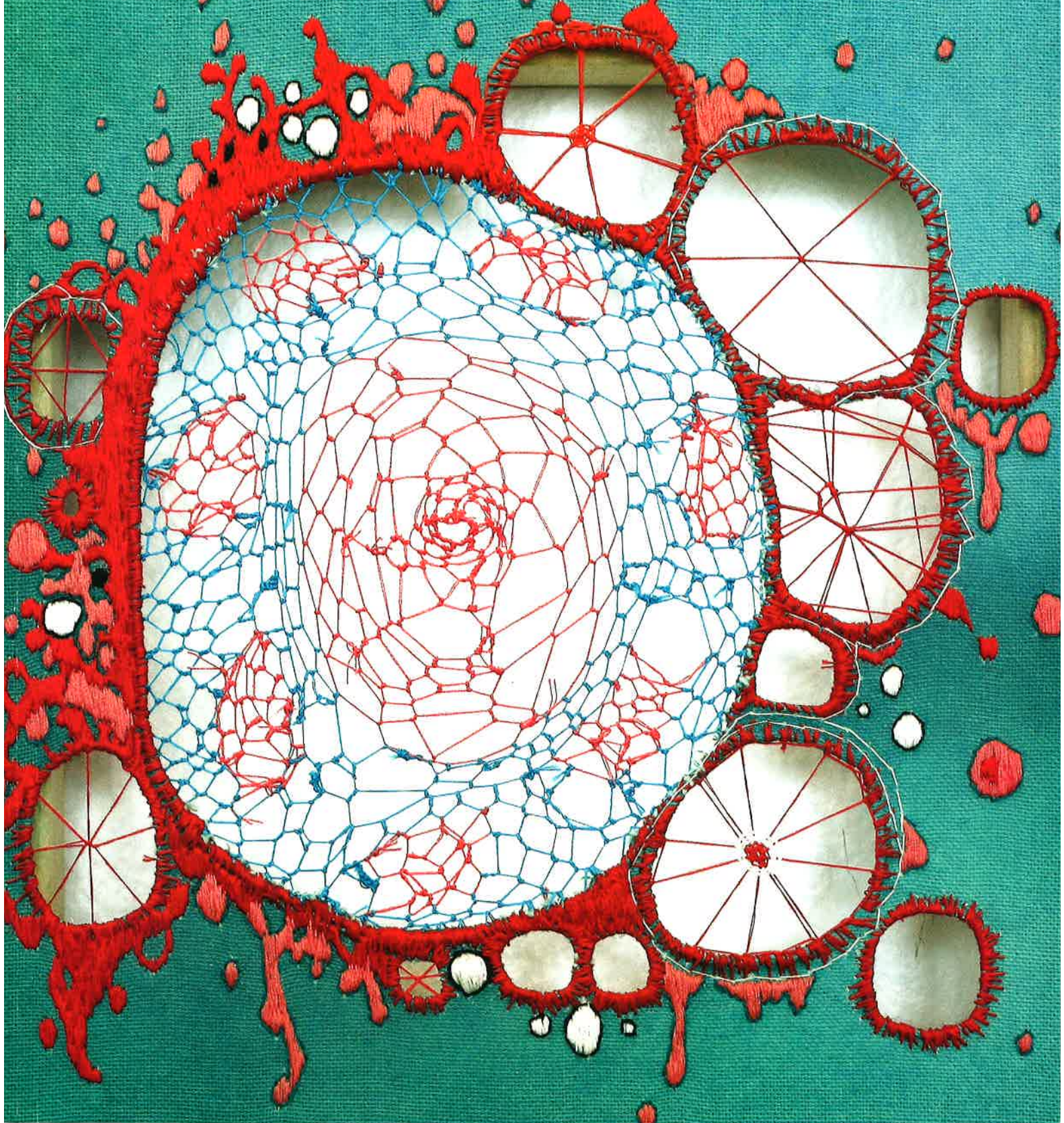


THE LAUREL OF
ASHEVILLE

APRIL 2016

THE ARTS AND CULTURE OF COMMUNITIES ACROSS THE MOUNTAINS





FEATURE ARTIST Will Dickert

BY PAUL M. HOWEY

Despite a childhood immersed in art (his mother was the executive director of the Paramount Center for the Arts in Bristol, Virginia), artist Will Dickert says his first real introduction to clay didn't take place until he enrolled in a ceramics course at UNC Asheville.

