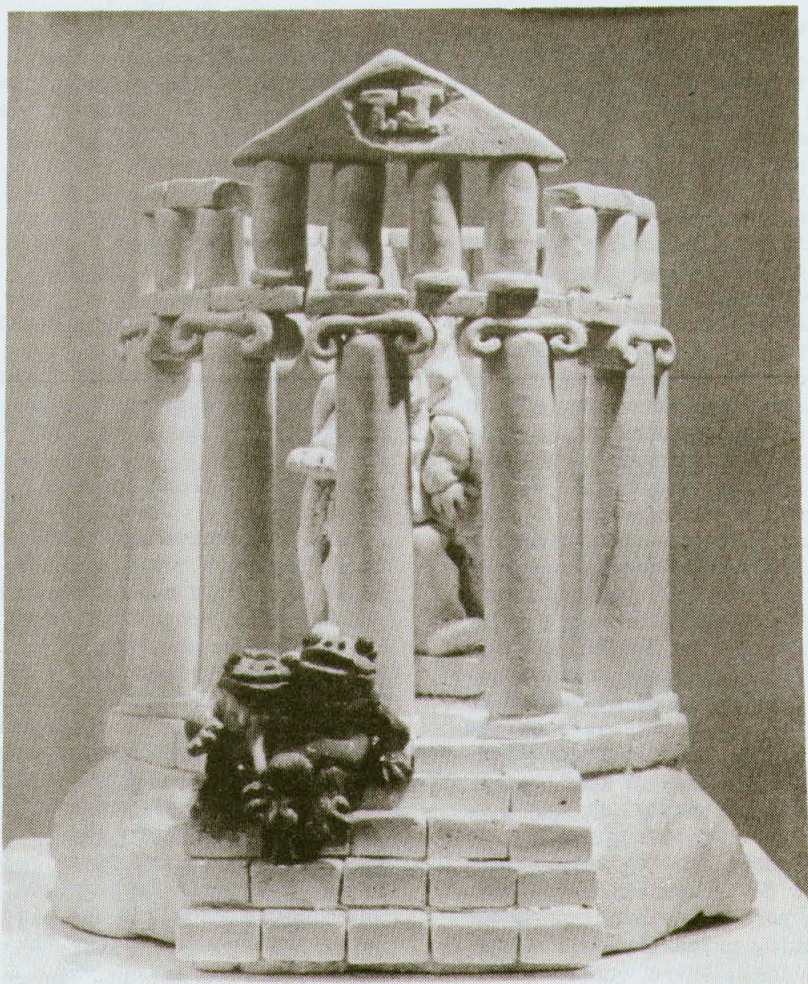


Posing on the Steps of the T. Jefferson Memorial, 1976



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David Gilhooly's Bicentennial Monuments and Bicentennial Tiles twit our national birthday celebration. Flirting with travesty all the while, the cynicism of these works is sure-footed but not contemptuous. The three monuments in particular are prime examples of one kind of creativity that has led a number of ceramicists into the mainstream of the contemporary visual arts.

During the past two decades there has been a remarkable burgeoning of precedent-breaking and precedent-making activities among certain ceramicists. These ceramicists, most often but not always working on the West Coast, have used clay not to create functional vessels of practical or ritualistic significance but rather to present expressionistic or satirical statements based on fact and fantasy. A major breakthrough came in Southern California in the mid-fifties when Peter Voulkos turned from making his much admired functional containers to using clay with an intent and spirit similar to the abstract expressionist's use of paint on canvas.

An important event occurred in 1961 when Robert Arneson made a quart bottle, complete with a clay bottle cap, and marked it "NO RETURN". This work signaled the beginning of a highly productive period in which many ceramicists worked in genres loosely reflecting the aesthetics of Bay Area Funk. More importantly, it was a wildly inventive period in which the participating ceramicists felt few restrictions on method and personal vision. Concentrating primarily on imagery and idea, these works were often polychromed. Some of the best adroitly synthesize aspects of painting and sculpture. This liberation from many former constraints was usually accom-

panied by a disciplined insistence on the highest standards of the craft. The result has been a large body of notable achievements in which the works of David Gilhooly stand prominently.

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The eight works by Gilhooly on view in MATRIX are but a token representation of the many hundreds of pieces large and small, all Frog Artifacts from the Frog World. Originally a student of anthropology, Gilhooly has created an elaborate and carefully structured mythology. Frog World is set outside any specific moment in time; or, as Gilhooly suggests, the setting is "diluvian" rather than antediluvian or post-diluvian. Working with clay as a ceramicist-anthropologist Gilhooly brings forth from the earth Frog Artifacts in which, he says, "the cultural byways of the Frog World" are revealed to us.

