

KILN' TIME



NOVEMBER 2011

THE OFFICIAL CLAY ARTS GUILD NEWSLETTER

Listed below are a few important "old" rules to remember, one "new" rule that the sale committee would like to try out this time and an added venue open to everyone.

The OLD (or currently enforced) RULES

- You must be a current CAG member and be actively participating in the requirements of the membership.

- You must be either currently enrolled in a ceramics class or have taken one within the 2011 year.

- You must estimate, as well as you can, the number of items you plan to sell and sign up for the required number of shifts based on this amount.

- You must follow procedures for submitting your inventory sheets as outlined on page 3.

The NEW (or different) RULE

- No single ceramic item can be priced for under \$10.

NOTE: it is okay, however, to group several items together (such as mugs) and price the group for at least \$10.

An ADDED BONUS

- For no additional fee, you may sell items worth less than \$10 at a special "KIDS ONLY" sale area at the Shadelands Sale - new this year! (Turn to page 4 for more details)



SET-UP DATES:

Wednesday, November 30
& Thursday, December 1

SALE DATES:

Friday, December 2
(Opening Night)
Saturday, December 3 &
Sunday, December 4

Sale Chairperson:
Mary Leigh Miller

Excitement mounts as our studio prepares for its next big sale! A committee of artists, including Christie Farrell (chair of the Shadelands sale), David Vander Jagt, Kathy Nelson and myself, met several times over the past few months to review past sales and come up with some new and different ways to "brand" our Civic Arts Education twice-a-year event.

First on the agenda: Marketing ourselves in a new way. The committee decided to enhance the sale concept by changing its name to "Artists Market." By doing this, we hope to promote the Civic Arts Education connection to our sales and also emphasize the handcrafted, one-of-a-kind aspect of the sale items. Dave Hanney, Civic Arts Education's graphic design consultant, has come up with a postcard design bearing our new logo. These postcards will be available very soon.

Another great idea: The committee also decided to try out a special sale area at the Shadelands venue that will allow children (up to age 12) to select and purchase their own gifts to give to family members and friends. Called a "Kids Only" room, this area will be supervised by teen and adult volunteers, thus eliminating the need for family members to accompany their children. The room will be open on Saturday of the sale weekend and filled with items priced under \$10. **CAG members are encouraged to participate in this special sale by setting aside any work meeting the criteria.**

What's different this year at our ceramic studio sale: My hope is to raise the studio's public image at this Holiday Sale by setting \$10 as the lowest price on any item or group of items, including selected CAG donations. For CAG members fairly new to selling their work, please look for printed information in the sale sign-up area suggesting \$ amounts for various types of ceramic pieces. **Buzz word for this sale: Think Big!**

Continued on page 4

MEMBERS of the BOARD

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Advisory Council Rep: Florence McAuley
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Scholarships: Susie Quan Wong

New Member Liason: Bette Sindinski

Kiln' Time Newsletter

Editor ~ Ann Henderson

Layout Editor ~ Mary Leigh Miller

Please submit all articles to Ann at
<annadele@comcast.net>

Visit our website:

www.clayartsguild.com

See the latest *Kiln' Times*
in full color!

Message from David Vander Jagt



This is a plea to get everyone involved in order to make our studio a better place. Our guild has recently purchased a new wheel for the studio. We underwrote a wonderful Master Potter Workshop by Scott Parady, who currently has an exhibit at the Trax Gallery. We provide scholarships and assistance. We are organizing the holiday sale and providing reduced open studio costs for members. We are your voice with the city. We provide open studio monitors that allow you access to the studio so you can create. "WE" are "YOU". We need all of you. I need you.

Due to a number of reasons, our treasurer, Ana Baretto, who has done a wonderful job for us, has resigned. We need a treasurer desperately. We still do not have a vice-president, someone who is willing to step up in a year or two and take on the presidency. The sign-ups for the holiday show are in the studio, and we need all of you to make this a success. Revenue from this sale is a major part of our budget. We need support, input from you and frankly HELP. Some of us can't do it all.

Yes, we're all busy. Yes, we have lives outside the studio and families and jobs. I'm not asking for 20 hrs, 10 or even 5 a week. Please volunteer to do SOMETHING. Sign up for a committee. Offer to chair a committee. (Look for the blue notebook in the studio.) One committee that is pro-active can make a huge difference in the studio atmosphere.

