

# CHUKES

## Biography

I was born in Vallejo, California. Our family moved to San Jose, California, when I was a year old and that is where I began my artistic journey. I have been working professionally as an artist for more than thirty-five years. I am now living and creating in Altadena, California.

My connection with art started around the age of five as result of watching my mother sew clothes for my brothers and me. She would sketch out the clothes on paper and within a few days of her sewing, we were wearing them.

I thought there was something magical in the process of drawing and pasting things together, so I asked my mother for a pencil and some paper, and I began to create images as my imagination ran wild. This was my first introduction in art; it was also my first introduction to sculpture because the clothes went from a two-dimensional piece of paper to a three-dimensional tactile object that I could wear.

I didn't find clay, clay found me. I was in the fifth grade the first time I touched clay. It was like being reacquainted with an old friend; I knew just what to do with it and the first sculpture I created was of a human head. My teacher was so impressed that he paraded my sculpture around all the classrooms. I never forgot that feeling because it wasn't me that was the center of attention, it was what I created that captivated the audience.

It wasn't until I reached high school that clay would begin to define me creatively. I had a wonderful art teacher named Mr. Shannon who valued art making as something equivalent, or even more important, than any of the academic classes I was taking at the time. Mr. Shannon made it clear that I would be remembered by what I created, not by what I scored on a test. I learned more about the wonders of art making through his teaching, and I credit him for his significant guidance in advancing my creative journey.

I attended San Jose City Community College in 1980 with the intent to study art. However, my athletic prowess gained more attention. After being ranked as the second fastest junior college 400-meter hurdler in the nation, I received a full track and field scholarship to San Jose State University where I also majored in art. I had great success as an athlete there but found little support from the college as an art student.

After leaving college in 1984 without a degree, I felt a huge void in my education so I decided to teach myself how to become a sculptor. I spent the next nine years escaping to my parents' garage spending countless hours honing my skills. I pulled from my athletic discipline and challenged myself to better understand the nature of clay to create the artistic visions that consumed much of my thoughts.

During this creative journey, I started exhibiting my sculptures in local art festivals and art events. My work began to get recognized, but it was not by the audience that was best suited for me. I started approaching art galleries with my portfolio, but I always felt there was something missing when it came to writing and speaking about my creative process. Frustrated by not feeling adequate enough to express the meaning of my work, I decided it was time to finish my academic education.

In 1993, I was accepted to the California College of Arts and Crafts, in Oakland, California. My goal there was not solely focused on becoming a better sculptor, I wanted to learn how to express

my creative thoughts by concentrating on classes that would teach me how to become more proficient at writing, documentation, and historical and oral communication. I learned more from that instruction than any of my required art classes.

In three and a half years I graduated with high distinction honors as a dual major receiving a BFA in Sculpture and Ceramics. In 1998, I moved to Los Angeles after meeting Earl Underwood, the director of Leimert Park Fine Art Gallery. Earl was so impressed with my work that he granted me artist residency of the gallery. This was a dream come true. For the next two years my work flourished, and I was able to create and exhibit in a wonderful environment until Earl's untimely passing forced the gallery to close. One year later I moved to Altadena, my current home. I met and married my soulmate, Rhonda, who has been a true blessing and a major force in my life and art! And once again, I felt compelled to return to college.

In 2005, I went on to receive my MFA in Sculpture from Claremont Graduate University in Claremont, California. My intent was to one day become a college professor. I wanted to give students something I felt I didn't receive in many of my college courses — the truth! I have yet to take on a college teaching position; however, I have found great pleasure in mentoring artists of all ages. I have given countless lectures, artist talks and workshops in colleges, museums, galleries, and art institutions nationwide.

To this day I have continued to challenge myself as an artist, never resting on my laurels. My goal is to use my artistic skills to educate and inform all peoples of the beauty and creative energy we possess as a human race.

My work is now exhibited and collected in prominent galleries, museums, college institutions and private collections worldwide, as well as by countless noted art collectors. My sculptures and paintings have been published in several books and magazines, as well as featured in television and movies.

I am honored to have received numerous awards in the field of art, but my greatest reward comes from sharing my lifelong creative journey with all.

**ART IS MY LEGACY!!!**