

Great White Oak Gallery

Seagrove, NC – Benjamin and Bonnie Burns, potters and owners of The Great White Oak Gallery, located in Seagrove, North Carolina, are another wonderful example of two artists that combine their amazing talents to create beautiful works of functional art.

Benjamin started off learning about pottery by taking classes at The Ceramic League in Miami, Florida, in 1980, but it was a hobby for 12 years. He sold real estate for 16 years, “but then Hurricane Andrew came to Miami, and I decided to go back to school to learn to do something that makes me happy, so I moved to North Carolina in 1992, and moved to Seagrove in 1998. So I have been making my living making pottery since 1992”, explained Benjamin.

Bonnie then added, “I have always painted since day one. I started painting for a group of potters that were buddies from church and they got together with LDDK with Drew and Linda. One lady designed the pots, one fired the pots, and they hired me to decorate the pots. This was back in 1991 I then began to decorate pots for some other people so after a while I decided to take pottery classes myself at Randolph Community College”.

Benjamin and Bonnie are known for making functional pottery, such as dinnerware, glasses, mugs and containers. They both use stoneware clay in the making of their pottery. Benjamin is known for his glazes such as the Oxblood glaze, and green tinted glazes. He likes to glaze and fire in a reduction atmosphere in a gas or wood fired kiln. Using the atmosphere technique causes the glaze to flow and flux into unique colors and patterns. The Oxblood colored glaze is one of the most difficult glaze to achieve. Due to the smaller sizes of his kilns, he is able to fire more often than other potters, which means it is easier for him to have items on hand in his gallery. He has designed a method of making his bowls, and serving trays with a special lip on the bottom of them so that they can hang on the wall like artwork. He also does commissioned pieces of pottery, including spectacular one of a kind sinks to be used in bathrooms. He has a display of several of his sinks that now reside in homes in the western mountains of North Carolina.

Bonnie likes to use an electric kiln. She paints her plates, bowls etc., using brightly colored under glazes, which she then covers with a clear glaze. The two combine when firing to make the pieces food safe. She uses an electric kiln because the glaze will stay in place. Electric kilns do not have the atmospheric changes in them like a gas or wood fired kiln. Benjamin likes the other kilns, because it causes the glaze to flux, and move. Since Bonnie paints specific designs such as flowers and animals on her pottery, she doesn't want it to move! She most recently has completed a large commissioned project for a client that wanted a backsplash made for the wall behind their stove area. Bonnie designed the artwork for it which included beautiful flowers and plants in a wonderful outdoor garden scene. She then divided up the scene into 3" X 5" inch pottery tiles, and painted the images on the tiles. The result is a spectacular one of a kind piece of artwork which will be mounted on the wall in her client's kitchen.

The Great Oak Gallery is located at 427 N. Broad Street in downtown Seagrove, and is a must see on your travels through the region.

For more information about Benjamin and Bonnie Burns, and their Great White Oak Gallery, please visit their web site at www.greatwhiteoakgallery.com, or give them a call at (336) 873-8066.