It is my goal and dream to make our studio the friendliest, most pleasant and welcoming studio in California. I also want time in the studio to be the best part of everyone's week. We support each other. We help each other grow. Our studio is a gem that we cannot afford to lose. Please let me know what you think we can do to make this an even better place. Also, please consider what you can do to help make a positive difference.

Thank you. *David*



C. A. G. SALE INSTRUCTIONS and CHECK-IN

By Ann Henderson

All inventories are due by November 28th. If you have Microsoft Word on your computer, the easiest way is to simply type your inventory directly into Word using the following format.

Important: NO spaces between lines, ONE tab between each piece of information, NO spaces, hyphens, dots — just ONE TAB.

STEPS:

1. Type your three-letter code and tab once (no commas, no spaces, nothing except ONE TAB)
2. Type the number of your item and tab again.
3. Type a short description of your piece and tab again.
4. Type the price in whole dollars with NO DOLLAR SIGNS.
5. Type return ONCE and do the same thing for your next item until you have all of them entered.

When complete, email your Word document inventory to Ann Henderson at CAGinventories@gmail.com. The final result likely will not line up and look orderly, but it translates into our database in an orderly manner when you follow the directions. A copy of your inventory will await you when you come to the studio for check-in provided it is done by November 28th.

Remember to bring your self-addressed, stamped envelope with you at check-in at which time you will sign a release form.

You can also write your inventory directly in Excel, using the same fields arranged in the same order as above: three-letter code, number of piece, description of piece, price. If you do not have Word or Excel, typing your inventory directly into the text of the email is acceptable, although it is much more work to transfer into the database.

In your descriptions, it would be helpful for statistical purposes to use common terms. That way we can provide follow-up information on percentages of what sold in relation to what was entered and the types of things that sold. By common terms, I mean: sculpture, plate, platter, cup or mug, bowl, vase, pitcher, jar, casserole, tile, planter. You can also include the type of firing, especially if it is different from high fire, for example: raku, pit fire, salt fire. Glaze or color are other means of sorting: Temoku, blue, Oribe green etc.

SAMPLE (See below)

Note in the sample below that the price column does not line up. Your copy will likely be skewed as well, but please do not try to fix it. It translates nicely into lined up fields in the database we use. **Questions?** Email Ann at CAGinventories@gmail.com.

ARH	1	Large Temoku platter	45
ARH	2	Small blue bowl	20
ARH	3	Christmas ornament	10
ARH	4	Lidded jar	27
ARH	5	Salad bowl with servers	55
ARH	6	Yellowbird mug	25
ARH	7	2-piece set of white bowls	50
ARH	8	Oribe green plate	45
ARH	9	White platter with green edge	35
ARH	10	Carved plate underglaze design	35

ALL INVENTORIES DUE NOVEMBER 28TH

Artists Market

Continued from the front page

PARTICIPATING IN THE KIDS ONLY SALE It's easy & it's free!

- Pick up an inventory sheet with **KIDS ONLY** marked at the top.
- Fill out the inventory in legible handwriting, following the instructions listed on the form.
- Tag each item with your 3-letter code, inventory # and price (whole \$ only, must be priced \$10 or under).
- Bring your items in a box clearly marked "KIDS ONLY" with special inventory sheet attached to the Ceramics Studio on Thursday, December 1 between 2 pm and 8 pm. Someone will transport your box to Shadelands and return unsold items to Studio E at the end of the sale.
- You will receive a separate check from the City of Walnut Creek for all sales transactions (minus the 25% CAG commission).

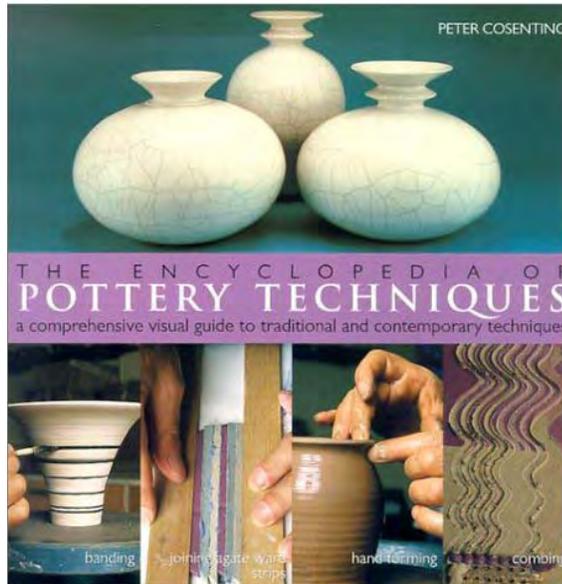
PLEASE NOTE:

