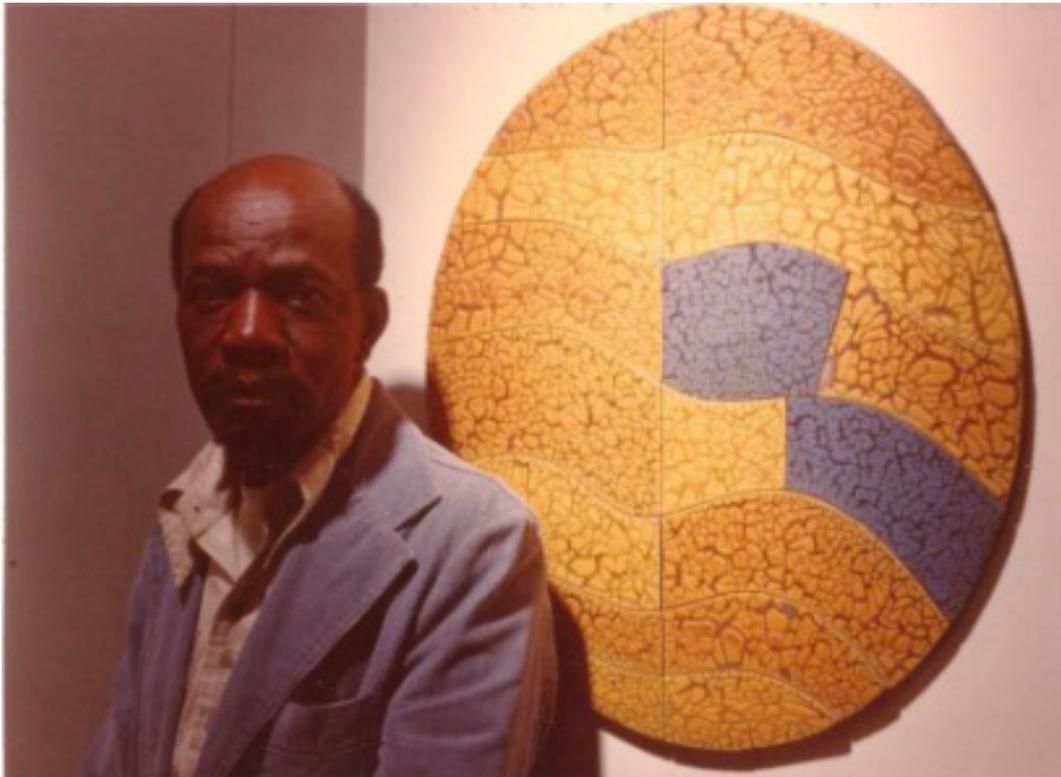


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Doyle Lane's Midcentury ceramics the star of Reform Gallery show

By David Keeps | June 6, 2014



Los Angeles-based artist Doyle Lane at a 1977 L.A. City College exhibition of his Clay Painting

A dozen years after Doyle Lane's death, the work of the Los Angeles Midcentury ceramist (1925-2002) has caught the eye of such luminaries as actress Jodie Foster, Louis Vuitton artistic director Nicolas Ghesquière and artist Takashi Murakami. Lane's greatest champion, however, may be Reform Gallery owner Gerard O'Brien, who has staged a retrospective, "Doyle Lane: Clay Paintings," on display through July 5.

"Doyle was a bit of a loner, and not much is known about him," O'Brien said. "He was an African American who lived in El Sereno, exhibited at the Brockman Gallery in Leimert Park and supported himself solely by making art. I was curious to tell his story as an artist."



In 1964, Doyle Lane was commissioned by architect Welton Becket to create a wall, photographed here mid-installation, at the Mutual Savings Building in Pasadena. (Reform Gallery)

Lane, whose work is in the collection of the California African American Museum in Los Angeles and will be featured in a Venice Biennale show in 2015, was apparently a modest man. "I don't think an artist should really put his work on a pedestal because he isn't the one to determine the aesthetic value," he said in a 1981 interview with *Studio Potter* magazine. "When someone buys a piece of work, that is the only compliment. Anything else could just be flattery."

Displayed in O'Brien's art exhibition space, the Landing at Reform Gallery, "Doyle Lane: Clay Paintings" presents a variety of work — from tiny bud vases for dried flowers (known by collectors as weed pots) to a 147-square-foot red tile mural commissioned by architect Welton Becket in 1964 for Mutual Savings & Loan offices at 301 E. Colorado Blvd. in Pasadena. Becket also designed the iconic Capitol Records Building and created the master plan for Century City.

O'Brien, who has been selling Lane ceramics for more than a decade and has seen the price of weed pots soar from \$300 to \$1,500, had long planned to exhibit the artist's work. This spring, O'Brien learned that the mural had been packed up and



Doyle Lane's miniature bud vases, known to collectors as 'weed pots' have appreciated in value from \$300 to \$1,500 over the last decade. (Reform Gallery)

would be donated to an as-yet-unnamed Southern California museum. O'Brien was able to secure the mural in the interim and had it insured and installed at the Landing for the exhibition.

"Red is one of the hardest glazes to achieve," O'Brien said, "and Doyle had such a mastery of his medium that it has an immense amount of power, like a three-dimensional painting by Mark Rothko."

The wall serves as the visual linchpin of the show, but Lane's round Clay Paintings from the 1970s — expertly crafted geometric compositions of mounted ceramic pieces that O'Brien has priced at \$15,000 each — are equally impressive. Some have textured volcanic glazes, while others are glossy and boldly colored, referencing the style dubbed California Hard Edge by Los Angeles Times art critic Jules Langsner. Lane intended them not just for interiors but also for exteriors.

"Why not take paintings out of doors," he also declared in that 1981 interview, "where one may sit and watch the changing play of sunshine on the glazes and thus have changes of mood during the day?"