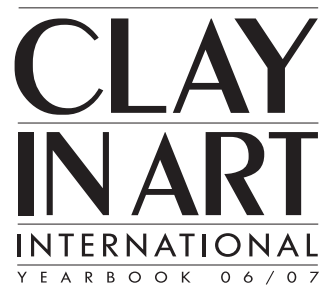

CLAY

IN ART

INTERNATIONAL

Y E A R B O O K 0 6 / 0 7

Hard cover (cloth bound) high quality volume,
25 cm (width) x 29 cm (height), 250 pages.
Published on February, 2007.



is a new publication which continues as the extension of **kerameiki techni** International Ceramic Art Review. Published once a year this exclusive annual record reports on the most important international current trends and developments in the field of contemporary clay art.

PUBLISHER – EDITOR: Kostas Tarkasis

ASSOCIATE EDITOR: Maria Petratou

TRANSLATIONS: Paul Edwards

GRAPHIC ARTIST: Andonis Vonazoudas

COMPUTER GRAPHICS: Magazine “Typographia” – Athens, Greece

PRINTING: COLOR PRINT – Athens, Greece

BINDING: Evangelos Androvic – Athens, Greece
Stachosi – Athens, Greece

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

The publication is available in both printed edition and digital format.
Digital (PDF): (acrobat reader 7 is required)

INDIVIDUALS

Printed: € 50.00 (approx. US \$ 62.50)
Digital (PDF): € 40.00 (approx. US \$ 50.00)

GROUPS

Both printed and digital: € 80.00 (approx. US \$ 100.00)

Inserted in the yearbook readers will find the **2006 CLAYART INTERNATIONAL PANORAMA CD-Rom**, with images and information from exhibitions, competitions and other events held worldwide through the year. The CD-Rom is an extension of the Yearbook contents with over 1200 extra images.

Additionally, (since 01/1/07) we offer all our individual registered readers at no extra charge, one month of free access to our new website

CLAY ART INTERNATIONAL.

The offer will start from the moment the site comes online.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: subs@clayart-international.com

- The reprinting of any text, and reproduction of images or illustrations are allowed only after written permission from the authors and the editor.
- The opinions and views expressed in this publication do not necessarily express those of the editors.
- We encourage the submission of material for consideration but this doesn’t place us under obligation.
- Material voluntarily submitted is not returned.

EDITORIAL

Tel/fax: + 30 210 6752766
cai@clayart-international.com
www.clayart-international.com
P.O. Box 76009, NEA SMYRNI 17110, ATHENS - GREECE



ISSN: 1790-6458

The first edition of CLAY IN ART INTERNATIONAL -Yearbook was a great publishing success, greeted with enthusiastic reviews and comments from all over the world.

We want to thank you all:

All the critics, curators, collectors and artists who have written to express support for the new publication and our Clayart International project in general.

All the ceramics and crafts magazines that have announced the publication dedicated special columns to report on it, and/or featured interviews with the publisher.

All the Kerameiki Techni subscribers who have shown their faith in us and joined us on this new journey.

All our enthusiastic new readers, many of whom do not belong exclusively to the clay community, but to the art world in general.

We feel honored and vindicated by your support.

Thanks to your positive response Clay in Art International has already established an enviable reputation as the exclusive annual record of current international trends and developments in the field of contemporary clay art. Through the pages of this annual publication and our website we will continue our investigation on the role of clay as a liberated medium serving the expressive values of contemporary applied and visual arts.

We will continue promoting and raising the profile of clay art internationally with insightful features reviews and articles presenting the work of significant established and lesser known artists, not just from the field of ceramics, but also visual artists, designers and architects who work in the medium as non-specialists.

One of the highlights of 2006 was undoubtedly the significant retrospective exhibition

"The Art of Betty Woodman" at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, the first ever on a living ceramic artist. It celebrated her contribution to contemporary ceramic sculpture and the interrelationship between ceramics, sculpture, and painting in her work. The two page reference on the exhibition, which appears in the Exhibition Highlights section, is directly linked with the corresponding section of our website where our readers will find an extended presentation supplementing the contents of the yearbook report with additional theoretical and visual coverage.

Another major event in 2006 was the opening of Korea’s Clayarch Gimhae Museum, the world's first Museum concerned with the relationship between ceramics and architecture. The opening exhibition featured the work of 16 worldly acclaimed artists from 10 countries, and included 47 large-scale works. We present the exhibition in one of the main articles of this edition.

The other main article in this edition is a long feature on the major international exhibition “The Human Form in Clay – The Mind’s Eye” held in Japan last March at the Museum of Contemporary Ceramic Art in the Shigaraki Ceramic Cultural Park. The exhibition, which will travel to three other important museums in Japan, includes some 80 works created by 26 ceramic artists from 11 countries, and has truly shaken the foundations of the Japanese view of ceramics. It was greatly discussed in Japan by the press and other media, and it has broadened the audience for ceramic art, not only among ceramists but also among artists from other mediums, and has drawn the attention of a very wide public.

In an exclusive preview we present the first major mid-career survey exhibition on the ceramic work of Kurt Weiser, organized by the Arizona State University Art Museum’s Ceramics Research Center (CRC). This travelling exhibition featuring approximately 40 artworks from the permanent collection of the ASU Art Museum and other American private and public collections, covers the 30-year creative career of the artist. It will open next November at the Contemporary Crafts Museum and Gallery in Portland, Oregon, and within the following three years it will be shown in some of America’s finest museums.

To conclude, we would like to announce that very soon our new webside CLAYART INTERNATIONAL will come online. The webside, which will be updated constantly, will be an innovative source of news and updates featuring images and information on actual current events held worldwide. It will constitute an alternative way for the international clay art community to communicate and interact.

S
T
I
N
E
T
I
N
O
C

LOUISE HINDSGALV
Burlesque Tableaus
by Jorunn Veiteberg

10 - 15

BETH CAVENER STICHTER
A Modest Proposal
by Garth Clark

16 - 23

JEAN-PIERRE LAROCQUE
In Conversation with Susan Jefferies

24 - 33

VIRGIL ORTIZ
Empowering Finurines
by Robert V. Gallegos

34 - 39

CRISTINA CORDOVA
Interviewed by Ann Nathan

40 - 45

THE HUMAN FORM IN CLAY
From Modern Art to Contemporary Ceramics
by Hiroko Miura

46 - 87

**RESONANCE
AND INSPIRATION**
MAGDALENE ODUNDO:
Breath and Dust
by Augustus Casely-Hayford

88 - 93

THE ESSENCE OF FORMS
The Clay Sculpture of Shida Kuo
by Todd Heyden

94 - 99

**THE DISH AS AN
ADVENTURE**
Recent Ceramics by Marit Tingleff
by Love Jönsson

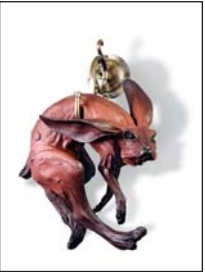
100 - 105

**A METAPHYSICAL
QUEST IN CLAY**
by Trond Borgen

106 - 111



LOUISE HINDSGALV



BETH CAVENER
STICHTER



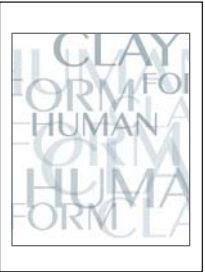
JEAN-PIERRE
LAROCQUE



VIRGIL ORTIZ



CRISTINA CORDOVA



THE HUMAN FORM
IN CLAY



RESONANCE
AND INSPIRATION



THE ESSENCE OF
FORMS



THE DISH AS AN
ADVENTURE



A METAPHYSICAL
QUEST IN CLAY



JASON WALKER



EXHIBITIONS
HIGHLIGHTS



KURT WEISER



SPLENDOR



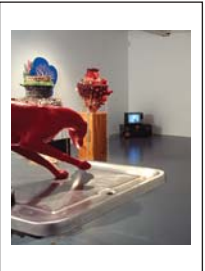
ARCHITECTURAL
CERAMIC EXHIBITION



PETER CALLAS



RAFA PERÉZ



ONE PART CLAY



BEAN FINNERAN



DONG-WON SHIN

JASON WALKER
Biomorph
by Donald Clark

112 - 118

EXHIBITION HIGHLIGHTS
BETTY WOODMAN, JUN KANEKO
RUDY AUTIO, STELLA BAKATSI

119 -127

KURT WEISER
Private Eden
by Edward Lebow

128 - 141

SPLENDOR
Ceramics by Rain Harris
by Namita Gupta Wiggers

142 - 145

**INTERNATIONAL
ARCHITECTURAL
CERAMIC EXHIBITION**

147 - 173

PETER CALLAS
Imperfection in a Modern Age
by Lisa G Westhelmer

174 - 179

RAFA PERÉZ
Freedom as the Source of Creation
by Carmen González Borrás

180 - 185

ONE PART CLAY
Ceramic Avant-gard & Mixed Media
by Garth Clark and Mark Del Vecchio

186 - 203

BEAN FINNERAN
Bodies of Works
by Peter Frank

204 - 209

DONG-WON SHIN
Stitched Reality
by Daehyung Lee

210 - 217

LOUISE HINDSGAVL THE FIGURINE

The porcelain figurine has held my interest for some length of time.

