



Jason Briggs' ceramic works break traditional mold

Release Date: 10/11/2007. Expired: 12/1/2007

Jason Briggs' porcelain sculptures turn the traditional world of ceramics on its ear by creating objects that as a whole do not appear to be part of the natural world. But the more you look at them, the more you think you see recognizable pieces that have been brought together in a surreal collection of textures, shapes and functions.



A selection of recent works by Briggs will be exhibited in the North Wing Display Case at The Renaissance Center in Dickson Oct. 31-Dec. 1. An opening reception will be 6-7:30 p.m. Friday, Nov. 2.

“There is no real defining reference for the artwork of Jason Briggs,” said Armon Means, curator for The Renaissance Center. “As with every artist, the world is the reference, in that it includes everything within it.

“Clay is the medium of choice for this artist though the pieces created are far from normal ceramics or sculptural forms. They are not functional as with pottery or figurative in nature – though their inspiration often comes from the body or nature. What intrigues Jason is the desire to create forms that exist nowhere else in the natural world, yet directly deal with our natural response to that form – that response often being a desire to explore the tactile surface. You just want to touch it.”

Briggs received his Bachelor of Fine Arts in Ceramics from the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater in 1995 and a Master of Fine Arts from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in 1999. He was an artist-in-residence for three years at the Appalachian Center for Crafts, operated by Tennessee Tech University in Smithville.

He currently is an adjunct instructor of Ceramics at Belmont University in Nashville and operates a studio on a five-acre farm in Watertown. In 2006, Briggs received one of six Individual Artist Fellowships awarded by the Tennessee Arts Commission, one of only two in the craft field.

What has brought attention to Briggs' ceramic works is the way they appear to combine textures. They are neither smooth nor rough, carpeted or matted, sharp or dull. He creates unique forms that seem to be

both organic and manmade, that are not just new objects but appear to come from a new world all his own.

“Rather than suggesting nature, in my own way I am seeking to create,” Briggs explains.

His work has been exhibited in shows across the country and was selected for the 1st World Ceramic Biennale International Competition in Ichon, South Korea, in 2001. His pieces are featured at the World Ceramic Center in South Korea, the Ceramic Research Center in Tempe, Ariz., and in collections from coast to coast.

David Maddox, art critic for *The Nashville Scene* and the art scene blog *Perambulating the Bounds*, called Briggs’ works in a recent exhibit at the Tennessee Arts Commission gallery “biomorphic forms in highly accomplished porcelain sculptures.”

“Each of his pieces in total also appears to be masquerading as something you can’t place,” Maddox wrote. “They have a double nature as illusions of illusions; they embrace and preserve, rather than resolve, the open-ended quality of the question they raise about their own relation to the universe of known things.”

After starting his art education in the field of drawing, Briggs switched majors to Ceramics after his first clay class awoke in him the need for direct contact with his art.

“Though my objects contain strong visual references, I am more interested in the implied tactile ones; the things that stir in me a compulsion to touch,” Briggs says. “Beyond other external inspiration lies this basic, primal impulse. I recognize – and act upon – a profound desire to push, poke, squeeze, stroke, caress, and pinch. I intend for my pieces to invoke a similar sort of temptation.

“I am searching for a fresh perspective. I strive to create an object I’ve never quite seen before – one whose inherent mystery and intrigue quietly insists upon viewer interaction. An object begging to be explored and examined in much the same way a child investigates the world: with wonder, curiosity and also trepidation. It’s very important that the work be challenging. A sense of unease is critical because it encourages the viewer to consider carefully what they are seeing – at what is compelling them. I would like my work to exist not as the ubiquitous art object, but as something more enigmatic -- foreign yet familiar, handmade yet somehow organic.”

To find out more about Briggs and his work, visit his website at www.jason-briggs.com.

For more information on The Renaissance Center's exhibit of work by Briggs, contact Means at (615) 740-5545 or armon.means@rcenter.org, or visit www.rcenter.org.

The Renaissance Center’s galleries are open 9 a.m.-9 p.m. Monday-Saturday and admission is free.