- Any CAG members wishing to sell in the regular part of the Shadelands Sale (held in the Shadelands auditorium), contact **Christie Ferrell**, <christieferrell@comcast.net> for sign-up forms and inventory sheets. There is a table fee charged for participating at this venue, but the 25% commission still comes back to our guild.
- You have the option of selling at both sale locations or just at the Shadelands venue. If you decide to participate only in the Shadelands Sale, we ask that you please sign up for at least one work shift here at the Ceramics Studio.

Any Questions? Don't hesitate to contact me: <mlmiller602@yahoo.com>

Book Review

Reviewed by Kate Chanok



The Encyclopedia of Pottery Techniques, by Peter Cosentino, is directed at the beginning to intermediate potter. Cosentino provides a solid overview of many different techniques, spending a few pages on each. Topics include: adding colorants to clay, applying decoration to clay, faceting, fluting, impressing, incising, use of slip and smoke, and texturing.

The text is clear and easy to understand, and the photographs provide a step-by-step breakdown of the techniques. For example, the section on burnishing covers objects that can be used, the process of burnishing, and how different clays will respond to the process, as well as how to finish the piece after burnishing.

The book is divided into two sections, the first of which focuses on techniques. The second half provides examples of a wide range of finished work. This part of the book provides both photos and descriptions of the methods used.

I'd recommend this book as a refresher for the intermediate to advanced potter who is seeking inspiration or reminders, and as a great overview for the beginning potter who is looking for ideas and techniques. 🙌

MISSING — Bunnynapped

Description: missing bunny about three inches tall, white with pink ears, high fire. This Little bunny's brother was bunnynapped, taken from the high fire glaze cart some time around Wednesday afternoon or evening, October 26th. The bunny's owner, **Galina Zyarkikh**, would very much like to have him back, no questions asked. Just surreptitiously return him to the glaze cart or sneak him into locker #9 and he will be delivered to the heartsick owner.



Local Venues, CAG, and the Community of Art

By Robert Hall

Although the mission of the CAG would seem to be intended only to “assist and encourage ceramics students to develop and improve their skills and understanding of the media,” there is another very important function the Guild serves – as a community where beginning artists can gain confidence in the value of their artistic creation, learn how to expose it to the larger public and experience the dynamics of marketing their work.

Often the path to this self-understanding and willingness to “test the market” is not a straight one, especially when an artist has had to defer full-time work in art to other career and personal goals. For some members of the Guild, a full commitment to artistic work may only really begin in retirement. Thus, learning how others have developed venues for showing their artwork may be helpful to other CAG members.

Recently, our new President, **David Vander Jagt**, arranged with a local business an exhibition of a selection of his artistic work. He and his wife Linda frequent the restaurant Lettuce in downtown Walnut Creek. Reflecting on the restaurant’s healthy ambience but plain decor, David wondered if the owner would see the advantages of displaying an artwork that, “would coordinate well with his food, being textural and organic in nature.” In fact, the owner, on reviewing pieces that David showed him, gave him free reign to placing his work in the restaurant. **Olga Judismann**, who once owned a gallery herself, assisted David and Linda in putting up the artwork. David occasionally changes out pieces so that interest in the exhibit remains fresh.

For David, there is the value of gaining exposure for his work, but also another venue to which he can direct people who view his work in the Lafayette Gallery. That many patrons of the Leshner Center stop by Lettuce is also a potential benefit. Interestingly, he also mentioned more than once another factor that affects many members of the Guild, that is, the problem of finding space for all the artwork he has created! The restaurant is another, very productive and satisfying place to put up his pieces. David is concerned that many clay artists seek to emulate the slick, polished, professional look to their pieces, which then lack individual voice and purpose. He is hoping that

when people see his work, they will be able to identify with what makes art like his unique. The exhibition in Lettuce thus provides a venue that familiarizes people in the area with the unique qualities of his work.



