

Cindy Lou Farley

I work full-time as a sculptural potter at my studio which is located nearby Athens, Georgia. For the most part I use with three clay bodies with a variety of glaze and decoration applications.

Raku: I start with a special clay body designed to withstand the extreme temperatures that the piece will undergo. During the glaze firing process, the pottery is taken out of a red-hot kiln (approximately 1850 F) using tongs, then placed in masses of combustible material (e.g., straw, sawdust, or newspaper), in a chamber and quickly covered with a lid, resulting in rapid oxygen reduction which intentionally stains the body of the pot black. After cooling, the pottery is scrubbed to reveal the "magic" of the Raku technique.

Sculptural Work: For many sculptural pieces such as *Rattus de Cheroot* and *Wonderland Birdhouse* I use a white stoneware called B-Mix, decorated with underglazes for color, an iron oxide wash, and then clear satin or gloss glaze to finish. These pieces are fired to cone 6 (2264 F) in an electric kiln.

Functional Ware: My functional ceramics are built with a reddish colored stoneware. White slip is applied followed by oxides and sprayed and dipped in glaze. These pieces are then fired to cone 6 in an electric kiln.



Why?

One of the intriguing questions about the ceramic sculpture I create is not "How did you do that?" (which is to be expected, especially from people working in clay), but "Why did you do that?" I used to be baffled by the question, yet I came to realize it was an important part of the curiosity of the viewer who attended exhibitions.

Rattus De Cheroot

Rattus de Cheroot is a most unusual rat . . .

That is the first line of the poem written by my friend Terry Kay, and it describes not only the ceramic sculpture titled Rattus de Cheroot, but it also reflects the experience of its creation.

The concept began with a gift of a cigar box from Tommie Kay, Terry's wife, who told me she was certain I would find a use for it in my work. Though I admired the gift and cherished the confidence Tommie had in me, I was not certain how a cigar box could be used in ceramic sculpture - until the day I trapped a mouse in a live trap in my cabin studio. Driving it away, I had a sudden idea of a rat sitting on top of the cigar box, peeling the band off a cigar, preparing to enjoy a smoke. And thus it began.

When I completed the piece (or so I thought) and the name was selected, I received a word-gift from Terry - a poem describing the character of Rattus de Cheroot. When I read it, a new idea developed: to somehow incorporate the poem in the piece. My husband, Rob, suggested a book, and that was the inspiration for the base, which contains the poem.

I have learned that art, in any form, is an evolving experience, one offering teasing possibilities to the intriguing "what if . . ." question. Rattus de Cheroot was such an adventure for me.



Rattus de Cheroot

Rattus de Cheroot is a most unusual rat
He has a sassy manner, almost like a cat.
He loves to smoke his stogies sitting on his box,
And tell outlandish stories about his brother, Ox.

Of course it's all a ruse, as those who know insist,
For Rattus' brother Ox, really does not exist.
Still, the tales bring laughter and smiles of merriment,
And Rattus de Cheroot lives cocky and content.

So, if your life is filled with stress hard to understand
Find yourself a good cigar, peel away its band.
Crawl up high and find a seat somewhere on your box,
And tell a made-up story about a made-up Ox.

For what could be better than sitting on your duff,
Lying to your buddies until they cry, "Enough!"
All your serious blither would sound so dull and moot,
If you could only live like Rattus de Cheroot.

Terry Kay, 2011

Bad Hare

In 2010, the Oconee Cultural Arts Foundation (OCAF) sponsored an unusual and popular exhibition - postcard-size art. Two hundred-plus entries were displayed, featuring professional artists and occasional doodlers. On an impulse, I created a 3-dimensional rabbit that had a chip-on-his-shoulder look (as opposed to a cute bunny). My husband, Rob, disagreed with the approach, saying because of the description of the exhibition - that of postcard size - it should be 2-dimensional. His argument was persuasive enough for me to follow his advice.

Still, I had the original 3-dimensional figure, unglazed, and each time I looked at it, I wanted to do more to it. I incorporated some barbed wire, did sketches, spent hours imagining poses and environments. Then, one day I saw an old animal trap and I knew immediately what I wanted to do. For my rabbit - for Bad Hare - I wanted to create a mystery of what his fate might - or might not - be if he attempted to raid a garden.

Each time I study the piece, I still wonder.



Three Toed Turtle

To get to my home, and my cabin/studio, I must drive over eight miles of winding dirt-and-gravel road cut into thick forest of pine and oak and poplar. I have learned to be on alert for deer obsessed with crossing the road I am traveling. But deer are not the only creatures who occupy our homeland. Fox and rabbit and raccoons and armadillos and snakes and coyotes and hawks and owls also live there. And turtles. I am especially watchful for turtles. One night, returning late from an exhibition, I barely missed hitting a large box turtle slow-waddling across the road. I stopped, got out of my car, picked him up and settled him safely off the road.

But I could not get the image of him out of my seeing, and, one day while toying with the sketching of animals that inhabited our property, I drew that image and the expression on his face was one of *Thank You*. I knew then that I had to create him in clay.

Fish

There is a lake below our home and I like spending time there in the late hours of the day, when the sun is skipping stones of light across the surface of water. One day, a great fish (or it seemed great to me) leapt up, and as it twisted in the air, I saw it as pieces of colored light, like a puzzle flashing apart and then together again. When it fell back into the lake, a ribbon of water, stealing gold from the sun, shot up, then vanished. That night I began sketching the sculpture I call Fish. At first, I wanted to fashion it in pieces, tied together with bronze wire, giving it an illusion of moving in deep water. But in creating the piece, I saw it not as a puzzle, but as a link to all life, ancient and yet new. The way it came from the kiln reminded me of the leaping fish I saw on a late day when the sun was skipping stones of light across the water.

