

Jess Benjamin
<http://www.jessbenjamin.com>

Artist Statement

My artwork focuses on water usage in the Great Plains area: a regional concern that is related to the phenomenon of global drought. My imagination was trained in the irrigation ditches on the 100th Meridian. As a nation driven by the imperative of over-consumption, the United States has become dependent on commodities that require large quantities of diminishing water. Below the Midwest lies the greatest underground water reserve in the world, the Ogallala Aquifer. Since 2000, I have witnessed the drought-like conditions in the Midwest, and I have witnessed how people have responded to the drought.

Through my research on water, I have discovered many structural similarities between jackstones, water and ethanol molecules, and water pumps and faucets. I use these objects to explain levels of water and drought. I use color, surface texture, and scale to aid in this understanding. My ceramic artworks reference the increasing struggles over water rights and are battered reminders of these problems. My hope is that all who see my artwork begin to protect and preserve our most precious resource, water.

Biography

Jess Benjamin's imagination was trained in the irrigation ditches on the 100th Meridian and is one of the last to be educated in a two room schoolhouse. Her father, Howdy, began teaching her about land management, geographical history, and farm markets as soon as she could handle a shovel: age 5. Benjamin now lives in the city and has gained a balanced perspective on our nation's water and drought issues.

Benjamin received her B.A. from Hastings College in 2001 and worked as a studio assistant for Jun Kaneko until 2006. In 2008, she received her M.F.A. from Bowling Green State University, Ohio. She returned to Omaha the same year to pursue her research and to acquire affordable studio space, in which she could continue to make large-scale ceramic sculpture.

Jess has exhibited her artwork at the Amarillo Museum of Art, Ellen Noel Art Museum, Joslyn Art Museum, and private galleries in the Midwest. In 2013, the Nebraska Arts Council awarded her an Individual Artist Fellowship Grant.

Benjamin's artwork has been published in *Ceramics Monthly*, *Clay Times*, *NY Arts Magazine*, *Lark Crafts: The Best of 500 Ceramics*, *500 Ceramic Sculptures*, and in *Sculpture Magazine*.