



*AMERICAN MUSEUM OF CERAMIC ART (AMOCA)
ANNOUNCES THE PASSING OF FOUNDER DAVID ARMSTRONG*



Pictured: David Armstrong standing in AMOCA's Julianne and David Armstrong Gallery; film still from *David Armstrong: Founder of the American Museum of Ceramic Art*, Heather Flores and Alessandro Gentile / Radium 88, 2024.

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For immediate release
(Pomona, CA–January 30, 2025)

It is with profound sadness that we announce the passing of David Armstrong, founder of the American Museum of Ceramic Art (AMOCA), on January 7, 2025.

David was born July 8, 1940 in McPherson, Kansas. He and his family moved to the Pomona Valley when he was 4, where his father started a furniture business. He was part of the first graduating class of Upland High School and attended Pomona College. While at Pomona, he discovered two passions that would shape the remainder of his life: he met his wife, Julie, whom he would marry three years later, and he took his first ceramics class.

After graduation, David was commissioned by the U.S. Army and served with the military police. While at Sandia Base, New Mexico, he created some of his first artwork. While he would not become an artist himself, David's business and entrepreneurial spirit became a catalyst in founding a place to showcase the works of some of the truly great ceramics artists of our time.

After his military service, he returned to Pomona to work for and eventually own his father's furniture business, which he would later convert into an art and ceramics gallery. His business became one of the largest manufacturers and distributors of collector plates. One of his proudest achievements was the opportunity to represent Red Skelton for 23 years as his agent.

In the mid-1990s, David retired from the collector plate business. He then became president of the Pomona Central Business District and played a key role in the transformation of downtown Pomona. In 2004, knowing that Pomona needed an anchor that would bring people into the area, he founded the American Museum of Ceramic Art. The museum was initially housed in a small building on Garey Avenue, which it soon outgrew. In 2011, AMOCA moved to its current location, the historic Pomona First Federal Savings and Loan building, a few blocks north. This move increased the square footage for exhibition and studio space, provided more storage for the growing permanent collection, and offered the important opportunity to significantly expand public programs.

"David was truly a pillar of the Pomona Valley community," his family said. "He will be remembered as a hardworking (he worked up until his final days), dedicated, passionate, kind, loving, broad-shouldered, visionary man who loved his family, friends, community and country."

David's unwavering vision and dedication to the ceramic arts and arts education transformed countless lives.

Executive Director Beth Ann Gerstein commented, "He created more than a museum – he built a vibrant community that continues to inspire and educate. His recent joy in witnessing AMOCA's 20th Anniversary celebration, the milestone of paying off our building's mortgage, and the premiere of a short documentary film about his remarkable journey make his loss especially poignant. While we will deeply miss his physical presence, David's spirit will forever resonate through our galleries and ceramic studio."

He leaves behind the love of his life and wife of 62 years, Julianne M. Armstrong; his children and their spouses, Liz and Brad Cornell, David S. and Pam Armstrong, and Christy Armstrong and Rodney Rincon. He is also survived by his sister, Mary, and her spouse Michael Rini; grandchildren Michelle Cornell-Davis, Christopher Cornell, Nicole Armstrong Lim, Erin Corson, and Alessa Rincon; and great-grandchildren Seneca Cornell, Jarely Cornell, Julianne Davis, and Elizabeth Davis.

A memorial service will be held at 10 a.m. Saturday, February 8 at Pilgrim Congregational Church, 600 N. Garey Ave., Pomona, CA 91767, followed by a 1 p.m. reception at AMOCA, 399 N. Garey Ave., Pomona.

In lieu of flowers, the family suggests memorial contributions be sent to the Armstrong Fund at AMOCA, 399 N Garey Ave, Pomona, CA 91767, or online: amoca.org/give/armstrong.

For those wishing to express condolences, cards may be sent to AMOCA, ATTN: Julianne Armstrong, 399 North Garey Avenue, Pomona, CA 91767.

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About AMOCA

The American Museum of Ceramic Art was founded in 2003, in Pomona, California. The mission of the museum is to champion the art, history, creation, and technology of ceramics through exhibitions, collections, outreach, and studio programming.

Location

American Museum of Ceramic Art
399 North Garey Avenue, Pomona, CA 91767
(909) 865-3146 • www.amoca.org

Contact

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