It belongs to a ceramic genre that boasts many virtues and the figurines are pretty. However, the classic figurines seem toothless and represent an idealised and romanticized world.

There exists another world that I would like to shed some new light on.

My interest is spurred on several counts. First and foremost, the opportunity to directly tell a tale appeals to me. Another aspect is the chance to unpack and rearrange the vast and tradition-bound baggage that the figurine is lumbered with.

In other words, my figurines lean on the classical figurines, but with a twist. All the virtues stand to fall and decay and the little stories are turned on their heads with a sense of wicked foreboding. And all within the frame of the inoffensive figurine centrepiece.

All the pieces are made of porcelain. Porcelain exudes such a fine note of civilisation thus underlining the contrast to my stories and at the same time making the reference to the classical figurine clear. The pieces consist also of toy bits and other everyday bric-a-brac to tie the stories to our contemporary lives.

IN REALITY.....,2006.
The Danish Museum of Art & Design, Copenhagen.
PHOTO: Dorthe Krogh

1. CAMOFLAGE, 2006. 31 x 35 x 47 cm
2. CONSUMED WITH PASSION, 2006. 54 x 46 x 58 cm
3. STILL SEXY, 2006. 50 x 23 x 25 cm
4. FEELING LOVE, 2006. 41 x 35 x 39 cm
5. PLAYMATES, 2006. 67 x 33 x 50 cm

BETH CAVENER STICHTER



The sculptures I create focus on human psychology – stripped of context and rationalization, and articulated through animal and human forms. This body of work was developed in an effort to understand how my own desires, fears, and insecurities have shaped my sexuality.

For this work, I collected stories from individuals who were willing to confide their most intimate experiences relating to gender identity, fantasies, fetishes, and abuses. I wanted to understand how these complex private experiences haunt our public personas.

The portraits created for this exhibition found their genesis in these shared personal accounts; I took their stories in and merged them with my own. The figures which have emerged use their animal body language in an effort to communicate their human natures: coy, desperate, lonely, and full of both fear and an unspoken longing.

BETH CAVENER STICHTER A Modest Proposal

by Garth Clark

Jonathan Swift's biting satirical work, "A Modest Proposal" (1729), suggested that poverty and hunger amongst the poor could be solved by selling their frequent and unwanted babies as source of food for the wealthy and powerful. It was a horrifying but instructive message, democratically placing us on the food chain. Flesh is flesh. In this exhibition of Beth Caverer Stichter's sculpture, her proposal references the same uncomfortable relationship in that she is also encouraging us to see people in an animal context, such as hares, goats, dogs, horses, and possums. Rather than using this relationship to objectify and repel, Stichter does the opposite, employing the animal as a device to illicit empathy and understanding.

Stichter grew up encouraged to follow two seemingly opposite roads, science through her father and art through her mother. What she took from her father's tutelage was to adopt the stance of the scientist, stepping back and looking at life with academic objectivity. More and more she found herself using her knowledge of science to explain her now long-term equation of man with animal giving her a singular voice, balancing emotion with knowledge and creating thereby a position of authority. She describes coming across a scientific theory by Carl Sagan that postulated that parts of our brain still retain characteristics of our reptilian and mammalian ancestors: "We are obliged," Sagan says, "to look at ourselves and the world through three quite different mentalities, [two of which lack the power of speech]. The human brain, amounts to three interconnected biological computers, [each with] its own special intelligence, its own subjectivity, its own sense of time and space, its own memory, motor, and other functions. Each brain corresponds to a separate major evolutionary step."¹

The reptilian portion of the brain is the oldest and is responsible for more primitive, instinctual behavior such as territoriality, possessiveness, aggression, and self-preservation, while the mammalian portion of the brain influences more social behavior, maternal instincts, familial ties, protection of the pack, and fear of predation. Governing these older remnants is the more recently evolved sapiens section of the brain, governing the more primal impulses with reason, memory, and self-awareness. So if we as human beings are governed in part by the same instincts as the crocodile and the rabbit, what separates us from the animals? This, in a sense, is the basis of Stichter's journey as an artist and in a way, as a scientist too. "I take the traits associated with this sapiens section of our brain to constitute the capacity for humans to be rational, and what separates us from other animals," Stichter says. "We, as a civilization, have largely outgrown our dependence on our baser instincts in order to survive, yet we continue to be governed by a more primal ancestry. I am intrigued by the idea that these primitive animal instincts lay lurking in our own depths, waiting for the chance to slide past a conscious moment. You can imagine that at the very least, this division is a strain on a subconscious level. It made sense to me that there is an animal part of my brain, unable to give voice to all I have tried to bury."

In this body of work she is exploring this view from a particular vantage point, our psychosexual mechanisms. Sexuality has always been part of her work but often in the background as she was leery to take this on full-frontally. The genesis of this group of sculptures came from a series of encounters Stichter had with people who she perceived as using private issues of gender, sexual experiences, desires, and abuses to create their public personas. At that point Stichter began to ponder how sexual practices form our character, particularly when they are dysfunctional, and this series of work was born.

JEAN-PIERRE LAROCQUE

CLAY SCULPTURE



HORSE WITH BAGGAGE
2005 - 06
96.5 x 70 x 40 cm
107 x 86.5 x 53.5 cm
PHOTO: Bertrand Carriere

I relate to medias like clay and drawing which are suitable to quick multiple changes and allow for a direct approach. I have given up on plans and goals, they tend to interfere with the many possibilities generated as work evolves. In its raw state clay is a boneless, unstructured material, a proper metaphor for chaos and nature. It is well suited for the roundabout ways of a transforming mind as it struggles to make some sense and attempts to fabricate meaning.

A piece in progress is a likely place for crisis to occur. It has the fertility of chaos. There an unpredictable situation may build up that has to be dealt with. In the end what you get to see is the measure of resolution brought to the crisis. The outcome is the piece itself. The resulting work is something better experienced than explained. It is the embodiment of a concept, record and a witness. It is layered with clues, evidence of erasures and traces of numerous adjustments which provide some transparency to the means of representation.

Meaning is a byproduct of articulation. It cannot be a given. It is what one arrives at and recognizes, at best a relative and temporary solution. This has to do with the elusive, nomadic essence of meaning. Working in the dark with change and chance as partners, one is lucky to catch a glimpse of it as the nightly caravan speeds by. For my part, I am content in the aftermath if I can retrieve some aleatory marks.

I work mostly from themes: horse, human head, the figure, vessel forms. Those are starting points, mere parameters against free fall. Being an artist is like jumping off a plane and making a parachute on the way down.

I selected the charcoal drawings from a larger suite that I began during the summer of 1997. Usually I begin with a face: some happen easily some will resist. I may draw and erase partially or completely thirty or forty times before some visage appears that I want to build and add on. It may begin with the head of a girl to turn into a bearded cavalier looking sideways only to be wiped away and rebuilt into a fakir or a young boy who knows too much. I wanted the figures to touch the edges of the paper with their heads and feet so that they are grounded in the space of the paper.

My finished work looks unfinished and sketchy as if I had walked away from it. By choice, a piece is resolved as it reaches as it reaches a feeling of open-endedness, as if stopped in its tracks, Pompeii-like, still on its way to a different appearance, unsure whether it is emerging or dissolving. The work is largely about its own making. It is preoccupied with language, this ordering devise outside which no meaning is attainable. It is about assessing dosages of order and wondering what it stands for. I try to get as close as possible to the semantic fiction that a piece made itself while I looked the other way. This is what I need to get out of my work and what keeps me going. Those are primary questions. They may even be the only ones that matter.

I am interested in that place in our psyche where nature and culture have to sit down and deal with one another. Engage in my work, I feel like I am in the front row watching this odd couple negotiate the more or less comfortable intersections that we have to live with; the crossroads of the body and mind, materials and ideas, order and disorder.

"Sure all art is the result of one's having been in danger; of having gone through an experience all the way to the end to where no one can go any further. The further one goes, the more private, the more personal, the more singular an experience becomes, and the thing one is making is, finally, the necessary, irrepressible, and as nearly as possible definite utterance of this singularity."

Rainer Maria Rilke, Letters on Cezanne

VIRGIL ORTIZ

LA RENAISSANCE INDIGENE

"...Not to get pigeon-holed in my craft and to refrain from staying within the American Indian galleries and only doing American Indian art shows remains a priority for me. My main focus now is to break out of that mold and to pave the road for the younger generation and show them they don't have to be so afraid to break out of the norm. Art speaks for itself...that's why I never name my pieces. I don't like to control the vision an owner may have of what one of my pieces is. I want the owner of a piece of my art to grow with the piece..."



