

# Briefings

2013

**nceca**  
NATIONAL COUNCIL ON EDUCATION  
FOR THE CERAMIC ARTS



# 2013 NCECA Biennial

Houston Center for Contemporary Craft  
Houston, Texas

January 26 - May 5, 2013



## NCECA Biennial Purchase Awards

2013

Léopold L. Foulem, *Choir Boy and Clergyman*

2011

Steven Olszewski, *Meditation*

Jose Sierra, *Tetera Caruay*

Andy Brayman, *Bowl*

Lindsay Oesterritter, *Ingot*

Tara Polansky, *The Shadow*

2009

Margaret Keelan, *Girl with Crow*

Kristen Kieffer, *Pear Covered Jar, Lilacs*

Heather Bren, *non-object 03*

Perry Haas, *Basket*

2007

Jason Briggs, *Squirt*

Brad Schweiger, *Construction 2*

2005

Kirk Mangus, *Love and War Amphora*

Stan Welch, *Mister*

2003

Karen Gunderman, *Dexterity*

Denise Pelletier, *Sirens*

Jerilyn Virden, *Two-Chambered Bowl*

2001

Sandra Belcher, *Hare*

Justin Novak, *Canopied Figure #7*

Liz Quackenbush, *Oval Insect Platter*

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## 2013 NCECA BIENNIAL ARTISTS

Nicole Aquillano  
Christa Assad  
Tom Bartel  
Nicholas Bivins  
Renée Brown  
Josephine Burr  
Gary Carlos  
Lisa Cecere  
Du Chau  
Andréa Keys Connell  
Emily Connell  
Shenny Cruces  
Elizabeth DeLyria  
Sharan Elran  
Léopold L. Foulem  
Teri Frame  
Chad Gunderson  
Sarah House  
Erica Iman  
Ryan LaBar  
Thomas Lane  
Lauren Mabry  
Ted Neal  
Tybre Newcomer  
Claudia Olds Goldie  
Vijay V. Paniker  
Joseph Pintz  
Paolo Porelli  
Audrey Rosulek  
Joel Schroeder  
Linda Sormin  
Mark Nathan Stafford  
Michael Strand  
George Timock  
Triesch Voelker



### PRESIDENT'S WELCOME

The 2013 NCECA Biennial is a vibrant example of the standard of excellence in our field. This exemplary exhibition has engaged three distinguished perspectives to select the best of 1,360 submissions that came in from around the world. My most sincere thanks goes to the review team, Cristina Córdova, Namita Gupta Wiggers and Richard Notkin, and to Linda Ganstrom, NCECA Exhibitions Director, as well as to our gracious host, the Houston Center for Contemporary Craft. Thirty-nine works included in the exhibition will be viewed by those that have an intimate relationship with ceramic material as well as the general public who will interpret the compilation of works through their own lens. This work will energize both those groups in a way that will examine accepted notions of how ceramic work is categorized.

Congratulations to the selected artists and to the caliber of work that they have achieved. A testament to the strength, breadth of creativity and innovation that has evolved from the strong historical roots that, at times, both inspire and challenge the role of ceramics under the umbrella of contemporary art; these artists own their right to be a part of the contemporary art discourse. It is with great enthusiasm that we celebrate this year's Biennial exhibition that marks our 47th Annual NCECA Conference, *Earth/Energy* in Houston, Texas.

Patsy Cox  
NCECA President

## HOST VENUE STATEMENT

Houston Center for Contemporary Craft (HCCC) is honored to host the 2013 NCECA Biennial exhibition in conjunction with NCECA's 47th Annual Conference. Since 2001, HCCC's mission has been to advance education about the process, product, and history of craft. As an organization, we achieve this through a nationally known artist residency program, educational programming, such as workshops and lectures, and by presenting over 10 innovative exhibitions in three different spaces each year. With the 2013 NCECA Biennial considered one of the most important recurring displays of contemporary ceramic work, HCCC is thrilled to introduce this exhibit to Houston.

Each year, the NCECA Conference brings together a diverse community of artists under the umbrella of "ceramic arts." The Biennial offers a chance to consider only a small selection of work that is happening in this broader discipline. As a material, ceramic is inherently grounded in a sense of place. The characteristics of the clay body depend on its diverse chemical makeup, which in part is determined by where the clay is sourced. With the biennial falling under the broader conference theme of *Earth/Energy*, it is fitting for these events to take place in a city such as Houston.

