

KILN' TIME



AUGUST 2021

THE OFFICIAL CLAY ARTS GUILD NEWSLETTER

WHY DO PEOPLE JOIN CAG and WHAT DOES IT DO? by Bette Sindzinski

This is a question I am asked frequently by students at our ceramic studio. Yes, a dedicated group of ceramicists who took on the name Clay Arts Guild has been around since the beginning of the studio... At least 60 years or so.

So just what does the CAG do?

I reached out to some of the members and asked them to make a list of the benefits of being a CAG member, and also the benefits to the studio. Here are some of their answers ...

- Equipment, Equipment, Equipment as **Mary Ellen Brownell** wrote to me. CAG provides money to the studio each year to purchase things like additional wheels, kilns (CAG provided a large amount to the new kiln coming soon), slab rollers, racks, etc. Without CAG's assistance, the studio would not be what it is today equipment-wise.

- Community Support: Promoting a higher purpose for the studio as **Bill Schaaf** mentioned. We do this through: (1) Members making and contributing bowls each year to CC Food Bank's *Empty Bowls Project* who raise money for their

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SUMMER SALE SUCCESS



We had a unique opportunity recently at the Community Arts' **Arts Around August** tile painting event at the studio where CAG was invited to set up an outdoor tent sale. It was very short notice, but we ended up with eight artists participating. The tile painting stations were set up next to the sale and we even had a Shaved Ice truck that enticed more customers to come visit our sale. Luckily the weather cooperated and we also enjoyed the shade provided by our new CAG pop-up tents. We sold over \$1,900 in three hours and generated over \$400 for new

studio equipment. It was a wonderful opportunity to connect with more of the community and we had the pleasure of meeting some new customers who have asked to be invited to our future sales.

A special thank you goes out to our studio manager, **Takemi**, who made sure we had the space we needed in front of the studio as well as helping us set up and take down the tents, tables and chairs. We also had some wonderful volunteers who



made the whole day possible ... thank you to **Zoe Levitt** (we will miss you, but enjoy Cal Poly!), **Ann Henderson**, **Betty Medwedeff**, **Bill Schaff** and **Bette Sindzinski**.

We hope to have at least one more "pop-up" sale before the big Holiday sale at Shadelands so keep an eye out for notices of upcoming sale opportunities.

👋 Pat Alger



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Visit our website:

www.wcclayartsguild.com

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Message from the CAG Prez ...



It is wonderful to see more and more people coming back to the studio. I am very excited to have the opportunity to take part in the variety of classes that are being offered this fall and Salt classes are back!

I also wanted to remind you about our social media outreach program and ask if you might be willing to join the ranks of "following and liking" our pages.

Nicole Collins has been doing an amazing job of posting upcoming studio information as well as posting some beautiful photos of pottery made by our membership. If you have not checked it out, I highly encourage you to take a look. She is also requesting that you send current photos of your pieces. She loves the action shots from the studio. You can send photos to nicolelanguage@aol.com.

Our Facebook page can be found here

<https://www.facebook.com/CeramicArtsWalnutCreek>

And an Instagram account you can access by clicking on this link

<https://www.instagram.com/clayartsguild/>

Hope to see you all in the Fall!

Pat

The Empty Bowls Project

For many years In conjunction with Community Arts we have donated bowls to the Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano County for their annual fundraising event, Empty Bowls.



In the Fall of 2019 we started preparing for the 2020 event, which did not happen. We have about 140 bowls ready to go. The Food Bank IS going to have the event this fall, and is asking for as many bowls as we can provide.

You can drop off donations of bowls anytime you are in the studio, for class or Open Studio. There is a box in the studio library for donations. Thanks in advance for your participation.

HOT TIPS!

by Clarice Judah

Hairline Crack in Bisqueware

Grind some bisque clay into a fine powder. Mix with small amount of vinegar, fill crack and remove excess. Re-bisque piece, or use paper clay (a mixture of the clay with 30% paper pulp). Smooth the surface and re-bisque. Another option is to rub glaze in the hairline crack at least twice, then glaze complete piece and pray.

Stuck Lids

Put your pot in the freezer for one to two hours; remove and tap with a rubber hammer. If sticking location is known, tap on opposite side. If you don't know where it is stuck, tap all around the circumference. You can put the pot in hot water and tap as well. Be ready to catch the lid as it might release when you don't expect it.

