

5-31-2013

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Recommended Citation

"Working Class Artists" (2013). *News Releases*. 425.
https://ecommons.udayton.edu/news_rls/425

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Working Class Artists

05.31.2013 | Fine Arts, Campus and Community, Faculty The June/July issue of *American Craft* will feature University of Dayton associate professor of visual arts Kyle Phelps. The seven-page feature focuses on Phelps' work alongside identical twin brother Kelly Phelps and the all-American, working class roots from which they draw their inspiration.

The feature highlights the brothers' unique relationship and distinct style of art. Using primarily clay as well as scrap metal from old factories and other mediums, their art depicts the struggles of the working class in America.

"It no longer is just a theme or a subject of the time, but something that transcended into a lifestyle, that has a very rich history, culture, sense of pride and a complete mindset," said Kyle Phelps, who heads the ceramics section of the University's visual arts department.

As a professor at the University of Dayton, Kyle Phelps tries to foster the same sense of creativity in his students as inspires his own art. "We don't believe in watering down our learned skills when they are being introduced to our students. We disseminate the same information to our students that we would use to produce our own work," he said.

The Phelps brothers have travelled parallel paths throughout their lives and continue to collaborate on many projects, often viewing themselves as one artist. Both brothers received their bachelor's degrees in fine arts from Ball State in 1996. They earned their master's fine arts degrees with a focus on ceramics and sculpture from the University of Kentucky in 2000. Kelly Phelps currently holds a position as associate professor and acting chair of the art department at Xavier University in Cincinnati.

Kyle and Kelly Phelps have been featured in more than 115 exhibitions around the globe and have completed more than 75 commissions. One of the most notable commissions was a life-size bronze statue of the legendary jazz musician *Eric Dolphy* located on the campus of Le Moyne College, Syracuse, N.Y., commissioned for the 40th anniversary celebration of Dolphy Day, an annual event at the college.

In addition, the brothers have been featured in more than 160 other publications. Notable publications include: *Sculpture Magazine*, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *Ceramics Monthly*, *The Jazz Press*, *USA TODAY*, *Cincinnati Enquirer*, *Dayton Daily News*, *Leo Arts and Entertainment Magazine* and *Confederacion Intersindical*, a labor magazine from Santiago de Compostela, Spain.

American Craft is a bimonthly magazine published by the American Craft Council, a national, nonprofit educational organization founded in 1943.

A preview of the article is available at <http://www.craftcouncil.org/magazine> (url: <http://www.craftcouncil.org/magazine>). The June/July issue of the magazine will be available in print in June.

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