

MARLENE MILLER ENCOUNTERS IN CLAY

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SCULPTURAL WORKS 1985 - 2017



PORTRAIT OF UNCLE MEINROD 1985, 30 X 20.5 X 17.5" EARTHENWARE WITH STAIN AND ACRYLIC

ARTIST STATEMENT

At the age of seven, I discovered the world of clay and I was smitten. I vividly recall, in my first visit to an art studio, mounds of the wet earthy substance waiting to be shaped, buckets of scrap and water, and the irresistible feel of the material in my hands. In art school years later, I came to love its fluid responsiveness, indomitable and mercurial nature. Yearning to explore complex human content, I inevitably turned to figurative sculpture in clay. As my exposure to art from around the world and across the ages deepened, I came to believe the most powerful artistic expressions emanate from deeply private realms that are inextricably connected to universal human experience. Drawn to mysteries found there, I have wrestled for decades with themes fueled by the murky relationship between power and vulnerability, the comic and tragic, wonder and horror, the holy and corrupt.

From 1981 to 1990, I focused on ceramic portraits of individuals living on the fringes, and the underlying life within each subject, in images of nursing home patients, my invalid uncle, and a trio of siblings I had met deep within Appalachia. My gaze then turned inward, when one night in 1990 I dreamed of a young girl standing alone on top of a lopped off tree stump in the woods, looking directly at me. The intense encounter shook me and inspired a new and more personal direction. From 1990 to 1996, I felt an urgent call from within to portray this elusive little girl in smooth surfaced pastel colored 1950's frocks. In each of the sculptures from the series, I wanted to capture the innocence and openness of this little girl, and explore her intense psychological and emotional interior world.

A period of tumult and loss followed, resulting in a turning point in my perceptions and in my work. Wishing to redirect my life and career, I undertook a monumental ceramic mural commission in 1998. The highly textured clay I used, along with the scale of the project, demanded a loosening grip on surface polish and detail, a focus on the essential, and trust in a more intuitive approach. The dug-from-the-earth, rough-hewn look it produced, complemented my darker

sensibility, so I continued to use it. In 2000, I left the security of my teaching position to focus exclusively on my sculpture and to further explore the rich terrain of the unconscious, a move both terrifying and liberating. Then came the devastating blow of 9/Il/2001, awakening within me an urgency to make sense of what seemed now, an unfathomably complex world. From 1998 to 2002, I also experienced the sudden loss of several of my closest friends. Signifying the end of one phase of my life and work, and signaling a new chapter, I dreamed one night of old man in flowing white hair, beard and gown, my childhood image of God. Standing atop a frozen icy dome in the sky, he suddenly slides off into the dark unknown as his perch melts away. Running to my studio in the dream, I discover that my gas kiln has self-ignited, exploded, and the door has burst open wide.

The solid ground beneath me, and the control I thought I had once possessed, were gone. An emotional nakedness emerged, along with a more profound sense of freedom, deeply impacting my work. My aim shifted to more fully embrace the unknown, opening the way for instinct and improvisation to reign. From 2002 onward, my work became increasingly more visceral and raw, even savage at times, in subject matter and handling of the clay. I explored the intersection of religion, power, and violence in the grizzled medieval sentries tasked with judging who is good enough to enter through the gate, and in the embattled warriors whose faces, skin, and garb embody the effects of profound struggle. During this period, I have also frequently revisited the little girl as my subject and as a vehicle to explore life in all its complexities. She has become freely expressive; at times wearing nothing but a collar and a smile, she hovers, appears as a disemboweled apparition, and exudes dignity and self-possession. Today, as I let go of preconceptions and restraints, the clay, the emerging subject, and I come together in a wild dance. I build up and destroy, over and over, pounding and gouging the clay with my hands, in search to discover something I have never seen before, and to be transfixed by the presence looking back at me.



