

CLAUDE CONOVER – (1907-1994)

Cleveland artist Claude Conover was a commercial artist for 30 years before choosing to make ceramic art his full-time profession. A self-taught potter, Conover followed a disciplined regime that produced one pot per week. Conover mixed his own clay and used a coil technique that he developed himself to produce his stoneware pots with their earthtone colors and incised decorations. Over the course of his second career his strict schedule produced a large number of vessels which were shown in nearly 50 exhibitions and collected by both museums and private collectors. Conover was also a member of the Cleveland School, a group of artists and craftsmen in Northeast Ohio who joined together to found several important artistic institutions in Cleveland and to foster the appreciation for the arts. The group was instrumental in the creation of the Cleveland Institute of Art and the Cleveland Museum of Art. Conover participated in 14 of the May Shows sponsored by the Cleveland Museum of Art, winning many awards in addition to those in other exhibitions. Conover's work is included in the collections of both private and public institutions. He died in 1994.

ARTIST'S STATEMENT – CLAUDE CONOVER

RESUME – CLAUDE CONOVER

- 1907 Born, Pittsburgh, PA
- Cleveland Institute of Art, Cleveland, OH
- Purchase Award, 8th Ohio Ceramic and Sculpture Show, Butler Institute of American Art, Youngstown, OH
- Horace E. Potter Memorial Medal for Excellence in Craftsmanship, 43rd May Show, Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, OH
- Purchase Award, Designer Craftsmen of Ohio Exhibition, Columbus Gallery of Fine Art, Columbus, OH
- Purchase Award, 15th Ohio Ceramic and Sculpture Show, Butler Institute of American Art, Youngstown, OH
- 1964 Everett D. Reese Award, Exhibition '64, Columbus Gallery of Fine Art, Columbus, OH
- B. F. Drakenfeld & Co. Award, 23rd Ceramic National, Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse, NY
- 1968 Mary E. Johnston Memorial Award, Exhibition '68, Columbus Gallery of Fine Arts, Columbus, OH
- 1968 Governor's Award of Highest Merit, Exhibition '68, Columbus Gallery of Fine Arts, Columbus, OH

- 1968 Best of Show Award, Exhibition '68, Columbus Gallery of Fine Arts, Columbus, OH
Special Jury Award, 50th May Show, Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, OH
- 1983 Cleveland Arts Prize, Visual Arts
- 1994 Died, Cleveland, OH

BIOGRAPHY – CLAUDE CONOVER

Born in Pittsburgh, PA, Claude Conover is identified with Cleveland, OH, where he received his education and subsequently spent his career. He studied art at the Cleveland Institute of Art, majoring in portraiture, and following graduation pursued a career as a commercial designer for the next 30 years, working in advertising, typography, and production. Conover worked during the day and at night taught himself pottery by working in a studio behind his house, and at 55 he left the commercial world and turned to pottery for his second career. For the remainder of his life he followed a disciplined approach to his art, exhibited in a number of shows, consistently won awards, and saw his work included in more than twenty museum collections.

Conover's work is hand-built using clay bodies he mixed himself – primarily stoneware and usually monochromatic. While in the early years he made ceramic animals - creations that are now highly prized by collectors – and also made bowls and lamps, it is his vase forms that are his signature forms. The shapes are variations of classical forms, the surface decorations geometrical and linear, and the color palette primarily earthtones. Using his own coil technique he constructed rounded, elongated, and stacked-pillow vases that have been described as "...timeless monumentality reminiscent of ancient vessels whose utilitarian purpose is now lost to us."¹ Perhaps because of his first career in commercial art, Conover developed a strict schedule that he adhered to in his ceramic career. Mondays were devoted to rolling slabs and making vessels which were then left to dry overnight. Tuesdays he assessed the form and began adding necks and other pieces. Wednesdays he completed the shaping of the final form, always using hand-building techniques, not the wheel. On Thursday he began decorative work, scratching the surface with a sawtooth blade and covering the surface with scratching, striping, and hatching. These decorative elements often produced an effect of prehistoric script or drawings. Fridays were devoted to the finishing decorative work, with the entire process completed by Sunday so that he could start again on Monday. As a result, he produced nearly 250 pots a year – over 3500 in the course of his ceramic career. The pieces were given Mayan names rather than numbers, and because of his prolific production, he used the same list of names over and over.

Conover was also a member of what was called "The Cleveland School," a group of artists and craftsmen in Northeast Ohio that joined together with other art supporters to found the Cleveland Academy of Art. The focus of the group was to found an art school, build an art museum, give exhibitions, publish an art magazine, and encourage support for the arts in the schools and community. From 1910 to 1960 the group flourished and achieved many of their

goals. Artists in this group were instrumental with the establishment of the Cleveland School of Art (now Cleveland Institute of Art), the Cleveland Museum of Art, the Cleveland Society of Arts, and the Kokoon Arts club. The annual May Show was a prestigious exhibition of art from this group, and among Conover's awards are a number from these shows, including 8 consecutive Special Jury Awards. The works of these artists are still highly prized and collected in the area and some of them were the subject of two exhibitions in Cleveland in 2009.²

Conover exhibited in nearly 50 shows around the country and internationally, and his work is included in the collections of the Cleveland Art Association and the Cleveland Museum of Art, both Cleveland, OH; the Columbus Gallery of Fine Art, Columbus, OH; the Museum of Contemporary Crafts, NY; the Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse, NY; and the Johnson Wax Collection of Contemporary Crafts, among others both private and public. In addition to his awards from the May Shows, he received the Horace E. Potter Memorial Medal for Excellence in Craftsmanship, Cleveland Museum of Art; the Governor's Award of Highest Merit from the Columbus Gallery of Fine Art; and the Cleveland Arts Prize as well as others. Conover died in 1994.

1. http://www.clevelandartsprize.org/awardees/Claude_Conover.html
2. http://www.cleveland.com/arts/index.ssf/2009/08/bonfoey_gallerycorcoran_fine_a.html

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GALLERY REPRESENTATION – CLAUDE CONOVER

Secondary Market

WEB SITES – CLAUDE CONOVER

http://www.clevelandartsprize.org/awardees/Claude_Conover.html

Article on Conover's winning the 1983 Visual Arts prize

<http://www.clevelandartandhistory.org/html/HTMLPages/artists/Conover.htm>

Brief article on Conover

http://rogallery.com/Conover_Claude/conover-biography.html

Short biography of Conover on RoGallery web site

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