UNTITLED, 2001. H: 50 cm
Courtesy of King Galleries



1. UNTITLED, 1998. H: 45 cm
2. UNTITLED, 1998. H: 45 cm
3. UNTITLED, 1998. H: 36.25 cm
4. UNTITLED, 1999. H: 61.25 cm

VIRGIL ORTIZ

Empowering Figurines

by Robert V. Gallegos

The demands by the Spanish put upon the Pueblos of New Mexico to “throw away their idols and become good Catholics”, was a relentless reality for centuries. Having to hide their religious practices, the Guadalupe figure with a native face, demonstrates Virgil’s attempt to capture in clay the development of a dual religion which evolved after hundreds of years of suppression. The zipper on the front of Guadalupe suggests that the cloak of Catholicism can be removed thus being Catholics during the day, Natives at night!

And what is more current than the troubles the Catholic Church is suffering through today? Virgil’s priest figure not only speaks of current events but perhaps also of actions suffered by the Pueblos in the past. The importance of these figures are not necessarily what they represent, but the empowerment that they give Virgil, i.e., all native groups. They can quietly criticize the dominant groups through humorous expressions in clay.

A number of years ago, Virgil saw the movie “Crying Game”, and was deeply moved. A two sided hermaphroditic figure was his response to capture the characters essence of dual sexuality. More importantly, Virgil made it a permanent part of the world not to be forgotten.

Respect and admiration of other artists’ work has motivated Virgil to create forms he may not have considered. After reading a book on the puppets made by Gustav Baumann, Virgil seized the opportunity to create a new figure that is animated and suggests life. As important, these puppets provided a new opportunity to incorporate his love for fashion by making the outfits. Virgil’s figure making and what it represents today evolved from the one hundred plus years old figurative making tradition at Cochiti Pueblo. The making of clay figurines (Monos as they are often called) in Cochiti Pueblo was the end product fueled by the great desire of the Anglos to collect “religious idols” and taboo items to sell. The market was first satisfied by items being brought up from Mexico via the Jornada de Muerto. However, this source took too long and was unreliable. Soon traders in Santa Fe, New Mexico like Aaron and Jake Gold satisfied the demand by having local pueblo artists make “god-like” figures. Potters from Cochiti Pueblo excelled in the variety and size of their figurines which began in the 1870’s. However, never were these figures a representation of anything religious in the pueblos. The potters merely made figures which the traders thought were “god-like” looking! They eventually evolved into humorous expressions of their neighbors outside the pueblos. The Cochitis had the last laugh, the start of the empowerment quality.

In 1989, at age 19, Virgil first saw historic Cochiti figurines and was awed by their size and balance. Once explained to him that the only difference between the making of figures by his ancestors and he was that he was influenced by people and events outside his Pueblo in the 20th century. The method and the reasons for making figures had not changed, only the influence! This was the beginning! One month later this magnificent male figure dressed in S & M attire appeared. Madonna’s book was the impetus of this creation.

Virgil no longer suggests the meaning of his figures although they are still meaningful to him. At first, Virgil would name the figures and explain what the figures meant to him. It wasn’t long before a common response was “it looks like this and means this to me.” Why limit their empowerment by defining them through a specific “world view”? All views are important to Virgil. For a figure to mean different things to different people defines the ultimate success and pleasure of making these marvelous figures.

Robert V. Gallegos, October , 2006

CRISTINA CORDOVA



LA GRAN CORRIDA, 2005.
Wall piece. 42.5 x 22.5 x 27.5 cm
Photo provided by Ann Nathan Gallery

CRISTINA CORDOVA Interviewed by Ann Nathan

...**A.N:** Would you say the beginning of your career started at Alfred (NY State College of Ceramics at Alfred University) or prior to your decision to attend Alfred? How great an influence was Alfred on your work? Who did you study under? On a scale of 1-10 measure the Alfred influence?

C.C: Attending Alfred University became a key step in my development as a ceramic artist. I arrived first as a Special Student and was able to delve into the innumerable spectrum of ceramic techniques offered by the department. I took courses in glazing and sculpture with Andrea Gill and Wayne Higby which allowed me to strengthen my portfolio both conceptually as well as from a materials standpoint. Once in graduate school I was able to experiment and investigate, trying different styles, formats, building strategies and surfaces in search of my own language. I also became influenced by fellow students and their progressive uses of the material which set the foundations for my interest in mixed media. During those years I worked with John and Andrea Gill, Walter McConnell, Anne Courier and Linda Sikora. Their critiques where invaluable clues as to the direction and effectiveness of my strategies. I greatly valued their input and continue to feed from it several years after graduation. In terms of my career, even though I had began showing my work at Pamil Fine Art in Puerto Rico my Alfred experience cemented my professional commitment towards becoming a ceramic sculptor and its influence in my trajectory can not be measured....

The artist's interview to Ann Nathan, owner of the Ann Nathan Gallery, Chicago, Illinois, was realized to accompany this presentation.

At a certain point one becomes aware of the prevalent means for communication and expression in art and attempts to understand their power and context. In my case, there is an involuntary gravity that has always drawn my efforts towards the figure. I believe there is an unconscious and immediate empathic connection that occurs upon perceiving a figure. An automatic, self-referential mechanism that projects onto a figurative work a certain history and meaning depending on the interpretation of its formal qualities. Growing up in an environment that offered a cult for the body both for its sensual potential as well as for its broad influence as religious imagery saturated with dramatic portrayals allowed for a rooting of these charged associations.

As a ceramic sculptor, the process of creation involves multiple aspects that require equal attention to ultimately give place to an idea. From a formal/technical standpoint, the experimentation and development of clays, glazes and other surface techniques absorbs half of my agenda. On the other hand, my conceptual preoccupations demand an equal amount of research and visual exploration in an ongoing search for artistic language.

Through the primary vehicle of the figure and the materiality of clay I am in constant search for a presence. The recombination of elements that resonate with a personal sense of gender, culture and time give place to compositions that become alternate means of immersion into reality. A reality where the boundaries between the sensorial and psychological become indistinct and where a profound language rooted in intuition and archived experience dictates paradigms. It is through these objects that I begin to understand the indeterminate and ever changing aspects of our humanity.

THE HUMAN FORM IN CLAY

THE MIND'S EYE

Contemporary ceramic art, encompassing a wide variety of creative styles and materials, vessels and sculptural forms, and even multi-media, has finally attained a level of unlimited possibilities for creative expression.

The special exhibition presented by the Shigaraki Ceramic Cultural Park "Human Form in Clay – The Mind's Eye" was an attempt to explore one facet of ceramic art from Japan and around the world by focusing on the theme of the human form. By taking this theme, our goal was to explore trends in contemporary ceramic art from abroad that had heretofore not been introduced widely in Japan. Examining the true nature of the messages communicated by the artists, we tried to demonstrate the unique characteristics of the ceramic art of different countries.

Robert Arneson
Peter VandenBerge
Mark Burns
Richard Shaw
Tony Natsoulas
Viola Frey
Patti Warashina
Robert Brady
Akio Takamori

One of the pioneers of contemporary American ceramics was Robert Arneson, a leader of the "funk art" movement. Arneson became head of the ceramics department at the University of California, in Davis in 1962. The legendary ceramics studio there, known as TB-9, turned out a number of prominent artists in the ensuing years. Peter VandenBerge was in the first class to graduate after Arneson became head of the department. Others followed, including Richard Shaw, Tony Natsoulas, and Robert Brady. These artists went on to become leading figures in contemporary American ceramics as they developed their individual approaches in expressing the human form.

Tracing the development of the Bay Area Figurative Movement, this exhibition introduced recent work by these four artists, as well as Robert Arneson's anti-war work created during the Cold War in the 1980s. In addition, we included work rich in social commentary by Japanese artist Akio Takamori, Patti Warashina, and Mark Burns.



American Contemporary Ceramic Art and the Human Form

Arina **A**ilincal, (RO)
Gertraud **M**öhwald, (DE)
Sarah **S**campton, (UK)
Leiko **I**kemura, (NL)
Sabine **H**eller, (DE)
Carmen **D**ionyse, (BE)
Imre **S**chrammel, (HU)
Paul **D**ay, (UK)
Aldo **R**ontini, (IT)
Philippe **B**arde, (CH)
Maria **G**eszler **G**arzuly, (HU)

Although European artists use a wide range of completely different styles of expression, one common characteristic of much of their work is that it philosophically addresses inner aspects of human existence. Another trend in European ceramics is that artists are choosing to work with traditional materials such as terra cotta. This exhibition introduced European artists who have developed a variety of individual approaches to their work: Maria Geszler Garzuly, who works with the typically Hungarian technique of photographic transfer; Gertraud Möhwald, who embeds shards of German pottery into her work; Sabine Heller, who carves human forms from commercial bricks; Arina Ailinkai from Romania, who inscribes words as symbols of human culture on the interior surfaces of her cast human forms; Carmen Dionyse from Belgium, who gives formative expression to the human psyche; the United Kingdom's Sarah Scampton, who fuses archaic images of people and vessels in her work; also from the U.K., Paul Day, who is attracting attention as a rising artist working in terra cotta combining human figures and architectural structures; Aldo Rontini of Italy, whose terra cotta is somehow reminiscent of traditional Italian terra cotta; Philippe Barde of Switzerland, who won the Grand Prize in last year's Ceramic Biennale in Korea, and reconstructs the outlines of people's faces in his bowl forms; and Leiko Ikemura, known as a modern artist in Germany.



