



# TYJESKI TILE CO.

MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN



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## DUCKS, DEER, BLUEJAYS & MORE DECORATE FRONT PORCH



After my parents helped me convert my garage into a ceramic studio a few years ago, I finally completed my end of the deal by creating these tiles for their front porch. It was delightful to do an Arts & Crafts project with my father, setting tiles together, accompanied by my 7-year-old nephew Tanner and his eagerness to lend a hand.

In this project, the worlds of hunting and art become one. Source material for the tiles of bears and deer were based on my Dad's trail-camera photographs captured in his hunting land, as well as from drawing decor in the hunting shack. The tiles were born out of "the land" and really put the Tyjeski into the Tyjeski Tile Company.



Blue matte tiles wrap around the front porch, showing off motifs from the hunting land such as black bears, whitetails, mallards, bur oaks and paper birch.



## THE ARTIST IN NATURE

### NOTES FROM BEN'S SKETCHBOOK

Drawing songbirds accurately from life has its challenges. Primarily, they can't sit still, or rather, they can't perch on a branch and pause for more than a second. Unless they're surveying the land, they're frantically on the move, scavenging for grub or announcing to the world that they are front stage in the opera house.

Ironically, a set of pigeons gather on the wires above my studio daily and are in no rush to fly away. They watch over the garden like some sort of patrol squad, though they are no muse to my eyes. It's the birds on the move, the ones that want to be left to their business that captivate me most of all.

Every summer, the Goldfinch makes me stop at whatever I'm doing. Their sounds are so sweet and their colors are so bright; what a beautiful subject to draw! Nothing seems to stop them from devouring every seed on a sunflower, except momentarily when I open the door and eagerly step out into the garden to draw them in my sketchbook. Naturally, this applies to when I am inside the house too. I'll be washing the dishes, looking out the window, and the goldfinches are clutched to the sunflowers. As soon as I stop to grab my sketchbook, they leave. Somehow, my luck fails again and again.

Even when out on the prairie, I can't manage to observe a Goldfinch for longer than 2 seconds at a time. In these flash encounters a collection of half a dozen drawings are loosely sketched out on a sheet of paper. In this rush of excitement, if I'm able to pull out my pencil in time, I aim to represent the goldfinch as accurately as possible. Messing up the placement of black, yellow, and white feathers is not an option! But as I strive for this accuracy, I question the importance of my effort. I've observed the goldfinch enough, I should have the confidence to create a tile design based on my experiences. Though, I am still worried about not representing the bird accurately.

Audubon, armed with his gun, had the pleasure of studying birds from literally holding them in his own hands and was able to draw their anatomy with overwhelming accuracy. Even if I were inclined to use that technique, such accuracy is better suited for the

scientist rather than an artist. There is little good in creating an artwork of a bird if you cannot see how the winged critter moves.

Drawing goldfinches from paintings or photographs is a little different in that you can study still images of the birds in movement and in their habitats. However, in this practice, you lose the experience of seeing the birds, listening to their sweet sounds, and observing their behavior. Even if I treated drawing these critters from books as a sort of rehearsal to prepare me for the open air, I fear something is still lost in this logic. Every time I cross paths with the goldfinch, my adrenaline rushes and I eagerly capture it even if only with my eyes. If I draw from photos, artworks, film, or taxidermy first, I fear I may not feel the same sense of urgency in the wild. I would be more inclined to pick and choose when I draw the birds.

Drawing purely from life, however, is its own type of art or lifestyle. And my goal is to create art, not be it. In truth, any act of drawing is beneficial, and always preparatory until the actual work of art you create. Hence, the real challenge I face is not drawing the goldfinch accurately from life or reference, but how I turn these drawings and experiences into a work of art.

### INSPIRING QUOTE

*"While Nature may furnish the raw material, she does not furnish ready-made designs, and will baffle our efforts to find in her the clew to a beautiful design. The last is our part in the problem. The beauty which we give to design must come from within us; it cannot be found in the study of the specimen, however painstaking or analytical that study may be."*

ERNEST BATCHELDER

## HELEN AND BEN BERTELSON'S TERRA-COTTA WONDER IN NEW BOOK

*The Bertelson Building: A Story in Terra Cotta* will be available at the Bertelson Building at 2105 North Prospect Avenue in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, during [Historic Milwaukee Inc. "Doors Open"](#) from 10am to 5pm on Saturday and Sunday, Sept. 23-24, 2023.

At 2105 N Prospect Ave is Paloma Wilder's fine craft jewelry shop, where she is giving tours and live demonstrations that weekend. The author of this book, Ben Tyjeski, will be signing copies in her shop from 10 am to 2pm on that Saturday. Stop by, say hello, and buy a book for yourself and a friend!

