

Introduction (appears in the catalog as “Curator’s note” p.6)

For thousands of years, artists have produced spectacular glazed tiles for architectural surfaces that alter the way people perceive the spaces they enter and inhabit. The ancient Babylonian Ishtar Gate had celestial blue-glazed walls several stories high that featured enameled clay brick reliefs of lions, bulls, and dragons. Created more than 2,600 years ago, they led into the Processional Way of Nebuchadnezzar II’s kingdom. The façade of his throne room was stunningly covered with palm trees and abstracted floral motifs made of blue, gold, and white-glazed bricks arranged like a mosaic. Such enormous, beautiful structures continue to impress people in fragmented reconstruction at the Pergamon Museum in Berlin, following decades of excavation in the early 20th century. On the other end of the spectrum, the sleek white tiles installed in New York’s subway system, which opened in 1904, have become the iconic modernist wall tile adopted by designers today for homes across the U.S. The glossy white surface reflects light in the city’s underground passageways, also enhanced by colored tile details in archways, domed ceiling designs, and station name panels delineated by white letters on a blue ground, surrounded by a variety of geometric and organic patterns. When New York’s Woolworth Building was completed in 1913, it stood as the tallest building yet constructed, starkly white with minimal architectural decorations glazed in blue, green, tan, and yellow that accentuated the building’s height.

In Buffalo, New York, Louis Sullivan’s Guaranty Building is a tour-de-force of terra cotta ornamentation. Completed in 1896, it was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1975. However, it had suffered from a fire in 1974, as well as further deterioration, and was vulnerable to an owner who considered demolishing it. Fortunately, preservationists, New York State Senator Patrick J. Moynihan, and others rallied funding through grants and loans to restore the building. After the law firm Hodgson Russ LLP took possession as new owners, they spent years supporting restoration. In 2008, a project to restore the amazingly intricate Art Nouveau terra cotta exterior façade was launched; the commission was awarded to Boston Valley Terra Cotta, whose historic craftsmanship has resulted in the Guaranty Building being a primary destination for any architectural tour.

Boston Valley Terra Cotta’s reputation has soared as commissions for renovations and new designs come from across the United States, Canada, and Europe. The firm works selectively with accomplished artists, so it has been an honor for sculptor Anne Currier to work with them to create unique ceramic tiles for interior walls. Beginning in 2009, her first commission, *La Stanza di Linea*, was a 14 x 40-foot wall in the Choral Room of the Miller Performing Arts Center at Alfred University in Alfred, New York. The musically inspired pattern incorporates three different tiles mounted to the wall utilizing Boston Valley’s unique clip system. Boston Valley thought so highly of the design, they installed it in their premier meeting room, where clients meet the company’s designers and engineers.

Next, BKSK, the architectural firm that designed 688 Broadway, a luxury apartment building in New York City’s NOHO neighborhood, chose one of Currier’s Boston Valley Terra Cotta tiles

for installation in the entryway. These tiles were oriented vertically, mixing contemporary aesthetics with a sense of arrival and aspiration.

Currier's latest tiles, designed in eight variations, are her most ambitious—derived from a combination of wheel-thrown and hand-built techniques. Currier manipulates clay to achieve sensuous, undulating waves, articulated in both positive and negative profiles that activate the planar movement. The 7-1/2 by 15-inch tiles are coated with uniquely formulated glazes that accentuate the rise and fall in their surfaces, distributing light and shadow in an ever-changing experience as one passes by them. One glaze is a semi-opaque iridescent satin white; the other is an opaque charcoal satin that breaks with a bronze sheen.

An installation of these tiles on large L-shaped steel frames will be displayed in public for the first time in the Burchfield Penney Art Center, Buffalo's premier museum dedicated to the art and vision of Charles E. Burchfield and distinguished artists of Buffalo-Niagara and Western New York State. The beautiful tile passageway—one side solid white, the other side charcoal—leads to an exhibition of Anne Currier's sculptures, which are also a study in balance and an invitation to discovery. Currier is recognized internationally for uniquely rendered sculptures that appear to defy the properties of clay by her precise handling of its volumes and sharp edges. Opposing elements in her *Anamorphosis* series evolve into abstracted, interlocking forms reminiscent of ancient figurative temple reliefs found in Europe and Asia. As well, distorted Cubist spatial representation in early 20th-century paintings by Juan Gris trigger ideas that Currier translates into her own three-dimensional configurations. Thus, "the interplay of masses and voids, absence and presence, light and shadow, stasis and motion" become her language of counterpoint. Each angle provides a new dynamic perspective of both her diptychs and newest wall-mounted sculptures, titled simply *DP*, followed by a number. For their seductive surfaces, Currier draws inspiration for her glazes from nature's palette, observed from her home and studio, to resemble mottled boulders, slate and rust, as well as intangible fog.

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For possible use as bio:

Sculptor Anne Currier is also professor emerita from the renowned Alfred University. She has received awards from the National Endowment for the Arts, the New York Foundation for the Arts, and Alfred University. In 2012, she was recognized as a Fellow of the American Crafts Council. Her receipt of the first-place fellowship from the Virginia A. Groot Foundation in 2017, as well as the 2018 Langley H. Kenzie Award, have made possible her Boston Valley Terra Cotta tile design project, a solo exhibition at the Burchfield Penney Art Center, and a catalogue about her work. Among collectors of Currier's work are the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New

York City; the Daum Museum of Contemporary Art in Sedalia, Missouri; the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in California; the Museum of Contemporary Art in Kyung-ju, South Korea; and the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, Russia.