Robert Arneson was a prominent American ceramic artist known for his politically charged works. His work often dealt with themes of youth, rebellion, and social issues. Arneson was born in 1930 in Benicia, California, and passed away in 1992. He began his career producing cartoons and became a cartoonist for the San Francisco Chronicle. Arneson later reflected that it was the very lack of tradition at the University of California at Davis in the 1960s that enabled him to develop his unique style.

In 1986, a retrospective exhibition of Arneson's work was held at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. The exhibition, titled "Arneson and Politics: A Commemorative Exhibition," included a number of his etchings and lithographs that addressed political concerns such as the benefit or commemorative print. The exhibition also featured a number of works from his "Self-Portraits and Political Themes in Recent Work." Arneson's art was known for its wit and irony, often using humor to underscore serious political issues.

Arneson's most powerful works were created in the Bay Area during the 1980s. One of the most powerful works was a commemorative bust portrait of the city's late mayor George Moscone, which Arneson created in 1993 for the Betty C. Reves Collection. The bust was created in protest after Moscone was assassinated in 1978. Another powerful work was "Nuke News," a witty if dark commentary on a number of political, social, and economic issues. Several of his etchings and lithographs are also on display in the library, which is part of the Cummings Center for the Study of American History.

Arneson's work has been the subject of numerous exhibitions and publications. He has been sponsored in part by grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities. Arneson's art has been the subject of numerous exhibitions and publications, including "Arneson and Politics: A Commemorative Exhibition," published by Steven A. Nash. Nash is Associate Director and Curator of Contemporary Ceramics—The International Exhibition at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (1999). The exhibition featured works by Arneson and other California artists, and was sponsored in part by grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities.