

Professor finds new home for art



HOWARD MILLER
Arts Beat

Huntsville is home to lots of artists, but it's doubtful any commute a greater distance than Curtis Benzle. Although his main studio is here, he teaches art at a college in Columbus, Ohio.

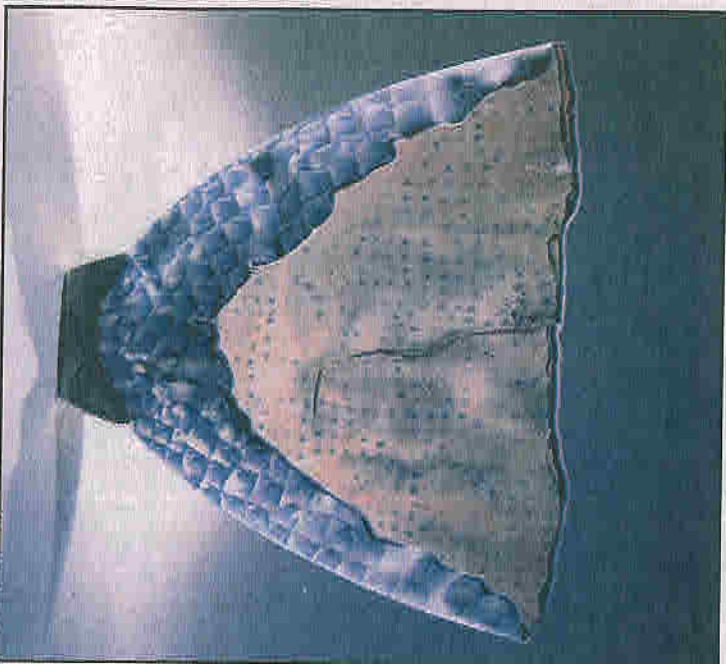
During the school year, Benzle flies back and forth weekly between Huntsville and Columbus, Ohio, where he teaches at the Columbus College of Art and Design.

"I've been teaching up there almost 20 years," Benzle told me while in Huntsville last week.

The way Benzle met his wife, Wendy Wilson, who owns AeroBentno, a Huntsville-based engineering firm, is somewhat out of the ordinary also.

"Two and a half years ago I was going down the Amazon River in a small boat on a family cruise with my parents and siblings. Wendy just happened to be in the boat," he said.

Carl and Wendy took a liking to each other, began dating and were eventually married. She lived in Huntsville and that was the first time he ever heard of the town.



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This is an example of Curtis Benzle's work. It's a ceramic vessel.

Now that he's gotten to know Huntsville quite well, he likes it very much.

"My primary studio at this point is in Huntsville," he said. His art teaching job being in Ohio, during the academic year, Benzle can definitely be called a frequent flier.

"Summer is my main creative time, as far as doing my own work," he said.

Benzle's creations appear to the casual observer to be glass, but in fact they fall into the general category of clay. It's

glass," Benzle said.

Looking at a photograph or slide of Benzle's work can play tricks on the eyes. One assumes they are round or oval. When in reality they are quite thin, more like an envelope than a vessel. The depth is an illusion.

"My primary emphasis is on the surface," he said.

These fascinating pieces have been well received. His work has been shown in the White House, the Jimmy Carter Library in Atlanta, the Clinton Library in Arkansas and the Museum of Modern Art in New York, among other places. Two pieces have been accepted into Huntsville's own "Red Clay Survey," which will be on view at the Huntsville Museum of Art June 19 through Sept. 11.

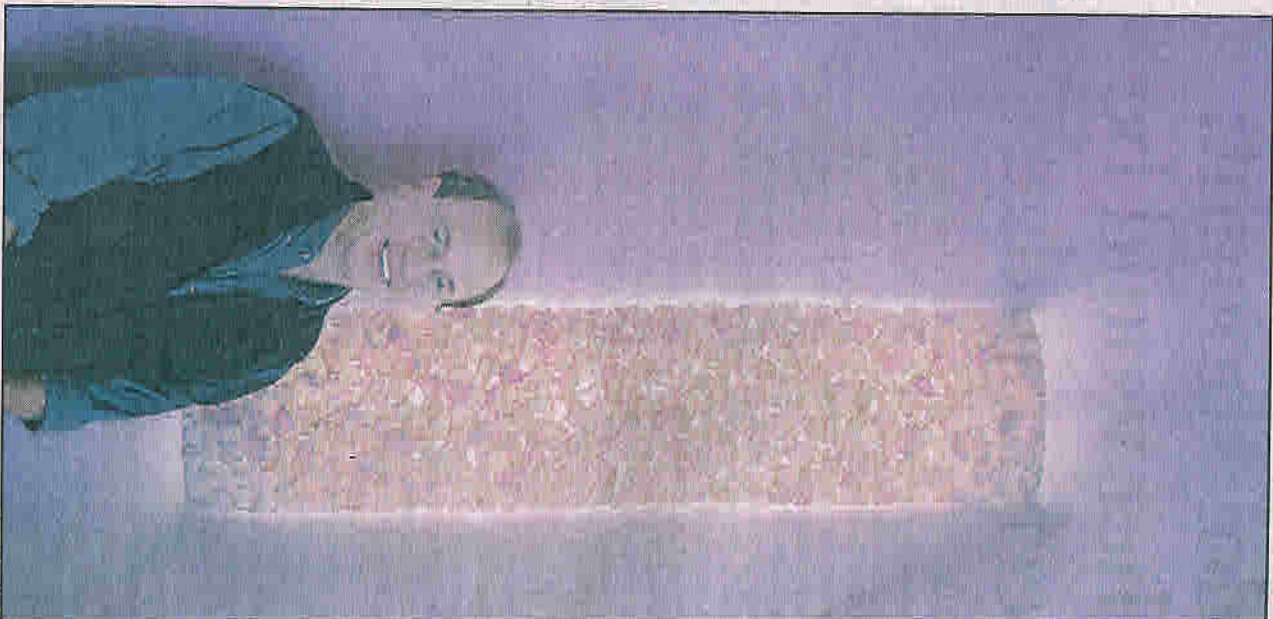
For sales, he is represented exclusively by the Sherrie Gallerie in Columbus, Ohio.

Benzle did his undergraduate work at Ohio State University, graduate work at the Rochester Institute of Technology and a program in ceramics at Northern Illinois University.

Down the road, Benzle sees himself moving to Huntsville, ending his long commute. Besides, he says he likes it here.

"It's been interesting being in Huntsville. It seems like the arts community is intact here, though smaller than in some other places," he said.

Contact Howard Miller at howardm@hsmes.com.



Artist Curtis Benzle and his work "Winter Wance."

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