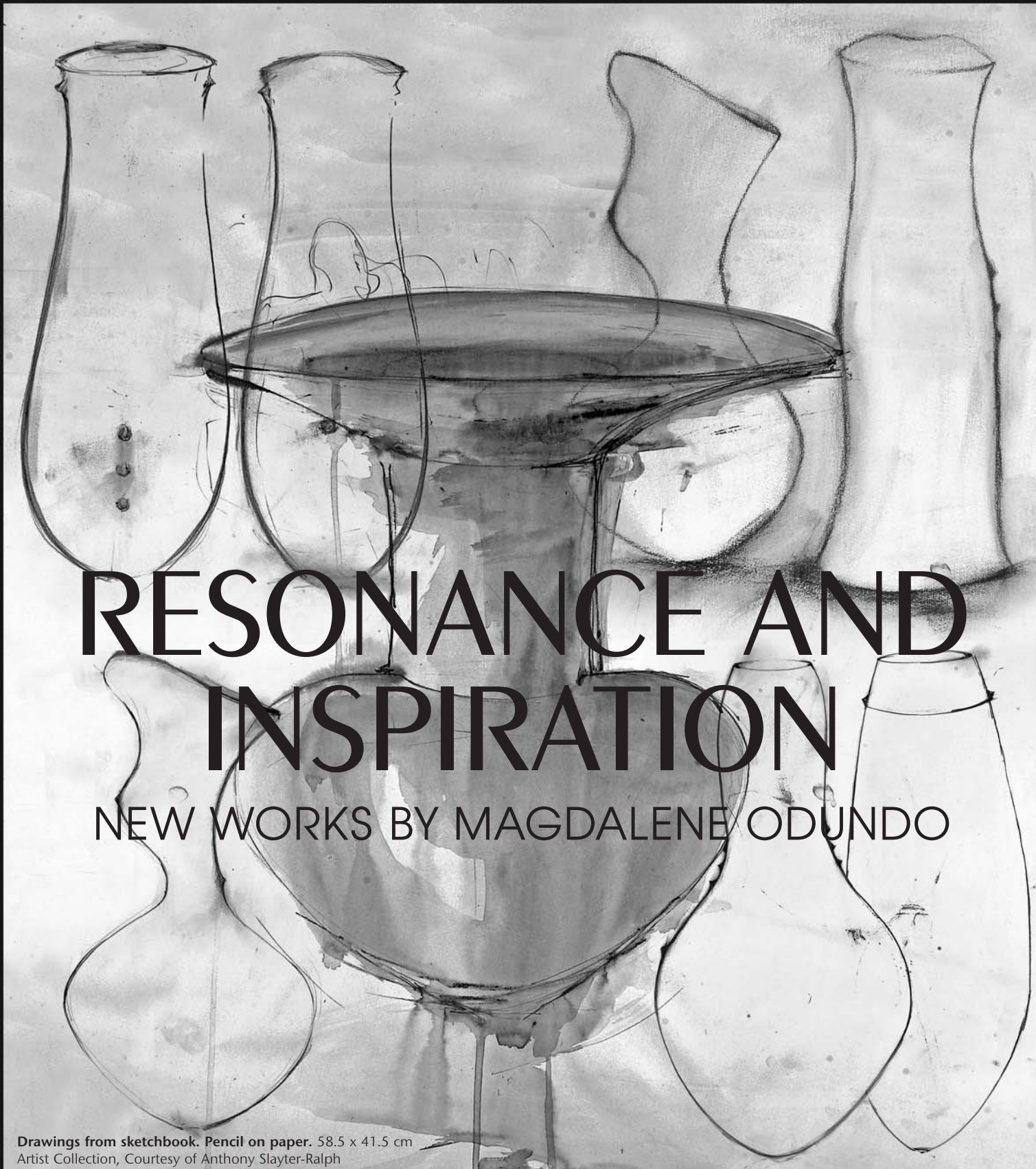
Varied Approaches in Contemporary European Ceramic Art

Shin **F**ujihira, (JP),
Tin-Ju **S**hao, (TW)
Mokichi **O**htsuka, (JP)
Mikang **L**im, (KR)
Ki-Joo **L**ee, (KR)
Takashi **H**inoda, (JP)

Asian artists featured in this exhibition include Koreans Ki-Joo Lee, who creates realistic expressions of the human form, and Mikang Lim with her stylish installations. Ting-Ju Shao, from Taiwan, creates work contrasting humans and nature with a comical touch. In Japan, the number of artists working with the human form has been very small. In recent years, however, ceramic artists working with this theme have begun to attract attention. This exhibition presented the work of three Japanese artists. Shin Fujihira expresses the human form while bringing out the charm of the ceramic medium in a world of lyricism. Mokichi Ohtsuka creates work founded on European history, yet infused with Oriental spirituality. Takashi Hinoda attempts to express the human in modern society through incorporating elements of anime into his work. Since the beginning of the 20th century, even as figurative sculpture receded in the face of the trend toward abstract art, a number of ceramic artists in the West took the human form as their theme. The variety of ways in which the works in this exhibition "looked" out at the viewers made us aware of a new way of encountering ceramic art.



Future Trends and Spirituality – **Asian** Contemporary Ceramics



RESONANCE AND INSPIRATION

NEW WORKS BY MAGDALENE ODUNDO

Drawings from sketchbook. Pencil on paper. 58.5 x 41.5 cm
Artist Collection, Courtesy of Anthony Slayter-Ralph

PHOTO: David Westwood Photography

MAGDALENE ODUNDO Breath and Dust

By Augustus Casely-Hayford

I have always felt that carbon and oxygen are the two great storytellers of the periodic table. They both seem to tell the same story but in very different ways. Carbon in its most manifest form is the archaeology of nature, the enduring imprint of organic matter. It is both the basis for many of the compounds that comprise living cells and the enduring vessel that stores fragile fragments of our past. It is part of everything we are. We release carbon wrapped in spent oxygen even when we breathe, leaving an imprint of ourselves on the atmosphere. Oxygen is the essence of life, carbon its shadow. These two elements carry the fundamental narrative of existence—who we are, were and will be.

In her carbonized and oxidized work Magdalene Odundo has unravelled that chemistry and found ways of revealing the lost history of breath and dust. She has negotiated her way into the most fundamental part of what we are and then rendered that place in clay. This series of pieces pushes Odundo's thesis further and deeper. This is not an exploration of cognition. Resonance and Inspiration are a deconstruction of existentialism—this work, like oxygen and carbon, is of us.

Odundo's work is conceptually seamless and completely convincing. One might imagine that her pieces come into the world fully formed, but this work is hard fought, forged mentally and physically from research, skill, minute incremental reconsideration and plumbing Odundo's exceptional imagination....

Augustus Casely-Hayford, Ph.D., Director of inIVA (Institute of International Visual Arts).

When I came back to Kenya in 1975 I became aware by how the African process of life was shadowed by pots. Funeral rights, for instance, could involve pot making and pot breaking. In almost all traditional African societies, all rights of passage were marked with ceremonial ritual, and for these, birth, marriage, death, including those meant to appease those living in the world beyond, involved the use of ceramics; bridal gifts, such as the Nupe giving out bridal pots, that were beautifully made and inlaid with metalwork, a set of cooking pots always making up part of a girl's trousseau amongst the Mijikenda of Kenya or internment, which accorded the dead with an array of pots.



These visits made me realise that I was going to like making objects in clay. I began to appreciate that, as a Kenyan and an African, I was really part of a rich cultural heritage.

In Nigeria I learned to look and to listen. By listening to people who made art, they made it apparent that ambition wasn't enough to make you a potter. Patience was the vital ingredient, you had to learn to observe, to participate in pottery making, carving, weaving; the act of knowing wasn't just thinking, it was a totality. This was more than apprenticeship, it was a form of engagement and adoption...

"I was in love with the making part of the process, my work had to do with technique, with how wonderful the firing could be," she said. "In my early work I was infatuated, intoxicated with the tactile quality. I spent months trying to get a surface quality, which I had total control over its final result.

