

KILN' TIME



JANUARY, 2019

THE OFFICIAL CLAY ARTS GUILD NEWSLETTER

HOLIDAY SALES A HUGE SUCCESS

By Pat Alger

Once again, CAG members joined other artists to participate in our Handcrafted Holiday Sale on November 30-Dec 2, 2018, at Shadelands Art Center. We would like to give a huge thanks to the Center for Community Arts staff for organizing, setting up and advertising the sale. Also a special thanks to those CAG members who came over on Thursday morning to decorate the rooms with festive lights, trees and decorations.



The sale included 78, Center for Community Arts teaching artists and students, and featured handcrafted items in ceramics, jewelry, glass art, wood carving,

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MEET TAKEMI TSURUTA, ACTING STUDIO MANAGER

By Clare Macy



Takemi Tsuruta is the son of a pianist/former elementary school teacher (mother) and a former Olympic (1960 – Squaw Valley) skier/architect/pencil drawing artist (father) and the young brother of two sisters. Born and raised in Oakland, he received his BA in Fine Arts from UC Davis and a Master's in Fine Arts -Three Dimensional Arts from Bowling Green State University, Ohio. Takemi has more than a decade of experience under his belt working as a studio tech at Leslie's Ceramic Supply and teaching at DVC, Roger Yee's Red Ox studio, as well as here in our Civic Arts studio. He has a studio in Clayton, where he lives with his girlfriend/partner, Leslie, and two dogs, Rocko and Theo. When he can spend time away from ceramics, Takemi enjoys traveling, hiking with his dogs, cooking, snow-skiing and playing golf (something he wished he could do more).

His interest and dedication to pottery lies in the educational arena of the art rather than the production side. In teaching, Takemi imparts his knowledge and experience to his students and recognizes the importance that relationships play in the communication between teacher and student. His choices of where to study and work have been based on the people with whom he studies and works.

When asked about his philosophy on ceramics, Takemi explained that pottery to him has a close connection to his Japanese heritage, that it reflects his own family-based values, his spiritual beliefs and the world around him. He draws inspiration from other pots, especially Japanese pots, plus a multitude of other sources in nature at large; even something as everyday as the particular color of paint on a car. In his own studio, he is currently following Japanese high-fire reduction methods, using Japanese traditional glazes. Takemi's future goal is to continue to explore and dabble in unique techniques that he enjoys today in his own studio and to continue to investigate his own cultural heritage through pottery.

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Message from the CAG Prez...



Welcome back to our studio family. I know the winter break is very long for most of us. Seven weeks of no clay work makes some of us venture into withdrawal. However, we are now back and have a new Interim Manager, Takemi. We are so thankful that he was able to step quickly into the role of interim studio manager. We warmly welcome Takemi into our family.

With that said, I was at a sermon in Boise, ID, and something that was said really touched my heart and made me think of the studio. Part of the sermon was about FAMILY and, what it means to be a family. I have heard people, over the years, refer to the **Clay Arts Guild** as a studio family.

So, what is a healthy family and how do we demonstrate that in the studio?

- ***Be supportive of each other.*** Being aware of the needs of others and asking if you can be of help. Also, in our studio, occasionally someone might be in a sour mood. We can be understanding of others and what they might be dealing with. We are not walking in their shoes nor truly know their difficulties, but we can be kind and gentle towards them.
- ***Good positive communication with encouragement:*** What would it be like to frequently express our appreciation to those who make our studio a better place. We often hear critical thoughts expressed, but how about expressing appreciation or even a simple "glad to see you here today."
- ***Family members are helpful:*** So many times I see our members carry clay for someone, help wedge for someone with a sore wrist, clear space for someone to work, etc. These are all wonderful qualities showing our care for each other.
- ***Actually listen to each other:*** We all have thoughts and views that differ from others. How often do we actually take the time to listen to those with different views than ours? By appreciating differences in each other we can gain some new insight, and foster our community, or family, with deeper understandings.
- ***Being able to forgive when we have been hurt:*** One thing in families, such as ours, is that there are times when tempers are expressed, words said, and glances given. Resentments hurt us all, so this is a good reason to forgive and reach out in friendship.
- ***Understand peoples differences:*** We all use the studio for different reasons,, some to socialize, some to have quiet undisturbed time, some to feel less alone, and some to escape from their "other stresses". We can appreciate and support all.

