

# ART STUDENTS LEAGUE OF DENVER

## **Supernatural Stomping Grounds: Artist Statement & Bio**

Kevin Snipes is an American artist born in Philadelphia and raised in Cleveland, Ohio. He received a B.F.A. in ceramics and drawing from the Cleveland Institute of Art in 1994 and concluded graduate studies at the University of Florida in 2003. He works primarily in ceramics, blurring the boundary between craft and art. Snipes combines techniques of narrative figure drawing, text and hand-formed porcelain constructions to create sculptural objects that can be seen as multi-layered paintings.

Snipes has garnered a number of awards and artist residencies including fellowships at The Hambidge Center for Creative Arts and Sciences in Rabun Gap, GA, The American Museum of Ceramic Art, Pomona, CA; Watershed Center for Ceramic Arts in New Castle, ME; A.I.R. in Vallauris, France, and C.R.E.T.A. Rome. Snipes received a Taunt Fellowship from the Archie Bray Foundation in Montana in 2008 and a McKnight Residency award from Northern Clay Center in Minneapolis, MN in 2011. In 2014, he was awarded a Joan Mitchell Foundation Painters and Sculptors Grant. Other awards include the Purchase Award at the 2009 NCECA Clay National Biennial, an Individual Excellence Award from the Ohio Arts Council in Columbus, and a Marie P. Cowen Fellowship in ceramics from Worcester Center for Crafts in MA. Snipes has exhibited both nationally and internationally and has work included in numerous collections, including the Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse, NY, Cedar Rapids Museum of Art, Cedar Rapids, IA, Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, PA.

As an artist who has worked with and within diverse communities, and as a member of a historically marginalized group, he says, "I find that I

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tend toward non-tribalism. Rather than creating art that speaks of a love of or victimization of African Americans, I speak of the problems underlying the recognition of difference. I work on a personal, intimate level that encourages an almost private investigation of the objects that I make. This act of confrontation that encourages only a single viewer with a single object sets up a dialog, in the nature of subject-to-object relationships and becomes a metaphor for the concept of otherness. There are many paths to try to eradicate racism, but it will never really happen until we can find a way to think of others as part of ourselves.”

Throughout his adult life, Snipes has maintained an often itinerant existence, allowing a sense of place to augment his sense of identity and contribute to the dialog of his work. Currently he is a visiting artist at the Art Students League of Denver in Colorado, where his intent is to bring a deeper level of social engagement to his work.

## **About the Teardrops**

One of Artist-in-Residence Kevin Snipes’ goals for his time at ASLD was to grow his practice of social engagement via art. As part of this practice, Snipes mentored students in teacher Melissa Calvert’s ceramics classes at Denver North High School throughout March & February 2022. Snipes worked with the students on developing their own visual language via color, symbols, and more. He encouraged students to use this visual language to incorporate the personal into their artworks.

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As a final project with the classes, each student created a ceramic teardrop—one of Snipes' signature shapes—and decorated it in a way that was personally meaningful to them. Many of them were inspired by Snipes' works and chose to include stylistic elements that reference his work, such as personal motifs and protruding shapes. Each student also wrote a haiku to go along with their work.

Snipes' piece that is presented alongside the students' work represents his time spent working with the young artists and his connection to each of them.