



Robert Toyokazu Troxell

December 4, 1949 - May 25, 2025

Robert Toyokazu Troxell astral projected to the next dimension on May 25, 2025. Born in Osaka, Japan in 1949 to a geisha and an army sergeant, he moved to the steel furnaces of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania at age five.

During his childhood he describes “balancing different worldviews, religions, and values to create [his] view of the world. Replacing the gentle strains of the samisen were the factory whistles calling men to work in cement plants. Images of Mt. Fuji were replaced by smoke belching grey smokestacks. Gone were the religious-aesthetic concerns replaced by industrial pragmatism.”

From his father’s side, he is the inheritor of ceramic practice from 19th-century Pennsylvania German potters Samuel and Henry Troxel, whose work, full of pithy and irreverent sayings, is memorialized in the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Robert is similarly an artist of whimsy and irreverence: a teapot resting on a 300 lb. bombshell. A plate with metal springs titled “Mr. Tension.”

He often pulled from his own life for his art. His piece “Tea House” recalls the chicken coop his mother used as a teahouse when they first arrived in America. The outside configuration suggests the profile of a rooster with a meditative space within. It is finished with low fire under glaze.

During his undergraduate studies at Millersville University, he supported

himself as an iron pourer and truck mechanic. These industrial processes were reflected in his artwork. During his studies at University of Delaware (MFA) and Penn State University (PhD), he created prints and pots and wrote about phenomenology, which significantly influenced his worldview and practice.

Robert started his career as Supervisor of Art Education at the Delaware Art Museum, then went on to become an instructor at the Barnes Foundation and a Senior Professor at Harrisburg Area Community College, where he taught for 24 years.

Among his many accomplishments at the Harrisburg Area Community College, he negotiated the first exchange contract with Jingdezhen Ceramic Institute, China and started the Crafts Marketing Program at the Pennsylvania State Museum. His innovative, experiential, and highly generous approach to teaching continues to shape generations of artists.

Throughout his five-decade career, Robert had solo exhibitions at The Whistler Museum of Art, Penn State University, Manchester Institute of Arts and Science, Pasadena's Del Mano Gallery, and Brooklyn's Five Myles Gallery. He participated in dozens of international group exhibitions — including the International Cultural Center in Krakow; the Manhattan Graphics Center; the Ceramic Art Invitational Exhibition in Zhejiang, China; the International Biennial Print Exhibition in Philadelphia; the Delaware Center for Contemporary Art. He was President of Round the Bend Theatre in Hudson Valley, NY and previously served on the board of directors at Woodstock Artists Association & Museum. His work was featured at Neiman Marcus and a number of museum stores such as Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Guggenheim Museum (New York), and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles.

He is survived by his loving wife Elizabeth, children Jenelle, Cooper, and Grace and his sister Linda Hostetter. His work, prints and ceramics, both sculptural and functional, can be found in homes across the world. He will be celebrated throughout the year in Cape May, NJ, Carlisle Springs, PA, Saugerties, NY, and Osaka, Japan.

He is with the Muse, now.

His artwork can be viewed at: <https://roberttroxell.com/>

Cremation arrangements were under the guidance of Buono Funeral Service, Inc. www.buonofuneralservice.com.

Tribute Wall

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“ Great person with a huge smile when I met him at MSC. Then saw him at 1992 NCECA and we spoke about future plans and clay. I was going to grad school and he was teaching. Always loved his joy of life and orneryness. Beth McGuigan

Beth A McGuigan - December 28, 2025 at 08:12 PM