We asked David about his path to art, thinking about all the CAG members who have entered their most active phase of art-making after winding down another career. He told us that he came from a more or less “blue collar family” that didn’t put a very high value on art. It was when he tried out architecture in college that he began taking art classes. He then switched to art and eventually received his degree in this major. He worked as an art teacher and later did his post-masters work in biology and began teaching science. It was at that point that he began doing pottery. He did his first show in the 90s, but it is now that he is retired that he can, “think more about the body of work and where I want to be as an artist.” He noted that he loves working with texture and there is an “abstraction of nature and form in my work, and it often takes on a cubist nature.” According to David, the market for art is down in this economy, so more than ever artists need creative, innovative marketing. “Artists have to be self-promoters.”

David would like to help, “increase exposure to the fine local art in the Walnut Creek community,” a form of advocacy that he considers part of his mandate as President. David noted that there is a shortage of art

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Exhibits

By Olga Jusidman

Our guild members do such interesting and beautiful work and often don't see what others do. The in-house exhibits give us this opportunity. This is exactly how I feel about our studio, and it is why I feel privileged to be an active member as the in-house coordinator. Our first display was "fall colors," and the tentative calendar for the rest of this year and next is as follows:

- November — Holiday Colors
- January — Salt Fire
- February — Raku
- March — Creative Critters

CONTEST

- April — Casseroles and bowls
- May — Mugs and teapots
- June — Red, White and Blue
- August — Previous and Recent Work

I would love suggestions for other exhibits, and without your pieces, our program will not be achieved, so please volunteer your work when requests are made for the next display. Thank you in advance to everyone who volunteers to allow us to show their work. 🖐️



Local Venues, continued from page 5

venues in the city. "Galleries are not cost effective and artists need some guerrilla marketing techniques." He believes that the restaurant Lettuce sets an example that he hope to expand to other businesses in the city. An added benefit is that everyone needs exposure to art, and many Lettuce patrons may not frequent galleries and museums. There was a newspaper article about the art there, and he hopes that this will help generate future venues.

We asked David about his experience with corporate venues in the area. He replied that people are leaning away from corporate, sterile environments. David wants to promote the uniqueness of fine, local work along with fine, local businesses. We discussed the recent workshop given by Scott Parady, whose work has an earthy, hand-made quality. "It is basic, almost primitive, and textural." Scott emphasized during the workshop that he is seeing more interest among restaurant owners to combine local produce, local preparation of food with local or regional artwork on the walls and on the tables. Scott got his point across by alluding to the "slow food" movement with the phrase "slow clay." Resonating with this, David observed that the restaurants using his pieces send a unique and original message through their serving dishes.

The new CAG leadership is working hard to encourage greater active participation of CAG membership in its committees and activities, with the ultimate goal to help everyone achieve greater visibility within the local and regional community and more venues to expose their work, but also to strengthen the bond between art and life. 🖐️

Moms bringing their kids to the Civic Park playground were confronted with an unexpected scene one morning...



Welcome to New Monitor Martha Strizich

By Gary Guglielmino



Many CAG members utilize the Open Studio on the weekends—it's a great chance to sneak away from the usual household chores and get a little work done in the studio. Both Saturday and

Sunday are open for long blocks of time, allowing CAG members the chance to settle in and work in an uninterrupted fashion before the call to begin cleanup arrives.

Those golden hours during the week and on weekends are brought to us, in part, by the generosity and dedication of the monitor staff. **Bridget Mohr** does a great job of organizing those volunteers, covering vacations and illnesses, and arranging for new volunteers to fit into the complicated schedule.

Since most people have obligations of some sort on the weekends, finding monitors for those weekend times can be a challenge. Fortunately, reinforcements have arrived! **Martha Strizich** has volunteered to share a monitor position with **Alice Lasky** in the Sunday afternoon time slot.

Martha is an enthusiastic potter who, while new to the studio, has lots of ceramic experience, which clearly shows in her work. Currently she is most interested in wheel-thrown work. She notes, though, that handbuilding fascinates her, and she plans to take a handbuilding course "one of these days."

Martha is also quite interested in the Clay Arts Guild Library and has volunteered to be involved with the Library Committee. With a background in library science, Martha will certainly be a great addition to the Committee. She is interested in formulating an online database of our collection that would make it much easier to search for works on specific topics in ceramics. While browsing in the library is fun and interesting, knowing

what is available on your topic (and where it is) might speed up the process of getting what you want!

