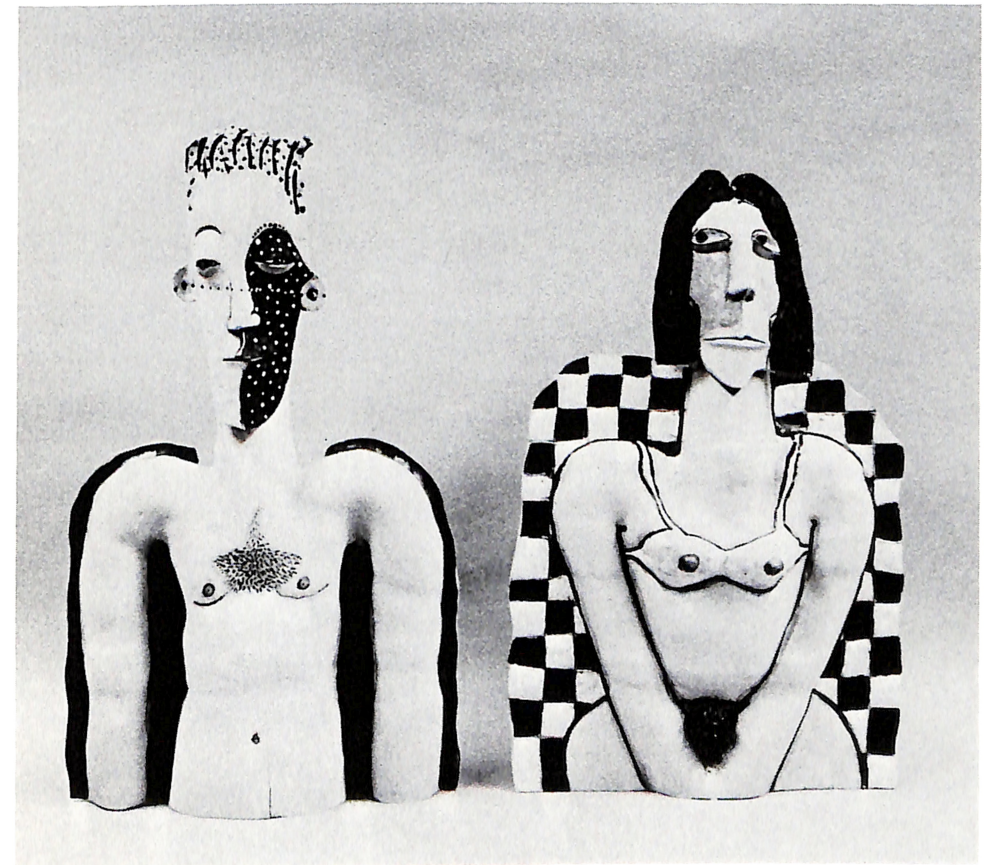
## Statement:

*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 Burrison 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 Craftsmen, 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, Greenville, Museum of Art, Greenville, 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 University, 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

## 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.*

## Selected Exhibitions:

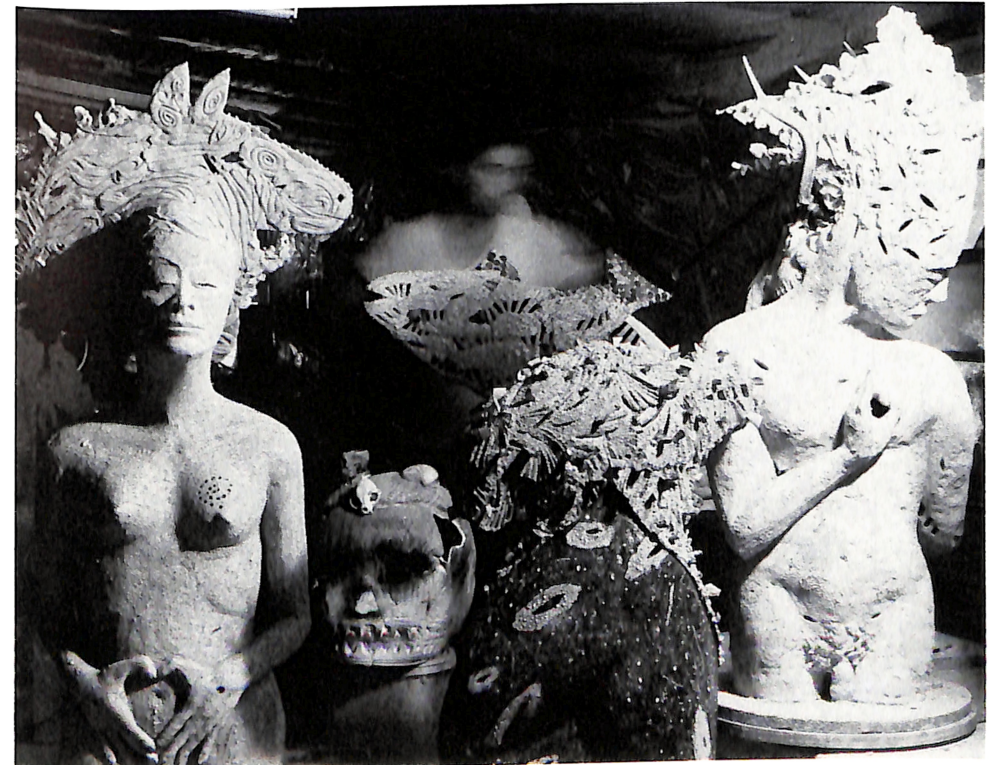
"Dark Humor in the South", Invitational, New Orleans Museum of Contemporary Art, Alexandria Museum, and SIU-ILL Art Museum, 1984

