Cleveland was a national center for ceramics and enamels from the 1930s through the mid-1950s. Naming all the artists and institutions that contributed to Cleveland’s prominent role would be futile, yet two individuals deserve mention. At the Cleveland School of Art, Julius Mihalik instructed students in avant-garde European design, while at the Cleveland Museum of Art, William Milliken made one of the museum’s missions the encouragement of local artists.

H. Edward Winter (1908-1976) and Thelma Frazier Winter (1903-1977) were instrumental in transferring traditional craft techniques into legitimate and recognized artistic mediums. Both were a fixture of the Cleveland art scene throughout their careers. They were married in 1939. Edward, a Cleveland School of Art graduate, was an enamelist and is considered one of the innovators of American enameling. In 1931 he studied in Vienna and brought the design principles of the Wiener Werkstatte to Cleveland. He published numerous books and articles on the art and craft of enameling.

Thelma Frazier Winter was one of the first American artists to produce ceramic sculpture in the Viennese taste. She was a graduate of Western Reserve University and the Cleveland School of Art and taught at Laurel School and the Art School. In 1939 she was the first woman to win a first prize in the National Exhibition of Ceramics at the Everson Museum. She authored *The Art and Craft of Ceramic Sculpture* as well as articles on ceramic design and technique.

Today, the name Winter evokes the image of an enamel ashtray and wide-eyed ceramic figure placed on a kidney-shaped coffee table which sits on a field of wall-to-wall carpeting, in a room filled with blond mahogany furniture with chartreuse walls. During the Winters’ careers, from 1930 to 1975, they were seen as much more.

Both Ed and Thelma worked at the Cowan Pottery early in their careers. In 1941, Edward stated, “I had been interested in ceramics even before going abroad; as I worked for a time in the pottery factory of Guy Cowan. I would design one piece for the company to sell and one piece for myself, and even with this arrangement my enthusiasm was high for ceramics as a life work.” Enameling, a process more immediate than ceramics, seems to have appealed to Ed and suited his temperament. In the collection of the Western Reserve Historical Society is a vase (dated 1929) with an opaque, thickly applied glaze that anticipates his later enamel work. From the estate of the artists, also held by the Historical Society, is a twenty-inch diameter wall plaque marked Cowan and signed "Winter/1931." Even early in his career, Ed liked to work on a large scale.
Thelma was employed at the Cowan factory after her graduation from the Cleveland School of Art in 1929. She had worked at the factory as a student, one of the requirements of her decorative design class taught by Mihalik. Looking back on her early career she said, “At this time Waylande Gregory & I were the only staff artists employed...I concentrated on decorative plaques, punch bowls, plates & vases both unique and for reproduction...In the May Show of 1930 Guy [Cowan] and I won 1st prize for a vase thrown by him & decorated in sgraffito...which I developed.” Slides of the prize-winning vase and of the octagonal plaque (ca. 1930) that documents Thelma’s painterly application of glaze decoration are in the Slide Library of the Cleveland Museum Art.

Thelma’s emerging interest in sculpture is evident in a carved vase, ca. 1930, from the Rocky River Public Library collection. At Cowan she worked with Waylande Gregory while she studied sculpture at school with Alexander Blazys in post-graduate studies recommended by Guy Cowan. Speaking of the Cowan factory she recalled, “It was one of the greatest experiences of my life to be in daily contact with the men who ran it.” These included glaze authority Arthur Baggs, designer Paul Bogatay, as well as artists Frank Wilcox, Victor Schreckengost and Edward Winter.

On the recommendation of Mihalik, Ed attended the Kunstgewerbeschule in Vienna in 1931. There he studied ceramics with Michael Powolny and metal work and enameling with Joseph Hoffman. He would draw upon his Viennese training for the rest of his career. Although penniless when he returned to Cleveland, Ed had a burning enthusiasm for his talents and enameling. At a 1933 exhibition of his enamels and ceramics at the Korner and Wood Gallery, Ed had a brief encounter with R. A. Weaver, president of the Ferro Enamel Corporation of Cleveland. Within days, Weaver offered Ed the resources of Ferro and allowed him to utilize the factory in the evening. This was the start of a forty-year association.

Weaver spoke in 1934 before the American Ceramic Society: “In our Company offices we have experimented with the use of artistic enameled pieces as decorative material. Mr. H. Edward Winter, a promising young American artist...has produced results which we believe will lead to a great extension of this idea in architectural ornamentation.” A fish mural, enamel on steel, three and a half by five feet, was executed for Mr. Weaver’s office in 1933. Other murals were placed in the reception room and a new application for enamel panels was born.

