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nceca Exhibitions

2018 NCECA ANNUAL Visual Voices: Truth Narratives



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DAVID BOGUS 1 Punk Necklace Series (Locks): Treat the Youth Right and Red, White, Brainwashed (11"x6.5"x2.5" each) ceramic, plastic chain. 2017 KRISTINE POOLE 2 Crying Out Loud: Seeing Red, Feeling Blue (32"x15.5"x23") clay, acrylics, 2017, photo by Colin Poole JESSE ALBRECHT 3 Suicide Hotline (I've Called) (15.5"x10.5"x10.5") ceramic, created at The LH Project, Veteran's Residency Program, 2017

Curatorial Statement

Winnie Owens-Hart

Having a voice is a critical component of human development. Too often, our voices have been silenced. The work in this exhibition gives tremendous artistic voice through each ceramic piece that retells an event or story that is effectively personal or global.

Historically, the narrative ceramic object has been the retelling of an event through visual imagery codification. Archaeologists have theorized that those early clay objects served as ceremonial, spiritual, and utilitarian societal markers documenting their makers' cultural existence.

Over time and currently, ceramic object makers have continued the creation of narrative ceramic work. The past practice of subsidizing the community narrative artist, who was required to adhere to acceptable societal and visual guidelines, gave way to today's independent, individualized ceramic narrative artist, free to express stories of their own.

Contemporary narrative ceramic artists, compared to their historical counterparts, are visually bombarded through global media systems. Some of their work is created based solely on the artists' personal experiences, while others are influenced by what they see through the media; some are shaped by both.

Wherever they draw their inspirations, the artists chosen for *Visual Voices: Truth Narratives* have created powerful works that speak in a variety of visual volumes and touch personal and global

emotions. Some of their works are, simultaneously, literal and abstract.

The artists in this exhibition, through their work, demonstrate the evolution of ancestral narrative ceramic pieces. Media has expanded our domestic worldview into a global reality. Their work resides in today's global community, and each artist presents their views. Their ceramic dialogues address intolerances of every type as fueled by global experiences and issues. Their work acknowledges that intolerances spawn racial, religious, class, and gender biases in every part of the world.

As we move through our life's timeline, the lenses through which we view the world change the way we see it. When certain events occur in our lives, both personal and observed, they often alter our angle of seeing and perceiving. Those events become the stories we retell, and they evolve into our narrative work. These narratives are retold from the artists' point of view... becoming their voice. Narratives have shaped, and continue to shape, the history of humankind.

The five invited artists — Syd Carpenter, Roberto Lugo, Sana Musasama, Reginald Pointer, and Janathel Shaw — are powerful representatives of *Visual Voices: Truth Narratives*. Their works speak in a variety of visual volumes that touch personal and global issues and emotions.

Syd Carpenter's "Shirley Hitchcock," a piece from her farm series, is an important work with historical implications. Ms. Hitchcock was one of a number of female American farmers of African descent. The retelling of her narrative goes beyond Hitchcock's personal story. During an earlier period in America, ownership of land was required in order to vote in political elections; however, historical accounts document African American landowners being denied their right to vote.

Roberto Lugo's work, "Obama and Me," uses an ancient, classical ceramic form decorated in a historical blue and white slip, brought into the 21st century as a graffiti pattern. In place of the traditionally centered portrait medallion of an affluent Roman politician is the portrait of the first American president of African and American heritage. The opposing medallion on the vessel is a portrait of the artist who, like the president, overcame many hurdles to realize a successful outcome.

Sana Musasama's work, entitled "Girl Soldiers," is a compassionate and compelling visual narrative of her commitment to a group of women who started out cultures apart. Over time, their lives and shared experiences developed into a mutual respect and trust that diminishes all boundaries. That trust allows Sana's great work to move forward, helping to make positive changes for the lives of many women.

Reginald "Yazid" Pointer's ceramic works present double or layered narratives in these two creations. His work entitled "No Need 4 Those Shots," examines and rails against symbols of hate that have been used for several decades and continue today to intimidate and create an atmosphere of fear among a specific group of people.

"They C What They Want 2" is Pointer's work from his Eye to Eye series. During this current state of the nation, there are deliberate attempts to cause confusion, doubt, and separation. Accepted or not, we are interconnected. Pointer visually overlaps the figures, sharing inseparable body parts and eyes, alluding to the fact that we are all in this together, and wishing that we could see eye-to-eye in order to find an area of compromise that moves us forward from divisiveness.

"Future Deferred" by Janathel Shaw pays homage to so many, too many, documented deaths of American men of African heritage at the hands of the police and vigilantes. The deaths of Trayvon Martin, Jordan Davis Russell, Michael Brown, Tamir Rice, and the artist's own son compelled her to create this honestly raw and powerful work. The surface work is stunning and continues to narrate life in a racial society.

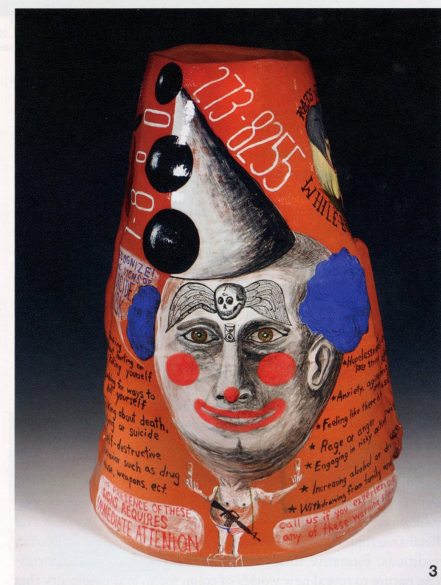
Every visual narrative work in this exhibition ranges from very personal stories and experiences that expand to national and international outlooks. The threads that run through this exhibition are powerful visions about gender, biases, geo-political challenges, and never-ending concerns about global morality at every level.

I believe the work in this exhibition constitutes a significant marker in the art world.

Winnie Owens-Hart is recognized as an educator, artist, filmmaker, author, and critical thinker in matters of clay, art, and culture. She taught at Howard University for over 37 years and has conducted research, exhibited, and presented lectures internationally. She is an honorary board member of the Renwick Museum, and has received an individual craftsman fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts.



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