GIRL I
1990-1992, 46 X 19 X 19"
EARTHENWARE WITH
UNDERGLAZE AND OILS
COLLECTION OF FIGGE MUSEUM,
DAVENPORT, IA

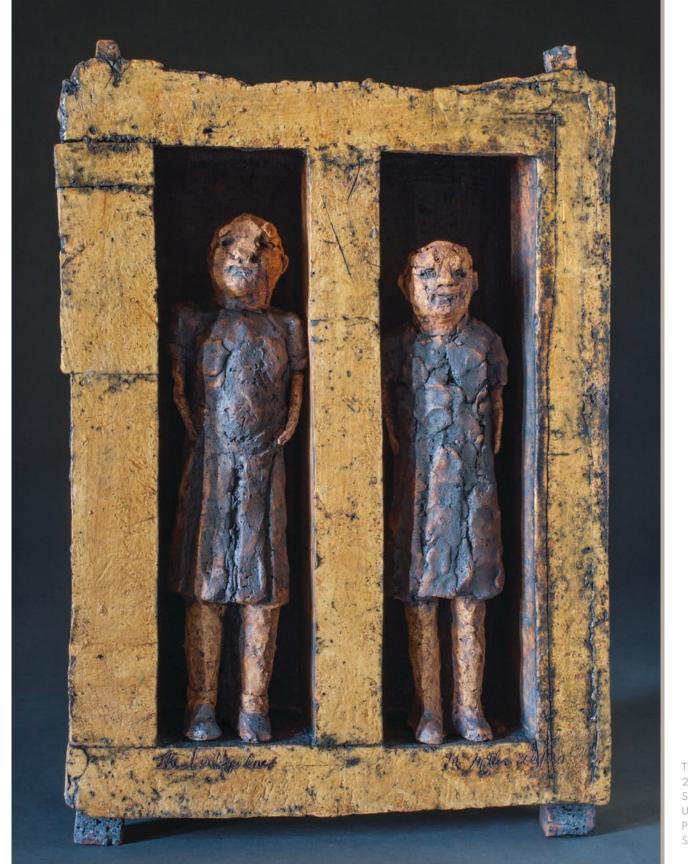


GIRL II 1992, 55.5 X 19 X 15" EARTHENWARE WITH UNDERGLAZE AND OILS





WITNESS 2003, 36 X 22 X 19" STONEWARE WITH UNDERGLAZE AND STAIN PRIVATE COLLECTION, ELK GROVE VILLAGE, MI



THE LUCKY ONE 2006, 18 X 10.5 X 4" STONEWARE WITH UNDERGLAZE AND STAIN PRIVATE COLLECTION, SALEM, OR



BLUE DIRGE, AKA FALLUJAH BLUES 2005, 31 X 14.5 X 5" STONEWARE WITH UNDERGLAZE AND STAIN



THEWATCHMAN 2006, 25.5 X 20 X 14" STONEWARE WITH UNDERGLAZE AND STAIN







SENTINEL IV 2008, 32 X 25 X 14" STONEWARE WITH UNDERGLAZE AND STAIN PRIVATE COLLECTION, FALLS CHURCH, VA



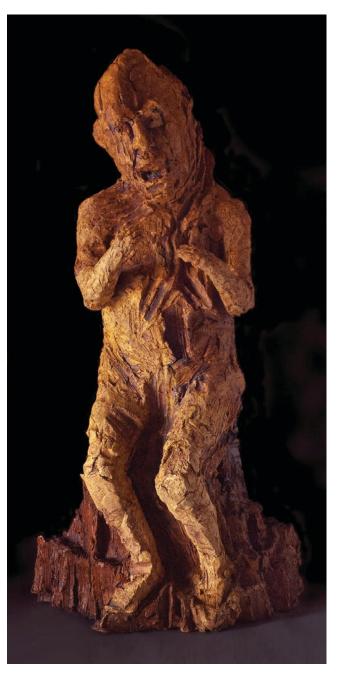
EFFIGY 2010, 47 X 17 X 14" STONEWARE WITH UNDERGLAZE AND STAIN PRIVATE COLLECTION, PEORIA, IL



