

Fred Shepard

“And that’s the way the work goes, because each piece spawns another piece, spawns another piece . . . spawns another piece. There’s an interplay between the designing and the building of everything.”

From 1963 to 1999, Fred Shepard taught ceramic art at Murray State University. He recalls that in those days, the art department faculty had to build most of their own equipment, like kilns for firing the pottery that he and his students made. He loved teaching and always continued to create his own special line of pottery, often incorporating other materials like copper or steel into the handles and other accoutrements. Now that he is retired, he is able to create pottery full-time in his studio, Dogwood Pottery, in Murray, Kentucky. Fred was actively involved with the Kentucky Guild of Artists and Craftsmen from the earliest days of its existence. When the Guild first organized, they had a traveling gallery on two railroad cars, and they traveled across Kentucky, sharing exhibits and presenting workshops. When the Guild train came to Murray, he helped them set up their exhibit and organize events. When the Guild held their first fair in Berea in 1967, Fred and other western Kentucky artists drove hundreds of miles to participate. Fred remembers that at that first fair there were no tents for the participants. They had to construct their own exhibit space using concrete blocks and slabs of wood. But it was a wonderful show, and Fred sold almost all the pieces he had brought, so he came back the next year and for many years afterward. He believed in what the Guild was trying to accomplish in organizing the artists and craftsmen of the Commonwealth, and he appreciated their efforts to reach out to artists in eastern and western Kentucky. He served as Guild president in the 1970’s and continues to be a member today, although he is less active since his retirement.