

My Life in Clay

Sara Swink



Girl in Chair (2011)
Wooden chair by Harold Oxley

Where to see my ceramics:

Guardino Gallery, Portland, OR
Hanson Howard Gallery, Ashland, OR
Mariposa Gallery, Albuquerque NM
Simon Mace Gallery, Port Townsend, WA
OPA Ceramic Showcase
Portland Open Studios, Oct. 13, 14, 20, 21



Sara Swink
Clay Circle Studio
(503) 638-9890
sara_swink@frontier.com
www.saraswink.com

I make ceramic human and animal figures with a psychological stance. Introspective, ambiguous, sometimes awkward—they often have a humorous edge. I like to form fast in a gritty sculpture clay, incise into the clay, bisque fire, finish with oxides, underglazes and glazes, then fire to cone 5.

My ideas derive most often from a process methodology that I teach in workshops, which employs simple and accessible techniques like collage and doodling to unleash the unconscious. Then I try to stay out of the way, letting ideas flow, selecting the ones that most resonate to bring into clay. I also get ideas from what I'm reading, a phrase or concept that triggers an idea for a piece. I sketch a lot, and one piece often leads to more ideas. In fact, there is a thread of narrative with several strands that run through all my ceramic work. Reflection and writing help me to understand and make some sense of the progression.

A wise man once said to me that the artist must practice heroic self-indulgence. Making art requires enormous amounts of time, let alone thinking about it, writing about it and running the business of it. In this, I strive to be true to myself and make what I am drawn to make, letting go of what might please a teacher I once had, or what will be likely to sell, or even what might be considered beautiful or clever or important. It's the process of inner exploration that keeps me moving forward.

I have loved clay since childhood, and after leaving it behind for many years, returned first to the potter's wheel and then to process-oriented sculpture. For a number of years I took private sculpture classes that supported my preference to work with the clay in an introspective way, while at the same time pursuing my academic art education at Foothill College, San Jose State University, and San Francisco State University. I taught at a number of California venues and in my own studio, while participating in regional shows. In 2006, I moved to the Portland area, where I established Clay Circle Studio and continue to show and teach.