

DECEMBER 2015 / JANUARY 2016

INVITATION

Tupelo

merry
AND *bright*





american CHRISTMAS

Artists Koos and Antoinette Badenhorst of Tupelo celebrate their American citizenship each holiday season by decorating their Christmas tree with handmade symbols of hope.

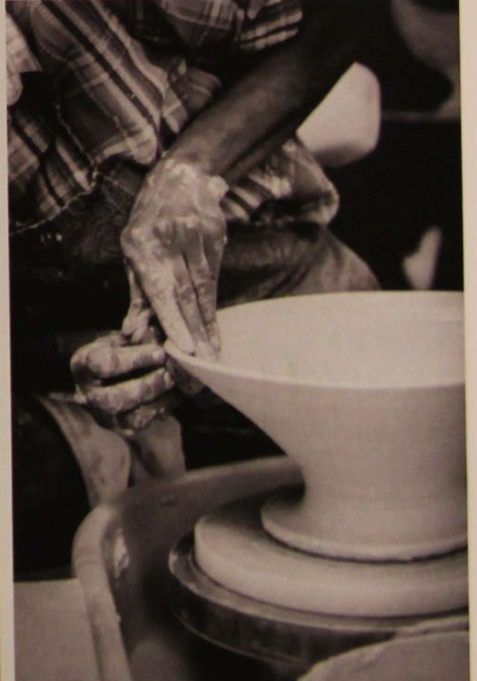
WRITTEN BY *Melanie Crownover*
PHOTOGRAPHED BY *Joe Worthem*
and *Koos Badenhorst*

Koos and Antoinette Badenhorst's family tree has become as rooted in American patriotism as it is in Christmas spirit since the couple moved to Mississippi from Cape Town, South Africa, in 1999. Last year, white lights cast their glow through translucent porcelain American flags on every branch from trunk to tip. For this couple, the holidays now represent a double celebration.

Antoinette, a porcelain artist, made the ornaments to commemorate becoming an American citizen in 2014 and to mark Koos' one-year anniversary as a citizen. When the Christmas tree was lit with the new ornaments, it became more than an emblem of the season.

"For us, the light shining through those flags is a symbol of hope. That is what America was for us, and it is what we still find here," she said.

The journey to finding that hope began 15 years ago with a monumental leap of faith.



Above, artists Antoinette and Koos Badenhorst in Antoinette's studio in Sallillo, Miss. Her artwork has evolved since she moved to the United States from South Africa 16 years ago, and she now specializes in porcelain that has been seen around the world. She created a Mississippi-shaped Christmas ornament this year to celebrate her home and her citizenship.

"We left our family and home in South Africa and came here with only \$5,000 and three girls getting ready to go to college. We had learned English from watching movies. I had to show I had a four-year degree and 12 years of work experience just to get a work visa," Koos said. "I don't think most people realize how much of a change it is."

The family spent eight years in Mississippi and then seven in Chicago before moving back to Tupelo in 2013. It was an era of major transition for the family, but the spirited couple showed their children how to flourish.

Antoinette's prolific art career started in South Africa with pottery and blossomed in the United States as she moved on to porcelain.

Her early American works included smoke-fired primitive pitch pots in homage to her native country. They later changed to fine and delicate, but deceptively sturdy, white porcelain works brushed with touches of vivid colors on the inside. The walls of her pieces are thin enough to allow light to flow through them.

"Looking at all of my works together is like seeing the story of my life. I was grieving the loss of my native country at first, and you can see when I finally had relief from that and started being content with myself as a Mississippian and American," she said. "You see through that thin wall to the color of my joy."

Museums and magazines around the world have featured her porcelain, and prospective artists from as far as Brazil and Australia take her online courses. Former President George W. Bush displayed her art in the White House, and singer-songwriter Joan Baez owns a piece.

Koos, a computer engineer turned photographer, first picked up the camera after paying a professional \$600 for photos of Antoinette's work for a competition. Not many novice photographers take on the challenge of shooting porcelain. It's difficult to capture the white of the outside, the texture and translucency of the piece and the color on the inside in one shot. Still, Koos was determined to learn.

After taking a beginner course at Itawamba Community College, *Mississippi Magazine* published his first picture in 2001. National publications including *Ceramics Monthly* and *Pottery Making Illustrated* have featured his art photography, and people worldwide seek his advice on shooting porcelain via his website.



