



**Noyes**  
Museum of Art  
STOCKTON UNIVERSITY



Education Guide

July 1- October 2, 2022

## ***Skeffington Thomas: Bottles, Containers and Stelae***

### **Opening Reception:**

Second Friday,  
July 8, 2022 6 – 8 pm

Skeffington Thomas is a potter and ceramic artist, and Professor of Art on the faculty of Rowan University in Glassboro, NJ. His works include bottles, containers, and stelae.

Thomas states, “I want my ceramic art to be seen and appreciated within the contemporary context of the vessel as sculptural form. Each morning as my fingers play across the body of my coffee cup, and my lips are welcomed by the roundness of a rim, I am reminded about the subtle quality of form and surface that the ceramic arts provide. This sensibility can be maintained when we create objects for daily use as well as forms of a monumental scale. With these forms, covered by a luscious glaze, not only are your fingers massaged by the surface, but also your hand and eye. The distinction between functional craft and sculptural art is blurred, and the viewer/user is granted an experience of a visceral nature.”

Celebrated for functionality, the bottle form has been utilized for documented history and it is and has been one of the vessels for capturing beauty in useful form. As a ceramic artist the exploration of form and surface is the root of expression with earth, air, fire and water. The bottle is a shape which provides opportunity to exploit the plasticity of the ceramic material in forms that are visually fluid and flowing, yet, when finished are rigid and hard like polished stone or opaque glass.

Appearing simple, bold and formal, the complexity in the fabrication of these bottles allows for abstraction of a form common or recognizable to all. Created in the scale of ancient amphora, the bottles created are technically functional, but are displayed as the contemporary sculptural expression of a classic form.

Taking multitudes of forms, containers are designed and fabricated for the interior space, the space where there is nothing, awaiting whatever will be deposited into it. These container forms created on the potter’s wheel are designed to capture the negative space of the interior like air expanding a stone balloon. The walls



Portrait of Skeffington Thomas with his work

containing volume, present a three-dimensional canvas for decorating with contrasting colors, glossy and matte surfaces. Working with pattern, color and texture are ubiquitous in artistic expression, Thomas utilizes these visual elements to create visually and physically stimulating ceramic art objects.

Common to many ancient cultures, the carving and erection of stelae provided the platform for memorializing someone or some event. The intent of making each shape, applying the markings, choosing the patterns that will inform the meaning of an object allowed, and allows for, designing unique and original monuments inspired by classical forms.

The stelae Thomas makes are constructed in an additive process rather than carved from stone or wood in a subtractive process. The forms are both symmetrical and asymmetrical depending on the viewing perspective, and explore the interplay of positive and negative space. Like in music, the space between the notes/shapes creates each individual form, these sculptures take advantage of negative space, the space where there is nothing in moving and fluid forms.

The titles of the stelae presented are informed by what Thomas was contemplating during design and fabrication. The forms of each one are open to whatever interpretation or emotive responses they induce, and will hopefully evoke a new emotional response with each interaction.

### **Artist Biography:**

After receiving the Bachelor of Arts degree from Lewis and Clark College, he worked as the apprentice for the renowned ceramic artist, Toshiko Takaezu. Upon earning the Master of Fine Arts degree from Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville, Skeff worked as the artist-in-residence at the Arvada Center for the Arts in Arvada Colorado. In 1997, he accepted the appointment to the faculty at Rowan University and has served as chair of the Department of Art and Associate Dean for the College of Fine and Performing Arts.

A member of The National Council on Education of the Ceramic Arts (NCECA) since 1991, Skeff served the council as Director-at-large from 2002-2004 and as President from 2008-2010. NCECA awarded the honor of Emerging Artist to him in 1996. Skeff Thomas has received the New Jersey State Council on the Arts Individual Artist Fellowships in 1999 and 2005 and First Prize in the Grand Prix de Ceramique, Casino Faienceries, Sarreguemines, France. Along with numerous national and international group exhibitions, Skeff has presented his work in 11 solo exhibitions with porcelain and stoneware artwork fired in his wood kiln on his property or in the kilns at the university.

Skeff Thomas has juried numerous competitions including the 2010 Taiwan Ceramic Biennale and the New Jersey State Council on the Arts Annual exhibition at the Montclair Art Museum and the Noyes Museum of Art. He has presented workshops and demonstrations of his craft throughout the United States and has had work published in Ceramics Monthly, Keramiki Techni, Clay Times, and American Craft amongst other publications.

### **Glossary:**

#### Abstract Art:

: uses visual language of shape, form, color and line to create a composition which may exist with a degree of independence from visual references in the world.

#### Amphora:

: a two-handled storage jar that held oil, wine, milk, or grain.

: sometimes used as grave markers or as containers for funeral offerings or human remains.

Bottle:

: a rigid or semirigid container typically of glass or plastic having a comparatively narrow neck or mouth and usually no handle  
: a narrow-necked container made of an impermeable material

Clay:

: a natural earthy material that is plastic when wet, consisting essentially of hydrated silicates of aluminum: used for making bricks, pottery, etc.  
: earth; mud.

Container:

: a receptacle for holding goods  
: receptacle or enclosure for holding a product

Form:

: the shape of a thing or person.

Glaze:

: a smooth, glossy surface or coating.  
: the substance for producing such a coating.

Negative Space:

: the empty space around and between the subject of an image.

Positive Space:

: the subject or areas of interest in an artwork

Sculpture:

: the art of carving, modeling, welding, or otherwise producing figurative or abstract works of art in three dimensions, as in relief, intaglio, or in the round.

Stelae:

: a usually carved or inscribed stone slab or pillar used for commemorative purposes  
: a stone or wooden slab, generally taller than it is wide, erected as a monument. The surface of the stele often has text, ornamentation, or both. These may be inscribed, carved or painted.

**For more information on Skeffington Thomas, please visit the following:**

**Artist Website: [www.skeffthomas.com](http://www.skeffthomas.com)**

**The Noyes Museum of Art of Stockton University · <http://www.noyesmuseum.org> · (609) 626-3420**

**The Noyes Arts Garage of Stockton University · [www.artsgarageac.com](http://www.artsgarageac.com) · (609) 626-3805**

**Check us out on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube.**

