

Art in Iron and Clay

Most people think meter box lids are only for protecting meters, but Jon Conover collects them as decorative art. It all started ten years ago when he visited San Francisco's meter shop and noticed a Golden Gate Bridge yokebox lid. Conover, the City of Sacramento, CA Meter Shop Supervisor, thought the lid was unique and began looking for his own Golden Gate Bridge lid. He eventually purchased one of the lids on eBay, cleaned it and had it decoratively painted. He mounted the yokebox lid on the wall of his office and thus began his yokebox lid collection. Conover has purchased one other lid in his collection since then, but the majority have been given to him by friends in the waterworks industry. The collection has grown over the years, but the Golden Gate Bridge lid remains his favorite.

For Father's Day, Conover's son decided to recreate his dad's favorite lid as an unforgettable gift. Working from a picture of the Golden Gate Bridge lid, his son thoughtfully crafted a replication of the lid in his high school ceramics class. He spent a month creating the lid, free-hand inscribing the image into the clay, stamping on the letters, carefully baking it twice and painting it. Conover says the ceramic replication is more meaningful to him than the original because it was a gift from his son.

Conover's collection is just one example of employing meter lids as art. Meter lids have inspired numerous painters, jewelers, clothing makers and collectors. The relationship between art and meter lids is not new, but each artisan or collector carries on the tradition with a personal spin. Conover hopes to expand his collection and one day pass it on to someone who also sees meter lids as art.



The picture above is Conover's lid collection and a Ford Meter Box poster depicting additional decorative lids.

Below is a closeup of the ceramic lid reproduction. The Golden Gate Bridge was etched into the surface of the clay before being fired in a kiln.

