

## Higby's 'Infinite Place' exhibition opens to national audiences



A well-placed reflection provides views of Wayne Higby's EarthCloud ceramic tile installations in the original Miller Performing Arts Center, left, and the new Miller Proscenium Theater, at right. All photos by Brian Oglesbee.

**“Infinite Place: The Ceramic Art of Wayne Higby” began a national journey this summer which originated in Arizona, moved on to Washington, D.C. this fall, and will continue to make stops throughout the next year and a half at sites including the Reading (PA) Public Museum; the Philadelphia (PA) Art Alliance; the Racine (WI) Art Museum; and the Memorial Art Museum, Rochester, NY.**

This retrospective of contemporary ceramic work includes some 60 pieces by Higby, Alfred University (AU) professor of ceramic art and Robert C. Turner Chair of Ceramic Art, College of Ceramics. Works in the traveling exhibition range from vessel forms and tiles to sculpture and architectural installations, spanning this master artist's 40-plus-year career.

“Infinite Place” opened last April at the The Arizona State University (ASU) Art Museum's Ceramics Research Center, Tempe, and ran through July. In early October, the exhibition moved to the Smithsonian American Art Museum's Renwick Gallery, Washington, D.C. and was on view through Dec. 8. On Nov. 21, Higby joined Smithsonian American Art Museum Senior Curator Eleanor Harvey and Henry Sayre, professor of art history at Oregon State University, as they explored the western American landscape and its relationship to his ceramic vessels.

Peter Held, curator of ceramics at the The ASU Art Museum, organized the retrospective. He is also editor of the 216-page color book of the same name as the exhibit - “Infinite Place: The Ceramic Art of Wayne Higby” - published and distributed by Arnoldsche Art Publishers, Stuttgart, Germany. The volume is available in the AU Book Store, Powell Campus Center. It contains a series of essays chronicling Higby's work by well-known scholars in the field, including the London-based, preeminent design historian Tanya Harrod; Mary D. McInnes, professor of art history at AU; Ezra J. Shales, associate professor of art history at the Massachusetts College of Art; and Helen W. Drutt English, gallerist, educator, curator, and leading authority on contemporary crafts.

In preparation for three years, “Infinite Place” gathers together ceramic objects and drawings from the ASU Museum's collection, private and public collections, and Higby's own possessions.

Art authorities consider Higby, who has been teaching at AU since 1973, to be one of the most innovative second-generation artists to emerge from the post-World War II American ceramic studio movement. For Higby, this “Infinite Place” tour offers a time to contemplate just what he has wrought throughout a very full career as artist/educator. The exhibition is designed to provide an in-depth critical analysis of Higby's body of work and to explore the forms, techniques, and firing processes used throughout a

career which has brought national and international recognition.



*White Terrace Gap*, 1984. Glazed earthenware, raku fired

Higby offers this insight into his exhibition: “A retrospective by definition is a look back, but the ideas, materials, and processes that are tracked continually live in the present and inform each new day in the studio.”

Higby’s work is described by his own artist statement as “Earth, sky, time, light, space: my work is a meditation on the relationship between mind and matter. It is not about landscape.” Rich color and flowing lines take the observer to places reminiscent of the Colorado landscapes of his youth as well as other panoramic tableaus. Since the early 1970s, he has explored the fusion of form and surface decoration inspired by a contemplation of panoramic American landscape vistas.

After visiting China in 1991, Higby began using porcelain with celadon glazes and creating thick “rocks” that alluded to the natural environment. During the last decade, he has undertaken several ambitious, large-scale mural projects, which are part of “Infinite Places” through photo documentation along with maquettes (small [scale model](#) or [rough draft](#) of an unfinished [sculpture](#)) of these commissions. A book on Higby’s work and his project

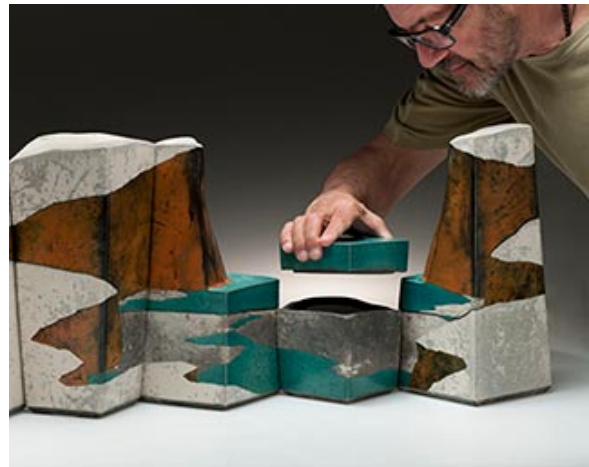
“EarthCloud” - the largest hand-cut porcelain, architectural installation in the world - was published by Arnoldsche Art in 2007.

Higby is the recipient of the American Craft Movement Visionary Award from the Museum of Arts and Design, New York; the Master of the Medium Award and the Distinguished Educator Award from the James Renwick Alliance. He is Honorary Professor of Art at Shanghai University and Honorary Citizen of the “Porcelain City of Jingdezhen, China, the first foreign national to be so honored. Higby is the founding director of the Alfred-Central Academy of Fine Arts’ Ceramic Design for Industry program in Beijing.

His work is held in the permanent collections of numerous art museums around the world including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the Victoria and Albert Museum, London; and the Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo.

Higby is an honorary member of the National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts, a Life Trustee of the Haystack Mountain School of Crafts, Deer Isle, Maine; and vice president of the International Academy of Ceramics, Geneva, Switzerland.

Major funding for the “Infinite Place” exhibit is provided by an Artist’s Exhibition Series grant from the Windgate Charitable Foundation with additional support by Marlin AU ’54 and Regina Miller, the AU Robert C. Turner Chair Endowment Fund, Alfred University, and the Friends of Contemporary Ceramics. The James Renwick Alliance supported the presentation at the Renwick Gallery. The ASU School of Art Ceramics Program assisted with the Arizona visit.



Wayne Higby with *Pictorial Lake*, 1986. Glazed earthenware, raku fired. Collection Sarah H. Morabito

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