

I saw Coeur d' Alene Art Currents call and I began building what became Fish Power Tower. I should mention I love science fiction. And my work has always been fueled by a connection to nature. Rocks for their energy, water for its healing effect, and the animals to not forget the animal in us. So I started to just build intuitively thinking on these things. First came the rock above ground, then the island underwater populated by fish, and then the top manifested as a fantasy tower city. I imagined a future society harnessing the power of the rain and sea and then the idea of fish power hit me. And I saw a fishy face in one of the towers. For me, this could be an imagined way to harness energy from the water and fish. Or it could be a super future fish society that built this tower. And it also makes me think of the power of the animal fish. As well as the power we get from eating fish. So, in this way, Fish Power Tower is a celebration and a message of thanks to the fish.

I enjoy building sculptures and thinking about these things. And I also really love to fire the kilns. This sculpture I fired in a kiln I built last year. I've been honing a technique for once fired pottery and sculpture. The clay body is heavily grogged for shock resistance. So I built the sculpture and let it dry for about a week. Then I glazed it and let it dry a few more days. And then, for firing, I start the kiln very slowly and candle the flame keeping under 212 degrees for about thirty minutes. This is actually very quick! The extra grog allows the moisture to easily escape. The other place to go slow is around 1063 degrees F. Quartz conversion takes place and if the temperature of the sculpture is not even, it may crack. I did get one small crack but for a different reason, and its not structural. It happened because I tried to cheat a bit and add some wet clay to dry. But its a craggy rocky thing so it fits right in. And the piece rings true on a tap test.

The other exciting thing about this sculpture is the glazed surface. All the glazes used have a semi-translucent quality. So they have a lot of depth. I also used a lot of soda ash in the glazes. Or brush soda ash directly on the clay surface. The soda ash does a couple of things that create a varied and interesting surface. As it melts, it interacts and combines with the clay body, creating a glassy surface. The soda ash also vaporizes in the kiln, creating more variation and this kind of atmospheric variation can be very exciting. The other variable is the reduction. I mostly fire in oxidation but have noticed some reduction gives the clay body a more pleasing toasty quality. To achieve reduction, the kiln master must find a combination of increasing fuel and limiting oxygen. I achieve this by adding in bits of cedar wood along with closing the air intake and damper a bit. It's a lot of fun to find that sweet spot. And when you open the peeps during reduction, a nice orange flame bursts out of the side of the kiln.

The sculpture has four sections that stack one on top of the other. Each piece is hollow slab built with walls ranging from 1/2 inch to 3/4 inch. The sculpture is balanced, but for a permanent installation, I will make a steel baseplate with steel pipe running up the center. And I will fit some rubber around a few key points of contact between the pipe and sculpture to hold it snug. To install, bolt the baseplate to a plinth. Then place each piece over the pipe. Correct placement of pieces is indicated by markings where the pieces meet. The baseplate will be from 6x6 inches up to 12x12 inches. The pipe will be 1 inch or 1 1/4 inch in diameter and about 48 inches long.

For the install, it would be great if we could time it close to the drop-off date. It would be nice if I could help put all the pieces in place. I would plan a little road trip to Coeur d' Alene from Portland, Oregon. Thanks for your consideration.

-Jesse Taylor