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Artist Profile: Magna
Getting His Hands Dirty

Darryl Erdmann's life in art
 by Ehren Clark | photos by Shawn Rossiter

"I would much rather be drawing at my work bench and conceptually doing artwork and listening to music than probably anything on the planet," says Darryl Erdmann, former drummer, sign-painter, furniture salesman, gallery owner. Above all, though, he is an artist, one with a full belt of tools to accomplish whatever visual concept presents itself.

Born in the small town of Brigham City, in a family of three boys, Erdmann began investigating materials at an early age, under the inspiration and encouragement of his father. "I started building things because I noticed my dad was in the garage all of the time making things," Erdmann says. "He was a welder. His father and his father's father owned the first Chevrolet dealership in town, we had a farm, and he'd spend his time out in the garage creating things. I picked up on that. He taught me how to weld, he taught me how to build things, he taught me how to get my hands dirty."

Erdmann has been getting his hands dirty ever since, with all manner of paint and ink, sawdust, Plexiglas and metal. From his early experiences under his father's watchful eye he moved on to his first formal art training under Marion Hyde, his high school art teacher. When Erdmann graduated, Hyde said to him, "If you let it stop there, I'll kick your butt." He may have noticed Erdmann's interest in music, which became his first passion right out of school. He played drums professionally, first as a studio drummer for Capitol Records, then on the road touring. "After many years playing, after enough nights of Holiday Inns, finally, from San Jose, I hitchhiked back home to get started at Weber State," Erdmann recalls. "In art."

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Exhibition Review: Logan
The Bliss and Black Mountain College

Connections worth exploring at NEHMA
 by Ann Poore

A group of faculty members dismissed from Florida's Rollins College in the 1930s dreamed of a school where, in addition to excellent programs in history, literature and mathematics, students could take classes in dance from the likes of Merce Cunningham, music from John Cage, get lectures in engineering from Buckminster Fuller, architecture from Walter Gropius, learn about pottery from the great ceramist Peter Voulkos, study art with Franz Kline, Willem de Kooning, Robert Motherwell and Josef Albers and weaving and design with Albers' wife, Anni. They wanted guest lecturers like Albert Einstein and the poet William Carlos Williams.

Students would each have their own studio, community work to do and woods to stroll in.

They made their dream a reality in the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina. Cy Twombly and Robert Rauschenberg would one day enroll. *Black Mountain College: Shaping Craft + Design* is a comprehensive and comprehensible traveling exhibition about the revolutionary experimental liberal arts college (1933-57) that continues to be influential in education and the visual, performing and literary arts even though it closed 57 years ago.

This absorbing show includes ceramics, textiles, furniture, sculpture, paintings, printed material and ephemera as well as video clips. It is now at the Nora Eccles Harrison Museum of Art at Utah State University through February and has been adapted by curator Katie Lee Koven, director of the Harrison, to include artwork from the NEHMA collection by students and faculty from Black Mountain College. She was assisted in the selection process by museum interns Adriane Dalton and Nick Danielson. Koven's connection with Black Mountain started when she was in graduate school in London. Her thesis focused on using Bernard Leach, the British potter, "as a vehicle to explore things marginalized in 20th-century Modernism. And I came across Black Mountain College -- while I'm in London. And I'm from South Carolina, so to find out about Black Mountain College [where Leach had taught an important seminar in 1952] when it was just a few hours away was really kind of like, wow this is pretty cool and obviously not well understood or well represented in 20th-century American Modernism history because I didn't know about it and a lot of people don't know about it," she says with a smile.

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Exhibitions Review: Salt Lake City
Old is New

InCiteful Clay at the Woodbury Art Museum
 by Geoff Wichert

Across the room, Nuala Creed's "Lament for Fukushima" looks like a child's well-worn doll, but up close he's seen to be an adult: one so rounded and smooth as to be mistaken for a child. He sits on the ground with his legs folded in front of him in the familiar lotus position. His right arm bends at the elbow, his hand held up next to his face, with the thumb and index finger touching in a circle—what Westerners might read as the sign for "O.K." His left arm is relaxed, resting on his knee, where his hand makes the same sign. Standing behind him and shading him, as he sits in this classic pose of meditation, looms a cloud-like shape that suggests either a tree or a very large mushroom. It is, of course, both. The composition refers to Buddha beneath the Bodhi Tree, the traditional story of the first human enlightenment. Yet something is not right, and to understand what it is necessary to examine the materials and their treatments more closely.

The Buddha is made of stoneware. In spite of the popular belief that the best ceramics are made of porcelain, which is used in making high-end consumer goods like teacups and bowls, Japanese artists have shown stoneware to be a more expressive and evocative material. They generally rely on techniques that foreground the human hand, the processes of making, and so encourage accidents that commercial manufacturers strive to avoid. To that end, Creed first stained and casually glazed her figure, then raku-fired him. This resulted in a timeless feel: old and weathered here, new and pristine there. As a final touch, she dunked his face in red glaze, producing a circular shape that recalls the way it was made, complete with an ambiguous drip. This red circle crosses the eyes, and dramatizes, in the restrained, formal manner of Japanese performance art, how this Buddha cries tears of blood. That, combined with the title, permit identifying the tree-like form above him as a mushroom cloud, symbol of the nuclear disaster that followed the tsunami at Fukushima. That the cloud is represented by roughly shaped and unglazed clay completes the allegory: the ancient, refined lives of the Japanese (and by extension of civilized peoples everywhere) are threatened by the unrefined, inchoate force of unleashed nature. It is the kind of artwork that, once seen, can never be forgotten, but grows in awareness day by day.

Probably the oldest known artistic medium, clay sculptures survive in European caves alongside painted animals and mysteriously carved bits of bone and stone. At the same time, as our contemporary artists demonstrate, clay can be as new as any other medium. Its plastic versatility allows it, in sufficiently creative or knowledgeable hands, to mimic—or at least disappear into—seemingly anything, including the most antithetical materials. How many viewers will notice that the pitcher of Shalene Valenzuela's "Purchasing Power II" isn't, as it appears, reverse painted glass, with its embossed measurements floating over the imagery, but is actually earthenware? The title of the series it comes from—*Blending In*—describes the medium as well as the message.



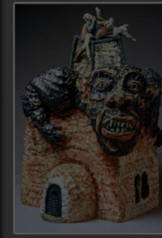
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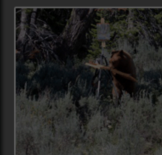
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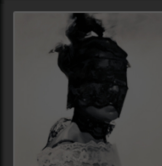
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