

# The Universe of True Beauty



PORCELAINS BY  
Brother Thomas



PUCKER GALLERY  
BOSTON



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## PORCELAINS BY Brother Thomas



GLOBULAR VASE

Chrysanthemum copper glaze  
6.5 x 9 x 9"  
TH1959B

Brother Thomas had a recurring and memorable dream of a pure white pot, which he tried time and time again to create until finally he realized, "it was myself that I was trying to make pure, better, a more beautiful person, a more truthful person, a person concerned with uniting and not dividing what he encounters and meets along the journey in this world." Brother Thomas exemplified the notion that beauty in art is less about what is seen on the surface and more about its ability to show us the beauty within ourselves.

I pursued a master's degree in art with an emphasis in ceramics for several reasons: the wondrously cryptic, yet completely grounding process of creating ceramics, the ceramics themselves, and the artist-craftsmen who made them. In my experience, there are few groups as humble, philosophically focused, and hardworking as potters. Ceramics is an enigma that for me becomes increasingly more

interesting in unexpected ways every year. Encountering the work of Brother Thomas has been no exception.

Each pot by Brother Thomas is a unique individual, whether in his treatment of form, surface, or function. Experience and explore even an abbreviated collection of his work, and his gift is immediately clear. He experimented with nearly all conceivable forms and glaze combinations, from the strictly traditional to the overtly non-traditional, from bright porcelain whites to matte moonlike textures. At times, he was extremely prolific and set no boundaries as to what he was willing to push and probe, yet he kept only a small percentage of work, only that which struck and spoke to a particular artistic and personal chord.

In considering the thought process of Brother Thomas, I find it useful to look to the profound Leo Tolstoy. In his seminal book *What is Art?*, Tolstoy writes about a feeling of "infectiousness" in art which he relates to that of true,



HEART-SHAPED VASE

Rose red glaze  
10.75 x 13.5 x 13.5"  
TH2140B

unadulterated joy—a feeling which we all know comes and goes in an all too ephemeral and fleeting way. It is the allure of this feeling that keeps us returning to a particular work of art or the work of a particular artist. We are, in a sense, “infected” by the mood that the work of art created. This experience of gripping fascination is cultivated by the beauty of a work of art, which results not only from the technical skill of the artist, but from the sincerity of emotion that the artist imbues in the piece.

Because beauty is formed and nurtured through the artist’s humanity, or empathy, it is therefore not unexpected that true beauty is often found in the things that are beyond our control. A profound and difficult truth is that some of the most abundant beauty comes from the bittersweet trials in life. Not surprisingly, many of the best artists have experienced the greatest losses. Ludwig van Beethoven lost all but a glimpse of hearing, Vincent van Gogh painted *Starry Night* from an asylum a year before his death at age 37, and Frida Kahlo began painting while bedridden and in severe and chronic pain from a serious bus accident which affected her the rest of her life.

An artist who communicates such emotions through his art creates a communion between himself and the viewer

and in this way, the work does not exist apart from that relationship. This unity points to the universal transcendence of art because it negates the effect of both time and space. A Brother Thomas pot embodies this type of real beauty; it is absolutely and undeniably mysterious. We can all recognize in it the deeply rooted feelings, the essences of the human condition, which so often escape words and that true artists serve to reveal. Brother Thomas felt his work was not finished until it was sent out into the world to be seen and enjoyed by others. His dear friend Sister Joan Chittister said “his life was about the pots, of course, but his life in all its dimensions, was really about the people whose relationships he had shaped as carefully as he had shaped every pot.”

Brother Thomas was sincere, clear, sobering, and unpretentious and the work carries this legacy—emanating moments of pure thought while still maintaining the mysterious quality of clay work. He reminds us that beauty is in the totality, or *gestalt*, of a work and not only what is pleasing or serves the eye. A room adorned with his work naturally becomes a contemplative space, a place of fellowship between the artist, the viewer, and the universe of true beauty.

