

## ARTIST STATEMENT

Gayle Fichtinger's ceramic sculpture is the outcome of intensive nature study in New England and sabbatical travel to China researching scholars stones and Yixing ceramics. Zisha clay was used by the Yixing potters to make tea ware for the Chinese scholars of the Ming dynasty. The scholars were Chan Buddhists, Taoists, or Confucianists who communed with nature through their painting, poetry, and the collecting of scholar stones for their classical gardens and studios.

Through her work she responds to the natural environment. Disruptions in the growth patterns of trees like gnarls, burls, and fungi draw her attention. Her hope is to elevate the overlooked and discarded bits and pieces of nature for a deeper understanding of the ecosystem.

Working on an intimate scale in a smooth red stoneware clay, she sculpts natural objects from observation. Carving and mark-making define surface pattern and textures. The zisha-like clay is fired without glaze to preserve the color and integrity of the material and be closer to its natural state. Her work is meant for contemplation.