



CAA

Ceramics Annual *of* America 2013



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October 18th, 2013

Dear Artists, Educators, and Art Enthusiasts,

On behalf of the residents of San Francisco, welcome to our city and the 2013 California Ceramics Cooperative's (CCC) 4th Ceramics Annual of America! As a strong supporter of the arts, I am proud that this wonderful event allows local artists to showcase their work to a broad audience of collectors.

I commend the California Ceramics Cooperative and the regional and international artists for the important role you play in bringing the world of art into our lives. The Ceramics Annual of America is an exhibition unlike any other in the country, giving art enthusiasts the opportunity to enjoy a breathtaking collection of contemporary ceramic arts. Featuring artists hailing from all over the world, the show presents a diverse set of styles, ideas, and raw creativity. This collaboration between the skillful planning of the CCC and the many talented artists of our nation creates an amazing event in which we come together to appreciate the symphony of emotions that art invokes in individuals.

This year, I would like to congratulate the California Ceramics Cooperative for partnering with the City and County of San Francisco by displaying pieces of the Civic Art Collection. Some of these amazing artworks have not been publicly exhibited in over twenty years.

Once again, welcome to San Francisco and enjoy the show!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mark Leno".

MARK LENO
Senator, 11th District

**Influences,
Intersections and
Innovations:
21st Century Ceramics**

Susannah Israel

Welcome to the 2013 Ceramics Annual of America, showcasing the remarkable quality and diversity of 21st-century ceramics. This marks the third year for the Ceramics Annual of America (CAA), a legacy of California's role in the history of American ceramics. Ceramic artists, educators and scholars have joined to encourage education and promote awareness of the ceramic arts, sharing and sustaining international connections among collectors and makers of ceramics. CAA is an important point of culmination, an American first, as an exhibition and art fair dedicated to ceramics aesthetics, cultural history and community.

Ceramics in the 21st century is a lively and dynamic art form with a fascinating history. Ceramic materials, Peter Voukos has said, are as old as dirt. Indeed, the evolution of clay is part of the planet's own formation history, involving the action of wind, water and pressure over geologic time. Human ceramic practice also has deep roots. In contemporary work we see unbroken lines of influence that reach back for millennia, such as shino tea bowls, anagama wood firing, memorials to the dead. Ceramic wares supplied essential needs for food storage and service the world around until the 19th century. Studio ceramics is profoundly influenced by art movements of the American 20th century: Abstract Expressionism, Minimalism, Patternism, Surrealism, Trompe l'oeil, political and social critique. Ceramics has flourished in universities, community centers, residency programs and art and industry. Combining multicultural influences in ceramic art history with the innovations of contemporary practice makes for art both rich and diverse.

The first Ceramics Annual of America opened in 2010 with a gala reception, followed by three days of educational panel presentations, artist

demonstrations, video presentations, and children's art activities, all centered around a museum-quality display of the work of seventy ceramic artists. More than seven thousand people attended this record-breaking art fair by the San Francisco Bay. Artists were present to discuss work with collectors and new clay enthusiasts; significant purchases and commissions were made. The sense of excitement was tremendous. At the end of the weekend, it was clear that the world of clay had enjoyed a new and successful gathering.

The scope of CAA is a brand-new development, but in another sense it is nothing new in the field of clay. Creative communities evolve around this art form in a unique fashion. Ceramics has inherent collaborative aspects that are much like music. Critique groups, artist receptions, anagama firings (up to ten days long) all provide opportunities to enthusiastically review current work in context, discuss ideas and inspirations and plans for more projects ahead. Different perspectives abound, from academic to avant-garde. I venture to generalize that ceramic endeavors typically consist of a group of people committed to working their dedicated butts off, and CAA is the latest of such undertakings. While not wholly Californian in origin, this is certainly collaboration at its best, California-style. The development of contemporary American ceramics owes much to the San Francisco Bay area, which makes the event at the Civic Center an artistic homecoming.

To get a feeling for the explosive growth of contemporary ceramics, we need to take a look at much quieter times: in 1941 the magazine *Craft Horizons* was first established, providing a way to see what was being made in clay as well as wood, glass, fiber and other materials. Presented in this craft context, ceramics soon began to outgrow the definition in what would ultimately become a very heated discussion. In 1945 Carlton Ball helped form the San Francisco Potter's Association while teaching at Mills College. In 1950, the Association hosted a conference entitled, "What Makes a Potter Good" featuring talks by Edith Heath, Marguerite Wildenhain, Herb Sanders and Antonio Prieto. Later visiting artists included Bernard Leach, Shoji Hamada, Stephen de Staebler, Byron Temple, and Daniel Rhodes. The name was changed to the Association of Clay & Glass Artists in 1997, and ACGA is thriving today.