QUEENIE 2012, 39 X 12 X 10" GLAZED STONEWARE



AMELIE 2012, 34 X 15 X 15" STONEWARE WITH UNDERGLAZE AND STAIN



BELOVED IV 2012, 36 X 20 X 16" STONEWARE WITH STAIN AND OILS



LITTLE FLOWER 2010, 32 X 16 X 14" STONEWARE WITH UNDERGLAZE AND STAIN





WARRIOR I 2016, 33.5 X 20.5 X 16.5" STONEWARE WITH UNDERGLAZE AND STAIN





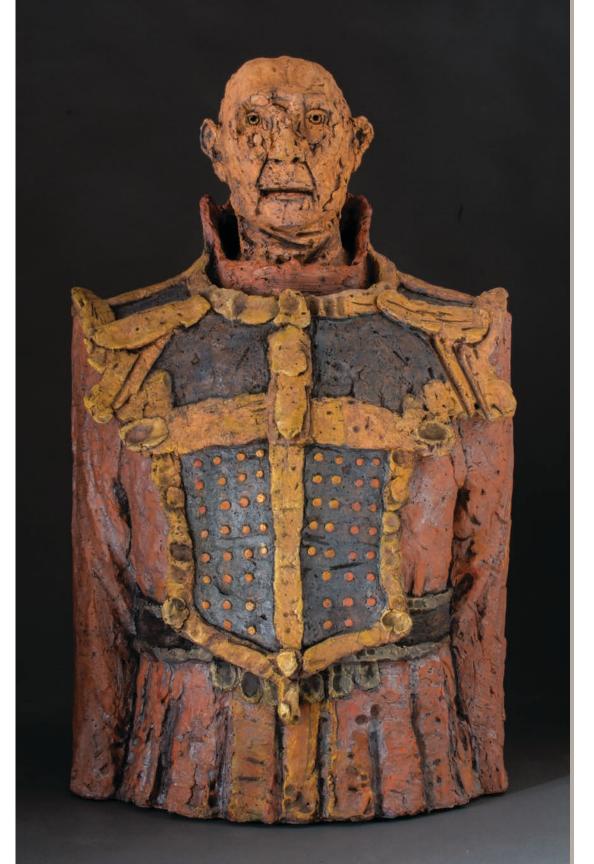
WARRIOR IV 2016, 31.5 X 20.5 X 16.5" STONEWARE WITH UNDERGLAZE AND STAIN





WARRIOR II 2016, 30 X 19.5 X 13.5" STONEWARE WITH UNDERGLAZE AND STAIN





WARRIOR VI 2017, 30 X 19 X 12.5" STONEWARE WITH UNDERGLAZE AND STAIN





BELOVED V 2017, 30.5 X 17X 11.5" STONEWARE WITH UNDERGLAZE AND STAIN



EDUCATION

1986-88	Advanced Studies in Figure Drawing, Illinois State
	University, Bloomington, IL
1978	M.F.A, Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY
1976	B.F.A, Bradley University, Peoria, IL

SOLO AND TWO-PERSON EXHIBITIONS

2017	Blood and Iron Solo Exhibition, Abel Contemporary, Paoli, WI
2016	The Warrior Series Solo Exhibition, Exhibit A, Peoria, IL
2013	The Girl Series Two-Person Exhibition, Art@803, Key West, FL
2012	New Work Solo Exhibition, Artisan Gallery, Paoli, Wl
2010	New Work Solo Exhibition, Contemporary Art Center, Peoria, IL
2009	Small Works Two-Person Exhibition, Art@803, Key West, FL
2008	New Work Solo Exhibition, Artisan Gallery, Paoli, WI
2008	New Work Two-Person Exhibition, Prairie Arts Center, Peoria, IL
2007	The Girl 1990-1996 Solo Exhibition, Figge Museum,
	Davenport, IA
2007	Erdklumpen Solo Exhibition, Bradley University, Peoria, IL
1995	Solo Exhibition of Sculpture and Drawing 1985-1995,
	Peoria Art Guild, Peoria, IL
1987	Solo Exhibition of Drawing and Watercolor, Illinois Central
	College, East Peoria
1986	Solo Exhibition of Sculpture, Allegheny College, Allegheny, PA
1983	Portraits of Appalachia Two-person exhibition,
	Southern Illinois, University, Carbondale, IL
1982	Two-person Exhibition, Callanwolde Fine Arts Center, Atlanta, GA
1980	New Sculpture in Clay Solo Exhibition, Illinois Wesleyan
	University, Bloomington, IL

INTERNATIONAL GROUP EXHIBITIONS

Museum of Ceramics, Faenza, IL

	William Le Group Extribitions
2017	13th International Ceramics Exhibition, Aveiro, Portugal
	Museum of Art
2011	10th International Ceramics Exhibition, Museum of Ceramics,
	Manises, Spain
2009	9th International Ceramics Exhibition, Aveiro, Portugal
	Museum of Art
2007	8th International Ceramics Exhibition, Aveiro, Portugal
	Museum of Art
2007	SOFA Chicago, International Exposition of Sculpture, Objects,
	and Functional Art, Navy Pier
2004	SOFA New York, 7th Regiment Armory, NYC
2004	SOFA Chicago, Navy Pier
1995	Fletcher Challenge International Ceramic Exhibition, Auckland
	Museum Auckland, New Zealand
1992	Fletcher Challenge International Ceramic Exhibition
1992	International Biennial of Ceramics, Chateau-Musee of
	Vallauris, France
1991	Faenza International Ceramics Exhibition, International

