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Delmar VanderZee

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# Wild Grape Vine on a Platter

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*Delmar VanderZee*

2011

White-ware clay, high-fired with Coleman Tea Dust and 9A Clear glazes.

12" x 12"



## Clay tiles, a vase and a platter

The beauty inherent in plants is observed and represented in many ways by artists: paintings, photography, dried displays, and more. These ceramic impressions are a kind of still-life self-sculpture, which show amazing detail.

*Prairie Wisdom* is a three-dimensional sculpture of plant impressions on clay tiles which capture the natural beauty and form of prairie plants—all members of the tall-grass prairie North American ecosystem-biome. *Prairie Wisdom* is a testimony to that beauty and history.

The natural prairie landscape changes throughout the season every few weeks as different plants mature to flower; so the color and texture of spring, summer and autumn is a continuously changing tapestry. Captured here is a “snapshot” representation frozen in stone.

The art piece (27” x 39”) is made of 15 white-ware ceramic tiles mounted and displayed in a shadow-box frame made from American Black Walnut. The background is a specially manufactured panel with lines mimicking an organic landscape. The upper tiles depict an undulating landscape and horizon. The tiles are high-fired with Coleman Tea Dust and 9A Clear glazes. The current location is the Science and Technology Center, Dordt University.

The title *Prairie Wisdom* has three levels of meaning. First, a confessional meaning, comes from Psalm 104: 24, “How many are your works, O Lord! In wisdom you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures.” Second, ecologically speaking, the rich diversity of species in prairies contributes to several ecological features: productivity, sustainability, endurance and resilience—truly a system that is wisely ordered. And, third (a kind of pun), the imprints that border the upper outer four tiles are from a plant called prairie sage!

The vase (5” x 14”) is similar in design and character to *Prairie Wisdom* except it is fashioned from one large tile wrapped into a cylinder affixed to a base forming an open vessel with impressions on both outside and inside.

A wild grapevine, *Vitis riparia*, makes a detailed impression on the platter, showing both leaf and stem-tendrils detail.

Inspiration for these ceramic pieces can be credited to Dawson Morgan, a ceramist from Alabama, and Jake Van Wyk, emeritus artist from Dordt University.

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