



RUSSELL BILES

b. 1959, lives in Greenville, SC

A self-described “son of the South,” Russell Biles was born, raised, and still lives in the southern U.S. He remembers playing around with clay at a young age, making animals and monsters, but it was not until he entered college to study architecture that he was re-introduced to art and ultimately to ceramics. Since his graduation Biles has been a studio artist in Greenville, SC, working in sculptural forms that range from large totems reminiscent of Northwestern Indian work to small, carefully crafted, colorful porcelain figures. He is best known for the latter work which confronts the direction in which society is moving and finds it severely lacking. Biles uses such American icons as the Cleavers and the Cartwrights as well as contemporary newsmakers to satirize social, religious, and political issues and to engage the viewer in the discussion. Biles employs irony and satire in his work and believes that the humor inherent in satire tempers the critique and hopefully produces a thoughtful reaction rather than an automatic rejection. As important to Biles as the message is the craftsmanship of his work, the quality that gives the work integrity and cements his position as a noted artist whose work is included in a number of both private and public collections.

ON HIS WORK

My works from the series “Gone” look back 50 years to memories of my childhood in the racially divided mill town of Concord, North Carolina. It highlights events and circumstances that I believe reflect our social evolution and invite comparisons between the past and the present. These comparisons can be viewed literally or metaphorically. When compiling subjects for this series I tried to think of memorable scenarios that spoke to issues of today and to my responsibilities as a parent and grandparent. Also, I wanted to evoke the perspective of a child experiencing a world created for them by adults. An adult influence, good and bad, not only creates the moment but steers generations to come.

The last piece I produced for this ongoing series is “Rake”. As a kid raking leaves and mowing grass was a job for kids. I don’t know what happened but we got lazy. And now we hire immigrants to do our work for nothing and then complain about it.

