



Randy O'Brien Artist's Statement

Inspired by the mineral formations, mudflats and lichens of southern Arizona, Randy developed a three-dimensional glaze surface that mimics the aesthetic of a naturally occurring material. For each piece, gray stoneware clay is made into the desired shape and then sprayed with his secret recipe. A gesso-like material, it gives the clay 'tooth' so he can later build up layers and layers of an obsidian glaze made from volcanic rock. The vessel is then fired at about 2,000 degrees Fahrenheit. Over a two-week period, the artist sprays on thin layers of this obsidian glaze called crawl glaze, as it 'crawls across the surface of the clay during the firing process. Once the glaze is on, the artist sprays on more layers of color made with metallic oxides. The work is fired and pulled from the kiln after 12 hours of cooling. This time-intensive process takes O'Brien about six weeks. It took over 15 years for him to develop this glaze.

"Essentially, I create form with glaze. Crawl glazes are fairly common in ceramics. The problem is that the glaze shrinks so dramatically in the firing that it loses its grip and gravity takes over. I've figured out a way to make the glaze stick while it crawls."

A full time potter for almost 20 years, Randy O'Brien began working with clay while he was pursuing a degree in geology at the University of California at Berkeley. He moved to Santa Cruz, California in 1984 to study with ceramic artist and educator Al Johnsen. Randy's love for the wilderness and adventure led him to move to Alaska in the late 1980's. He established a pottery studio in Homer creating and selling functional, stoneware pottery with glazes inspired by the glacial fields and mountains of Kachemak Bay.