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



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

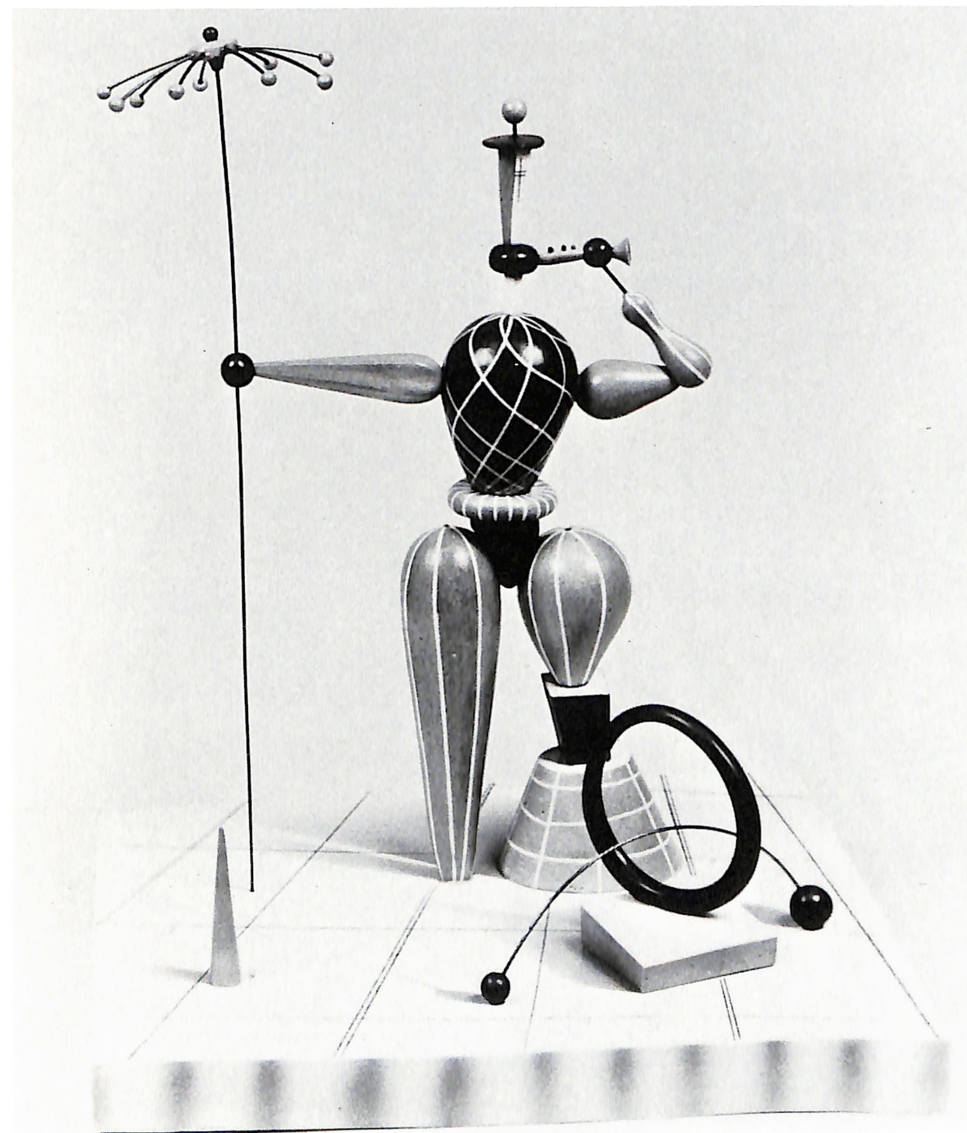
## Awards:

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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