"I was somewhat intimidated by the overwhelming amount of information about materials and technique," says Will. "I struggled that semester, but was fascinated by the first pieces of mine to be fired."

He says he grew up surrounded by art. "As a young child, my mother's artistic talent instilled in me a lifelong

passion for the visual arts." She was supportive of his talent from the very beginning, enrolling him in a number of art camps and entering his artwork in area contests. "She loved that I was fascinated with art."

Over the years, he's had a number of jobs, mostly working at summer camps in Western North Carolina. He worked at one for six years, becoming the camp's assistant director. "I now direct the pottery program at Rockbrook Summer Camp in Brevard." He also teaches continuing education pottery courses at Blue Ridge Community College.

With an already established love for the region, he chose to attend UNC Asheville from which he graduated with a bachelor of arts degree with a focus in ceramics.

By the time he got to college, he'd already determined that he wanted to be a full-time artist. "I am lucky, in a sense, that what I was passionate about learning was always clear." About the stark realities of being a full-time artist, Will says, "It turns out you (also) have to be a business person, an advertiser, a construction worker, and have so many other functions.

Because of all that, Will early on decided it would a good move to get his teaching license for art education for



grades K-12 while he was in school. "I love working with children, and feel I have an ability to connect and successfully manage them in a learning environment." But Will says, "I have essentially stuck to my guns though and call ceramics my primary vocation, supplemented by seasonal teaching jobs."

Will says his techniques working with clay have evolved over the years. "For a long time I was focused on being technically sound in my making process. So I would challenge myself to make forms I had never tried and to make them the best I could, as far as technique and mechanics.

"Then there was a shift to take those skills and focus more on form as well as function. I wanted to make work that functioned well but also was executed as well as possible mechanically. I feel in the end, however, you are either recognizing the fact that something is made well and is not exactly aesthetically appealing, or some permutation of that statement." He says that while his current work is more focused on form and function, he wants the work to "transcend being defined by how it was made or what it functions as."

Will uses stoneware and porcelain clays, along with a number of slips and glazes that enhance the pieces and also help them endure his wood-firing techniques. "I wood fire my work in a variety of kiln types: anagama, noborigama, and Bourey-box salt/soda kilns."



He says is drawn to wood firing not only for the surfaces that can be achieved, but also because the process requires a constant interaction between the maker and the pots in the kiln. "You are present, and actually forcing the changes the pots go through in the kiln, as opposed to some other firing methods where the maker is somewhat removed from what is happening to the work in the kiln." He adds that firing with wood always imparts a uniqueness and depth to surfaces that is not necessarily present in other firing methods.

As for his creative process, Will says, "Some pieces begin with simple templates. However, most new forms are actually born from older ones. I often let pieces



evolve, and tweak certain aspects or components. I tend to work in series, which really provides opportunity for careful observation through quantity."

You can see Will Dickert's work at Blue Spiral 1 (where he has an exhibition that runs through April), Asheville Ceramics Gallery, New Morning Gallery, Crimson Laurel Gallery, and Dobrá Tea. For more, visit willdickertceramics.com. (Photos of artwork by Tim Barnwell / Photo of the artist by Paul M. Howey)





He says is drawn to wood firing not only for the surfaces that can be achieved, but also because the process requires a constant interaction between the maker and the pots in the kiln. "You are present, and actually forcing the changes the pots go through in the kiln, as opposed to some other firing methods where the maker is somewhat removed from what is happening to the work in the kiln." He adds that firing with wood always imparts a uniqueness and depth to surfaces that is not necessarily present in other firing methods.

As for his creative process, Will says, "Some pieces begin with simple templates. However, most new forms are actually born from older ones. I often let pieces



evolve, and tweak certain aspects or components. I tend to work in series, which really provides opportunity for careful observation through quantity."

You can see Will Dickert's work at Blue Spiral 1 (where he has an exhibition that runs through April), Asheville Ceramics Gallery, New Morning Gallery, Crimson Laurel Gallery, and Dobrá Tea. For more, visit willdickertceramics.com. (Photos of artwork by Tim Barnwell / Photo of the artist by Paul M. Howey)

