

CANTON CLAYWORKS

Artist Tim Scull's unique techniques draw art students from afar



Students come from as far away as Hawaii to take classes at Canton Clayworks under the tutelage of owner Tim Scull. Their long journeys are for good reason. Scull is a national award-winning ceramics artist whose frequent success at juried shows inspired a documentary on the NPR affiliate, WGBY. What makes Scull so successful is the studio he has built over the past seventeen years that's unlike any other. He houses more glazes and slips than any other studio in New England. What his Clayworks are especially known for however are the kilns: wood-fired outdoor kilns which are otherwise almost extinct in the United States.

After 9/11 when people had less discretionary income for the arts and electricity rates increased, Scull made the decision to switch to wood-firing in his studio. This made a dramatic impact on the pottery and the business. Building open-burning kilns, however, meant Scull needed permits from the town and there was no precedent for how to evaluate this unique installation. After working with the fire marshal to detail how the kilns would work, Scull was able to start building. "If you play by the rules and procedures, Canton works with you," he says. "They are supportive."

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The studio is located in a former dairy creamery in North Canton where Scull also now resides. He chose Canton because he heard the town was friendly to people in the arts opening businesses. It had a reputation for thinking outside the box that allowed a business with unique development needs to innovate on site. Today the studio is home to several outdoor kilns, a gallery and extensive gardens.

Students intern at the studio from art schools all over the country, and people from across the state come in for classes year round. Scull attributes the draw to the fact “there’s always something new to discover.” The firing of a kiln is a community event since wood has to be fed in every three hours, day and night. When it’s opened, it’s a celebration.

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Students stay with Scull for years because he promotes an atmosphere where striving for excellence in your craft is celebrated. Several of his students have become so talented they have gone on to open studios of their own nearby. Scull sees this as success and as giving back to the community that let him start such an unusual venture, adding, “Canton has been spectacular for my career.”

