



Linda Graham
Clay Portfolio
1975 - 2018

Cover:
Warrior Woman, circa 1978, 8" x 4"x 6"
Celsius Rising, 2010, 12"x 8"x 4"
Photo credit: Wes Magyar, 2017

Artist Statement

My early interest in science led me to view both my art studio and garden as laboratories.

The works are representative of many years of thinking on how the world works through gardening and working in my studio.

These ideas have driven the learning of various techniques which evolved into new ideas.
A positive feedback loop!

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Linda Graham: Expansive Ideas About Clay

By Michael Paglia

It was only shortly before Linda Graham and her husband William moved from the Washington, D.C.-area to Denver, Colorado in 1968 that her interest in ceramics initially appeared. Before that her principle concerns had tipped more toward math and the sciences, and she'd even attended medical school for a time. "I thought art was something people did when they couldn't do anything else," says Graham with a laugh.

In the mid-60s when Graham was still back East, she had come to know Peter Pettus, an educator, photographer and potter and he held classes in his clay studio in Alexandria, Virginia which she attended. Pettus embraced the ethos of the day regarding pottery, pursuing the idea, in the tradition of Bernard Leach, of throwing the perfect pot. This was something that Graham was little interested in, then or now. "I took the classes from Peter, because I wanted to make a set of dishes," Graham recalls, "but the trouble with throwing dishes is that they all come out differently, and so I never did make the whole set."

Arriving in Colorado, Graham and her husband stumbled onto an unusual property in a semi-rural area outside of Denver comprised of an idiosyncratic hand-built modern house and a big piece of land. It was so ideal for their purposes the couple still lives

there. Soon, Graham, with three young children to raise, set up a clay studio at home, putting a potter's wheel in her large kitchen. She took classes at Castle Clay, firing her pieces there, sometimes working over-night in the iffy industrial area where it was located, causing William no end of consternation over his justifiable fears for her safety. A fellow potter, Barbara Hoffman, with whom Graham had become close, decided to build a kiln in her garage, and this inspired Graham to build her own kiln and clay studio which she housed in small additions that were made to her own home.

Colorado was an ideal place for Graham to have wound up considering her interest in clay because, in the 1960s and 1970s, the state was a hot spot in international ceramics. There were several significant clay artists working here at that time, including Betty Woodman, Richard DeVore, Paul Soldner, and Nan and Jim McKinnell, among others, and these luminaries sat at the top of a vibrant scene that encompassed scores of accomplished ceramic artists who were all active simultaneously. Graham would tap into this energy directly by taking classes from the McKinnells at Colorado Women's College. She vividly recalls her first impression of seeing the legendary artists, noting how shocked she was that instead of the Bohemians she had expected, there was an elegant old couple with Nan being a little white-haired lady who wore an apron, and Jim, a tall thin man in a bow tie.

Between 1975 and 1980, Graham created a series of ceramics that comprised her first signature pieces, as well as her first coherent body of work, "Small Tea Pots". As indicated by the title, they are based on the tea pot form, however, despite Graham calling them tea pots, they are not really vessels because they have no utilitarian purpose. Rather, they are miniature sculptures that use the components of the tea pot--the handle, the spout, the lid, etc.--as their formal vocabulary.

As a result, these modest statements, subtly, if emphatically, entered into the then-current fray related to the future of the vessel tradition. At that time, ceramic artists like Woodman and Soldner were breaking away from the vessel, transforming it into sculpture, and with these "Small Tea Pots", this is also what Graham was doing.

These tea pot sculptures have a whimsical, animated quality and they look as though they could scurry across the floor at any moment, an impression reinforced by the posture of the tea pots, their legs, and the swept back lids that sometimes resemble the stocking caps that garden gnomes wear. This sense of having fun and capturing joy, found in the tea pots, are durable interests for Graham and continue to play roles in her most recent ceramics.

And it is precisely these uplifting qualities that another body of work, done almost simultaneously with the tea pots, the "Horns", are all about. The "Horns" are techni-

cally ambitious and formally complex ceramic sculptures that Graham made between 1977 and 1980, but their sensibility would persist through several subsequent series she would create much later.

The shape of these sculptures is evocative of a French horn, and as it turns out, Graham's son was learning to play the French horn when she was making them. To fabricate the horn's pipe element which connects to its bell at one end, and to its mouthpiece at the other, Graham used a technique for throwing double-walled vessels on the wheel that she discovered accidentally. "For years, I thought I had invented it," she says with a self-deprecating chuckle, "I guess that's what happens when you work alone in your studio." The bells and the mouthpieces are also thrown, a bowl for the bell, and a flared vessel for the mouthpiece. The palettes of strong and bright colors are the result of the commercial glazes she used, giving these "Horns" something of a post-modern vibe. However, Graham turned away from these strident color schemes with the later "Horns" having been left unglazed.

In the 1980s, Graham created "Geometric Forms", a body of architectonic work done in elemental shapes. They have scabrous surfaces which is the product of the novel clay recipe she used that included blending in fiberglass. If the tea pots and "Horns" have a sense of capriciousness, these pieces are positively stoic. Though this path would much later lead to her acrylic sculptures, in terms of her ceramics, the "Geometric Forms" was

a cul-de-sac, with Graham abandoning the direction, and even leaving ceramics entirely for many years soon after completing them. From 1990 to 2002, Graham concerned herself not with ceramics but with founding and running Downtown Aurora Visual Arts, a non-profit arts organization that continues to flourish.

