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Three years after publishing *The Future Emerges from the Past: Celebrating 200 Years of Alabama African American History and Culture*, **alafricanamerican.com** continues to honor and highlight past, present, and future Alabama African American history makers.

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Because Alabama African American history can't be taught in a single month, we will continue to share short articles along with links to videos, photos, reference material, and additional information for all to enjoy on a monthly basis. The website's goal is the same as the book's: To inspire the young and young at heart to dream big and celebrate Alabama's rich African American history and culture.

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L A R R Y



Photo: Amarr Croskey / The Birmingham Times

A L L E N

**The 65-year-old ceramicist
from Leeds, Alabama
has made a successful career
of taking “a lifeless lump of clay ...
and [turning] it into something
elegant and fine”**



LARRY ALLEN

Birmingham native Larry Allen has built a reputation as a master of using his hands to build something out of nothing through the art of clay

Roy Williams

Photo: Mac Jamieson

Since opening LA Pottery in Leeds (Alabama) in 1978, Larry Allen’s hand-crafted stoneware – inspired by African and Native American artwork — has been bought by art collectors across the nation.

Allen typically sells his pottery online or by attending art festivals across the United States. It was while his stoneware was on display at an Atlanta art gallery that Allen gained his biggest attention yet: catching the eye of **Ken Lashley**, a writer best known for his work on *The Black Panther* comic books. Lashley purchased several of Allen’s pottery, and they appeared as props in last year’s blockbuster movie *Black Panther: Wakanda Forever*.

Each piece of stoneware from LA Pottery is hand-crafted solely by the artist. Larry makes each vessel from a special black stoneware clay, delicately carving designs into the surface of the wheel-thrown vessel.



In 2007 one of Larry's vases was presented on behalf of the Alabama State Council on the Arts as a gift to Pulitzer Prize winner and author, **Harper Lee**. Another was gifted in 2008 to Liberia's first woman president, **Ellen Johnson Sirleaf**.



Photos: Mac Jamieson

Allen's artwork was featured on the national HGTV show *That's Clever* and he has given live pottery demonstrations on BrightHouse Cable, the predecessor to Spectrum Cable.

Shortly after getting his bachelor's degree in art from Berea College in Kentucky, Allen opened LA Pottery in Leeds. His work has gained him numerous awards, including Best of Show winner at the Magic City Art Connection in Birmingham three times – 2019, 2018 and 2016.



I try to give each piece the attention it deserves because I realize that I don't like to cop out on a piece just because it's small. I like to pay attention to everything I'm doing and put in the time for each piece.

Photo: Amarr Croskey / *The Birmingham Times*



Allen has a passion for sharing his expertise with young artists. He has served as a teacher at Jefferson State Community College since the 1990s and teaches pottery classes at his Leeds studio.



In a May 2019 interview with *The Birmingham Times*, Allen shared what inspires his designs: “I try to give each piece the attention it deserves because I realize that I don't like to cop out on a piece just because it's small,” Allen said. “I like to pay attention to everything I'm doing and put in the time for each piece.

“You can easily get lazy with pottery, and I been throwing since the 1970s. It's one of those things where you can really get to a point that you can get lax. I have to choose things that keep my attention, so I choose shapes that make me work for it.”

Two of Allen's pieces were used as chapter introductory graphics in the 2019 Alabama Bicentennial Commission book, *The Future Emerges From The Past: Celebrating 200 Years of Alabama African American History & Culture*.



ADDITIONAL



RESOURCES

See examples of Allen's amazing pieces on his website:

<https://larryallenpottery.com>

Artists Incorporated Gallery

<https://www.artistsincorporated.com/viewcollection/148471>

This Alabama Potter Carves Meaning Into Every Piece

<https://thecottagejournal.com/alabama-potter-larry-allen-carves-meaning/>

Pottery artist's work on display in *Black Panther: Wakanda Forever*

<https://kyma.com/the-good-stuff/brightside/2022/11/13/pottery-artists-work-on-display-in-black-panther-wakanda-forever/>

Larry Allen: Ceramicist who makes something out of nothing

<https://www.birminghamtimes.com/2019/05/larry-allen-ceramicist-who-makes-something-out-of-nothing/>

Berea College / Distinguished Alumnus Award: Larry Allen '78

<https://magazine.berea.edu/alumni-connections/alumni-awards/distinguished-alumnus-award-larry-allen-78/>