For Ed, Ferro was like being a kid in a candy store. He stated, “Operating their huge, box-type muffle furnace was somewhat different from working with the small ...furnace in our Vienna classroom; there was no size limit on art work that could be produced..... While I had resorted to small bowls and ashtrays in Vienna I could now produce large wall decorations and plaques. Thus a new field of art was open to me.” Ed’s large murals appeared in several major exhibitions in the 1930s. The mural, *Aviation of the Future*, was displayed at Cleveland’s Great Lakes Industrial Exposition in 1936. It was produced with stencils and a sifting technique which became part of Ed’s standard repertoire. In 1939 he displayed the large mural *Helen of Troy* at the Golden Gate Exposition and Thelma Frazier (not yet married to Ed)
exhibited ceramic sculpture. In the exhibition catalog, William Milliken wrote the introduction to the enamel section and stated: "[There is]...a renaissance today in the use and appreciation of enamel, in both Europe and America ...New uses and possibilities are being sought and found, one of these being the decorating with enamel of large architectural wall surfaces." In a blind competition in 1940, Ed was commissioned to produce decorative enamel panels for the United States Post Office in Cassville, Missouri.

In the 1934 May Show, Edward received a special award for a group of ten enameled pieces. The group included a large, 18-inch diameter plaque, Bavarian Alps, which was purchased by the museum. Milliken wrote in the exhibition introduction: Enameling on metal ...emerged for the first time as a large and exceedingly important group. The able and distinguished work of H. Edward Winter won first for his entire group of ten pieces. They have splendid color and strong, vigorous forms and patterns." A vase from the group belongs to Western Reserve Historical Society.

Large round plaques from the mid-1930s were made at the Ferro plant and show Ed's experimentation with stencils, sifting techniques and air-brush applied enamel. Occasionally, these large plaques were utilized as table tops, set into wooden bases. Two rectangular murals were among the works he displayed in the May Show in the early 1940s. Mexican Mural, 1940, now in the museum collection, is a floral design with lilies. Flowers were a favorite subject. Ed commented, "I use floral pattern, not because I am a great lover of flowers - to be honest I don't know the flowers names, hardly know one from the other - but because their colors and rhythmic forms ...lend themselves perfectly ...to enamels". By no means did Ed abandon making small enamel bowls, ashtrays and vases. In 1939 Ed won a first prize at the May Show with a group of enamels which are considerably less experimental than his earlier work and represent a simplification of technique and maturation of style.

Much of Ed's enormous energy in the 1930s and early 1940s was directed towards the retail market for enamel giftwares. In 1939 he introduced a line called "Zebra Stripe." An example of this type of decoration was among the 1939 May Show group. The line of giftwares was carried in Cleveland by Halle's and the Coulter Gallery, and nationally by Hudson's in Detroit and Marshall Field in Chicago, to name a few. From 1948 to 1950, Marshall Field sold $11,846.34 worth of Winter enamels according to Ed's figures; that's a lot of ash trays at $12.50 each.

Thelma left Cowan Pottery in 1930 to return to school for a degree in art education. Ornaments in her examination portfolio dated 1935 were executed using layered stenciled images that relate closely to Ed's enamel work. Thelma's interest though was ceramic sculpture. In 1938 she won first place in the annual National Ceramic Exhibition for the sculpture Jupiter and Lo and which can be seen at the Western Reserve Historical Society. Thelma said, "Ceramic sculpture, built directly of vitreous clay, fired and glazed, was a revolutionary idea to me, wonderful and exciting after the study of sculpture in the traditional way with stifling static armatures and plaster casting...I felt at once that this was my medium."
The Viennese influence is apparent in her works. *Pegasus on Tracks* (ca. 1939, slide at CMA) and *The King and Queen of Hearts* in the collection of the Western Reserve Historical Society are examples of circus and children’s themes that run throughout her work. These sculptural works were revolutionary to a generation of Americans accustomed to the stylized, controlled vases of the art pottery movement. In Thelma’s words, “The Viennese flair for whimsey and humor made it a very personal art, full of intuitiveness and charm ... Colored ceramic sculpture should not be something that could just as well have been made of marble, stone or bronze with a random glaze applied as an afterthought. It should be stylized and decorative, designed from the beginning....”