The next year, 2003, Graham began to take classes at the Rocky Mountain College of Art and Design. It was there that she later connected up with ceramic artist Martha Russo whose work uncannily resonates with Graham's. The association with Russo was kismet, and in 2007 Graham started making ceramics seriously again.

The first ones she made afterward were the "Lyrical Lines" sculptures which seem to be picking up the thread she had dropped with the "Horns" a quarter of a century before. The "Lyrical Lines" are simple streamlined three-dimensional scribbles made out of the double-walled tubes, some left unglazed while others were glazed. Coming directly out of this same stylistic trajectory are the "Garden" pieces, made between 2008 and 2010, that are abstract, akin to the "Lyrical Lines", but unlike them, are baroque and not pared down and fluid. In the "Garden" series, Graham's double-walled tube components have been altered and sculpted and their interrelationships to each other and to the added vessel elements, is fairly intricate.

Eccentric shapes also characterize the "Genetic Abstractions" of 2010 and 2011, which

are miniature, sometimes heavily figured shapes having an organic quality. Though these pieces reveal a clear break in her stylistic development, they are not the dead-end that the "Geometric forms" turned out to be in retrospect. The little quirky shapes and tiny scale of the "Genetic Abstractions" are not entirely unprecedented and can be sourced right back to those early "Small Tea Pots".

And that brings Graham's oeuvre full circle right back to where she started with her most recent efforts being a revival of the "Small Tea Pots". The early versions are non-functional, whereas these newer ones are downright anti-functional. Not only can't they serve as vessels, they can barely sit on a shelf by themselves without tipping over, and thus they need to be placed atop thrown ceramic stands or suspended from above using cords. Like the earlier ones, the lids on these are exaggerated and play outsized roles in the compositions. Needless to say, precariousness is appealing to Graham, and these perilous stacks of highly fragile clay bits fit that bill. Also notable regarding these latest "Small Tea Pots" by Graham are the beautiful polychrome glazes on some of them.

Surveying twenty years of Graham's ceramics, made over the last forty, it is apparent that she is long overdue for a reappraisal. Because Graham has kept a very low profile, she's less well-known than she should be, especially considering how well her work fits into Colorado's deep-rooted contemporary ceramic traditions.

Early Tea Pots

The teapot form, so versatile, so complex, so challenging, so fascinating, has repeatedly drawn me back. I made the first ones in 1975 when I had a small daughter. My clay skills have matured but the animated anthropomorphic form still fascinates.



1975-1980, 3" to 8"



Egyptian Teapot, 1980, 6" x 4.5" x 2.5", porcelain



Warrior Woman, 1980, 8" x 4" x 6", porcelain



Long Spout Teapot, 1978, 4" x 6" x 4", porcelain
In the collection of David and Patricia Porteous



Small White Teapot, 3.5"x 4"x 2.5", porcelain

Horns

Late one night, communing with my muse's question, "what can the clay do?", I made a double walled vessel. Being surrounded by my sons french horn and my daughters dancing, I was inspired to make the horns and lyrical lines.

If you see one in Massachusetts, or Florida, or..., you know that person knew Linda Graham, back in the day.



1977

Solitary Trio, 1978
18" x 22" x 14"
low fire white ware



Juried Exhibit:
Forty Colorado Artists
Look at Humor,
Denver, CO





Doubles 1979, 12"x 16"x 14", low fire white ware





Painted Lady, 1980, 14 x 9 x 5", low fire white ware



Weaver Horn, 1977, 7"x 12"x 7", low fire white ware

In the collection of Galen and Carolyn Weaver





Yellow Belled Trumpet, 1978, 14"x 10"x 8", low fired white ware



Red Curl, 1978 , 6"x 9"x 6", low fire white ware
In the collection of David and Patricia Porteous





