

The Grand Rapids Brewing Company presents. . . .

The Coming

a clay installation by Jacob Van Wyk

'One should not be a slave to the subject, but use your skills and experience to nurture the work of art, to let it speak on its own terms, adding to the mystery of images and discourse.'

J. Van Wyk



Transfer of gesture layout to angled board - 8 by 12 ft.



Built from bottom to top, left to right - slow dry under plastic



1900 lbs of clay was required to build the piece - 1" thick.



Work was allowed to dry slowly and cut into sections.

The Coming is a clay work weighing 2500 lbs requiring nearly 500 hrs to complete.

More importantly, it demanded critical control of drying, shrinkage, subject distortion, proportional and perspective suggestion - as well as multiple firings and consistent glaze application and final firing.

While this complicated work tested my skills and experience in clay- it developed a life of its own and I rolled with it, following its lead.

Inspiration for this work began with the power of biblical images and my long term investigation of angels. My goal was an emotional impact. I studied classical work from the Getty museum in LA, Picasso's Guernica, and the work of Steve Prince, who also uses the four horses of the apocalypse in woodcut prints.

Process - Since the piece was made in a narrow time frame in the summer of 2013 for all the construction, drying, firings, and final mounting, extensive preliminary sketches were not possible so the work followed a minimal thumbnail sketch and then full scale gestural drawings were made on paper (shown) before actual work in clay progressed. Research during construction included human anatomy studies, actual horse observation (we have 2), reproductions of Renaissance sculpture and relief work from the Getty Museum in Los Angeles, CA, and even one of the horses in Picasso's Guernica provided inspiration. During the construction process, the tiles were covered in plastic to prevent drying too quickly while keeping the lead edge moist in building the form. Changes are difficult to make when the clay stiffens and the integration of different sections into one scene was challenging since the work was enveloped in layers of plastic as I worked. The whole assemblage had to be cut apart as construction progressed while the clay slowly hardened in approximately 1 ft sq pieces, allowing for more complex sections, anticipating eventual reassembly. Dimensional areas needed double wall support where cuts were made to keep the sections stable, reduce distortion, and help mate them up after glaze firing and final assembly.

Bisque sections were reassembled on the original 8' by 12' angled board and glaze and stain was brushed, sprayed, and sponged on, while some sections and figures were waxed to prevent over-glazing and excessive mixing of color. Glaze firings took about 8 hours, with a 20-hour cool down before unloading.

Comments by other artists:

'I love the composition, the push pull of the figures in space, the anguished tension and rhythm of the bodies juxtaposed to the stoic Corinthian columns.' Steve Prince

'The force of "The Coming" is portraying views from the front and sides in which figures meet the viewer in the round—in human scale. VanWyk preserves and sometimes exaggerates the sketch-like qualities and textures of his clay figures; the uneven surfaces come alive when struck by light. Jake's emphasis of shine on shine and matte surfaces of the ceramic glazes capture, reflect, and seem to originate light, suggesting a metaphor for the light.' David Versluis



98 sections were spread out to dry - 3 weeks, then fired.



Assembled bisque fired sections - glazed on site.



Glazing involved 14 stains and glazes - brushed, & sprayed.



10 glaze reduction firings at 2350 degrees were required to complete the work. Reduction firing involves an oxygen starved atmosphere - which is difficult to maintain consistent color and clay tone. Sections were assembled and epoxied to 12 sections of 3/4" plywood. Crated sections weighing about 250 to 300 lbs each. 24 screws secure bottom 4 ft. pieces, tabs and 12 screws secure the top sections to wall.