

Priscilla Hollingsworth  
Artist's Statement - Vessels

I often make clay vessels in a series, so that I can try out several ideas at once. These are pots to be looked at rather than used, although the act of visual contemplation is certainly a function, too. I am inspired by plant forms and the movement of water over sea life. I am interested in rich juxtapositions of color.

Having studied with potters, I think about the parts of the pot: foot, base, body (or belly), shoulder, lip, handles. These categories become areas of formal invention for me. I look at pots in history, such as Neolithic earthenware, Moorish decorated urns with flaring handles, eighteenth century European soft paste porcelains with extravagant decoration. I also look at architecture and its decoration from several eras.

If I had lived in another time, I might want my work to appear to be technically perfect, with smooth surfaces seemingly untouched by the human hand. But as a contemporary artist, I recognize that I live in a materially wealthy society in which perfect (but soulless) machine-made replicas can be purchased cheaply in any discount department store. I follow in the long line of artists from William Morris in the mid-nineteenth century to the present day who make the antidote to the mass-produced object: the thoroughly handmade object of beauty meant to be present in the daily life of the home.

My favorite clay body is a light-to-medium orange terra cotta that is formulated mostly from clay mined in Georgia. I use a variety of glaze treatments, from bright and shiny to semi-matte to dry and matte. It is very important for me to get a contrast of color and surface reflection. To this end, I often glaze fire a given piece multiple times.