VESSEL SERIES I, no.1, 2004. 45 x 33 cm
Artist Collection, Courtesy of Anthony Slayter-Ralph

SHIDA
KUO



UNTITLED, No. 06-01, 2006. 53 x 42 x 97 cm

THE ESSENCE OF FORMS

The Clay Sculpture of Shida Kuo

by Todd Heyden

...Kuo maintains that his work carries no consciously intended message: "It is a record of what I feel through this material [clay]." He finds that his audience does not always relate to his work as he intended, although he reports most react to its calm, simple quietude. Kuo thinks that his work cannot be understood quickly: "It is not like a movie you can see once or twice; it is something that one must live with for some time."

Kuo admires Martin Puyead's work for the "almost-seen, almost-understood elusive quality that touches one," and this quality is surely present in his art as well. Even without a stated message, Kuo's work touches one by evoking curiosity about something hidden that can be discovered by spending time with his work. It is not surprising that Kuo says that the best way to appreciate his art is to "live with [it] for some time."

For this sculptor, a work is meant to be viewed from all sides. Think of a sea shell, how every aspect of it draws our attention, even the interior, and you can understand what Kuo is up to. Every angle of a Kuo sculpture should be considered: if one takes down a wall-hanging sculpture, he finds additional marks and colorings on the back; if one stands close and peers into a freestanding work, he discovers various colored oxides daubed on the insides. Every surface carries color and content.

A key concept in Kuo's work is the uniqueness of each creation, which is why he has refrained from creating sculptures in a series, which dilutes the power of the original, he feels. For him, each piece is an original work, not one in a series. In fact, he creates only 10 -12 works in an average year. He feels compelled to make an important discovery each time, to explore the new, the unknown, rather than repeating ideas. He finds creativity precious: "It is hard to squeeze out uniquely styled pieces." A finished sculpture, he says, "contains great energy" because it is the result of lengthy exploration....

Todd Heyden Ph.D, is an Associate Professor at Pace University. He met Shida Kuo in the 1990's and has admired his work ever since.

It puzzles me why certain forms and some particular types of material, would always possess more visceral power over me than others. Similarly, I am curious how people of different origins and backgrounds respond to forms and materials in an identical way. Is that an evidence of homogeneity of mankind as a collective species? It seems to me that those shared experiences of emotional and spiritual impacts created by forms and materials have been articulated by our bodies even before they could be understood by our minds. It is a collective sense of déjà vu for mankind, repressed by consciousness but persistent in our veins.

Drawing was the primary method of communication before the invention of languages. Wasn't drawing initially based on observations of the nature?

What was the process, then, in which the nature was transformed into shapes and lines?

I am driven by these related questions, and cannot help trying different angles when approaching those natural creations. I attempt to locate the essence of forms, as a whole or as configurations of fragments. Those fragmented, unfinished forms are stored in my head, waiting to spring up from the entity called "I" after a series of conflicts, contradictions and convergence among themselves, until they emerge as a new form of completeness.

My work from the past few years demonstrates this creative process. Instead of making any statement through my work, I have played a faithful recorder, using only my sensitivity to materials and undisguised techniques, just to catch the forms that might have been otherwise left in oblivion.

I use primarily ceramic and wood for my work because human beings have used these two materials for thousands of years regardless of cultural or racial differences. They are so close to us in many ways and become the best material for me to convey my ideas.



MARIT TINGLEFF

THE EXPERIENCE OF THE FANTASTIC

THE DISH AS AN ADVENTURE

Recent Ceramics by Marit Tingleff

by Love Jönsson

...In many of the dishes made by Marit Tingleff there is a dimension of something almost archaic: a presence of time and memory lingering on when the specific moment has already passed. It is as if everything temporary and incidental has been washed away, leaving behind but a kernel of that which is essential, most elementary and resistive. We are faced with blotches, streaks, and evidence of something dripping; traces of geometrical and organic forms. To be sure, recurrent themes and even motifs, frequently connected to nature, remain discernible as compositional ideas governing the design of these works. At the same time, however, much of their architectonics come across as disordered. The traces left by brushes, tools, and rags run over their surfaces may not always form a composition in a strict sense. In many respects, what they constitute is rather something with the character of a document; they are signs of human activity. Many of them can be read as reports narrating how an empty space is being conquered or how a geographical area becomes gradually transformed.

A number of the works are marked by a tempered colour palette dominated by dark, dull hues, as if viewed through a grey filter. Other works are teeming with radiant tones of sun-yellow, red, pink, and light green. The colour scheme relies on a dialectic back-and-forth movement between the two extremes of restraint and richness, continually giving rise to new syntheses. Indeed, Marit Tingleff stands out as “the painter among Norwegian ceramists,” in the apt characterisation of the art historian and critic Jorunn Veiteberg.

In the individual pieces we can also see a corresponding movement between their totality and its particulars. Even in the largest of the dishes, extending over one and half metres in length, the clarity of the detail remains striking – in the brush stroke, the curvature of the edge, the resonance of two colour fields juxtaposed with great daring. However, the care and attention with which the artist treats these details is not indicative of any pure pursuit of refinement...

Love Jönsson is a crafts and design critic and teaches at the School of Design and Crafts at Göteborg University, Sweden.

I often ask myself the question: “Why on earth do I choose to make ceramics?” I hardly ever succeed in coming up with a rational and comprehensible answer to this question. The utility value of my occupation to society has undergone a definitive change - from being based on a concrete need for practical and beautiful things, to becoming a profession in which the exploration of artistic possibilities is now a primary concern. So when I am in the frame of mind in which I really want an answer, when I need to feel that my efforts in life involve something people actually need, then I always end up feeling depressed. I therefore need to leave behind the narrow, puritanical interpretation of the utility concept if it is to be meaningful...

JENS ERLAND KOMPOSITT



SHADOW II, 2005. D: 103cm. PHOTO: Olav Garborg

A METAPHYSICAL QUEST IN CLAY

by Trond Borgen

...Simple, yet intricate monumental forms are here created in what Erland calls composite ceramics – combinations of two very different materials in such a way that the intrinsic qualities of each material are brought out to full advantage and used to heighten our experience of the other material. His early forms of this combination carry the title *lovedeathdust*, which, in the spirit of Samuel Beckett, sums up human life as a quick breath, a longing for something bigger, and a death that turns us all into a handful of dust. This dust is not just contained in the clay; it is sometimes to be found in the pleated folds of the air filters. For Erland does not only use new filters; he also fits around his ceramic circles old, used and dirty filters taken from the construction machines, thus demonstrating very clearly how he has positioned himself in post-industrial art, in which any material can be used, and in which the references to an industrial reality, normally found far away from the purity of art, are seemingly effortlessly incorporated in our experience of art.

Straight from the big machines, *lovedeathdust* could also have been called *dieseldustsmell*, for some of the black filters involve our senses directly as we stand before them. In these dark versions it is as if the angels are no longer innocent; they are pitch-black creatures thrown out of heaven together with Lucifer and brought down to earth as fallen angels. And the echo from these wings is no longer divine, but hellish. If filters are lungs made for breathing, some of these lungs are now clogged up and cannot be of any help for man on earth – pollution is part of man's existential condition, and who or what can save him then?

Right in-between these extremes – the white and the black suns of art, the white and the black angels – stands man, drawn in both directions in his existence here on earth. There is an obvious metaphysical quest in Erland's composite ceramics; one is indeed searching for innocence, but it is not clear what the end result will be. In order to get any closer to an answer, it helps to study the way Erland treats both surfaces: on his ceramic circular discs there are delicate nuances left by the process in the wood-fired kiln, but also consciously intended patterns made by the artist. And he has treated the filter paper in various ways. In a catalogue photograph of the artist in front of four of these composite ceramic black suns, we see four circles that also make a square because a small section of each of the black filters is white. Erland has placed himself strategically in the middle of the square that is then formed behind him. Here is an obvious reference to Leonardo da Vinci and his drawing of a man inscribed in a circle and a square...

Trond Borgen is a Norwegian art critic, lecturer, curator and author. He has published several books on art, in Norway, the UK and Belgium.



JASON WALKER

I am a part of a culture with two very distinct camps – the manmade and the natural. We no longer allow ourselves inclusion in the definition of nature. Nature has become something outside of what we are. How has this separation occurred?

It is my belief that technology is the impetus for this great mind shift.

Human societies have long created tools, or technologies, to solve specific and urgent problems of physical life. For instance, a twenty-mile walk to the market used to be an all day affair, but it is now just a quick trip to the store in our automobiles. Due to real benefits such as this, our culture has embraced technology with blind admiration. We marvel at every new invention and believe technology will navigate any problem that may arise. It in turn has created a new set of problems.

This is the story I am narrating in my ceramic work. I want to explore how technology is both friend and foe.

We rely on it in every mode of our lives. Thus, I have chosen to portray images like a cog from a motor that aids us in transport, plumbing parts that bring water to our homes and electric power poles and parts that bring heat and light.

