

# S N Y D E R M A N - W O R K S G A L L E R I E S

## **Irina Okula**

### Artist Statement

The inspiration of the clay objects I create goes back to my long interest in Native American Pottery. For many years, I have been teaching a course on Indian pottery using many of their techniques of construction and firing. I love the polished surfaces they produce without glaze. I have visited the Pueblos in New Mexico and Arizona and marveled at the beautiful landscape of the western states. My work echoes these influences. I see my work as sculptural rather than functional. I throw large open bowls and use them as a canvas. I go out and collect many natural combustible materials for use in the firing process. Prior to firing, the materials are placed in and around my work. The fire and combustible material will dance upon the clay and leave exciting random marks. The patterns left by the process invoke the fiery chaos of nature, contrasted with the calm and serene patterns reminiscent of cloudy skiescapes and geologic formations. Each piece is one of a kind and sometimes goes through many firings until I am satisfied with the result. Experimentation and risk taking is a large part of this process. Getting one successful piece out of many keeps me coming back and trying again.