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2018	Smithsonian Craft Show, National Building Museum, Washington, D.C.
2017	Emergence, Riverfront Museum, Peoria, IL
2016	13th Ceramics Invitational, Abel Contemporary Gallery, Paoli, V
2015	Three Person Exhibition, Liz Solaro Gallery, Quincy, IL
2015	Little Ones Invitational, Cinema Gallery, Urbana, IL
2013	Cornell Museum of Art Exhibition, Delray Beach, FL
2012	Ink and Clay, California Polytechnic University, Pomona, CA
2010	Red Heat: Contemporary Work in Clay, University of Tulsa, Oklahoma, Best in Show
2009	A Contemporary Look at Abraham Lincoln, Peoria Art Guild
2007	Ink and Clay, California Polytechnic University, Pomona, CA
2006	The Other, Mary Lou Zeek Gallery, Salem, OR
2004	Contemporary Crafts, Mesa Contemporary Arts, Mesa, AZ
2003	Smithsonian Craft Show, National Building Museum, Washington, D.C.
2002	Inspired in Illinois, Lakeview Museum, Peoria, IL
2001	Illinois Women Artists, Illinois State Museum, Chicago; Illinois
	State University, Normal; Lakeview Museum, Peoria, IL
2000	Ceramics Invitational, Texas A & M University, Commerce, T
1999	Guest Curator and Exhibitor, <i>Narrative and Poetic Expressio</i> The Human Figure in Clay, Lakeview Museum, Peoria, IL
1997	Figurative Ceramics, The Works Gallery, Philadelphia, PA
1994	Ceramics Now, Downey Museum of Art, Downey, CA
1993	Regional Art Exhibition, Davenport Museum of Art, Davenport, IA, First Place Purchase Award
1993	29th Ceramics National, Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse,
1991	Clay USA, Georgia State University, Atlanta, GA
1990	National Ceramics Exhibition, Taft Museum, Cincinnati, OH
1989	Ceramics Now, Downey Museum of Art, Downey, CA
1987	Whirlpool Foundation National Sculpture Traveling Exhibition
1986	Interior Images, Esther Saks Gallery, Chicago, IL
1985	Ceramics National Traveling Exhibition, Erie Museum of Art, Erie, PA
1984	Erotica, University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee
1984	Southwest/Midwest Exchange Exhibition, Museum of Fine A of New Mexico, Santa Fe and Lill Street Gallery, Chicago, IL
1982	What's New in Clay, University of Houston, Houston, TX
1980	Tradition in the Making, Atlanta College of Art, Atlanta, GA
1979	Clay / Form, Function, and Fantasy, Long Beach Gallery, CA
1979	Objects '79, Western Colorado Center of the Arts, Grand Junction
1978	Clay from Molds: Multiples, Altered Castings, and Combinations, John Michael Kohler Arts Center, Sheboygan,
1978	Crafts '78, Women's Cultural Trust Gallery, Philadelphia, PA

AWARDS / HONORS

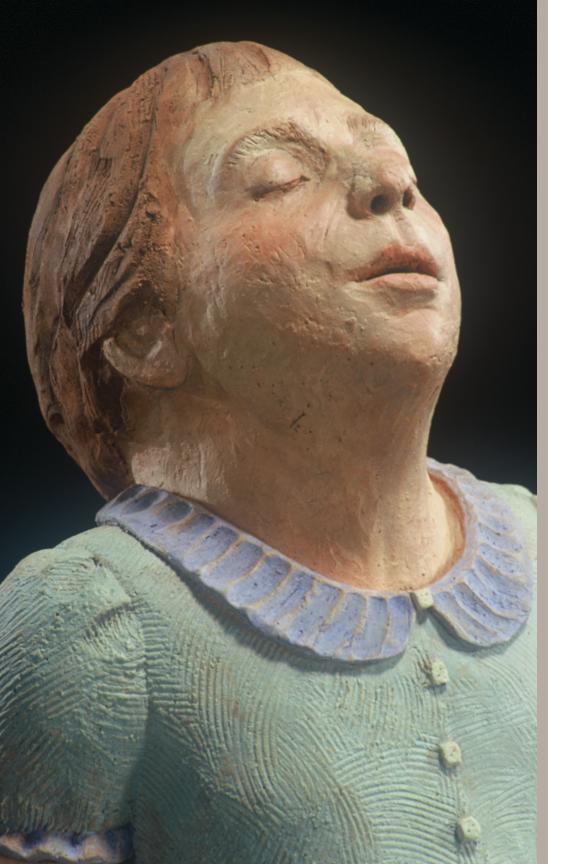
1976	Two Year Graduate Fellowship Award, Syracuse University
	Illinois Arts Council Individual Artist Fellowship Award







1998, ARTIST'S STUDIO CERAMIC WALL RELIEF COMMISSION ILLINOIS CENTRAL COLLEGE, EAST PEORIA



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