CAROLINE STALLER



TALL VASE  
Textured white with black glaze  
20 x 4.25 x 4.25"  
TH636B



SMALL VASE  
Armenian Bole glaze  
5.5 x 4.75 x 4.5"  
TH1714B



LIDDED JAR  
Northern celadon glaze  
9.5 x 9 x 9"  
TH307B





LARGE DECORATIVE PLATE

Kairagi glaze  
2.25 x 19.75 x 19.75"  
TH1985B



SMALL WHEEL FORM VASE

Blue Kairagi glaze  
8.75 x 8.5 x 3.25"  
TH1962B



LIDDED JAR

Kaki glaze  
6.5 x 8.5 x 8.5"  
TH39





SQUARE CANTEEN FORM VASE

Iron yellow glaze  
10 x 8.25 x 3.75"  
TH1252B



SMALL VASE

Eggshell glaze  
10 x 4 x 4"  
TH2114B



ELLIPTICAL VASE

Ice crackle glaze  
10 x 25.25 x 3"  
TH714



TALL NARROW VASE  
Golden tenmoku glaze  
18.25 x 3.75 x 3.75"  
TH581B



TEA BOWL  
Yellow Armenian Bole glaze  
3 x 6 x 6"  
TH1585



VASE  
Black olive glaze with gold streak  
12 x 4 x 4"  
TH272B





CANTEEN FORM VASE

Teadust iron glaze  
10.25 x 8 x 3.75"  
TH2203



CANTEEN FORM VASE

Iron yellow glaze  
10.75 x 8.25 x 4.5"  
TH2147



CANTEEN FORM VASE

Ash glaze  
10.5 x 8.5 x 3.5"  
TH827B



CANTEEN FORM VASE

Dark jade celadon glaze  
11 x 9 x 3"  
TH931B



VASE

Iron yellow glaze  
14.75 x 8.75 x 8.75"  
TH2197



VASE  
Honan tenmoku glaze  
19 x 9 x 9"  
TH1295B



TEA BOWL  
Oil spot glaze  
3.5 x 5.5 x 5.5"  
TH1362B



EWER  
Honan tenmoku glaze  
11.5 x 5.5 x 3.5"  
TH2092B





CHALICE AND PLATE SET

Honan tenmoku with kaki glaze  
Plate: 1.75 x 9 x 9"; Chalice: 6 x 4.5 x 4.5"  
TH2226



LARGE JAR

Tenmoku with kaki glaze  
15.75 x 15.5 x 15.5"  
TH2028B





CANTEEN FORM VASE

Honan tenmoku glaze  
18 x 15.75 x 9"  
TH679



TEA BOWL

Celadon with iron yellow glaze  
3.75 x 5 x 5"  
TH1100B



TEA BOWL

Armenian Bole glaze  
3.5 x 5 x 5"  
TH1376B



VASE WITH SQUARE TOP

Kaki with Kairagi glaze  
11.75 x 8 x 8"  
TH1504B



VASE WITH SQUARE TOP

Oil spot glaze  
10.75 x 9 x 9"  
TH1437B



FLASK FORM VASE

Honan tenmoku glaze  
18.25 x 10 x 4.5"  
TH979



VASE

Mirror black glaze with partridge feathers  
17.75 x 17.5 x 17.5"  
TH1238B



TEA BOWL  
Yellow on white glaze  
3.5 x 4.5 x 4.5"  
TH734 (DS)



TEA BOWL  
Kairagi glaze  
3.25 x 5 x 5"  
TH1773B



SMALL VASE WITH COVER  
Nickel red glaze  
14.25 x 3.75 x 3.75"  
TH875B



VASE  
Iron red and kaki glaze  
12.25 x 4.25 x 4.25"  
TH362B





TEA BOWL

Iron blue with copper flambé glaze  
3.75 x 5.75 x 5.75"  
TH1779 (CC)



