

George Rodriguez

Ceramic Artist



Seattle-based artist George Rodriguez creates highly detailed surfaces in his figurative ceramic sculptures. His artworks are often explorations of identity and connections to

community. He uses humor to engage the viewer in deeper cultural issues. In 2010, Rodriguez traveled to twenty-six countries on a Bonderman Travel Fellowship, informing his work with diverse sculptural traditions and creating a unique take on contemporary life. Rodriguez studied ceramics at the University of Texas at El Paso and the University of Washington.

How did you first become involved in ceramics?

I wanted to do something in the arts and went toward a graphic design degree, but found that a little too restricting

for my tastes. I moved into art education, which required introductory classes in all the visual arts—painting, sculpture, ceramics, and metal. I took ceramics first because I just wanted to get it out of the way. I didn't know anything about ceramics. I thought it was only pottery and figurines; not what I was interested in at the time. It really was my mentor, Vince Burke, who taught my UTEP undergrad class. He showed me the possibilities of clay and let me go. That was it! Now I make pottery and figurines, which I love.

Where do you get your inspiration?

I'm usually thinking of how pieces interact and talk to each other when viewed in a show setting. It's an experience when you walk into a gallery or a museum, and you can see conversations between the sculptures. The sculptures have their own message or meaning. That's why I really like to work in a series. With the scale of my work, I know that the pieces on pedestals talk differently than something that's larger scale or sitting on the ground. When viewed from far away, the ornamentation just looks like texture or a pattern. But as

the viewer gets closer and closer, a bit more detail, different patterning, and colors are revealed.

I continue to be inspired by the Bonderman Travel Fellowship I received. It really shaped who I am and the way I see the world. It made me realize how globally interconnected we are as people. Seeing sculptures outdoors, in tombs, in temples, and public art made such

an impact on what elements I use in my own work. I'm trying to blend all these different cultural factors together into a kind of a melting pot of the new.



Fig. 1-39. *Urban Guardian: Rat*, 2020. Ceramic and glaze, 61" x 36" x 27" (155 x 91.4 x 68.6 cm). Foster White Gallery.