

Bio

Andréa Keys Connell (b. 1980) is an Associate Professor of Ceramics in the Department of Art at Appalachian State University. Her work has been widely recognized, featured in national and international publications such as *Colossal* and *The New York Times*. She has exhibited internationally in galleries and museums, including the Jane Hartsook Gallery in New York City and the Gaya Culture and Art Center in Goryeong, Korea. With over 20 solo exhibitions since 2009, she is represented by Blue Spiral 1 in Asheville, NC, and J Mackey Gallery in the East Hamptons.

Beyond her studio practice, Andréa has extensive experience in public art commissions and collaborative projects. Her recent collaboration with Susan Alexandra in New York City was featured in *Wirecutter*.

In addition to exhibiting her work and teaching at App State, Andréa is an accomplished educator who has led figure-sculpting workshops at renowned craft schools, including Penland, Haystack, Arrowmont, Centre d'arts Rozynski, and The Metropolitan Museum of Art in NYC. She has also been invited to present as a demonstrating artist at major conferences such as NCECA, Women Working in Clay, and The Bascom's Annual Clay Symposium.

Artist Statement

My sculptures embody the profound presence of love, longing, humor, and grief that have shaped my life since becoming a mother. Each piece seeks to express the universal, nonverbal experience of motherhood—that tender, intimate space where the joys and sorrows of loving a child intertwine, touching every aspect of the world around me.

Figures and natural elements shift between embrace and support, leaning into each other as though deeply connected. Sometimes, my pieces convey harmonious balance; other times, they seem on the edge of collapse. In my studio, a sculpture about holding exists beside one about breaking. To me, these ideas are inseparable: we hold to avoid breaking, and we break because we understand the weight of holding.

I work with a gritty, earthen clay body—rich in sand, grog, and fibers. Its raw texture and earthy tone feel both strong and vulnerable. This clay endures fire, weight, and constant shaping, yet its surface reveals its essence. This material allows me to build with honesty and speed, leaving little room for refinement. I work in bursts of energy, seizing fleeting moments between life's interruptions. The urgency of my process reflects the beautiful, imperfect messiness of motherhood itself.

I reject the notion that solitude is necessary for meaningful art. My life is my practice. Motherhood has given me a shared language to explore what I value most: the ways we care for one another and how that care transforms us.