

Richard W. Rosen Naples, FL

Living in the Philadelphia area as a child, one of Richard W. Rosen's favorite activities was visiting his grandparents in the city. These visits were a feast for the senses full of excitement, sounds and colors from the many cars, clanging trolleys and diverse people. Tall buildings, crowded train yards and long bridges crossing rivers further inspired Rosen. Entwined with the man-made systems was nature in the form of beautiful parks and gardens; his grandparents always had colorful flowers in the small garden in front of their rowhouse. As Rosen matured, his appreciation grew for the complex relationship between the man-made and nature.

Artistically, Rosen finds inspiration in the works of Calder, Hofmann, Kandinsky and Miro. His artwork combines sculpture and painting and, in the case of wall pieces, woodworking as well. Rosen's varied life experiences are reflected in this art. His travels, the people he's met and world events help form the themes in his work. As we are all affected by our environment, Rosen's hand-built clay and mixed media constructions are affected by his observations. His work evolves intuitively and is inspired by shapes, textures and colors in nature and in man-made forms. For instance, he finds organic and geometric abstract images in clouds, rocks, trees and city skylines. Dreamlike imaginary elements and exotic images also serve as inspiration for Rosen's work. His desire to challenge shape is enhanced by a passion for color. Rosen wants his art to be stimulating as well as fun for the observer. Since the work is open to interpretation, viewers are encouraged to use their imagination while enjoying and contemplating it.

Prior to beginning a new work, Rosen uses a conceptual approach to visualize his ideas. The freedom to improvise and allow for the natural flow of ideas is essential. He is inspired by listening to a variety of music as he works in the studio. Hand-building clay allows him to create in a very natural, tactile way that is both calming and therapeutic. Found objects and free-hand techniques are used to create textures and shapes. After the piece has dried, it is bisque-fired followed by the application of underglazes and glazes, finely ground colored glass, which provide the means to "paint" the clay with color. Then, the piece is fired again using contemporary raku firing methods which add an element of surprise and spontaneity due to the unpredictable reactions of the clay and glazes. These reactions often result in dramatic cracking and brilliant colorful metallic effects which are incorporated into the finished piece. The raku firing process dates back to 16th century Japan when it was used to produce simple, yet refined, bowls for the Zen Buddhist tea ceremony; the raku symbol generally represents the concepts of enjoyment, happiness, pleasure and quiet.

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