Ed served during the war designing pamphlets and posters. Thelma remained in Cleveland, teaching, running the retail business and entering shows. Fuel and supply shortages during the war may have been a factor in her turn to paintings in the 1940s. A watercolor titled *Flowers* appeared in the 1944 May Show, the year she won first prize in both ceramic sculpture, and mural and decorative painting. *The World Outside My Window* in the 1947 May Show was awarded a second prize. She said, “I keep painting going along with my work in clay. From painting I derive fresh ideas...the plasticity and color of my ceramic work give me in my painting an added feeling of reality and depth...I love to paint, but ceramic sculpture is my first love and a greater challenge, more difficult and demanding because it is a combination of sculpture, drawing, painting and design.” Thelma was a perennial exhibitor at the May Show and at the annual National Ceramic Exhibition held at the Everson Museum of Art in Syracuse, where she won first prize in 1949 for *The Jugglers*.

In 1957 she won the United States Potter’s Award in the International Ceramic Exhibition for *The King Bird*. In her book, the creation of *The King Bird* is explained completely from design sketches through the firing stage. She explained its design planning in this way, “As in many bird-forms, both in nature and as they are interpreted in art, the stylization of *The King Bird* grew out of the combination of the triangle and the circle. Beginning with the overall shape of the sculpture itself, the body and legs, head and neck, wings and tail, as well as the surface pattern, are dominated by these two basic shapes.” In contrast, Ed rarely sketched or planned his work on paper, preferring to work with his medium directly.

In the 1950s, Ed continued his architectural commissions including a theater and restaurant executed in collaboration with noted Cleveland architect Milton Dyer. Ed experimented with unusual interior applications of enamel including bathroom shower wall-panels for Dr. G. H. McIntyre, vice president of Ferro, and an enamel fireplace. In 1952, *Art in Focus* reported from New York: “Two current exhibitions may be studied to advantage by every young artist...one [by] Walter Gropius; the other...by Cleveland’s brilliant young art innovator, H. Edward Winter. Both Gropius and Winter accept the engineering revolution that has brought new space concepts, new use of building materials and accent on abstract design. Both understand that, unless the arts can be integrated and rendered dependent one on the other, they will die as living forms and continue to exist only in museums.”
Ed's artistic work in the 1950s and 1960s became looser and more abstract. *Cycle of Life* (1947), and *Olive Green with Textures*, (1963), are examples of his new style. In the 1988 exhibition catalog *The Cleveland Enamelist*, Mel Someroski, a Cleveland trained enamelist, notes, "Much of [Winter's] enameling can be categorized as "Moderne," but he experimented so wildly and widely with enamel that he produced an enormous amount of work beyond that...His dripped and poured surfaces anticipated the advent of abstract expressionism in Cleveland enameling."

After 1950, both were out of teaching and devoted full-time to their art work. The Winters were proud that their livelihood was dependent on their art and not teaching. Like Ed, Thelma received architectural commissions including the 1958 ceramic mural, *Child and Nature* installed at the Columbus State School. While Thelma received church and school commissions, Ed got the Cleveland Water Works mural commission.

In 1958, Thelma took up enameling. The trade journal *Ceramic Industry* reported in 1958: “Against a vibrant white background, the whimsical designs so created by Thelma Winter are lit with chartreuse, green pink, black and gold, and are here and there accented with gems of transparent frit in peacock blue.” Clearly, she was not afraid to use color. Thelma said of her enameling, “...[I] believe one of the most exciting experiences of my life began when I started to work with enamels.... I could transfer all I had learned in the other mediums to my enamels so that they have a style which is completely personal and different from [Ed’s].”

Thelma's enameling and design skills led to eleven major church murals executed in collaboration with Ed. The 1960s and 1970s were spent on these commissions, the continuation of retail sales, exhibitions and the publication of books and articles. Both were elected permanent Fellows of the Royal Society of Arts in 1973. It would be impossible to talk of the Winters without mention of Ed’s personality. His competitive nature is revealed in his letters. He would always have an outspoken comment on the character of Cleveland's art.

The Western Reserve Historical Society in Cleveland, Ohio holds the Winter Papers in its Library and significant examples of their arts and collection in the Museum. The Winter collections were the gift of the Winter Estate. Items listed in the endnotes as being from the WRHS may be found in the Winter manuscript collection. References to the artworks are from the catalog records of the Museum registrar.
Endnotes


12. Ibid., p. 23.

13. Ibid., p. 22.


15. Art in Focus, vol. 3, no. 7, April 1952, clipping in a scrapbook, WRHS.

