

Barbara Satterfield
Artist Statement

I coil low-fire earthenware clay, the building process that created ritual vessels and storage jars of ancient cultures, and the plant and animal forms that artists have made for millennia. When I coil build, I feel connected to this history and embrace the organic physicality of the process while pursuing a contemporary interpretation of the medium.

Coil building lends itself to extreme angles and expansive spaces. Relative humidity and patience determine how far I can push the boundaries of either. Gravity and instinct determine how far I can push asymmetry, and still maintain structural balance. I like to pull visual tension through the foot to the lip of each piece, like stretching muscles. And the combination of oil paint and encaustic, a new approach for my surfaces, allows me to reveal the flex of the fired clay with translucent yet permanent finishes.

Each piece is inspired by an already-created object: a nest, a pod, a root, a thorn, an insect — even a fungus. The pieces present, support, house, surround, cradle or protect the found objects, or press molds of same. The objects are collected for their extraordinary features, elegant spatial qualities, or out of respect for the industry of their making.

Creating these pieces combines my ongoing homage to a centuries-old practice, my fascination with often-unexamined things, and my desire to give physical form to metaphorical thinking about the diversity, fragility and tenacity I observe in nature.