

The bee has obtained an unusual status in the collective consciousness as a small insect that has been widely celebrated in folklore, mythology and even used as a metaphor for human behavior paradigms. Unlike other creatures of its stature, the bee is adored by many as well as providing pleasurable nourishment for the population. Christopher Russell is fascinated by bees and their hives for the following reasons, “...*their extraordinary architecture, social structure and embroidery-like detail all provide great subject matter. Bees are such artisans! I enjoy the cyclical process of painstakingly making replicas of the busy bees’ craft process.*” Like naturalists before him, a steady hand and curious eye were the essential in order for Russell to invest his time capturing and magnifying the tiny structures of the bee domain.

The recent plight of bees has been well documented; their numbers are rapidly diminishing as the result of involuntary changes to their preferred environments. This is despite the fact that numerous scientists who have studied bee behavior have been impressed by the complexity of mental operations by bees and their innately flexible and adaptive tendencies.<sup>1</sup> Bees are seen by Russell as a prophetic

messenger warning of what is to come without greater consciousness of the interconnectedness of all living creatures on earth.

Russell’s works hark back to the glass creations of the German brothers Leopold and Rudolf Blaschka. These artists created highly realistic specimens based on the natural world for private and museum collections where they were used as teaching aids. Russell’s *Bee Work* series is in the long standing tradition of scientific models and the decorative arts. His expertise with hand built ceramic forms facilitates translation of the complexity of the beehive, or the intricacy of individual grains of pollen, into forms which are of a scale that we can all appreciate.

Christopher Russell works been exhibited at the Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse, New York; the Clay Center, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and Greenwich House Pottery, New York. He participated in the Kohler Arts Center Arts/Industry Residency Program in Sheboygan, Michigan, and was a visiting artist at Watershed Center for Ceramic Arts in Edgecomb, Maine. He earned his Bachelor’s degree from Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut.

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1. Najafi, Sina, *The Language of Bees: An Interview with Hugh Raffles*, as published in *Cabinet Magazine*, Issue 25, Spring 2007.