My promise for this year, as president, is to continue to focus on CAG being a wonderful supportive, friendly family for all students at the studio. ***Welcome to our family.***

Bette

printmaking, photography and fiber art. The three day event hosted over 1,000 shoppers with three rooms of shopping and live music from composer and flutist, Monica Williams, and College Park High School Christmas Car-olers. On Saturday, our very own "Santa", **Bill Mellberg**, thrilled the children with a special visit.

Over 2000 items were sold over the three day sale, with a total sale amount of \$45,000, which works out to an average sale per artist of nearly \$600! This year artists, staff and Community Arts Foundation board members donated items to the Handcrafted Holiday Sale to benefit student scholarships. \$2,323.05 was raised through this effort.

This year we also decided to try holding a few Pop-Up Pottery Sales right before Christmas. We set up our tents next to the skating rink entrance with the hope of catching parents as they waited in line to go into the rink. For each sale, we invited four to five artists to set up a table to sell their pottery and sold CAG donated pottery as well. We had originally scheduled three sales (Dec 15,16 & 20), however the weather did not cooperate for the sale on the 16th.

At these sale events, we sold a total of 62 pieces and generated nearly \$1000, \$170 of which went to CAG. We found that the sales really picked up in the afternoon, with most happening between 2-4 pm.



MEET TAKEMI TSURUTA ~ Special CAG Meeting ~

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On Wednesday, January 16, we heard from Takemi himself as the CAG board meeting began in the studio with a complimentary lunch buffet for the entire studio community. (Heartfelt thanks to Betty Medwedeff for arranging the lunch!) Students and teachers filled the studio for Takemi Tsuruta's presentation as our acting studio manager.

After introductions by **Bette Sindzinski**, CAG president, and **Maile Ogasawara**, the Community Arts program director, Takemi began by expressing his gratitude and excitement about taking on this position. To illustrate his journey through pottery to where he is today, he showed 12 slides of the people, teachers, employers and students who have influenced him throughout his life. These slides fittingly began with a picture of his parents. He detailed his education and discussed his years as a studio tech, his work at Leslie's Ceramic Supply and his teaching career.

Takemi outlined the items he had addressed at the studio so far: ordering and unloading required clay, endeavoring to solve problems with the damp room, improving the kiln performance, identifying safety issues, rearranging space in the studio for efficiency, purchasing more lockers and seeking an effective way to monitor student locker assignments. Takemi also shared that he is collaborating with **Bruno Kark** to make new plaster molds and with **Brad Kreps** to determine glaze needs. He discussed the need for many things, such as a larger clay mixer to recycle more clay and shelving for kilns, recognizing that there is a substantial cost to these items that cannot be met right away.

Takemi acknowledged the immense assistance he has received from Maile, Rana and Bette, to name a few. He declared to all participants in the studio an open-door policy, the invitation to call/email/talk in person to him when issues arise, and if he cannot solve them, he will contact Maile. Rana offered that she can field questions when she is at the studio and will ring Takemi if she cannot solve/answer any questions.

It was made clear that the ice rink will continue to exist despite opposition to it. In addition, it was reiterated that monitors will not be permitted to sell clay or other supplies and that students are encouraged to procure these items while teachers are present.

Takemi gave the audience an opportunity to ask questions, bring up concerns and offer suggestions. He vowed to promote a positive atmosphere, both physically, in terms of providing the supplies/equipment needed in studio, and emotionally, which includes supporting a cooperative and congenial environment for everyone here.



