

CHARMING CERAMICS BY DIANE HENKE

Cedarburg ceramic sculptor Diane Boer Henke is inspired by Mother Nature and intrigued by emotions and facial expressions of individuals she meets. Her charming clay forms reflect a love of observation matched with an esteem for quality craftsmanship and technique. Henke's work consistently reveals an interest in the human condition and engages the viewer in lighthearted curiosity. The clay forms she creates are both naturalistic and fantastical compositions.



Henke grew up in Little Chute, Wisconsin. The fifth of six children to Dutch immigrants, she was raised bilingually. She grew up culturally aware and exposed to the arts at an early age. Her uncle Harry Hermes was a well-known oil painter in the Netherlands, and she became familiar with important, historical artists throughout history through her parents' subscription to the Time-Life Artist book series. Her parents also encouraged Diane and her siblings to learn creative skills and to make things by hand if they were unable to afford something.

Growing up with the music of the 60s and 70s, the silliness of Monty Python, Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In show of the 60s, Saturday Night Live, and the revealing and pronounced facial expressions of Johnny Carson have stayed with Henke into adulthood and continue to impact her clay personalities. Henke is also inspired by the tongue-in-cheek social commentary of Dutch Renaissance painter Pieter Bruegel the Elder, while a respect for the Arts and Crafts movement appears in the well-executed craftsmanship of her three-dimensional forms.

Henke attended UW-Milwaukee and the College of Lake County in Illinois where she learned the importance of construction and technique from skilled potter Tony Holmes. She continues to take art classes to hone her craft and further explore other mediums, but ceramics is where she feels most at home. Henke uses a combination of hand built and wheel thrown techniques to complete her sculpture. To achieve color differences, she uses a combination of different colored clays, oxides, glazes, and acrylic paints.

In partnership with Henke's love of humor is an earnest exploration of human expression and a curiosity in the natural world. Human expression is rendered after Henke engages in lively conversations with others. The artist detects lines in faces that tell stories and slight changes in facial muscles and gestures that project a change in emotional state. Henke indicates her "creations are a representation of emotions and attitudes, not of a particular person. Although occasionally images of people from memory do surprisingly appear." Mother Nature is also a constant inspiration for Henke as she often takes walks in Cedarburg, revels in the abundance and comeliness of her garden, and takes long, watchful hikes.