Party Time, 1980 , Tall: 15" , small: 8" , Low fire white ware



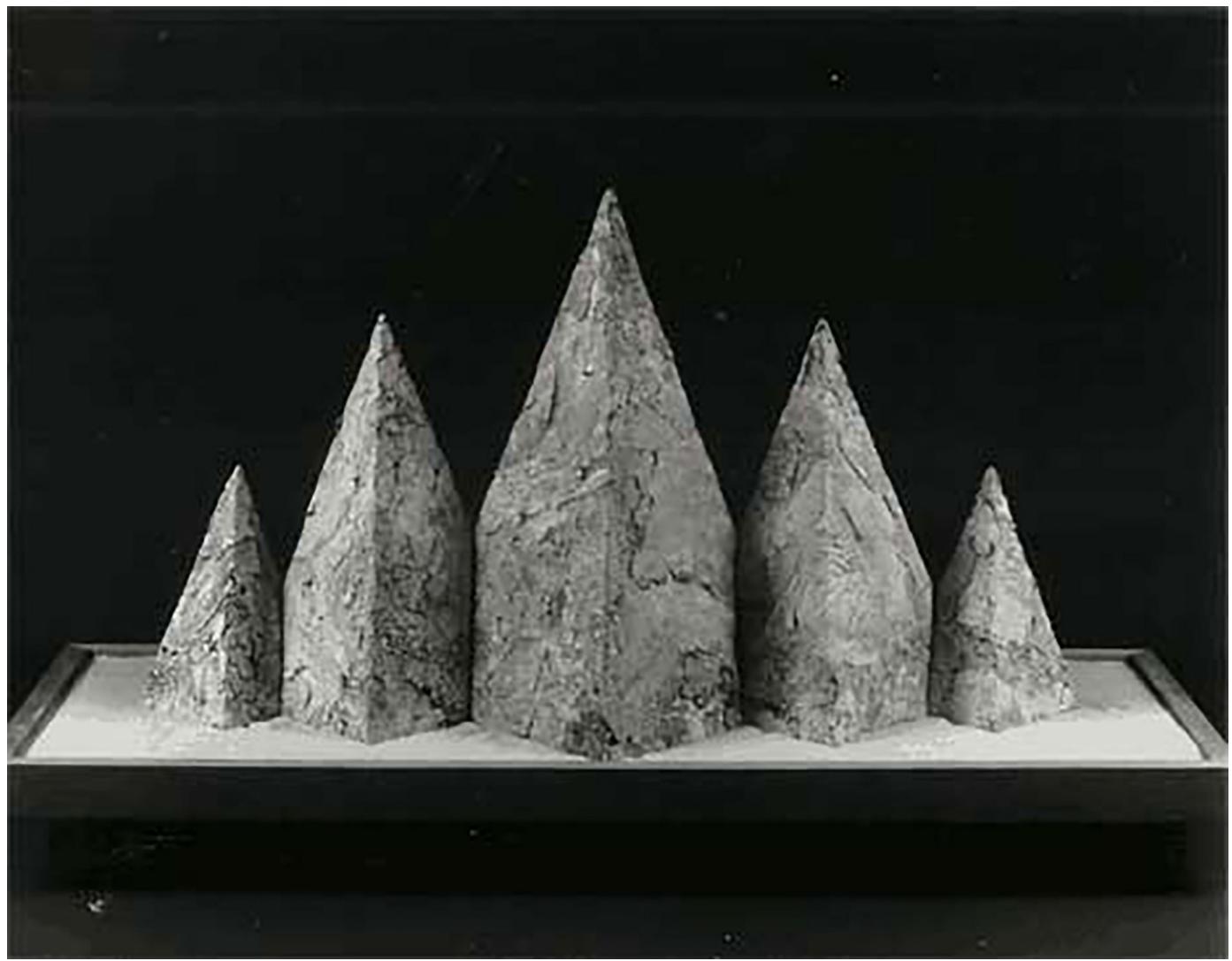
Berkeley-Lainson — Brown Palace — Denver

Solo Exhibit, 1978,, 16"x 18"x 12"

Geometric forms

After a life steeeped in the beauty of geometry, I suppose inevitably it would show up in clay to satisfy my desire to work large.

Using leftover terra-cotta and whiteware clays, strengthened by fiber glass strands, I produced a satisfying surface as well.



