

Walter Hyleck

“Many artists, including myself, spend much time solving problems. For the most part they are hypothetical in nature and rarely resolved as solutions. It’s time to realize that artists invent problems for their own sake. Artists are problem makers.”

Walter Hyleck has been the inspiration for countless potters not only through his own work as a ceramicist, but also as a professor at Berea College. A native of Beloit, Wisconsin, Hyleck received his BA degree in art and art history from the University of Minnesota, Duluth, and an MFA in ceramics and art history from Tulane University in 1967. In 1970, he founded a unique program at Berea College called the Ceramic Apprenticeship Program, which combined technical training with design, production, and marketing opportunities under the mentorship of a resident professional potter. Numerous students who participated in the program went on to become successful ceramic artists, craftspeople, and teachers. Hyleck guided the program for 38 years, until he retired. He also continued to produce his own work, participating in over 250 solo, invitational, and juried exhibitions around the country. His work is in the permanent collections of museums like the American Museum of Ceramic Art, Pomona, California; The Mint Museum, Charlotte, North Carolina; Ceramic Art Gallery, New South Wales, Australia, and Brown and Forman International Lmtd., Louisville, Kentucky. He is respected not only for his technical expertise, but also for his exploration and expression of abstract ideas through form, texture, and color. As a professor, he insisted that his students develop technical proficiency, such as making vessels with walls that are not too thin or too thick. At the same time, he encouraged them to develop their own artistic vision in design.