More than occasionally these Artifacts have an eerie similarity to artifacts past and future of that seemingly unrelated biological species, *Homo sapiens*. Gilhooly's cups, lidded casseroles and cookie jars, portrait busts and monuments have told such stories as *The Birth of Frog Tut* from a *Lotus Blossom* and *Frog Michelangelo's Creation of Frog Adam*. There is an entablature of *Frog Moses' Ten Commandments* which include such admonitions as "Plant all seeds", "Stand by your products", "Never swim alone" and "Complete your cycles". There are large busts of *Frog Victoria* in her Jubilee Year, *Boris Frogloff* and *King Frong* who devours all of the abstract paintings in the *Guggenfrog Museum*. There is also a *Frog Mt. Rushmore*.

Thanks to their special lungs which enable them to assimilate nutrition (minute organisms)

from the air they breathe, Gilhooly's frogs have elevated food as we know it to an intensely pleasurable ritual. For instance, the frogs cultivate vegetables primarily for their unusual shapes and colors. Frog Osiris bedecks himself in a glorious array of vegetables to mark special occasions, and the Count of Crumbs wears bagels and donuts for his Bar Mitzvah. All in all, the broad range of Artifacts unearthed to date suggest a funloving Frog World which prizes fecundity, sensuality and ribaldry.

David Gilhooly was born in Auburn, California in 1943. He attended the University of California at Davis where he studied with Robert Arneson and William Wiley. Gilhooly left the United States in 1969 to live in Canada, first in Saskatchewan, currently in the Toronto area. However, he has carefully arranged to spend this year "living in the U.S. even at the expense of missing the Olympics." Gilhooly is represented by the HansenFuller Gallery of San Francisco.

AMK

I have been waiting and preparing for the Bicentennial for a long time....These classically while brick pieces naturally reflect the great neoclassic revival in the Frog World of the time. In fact the revival covered not only architecture but literature, language and even science. The bricks were made from fired natural porcelain found just over the edge of the Continental Shelf. Metals had always been diffi-

cult for the frogs to obtain, their version of the Earth being much more aqueous than our own present version, in fact such as our world probably was at the time of the Noah's brothers' flood, approx. ten thousand years ago and corresponding with the final destruction of Atlantis. Anyway for the lack of easily accessible metals the frogs have built their technology almost entirely with various clays performing metallic functions. It is not difficult to imagine a porcelain internal combustion engine....The tiles are actually forever drawings done with ceramic pencils of a limited five color palette.... covered with glaze to make them last forever as clay things do, unaffected by bathtubs running over and recycling such as charcoal drawings and cast bronze sculptures respectively are put to. Artificial rocks last forever. Or the other way of looking at it: all rocks are only clay fired to various ways by Mother Nature....Also you have Frog Washington Being Visited by Pigeons. A fake bronze Washington that is gradually deteriorating, actually patinaing as time progresses, maybe you have noticed that? It is getting greener all the time. Though that may simply be pigeon droppings gradually accumulating. This would be a fine piece for a library.

David Gilhooly
In a letter to Andrea Miller-Keller, June 1976.

Works in MATRIX:

Frog Washington Being Visited By Pigeons, 1976, glazed ceramic, 35 1/2" x 24" x 22".

Posing on the Steps of the T. Jefferson Memorial, 1976, glazed ceramic, 17 1/2" x 13" x 17".

Playing Hide and Seek at the Washington Memorial, 1976, glazed ceramic, 32" x 11" x 11".

Five Bicentennial tile drawings, 1976, all glazed ceramic tile, 9" x 9" each:

The Spirit of '76

George Washington Introduces himself to Betsy Ross

Frog Washington Signs the Declaration of Independence

Cracking the Liberty Bell on a Turnip Vendor

George Washington Crossing the Delaware

All works in this exhibition are lent by HansenFuller Gallery, San Francisco.

Selected one-man exhibitions:
Richmond Art Center, Richmond, California '65 (first); San Francisco Museum of Art '67; HansenFuller Gallery, San Francisco '68-'76; Candy Store Gallery, Folsom, California '68-'74; M. H. DeYoung Memorial Museum, San Francisco '68; Martha Jackson Gallery, NYC '71; York University Art Gallery, Toronto '72.

Selected group exhibitions:
Sacramento, California, The First Group Mess '66; University Art Museum, University of California, Berkeley, Funk '67; Whitney Museum of American Art, NYC, Sculpture Annual '70; Museum of Contemporary Crafts, NYC, Clayworks '71; Victoria and Albert Museum, London, International Academy of Ceramics '72; San Francisco Museum of Art, A Decade of Ceramic Art 1962-72: Joseph Monson Collection '72; Whitney Museum of American Art, NYC, Clay '74.

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Arneson, Jeanette. "David Gilhooly," Craft Horizons Vol. XXXI No. 4 (August '71) pp. 20-21.

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Albright, Tom. "Mythmakers," The Art Gallery Vol. XVIII No. 5 (February '75) pp. 12-17+

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