Interlocking Stellates, 1984, 52" x 96" x 30", terra-cotta/white ware/fiberglass

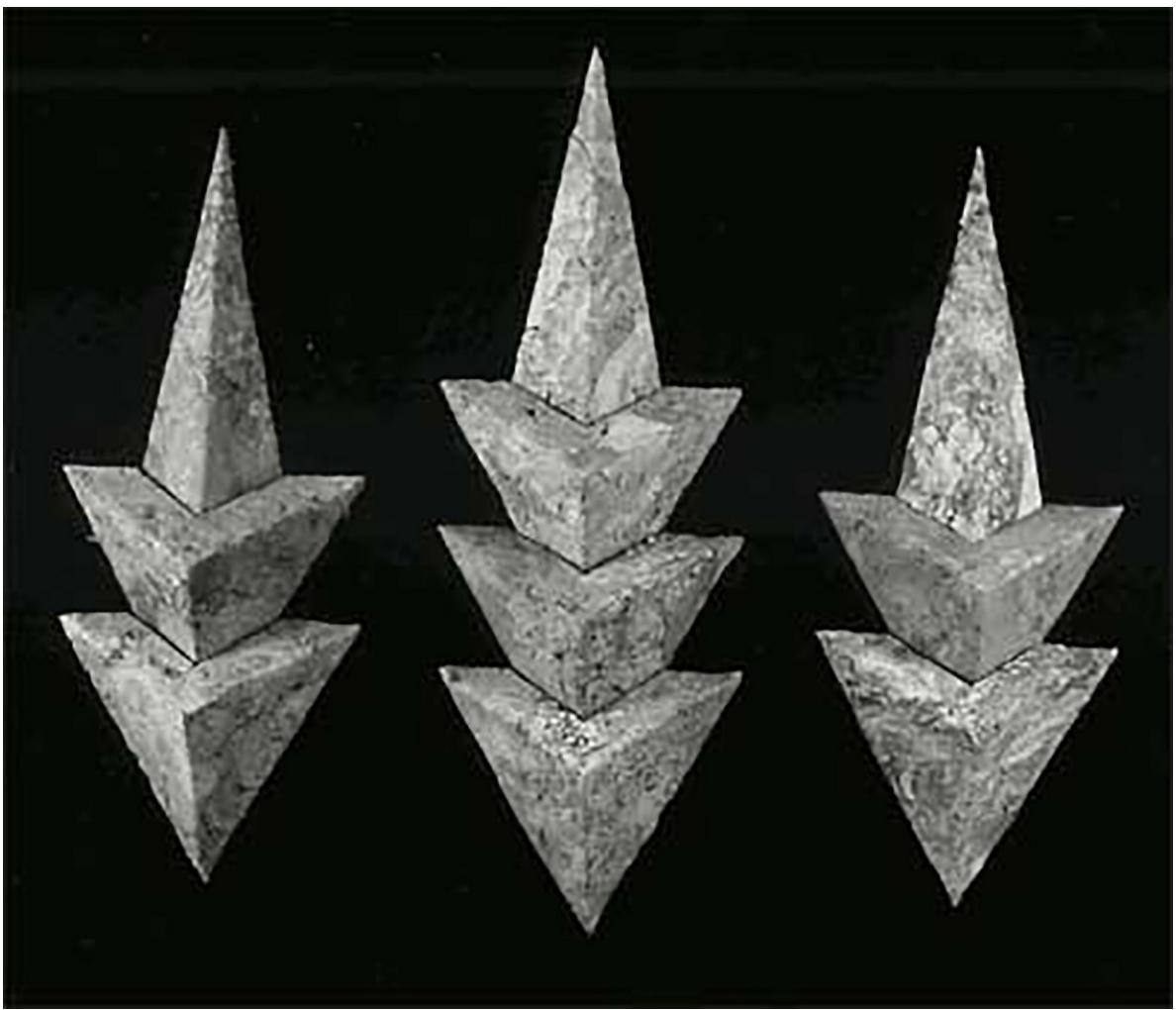
Juried exhibition, Women Who Create Art, Foothills Arts Center, Golden, CO



