

Tim Rowan

by Jeff Shapiro



Cups, to 3 inches (8 centimeters) in height, handbuilt stoneware, wood fired in an anagama.

Tim Rowan is not a well-known production potter, nor is he part of the art school old boys' club. He doesn't fit in any neat category and cannot be pigeonholed. Yet the objects he produces create a strong statement that reflect his influences over the course of his upbringing and education. The result is a growing and evolving body of work that most certainly is imprinted with the originality and confidence of an artist on a quest.

Rowan received a B.F.A. from the State University of New York, New Paltz, in 1992. From 1992 to 1994, he studied with Bizen potter Ryuichi Kakurezaki in Japan. On returning to the U.S., he spent time in New York, Massachusetts and Michigan,

"Object," 15 inches (38 centimeters) in length, handbuilt stoneware.





"Vessel," 4 inches (10 centimeters) in height, handbuilt stoneware, wood fired in an anagama.



Constructing the anagama: once the floor and flue opening were complete, Rowan began setting the arch.



Buttressed with local stones for insulation, the new kiln is ready for loading and firing.



"Box," 8 inches (20 centimeters) in height, handbuilt stoneware, by Tim Rowan, Stoneridge, New York.

exploring the potential of different clays and forming processes. Subsequently, he entered graduate school at Pennsylvania State University, earning an M.F.A. in 1999.

Rowan now lives in Stoneridge, New York. Having successfully completed the construction and first firing of his innovative anagama-style kiln, he is building a new studio.

His work is very direct, with minimal embellishment or decoration. The attention to material and firing is apparent, as they work with the form to produce a strong but quiet presence. There is something about the strength and simplicity that draws the viewer deeper and deeper into the form.

Predominantly a handbuilder, Rowan takes a "wholistic" approach in that he is completely involved in each step of the

process. He has spent time in a variety of locations, digging and firing low-fire clays.

In his early testing, perhaps the failures were more abundant than the successes, but this is evidence of a commitment and devotion to the evolution of one's work. These experiments are now bearing fruit. The forms, though simple at first view, express the result of his experiences.

Often, work of this nature can be so personal that it is inaccessible to a viewer who is not privy to the inner thoughts of the artist. Rowan provides just enough meaning to enhance the already strong forms, such as his early boxes that are derived from mortuary containers having to do with his thoughts on mortality and being grounded.

His more recent "grid" forms suggest skeletons and spines, with reference to

boat building and to structural elements of architecture. There is a natural progression, from the easily recognizable lidded box to the separated cubicles to the newest work that is sculpture without vessel containment as part of format.

The constant struggle for direction and the total involvement with his medium are obvious to anyone who is willing to take the time to appreciate the quiet strength that permeates Tim Rowan's vessels and sculpture. These, combined with a passion for experimentation, forming and subsequent firing, are what keep the work alive.

The author Jeff Shapiro is a ceramics artist residing in Accord, New York.