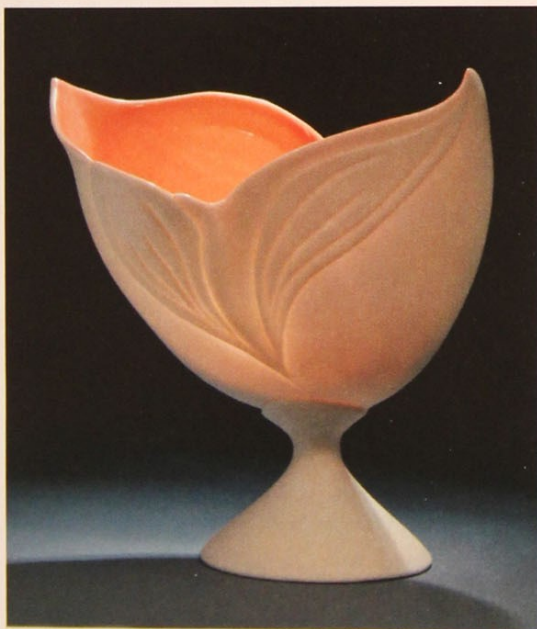
**SPORTSMAN
LAWN & LANDSCAPE**
Tupelo, MS For The Neatest Yard Around
**NEED A HELPING HAND THIS FALL?
CONTACT US ABOUT OUR LEAF REMOVAL SERVICES!**
662-844-6539
WWW.SPORTSMANLAWN.COM



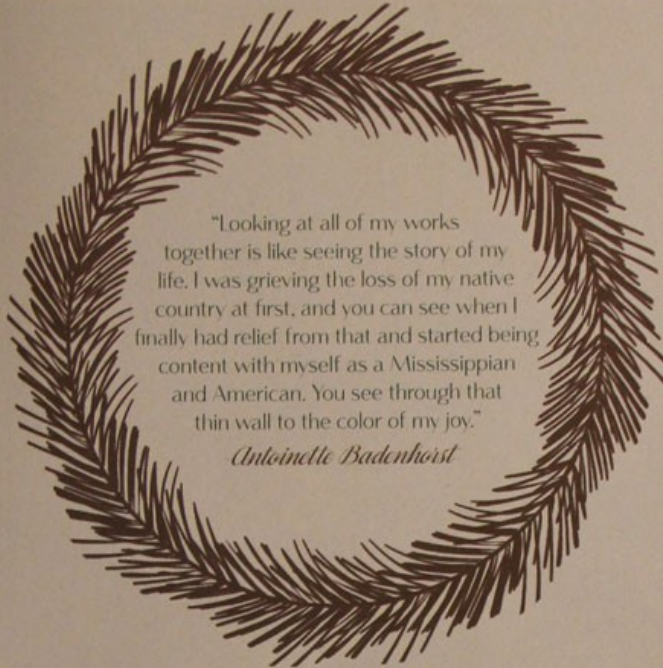
The **Shoopy Owl**

**Merry
Christmas
& Happy
New Year!**

1626 NORTH VETERANS BLVD, TUPELO, MS 38804 • 662-844-4042
TUESDAY - FRIDAY 10AM - 5PM • SATURDAY 10AM - 3PM



Antoinette's signature translucent white porcelain is often photographed by her husband, Koos, who learned the difficult skill of porcelain photography to capture her work. To see more of the Badenhorsts' work, visit koosphotos.com or porcelainbyantoinette.com, or search for Porcelain by Antoinette on Facebook.



"Looking at all of my works together is like seeing the story of my life. I was grieving the loss of my native country at first, and you can see when I finally had relief from that and started being content with myself as a Mississippian and American. You see through that thin wall to the color of my joy."

Antoinette Badenhorst

Koos devoted some of his talents to the technical side of his wife's Web classroom while he used his lens to help promote her artwork.

He posted photos of the whole flag-making process on her website last year – detailing the way Antoinette shaped the waves with her fingers and gently etched every star with a template, pressing in each stripe before she signed, dated and numbered the back.

When they put the limited edition ornaments up for sale, the Badenhorsts found that the story of their American journey struck a common chord. Many of Antoinette's followers knew of her background, and when they ordered ornaments from her online shop, several buyers shared their own citizenship stories.

One woman requested the ornament numbered 13 because that was how many years she'd been in the country. Another got the number 14 for a friend who became a citizen in 2014.

The touching personal stories convinced Antoinette to fire up her kiln again this month to create a second series of the ornaments.

This year, Antoinette's theme is homecoming. With all three of their daughters and their five grandchildren now back in Mississippi and living not too far down the road, the family togetherness that comes along with home is a happy topic for the Badenhorsts.

The new ornaments reflect that idea with a U.S. flag worked into the outline of the state of Mississippi. Additionally, the patriotic set will have the company of a new series of house-shaped ornaments this season. Each house is different, though they are all made from Antoinette's signature translucent white porcelain. There are small-, medium- and large-sized homes to hang, or one style featuring a small village on a single ornament.

"We think, 'Where is home?' and it is here," Antoinette said. "I fully believe God sent us as a family to Mississippi because He knew we needed a family. They may still ask, 'Where y'all from?' when we talk, but this is where we were welcomed with open arms and helped whenever we needed. This place chose us too. That, I will always celebrate having."

McClinton Dental is now

Perkins Dental

New look, new name, and the dedicated staff and quality service you've always trusted.

Call to make an appointment today

662.534.8597



Kelton McClinton, DMD
and Jessica Perkins, DDS



perkins dental

A breath of fresh air.

212 Oxford Road | New Albany, MS 38651
perkinsdentalclinic.com