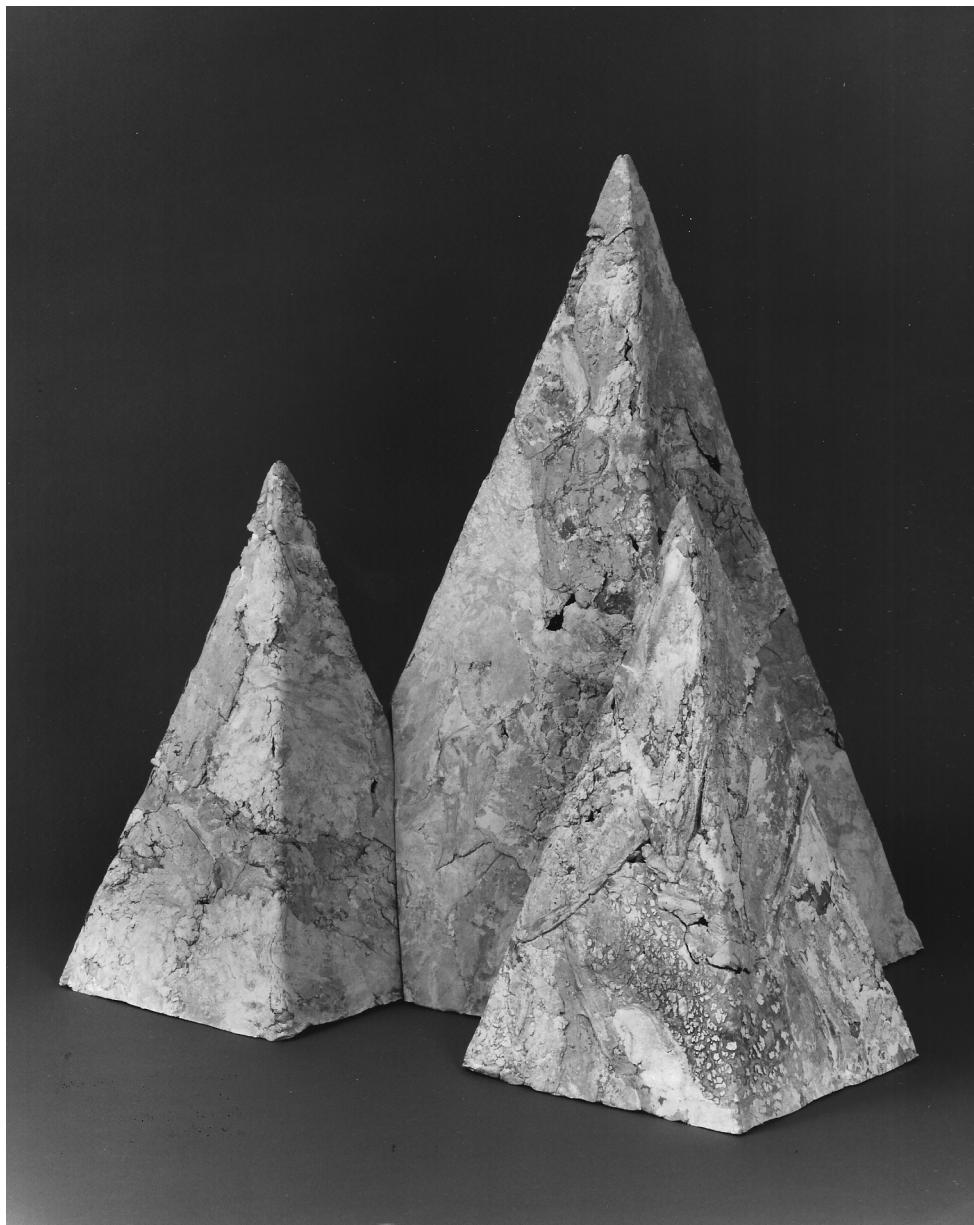


Earth Form, 1984, 17" x 9" x 9", terra-cotta/white ware/fiberglass

In the collection of Galen and Carolyn Weaver



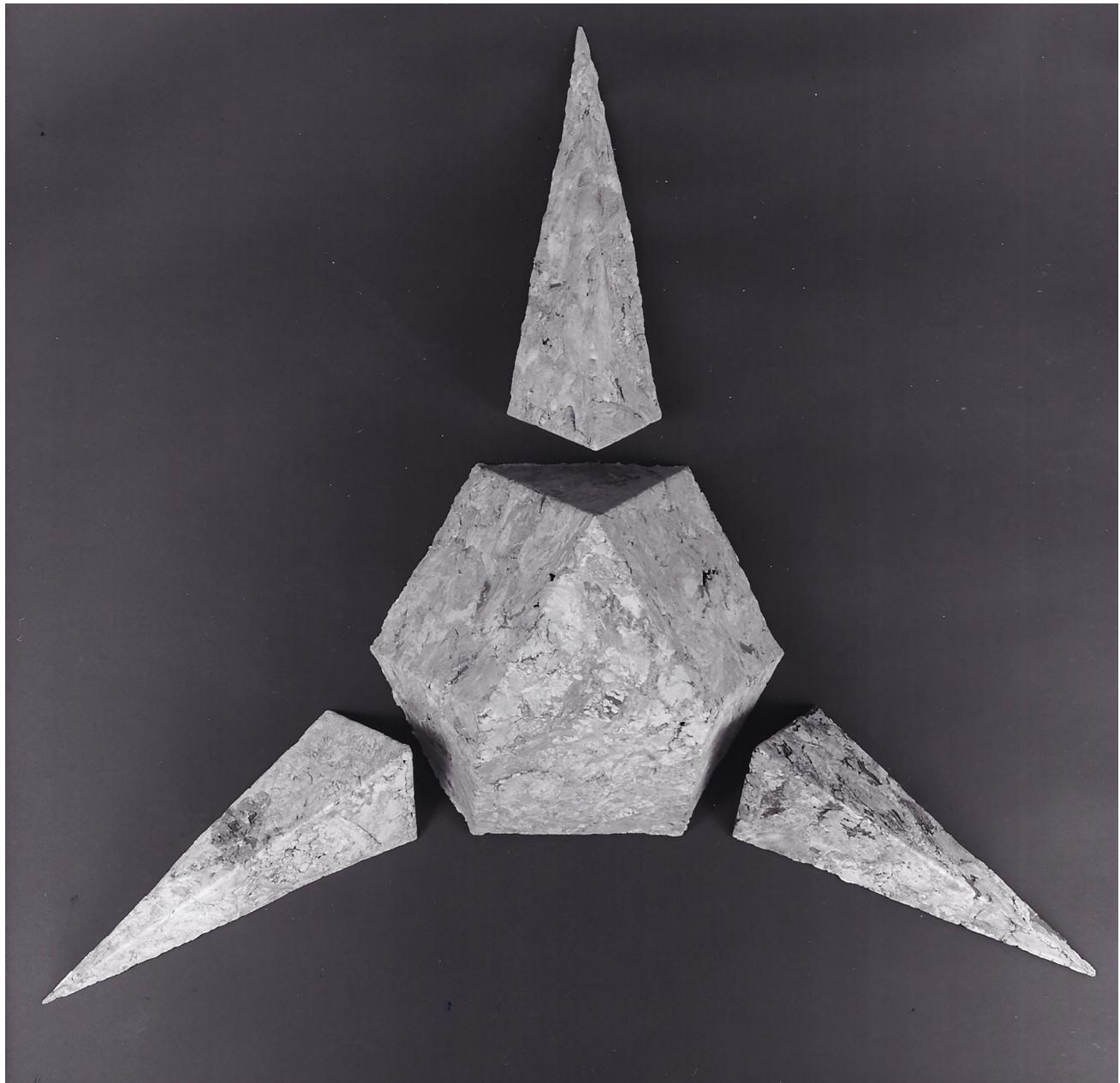
Earth on the Wall, 1984, 54"x 60"x 17", terra-cotta/white ware/fiberglass



Interlocking forms, 1983, 36" x 21" x "30", terra-cotta/white ware/fiberglass



Big Boy, 1984, 36" x 26" x 21", terra-cotta/white ware/fiberglass



Stellated Segmented Cuboctahedron, 1984, 60 x 44" x 10", terra-cotta/white ware/fiberglass



Wings on the Wall, 1984, 10"x 5"x 1.5", terra-cotta/white ware/fiberglass

In the collection of David and Patricia Porteous







Small Segmented Sculpture, 1985, 18" x 10" x 6" terra-cotta/white ware/fiberglass

Lyrical Lines

The double walled vessel of the Horns, became Lyrical Lines when I returned to my personal art practice in 2007 after establishing a nonprofit art program.



