

reform

GALLERY

the landing

The Landing to Feature Clay Paintings Made Between 1930 and 1960 by Renowned California Modern Ceramist Myrton Purkiss

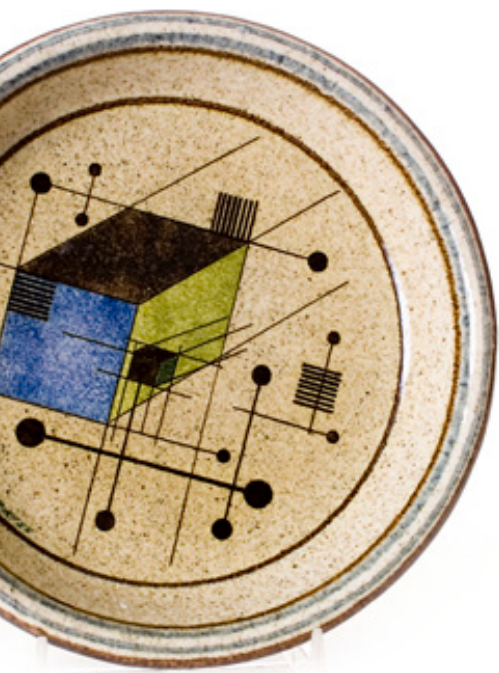
Myrton Purkiss: Paintings on Clay, 1930 - 1960

Opening Reception: Thursday, February 7th, 6 - 9 pm

On Display: February 7th - March 28th

For its second show, the Landing—the fine art gallery that sits within rare furnishings gallery Reform—will feature a large collection of one-of-a-kind hand-painted plates by master California Modern ceramist Myrton Purkiss. An artist with work in LACMA's permanent collection, Purkiss made each plate by hand between the years 1930 and 1960; he kneaded the dough with his feet and hand-rendered each plate on a potter's wheel of his own invention, powered by a motor he'd taken from a sewing machine. In the mid twentieth century, Purkiss's pioneering ceramic works—both decorative and functional—helped bridge the gap between craft and fine art; from the 1940s on, Purkiss's ceramics were represented by the prestigious Dalzell Hatfield Galleries inside Los Angeles's Ambassador Hotel, alongside works by some of the most respected fine artists of the day. Along with his teacher Glen Lukens, Purkiss helped pave the way for the next generation of fine art ceramicists, which included Ken Price, Ron Nagle and Peter Voulkos. In 1977, after Purkiss's death, curator Dextra Frankel mounted a memorial exhibition of his works at Cal State Fullerton. The Landing's show will feature the largest collection of Purkiss's works to be displayed since.

In the materials printed in conjunction with his 1952 exhibition *Modern Ceramics*, the Dalzell Hatfield Galleries wrote, "Myrton Purkiss has become an eminent leader in the field of ceramic art in America today... His boldness of imagination and freshness of approach rank Purkiss among the most original of contemporary artist-craftsmen. In his work there is nothing derivative. Purkiss is one of the rare individuals who combine in one talent a thoroughly competent craftsmanship and an extraordinarily vital artistry."



Gerard O'Brien, owner/curator of both the Landing and Reform Gallery, has been collecting Purkiss's plates for twenty years. "For a while I think I bought every piece of Purkiss's work I saw," he says. O'Brien is a passionate believer in ceramics as fine art and in Purkiss's work in particular. "If you look through history, the great artists of every generation have at one time worked with clay," he says. "In a lot of ways, ceramics are the hardest pieces to realize. There are so many places that they can go wrong. So the medium is quite amazing, and hard to control, and that's one of the things I deeply appreciate about Purkiss's works: he was completely in control of his craft.

"For Myrton, the plate was just a form, one that he learned to do well and felt comfortable with," says O'Brien. "It was like constructing his own stretchers and building his own canvases."

A native of Fullerton, CA, Purkiss studied at the Chouinard Art Institute, and then under legendary ceramicist Glen Lukens at USC, before heading off to spend more than three years overseas fighting in World War II. He was stationed in both England and France and spent much of his off time visiting local ceramists and learning about the ancient potting, firing and glazing techniques they used. After the war he returned to California to set up his workshop.

On Thursday February 7th, from 6 - 9 pm, the Landing will host the exhibition's opening, which all are invited to attend. For O'Brien, much of the pleasure of operating the Landing comes from exposing audiences to artists whose work he believes should be better known; for him, Purkiss is just such an artist. Says O'Brien, "I like telling stories I think need to be told."





Reform Booth at Design Miami/Basel 2008

REFORM GALLERY

Reform Gallery showcases rare and handcrafted Modern furnishings and decorative arts, with a specialty in California Modernism from the latter half of the 20th century. Owned and curated by Gerard O'Brien, Reform displays works by the most seminal and sometimes underappreciated designer craftsmen of these movements, including Sam Maloof, Charles and Ray Eames, J.B. Blunk, Paul McCobb and Arthur "Espenet" Carpenter, among many others.

In 2006, Reform hosted the exhibition R.M. Schindler: The Gingold Commissions, which featured 31 of Schindler's one-of-a-kind handmade furniture pieces. In 2005, Reform mounted the exhibition California Design: A Celebration of California Design from 1956 to 1976, which brought together works by over 30 groundbreaking designers. Both of these shows were documented by Julius Shulman.

Founded by O'Brien in 2003, Los Angeles-based Reform was first located on La Brea Avenue and later on La Cienega's gallery row. In 2010, Reform moved to its current 3,000-square-foot location on Melrose.



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