

Ruenell Foy Temps-Biography
Born, San Francisco, CA., May 4, 1940

Ruenell started sculpting with adobe clay found in backyard as a young child, building houses and cities for the bugs that lived there. When she got older, she moved on to making clothes for her dolls, creating and cutting patterns for dresses and pants and other attire, developing the pattern making skill that she later honed in her slab-building work in clay.

She spent most of her pre-college years living in the (then) very small town of Twentynine Palms, at the entrance to Joshua Tree National Monument in the California desert. The influence of the boulder formations in the Monument and the vastness of her desert surroundings can be seen in many of her clay sculptures and oil pastel paintings. While in high school, Ruenell earned and saved money for college doing alterations and tailoring at the local dry cleaner. She was chosen to attend California Girls State when she was a Junior at Twentynine Palms High. When Ruenell saw the U.C. Davis campus, where Girls State was housed, she decided that was where she would go to college. She entered U.C. Davis as a Home Economics major with a partial scholarship from the Daughters of the American Revolution.

In her first semester at Davis, Ruenell took a design class in the Art Department as her one elective. That class convinced her to switch to an art major. At Davis she was fortunate to study with such acclaimed artist/instructors as Wayne Thiebaud and Ronald Peterson. Half way through her Junior year, Ruenell married, and moved to the San Francisco Bay Area where she worked while her husband was getting established in his career.

Ruenell fit as many community college art classes as she could into her full-time work schedule. She was introduced to clay at College of Marin by Edwin Cadogan, head of the art department and founder of its ceramics program. He recognized her talent for working with clay and encouraged her to spend all the time in the clay studio that she could manage. That is also where she found her love for sharing her knowledge of clay and art in general with other students and renewed a long-time desire to teach.

Ruenell enrolled full-time at San Francisco Art Institute as a painting major, a bachelor degree being the first step toward a teaching credential. She studied there with Tom Holland and Sam Tchkalian. The latter introduced Ruenell to his friend, Peter Voukos, who headed up the ceramics program at the University of California at Berkeley. After getting her BFA, Ruenell applied for the master degree program at SFAI and was unanimously accepted by the entrance committee. Two weeks later she received a letter of rejection, which she subsequently learned was because they belatedly realized she was female.

Based on what Voulkos saw in the ceramic work Ruenell did at College of Marin, and later at her first home studio, he cut through late application tape at U.C. Berkeley and welcomed Ruenell into his master degree program in ceramics. With her MFA in hand, Ruenell became certified to teach in California community colleges. College of Marin welcomed her back, first as a substitute instructor and later on a regular basis. There she taught design, painting, and drawing, and introduced a class in materials and techniques. She was asked by Thonos Johnson to fill in for him teaching his ceramics classes when he was laid up for most of a semester from a motorcycle accident.

Ruenell left scheduled teaching a few years later to spend more time on her own work in her newly-built studio in west Marin County. She continued to teach as a guest lecturer at College of Marin and conducted workshops at many California colleges and universities. She was invited by Paul Soldner to spend the summer of 1974 teaching and working at his, then recently established, Anderson Ranch Center for the Hand in Snowmass, Colorado. She also did a two-month lecture/demonstration tour of Eastern Australia at the invitation of that country's Crafts Board in 1987.

Ruenell was an accomplished artist in both ceramics and painting. She switched between clay and oil pastels to keep her ideas fresh in both mediums. Unlike her clay that evolved without considering what would sell, her oil pastels were designed to appeal to and were widely accepted and promoted by retail galleries and decorators. Throughout her career, Ruenell's ceramic work received countless awards and was acquired by many institutions and private collectors. Check out her resume for more detail.