

SUSAN M. SUTHERLAND BARNES
CONE 5 STONEWARE, RAKU, AND THE FIBER ARTS
Paw Paw, MI 49079

THE LEAF IS AN ICON FOR A GREATER WHOLE

Making art has been my lifelong passion with nature as the binding spell. As a child I loved being outdoors, collecting insects, and painting with watercolors. Then I discovered printmaking and took a creative side trip. Later I found weaving, went back to school, and became a fiber artist. And always there was clay - all the while sneaking in with a workshop here and a classroom there. By the time I had my own studio, any idea of what clay was *supposed to be* had already been influenced by what had come before. Painting, printmaking, and especially weaving had an undeniable impact on the content and direction of my early work and those experiences still influence my choices.

Therefore, this is important to know when viewing all of my ceramic works – with or without fibers. I have shaped my present mindset on past lessons and experiences and I cannot agree to a preconceived idea of how clay should look. Instead I prefer to respond to my own sense of pattern, color, texture, and form as I explore a long felt connection between myself and the natural world. I want more than a record or review. I feel a need to capture a certain fullness of all my senses ... if that is possible? Practical function is not my first concern and often I need more than clay.

I've recently rediscovered working in the garden and it is, in some ways, like finding one's creative voice on the long way home. There is a necessary process and each step along the way needs the step that came before and the one that will be coming after. As in my life and as an artist, there is a common rhythm in those steps that calms, connects, and reminds me. This is where my voice began. Creative process is a mode of travel and the world outdoors is an open road.

Susan M. Sutherland Barnes
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