TEA BOWL

Celadon, gray green with iron wash glaze  
3 x 6.5 x 6.5"  
TH1285B



FLASK FORM VASE, WITH CUT RIM

Iron yellow glaze  
13.75 x 13 x 3.75"  
TH1983B



CANTEEN FORM VASE

Celadon with iron yellow glaze  
10.25 x 8.5 x 3.75"  
TH1232B



CANTEEN FORM VASE

Teadust with kaki glaze  
10.25 x 8.5 x 4"  
TH1943B



CANTEEN FORM VASE

Green and kaki glaze  
10.5 x 8.5 x 4"  
TH2151



PLATE WITH ANGELS

Celadon glaze  
1.5 x 11.75 x 11.75"  
TH2222



PLATE

Iron yellow with kaki glaze  
1 x 12.75 x 12.75"  
TH2225



SMALL DECORATIVE PLATE

Oil spot glaze  
1.75 x 10.5 x 10.5"  
TH970B



PLATE

Lavender copper glaze  
1 x 11.75 x 11.75"  
TH427B





DECORATIVE PLATE

Textured black and yellow iron glaze  
2.5 x 20.5 x 20.5"  
TH1623B





SMALL DECORATIVE PLATE

Copper blue on opal white  
3 x 13.25 x 12.5"  
TH1187B



SMALL RECTANGULAR VASE

Kairagi glaze  
7 x 12 x 3"  
TH2099



SMALL DECORATIVE PLATE

Copper red and blue glaze on white  
1 x 11.75 x 11.75"  
TH671B



RECTANGULAR VASE

Red and white textured glaze  
10.5 x 14.75 x 3.25"  
TH503B



VASE

Red chrysanthemum glaze  
19.75 x 9.25 x 9.25"  
TH1683B



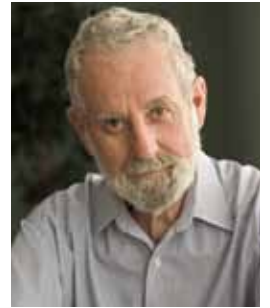


TALL VASE

Peacock glaze  
19.75 x 4.5 x 4.5"  
TH772B

## Brother Thomas Bezanson

Brother Thomas Bezanson was born in Halifax, Nova Scotia in 1929. He graduated in 1950 from the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design and in 1968 received an MA in Philosophy from the University of Ottawa. He began working as a potter in 1953 and later entered the Benedictine Monastery in Weston, Vermont. In 1976, he was a visiting lecturer at Alfred University School of Ceramics and was awarded a National Endowment for the Arts grant in 1983. He lived and worked in the monastery for twenty-five years but, feeling the need for greater artistic freedom, left in 1985 to become artist-in-residence in the community of Benedictine Sisters in Erie, Pennsylvania. Brother Thomas's elegant forms are completed by a vivid array of glazes, which he created from natural materials. He has had numerous exhibitions in galleries and museums and his works are included in over 80 international collections including the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Art Institute of Chicago, the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. He has been featured in numerous publications, including the recently published fifth edition of his *Book of Days*, and a biography entitled *Tales of Thomas*. Brother Thomas died in Erie, Pennsylvania in 2007.



## The Brother Thomas Fund

The Brother Thomas Fund was established at the Boston Foundation in 2007 to honor the legacy of Brother Thomas, who wanted the sale of his work to support struggling artists. The goal of the biennial Brother Thomas Fellowship program is to support and celebrate a diverse group of Greater Boston artists working at a high level of excellence in a range of disciplines and to enhance their ability to thrive and create new work. Each Brother Thomas Fellow receives an unrestricted award of \$15,000. Fellowships, given without stipulation as to how the funds are spent, match the needs of artists as well as the wishes of Thomas, who wanted to help other artists as his friends had helped him. Brother Thomas Fellows are selected in alternate years based on an inclusive process of nomination and panel review by a diverse group of nominators from Boston's arts leaders. The fellowships are awarded to individuals who have made a firm commitment to their art and are working at a high level of achievement. The Fellowship program acknowledges that even established artists often struggle for the resources needed to advance their art. Over time, as former Brother Thomas Fellows welcome the new award winners, the awards create a community of artists of recognized excellence.





SMALL DECORATIVE PLATE

Copper red on opal blue celadon glaze  
3 x 13.5 x 12.25"  
TH1339B

**PUCKER GALLERY**  
240 Newbury Street, 3rd floor  
Boston, MA 02116  
617.267.9473  
contactus@puckergallery.com

**GALLERY HOURS:**  
Monday through Saturday  
10:00 AM to 5:30 PM

Sunday  
1:00 to 5:00 PM

Pucker Gallery is a member of the  
Boston Art Dealers Association  
and the New England Appraisers  
Association.

**CREDITS:**

**Design:**  
Leslie Anne Feagley

**Curated by:**  
Caroline Staller

**Editors:**  
Jeanne Koles and Jocelyn Furniss

**Photography:**  
John Davenport

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Cover:  
TALL VASE

Chrysanthemum glaze  
30.75 x 8.75 x 8.75"  
TH851B

## The Universe of True Beauty

### PORCELAINS BY Brother Thomas

**DATES:**

9 September through 15 October 2023

**PUBLIC OPENING RECEPTION:**

Saturday 9 September 2023, 3 to 6 PM

**ONLINE EVENTS:**

Please visit [www.puckergallery.com](http://www.puckergallery.com) for a list of virtual gatherings  
and events accompanying *The Universe of True Beauty*.



ELLIPSE FORM VASE

Tender green celadon glaze  
12 x 17 x 2.75"  
TH756B



Please visit [www.puckergallery.com](http://www.puckergallery.com) to view current and past exhibition  
catalogues and subscribe to the *Pot of the Week* email list.