Meet Your Monitor

MARY ELLEN BROWNELL

By Erika Goldstein



It was my pleasure to interview **Mary Ellen Brownell** who monitors on Saturday afternoons from 4-7pm and also creates our outside display window! She moved up here four years ago from Southern California where she had a long journey at UCI working as an ultrasound technologist (not to be confused with technician). She enjoyed her job and upon retirement moved up to the lovely Bay Area to be closer to her children and grandchildren.

She lives on five glorious acres in the country and loves her trees, chickens, dogs and soon to be goats!

Mary Ellen started her adventure in our clay studio four years ago during the winter quarter. She loves to hand build her creations and has had so many wonderful experiences in all the classes she has taken and she loves the intimate relationship with clay! She said that the most frustrating thing about working with clay is to not have huge cemented expectations about the outcome/result and her favorite thing about creating is that it is messy, slippery and bumpy.

I then gave her two words and asked her to choose her preference! I have underlined her choice!! Cake or pie? Ice cream or gelato? Bath or shower? Water or fire? Sunrise or sunset? (although sunrises smell better!) Earthquake (because she has experienced them) or tornado? Football or baseball (go dodgers)? Ribs or steak? Wine or beer? Tattoos (she has a lovely one all the down her leg) or piercings? Chocolate (especially honey mamas) or hard candy? She said that if she had a magical power she would want to be like Harry Potter and apparate (to move magically—thus instantaneously)—across the world and travel and she would love to go to Africa (which she will be doing this summer), India and Japan.

She also talked about how much she loves our clay studio community and how we support and can appreciate each other's creativity. She loves looking at how things are crafted even if it is not her style or color, and she really enjoys all the collaboration! So say hello when you see this most fabulous and friendly monitor. She will always be happy to lend a smile and encouragement. 🖐️



Empty Bowls

By Mona Moxley

For many years Clay Arts Guild members and Ceramic students of Community Arts have contributed to the **Empty Bowls Project**, an annual fundraiser held by the Food Bank of Contra Costa County. This fundraiser in October each year raises money and awareness of the work the Food Bank does for the needy. Our 2018 contribution was a great success. We sent 150 bowls to the Food Bank.

We are accepting completed bowls for the 2019 Project. Our goal is 150 completed bowls, suitable for soup. There is a box ready for your contributions in the Library marked Empty Bowls.

If you are between projects, feel moved in these tumultuous times to contribute to your community, or just need something to “warm up” for the day, throw a few bowls for this great project.

I am coordinating the project this year. Please feel free to contact me with questions.

monamoxley@yahoo.com



Our Incredible CAG Volunteers

A hats off to our incredible CAG volunteers who keep our studio clean and healthy. In November, many studio members arrived on a sunny Sunday morning to clean the studio top to bottom. **Clarice Judah** is the long-time CAG member who orchestrated the clean up of all ware boards, wheels, lockers, molds, damp and dry rooms, glaze room, carts, and a host of other areas. Studio members worked for two hours until things sparkled.

Then in December, **Florence McAuley** led a small band of volunteers to clean all the ceramic pieces in the CAG collection cabinets. All pieces were carefully and lovingly taken out, cleaned, and returned with their proper identification numbers. Hats off to Florence, **Betty Wang**, and **Hilde Hildebrand**.

