

CEMENT FEET

A skateboarder with an appreciation of basketball and the rare skills of a ceramic sculptor has reimagined how a sneaker can look.



Basketball sneakers have achieved extremely high cultural status due to their fashion utility, their association with one of the world's most popular sports, and their ties to the game's superstars: Kobe, LeBron, and Jordan, for starters. So why not elevate these cultural identifiers further by making ceramic sculptures out of them?

That is what Brock DeBoer has done with his sculptures of kicks. A native of South Dakota, DeBoer is now based in the Los Angeles area turning a long-time passion into a critically acclaimed business. A skateboarder at heart, DeBoer discovered pottery during a stint at summer school, telling online art magazine *Colossal*, "When I sat at the potter's wheel, I was challenging myself almost the same way as I did skateboarding." He later got a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Ceramics at the Kansas City Art Institute,

which is where he was introduced to porcelain and began sculpting everyday objects from pop culture. "The subjects, such as the sneakers, have a shelf life before the soles crumble and bubbles pop, and having the ability to preserve them and give them a new life is interesting to me," DeBoer added.

DeBoer's porcelain sneakers are proof of an artist rich in skill and creativity. At first, the thought of "ceramic basketball shoes" conjures images of hulky blobs, light on detail. But with DeBoer's detailed craftsmanship they have the appearance of real-life kicks that have been worn, complete with laces, eyelets, soles, brand logos, and even mini wrinkles that hammer home the realistic look. What adds to the appeal is the idea that DeBoer is creating fragile, porcelain works of art to represent what would otherwise simply be considered beaten-up,

worn-out shoes—sneakerheads literally call them "beaters."

Maune Contemporary, an Atlanta gallery that has showcased DeBoer, describes his work on its website: "By using classical motifs of cobalt patterns and true-to-life finishes DeBoer's casts become suspended somewhere in the past and disguised in the present."

In recent years, real-life sneakers have skyrocketed in value and collectors go to increasing lengths to preserve their shoes, but there is a literal, scientific limit to how long they can stay in presentable condition ... and that timeline is even shorter if they are actually out on display in the sunlight. DeBoer's ceramic shoes, on the other hand, can present a similarly cool shoe in much more dramatic fashion and with an infinitely longer shelf life.