

The Calendar

FIRED UP

Philipstown artist will share ceramics from his own kiln

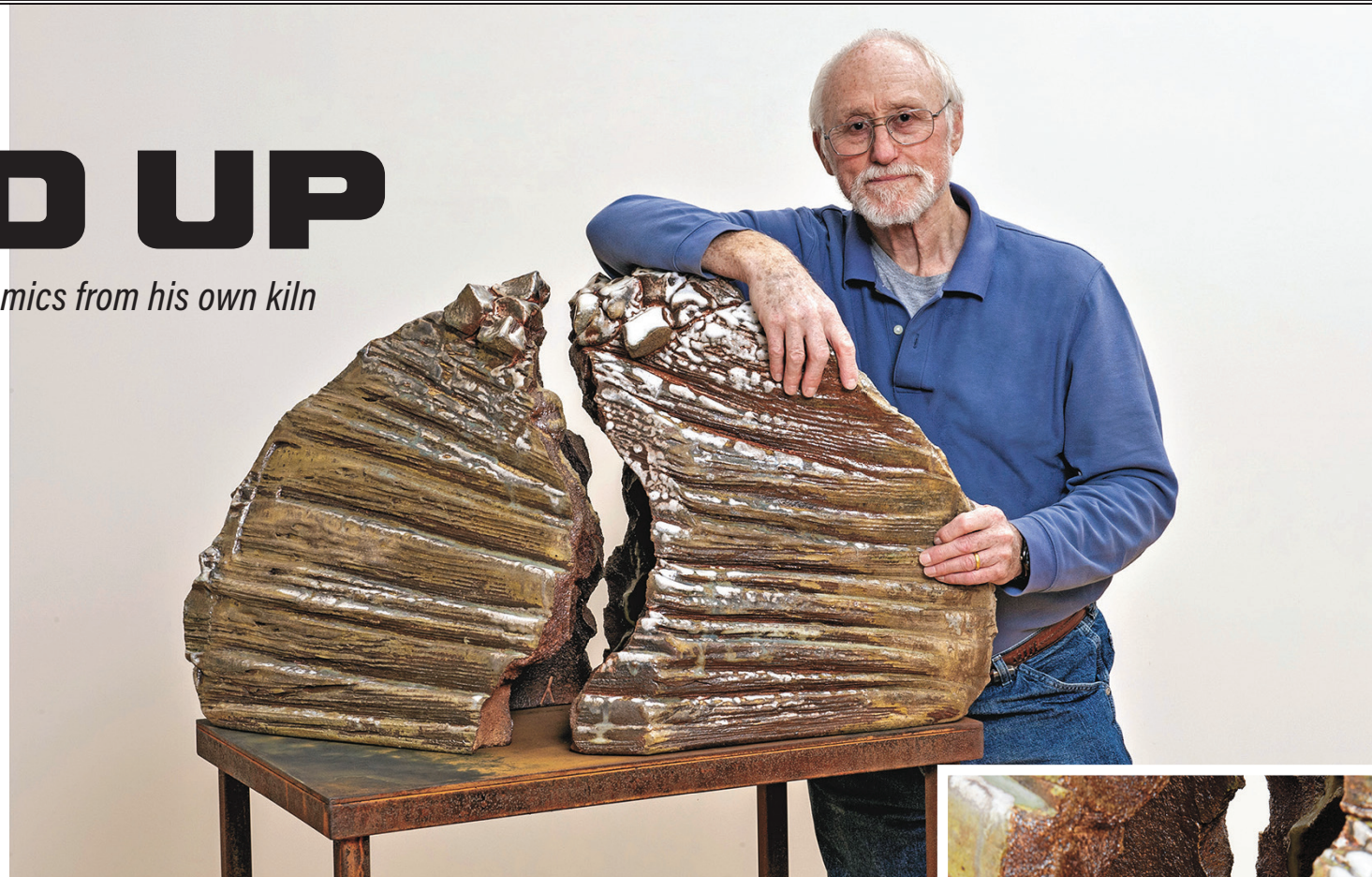
By Alison Rooney

After 25 years as a sculptor, Tony Moore transitioned to painting. But after 15 years behind the easel, the Philipstown resident returned to sculpture because he was “completely taken with the sensual potter’s wheel.”

Moore’s artistry from 2017 to the present will be celebrated in an exhibit, *Tony Moore: Eternal Becoming, Ceramic Sculptures and Fire Paintings*, that opens at the Garrison Art Center on April 8.

Paralleling his shifts in media, Moore changed course geographically over the years, from his native England to Yale University (where he obtained an MFA in sculpture) and New York City, where he lived for 25 years. After being exposed to the Hudson Valley during a Byrdcliffe residency at Woodstock, Moore landed in Philipstown, which he had visited with his then-girlfriend and now wife, Dr. Cynthia Ligenza, “whom the whole village seems to know,” he notes.