In 1951 Peter Voulkos was enrolled at the California College of Arts and Crafts for graduate study in ceramics. That summer, he and Rudy Autio worked with Archie Bray at his Montana brick factory, firing kilns and making bricks in exchange for using the facilities for their own work. Archie Bray was committed to creating an artists' residency at the brick factory, which began in 1953 and celebrated its 60th anniversary in 2011 as

an internationally renowned program. Also in 1953, *Ceramics Monthly* magazine began publishing articles, profiles and news exclusively about clay, an important first. The section entitled "Where to Show" took up just half a page in the early years of publication.

Beginning in 1953, Peter Voulkos exhibited in New York and taught at Black Mountain College during the explosion of abstract expressionism onto the American art scene. In 1959, Voulkos began teaching at the University of California, Berkeley. In 1961 Jim Melchert, Ron Nagle and Stephen de Staebler began studying with Voulkos. In 1962 Ruby O'Burke, a Mills College graduate who had studied with Antonio Prieto, established her ceramics workshop in San Francisco, which grew to become a nonprofit community arts center offering workspace and classes today.

In 1966 the groundbreaking Funk show was held at the University of California Art Museum in Berkeley. Art historian Peter Selz defined funk as "hot rather than cool, committed rather than disengaged, bizarre rather than formal, sensuous and frequently quite ugly." Like the Abstract Expressionists whose response to labels was 'it's not that, no, not that, not that', Arneson and the other ceramic artists in the show initially wondered about this term. Richard Shaw talks about the terms then in use among the artists: Nut Art, or Dumb. But Funk stuck and Arneson became the 'father of funk ceramics'.

In 1971 the Berkeley Potters Guild was formed. In 1972 *Studio Potter* magazine began publishing articles and reviews focused on the working artist outside of the academic setting. In 1977 Meyer Breier Weiss Gallery opened, exhibiting the works of Bill Abright, Kathryn McBride and Claudia Tarantino. Virginia Breier later opened her own gallery at Fort Mason, and Dorothy Weiss Gallery opened in 1984. The Oakland Museum of California and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art exhibited work by Robert Arneson, Richard Shaw, Viola Frey, and Stephen de Staebler, presenting ceramics in a fine art context and making it accessible to the public.

In 1986, the California Conference for the Advancement of Ceramic Art was first presented as a collaboration between Arneson and John Natsoulas in Davis, California. The CCACA has continued to grow and now features a three-story annual exhibition, with lectures and demonstrations by a slate of distinguished ceramic artists, and over forty student exhibitions from colleges and universities in California and beyond. This confluence of creative energy provided fertile ground for the inception of the CAA today.

Ceramic education at college level, which was the entry point for Voulkos, has provided an

important historic continuity since the 1950's. The long lineage of teachers and students now forms a vast tree of connection, with easily traceable branches, twigs and leaves of inspiration and influence. Innovators and educators in ceramics are especially noted for generosity and encouragement in sharing their technical and philosophical knowledge. The CAA provides a fascinating look at the development of ceramics practice through college and university programs. Some CAA artists are instructors with master's degrees and years of teaching experience. Some are pursuing graduate degrees. The community college system in California is especially noted for its accessibility and its success in preparing professional artists.

The extraordinary innovations possible with ceramic materials, and the expressive nature of the medium, guarantee a creative pluralism which truly characterizes ceramics today. The world of clay has become global, with artists remaining in touch across the world after a conference, a residency, a teaching appointment, a public project, or an exhibition brings them together. Social media are a daily means of communication in ceramics, making possible the sharing of news, images and videos worldwide.

Explore the exhibition and you will discover work as varied as the minds that made it. Some work gives homage to the earth, source of clay, with raw organic texture and emphasis on mass, volume, and dynamic thrust. Industrial processes have become the tools and techniques for some; these vary from monumental terracotta, made on-site in factories, to porcelain slip-casting of minute, delicate forms. Personal narrative informs many sculptural pieces. Complex surfaces involve exquisitely drawn and printed images. Cultural critique is a focus, informed by the 1990's theory that all artists are social workers. Some work is intended for pure aesthetic engagement with beauty. Technical virtuosity can be found side by side with an unrestrained expressionistic delight in the sheer joy of art making. The 2013 Ceramics Annual of America brings together another impressive group of ceramic artists with practices rooted in diverse cultures, experiences and education from around the world.

Paolo Porelli

Babel Man
28" x 12"
glazed stoneware
2011

Paolo Porelli received his degree in painting at the Accademia di Belle Arti in Rome. In 1990, he opened his own ceramics studio. Since that time, he has produced sculpture and functional pottery. He has exhibited widely in Europe and the US. Recently, he was a summer resident artist at The Archie Bray Foundation for the Ceramic Arts, Guest Artist in Residence at The Clay Studio in Philadelphia, and artist in residency at the Woodstock Byrdcliffe Guild. In 2012, he co-founded c.r.e.t.a. rome, an international center for ceramic arts.