So, when you look around, be proud that we have one of the cleanest studios due to our volunteers. Your health appreciates it. *Thanks to all!*

Bette Sindzinski



Library Notes

By Librarian, Aletha Wiens

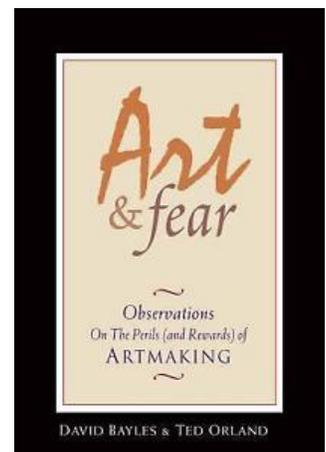


ART AND FEAR; Observations on the Perils (and Rewards) of Artmaking David Bayles and Ted Orland, 1993

“Given a small kernel of reality and any measure of optimism, nebulous expectations whisper to you that the work will soar, that it will become easy, that it will make itself. And verily, now and then the sky opens and the work *does* make itself. Unreal expectations are easy to come by, both from emotional needs and from the hope or memory of periods of wonder. Unfortunately, expectations based on illusion lead almost always to disillusionment.

“Conversely, expectations based on the work itself are the most useful tool the artist possesses. What you need to know about the next piece is contained in the last piece. The place to learn about your materials is in the last use of your materials. The place to learn about your execution is in your execution. The best information about what you love is in your last contact with what you love. Put simply, your work is your guide: a complete, comprehensive, limitless reference book on our work. There is no other such book, and it is yours alone. It functions this way for no one else. Your fingerprints are all over your work, and you alone know how they got there. Your work tells you about your working methods, your discipline, your strengths and weaknesses, your habitual gestures, your willingness to embrace.

“The lessons you are meant to learn are in your work. To see them, you need only look at the work clearly—without judgement, without need or fear, without wishes or hopes. Without emotional expectations. Ask your work what it needs, not what you need. Then set aside your fears and listen, the way a good parent listens to a child.” 🙌



My First Michael Berkley Intensive

By Mary Ellen Brownell

This past Thanksgiving my visiting son sat down at my abandoned wheel and quickly threw two pieces. He had not thrown anything in 20 years! I was amazed at him, and irritated at myself for giving up the wheel years ago. Then I saw the **Michael Berkeley "Anyone Can Center"** workshop offered in the catalog. Ah ha! Another opportunity to start over. I would scrap all of my previously learned habits (they weren't working for me anyway) and start fresh.

On my way to the studio, I focused on keeping a "beginner's mind," telling myself this was my first time throwing. I was not going to let my ego get in the way of learning. Michael began by showing the way he wedges using minimal strength to get a spiral. Wedging for me had always yielded clay with more air than when I began. His method looked hard but soon I surprised myself with only a couple of bubbles in several lumps of clay. A good start! Then he demoed centering (of course making it look easy). His teaching was well thought out and very specific: feet here – legs here – arms here – hands here. Then he went on to explain finger positions for dropping a hole and opening up (my biggest difficulties). He assured us our hands and fingers would soon be stronger (and maybe calloused).

Then it was our turn to try. After a couple of slow starts and following his directions: *Success!* I centered a mound of clay! Sorta. It became an okay bowl that I was overly proud of. Then I overheard Michael saying that bowls are easy. All right then, I accepted the challenge and moved to cylinders. After that it was: Cylinder. Oops, pushed too hard and clay flew off. Cylinder. Oops, collapsed wad of wet clay. Very short cylinder and so forth. When he wasn't demonstrating techniques, Michael worked patiently with individuals having difficulties or questions. Soon it was my turn. I liked that he didn't just make suggestions but got his hands dirty and showed me how it felt to do it better. Afterward, I still had a few disasters but continued to repeat his instructions: Feet-legs-arms-hands-fingers. Hooray! I

finally made some recognizable (albeit thick-walled) pieces. I now understand how satisfying throwing can be. Later in the workshop, he showed what might be done with these cylinders, including cup, pitcher, vase, and jar, but by day three my brain was full (and my body was stiff).

I feel that this type of workshop (15 hrs over three days) was a great way for me to relearn. I could work on improving my new abilities before my body forgot them. One of my favorite things Michael said was that after learning the initial steps, we needed to stop thinking and learn to "feel" the clay! I hope to get to that stage soon. I am delighted with my newly polished skills and I'm excited to practice them. I haven't given up hand building, I've just added another way to play with mud. 🖐️



Missing Kiln Times' HOT TIPS?

