

**Artist:** Liz Burkhouse

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## Artist's Statement

### About Me

I've been an artist all my life, starting with the sale of a ceramic sculpture when I was 12. Because I never thought of art as a viable 'career,' and I needed to earn a living, my life detoured through the California high-tech industry where I worked in graphic design and as an Instructional Designer and Courseware Developer for 20 years. Along the way, I picked up a Masters Degree in Instructional Technology from San Jose State University, developed skills in graphic art, designed parade floats, and drew cartoons. While my twin sister focused her talent on 2-dimensional art and illustration, I always leaned toward sculpture and mixed media. After the dot-com bust in 2000 left me without a job, and between consulting jobs, I started designing tile mosaics and tile murals which eventually led me back to clay. In 2005 I joined my local ceramics guild, built a studio in my backyard, and got serious about my work. I find my third career is a journey back to the things I enjoyed growing up.

### About the Chikins

Reaching back into childhood for inspiration, I discovered a cartoon chicken I'd drawn in third grade and thought, "Why not?" For some reason, chickens lend themselves to wordplay and I couldn't resist. So, my whimsical "Chikins" series of ceramic sculptures capitalize on the wealth of chicken-related puns in the English language and the popularity of poultry in general. My anthropomorphic chicks are meant to tickle the funny bone and touch the heart. It's been seven years and while the chickens are still running amok, other quirky ideas are yammering at my door, scratching to get out.

### About the Process

My sculptures frequently start with a common saying or expression—many of them suggested by friends and customers. A cartoon sketch roughs out the idea and after a number of iterations in clay (some more successful than others) the final version becomes a regular item in my inventory. Because each one is individually made—with a slight difference in expression, an added touch of irony, a change in color—even the repeats are surprisingly unique.

My sculptures are made of ceramic paper clay (usually a white sculpture clay mixed with paper pulp to create a stronger, lighter-weight medium). I build pieces using coil and slab techniques over newspaper forms, which are removed before firing. The fired pieces are glazed multiple times with bright, low-fire glazes and may be finished with various enamels, paints, and accessories. Some are assembled after firing using epoxies.

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Liz Burkhouse'.