

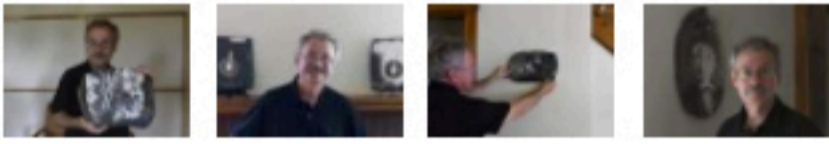
# New Ken artist John Dorinsky bringing dreams to life

REX RUTKOSKI | Sunday, Aug. 27, 2017, 9:00 p.m.



LOUIS B. RUEDIGER | TRIBUNE-REVIEW

Artist John Dorinsky pictured in his New Kensington home with one of his creations.Tuesday August 22, 2017.



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In inviting people to attend his exhibit at Penn State New Kensington, John Dorinsky draws on inspiration from the celebrated French novelist Marcel Proust.

“Proust writes that “The pleasure that an artist gives us is to know an additional universe,”” says the New Kensington resident in his mailing. “That is what I would like people to take away from my art, the awareness of an ‘additional universe,’ a universe that is both familiar and unknown.”

The 65-year-old retired art teacher's world of creativity is a literal dreamscape that unfolds Aug. 28 through Sept. 29 in “Sand Dune Raku,” a series of dramatic artworks inspired and informed by dreams.

It is part of his ongoing series devoted to the expression of dream imagery using the raku ceramic clay firing process, a Japanese technique which Dorinsky likens to “trying to capture a dream.”

His paintings, prints and ceramics have been shown in museums and cultural centers throughout the United States, including the Carnegie Museum of Art in Oakland, the New Jersey Center for Visual Arts, and the Fine Arts Institute of San Bernardino County Museum in California. He also has exhibited at the Southern Alleghenies Museum of Art, Ligonier, the Westmoreland Art Nationals and at the Westmoreland Arts and Heritage Festival.

## John Dorinsky's ‘Sand Dune Raku’

When: Aug. 28-Sept. 29, 8 a.m.-8 p.m. Mondays-Fridays; noon-5 p.m. Saturdays-Sundays. Meet-the-artist gallery reception, 7-9 p.m. Sept. 8

Admission: Free

Where: Penn State New Kensington art gallery, 3550 Seventh St. Road, Upper Burrell  
Details: 724-334-6056

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Dorinsky sees raku as a spiritual technique necessitating that he works with elemental forces,

"It is a means of putting mental images from the unconscious into play with the elements. In my work, I orchestrate fire, earth, air and dreams," he says.

The medium engages and captivates him with its simplicity, directness and, yes, mystery.

Most people have seen raku art, says Tina Sluss, coordinator of the Penn State gallery, but don't realize it. "John creates each piece of art with energy and calm, allowing it open to interpretation, but also forcing you to look deeper into each piece," she says.

"It also encourage us to use our imaginations as we try to figure out the stories they contain," adds Janet McCall, executive director of the Society for Contemporary Craft, Pittsburgh, where Dorinsky was part of the 2004 "Perchance to Dream" exhibit of artists from across the nation exploring the rich connection between the inner world of dreams and the creative process.

"His art work is wonderful," says McCall, who initially met Dorinsky almost 15 years ago in connection with a "Dream Discussion Group" that gathered monthly in Pittsburgh.

"He employs a very unusual technique, different from any other artists I'm familiar with, and the result is always evocative and intriguing. The pieces look ancient and almost other-worldly, like clay tablets from a lost civilization"

This is Dorinsky's second showcase at the campus in Upper Burrell, Westmoreland County. His first was "New Kensington Dreams" in 2006.

"It is a handsome and sedate exhibition space that is both spacious and intimate," he says. "It is very well managed and a perfect community art center."

## OF DREAMS

Dorinsky became interested in dreams in his late 20s, after studying at the New York Studio School, which emphasized abstract expressionism. The gestural style of Abstract Expressionism had been influenced by surrealism, the first modern style devoted to dreams and the unconscious. He also discovered Carl Jung, who founded analytic psychology, and has read many of his works over the years.

"The attraction of dreams is that they break with conventions of seeing and thinking, and challenge assumptions," Dorinsky says.

They are learning tools, he says, providing insight and clarification, dramatizing issues in a way that demands the dreamer's attention. They are multi-leveled, yet economical, like great poetry, he says.

Dorinsky says it is challenging to visualize dreams, to bring them to life in his art. He had to find a medium that worked for the narratives he was drawing.

"Because dreams are so irrational and the process of raku seems so irrational when you first see it, they were a perfect fit," he says.

If the imagery of a dream strikes him, he will scrawl it down on a post-it note and date it.

"Sometimes I'm half-asleep writing in the dark and the notes show it. They are almost illegible," Dorinsky says. "I stick the notes in a journal and when there is free time, re-write them and consider them."

He likes to say that he "stumbled" into an appreciation for art and then "built upon the stumble."

It began with comic books, drawing and reading them. He learned about Cubism and abstract expressionism from the late Bill Gravatt of the former Art Institute of New Kensington, and by studying at the New York Studio School. He majored in art education at college, which led to a position at Taylor Allderdice where he taught art history and ceramics. He had previously taught part-time at Valley High School, New Kensington.

He is most proud of creating and teaching at Taylor-Allderdice the first Advanced Placement Art History class in a Western Pennsylvania public school system.

“This introduced art history to many high school students who would otherwise have no awareness of the subject,” he says. “Art and music are vital because of their power to break through linguistic and temporal barriers. Studying World Art brings the realization that the earth is a ‘Museum without Walls,’ as Andre Malraux described it in his book on art history.”

Though he does not come from an artistic family, Dorinsky's home life growing up in New Kensington provided a nurturing foundation for his career.

“My mother's family is from Tuscany in Italy, the home of the Italian Renaissance. My mother had artistic talent and was gifted in mathematics. My father had little interest in art but he was a gifted accountant and IRS agent,” he says. “With my grandparents, they made a home environment that was creatively nourishing and stimulating. They are all my muses.”

Rex Rutkoski is a Tribune Review contributing writer.