6" x 9"

Paperback, colored photographs

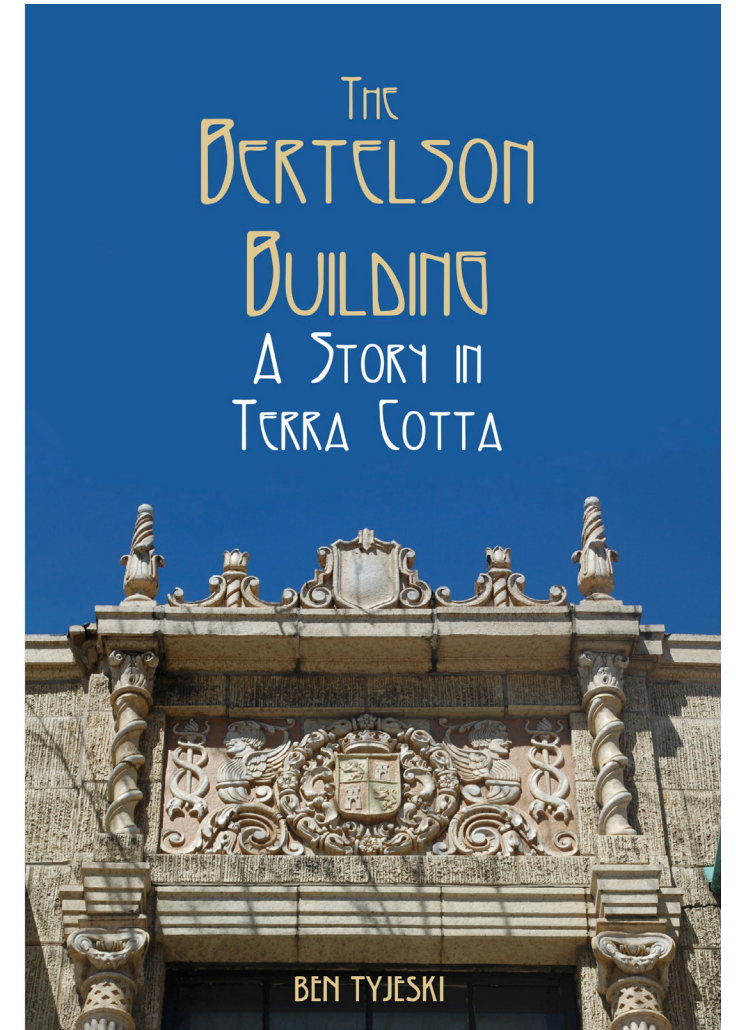
46 pages

### BOOK DESCRIPTION

The Bertelson Building in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, is one of the state's most impressive and artistic sites with architectural terra cotta. The façade, fully clad in polychromatic terra cotta manufactured by the American Terra Cotta & Ceramic Co. of Crystal Lake, Illinois, was one of the many projects the manufacturers created with Milwaukee architectural firm Martin Tullgren & Sons. Their design for the building brings the imagination to life with relief sculptures of portraits, children at play, and fantastic creatures. Whether it's a fairy tale or a love story, there is a romantic charm to the building that continues to allure those who take notice of it.

This structure would not exist if it were not for the original owners, Helen Bertelson and her son, Ben, who erected this building with the fruits of their labor in the photography field. Their high-quality, artistic photographs allowed them the opportunity to construct a place to live and work, all the while, create spaces for small businesses and support a culture of neighborhood shops in Milwaukee's East Side.

The author, Ben Tyjeski, generously uses colored photographs to illustrate the many unique, decorative features in the architectural terra cotta of the Bertelson Building. He compares the Spanish Colonial / Mediterranean Revival to other buildings designed by the Tullgren architects and other sites manufactured by ATC&CCo., accompanied by historic photographs from the American Terra Cotta Collection in the Northwest Architectural Archives at the University of Minnesota, especially of buildings that are non-extant. He also tells how the Bertelson Studio is represented in the building's architecture and documents the current tenants.







**Top left:**  
Preview of lost Batchelder fountain tucked away in a secret garden, featured in an upcoming “Tile Town” article on UrbanMilwaukee.com. Stay tuned! Image by Megan Jarchow.

**Bottom left:**  
My sweetheart and I celebrating 10 years together at Mr. Wright’s home studio.

**Top right:**  
Brick veggie bed with raised corners for tile decorations (in progress!)

**Middle right:**  
A view of a custom tile before plaster being poured over it for a mold. The design is for a Wauwatosa homeowner, Suzi.


**Bottom right:**  
Tiles salvaged from a mid-1930s residence in South Milwaukee are finding new life in my kiln room. Huge thanks to Julia and Matt!

The tiles were manufactured by the Continental Faience & Tile Co.!

# CARL BERGMANS

AND THE

## CONTINENTAL FAIENCE & TILE CO.



BEN TYJESKI   KELLY DUDLEY   KATHY ROBERTS

# COMING SOON!

The long awaited book, *Carl Bergmans and the Continental Faience & Tile Co.*, is coming out this year!

The book portrays Carl Bergmans’ life using quotes from letters that he wrote to Belgian author Marie Gevers during their almost 25 year correspondence. The emphasis of the book is on his years in Wisconsin running his ceramics business, the Continental Faience and Tile Company, and covers the manufacturer’s products, processes, and factory, using sources from former employees. Over 80 of the company’s colorful tile installations in Wisconsin and across the country are lavishly illustrated.