

My Life in Clay

Sara Swink



Wellspring
Ceramic
10" x 10" x 10"



Sara Swink
Clay Circle Studio
(971) 271-0480
sara.swink@gmail.com
www.saraswink.com

I make clay human and animal figures with a psychological stance. My hand-built sculptural work imparts ideas through fragments of narrative, often with a humorous edge. I often use collage to gather inspiration, recombining and developing ideas through sketching on paper and in clay. I like to riff and doodle, one idea leading to another, in an endless progression of a personal narrative that reflects and feeds my inner life. I use a gritty sculpture clay, incise into the clay, bisque fire, finish with oxides, underglazes and glazes, then fire to cone 5/6.

My love of clay began at the age of 8 with the encouragement of our next-door neighbor who was a potter. In high school, I learned to throw on the potter's wheel, hand build, and mix glazes; I bought my own kickwheel with money earned cleaning houses. I left ceramics behind until I took a class at Palo Alto Art Center nearly twenty years later. This was followed by a workshop in 1998 with Coeleen Kiebert, whose methodology fuses artmaking with the psychology of the creative individual, and whose approach I teach. At the same time I pursued an academic art education in art history, ceramics, drawing, printmaking and foundry work at Foothill College, San Jose State University, and San Francisco State University through the first year of graduate study in ceramics. I taught at a number of California venues and in my own studio, while participating in regional shows. In 2006, I moved to the Portland area, where I established Clay Circle Studio, continue to show nationally and teach locally. In 2013, I was featured on Oregon Public Broadcasting's "Oregon Art Beat".

About This Body of Work

As the pandemic was winding down and I was transitioning out of solitude, I struggled with reopening my studio classes to others. I was very irritable and resistant. In 2022, I made a collage to invite the unconscious perspective, which led to a series of horse sculptures that culminated in this body of work. The horses led me through a period of gradual reconciliation with myself and others. The horses were playful and offhand, allowing me to take things more lightly, recognize feelings of inadequacy and let go of perfectionism, and connect in a more relaxed way with people in my studio.

Further collage work and the progression of pieces revisited the theme of predator and prey, with cat and horse archetypes standing in for aspects of my own human psyche. In the next phase, surface treatments of naively painted animals seemed to suggest the bubbling instinctual creative wellspring within. This felt like the completion of a cycle.