



NEBRASKA NOW:  
MARGARET BOHLS, ITALIAN STUDIES

# MARGARET BOHLS

Ceramic artist Margaret Bohls has an abiding interest in historical vessel forms, and their social context. *Nebraska Now: Margaret Bohls, Italian Studies*, consists of three large groupings of vessels based primarily on those produced by the Etruscan civilization.



After traveling to Italy and London and visiting a number of museum collections, Bohls spent two months producing drawings and vessels based on her understanding of these forms. In this series, Bohls strives to identify a set of physical and formal attributes of the objects that visually communicate something about the culture that produced them or the era during which they were created.

Bohls considers the individual pieces to be sculptural representations of utilitarian forms arranged on, and

framed by, large stoneware trays.

The forms are largely based on European, Modernist era silver tea, coffee, and chocolate sets. Her interest is in the abstraction and repetition of the forms and their visual motifs, as well as their “still life” like arrangement.



*The inspiration & process*

Margaret Bohls is an American potter and educator and has been teaching ceramics at the college level for twenty-three years and is currently Associate Professor of Art at the University of Nebraska - Lincoln. She has given lectures

at universities across the U.S. and has taught hands-on workshops at art centers such as Greenwich House Pottery in New York, Anderson Ranch Arts Center in Aspen, Colorado and Penland School of Crafts in North Carolina. Bohls’ work has been shown in over 100 group and solo exhibitions since 1995 and is included in the permanent collections of the Minnesota Museum of American Art, the American Museum of Ceramic Art (AMOCA), the Weisman Museum of Art, and the Everson Museum of Art. She has written articles for the *Journal of the National Council for Education on Ceramic Arts and Pottery Making Illustrated*, and her ceramic work has been featured in periodicals such as *Ceramics Monthly* and *Studio Potter Magazine*.



*"The pieces I create are visual and sculptural objects. I conceive of each body of work with a particular set of formal goals in mind. The contours and volumes, colors and surfaces of the objects I create compose a dimensional image. Volume is a key element in utilitarian forms as it defines the potential for containment. The visual evidence and the physical quality of this volume is important to the way my work communicates formally, whether the volume is expansive and taut or soft and weighted. I think of the outlines and edges of the work as drawn lines. I choose and manipulate the softness, weight and speed of these lines. Edges and lines either define or interact with the volume of the forms. Surfaces, whether they are visually complex, or minimal, are chosen in part based on how they respond to and enhance form and line. I observe and enhance the visual and physical relationships between two or more forms when they meet in a pair or grouping."*





*"When creating my work I am also engaging in a dialog with the existing vernacular of utilitarian forms. Each of us has an inherent understanding of functional forms that is embedded in our culture. This vernacular changes with time and place. I am both utilizing and questioning this rather slippery language of form and use in my pots. My choices of form, scale and color, as well as the style and placement of spouts, handles and feet are based in part on my understanding and examination of this cultural vernacular. In this way utility provides a particular form of communication between myself and my audience.*



*My understanding of this language of forms comes from my study of historical ceramics and the decorative arts. My work owes allegiance to no particular historical tradition, rather I find the influences and relationships between objects and makers from different cultures and time periods is what fascinates me. Each pottery form carries a particular cultural and historical text that is part of that dialogue. Many of these objects are sources for my work. Chinese and Korean celadons, Iranian and European tin glazed earthenware and Bauhaus and Art Deco ceramics from the Modern era are several of my influences. Working primarily with porcelain, I am interested in its particular history. European porcelain from the 18th and 19th century such as Sevres and*

*Meissen provide rich visual source information. I also have an interest in the women's tradition of decorating on porcelain in the 19th and early 20th century. "*



*Etruria*  
earthenware and stoneware  
2019



*Apulia*  
stoneware  
2020



*Bucchero*  
stoneware  
2021





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