Ben Owen III – Biography

Ben Owen III (b. 1968) is an American studio potter working in Seagrove, North Carolina. Born into a traditional pottery family, he was first introduced to clay by his grandfather when he was eight years old. Ben’s natural talent and unusual level of interest led to an apprenticeship with his grandfather and father at age 13. Through high school, he carefully studied the shapes, glazes, and traditions of the Owen aesthetic and learned to appreciate the history and legacy of generations of craft.

During college, Ben’s interest in form, design, and color piqued and he began to forge his own unique path in clay. Through technical exploration and academic influences, Ben’s clay vernacular began to evolve. Travels in the United States attending workshops and conferences along with a fellowship in Japan, extended his continued research. He has said, “My approach to working in clay is inspired by many influences. Tradition and vision merge to forge the future, as I honor the historic Owen aesthetic while creating a new, unique body of work. Culture, blended with influences in nature, inspires my work. With studies in China, Japan, Australia and Europe, as well as in the university setting, I have continued to create a unique identity from culture and nature.”

Ben’s recent passions have included glaze creation and experimentation. “For some pots, I use a four-chambered wood kiln with a firing process of up to four days. The prolonged exposure to ash and heat develops a wide range of color and texture on the clay. Other glaze techniques have evolved in a gas or electric kiln with a precision in temperature control to manipulate the finish. Some pieces are re-fired to develop layers and depth on the finish.”


Over the past decade, Ben has worked with designers and collectors to create custom pottery to be installed in a series of premier hotels and public spaces including the Ritz Carlton Hotel in Tokyo, Japan, Umstead Hotel and Spa in Cary, North Carolina; the Mandarin Oriental Hotel in Boston, Massachusetts, and Grand America Hotel in Salt Lake City, Utah. Many of these vessels are large in scale and carefully designed to enhance the magnificent and unique interior of each location.
Ben Owen III

Biography

Education
1989-1993 East Carolina University, Greenville, NC
1987-1989 Pfeiffer University, Misenheimer, NC (Instructor in Ceramics Department)
1984-1993 Apprenticeship with Ben Wade Owen Jr., Ben Owen Pottery, Seagrove, NC
1977-1983 Apprenticeship with Ben Owen Sr., Old Plank Road Pottery, Seagrove, NC

Selected Permanent Collections
American Museum of Ceramic Art, Pomona, CA
Ceramics Monthly, Westerville, OH
Chrysler Museum of Art, Norfolk, VA
Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, OH
Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas, TX
Fuller Craft Museum, Brockton, MA
International Folk Art Museum, Santa Fe, NM
Mint Museum, Charlotte, NC
Mobile Museum of Art, Mobile, AL
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA
New Orleans Museum of Art, New Orleans, LA
North Carolina Governor’s Mansion, Raleigh, NC
Ogden Museum of Art, Ogden, LA
Smithsonian Museum, Washington, DC
The Schein-Joseph International Museum of Art, Alfred, NY

Solo Exhibitions
Pucker Gallery, Boston, MA, 2015, 2016
The Bascom Gallery, Highlands, NC, 2011
Signature Shop Gallery, Atlanta, GA, 2009
Louise Wells Cameron Art Museum, Wilmington, NC, 2004
Ariodante, New Orleans, LA, 1999
Berman Gallery, Atlanta, GA, 1996
Mint Museum, Charlotte, NC, 1995
Chrysler Museum of Art, Norfolk, VA, 1994-1995
St. John’s Museum of Art, Wilmington, NC, 1994

Selected Group Exhibitions
Quiet Inspirations: Influences From Japan, North Carolina Pottery Center, Seagrove, NC 2015
Teapots VII, Baltimore Clayworks, Baltimore, MD, 2015
North Carolina Ceramics Invitational, Duke Eye Center, Durham, NC, 2014
Pottery in the US South, International Folk Art Museum, Santa Fe, NM, 2014
Continuing Legacies, The Arvada Center, Arvada, CO, 2013
Blue Dome Gallery, Silver City, NM, 2013
National Teapot Show, Cedar Creek Gallery, Creedmoor, NC, 2008, 2005
The Potter’s Eye, North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh, NC, 2005
North Carolina Pottery, Craft Alliance, St. Louis, MO, 2003
Hot Ice III: Teapots and Pitchers, Blue Spiral 1 Gallery, Asheville, NC, 2002
Clay/Wood/Fire/Salt, Ohio Craft Museum, Columbus, OH, 2001
Different Stokes, University of Iowa Museum of Art, Iowa City, IA, 1999
Premeditated Function: The Corsaw Collection, Alfred University, Alfred, NY, 1998
Ceramic Art, Mint Museum, Charlotte, NC, 1997
Built Upon Honor, Atlanta History Center, Atlanta, GA, 1996
Cera Gallery, Tokoname, Japan, 1995
Functional Ceramics, Wayne Center for the Arts, Wooster, OH, 1994
New Ways for Old Jugs, McKissick Museum, Columbia, SC, 1994
Craft of the Carolinas, Gibbs Museum of Art, Charleston, SC, 1993

Selected Publications
Grand Strand, 2014
It’s Just Dirt, Stephen Compton, 2014
Southern Living Travel, 2012
Southern Living, November 2009
Ceramic Art and Perception, March 2008
The Remarkable Potters of Seagrove, Charlotte Brown, 2007
The Potter’s Eye, Nancy Sweezy and Mark Hewitt, October 2005
The Boston Globe, May 1994, July 2005
Ben Owen III: A Natural Influence, Phyllis Blair Clark, February 2004
North Carolina Pottery: The Collection of the Mint Museum, Barbara Stone Perry, 2004
Los Angeles Times, June 2004
Bon Appetit, November 2003
The Penland Book of Ceramics: Master Classes in Ceramic Techniques, 2003
Smithsonian Magazine, October 1998
Grit, American Life and Traditions, November 1997
Studio Potter, December 1997
Our State, North Carolina, 1993, 2005
American Craft, April 1995
Chicago Tribune, October 1986
USA Today, February 1984