If you have a hot tip to share, email it to Ann Henderson – annadele@comcast.net. If it's featured in a future issue, you will receive a free bag of clay.

Instagram Page for CAG

The Walnut Creek Clay Arts Studio Instagram page is up and running and we are always looking for new material. The Instagram page promotes our studio and is a way for us to advertise upcoming sales, pop-up sales, guest speakers, and classes. It is also a platform to highlight our members' amazing talent.

We would love to feature your work, your artistry, and creativity. Please send us your pictures or a short video of your pieces (work in progress or finished work). We will post them as they come in, giving you full credit and links to your Instagram/ Facebook pages. Just include the information you would like us to upload. We look forward to hearing from you.

Please send your photos and information to: Nicole Collins at nicolelanguage1@gmail.com.



The Manager's Office

Hello All and Happy 2019!

As you are all aware of the policies and rules of the studio, I ask that you do your best to follow the protocols of the studio.



We are all here as a community and need to continue to work that way. As we embark on a new year, you will notice some small (and large) changes happening in the studio. Please be patient with us as we work to resolve these issues. Please feel free to contact me via phone, email or in person. If I'm in the studio, my door will always be open (unless I'm in a meeting).

I truly value this opportunity to join this studio and will be working diligently to fix and improve as much as I can, as fast as I can. My studio radar is quite strong, so chances are I'm aware of the problems and concerns and already working to resolve them. Let's all take a deep breath and rest assured that this new year is going to bring good energy, faster firing cycles and a more efficient and clean studio. Thank you again to those who have already reached out with your blessings to offer your help. I appreciate all the positive energy. Here's to a new chapter and a new year!

Thank you

Takemi

Happy New Year to all ...

As we start this new year and winter quarter, we want to welcome Takemi as the Interim Studio Manager. For all of us this is a new beginning and we are looking forward to his input and leadership. I'm sure he will be busy for the next few weeks getting the studio on track so let's be mindful of his schedule when interacting with him. But please take the time to introduce yourself and make him feel welcome. Personally, I feel that he will be a "bright light" in our studio life.

So, get that new bag of clay, put on that clean apron and gaze at your empty locker and get creative again. Don't worry, the apron and locker will be dirty by the end of the week or more likely the end of the day!

Let's have a great year and continue to create beautiful pottery!

Sue Pena

What's Happening in the Clay World

GALLERIES and EXHIBITIONS

TRAX Ceramics Gallery,
1812 5th St. Berkeley
The gallery posts new hours.
Call: 510-540-8729.

Surface Narratives with Beth Lo, Kevin Snipes, Ron Meyers and collaborations by Sandy Simon and Robert Brady online Friday, February 8th at noon.

CONFERENCES

NCECA 53rd Annual Conference: CLAYTOPIA
March 27-30, 2019, Minneapolis, Minnesota
<https://nceca.net>

CCACA 2019, 31st Annual California Conference for the Advancement of Ceramic Arts. May 3-5, 2019. Information online and at John Natsoulas Gallery, 521 First St, Davis, CA 95616. Featuring Patti Warashina, Kim Dickey, Dan Anderson, Cynthia Consentino, Stephen Braun and Shalene Valenzuela.

CALLS to ARTISTS

Blue Line Arts: Apply at www.bluelinearts.org/call-to-artists

Ceramic Wall Works. Deadline to enter, March 1, 2019. Exhibition dates: April 5-June 1, 2019.

Purposeful Pottery. Deadline to enter, March 1, 2019. Exhibition dates: April 5-June 1, 2019.

California Clay Competition 2019, The Artery Davis
Deadline to enter: February 16, 2019. Exhibition dates: May 3-31, 2019. Prospectus online at www.theartery.net/cc.html.

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