Three Gestures, 2007, dimension variable, unglazed low fire white ware



Lyrical Lines II, circa 2007-8, 10"x 24"x 10", unglazed low fired white ware





Gestures, 2008, 10"x 20"x 10", low fired white ware



Lyrical Lines III, circa 2007-8, 10" x 24" x 10", unglazed low fired white ware

Garden

Working hard in the garden I avoided helping my Mom and sisters with housework inside. Instead I could experiment with growing 4-leaf clovers or different varieties of tomatoes.

Today my garden is an inspiration of wonder and pleasure, providing an abundant source for abstraction.

Wine in the Garden, 2008, 9"x 13" x 9", low fire white ware

Juried Exhibit, From the Ground Up, Las Cruces, New Mexico





Garden Scene, 2008 15"x 34"x 10", low fire white ware





Yummy Pink Garden, 2009
18"x 20"x 14"
low white ware

Juried exhibit: *Continental Divide*,
Arvada Center, Arvada, CO

In the collection of
Courtney Lane Stell





Garden Gourd, 2009, 12" x 18" x 10", low fire white ware



Sex in the Garden, 2009, 14" x 24" x 14", low fire white ware



Desert Garden, 2009, 14"x 24"x 14", low fire white ware



Sun Baked, 2009, 14" x 20" x 14", low fire white ware



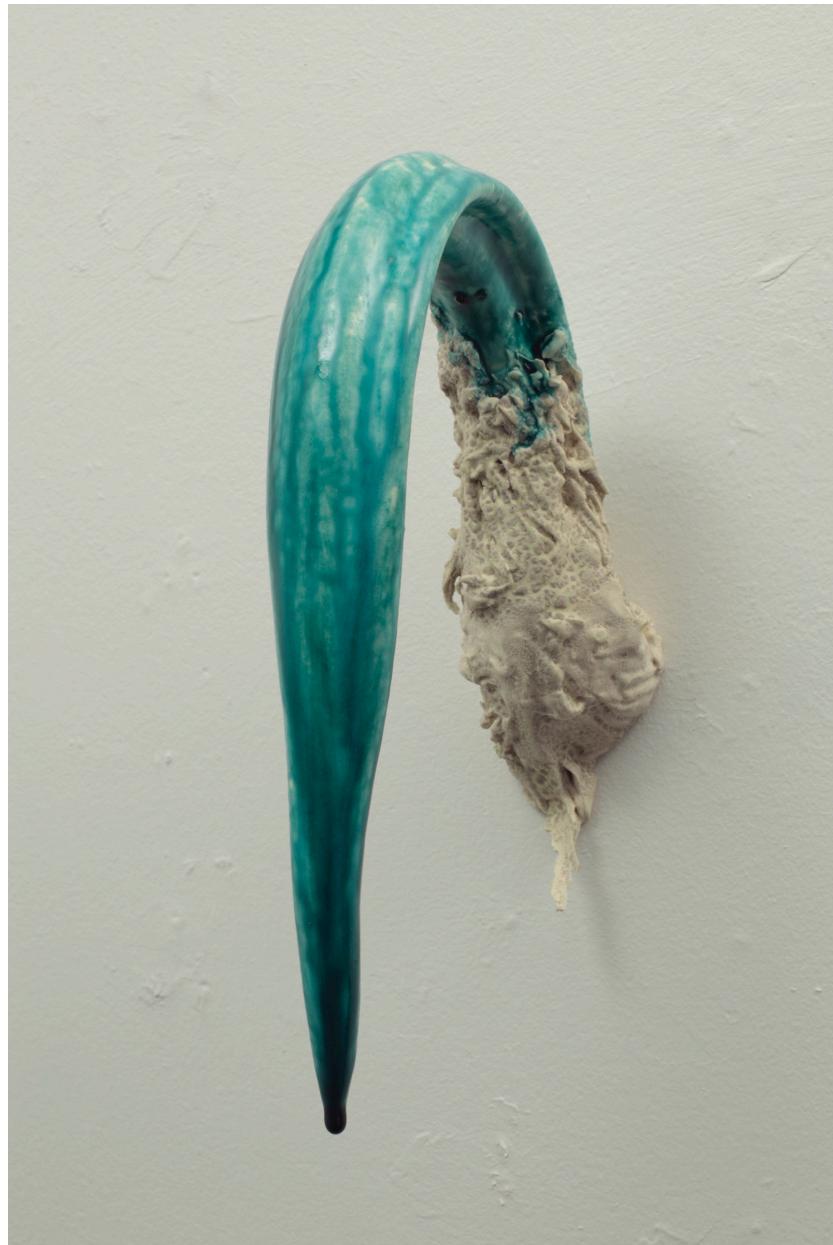
Proud Donkey, 2009, 14" x 16" x 14", low fire white ware



Burnt Garden II, 2009, 16"x 14"x 14", low fire white ware



Celsius Rising II, 2010, 12" x 8" x 5", low fire white ware



Celsius Rising, 2010, 12" x 8" x 5"

Juried Exhibit: Beyond the Brickyard,
Archie Bray Foundation, Helena, Montana

Genetic Abstractions

Like many fields of scientific study, much has been learned in my lifetime. Genetics has gone from a simple matching of characteristics to a very complicated story of DNA, RNA, and epigenics, as a complex communication system.

