

the
Marks™
project

A platform for the future of
American ceramic art



Artist: Bill Abricht. Photo: Artist

What is our Mission?

To create and maintain a searchable online database of the signatures, marks and biographical information for American mid-20th- and 21st-century studio potters, ceramic artists, and artists working in clay.

What is our Vision?

To provide a primary research platform to assist scholars, collectors and creators in the identification and understanding of American studio potters, ceramic artists and artists working in clay. To celebrate and document their impact on American art history and culture, by documenting their careers, their processes and their identifying marks and/or signatures.

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What are TMP's founding principles?

Founded in 2012, TMP is a qualified 501(c)(3) educational, not-for-profit organization that serves the potters and the community of researchers, institutional professionals, and collectors. It is now the established research hub with an ever-expanding catalog of American clay artists working from 1945 onward. It concentrates on recording their works and the marks used to assist in identifying objects as an indicator of authorship

What makes TMP Innovative?

The invention of the first online research platform to foster the study of American ceramic arts. This documentation includes functional, sculptural, and/or conceptual work that is primarily clay-based. Digitally documenting the makers and their identifying marks enables inquiry and understanding of the material in the context of the history of American Art.

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Artist: Haris Deller. Photo: TMP

How Does TMP Support Scholarship?

It encourages new scholarship by creating and maintaining a searchable archive-based tool that makes known the previously unsearchable makers of the 20th century, adding them to the accessible records. The continually updated and expanding database in American studio and contemporary ceramic arts provides a research platform for historical and contemporary makers and their marks.

Who Can Be Discovered?

TMP provides the established platform that offers makers past and present a place to build their professional history and be discovered: their works collected, written about, and exhibited. TMP is committed to all American potters being seen. Each maker has a unique "living" Artist's Page that can be updated as new data and images become available. In time, this Page becomes a legacy tool.

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Why is TMP Important?

According to art historians, two-thirds of the nationally known American post-war studio potters known through printed publications are lost: Pre-internet makers have no credible presence on the internet, making both their marks and their artwork essentially invisible to contemporary researchers, collectors, museum professionals, and the public. By documenting regional and national institutional collections, TMP makes the previously undiscoverable mid-20th century American ceramists searchable on its website. Continuing to document these collections adds the names, works, identifying marks, and professional histories of those yet to be recorded makers to the accessible records.



What is TMP's Future?

In the beginning (before TMP) there was no online dictionary or listing of post-war American ceramic artists' marks available to assist in the identification of the makers. The majority of public institutions did not have the resources to make photographic or digital records of the marks or identifying characteristics of objects held in their collections. Together, these conditions created an information void in post-war and contemporary American ceramics.

We have proof of concept: "If you build it, they will come." TMP's database is used globally: for the year 2024, TMP had 722,000 page views by 149,000 verified users. (Users increased by 125% over 2023.) The UK, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand account for 11.5% of international users. Currently, TMP documents over 2,300 makers, over 9,500 object images, and 6,500+ mark images.

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For more information —
www.themarksproject.org