

CHIAROSCURO CONTEMPORARY ART

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YARROTT BENZ

Santa Fe, NM

BIOGRAPHY

Yarrott Benz was born in 1954 to a family with German roots in Nashville. His father was a surgeon and professor of medicine at Vanderbilt University, his mother was a nurse, and two of his three siblings became medical professionals. While sciences figured prominently in his family as he was growing up, visual arts instead came more instinctively to him. It was also in his DNA. His great grandfather Maximillian Benz (1848-1932) was a noted furniture designer and cabinet maker trained in Germany's Black Forest, arriving in Nashville in time for reconstruction after the Civil War. Maximillian left behind in Germany another consequential designer in the family, his first cousin Karl Benz (1844-1929), considered the inventor of the world's first automobile and the founder of the company bearing his family's name.

Yarrott Benz received a BA degree in art history from Vanderbilt in 1976, and BFA and MFA degrees from the University of Pennsylvania in 1980, studying with sculptors Robert Engman and Maurice Lowe, painters Alex Katz and Neil Welliver, and visiting artist Isamu Noguchi. After living in Italy for several years, where he was an assistant to sculptor Beverly Pepper at her studio in Todi, he later opened his own studio in Ancona on the Adriatic Coast.

He has exhibited sculpture, painting and photography in solo exhibitions in Italy, New York, Philadelphia, and Nashville. Articles about his work have appeared in *The New York Times*, *New York Magazine*, and *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, among other publications in the United States, Italy and Australia, and he has been the subject of interviews on NPR's program *Fresh Air*, RAI Radiotelevisione Italiana, and ARD, German public radio.

In the early 1990s, Benz was an activist with Visual AIDS in New York City, and he was one of seven colleagues who designed and implemented the iconic and ubiquitous *Red Ribbon* project, arguably the world's most recognizable symbol of AIDS activism and support. A year earlier, he had led the Visual AIDS committee for *Night Without Light*, extinguishing the lights of buildings, monuments and bridges in New York City for fifteen minutes on World AIDS Day to reflect on the devastating impact of AIDS.

For twenty-seven years he taught and chaired the departments of visual art at both Friends Seminary in New York City and Sierra Canyon School in Los Angeles. As a result of the successful architecture programs he developed at both schools, he was commissioned by the National Architectural Trust in 2005 to write *Building Blocks: A Curriculum on Architecture*. Several of his students in architecture and photography have gone on to achieve prominence in their fields.

He authored the memoir *The Bone Bridge: A Brother's Story* (Dagmar Muira, Publisher), which became an Independent Publishers Award (IPPY) gold medal winner in 2016. The book met with enthusiastic reviews. Vinton Rafe McCabe wrote in the *New York Journal of Books*: "The Bone Bridge is a book that deserves a large and appreciative audience for the simple reason that it is the best memoir written in recent years, one that hits the reader like a punch to the gut and leaves him, in turns, devastated, inspired, traumatized, and enlightened."

Since 2020 he has worked in Santa Fe, New Mexico, where he lives with his husband, Jeroen Jurg.

RESUME

EXHIBITIONS / REPRESENTATION (selected)

2024 *Recent Work*, Solo Exhibition, Chiaroscuro Contemporary, Santa Fe

2005 - 2021 Jayne Baum Gallery, NYC

2002 *Oregon*, solo exhibition, Degan Scharfman Gallery, NYC

2001 Degan Scharfman Gallery, NYC

Leslie Lohmann Gallery, NYC

- 2000** Degan Scharfman Gallery, NYC
- 1999** *A Field Apart*, solo exhibition, Degan Scharfman Gallery, NYC
- Great Photography of the Twentieth Century*, Curated Invitational to benefit GHMC, NYC
- Denise Bilbro Fine Art, group exhibition, NYC
- 1997** *Three Artists*, Mary Anthony Gallery, NYC
- 1992** *East Village Portraits*, group exhibition, PS 122 Gallery, NYC
- Bitter-Larkin Gallery, group show, NYC
- 1990** *New York/Nashville*, with artists Red Grooms and Mel Chin, Metro Arts Commission, Nashville Downtown Gallery
- 1988** *Ten Times Twelve: A Decade of Fleisher Artists*, Samuel Fleisher Art Memorial of the Philadelphia Museum of Art
- Storm Turning*, solo installation, New York University
- Confessions*, solo exhibition, Red Column Studio, Philadelphia
- 1987** *Objet D'art*, juried exhibition, Moore College of Art, Philadelphia
- Animals in Art*, solo exhibition, Cadme Gallery, Philadelphia
- Atlanta Biennial*, juried exhibition, Nexus Center for Contemporary Art
- 1986** East Coast juried exhibition, Fine Arts Museum of Long Island, Hempstead, NY, juried by NYTime's Grace Glueck and Bernice Steinbaum
- In the Animal Kingdom Come*, solo installation in the Sheridan Building, Philadelphia
- 1985** *A Common Purpose*, permanent solo installation, The American Red Cross Mid-South Headquarters Building, Nashville