Juxtaposed with these images are images of animals and landscape. A bird as a symbol of the spirit or a fish as a metaphor for wealth or sustenance are common to my vocabulary. All the images are things I see and interact with often, if not daily.

They are a representation of my world and an examination of the way in which technology has woven itself into the fabric of our existence. It has changed the way we perceive nature and redefined what it means to be human.



GREEN FISH, 2006. 40 x 25 x 22.5 cm

EXHIBITION



THE ART OF BETTY WOODMAN

The Metropolitan Museum
of Art, New York
April 25 - July 30, 2006



JUN KANEKO

Selected Works
1989-2005

Museum of Modern Art, Gifu,
Gifu, Japan
April 15 - July 9, 2006

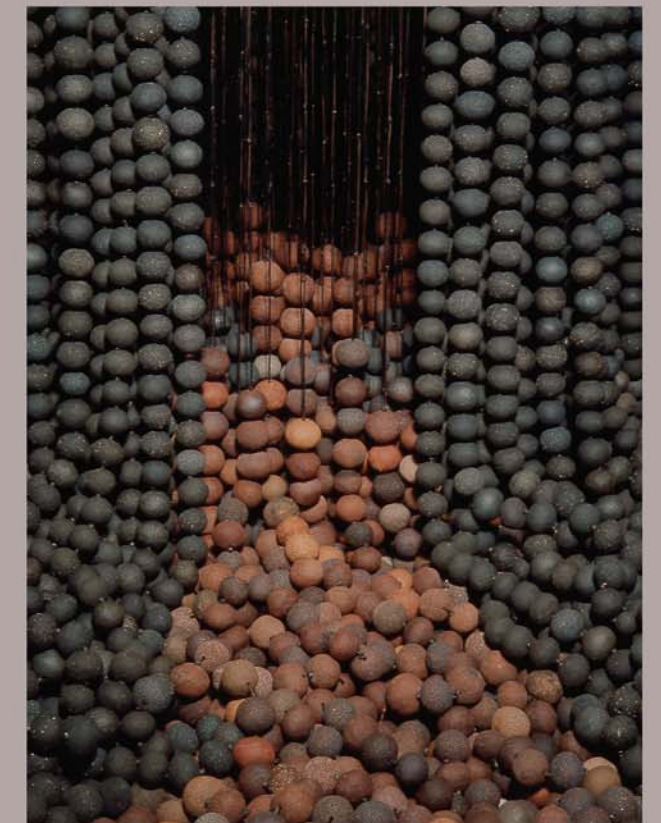
HIGHLIGHTS



RUDY AUTIO

The infinite figure

Holter Museum of Art,
Helena, Montana, U.S.A.
June 12 - August 30, 2006



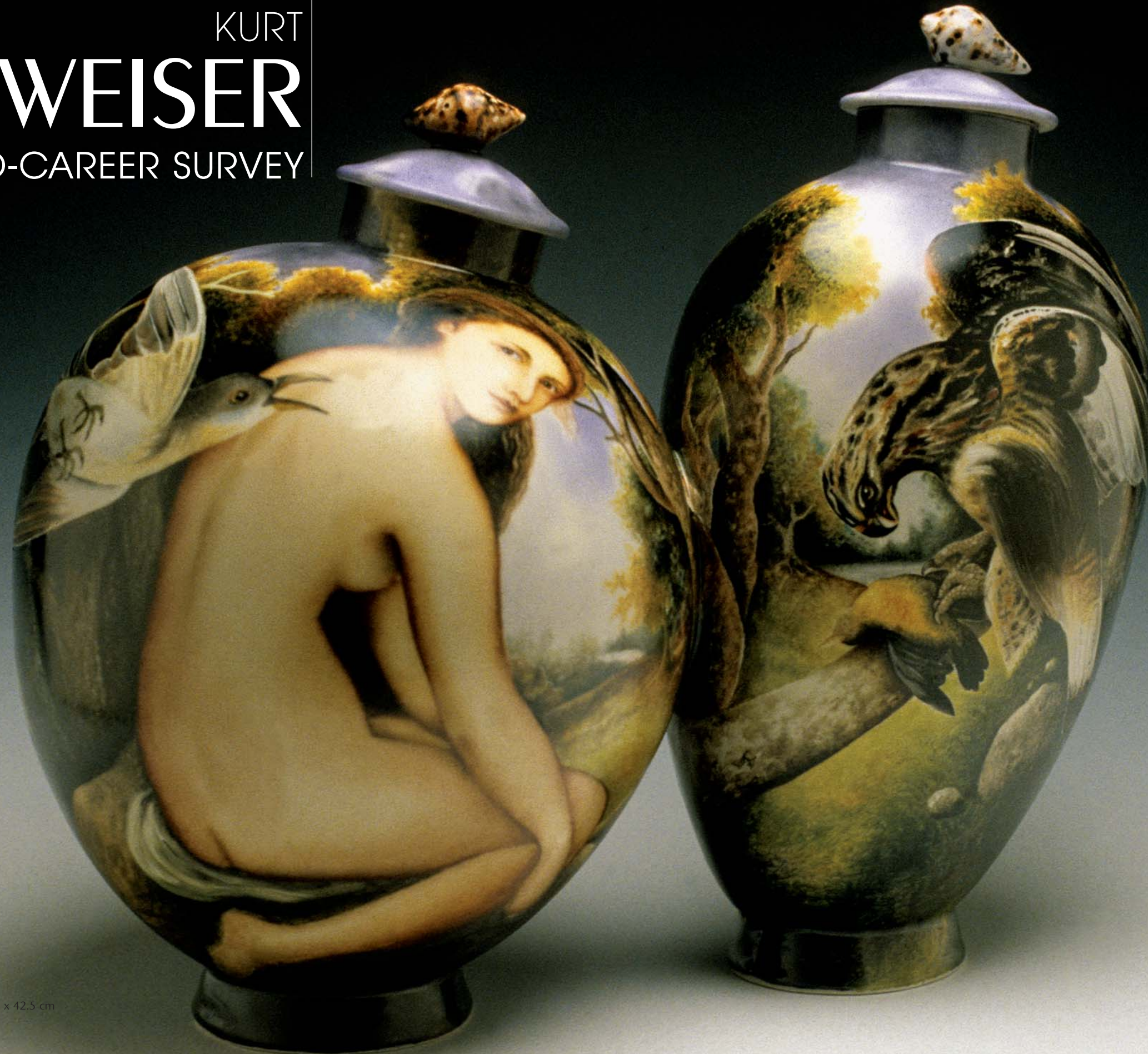
THE FLOW OF LIFE

Sculptures
of Stella Bakatsi

Red Gallery, Athens, Greece
February 27 - April 5, 2007

KURT WEISER

A MID-CAREER SURVEY



ROULETTE, 2002. 37.5 x 42.5 cm

For years the work I did in ceramics was an effort to somehow express the formal and beautiful nature of the material. As interesting as this exploration was I always had the vague feeling that the best expression of the material only came as a gift of nature, problem was, nature and I never got along that well. Somewhere in the midst of this struggle I realized that the materials are there to allow you to say what you need to say, not to tell you what to say. So I gave up trying to control nature and decided to use what I had learned about the materials to express some ideas about nature itself and my place in it. I started drawing and painting on pots out of desperation more than anything else... to have some say over what happened on the surface. I thought about the childhood experience of sitting at the breakfast table staring into the images on the cereal box. This cereal box absorbed my attention like a sponge, still half asleep every bit of information and image held my attention to the exclusion of everything else....it was a great place. I wanted to make something that had the same absorbent and compelling surface that that breakfast cereal box had when I was a child. At first I made many tea pots and drew on them or painted with china paints and later on moved on to other shapes that were mostly classically Chinese but as if viewed in one of those fun house mirrors at a circus. The ideas and subjects of these paintings on the pots are for the most part just a collection of my own history of fantasy and view of reality, built the same way we dream...a central idea and a cast of other characters and environments that just seem to show up to complete the picture.

SPLENDOR

CERAMICS BY RAIN HARRIS



FROU FROU, 2006. 22.5 x 22.5 x 47.5 cm



BEDAZZLE, 2006. 20 x 20 x 32.5 cm

PHOTO: Doug Weisman.

SPLENDOR

Ceramics by Rain Harris

by Namita Gupta Wiggers

..Beneath a confection of delicately tinted sculptures embellished with flowers and tipped in lustrous gold, Rain Harris' work is about boundaries and tension. Stretching the limits of ornamentation while maintaining strong silhouettes, her works combine forms derived from boudoir objects of prior eras and voluptuous shapes from nature. Harris' sculptures are simultaneously attractive and repulsive. The work tests the limits of elegance and kitsch, ornamentation and excess.

Harris' work on view evolved from close examination of cosmetic bottles typically housed in a woman's boudoir of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. These small, feminized vessels stored secret potions concocted in the name of beautification. In reality, the contents were often quite toxic, resulting in illness or even death for the user.