This series is a comment on this exciting complexity and is not meant to represent actual molecules.



Hidden Places, 2010, 8"x 8"x 7", low fire white ware



White Abstractions, 2010, height, height 3"to 6", porcelain





Genetic Abstractions III, 2010, height 3" to 6", porcelain



Juried Exhibits:
Capturing the Spirit, Lakewood Cultural Center, Lakewood, CO
North American Sculpture Exhibit, Foothills Art Center, Golden, CO



DNA Genetic Abstractions, 2011, height 2" to 4"



DNA Genetic Abstractions, 2011, height 3" to 6"



DNA Genetic Abstractions, 2011, height 2" to 4"



DNA Genetic Abstractions, 2011, height 2" to 4"





DNA Genetic
Abstractions,
2011
height
2" to 4"



Current Teapots

Forever versatile, I continue to explore the teapot form, some having taken flight!

Adding drip glazes has expanded my surface vocabulary.







*Small
Teapots,
2017
porcelain
height
4" to 8"*













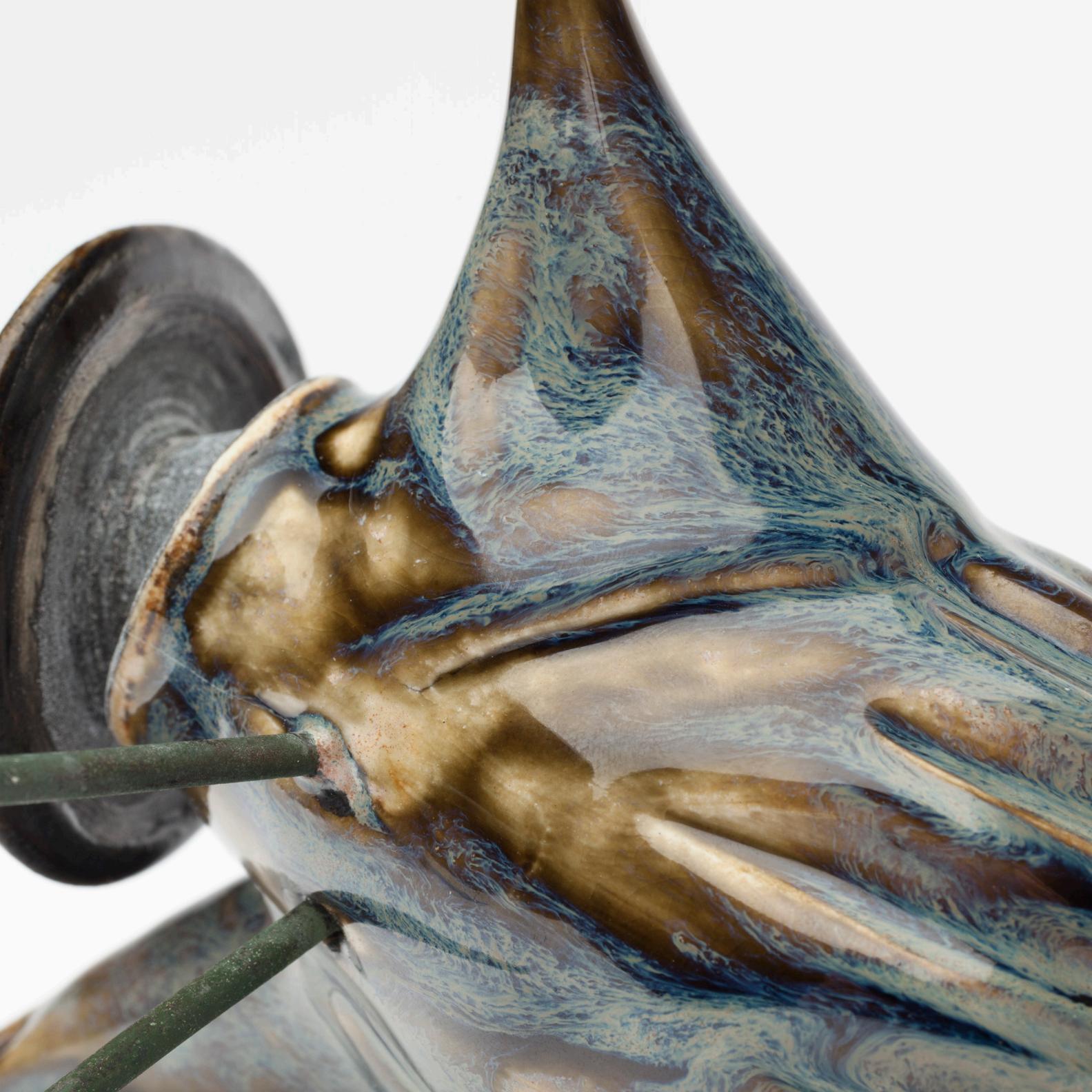




Stroke Me Twice, 2018, 8" x 8" x 5", porcelain



Broken Sorrow, 2017, 6" x 5" x 2.5", porcelain





Flying Witch, 2017, 5" x 5" x 2", porcelain



Small Teapot, 2018, 7" x 9" x 4.5", porcelain



Whichever Way, 2018, 11" x 8" x 4", porcelain





Multi Stage Teapot, 2018, 10"x 5.5"x 4.5", porcelain





Multi Stage Teapot II, 2017, 11" x 6" x 6", porcelain



