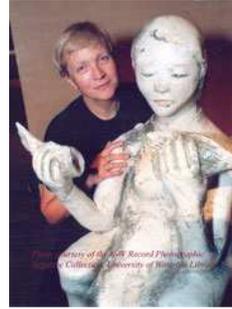


Ann Roberts

When Ann Roberts moved to Waterloo in 1967 she had already spent seven years making functional pottery in Montreal. In South Africa, where she had grown up, she loved to paint.



However, in Waterloo, Roberts embarked on a different form of expression that would blend these two loves. It was ceramic sculpture that ultimately made her an internationally renowned artist.

This metamorphosis in her work was described once in a newspaper article:

“Teapots grew open mouths instead of spouts and goblets were related only distantly to each other.”

Change has always inspired Roberts’ life and work. After living in Waterloo for many years, Roberts now lives in a home overlooking the Conestogo River. “Rivers are filled with life, but they also dry up. They are in a state of constant flux, as is life,” she said once.

Roberts’ work graces several public spaces in the area and she helped found the Waterloo Potters’ Workshop. Yet her legacy is perhaps most felt in the establishment of the Canadian Clay and Glass Gallery in Uptown Waterloo. For almost ten years, Roberts raised funds and pushed for the national gallery that finally opened in 1993.

Roberts supported the project because she believed that artists who worked in clay and glass did not have the same opportunities to exhibit as painters. She also felt that Canadians who work in clay and glass don’t see themselves as a group simply because of our vast geography.

For her part, Roberts’ clay sculpture has been strongly influenced by mythology, and her work is infused with a literary sensibility. She said once, “I think along the lines of poetry when I’m working. When a poet chooses words he does so for specific reasons, for the duality of sound and meaning, and if that poet can find the words to make you understand and feel his work then he is successful.”

Her work has explored the female form, often retelling myth from a feminine point of view. “Myth is something you play with,” she said once.

In 1974 she returned to South Africa to study the clay work of the Basotho people of Lesotho. After returning to Waterloo, she attended the University of Guelph, completing a BA in Fine Arts. She received a Master of Fine Arts from the Claremont Graduate School in California.

She joined the fine arts faculty at the University of Waterloo in 1977 and retired in 2001. Roberts has twice been nominated for the Governor General's Award, and has been a finalist for the prestigious national Saide Bronfman arts award. Her work has been exhibited across Canada and internationally in Korea, Greece, Hungary, Germany, the U.S.A, Norway, Scotland and Australia.

Her distinguished career was recognized in 1992 with a 20-year retrospective, called "Ann Roberts' Harvest: Coming Full Circle" which was organized by the Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery.

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