Within the exhibition Splendor, Harris moves her vessels beyond functionality and bedside residence. Here, she mimics elements of Baroque, Rococo and Victorian design. Using her own vocabulary of forms and surfaces that reference—but do not copy—specific domestic objects, the level of detail approaches absurdity as Harris tests the boundaries of grotesque ornamentation.

Wall pieces, such as Frivolity, exemplify this density of decoration that flirts with excess. Moving from the pedestal to the wall, Harris could have enlarged the proportions of her work to fit the larger surface area. Instead, she deliberately retains a domestic scale, electing to fill a small architectural space defined by colored wallpaper with forms derived from the paper's patterns. These forms frame, cover, and extend that pattern, concentrating the space with a proliferation of decorated elements. Harris' intimate mini-installations, like Frivolity, pull the viewer into swirls and roses, activating the space through adornment.

Once her aesthetic limit for detail is satiated, Harris moves her attention to a different type of object and space. As a result, sculptures like Saccharine and Bon Bon grow increasingly concentrated, full of elements and further patterning. Works like Frou Frou push the limit almost over the top. Here, Harris adds rhinestones, feathers and glass to luster glaze and decals, saturating a modestly-sized sculpture with glitz and sparkle.¹

Harris' work exemplifies a current shift in art today, where the aesthetics of domesticity—lowbrow elements, in particular—are increasingly merged with studio art practice. While her processes and techniques come from her BFA training at the Rhode Island School of Design, the aesthetics Harris explores come from the world of flea markets, yard sales and thrift stores. Defying concrete categorization, Harris' hybrid sculptures merge contemporary cultural trends with Rococo panache, recalling objects from past eras while drawing new attention to aspects of their form, surface patterns and historical antecedents.

Namita Gupta Wiggers, Curator, Contemporary Crafts Museum & Gallery

INTERNATIONAL ARCHITECTURAL CERAMIC EXHIBITION

William **Daley** (USA)

Nino **Caruso** (IT)

Bjørn **Nørgaard** (DK)

Anton **Reijnders** (NL)

Daniel **Pontoreau** (FR)

Hoshino **Satoru** (JP)

Tadayasu **Sasayama** (JP)

Klaus **Osterwald** (DE)

Tony **Hepburn** (USA)

Angel **Garraza** (ES)

Jeong-Beom **Kim** (KR)

Jun **Kaneko** (USA)

Ole **Lislerud** (NO)

Betty **Woodman** (USA)

Hankee **Cho** (KR)

Dong-Won **Shin** (KR)



NEW WAY OF ARCHITECTURAL CERAMICS

by Sangho Shin

The adobe house is the most primitive kind of dwelling after the 'cave'. As man evolved into a more intelligent and skillful being, construction techniques progressed and man began to make solid bricks out of clay by firing them. The firing method developed in different ways among architects and artists, but nevertheless, it shared the same basic approach.

The construction of houses using fired clay developed through similar routes in both western and eastern countries with differences that were determined by the climate and surrounding environment. In the Orient, architectural ceramics developed with focus on roof tiles and walls, while in the West, their development concentrated on uniform bricks for decoration, as well as on roof and wall tiles that covered the exterior and interior of buildings.

There was no other material more abundant and easily available than clay. Possessing the most suitable characteristics necessary in maintaining uniform shape, temperature and humidity, clay has been used for over several millenniums. However, in the flow of civilizations, and with the emergence of the so-called industrialization and urbanization, new materials such as concrete, glass and steel were introduced, expanding the range in architectural history but narrowing the usage of clay and thus ceasing the development of architectural ceramics. Modern society required mass production rather than artistry so the identity and characteristics of architectural styles drew no great meanings. The square indifferent space of apartment buildings that ignore individuality and the environment that encompasses them have aroused dubious questions on the future forms of housing. But as people have started to feel the need for a lasting and natural material, interests in clay started to rise again gradually and quietly.

A lot of research aimed at studying the nature of clay has been carried out by many institutions and ceramic artists individually. The range of ceramics has surpassed the vessel form and has now reached a point of development that we could never have imagined in the past. Today many people, even those who hold some reservations, are examining ways -and making proposals, as to how ceramics can have a positive impact on our society.

The Clayarch Gimhae Museum aims to provide the basis for the creation of innovative architectural ceramics through the coalition of ceramics and architecture. Clayarch intends to concentrate on the present path of ceramics and architecture while searching for ways and possibilities to adapt artistic aesthetics to everyday life by supplying excellent architectural ceramics to the residential environment, culture, and social life of people.

The 2006 International Architectural Ceramic Exhibition displayed 47 artworks by 16 artists from 10 countries. Throughout the exhibition, we were able to experience and understand different issues and artistic expressions -that were manifest in the works by means of experimentation, technical approaches and investigation of the notion of space within architectural ceramics, and to realize the extensiveness of artistic architecture...

Sangho Shin, is well known artist, Professor at the College of Fine Arts, Hongik University and Director of the new Clayarch Gimhae Museum.

PETER CALLAS



ZAO. 90 x 52.5 x 55 cm
Collection of John & Marilyn Stover

IMPERFECTION IN A MODERN AGE

by Lisa G Westheimer

To see the work of Peter Callas is always a visceral and cathartic event. His abstract creations are suspended between the states of evolution and de-evolution. There is an ancient, fleeting quality to them, seemingly battle worn and scarred, as if they live and breathe, whisper and sigh, but within them pulses an undercurrent of tension, energy and passion unique to his aesthetic vision. Each piece is a study in contrast and contradiction for he possesses the ability to project spontaneity from masterful calculation, instill a sense of vulnerability from what is great strength and conjure a feeling of softness where it is hard to the touch. There are boundaries to be crossed from the surface to the subliminal as he strives to push the viewers beyond their levels of expectation, causing them to ask new questions and seek unexpected answers. The push and pull of the opposing forces instilled in his abstract forms capture a sense of passion and energy. When spied across a room his work is a siren beckoning the viewer nearer, almost pulling them forward to take a closer look. One cannot witness this work at a glance; it must be pondered, consumed and digested until the transfer of information and energy is complete. His vision is shaped by imperfections in this Modern Age and the ability to reconcile and channel all of the opposing influences into a communication bridge. This is what makes his work so engaging.

During his long career Callas' maverick, pioneering spirit has opened the world to be his classroom; evolving artistically as he traveled the globe. It was in Japan where he was exposed to an ancient culture with aesthetic traditions vastly different from his own, yet possessing sensibilities in tune with his own. It was there that he discovered the Zen aesthetic of wabi sabi which ignited his spirit....

Lisa G Westheimer is an art critic, writer and ceramic artist living and working in West Orange, New Jersey.

My life, together with my art has been a work in progress. I have lived by intuitive chance, liberating the bad efforts and giving artistic potential a second chance. When I am working on constructing a piece, sometimes by deconstruction, I find a more exciting way to approach it. To that end there are no limits. It is an artistic process in which you either get something good or you don't.

The joy of shaping, however, should never be overshadowed by the entertainment value of making things; it must always reflect how I feel inside. Perception of myself, understanding my own spirit and the ability to see things differently function to fulfill my ambitions, and illuminate my vision. Over the years I have accumulated a wealth of technical skills, but all the technique in the world does not guarantee an aesthetic vision or successful form. Raw talent, an immeasurable degree of faith in myself, and perseverance germinate that free, dynamic approach necessary to thrive as an artist. Predictably it has become more about instilling a sense of purpose and self worth in life....



RAFA PÉREZ

CONTRA - DICCION

UNTITLED, 2006. 50 x 50 cm. PHOTO: Carlos Hermosilla

RAFA PÉREZ Freedom as the source of creation

by Carmen Gonzalez Borrás

An artist like Rafa Pérez is unusual within the current artistic panorama, for a variety of different reasons. The first reason is that he is an object-orientated artist who battles with the physical medium which he is faced with in order to create his work, despite the pluralism which exists in the world of art, where it is difficult to find artists who do not base their work on a conceptual idea. The second reason is that he was able to continue painting and believing in his intuition and his position in relation to art, without paying attention to fashions or the fact that painting became unfashionable at the end of the 70's, thereby giving way to new forms of expression. The last reason for being considered unusual is because he uses clay in his paintings, which is a fresh material that became one of the potential materials to be used in contemporary art in the 50's. Rafa Pérez above all paints with clay materials, although he does mix them with cement, stainless steel, and all types of resources which are valuable to him for his expressionism. At the same time he is very conscious that the choices he makes with regards to his painting are allied with a feeling of going “against the flow” in the current artistic panorama. He is also conscious of the fact that he is using a material which is sometimes unknown by a great deal of people who are involved in art...

Dr. Carmen Gonzalez Borrás is an independent curator and author living in Germany.