Would you like a free bag of clay for your Hot Tip?

First, you need to try out your hot tip, then write about it and send to Mary Leigh Miller, mlmiller602@gmail.com. If you learned about it from someone else, read it in a book or on the internet, please give credit where credit is due, but the free bag of clay is yours if published. Accompanying photos are always welcome.

Why Join CAG, continued

programs. (2) Providing small ceramic pieces for Meals on Wheels – a new project for us. It's fun to have shut-in folks get handmade ceramic pieces along with their meals. (3) Working with high school STEAM events (science, technology, engineering, arts, and math). (4) Participating in Family Arts Day events that encourage families to have fun.

Here are some more comments from members:

- CAG provides money each year toward the Community Arts scholarship fund so that clay students who struggle financially can take classes.

- Usually, but not currently due to COVID, CAG organizes social and educational events for its members, *and* we usually have treats to munch on as we have fun. We also have contests for members with recognized known ceramicists judging the events, with prizes too. Hopefully soon these things can start again.

- **Pat Alger** points out that CAG co-sponsors Master Potter Workshops each year. We have had famous potters come and demonstrate their skill for a whole day. These workshops have been so much fun!

- CAG also provides the monitors for Open Studio times, which help keep overhead costs lower for the studio.

- One of the most common, well-known perks is the reduction in Open Studio fees for CAG members each quarter.

- Many CAG members are seasoned potters and help new students with questions and guidance.

- *And* only CAG members get to sell in any pop up CAG sales, or large studio sales.

- CAG members foster “community and support” for our fellow potters.

- CAG members help the studio be a “better” studio. The studio functions at a higher level of professionalism based on CAG input.

- CAG members enable the studio to strive for a “Higher Purpose”, from workshops, scholarships, to Empty Bowls and Meals on Wheels.

So these are a few of the things that Clay Arts Guild does each and every year. I'm sure I forgot many things ... fun things to participate in for CAG members. It is a great Guild and wonderful group of potters.

Join or renew your membership today at:

<http://wcclayartsguild.com/>



MY CLAY TEACHER

by Zoe Levitt

A year ago, I was inspired to buy a five pound bag of terracotta clay from Amazon. I was enamored with the idea of being able to create minimalist vessels while wearing strictly linen clothing and living an organized, clean life. The onset of COVID-19 and its subsequent quarantine was a time for me to reinvent myself – starting with clay.



I began with the creation of two little creatures that lacked rhyme or reason. They were mythical and whimsical... and structurally unsound. I adorned them with wings and horns without realizing the fragility of green ware and created them with liberal amounts of water, creating a sticky mess. Ultimately, one small

creature sits unfired on a shelf due to the fragility of its adornments, while another successfully made it through both bisque and glaze firing. This was my first encounter with humility.

Fast forward six months, I embark on the preparations for my first CAG sale. I have many pieces planned and am excited to try out underglazes for the first time. If you've read my first CAG newsletter piece then you'd know that, due to the time constraints of being a full-time college student, many of my pieces were not fired in time and, unfortunately, I was unable to share my prepared work with the public. I did have a great time volunteering my time, however, to assist with the sale! This was my second dance with humility.



I began as a hand-builder due to the uncomfortable cost of a wheel. This past quarter, I was able to take my first throwing class. It is nothing like the YouTube videos! One day, I was on a new wheel and the pedal was more touchy than I was used to. I couldn't center for the life of me, and fought back tears as I struggled against the spinning clay. However, by the end of week eight, I finally graduated to throwing two pounds of clay instead of one and a half, and have finally learned how to pull a wall! Now I have an itch to throw and cannot wait to get back on the wheel and experiment! This was my most recent brush with humility.



I've talked to many potters and I have been assured that humility does not visit me alone. Clay teaches more than just craft skills. It touches our core and pulls us down to the earth from whence it came, and reminds us that we are akin – moldable when young, hardened by age and refined with time. Clay has been so much more than a hobby for me, it has taught me about myself and about the life ahead of me. 🙌

Read the confessions of another ceramics "first-timer" starting on page 5.

Meals on Wheels

Donate your small pottery creations to brighten the day of Meals on Wheels recipients. Donations can be left in the Library.

MY ADDICTION TO POTTERY By Jean Lindberg

Jean Lindberg met Ann Henderson in an open studio class this summer and was asked by Ann to write about her clay experiences. She plans to join CAG in the fall.



