



steven gootgeld

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Biography

Born in Escondido, California, and raised in southern and northern California, Steve started life as the oldest child of a family dominated by structure, order, technology, and control. Steve grew up during the Cold War and has strong memories of nuclear bomb drills and “Duck and Cover” practice. In contrast, he also remembers being vividly aware as a baby in his crib that he was part of a larger—and smaller—reality. As a child, Steve loved to play with tinker toys, lego blocks, erector sets, anything he could use to create three-dimensional reality. In school Steve enjoyed art and in his free time, went fishing and waterskiing. His father, however, focused on order, structure, machinery. Still, Steve continued to take art when he could, particularly in summer school.

After high school, Steve took a summer job as an engineering technician, eventually working his way to an engineering management position. In his personal life, he continued to pursue mountain climbing, sky diving, skiing, motorcycling, and—most significantly—the counterculture of Santa Cruz. This vivid world opened his mind to new possibilities and spiritualism. He was part of two different realities: the systematic, confined world of electrical engineering and the open, questioning world of west coast spiritualism and exploration.

As Steve approached 30, he began to slowly transform his life. First he moved to Colorado and worked as an engineering manager with an electronics firm. Then in 1990, he gave away most of his toys and left the big-city life. He came to remote, remarkable, removed Taos, New Mexico. Before he settled in permanently, however, he traveled in Central America with Native activists. For a year, he explored their beliefs and spirituality while searching for his connection with the universe and with the core that was Steve.

Next Steve returned to Taos, where he took odd jobs as he slowly built a life. He discovered that playing and making drums loosened his imagination. In his dreams and from his experiences in Native ceremonies, he saw eagles and hawks and other animal spirits soaring and striding. They came alive in his life. He prayed for a way to express himself, and the universe answered: a friend let him play with some clay, Steve bought his own store of sculpture clay, and the future was born.

Completely self taught, Steve has developed a meticulous, inspired artistic process. Sometimes he has a design in mind before he starts; sometimes he lets the clay and his heart guide his process. First he rolls out sheets of clay, which he cuts and blends to form the sculpture. Next he adds major embellishments. Then he slowly dries the piece by wrapping it repeatedly in dry cloths, a step that takes several weeks. Next comes painstaking hand sanding and sponging until the piece achieves the texture Steve is seeking. Then Steve glazes and fires each piece over and over until the glaze achieves a remarkably silky, rich, deep color and glow.

Since 1992, Steve has been making his living as a sculptor. He started with small pieces which he marketed in Taos, Arizona, and California. He continued to grow spiritually, learning to focus on living the moment even while recognizing the need to interact with the systems of society. His venture into abstract sculpture, beginning in 2000, continues to be his true devotion.