



PRESS RELEASE: Batdorff's Passion for Pottery to go on Display at Ferris Art Gallery

Sandy C Gholston to: Archive

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The fruits of this art form can sometimes shock, but that shock gives way to a genuine appreciation for quality, artistic work. Below is a press release on Jack Batdorff's prized Face Jugs collection going on display at Ferris State University's Rankin Center Art Gallery. Further information is available by contacting Sandy Gholston, interim assistant director of News Services.

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BIG RAPIDS – Jack Batdorff's prized face jugs collection is a product of a passion for art that dates back to his childhood days growing up near the picturesque Lake Michigan shoreline in Manistee – days that sparked his ongoing love affair with art.

Symbols of Batdorff's love of art will be on display this winter in the Ferris State University Rankin Student Center Art Gallery beginning Dec. 6 and running through Jan. 14. As part of the introduction of the face jugs exhibit from Batdorff's collection, the Gallery will host a reception on Dec. 16 beginning at 5:30 p.m. with live music courtesy of Susan Morris and Dave Hay along with refreshments.

For Batdorff, this heartfelt passion for this labor of love has both historical and contemporary roots.

"My passion is American ceramics that encompasses the stoneware of 250 years ago to the contemporary artist works and everything in between," said Batdorff, a fourth-generation owner and operator of The Pioneer Group, a privately held publishing, printing and communications firm headquartered in Big Rapids, which has holdings that include the *Pioneer* of Big Rapids and *Manistee News-Advocate* newspapers. "I can write, but I can't pound a nail in straight ... so I collect."

By his admission, the Batdorff home symbolizes his passion for collecting art. "My first love is folk art. It is my passion. Our house is full of it: stoneware, sewer tile, gargoyles and just about anything else I can sneak in under my wife's radar. On the flip side, my office is my personal domain ... and in the immortal and unforgiving words of my wife, Susan, 'What goes there stays there ... period,'" he confessed.

In his collection, Batdorff counts more than 500 jugs of “snakes, vermin, lizards, spiders and devils staring me down.” He admits the face jugs have a certain eye-catching quality. They also, however, boast a historic quality.

“The whole grotesque face jug movement got started hundreds of years ago in Africa, where native Africans used to make effigy jugs of their forefathers to put over the graves of the deceased ones ... to scare away the devil and bad spirits and allow the soul to go to find peace in heaven,” Batdorff wrote in a recent newspaper column.

In bringing this exhibit to Ferris, Batdorff hopes the campus community will enjoy a glimpse of some of the fruits of his passion for art. For its part, the Rankin Art Gallery is excited to have an exhibit of pieces from a collector with strong local ties.

“The Batdorff Collection is nothing short of astounding to view in its entirety,” said Carrie Weis, director of the Rankin Center Art Gallery. “Its sheer volume is impressive, but even more so, its art historical importance is museum worthy.

“We are lucky to have such an incredible collection and patron within our community to share these pieces of our American history,” Weis added.

Rankin Center Art Gallery hours are Monday through Friday from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.

For more information about the Rankin Student Center Art Gallery, contact Carrie Weis at (231) 591-2536 or e-mail her at weisc@ferris.edu.

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