



Left: Bruce M. Sherman works in his Manhattan studio. Above: Represented by Nicelle Beauchene Gallery, Bruce M. Sherman is known for his anthropomorphic, ceramic vessels. Photography by Shayna Fontana.

## BRUCE M. SHERMAN NICELLE BEAUCHENE GALLERY

For the last handful of years, ceramics has been enjoying a season in the sun, gaining long overdue respect in an art world which has sometimes relegated the medium to a one-down status. Happily, for the Dallas Art Fair, New York's Nicelle Beauchene Gallery returns this year with new work by ceramist Bruce M. Sherman, a roster artist whose oeuvre is cutting edge, provocative, and endlessly delightful. Sherman practiced dentistry "on and off" for nine years, but his love affair with clay has been a constant for 50+ years, and for the last 15 of those, his full-time passion. "For a lot of years ceramics was sort of a second cousin; it was a craft," he confirms. "I think it's caught on more lately because people are discovering what a breadth of possibilities there is in clay."

Possibilities, anyone? Sherman's clay-ful imagination frequently takes him to an anthropomorphic Neverland, where his inscrutably beguiling sculptures may be composed of hands, lips, eyes, ladders, eggs, feet, cactus, birds, top hats, cylinders, high-contrast glazes, and the requisite connective tissue to pull it all together. "I don't really work from sketches," he says. "It's very improvisational, sort of like listening while you're playing music,

which I still do, improvisational piano. With clay I have to feel what's needed next, let's say after I put the legs on—what's the next form? The piano has really helped me become more intuitive with the clay, just kind of listening to it, seeing where it wants to go." Sherman likes to start his morning with piano practice before he hoofs it over to his studio, and it's not unusual for him to be working six, even seven, days a week.

Nicelle Beauchene first showed Sherman's work two years ago, part of a group exhibit called *The Faraway Inside*. Featuring eight artists working in a variety of mediums, the favorable response to Sherman's pieces was strong enough that the gallerist invited him to join her roster. *IS*, his first solo exhibition there, ran last spring and included a number of vessels, even a drawing, in addition to a dozen or so of his signature surreal sculptures. "My little figures are very intuitive; I have no idea what those things are going to be," he says. "They sometimes have a certain compassion to them, or a certain humanness—they really do. I'm as surprised as anyone else." —Steve Carter