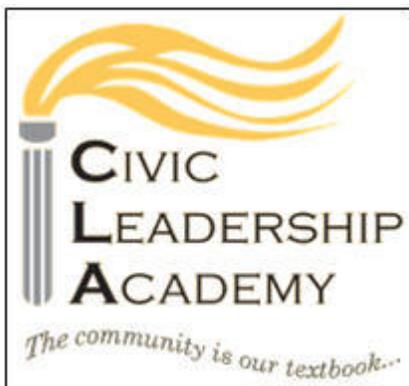


*This Month's Featured Artist.....*

## **Surendra Rose Horn**



The students at Civic Leadership Academy in the Elmhurst section of Queens have an advocate in their art teacher, Surendra Rose Horn. A young ceramic artist who expanded her focus to teaching three years ago, Rose wants to equip her students with problem-solving and technical skills through the development of their creativity and aesthetic sense. The medium of clay becomes the conduit through which young people with many economic and social disadvantages find the means to discover and express their inner strengths.



The Civic Leadership Academy was founded in 2008 as a New York City Department of Education high school. The school's focus is on youth development through service learning, a teaching method that enriches learning by engaging students in meaningful service to their school and communities. While meeting the curricular

requirements for a college-preparatory program, CLA approaches the learning process with the goal of forming responsible citizens who will participate in the public life of a community in an informed, committed, and constructive manner. Principal Phuong Nguyen leads a talented and enthusiastic young faculty that is united in achieving this objective through all disciplines – both sciences and arts.

Rose teaches art to classes of about 28 students, in mixed classes of 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> graders. "All my students are completely

hypnotized by the mechanics of wheel throwing. I have absolutely no discipline problems," she says. She points out that her art program may be the first exposure her students have with the concept of aesthetics. "Most of these young people have never entered a museum, let alone taken formal art instruction." This presents a dual teaching challenge: imparting specific technical skills *and* introducing the concept of creativity as a way of interacting with reality. Because clay is such an elemental medium, Rose's students are naturally attracted to its "hands-on" properties. She points out how, as a child in Ohio, she spent many hours playing near a stream, forming small figures out of the mud she found there. "I realized that what I had found there was a natural clay deposit. My imagination began to run wild." She sees this same impulse in her students.



French Bulldog

Rose studied ceramics at the Ohio State University, but had to leave the program during her freshman year to care for her terminally ill mother. Prior to this experience, Rose describes her work as embodying "the idealistic forms of youthful ignorance." Her mother's death triggered an entirely new artistic direction. She returned to school and received her B.A. in Ceramics and moved to New York City to pursue her work. She found a position at the Educational Alliance teaching adult ceramics and used that studio space to work on her pottery, sculpture, and figurative sculpture. During this time, she created a series of figures that she entitled, *Motherly*. Her work explores issues of home, of comfort, of caring. She says, "I want to bring the viewer into a state of absolute comfort and stillness ... to remember her definition of home, safety, and connectedness ... to experience the feeling of being held as her caretaker would hold an infant ... body limp with relaxation, eyes half closed, mind wandering from the daily events to the expansive hills and magical forests of dreams."

In 2009, Rose returned to school and received a Master of Art in Teaching from the School of Visual Arts. This led to her position



*Bun in the Oven*

at the Civic Leadership Academy, where she is the Head Teacher in Visual Arts. Her goal is to build a solid ceramic art department. She credits the support of Principal Nguyen for being able to properly equip the school's studio. She says, "Ceramics is an expensive medium for schools to invest in. We are fortunate to have a very well equipped studio. We have a pug mill and are in the process a getting a second kiln, making us on

par with some of the best local private schools." Rose is working toward creating a program in which the arts are tracked in the same way as academic subjects. "Right now, my classes have a mix of grades. I'd like to see a progression of instruction, with



*Motherly (series)*

prerequisites and competitions, leading to the creation of a presentable portfolio for graduating students." Rose's commitment to her students supports the school's mission of creating responsible citizens. Using her own work as an example, she helps her students learn to express the complexity of the issues in their own lives through clay. "I want them to put the meaning of their lives into their

work," she says, "whether that work be a clay pot or their lives' vocation." Perhaps the work that best expresses Rose's

comportment to life is her "Perpetual Embrace," seen below. Born out of her experience of caring for her mother, the piece evokes the cycles of birth and death and the profound human



*Perpetual Embrace*

connection that links these poles. Rose is clearly moving forward, transferring that embrace to her students at CLA.

See more of Rose's work, at [www.surendrarose.com](http://www.surendrarose.com).

Learn more about the Civic Leadership Academy, at [www.claqueens.org](http://www.claqueens.org).