“I was living in Flatbush, so to be in the Catskills was cleansing to my soul,” he recalls. “Cynthia would come up every other weekend to visit. I asked her if she’d ever thought of living in the country. This place came up, on top of a mountain, in the



Tony Moore, with "In Memory Of"

woods. We visited, and our jaws dropped. We got married on the property.”

During the years since that move, Moore has continuously created art, much of it fired on his Anagama Noborigama Japanese-style wood-fire kiln. He built the most recent version in 2021. He recalls his first reaction to the kiln when it was being fired by an instructor. “I was just awestruck,” he says, “Fire is so powerful: It gives us the hearth and a way of forging, but it also can be incredibly destructive.”

Moore runs his kiln, which he fires three times a year, as a community resource for ceramists near and far (see tonymoorekiln.com). Often there will be 40 participants at the firings, he says, which last three to four days. The glazing, loading, firing, cooling and unloading takes another three weeks. “It’s a mammoth undertaking, and a shared experience that requires collaboration,” he says.

“My firings are open to anyone to come and experience,” he adds. “We have complete novices to professionals. Some people are romantic about their kiln, giving them names, but not me. My kiln is a tool and, for me, it’s work.”

Knowing what you will pull from the kiln can be difficult, he says, especially with a wood fire. “You go through the process of working the clay when malleable, then drying it out, then low-firing it,” he explains. “At that stage, clay is absorbent. Then you glaze.”

Because of chemical reactions, the color applied to a piece will change while being fired. “Based on prior experience I have a good idea of what the results will be, but it’s just a parameter,” Moore says. “Interactions happen which are unexpected, because art-making is intent, vision and realization.”

The five sculptures to be shown at the art center were created with technique mixed with kismet. Last year, Moore decided to make larger sculptures, similar to those from years ago. But in the process, one cracked in two, revealing the interior of the sculpture, which he found intriguing.

“When I started making more sculptures last year, I chose to crack them in half,” he says. “I dug out from underneath, built scaffolding and used a hydraulic lift, then I kneeled and dug out the interior. I created a narrative within the interior, which has become a cave. There has always been



Detail from "In Memory Of" Photos by Al Nowak

something quite ancient, in terms of time and evolution in my work, so this is a reference to origins of humanity being revealed within this large, topographical form.”

The exhibit will also include examples of Moore’s “Fire Paintings,” which are abstracted figures made from cut twigs impressed into wet clay.

“The figures kept running, fleeing, tumbling, searching, moving away from and toward something else,” he says. “They moved across landscapes, toward glowing edifices and systemized structures, which both beckoned them and somehow dominated them. The figures were present, yet also in spirit form, floating and dissolving in diaphanous light and shimmering waters. They started to become surrogates, taking on personalities.

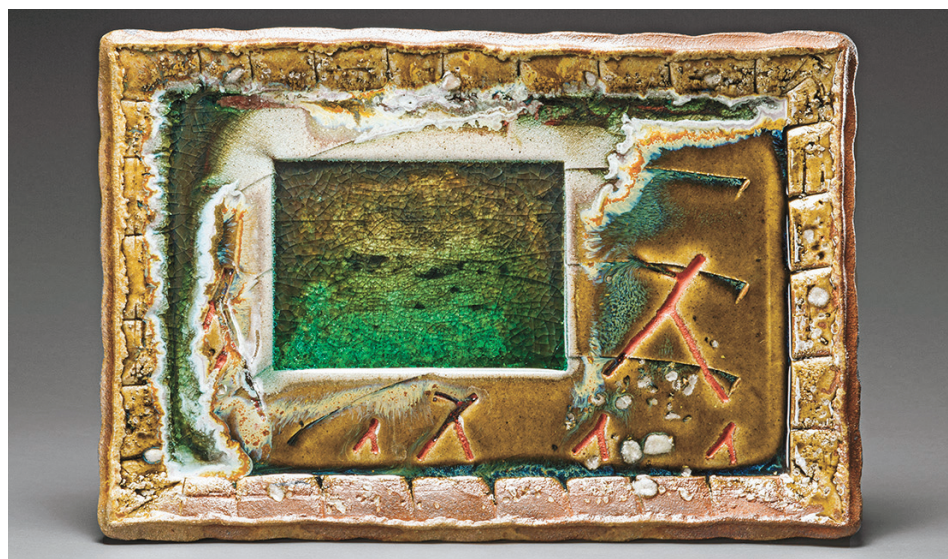
“Within the context of issues such as migration, the global pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine war, these abstracted works evoke contemporary anxieties and aspirations toward the future.”

Now 75, Moore says he has realized over his career that “art is like hacking your way through the jungle to lost ruins: You’re finding your way to something pre-existent, you just have to discover it. The challenge is incredibly exciting.”

The Garrison Art Center is located at 23 Garrison’s Landing. Moore’s show opens with a reception from 5 to 7 p.m. on April 8 and continues through May 7. There will be an artist talk at 2 p.m. on April 23. See tonymooreart.com.



"Blue Guide II" (2020)



"Fire Painting" (2018)



"Children of Light IV" (2017)