- Three person show, Butcher-Young Gallery, Philadelphia
- 1984** Group exhibition, Nexus Gallery, Philadelphia
- Testimonial*, permanent installation, Hospital Corporation of America, National Headquarters Building, Nashville
- 1983** Challenge Exhibition Series, solo exhibition, Samuel Fleisher Art Memorial of the Philadelphia Museum of Art
- Ghost Armada*, temporary site-specific 300 foot long installation on the Port of History Museum, Penn's Landing, Philadelphia
- 1982** *Sculture da Parete*, Galleria del Falconiere, solo exhibition, Ancona, Italy
- Group exhibition, Galleria La Polena, Genoa, Italy
- Altari*, Galleria di Franco Cicconi, solo exhibition, Macerata, Italy
- Fire Scaffolds*, temporary hillside solo installation, Inteatro Festival, Polverigi, Italy
- 1981** The Faculty Club, University of Pennsylvania, solo exhibition, Philadelphia

Bibliography (Selected)

New York Journal of Books, "The Bone Bridge: A Tremendous Achievement, A Work of Truth" by Vinton Rafe McCabe, March, 2015

Lambda Literary Review, "Yarrott Benz: On Revisiting a Harrowing Adolescence", by Christopher Bram, April 30, 2015

Publication of *The Bone Bridge: A Brother's Story*, Dagmar Muira publisher, March, 2015

Interview, ARD German Public Radio, interviewer Jan Tussing, December 1, 2013

The Montreal Review, "The Heart of Florence", January, 2013

Gulf Stream Magazine, "Wars", May, 2013

Vintage Magazine, "Blue Pictures from Los Angeles", June, 2010

Art & Understanding, "Stolen Lives: Yarrott Benz's Snapshot of Loss", Lester Strong, June, 2001

Blue Magazine (Australia), "Moving Pictures: Yarrott Benz", Richard Waller, January, 2001

Art & Understanding, "Writing a History of Tears", Lester Strong, January, 2001

Great Photography of the Twentieth Century, catalogue, curated exhibition to benefit Gay Men's Health Crisis, 1999

The New York Times, "One Historical Place Swapped for Another", Barbara Whitaker, May 10, 1998

Art at Friends: Today, Catalogue by Michael Kimmelman, April, 1992

New York Magazine, "Fast Track: Heart of Darkness", Stephen Dubner, December 17, 1990

The Philadelphia Inquirer, "Rethinking Traditions", Stephen Salisbury, August 14, 1990

Art and Antiques, "Titans and Tornadoes", Andrew Boynton, December, 1986

The New York Times, "A Show that Explores the Contemporary", Phyllis Braff, November 9, 1986

The Philadelphia Inquirer, "Yarrott Benz's 'In the Animal Kingdom Come'", Edward J. Sozanski, July 16, 1986

The Philadelphia Inquirer, "Three Artists at Fleisher", Edward J. Sozanski, December 15, 1983

The Philadelphia Inquirer, "Sculpture at Penn's Landing", Edward J. Sozanski, July 8, 1983

Fresh Air, interviewer Julie Burstein, National Public Radio, WHYY Radio, Philadelphia, July 12, 1983

The Philadelphia Inquirer, "Modern Sculpture Goes Up in A Big Way", July 28, 1983

Inteatro 82, Velia Papa and Roberto Cimetta, editors, Edizione delle Marche, July, 1982

Il Resto del Carlino, "E intanto uno scultore degli Stati Uniti propone una fontana per Piazza Monina", Franco Elisei, August 6, 1982

Interview, Televisione Rete Quattro, Italian state television, interviewer Gianni del Morro, August 17, 1982

Il Corriere del Adriatico, "Yarrott Benz: Uno scultore che ha trovato nelle Marche l'ambiente ideale per la sua vena artistica", Stefania Aracci, October 31, 1982

Il Resto del Carlino, "A fuoco le sculture di Benz", Franco Elisei, July, 24, 1982 Interview, Radio Arancia, Ancona, Italy. Interviewer Franco Elisei, July 24, 1982

The Daily American, Rome edition, "The Fire Scaffolds by American Artist Yarrott Benz", John Francis Lane, July 12, 1982

The Tennessean, "Three Exhibitions in Italy of Yarrott Benz", Clara Heironymous, July 10, 1982