

Dianne Caton - Clay Artist

By Brian Lynch

When did you start?

I started at 15 in New Zealand. Wanting to go to art school, my father insisted I should attend Business College – he won. That week I enrolled in a pottery class at the local high school and the love affair began. My father, realizing my passion, built me my first electric wheel.



Why did you start?

I had the chance to “touch” clay in high school and never wanted to do anything else.

How has your work developed through the years?

My work has definitely changed from doing functional pieces to more sculptural/non functional pieces of "clay art". I no longer strive to make what I think people would like, I only make what I love to make.



What is your "method"?

I'm currently focusing on low fired-horse hair pieces. I take the piece out at around 1,000 degrees and lay individual strands of horse hair. The hair burns an incredibly interesting line into the piece.



What would you call your style?

I cannot leave a piece of clay plain. I have the uncontrollable urge to carve or change the shape in some way. Hei matau, the bone or greenstone carving in the shape of a highly stylized fishhook and koru or fern frond are perhaps Maori culture's most recognizable icons. Instantly identifiable by their bold yet sinuous and curvaceous nature, Maori art forms are never simply decorative, speaking also of family ties, land, character traits and genealogy.

A New Zealander living and working in the US for over 30 years, my work has constant echoes to the culture I grew up in –where every line is a curve and practically every cut into wet clay alludes to traditional Maori forms or designs. Drawing upon and reinterpreting these characteristic motifs maintains my connection not only stylistically but also personally to New Zealand and its unique visual heritage, for in Maori culture nothing is ever separate, but always linked to the past even as it faces the future.

Did you ever feel like giving up?

Never!

What's the best thing about being an artist?

When people pass my booth at shows, stop in mid stride and go "wow"! Just makes my day – even if they don't buy anything, I love that they love my work.



What's the worst thing about being an artist?

The worst thing about being an artist is the business aspect.

How do you feel when people interpret your artwork differently?

It's great to be able to see what they see and I'll look at the piece in a different light also.



What advice do you have for aspiring artists?

Never stop doing what you love.

Who is your favorite artist?

Don't really have one – just admire anyone who has the gift to create beautiful things. My husband and I have a wonderful collection of other artists work.

To see more of Dianne's artwork please visit her website at: www.catonpottery.com