

## **ARTIST'S STATEMENT**

### **Don Staufenberg: *Ceramic Infusion***

Infusion – *“The act of adding one thing to another to make stronger or better.”*

Ceramic infusion – the integration of materials (wood, metal, fiber, polymer) within the ceramic piece to create a unique tactile visual.

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#### **BIO BRIEF**

Don Staufenberg is a product designer by background. Originally from Long Island, New York, Staufenberg earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Industrial Design from Kent State University, Kent, Ohio. He has served as product designer with many prestigious companies including Rubbermaid and Herman Miller, and as head of design at Fitch Inc., Columbus, Ohio. He has been a guest lecturer at a variety of universities and currently provides design consultation for various firms.

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#### **STATEMENT**

My ceramic background started at Kent State where I took ceramic classes as an art elective. I liked clay as a material; how it could be formed by throwing or slab, the three-dimensionality that could be created by adding or subtracting material and the glazing and firing process to enhance the created piece. Learning how to work in ceramics complemented my education in product design.

Over 40 years later, my wife, Jill, encouraged me to return to ceramics. Although I was hesitant at first, she signed me up for classes at the Dublin, Ohio Rec Center. She assured me that they had left-handed wheels for throwing. With guidance and help from my instructor, Stacey, all of my ceramic pieces have been created at the Dublin Community Recreation Center. All the wood, metal and fabrication of the pieces are created at my studio in Dublin, Ohio.

During my work career, each design position presented a unique experience in developing products; learning about different materials, processes and the people/environment you work with.

Working with the craftsmen at Herman Miller developed my appreciation for wood and provided an education in the art of working with wood. I had the incredible experience to work with and listen to stories from Ray Eames. The stories of how she and Charles Eames created furniture, products and films within their studio was very inspiring for a young designer. D.J. De Pree, founder of Herman Miller, hosted design “sit down” meetings with us to educate and enlighten the design team on the meaning of innovative design. The guidance and vision of George Nelson challenged us to take a risk in innovation, creating the foundation of Herman Miller as we know it today.

At Fitch Inc., design consulting firm in Columbus, I had the pleasure to work with a very gifted design team. Innovation, process, form development, proportion, color, texture and finish were all part of the daily discussion. I also had the pleasure of working with two design masters, Dean Richardson and Dave Smith, founders of RichardsonSmith design firm in Columbus Ohio.

## ***So why is all this important to me and the work that I have created?***

This exhibition of work is a melding of all these experiences and the influence of all the people that I have had the honor to meet and create product designs with. My inspiration comes from my past experiences, my current surroundings and the textures/colors/finishes that I am exposed to.

Through the years of developing products, you build a large library of forms, textures and shape relationships in your head. I now wanted to infuse the years of knowledge of design, the library and materials. I explore how ceramic, wood, metal, polymer, color could work together to create exciting and meaningful pieces of art. Each piece is unique and presented many different challenges in the infusion of materials. In this collection, I am pushing my creativity and technical skills to produce the pieces.

As a designer, I investigate layers, textures, color (gloss vs matte), positives and negatives in each piece. I examine layers of material, the hues of different wood, layers of glazes, and ask – what will that create? What types of shadows will be created from the layers, internally and from external light when introduced? What colors will be produced, and will they complement or be in contrast? I consider positive and negative – textures coming out, going in, and creating visually stimulating surfaces.

My sketches show the process that I go through to create each of the pieces. A sketch is just a start, a tool – exploring form, proportions and how materials could work together. I then experiment with positive and negative spaces, textures, the shadows and highlights created by external light and visualize the three-dimensional aspect – how it will look from all sides? A series of sketches are created to explore visual alternatives and material relationships. Does it work, are the proportions correct, are we taking full advantage of all the materials?

The uniqueness of clay provides the ability to add and subtract material easily – altering the surface. Clay allows for creating textures with objects, cutting areas out or adding shapes to enhance the surface – developing areas of focus.

Each piece explores the relationship between all these elements to create a ceramic piece that is differentiated and unique.