So, welcome, Martha, and thanks in advance for your work for CAG and all the ceramics students of the Walnut Creek Civic Arts Education. 🖐️

OPEN STUDIO

By Bridget Mohr, Monitor Chairperson

As CAG members, we have 30 hours of open studio time per week. This is a great opportunity to improve our craft, work on our projects, and share in the camaraderie of our artist community. A few reminders when using the studio:

- Check in with the monitor when you arrive.
- Clean your workspace, and a little extra around the studio, before leaving.
- Clean the wedging table after using it, and don't store your clay on the table.
- When using the CINK in the glaze room, remember to turn off the power switch **each time you use the faucet**, not just when you're done glazing.
- Begin your cleanup early enough to be ready to leave the studio before the end of the session; don't make the monitor wait for you!

Speaking of monitors, we have 3 new monitors this session: Fern Skowland is working the Wednesday 12-4PM session and Martha Strizich and Alice Lasky monitor Sunday 4-7pm. Thank you to Fern, Martha, Alice, and **all** of the monitors for ensuring our studio is available for us! Please show them your support by obeying the studio rules and any requests from the monitors.

Thanks for your cooperation and have fun!



Lynne Meade Gallery Exhibit

CAE instructor Lynne Meade will be showing some of her pieces in a group show at the Blackhawk Gallery in Danville from October until January. You are invited to a reception on October 29th from 5-7PM. The Gallery is at 3461 Blackhawk Plaza Circle, Danville, CA 94506, 925-548-8023.

The gallery hours are Monday through Saturday from 10AM 'till 8PM and on Sunday from 11AM to 6PM. A slideshow of many of the works available at the gallery can be seen at the website adas4art.org.

DONT FORGET YOUR 10%

Many of our studio artists show and sell their work outside of the CAG sponsored studio sales, and they faithfully give back 10% of their earnings to the studio. That is an unwritten agreement you make when you take classes and produce ceramics in the CAE program. Both the city and the guild hugely supplement the program, and that 10% is your acknowledgement of that support. To all of you who have contributed in this way to our outstanding program, thank you. I will not post names, because this is a personal matter built on trust.

CAG Scholarships

By Susie Quan-Wong

The CAG Scholarship Program has a name change from *The Carol Levin Scholarship* to *C.A.G. (Clay Arts Guild) Merit Scholarship Award*. The criteria for this scholarship remains the same as follows: It is awarded to those special students who have the potential to do special work in clay and who show artistic, creative talent and/or progress.

We want to encourage budding artists. This scholarship is given in the form of credit towards a Civic Arts Education ceramics class and/or ceramics workshop or CAG membership. The Scholarship committee determines the amount. Any student in the Civic Arts Education Ceramic Arts program is eligible.

Clay Arts faculty, Clay Arts Guild members and Walnut Creek Civic Arts Education staff may nominate a candidate. The scholarship committee will determine the winner(s) from the list of candidates. Application forms and accompanying materials (i.e. application form, essay about personal ceramic experiences and evidence of the ceramic work plus two clay pieces) must be completed and returned by a certain date (to be determined). All completed paperwork may be given to the instructors or to a member of the scholarship committee, and the committee will let candidates know when and where to take their pieces for judging.

The C.A.G. Merit Scholarship Award Committee

Susie Quan Wong sqw@comcast.net
Betty Gadd pbandm@yahoo.com
Grace Goto marcgoto@aol.com
Lin Marion

Evelyne Karim Commitment to Community Scholarship Fund



This is a one-time award to be given to an outstanding CAG member who has shown commitment to community, creativity and artistic talent. This award will be given in the form of credit towards a Civic Arts Education ceramics class. This award is in memory of **Evelyne Karim** who was a talented artist and craftsperson and was most passionate about clay arts. Evelyne was also a longtime member of the Walnut Creek Clay Arts Guild, where she had been enrolled and was a fixture there for more than forty years until the very last days of her long life of 91 years.



The HATS Fund and Friends of Civic Arts Education Foundation

By Susie Quan-Wong



Originally, the CAG established a financial aid fund in memory of **Pat Schmidt**, a beloved Guild member who died of breast cancer in 2003. She used to teach in the School of Education at Sonoma State University, but after undergoing major procedures to cure her cancer, she blew off her

PhD, quit her job and decided she wanted to be a potter. She had a rare reverence for ceramics and was like a kid at Christmas at the opening of glaze kilns. Four years later, the cancer returned, and she died within a year. Pat was loved by so many in the studio; the CAG started *Pat's Fund* in her memory (*More information on Pat is available in the CAG Newsletter archives, July 2003*).