My addiction to pottery all started with a pushy dinner host.

We had just arrived for a two to three year assignment in London. I had brought scrap-book material and a lot of books with me, because I was just sure it would rain all the time and I wouldn't make a

friend. But, the loneliness was short-lived. During our second week in town, we were invited to Jeff's co-worker's home for a wonderful home-cooked dinner (much appreciated, since we weren't able to figure out how to turn on the stove). When we arrived, I discovered that the wife, Sophie, was an artist – an actual artist with a studio and a gallery that represented her. She suggested that I take a ceramics class with her. No matter what I said, and how much I told her I was not at all interested in ceramics, by the time we left, she had my credit card and I was enrolled in a course.

When I got home, I checked my email. The course confirmation stated I was taking *advanced ceramics*! I phoned Sophie in a panic.

Me: But I've never taken ceramics before!

Sophie: Sure you have.

Me: NOOOO! I haven't! The only class I had ever taken was a "paint your own ceramics while sipping champagne class," and the champagne won!

Sophie: Don't worry, you'll be fine. Plus, I'll be there to help you." (Seriously?)

A few weeks later, when our first ceramics class

was nearing, I texted Sophie to coordinate.

Sophie: Oh, I forgot to tell you, I'm missing the first class, I'll be in Spain.

Me: WHAT???

Sophie: You'll be fine. They don't do much the first week anyway. Just be sure to tell the teacher, who knows me well, that I'll be back the following week.

Me: You are sending me to advanced ceramics by myself???

So I showed up by myself, and all the students were busy throwing pots, making mass production tableware and generally knowing what they were doing. There were three new people, and the teacher asked us to tell a bit about our experiences with clay.

Lady 1: I've just moved from Switzerland, but couldn't bring my wheel or kiln with me. (I suddenly feel the urge to go to the bathroom and not come back)

Lady 2: I've been teaching ceramics for 28 years, but have recently moved into a new studio. My gallery wants more of my work, so I just need a place to throw while it's being set up. (CAN I SHOOT MYSELF NOW?)

Me: oh, ya, about that ... well, I just moved from San Francisco; I haven't done ceramics since middle school, and my friend Sophie, who is in this class, signed me up. Oh, and Sophie wants me to tell you she is in Spain this week, but she will be back next week for sure.

Teacher: Well, first of all, I think you may be in the wrong class (understatement of the year!), and second (as she scrolls down her registration list), I don't have a Sophie in this class.

WHAT!!!!!!????

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me: (Texting Sophie) SOPHIE! What did you do to me?! the teacher says you aren't in this class!!!! Yikes!!!!

Sophie: (texting back) OH, SH**!!!!!! I signed you up for the wrong class!


SERIOUSLY?

Postscript: the ceramics teacher was very nice, and let me stay, even though she told me I wasn't allowed to ask questions. Somehow I managed, and all the students in the class helped me out. They even put my first piece of work in the showcase, and it turned out that, even though I still have nothing I particularly want to make, I love clay, and can't wait to dig my hands into it every week.

This studio is just what I need!



Here is my first project that ended up in the showcase.... warped wine bottles, because I couldn't figure out how to get the bottles out (I had put the bases on already) 🙄



Studio News

The Ice Rink will be returning this year. Construction starts on October 25 and will run through early February. Management will work with the city regarding different parking possibilities but they do not have definitive plans. More information to come.

Parking stickers will be available for the fall session. For those needing more than three hours during the coming sessions, they will be available at the Senior Center.

The Holiday Sale will take place for two days. Saturday, December 4, 10 am to 5 pm. Sunday, December 5, 10 am to 3 pm. Loading will be on Friday, December 3. Limited staffing is affecting plans, and the sale will be on a smaller scale, possibly in the auditorium only. A possible pop up sale is also being considered for December at Shadelands along with a Santa Claus event.

The cargo ship carrying our new gas kiln suffered a fire. Insurance will inspect for damage. If damaged, it will be returned to Sweden. More information to come. The kiln will be installed by contractors with staff members from Community Arts present. Contractors will also train staff members after installation.

Rana has taken a job elsewhere so Takemi is in the process of interviewing for a studio assistant. Position will be filled for fall quarter.



More photos taken at the August Sale and Tile Painting event.