Big Boy Dressed to Party, 2017, 5" x 4.5" x 4", porcelain

Biography

Linda Graham earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Miami University, Oxford, Ohio with a major in Biology and a minor in Chemistry in 1960.

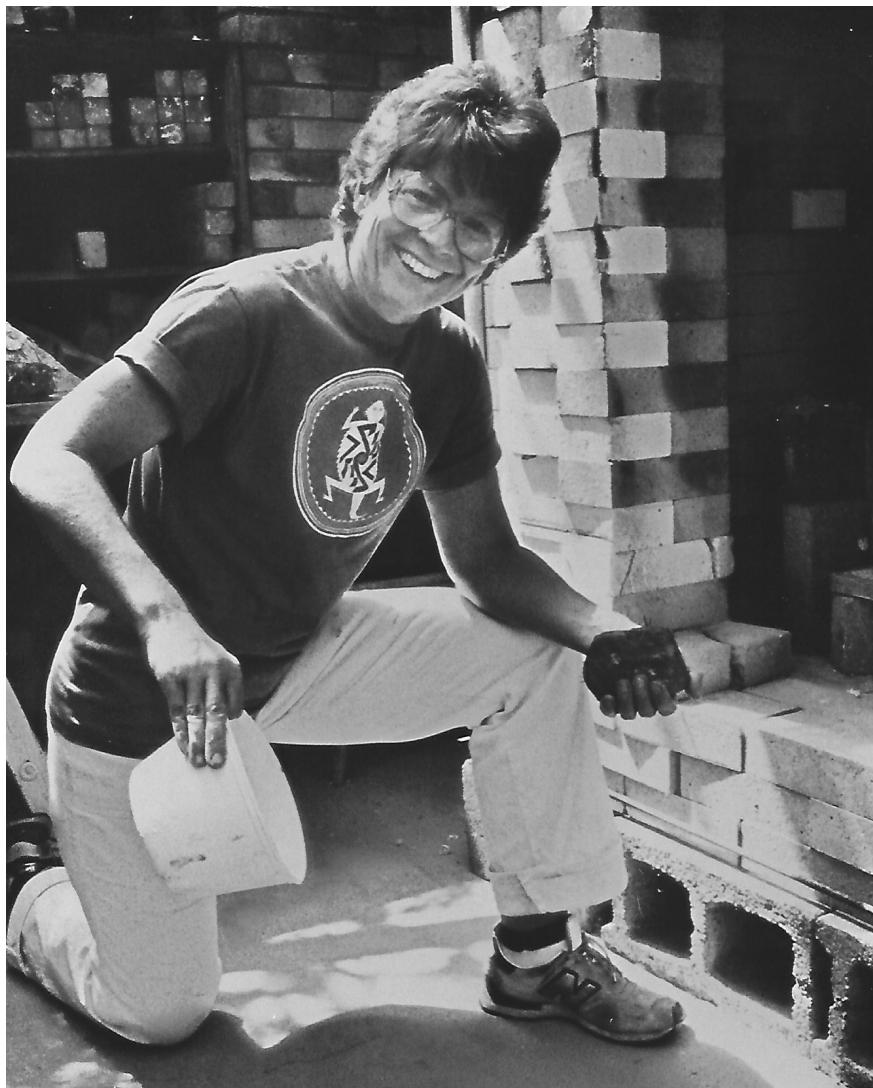
A year of medical school (1961-2) at Case-Western Reserve University was followed by years of child rearing and developing skills and knowledge about constructing, glazing and firing works in clay.

Her clay work was exhibited in Colorado during the 1980's, while the 1990's + was spent working to create Downtown Aurora Visual Arts (DAVA), a youth arts organization in Old Aurora, CO while earning a masters of public administration from the University of Colorado Denver in 2001.

While taking computer classes in the continuing education program at Rocky Mountain College of Art and Design (RMCAD) (2003-7), she found the clay program. Headed by Martha Russo she continued to assist the program while auditing classes and exploring new directions.

In 2011 she was introduced to sheet acrylic (aka Plexiglas) and spent 3 years making sculptures using light and projections to visualize the complexities of the cosmos. These images are presented in a separate catalogue.

Linda continues to work in her studio



1980s



2018



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