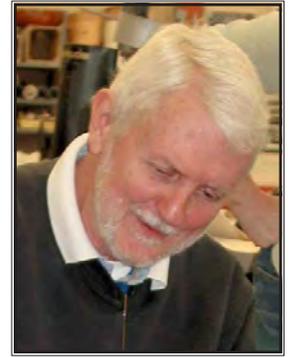
When **Sonja Biberman** died in 2007 at the age of 96, there was a similar feeling among Guild members. Sonja's daughter generously donated 25 of Sonja's favorite hats to the studio, which sold at a silent auction, the money going to the financial aid arm of the CAG. Thus, *Pat's Fund* evolved into the H.A.T.S.



fund, **Helping Artists Toward Success**. This fund continues today supporting Guild members who have fallen on hard times in this tough economy. (*To read more about Sonja, a special edition of Kiln' Time, May, 2007 was published with loving stories about her and her interesting life and is available on the CAG website*).

After **Don Porcella** died, his wife Ann chose to use the money raised, in excess of \$2000, from the auction of

Don's tools, pots and equipment for that fund as well. Don was a longtime very active member of the Guild, having served many roles, including president. To know him was to have him as a friend (*Additional information about Don is in many issues of Kiln' Time, but his obituary appeared in the June, 2010 issue*).



The HATS Fund is designated for financial help to Clay Arts Guild members who may have difficulty affording classes at the Civic Arts Education Ceramic Studio. Eligible recipients must have been Clay Arts Guild member for at least one year and contributed in some way to its success. Awards are private and not awarded for artistic skills, but strictly for financial need, therefore, there is no formal application needed. An informal contact by instructors or other CAG members may yield several names throughout the year.

When the individual or individuals are identified, they are told that there is money available to help, and they are asked if they would like to accept funds. Once the individual accepts, the CAE office is notified of the name and the amount of the financial aid. The CAE office will bill CAG for the amount when awarded.

The Clay Arts Guild also encourages that those in financial need apply to the Friends of Civic Arts Education. Friends of CAE is an independent, non-profit (501.c3) foundation that hopes to promote advocacy in finding ways to obtain long-term financial support for the student scholarship program, making the arts available to all children and seniors in the Diablo Valley. The financial aid applications are open to all ceramic students and must be obtained through the Civic Arts Education office and returned there. Friends of Civic Arts Education are responsible for reviewing the applications and contacting the applicants. 🙌

"Art is the only way to run away without leaving the house." T. Tharp

HOT TIP!

No Holes Burred!

By Era Cherry

This is an idea for those who make colanders, candle lanterns, berry bowls, etc. Making nice smooth holes in leather hard clay is always challenging, especially if you are looking for varied sizes. After trying many different objects, I spied a rack of metal drill bits on my workbench. Why not? Although there is a tendency for them to get plugged with clay, they are easy to clean and use again. You don't even have to have a drill to hold the bits. They can easily be twisted in the clay with just your fingers.

As you are working, be sure to support the clay surface on the backside to avoid stress. It is amazing how many simple things from the hardware store can be used for working with clay.

Now it's your turn. Era earned a bag of clay for her tip this month. You, too, can earn a bag of clay. Just write a description and email annadele@comcast.net or put a copy in Locker #9 with your clever idea. We don't care where you saw it as long as you're the first one to submit it to HOT TIP. If you get the idea from a friend, teacher, book or magazine, however, it would be nice to acknowledge the source.

Master Potter Workshop with SCOTT PARADY By Sandy Ritchie and Pete Couraulis

A cozy group of about twenty-five hardcore ceramic enthusiasts enjoyed the day watching **Scott Parady** work his magic throwing and altering a variety of vessel forms both ceremonial and utilitarian. He formed all his pieces on the kickwheel and then pinched the works in a process he refers to as "slow thrown." He started by passing around pieces he had made in this way and explained that he likes to use pure clay that he finds in the Sierra Nevada and wood fires using no glaze. The rough pieces are then polished with wet/dry sandpaper and finished with beeswax or mineral oil.

