

Art A Day

By Barbara Clark

I was invited to participate in the Art-A-Day project for the Columbia Center for the Arts in Hood River by Rachel Harvey. The idea of the Art A Day challenge is for the artist to spend an entire month devoted to creating a body of work, making one piece of art a day. This proposal was very exciting to me but I was also perplexed. The idea of creating a piece a day didn't fit easily with the reality of my slow tile-making process. Spending a month on a single theme and seeing where it led me was so alluring however that I plunged in anyway.

I spent the month of March having a wonderful time, giving freedom to my imagination. I decided I would cast some of my tiles using my usual technique, and take these images as a basis to daydream and explore the lives of my animals. Though I didn't strictly adhere to the one piece of art a day I did adhere to the spirit of the challenge working consistently every day on a body of work.

I already had my mind on donkeys at the time.



I was reading the book “Donkey” by Jill Bough, part of an animal series that I collect and enjoy reading and frequently just thumbing through for the interesting images. Though being very helpful creatures to man for thousands of years, they have been extremely ill treated and maligned. I had heard several stories from friends, of donkeys becoming rescue animals and finding their way to farms in idyllic settings. This was very happy news.

I feel that donkeys are really quite beautiful and gentle looking creatures and at the same time always somewhat harassed. I had an image of a donkey finding and enjoying some figs while some scrub jays are watching and trying to discourage him in their usual way. I could have removed the birds to give him some peace but then it wouldn't have been realistic.

After creating the drawing, I made a copy and then used a process of incising the drawing directly on a tile I rolled and cut out of porcelain clay. The tile was dried, fired a second time and then painted with underglazes.



I am intrigued by masks and their many design possibilities. This interest was heightened by a trip to Venice and also especially by visiting a museum in Zacatecas Mexico dedicated to displaying a private collection that has 3,000 masks on view at any one time. Since I was in a state of donkey appreciation I went to the drawing board. Here is the donkey mask on paper.



The actual implementation in clay involved some trials. Long ears are easy to break off in many steps along the way



I also enjoy small animal sculptures. The process of creating the three dimensional animal feels magical. They seem to me to emerge from the tile and become a complete being. I haven't actually observed them being animated however but suspect that they do when left alone.



This is a photo of the author, Barbara Clark, stopping to enjoy some agapanthus.

