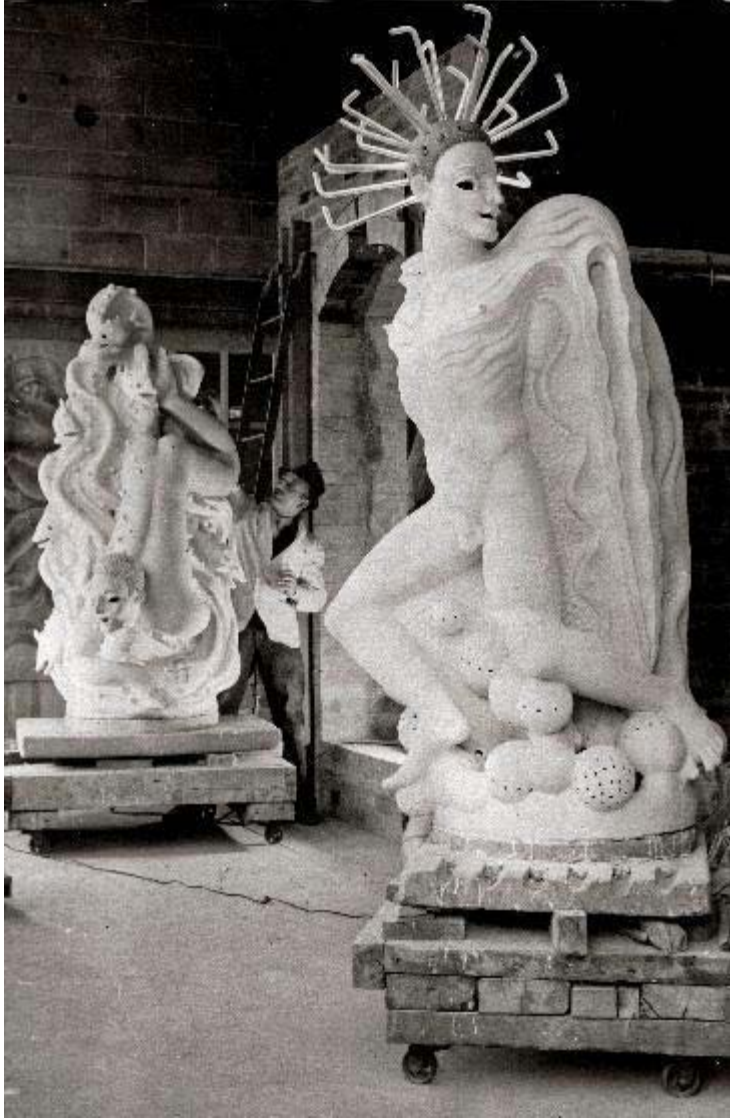


Waylande Gregory Exhibition at Alfred Ceramic Art Museum
12/12/19



The 1930s Jazz Age Sculpture of Waylande Gregory

Alfred Ceramic Art Museum

February 13 –July 26, 2020

Alfred University, Alfred, NY 14802

Waylande Gregory is recognized as America's top ceramic artist of the 1930s. His Fountain of the Atom made for the 1939 New York World's Fair, admired by Albert Einstein and countless others, was at that time the world's largest ceramic sculpture of the modern era. Gregory came into his own during what F. Scott Fitzgerald, author of *The Great Gatsby*, named the Jazz Age.

Nice Work If You Can Get It, George and Ira Gershwin; Night and Day, Cole Porter; Over the Rainbow, Harold Arlen and Yip Harburg: these songs sung by Fred Astaire and Judy Garland helped define the 1930s in America. It was the lingering Jazz Age, which began in the mid 1920s. Big bands were popular. Glen Miller's in The Mood was at the top of the charts. Ella Fitzgerald, Billie Holiday, Duke Ellington were stars. The radio was becoming a staple in homes across America.

The 1930s was also the era of the Great Depression, the construction of the Empire State building and the discovery of the planet Pluto, which Walt Disney took to heart, naming a new animated character of a dog - Pluto. Amelia Earhart flew the Atlantic solo, Roosevelt became President of the United States and Hitler became Chancellor of Germany. The Star Spangled Banner officially became the USA National Anthem and Kate Smith's rendition of God Bless America by Irving Berlin became part of the American consciousness.

Waylande Gregory was born in 1905, the youngest of 6 children in Baxter Springs, Kansas in the foothills of the Ozark Mountains. He began a lifelong interest in art at an early age. As the story goes, as a young boy he became interested in ceramics after witnessing an Indian burial. Later Gregory studied at the Chicago Art Institute with the well-known American sculptor Lorado Taft, considered to be one the greatest teachers in the history of American sculpture. In the late 1920s Gregory worked for the Cowan Pottery in Cleveland, Ohio. There he designed many of his now famous Art Deco works - Salome, Nautch Dancer, Burlesque Dancer. Waylande Gregory was the first ceramic artist to teach at the Cranbrook Academy of Art, 1932. A year later, he moved to New York where he began WPA (Works Progress Administration) projects. One of his most famous and often discussed WPA works is the large mural titled Democracy in Action, 1941, which is installed on the exterior of the East Administration Building, Municipal Center in Washington D.C. In 1939, Waylande Gregory received the Charles Fergus Binns Metal, one of the most prestigious honors in the field of ceramic art.

The Alfred Ceramic Art Museum's Mother and Child by Gregory, a monumental figurative sculpture, is a central feature of the Museum's permanent collection. Mother and Child was once the centerpiece of the 4th Syracuse Ceramic National of 1935. It traveled with the Ceramic National to the Philadelphia Museum of Art where it gained much attention, in part, for its large scale. It is featured in the book on Gregory by scholar Tom C. Folk: *Waylande Gregory: Art Deco Ceramics and the Atomic Age* (pages 112 and 113). This beautiful book is also the source of the facts concerning Gregory's life mentioned in this outline. Mother and Child, 1936, joins the Alfred Ceramic Art Museum Exhibition of Waylande Gregory's work: *The 1930s Jazz Age Sculpture of Waylande Gregory*, February 13 – July 26, 2020.

The Alfred Ceramic Art Museum would like to thank Tom C. Folk for his help in bringing this important exhibition to the Museum and, as a result, helping the Museum address its mission of bringing the best of ceramic art and its important history to the attention of the art world. The 1930s Jazz Age Sculpture of Waylande Gregory is an exhibition that honors, highlights and celebrates the American experience in Ceramic Art.

Wayne Higby

The Wayne Higby Director and Chief Curator

Alfred Ceramic Art Museum

at Alfred University