I have the feeling that I am working with clay by chance, as if life had brought me here. I am not looking for transcendence in what I'm doing, but I certainly do try to keep my eyes open to what is beautiful to me, and this is very dynamic when using clay. Sometimes I find what I'm looking for in objects in my workshop which have been in front of me for a long time. That is when I get excited and I discover so many paths to take that I start to work without a break. All of these hours in the workshop lead you to understand the material. With ceramics, the creative process is very strongly linked to the learning process. In contrast to other materials, it is not only about the “tasks” but also about “how” it can become the creative vehicle in itself and one becomes allied with the material, the kiln, the process...and it seems like they all have a part to play. For me there is no parallel between opening the kiln in the morning and any other plastic activity.

ONE PART CLAY

CERAMIC AVANT-GARDE & MIXED MEDIA



Adelaide **PAUL**

Timothy **BERG**

Chad **CURTIS**

Doug **JECK**

Nicole **CHERUBINI**

Sinisa **KUKEC**

HERINGA

VAN KALSBECK

Reinaldo **SANGUINO**

Michael **O'MALLEY**

Julie **YORK**

John **BYRD**

ONE PART CLAY

by Garth Clark and Mark Del Vecchio

...This exhibition comprises work by eleven artists, ten from the United States (Timothy Berg, John Byrd, Nicole Cherubini, Chad Curtis, Doug Jeck, Sinisa Kuhec, Michael O'Malley, Adelaide Paul, Reinaldo Sanguino, Julie York) and a collaborative from Europe (Heringa/Van Kalsbeek - Liet Heringa and Maarten Van Kalsbeek from Amsterdam). Most of these artists once had a primary interest in ceramics. Now they have reduced clay to part of a broader palette of materials. A few, notably Cherubini, have kept it as their dominant material. But for the others one might even argue that its role is of little consequence, just a passing holdover from their recent past. Either way, all of this is deeply threatening to a ceramics world that is wrestling with a very rapid deconstruction of the place of ceramics in art.

Many view this multi-media movement as a Trojan horse, ready to release its warriors in the dark of night and destroy the medium's material solidarity. In a sense they could be right. But does that matter? Talking of Greeks, remember how Voulkos was seen in the late 1950's and early 1960's as the Ceramic Antichrist, a destructive force who would kill off ceramics? Today his work looks more traditional than radical. The threat of change is always more terrifying than change itself.

In art, when the revolutionary spirit takes flight, there is always a period of destroying the old followed by rebuilding. Often in the later stages of the coup, cherished aspects of the earlier regime are restored, rehabilitated, modernized and taken back into the fold. This is healthy revitalization—the eternal renewing cycle of birth-death-decay-rebirth—and by its nature it is often messy, smelly, disrupting, disturbing, irreverent, even cruel.

What Mark Dean is encouraging us to do is to look at work that does not slavishly worship the kiln and see it as new romance that takes ceramics to a place that is, yes, risky, but because of that also exciting. This will not be an easy show for many to swallow. Aside from getting used to differences in our levels of comfort and reward, this work also challenges what has always been the basis of collecting in craft-based materials. Mostly collectors have a passion for one material; clay, glass, wood, metal, fiber, and focus mainly on that interest. Yes there are collectors who collect all materials, but they are decidedly fewer.

These works immediately question the viability of this kind of material specificity. For instance, is Adelaide Paul's new work no longer of interest to those who have collected this artist's ceramic work in the past? Does this sculpture with its meticulously assembled and sewn skin of lamb's leather now belong to the fiber camp? What do you do when one of your favorite artists shifts their materials and yet continues to explore what you have always loved in their vision? The crucial question is simply, do you now grow with the artists into new zones of experience, or do you reject them and go back to others who promise predictability?

Interestingly, the artists Mark Dean has selected, while not seeing themselves as part of the craft movement, have mostly chosen not to express their independence by going either anti-craft or anti-beauty, which is a relief after years of the badly-made and the ugly claiming higher ground. Much of the work in this exhibition is made with breathtaking skill, not an uncommon path in recent postmodernist art and one that the art critics are beginning to notice and applaud....

**Garth Clark, internationally known dealer, historian and critic.
Mark Del Vecchio is the co-founder of the Garth Clark Gallery.**

BEAN FINNERAN TOPOLOGIES



BEAN FINNERAN Bodies of works

by Peter Frank

Brightly colored, human-scaled, and comedically bristly, Bean Finneran's sculptures readily endear themselves to careful viewer and casual passerby alike. Their modesty and self-containment give them an appealing geniality. They stand, sit, or lie with a perky yet decorous energy, mischievous but not unruly. Engaging as they can be, however, the clay-wand mounds Finneran has formulated and fabricated for the last decade are not blandly reassuring, not in the least. They in fact subtly subvert our perception of the world we occupy with them. Methodically produced and orderly in appearance, these accumulatory objects do not transgress social or perceptual boundaries. They simply straddle such boundaries, or even ingest them, absorbing the toxins of limitation into their deeply hidden cores. Opaque as they might physically appear, they are the opposite of walls. They dissolve and engulf such separations, confounding functions and states of being – solidity fused with porosity, distinct line and contour conflated with chaotic indistinction, formal integrity emerging from what seems individually-minded strands of clay.

Such metaphorical sponging is appropriate, given the sculptures' resemblance to the primitive fauna that flourish on the ocean floor. (In their brittleness they conflate the animal with its exoskeleton; they are the coral and the reef at once.) However much of Finneran's arrangements may resemble haystacks, anthills, or other inert forms (forms imposed on flora by fauna, as it happens), the elements in the sculptures, those myriad strands, brim with an eccentric vitality, each having a certain mind of its own even as it conforms to the spatial and compositional dictates of the integral accumulation to which it belongs. These objects not only infer life, they infer movement – willful movement, that is, not just the movement of stalks and blades in the currents of wind or water...

Peter Frank has served as art critic for the Village Voice and the SoHo Weekly News, and has taught at the Pratt Institute,....

Composing with form, color and light I am passionately interested in an aesthetic of transience, impermanence, knowing that in a moment any form I build could expand or transform or disappear. Looking for a relationship to nature I assemble structures from repeating elements adapting the sculpture I make to the time and space available for its construction. It's an irrational, task-oriented circular process of gathering and layering that ends at the point at which it began- by adding elements that have a shape identical to the existing elements. The inside is the outside. The element I usually build with is a curve because the world is filled with graceful curves, the spiral of a nautilus shell, the meanders of a river crossing a floodplain, ripples from flowing air in the form of wind, the florets in the center of a sunflower and the twisting double helix of DNA. I construct economical, simple forms: cones, rings, spheres, domes, lines and create a temporary landscape. A definition of form is that it is: the nature, structure, or essence of a thing, the particular way something is or appears to be. I believe abstract forms carry intention and memory and mysteries....

WHITE RING, 2006. 180 x 75 cm
PHOTO: Bill Bachhuber

STILL LIFE: CLAY



1.



2.



3.

- 1. A LOST DOOR, 2006. 66 x 48 cm
- 2. A SOUP BOWL, 2006. 38 x 80cm
- 3. TEA BOWLS-SPLIT, 2006. 135 x 30cm

PHOTOS: KC STUDIO

DONGWON SHIN Stitched Reality

by Daehyung Lee

...Shin's ceramic sculptures on the walls emphatically announce, "This is the way to implant ideas into a space." Drawing from the long, but disparate, artistic traditions of still-lives and ceramics, Shin joins them to allow a contemporary investigation of space, materiality, and composition that is innovative and entirely her own. Shin explores the transit of visual invention that runs between still-life painting and ceramic sculpture, wood board and clay. As she has moved to and from different genres, she absorbs the specific conditions of each discipline - from materials to language - and conceptualizes it into her work.

Replacing a pencil or brush drawing with ceramic assemblage, Shin's "stitched still-lives" respect the style of traditional clay technique, which has a 20,000-year history, but at the same time introduce contemporary lines and visual tension through the split of two-dimensionality and three-dimensionality. Projecting a speculative view of objects and spaces, she reinterprets commonplace items and their infinite variables in the context of these two different levels of dimensional space.

Shin's current work involves representations of flattened clay kitchenware and accompanying furniture, such as tables and cupboards, composed of distinct ceramic shapes "stitched" together by visible threading-holes that line the edges of connecting objects. The work is intriguing, not only because of the oddly-flat surfaces but also because of its distinct, individual physical presence. Just as in her early installation works, this more mundane kitchenware relies on reflections of distorted images of everyday objects. In contrast to the exuberance of the earlier complicatedly stitched vessels, there is a more somber tone to her new series. This may be due partly to her understanding of the roles of negative space in the relation between the subject and the surroundings. Working with the two-dimensionality of the outlined forms of tea-cups and tables and the three-dimensionality of both the materials from which they are composed and the intense perspective they describe, the effect she creates becomes an introspective activity and leans towards a more serious investigation of visual perceptions.

Daehyung Lee, Director of SUN Contemporary Art Gallery.