Scott also demonstrated a different way of wedging by cutting the clay in half and slapping it down on its side, one piece on top of the other over and over, adding quartz to the clay as he wedged. He shaped a small ball of clay, centered it on the wheel by patting the sides as it turned and then patting down the top. Slowly he kicked the wheel while pinching the clay upward with his thumb on the inside and fingers on the outside straightening the sides with a knife. To extend the form further upward, he made a coil three times the diameter of the vessel and beveled the edges of the coil and the vessel. He then wet the edge of the vessel and added the coil so the seams overlapped, pressing them together and continuing to pinch the pot upward while turning the wheel. He did not use slip.

His demonstrations also covered some Mishima slip work and a variety of methods used to create textures. The workshop included a digital presentation covering the use of native clays and his Pope Valley Anagama wood firings. He explained that a firing takes from 7 to 11 days and uses a little over a cord of wood per day. He's planted many trees to offset the use of wood.

Scott was asked how he got started working in this way. He said he took art in high school and clay sculpture in college. He learned to throw on the wheel and went from throwing to pinching and then to a combination of pinching and throwing. He did environmental sculpture for graduate work. Scott is currently an Associate Professor of Ceramics at California State University, Sacramento, and exhibits his work widely in the U.S. He is internationally recognized for his contributions to contemporary wood-fired ceramics.

Scott's work is currently on view at the **Trax Gallery** in Berkeley as part of "*Two Woods and A Gas*," which also features Steve Rolf and Simon Levin. 🖐



Pit Firing at the Beach

Article & photos by Karen Horn



On a beautiful sunny Saturday in October, Lesley Jensen's Alternative Firing Class had a splendid day at the beach, using the primitive pit firing. The pit fire is a highlight of the class. Students spend weeks creating pieces for the firing, creating, burnishing, decorating; they collect cow dung, sawdust and wood; they bring salads, pulled pork, and sunscreen for all to share.

Students throw and hand-build pieces to burnish when leather hard with smooth tumbled stones to submerge the sand and grout in the clay and to "polish" the surface. Terra sigillata (a liquid clay) may also be sprayed onto the pieces and then buffed with soft cloths to compact the fine clay particles, producing a glossy surface. This makes the clay more receptive to the pigments in the fuming in the pit and yields a beautiful polished finish.

Once the pieces are bisque-fired, they are ready to be decorated, using fine copper wire, steel wool, copper scrubbers, and copper spray paint that creates silhouettes of leaves, mesh, and other objects. These materials will give off fumes that get trapped in the pores of the clay, marking and coloring the surface.

Our eager group arrived at Dillon Beach, just south of Bodega Bay, at 8 AM. We unload our wares and supplies and used shovels to dig the pit. All bisque ware is spread out on a tarp so that we know how big to make the pit. We dig a two-foot deep pit to provide wind protection and to retain sufficient heat to permit the fuming process.

Fine sawdust is then spread out on the bottom of the pit. A line is formed and people take turns placing their pots in the pit. Decisions are carefully made, as the surface

of the pot that is in direct contact with the sawdust will have a deep black color that comes from carbon trapping. Copper carbonate, rock salt, and charcoal briquettes are spread around the pieces. Care is taken not to inhale the copper carbonate dust (dust masks) and all wash hands after using it, as the copper is a respiratory and skin irritant. During the firing process, copper carbonate will fume and create flashes of deep red, blues or orange on the fired work. The salt helps with color development. Dried seaweed – impregnated with sea salts and containing many trace elements – is placed over the pieces to give them a unique coloration.

Pots are then covered with dried cow dung. As the cow pies burn, they help get the pit to the desired temperature, impart various colors (blacks, greens, grays, browns), and cover the ware with an ash that promotes a local reduction atmosphere necessary for copper reds. Successive pieces are placed tightly next to each



Pit Firing at the Beach

continued

other. When all pieces are placed, the pit is filled with crumpled newspaper, kindling, and firewood. Then come the lighter fluid, a few paper torches to get it started and finally the bonfire. The fire is lit at 10 AM, happily right on schedule.

We then have four hours to walk on the beach, throw balls for the dogs, have a great lunch, take a nap (me), and wait for the heat to die down in the pit. The pit is not disturbed and allowed to cool naturally to the point where pots can comfortably be handled.



Eventually it is time for the uncovering. Lesley wears heat-resistant gloves to carefully remove the still hot pieces from the pit, placing them along the rim of the pit to cool as we admire the yield. Various groups of people on the beach have wandered over to our group

through the day. Most ask if we are roasting a pig! But the real draw is when we begin to pull pots out of the pit: Everyone wants to see our treasures as they come out of the ashes!

