

Subversive Nature **Solo Show by Russell Biles**

Washington DC – 9/15/19: The District Clay Center presents [Subversive Nature](#), a solo exhibition by South Carolina artist, Russell Biles. A nationally known sculptor, Biles plumbs his own subversive impulses to create works in ceramics that call for us to think deeply, reach out to those around us and act as communities to better the world around us.

- In a new work - *Eagle Has Landed (400 Years of Occupation)* - Biles casts a hard look at our domination of the natural world and asks us as a society to consider anew both the costs and consequences.
- In another new piece – *Captain America Calling* – Biles looks at the importance that RBGs fight against cancer has for the nation.

“The exhibition *Subversive Nature* is my attempt to make a positive social contribution through art. The work exhibited reflects my subversive nature as well as my affinity with the natural world. By combining these elements, it is my hope to raise social political awareness by motivating the audience to do a good thing like vote, give blood or just think.” – Russell Biles

Cass Johnson, the Executive Director at District Clay, explains “Biles brings an important perspective to the DC art scene: “With Russell’s work, you feel both outrage and hope . . . plus a good bit of humor. He feels injustice or apathy deeply – his work can be biting – but he never loses hope or his sense of humor. His work is a testament that by coming together, talking to one another, finding common ground each of us has the power to improve our collective lot. In our current political climate, I don’t think there is a more appropriate message for Washington DC. We are very proud to share his work and provide an opportunity for the community to participate.”

A CALL TO ACTION - Biles issues a call to action using two striking installations of cast multiples which, when assembled, spell the words [VOTE](#) and [GIVE](#)*. Biles uses the familiarity of a low-brow cast vintage figurine as the body with recognizable portraits of influential people and politicians. Stacked stadium style, the letters spell words that call out both to the power of individuals and of people coming together. His figures share the same body with individual sculpted portraits in VOTE and blood droplets that represent blood types by race and populations. These works vividly illustrate why acting for the common good is sometimes the greatest gift an individual possesses.

In keeping with Biles’ work as a Call to Action, District Clay has planned the following:



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- **BLOOD DRIVE at District Clay on November 27, 1-6 pm** - Biles will give a small figurine from his GIVE piece to each person who gives blood.
- **POLITICAL ACTION DONATIONS** - District Clay will donate 25% from the sale of each political figurine from Biles' VOTE piece to one of the following political action groups (the purchaser selects the group): Capital Area Food Bank, Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Human Rights Campaign, NAACP, National Resources Defense Council, Planned Parenthood, RAICES or the Turtle Survival Alliance.

DETAILS:

Dates: Oct 19 – Dec 14.

Opening Talk and Reception: [Sat, Oct 19, 6 pm](#) with an artist talk at 6:30 pm followed by a reception.

[Show Catalog](#)

Related Events:

- Artist talk at the [Center for Contemporary Political Art](#) (CCPA: 916 G St NW): *Social and Political Art from a Southern Exposure*, Wed, Nov. 20, 6-8 pm.
- District Clay Blood Drive: Wed, Nov. 27, 1-6 pm. Register to participate at www.districtclaygallery.com.
- Closing Brunch & Artist Talk, Sat, Dec. 14, 10-12 noon (*private event: sponsored by the James Renwick Alliance & the Center for Contemporary Political Art*. Contact cass@districtclaycenter.com for more info.)

ABOUT RUSSELL BILES

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.

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 works are included in numerous private and public collections, including the Museum of Art and Design, NY; the Peabody Essex Museum, MA; and the Mint Museum, NC. He is currently represented by [Ferrin Contemporary](#).

ABOUT THE DISTRICT CLAY GALLERY:

The District Clay Gallery is Washington DC's only all-ceramic gallery and is located within the District Clay Center. The gallery presents six exhibitions a year, including shows highlighting new emerging artists and important political and social themes. Both the gallery and the center opened in Nov. 2016.

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Gallery Hours: Saturday and Sunday 11:00am – 5:00pm or by appointment