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**Media Web site:** [americanart.si.edu/press](http://americanart.si.edu/press)  
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**Media Preview:** Tuesday, Aug. 29; 3–5 p.m.

## **Smithsonian American Art Museum’s Renwick Gallery Presents First U.S. Retrospective on Celebrated Ceramicist Ruth Duckworth**

“Ruth Duckworth, Modernist Sculptor” will be on view at the Renwick Gallery of the Smithsonian American Art Museum from Sept. 1 through Jan. 15, 2007. It is the last stop for this nationally touring comprehensive retrospective.

The exhibition positions Duckworth within the modernist movement and provides an assessment of her contributions to the contemporary art world. It features 80 artworks including wall reliefs, free-standing sculpture and sculptural vessels. Many of the pieces are from the artist’s private collection, including carvings and maquettes that are exhibited publicly for the first time.

“The museum is pleased to present Ruth Duckworth’s groundbreaking ceramic artworks at its Renwick Gallery. Her work truly influenced the direction of 20th-century modernism,” said Elizabeth Broun, the museum’s Terry and Margaret Stent Director. “At age 87, Duckworth continues to inspire legions of artists and designers, working full time in her studio.”

Duckworth works with a wide range of materials and techniques, including stone carving, metal fabrication and bronze casting, but her most important output has been in clay. A progression of her vanguard vessels and wall reliefs shows her moving away from functionalism to explore purely sculptural qualities.

“Ruth Duckworth, Modernist Sculptor” is organized in three sections, linked by chronology and theme. The exhibition’s first section features Duckworth’s early works, from her initial years as a studio artist living in London. The second section contains Duckworth’s abstract figurative works, free-standing ceramic sculptures and wall panels. The exhibition places Duckworth’s work in context with other modernist sculptors of her era and demonstrates the artist’s appreciation of Bronze Age implements and Cycladic figures from ancient Greece.

The third section presents a selection of the artist's mature work. The exhibition also includes a 30-minute video, "Ruth Duckworth: A Life in Clay," that runs continuously.

"Duckworth's porcelain sculptures, with their translucent and opaque surfaces and colored oxides that stain the surfaces, reveal her mastery of form and surface design," said Robyn Kennedy, the exhibition's coordinator and Renwick Gallery chief. "Through bold and subtle contrasts, her abstract figures and vessels entice a sense of touch and exemplify craftsmanship. Her ability to employ and master porcelain's inherent physical properties for its expressive potential, informs her use of this medium and approach to sculpture."

### **About the Artist**

Born in Hamburg, Germany, in 1919, Duckworth moved to England in 1936, during the rise of Nazi power. There she studied art at Liverpool School of Art, Hammersmith School of Art and Central School of Arts and Crafts in London, and she organized her first exhibitions. In 1964 she accepted a one-year teaching appointment at the University of Chicago but continued in this faculty post for 13 years and has lived since in the United States.

Duckworth's work is represented in the Smithsonian American Art Museum's collection as well as major collections in the United States, Europe and Japan. She also has received many honors, including a 1993 Lifetime Achievement Award from the National Museum of Women in the Arts and a 1996 Gold Medal from the National Society of Arts and Letters. The Museum of Arts & Design named her a Visionary in 2003.

### **Credit**

"Ruth Duckworth, Modernist Sculptor" is curated by Jo Lauria and Thea Burger for Art Options Foundation. The James Renwick Alliance, Helen Williams Drutt English, and Colleen and John Kotelly support the exhibition's presentation at the Renwick Gallery.

### **Publication**

A major monograph that places Duckworth and her work squarely within the modernist movement and the world of émigré artists accompanies the exhibition. The book, also titled "Ruth Duckworth, Modernist Sculptor" and published by Lund Humphries Publishers, contains a critical analysis of Duckworth's creative output during the past 50 years by co-curator Jo Lauria, a biographical essay by the British writer Tony Birks and an introduction by artist Martin Puryear. The book is available at the Renwick Gallery store for \$60.

## **Free Public Programs**

On Friday, Sept. 15 at noon, Ruth Duckworth will give a talk in the Grand Salon at the Renwick Gallery. A complete schedule of public programs is available in a brochure. Call (202) 233-0667 to request a copy by mail or visit the museum's online program calendar at [americanart.si.edu](http://americanart.si.edu).

The Renwick Gallery of the Smithsonian American Art Museum is dedicated to exhibiting American crafts and decorative arts from the 19th to the 21st centuries. It is located on Pennsylvania Avenue at 17th Street N.W., near the Farragut North (Red line) and Farragut West (Blue and Orange lines) Metrorail stations. Museum hours are from 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. daily, except Dec. 25. Admission is free. Smithsonian Information: (202) 633-1000; (202) 357-1729 (TTY). Recorded information: (202) 275-1500. Please visit the museum's award-winning Web site at [americanart.si.edu](http://americanart.si.edu).

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**Note to editors:** Selected high-resolution images for publicity only may be downloaded from <ftp://saam-press@ftp.si.edu>. Call (202) 275-1594 for the password. Additional information about the exhibition is available in the museum's online press room.