Lesley starts at the perimeter and gradually works her way to the center, as the sand on the perimeter is slowly shoveled into the pit over the hot coals. When the last



pieces are removed, the pit is filled and the sand raked so that there is no trace of the magic of the day. Pit fired pieces are taken home, and finished either by rubbing with Johnson's Paste Wax or by spraying a semi-gloss varnish to enhance the gloss of the pieces and protect the finish.

Pit firing at the beach is a wonderful cooperative effort. It requires a lot of planning, preparation, effort, and time. With the right people (Civic Arts people!), the right teacher (Lesley), and the cooperation of Mother Nature, you come home with the most amazing surface colorations and markings on your pottery that can only be yielded with this oldest known firing technique. 🖐️



Notes from the Kiln Room

It has been brought to our attention that there has been a bit of work coming into our studio from some home studios and not made during class or open studio hours. To clarify things... ***This studio is an educational facility and not designed to be a firing service for outside studio work.***.....Official studio policy is that no work will be fired in this studio that is not made with clay purchased here and not made in this studio.....It seems there always have to be a few who tend to take advantage of the policy, and now we have reports of boxes of ware being brought in. If those students persist in doing this then we will have to take some action.....So this is warning number one: we know who you are. Please abide by our studio rules or your work will not be fired. *Please note: There is no problem with students making ware in studio during class or open studio and then taking it home to finish or decorate, etc.*

We have received several complaints lately of contaminated glazes..... ***Please cover the glazes before you walk away from bucket for any reason.***...It is also recommended that students wash or wipe off their ware before glazing.....We cannot possibly control the quality of the glazes in this studio with up to 300 students if the students themselves don't take care not to have stuff fall into the glazes. Students may also wish to strain glazes before use if they feel that the glaze is contaminated.

And finallyhere is a glaze room reminder: Anyone using the glaze wash out "cink" (instructors and students alike) remember to turn the power switch to "cink" off after each use.

Dates to Remember



FRI. NOV. 11	STUDIO CLOSED VETERAN'S DAY HOLIDAY
SAT NOV. 12	LAST SATURDAY CLASS OF QUARTER
FRI. NOV. 18	LAST CLASS MEETING FOR FALL • All work must be removed from studio and lockers cleaned out by 7 p.m.
SAT. NOV. 19	STUDIO CLEAN UP PARTY 10 AM – NOON
SUN. – THUR NOV. 20 – DEC. 1	STUDIO CLOSED
FRI. – SUN DEC. 2 – 4	STUDIO SALE
MON. – SUN DEC. 5 – 11	STUDIO OPEN FOR PICK UP OF FINISHED WORK 10 AM – 7 PM • Note: No throwing or glazing allowed
MON. – FRI DEC. 12 – JAN. 6	STUDIO CLOSED
SAT. JAN. 7	FIRST CLASS OF WINTER 2012 SESSION
SAT. FEB. 18	MASTER POTTER WORKSHOP with RUTHANNE TUDBALL



THE CAG OPEN STUDIO HOURS

Always check the bulletin board for special announcements

Mon.....4 - 7 pm	Fri.....12 - 7 pm
Tue4 - 7 pm	Sat12 - 7 pm
Wed.....12 - 4 pm	Sun.....1 - 7 pm
Thur.....No Open Workshop Shop Hours	

What's Happening in the Clay World

EXHIBITIONS

Trax Gallery — through November 13th. *Two Woods and a Gas*, ceramics show with Scott Parady, Simon Levin and Steve Rolf.

Crocker Art Museum, Sacramento — Through January 15, 2012, Clayton Bailey's *World of Wonders*

Asian Art Museum, San Francisco — Through January 8, 2012, *Poetry in Clay: Korean Buncheong* ceramics from Leum, Samsung Museum of Art.

CONFERENCES

NCECA 2012, Registration IS NOW OPEN! 46th ANNUAL CONFERENCE March 28-31: Seattle, Washington Washington State Convention Center, 800 Convention Place, Seattle, WA 98101-2350

If you know about Bay Area exhibits, conferences and/or workshops that other CAG members would be interested in, please contact Ann Henderson or Mary Leigh Miller. We will include your information in this section of the newsletter.

CLAYARTSGUILD

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To view the CAG Newsletter in full color, go to our website: www.clayartsguild.com