

Ruth Duckworth

b. 1919

From AskArt:

A Jewish-German emigrant who was educated in England, but established her career in New York City, Ruth Duckworth is not easily categorized because her artwork runs a gamut of materials and subjects, which are mostly abstracted. Among her creations are figurative bronzes, porcelain vessels, ceramic wall reliefs, abstract alabaster forms, and rough stoneware.

She enrolled in the Liverpool School of Art in England when she was age 17 and studied sculpture there from 1936 to 1940. English sculptors Barbara Hepworth and Henry Moore were influential on her work.

In the mid 1950s, following the advice of potter Lucie Rie, she went back to school and attended the Central College in London. She was immediately taken with the experimental atmosphere of ceramic potters, which was focused on abstraction rather than functionality.

Her early work was expressive, primeval forms and was mostly done with the coil method. She gained attention but left England in 1964 to teach in Chicago for a year. Leaving with her and having ongoing influence was Hans Coper, Britain's leading post-war potter. In Chicago, she firmed her modernist inclinations, and created many bone white porcelain vessels that were purely art objects and lacking functionality.

As her work evolved in America, she has returned somewhat to figuration and creates larger-than-life bronze figures, but also continues to do smaller abstract sculptures from clay. In January 2005, an exhibition of her work opened at the Museum of Arts and Design in New York.

Selected Major Collections:

Art Institute of Chicago
Windsor Castle, England;
Stuttgart Museum, Germany
National Museum of Modern Art, Japan;
Boyman-Van Beuningen, The Netherlands;
Everson Museum of Art, New York
Philadelphia Museum of Art
The Smithsonian Institution, Washington D. C.;
National Museum of Scotland;
Kestner Museum, Germany;
Schleswig Holsteinisches Landesmuseum fur Kunst und Gewerbe, Germany;
City Museum, Bassano Del Grappa, Italy;
Buckingham County Museum, England;
Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco
Wustum Museum of Art, Wisconsin
St. Louis Art Museum, Missouri
International Museum of Ceramic, New York

Boston Museum of Art
Mills College, California
Inner London Ed. Comm., England;
Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, The Netherlands;
Victoria and Albert Museum, England;
J.S. Speed Art Museum, Kentucky
Kestner Museum, Germany;
Museum fur zeitbenossische keramische Kunst, Germany;
Utah Museum of Fine Arts
Museum of Arts and Design, New York
Los Angeles County Art Museum
Metropolitan Museum, New York,

Selected Honors and Awards:

Ceramic Art of the World, Gold Medal, Calgary, Canada, 1973
Fellow of the American Craft Council, 1981
DePaul University, Honorary Doctorate Degree, 1982
Triennale de la Porcelaine, Nyon, Switzerland, 1992 (first American ever invited)
The National Museum of Women in the Arts, Lifetime Achievement Award, Gold Medal, 1993
American Craft Fellow Award, 25 years of Leadership, Gold Medal, 1993
National Society of Arts and Letters, Gold Medal, National Career Award, 1996
Ruth Duckworth Ceramic Scholarship Fund, Lewis and Clark College, 1998
The Madigan Prize, State of Illinois, Best Sculpture of the Year Award, 1999
Master of the Medium Award, Gold Medal, Renwick Art Alliance, 2001
Distinguished Artist of the Year, Beaux-Arts Celebration, Union League, Chicago, 2003
Arts in Education Award, Art in Teaching, Chicago, 2003
Visionary Award, Lifetime Achievement, Museum of Arts and Design, New York 2003
Department of Cultural Affairs, Government of Greece, Olympic Sculpture Garden, Artist to represent the United States of America, (Athens, Greece) 2004
State of Illinois, Sculptor Award, Chicago, 2005