Many people may not be aware that, while Houston is known for its strength in the oil and natural gas industries, it is also a leader in the research and development of renewable energy sources, such as wind and solar power. And, as the fourth largest city in the nation, Houston is known for its incredibly vibrant arts scene. HCCC is just one of many arts organizations across the city promoting and developing a rich and artistic culture for the community. By hosting the 2013 NCECA Biennial, HCCC hopes to introduce a diverse audience of arts patrons to NCECA and that, similarly, the conference will present our city to the national ceramics community.

Anna Walker  
Curator, Houston Center for Contemporary Craft



### JUROR STATEMENT: CRISTINA CÓRDOVA

Coming together to carefully survey and select from thousands of images proved to be a powerful and humbling exercise in assertiveness. I was sparked by so many submissions that the emergence of a hierarchy was gradual and elusive. Through many, many hours of judging, recalibrating, deliberating, conceding, opposing, seducing and rejecting we birthed this unique collective. It is an odd baby, imprinted with the specific aesthetic and conceptual gravity of three multi-cultural individuals from all over the US that parachuted together with hefty opinions and a long personal history of creative battles. Like our personal cabinet of wonders it holds the objects and images that touched a unique nerve in our sensibilities and ignited the thrill to share with an audience.

It is an extraordinary time to be working in clay, a material that though open to the vast expanses of human innovation and technology still defines itself by the simple quality of malleability, reliant on human hands to structure meaning. After this experience I returned to my studio practice with a deep sense of gratitude to all the artists who, selected or not, offered examples of their work. Together the spectrum included vessels, sculpture, installation, performance, video and lighting and boldly questioned formal distinctions between art, craft, architecture and design that both challenged and inspired me. It was also a great privilege to have worked alongside Namita Gupta Wiggers and Richard Notkin and to have had the invaluable support of Linda Ganstrom and Kate Vorhaus from NCECA throughout the process.

I hope you enjoy this exhibition and share with me the thrill of the possibilities.

Cristina Córdova



### **BIOGRAPHY: CHRISTINA CÓRDOVA**

Internationally acclaimed for her hauntingly, provocative figurative sculptures, juror Cristina Córdova has a well-established record of museum exhibitions including: Fuller Craft Museum, Brockton, MA; Museum of Contemporary Art, Puerto Rico; Museo de Arte de Puerto Rico, Puerto Rico; Mint Museum of Craft + Design, Charlotte, NC; Mobile Museum of Art, Mobile, AL; Gretchen Keyworth, Society of Arts & Crafts, Boston, MA and the Joseph-Schein Museum, NY. A highly respected workshop teacher, Córdova has led numerous workshops in figurative art in universities and art centers such as: Armory Arts Center, Haystack Mountain School of Crafts, Anderson Ranch Arts Center and Penland School of Crafts where she serves as a trustee. A graduate of Colegio de Agricultura y Artes Mecánicas, Mayagüez, Puerto Rico and New York State College of Ceramics, Alfred University; Córdova's work challenges gender and racial boundaries while evoking re-examination of intellectual conventions and social norms. Córdova recently exhibited her art in Bestiario at the Morean Arts Center, St. Petersburg, FL during the 2011 NCECA conference and in *Push Play: The 2012 NCECA Invitational* at Bellevue Arts Museum.

Above: Cristina Córdova, *Preludios y Partidas*, 2012  
Ceramic, concrete, steel  
144" x 180" installed





### JUROR STATEMENT: RICHARD NOTKIN

*"To punish me for my contempt of authority, fate made me an authority myself."*

Albert Einstein

While it is an honor to be invited by NCECA to perform the juror's duties for the 2013 NCECA Biennial, the role of juror is also an unenviable task and a serious responsibility. I have always been skeptical of authority, and do not accept lightly the gate keeping power that accompanies the juror's task. The jurying of works of art is predominantly a subjective endeavor -- a different group of jurors would have resulted in an entirely different exhibition. I also know, emerging from our lengthy deliberations, that each one of us, acting alone, would have chosen a somewhat different exhibition. Aesthetic taste is as uniquely personal as one's fingerprints and DNA. There are no absolutes, no black and white, right or wrong answers to the subjective process of jurying works of art.

The jury consisted of three individuals with uniquely different skills, opinions and aesthetic prejudices. This is as it should be. I believe that, in the arts as well as other disciplines, when we are all thinking alike, nobody is really thinking deeply. Among my fellow jurors, Cristina Córdova is a strong figurative sculptor, in my opinion one of the best in the field. Namita Gupta Wiggers is a curator and the director of the Museum of Contemporary Craft in Portland, OR, and she has a finely developed curatorial eye. Our task was to whittle down 1360 works of ceramic sculpture and pottery by 740 artists into an exhibition of only 39 works. After two consecutive ten-hour days in Hays, Kansas, we did come to a consensus of sorts on the final 39 pieces. We did not attempt to compose a survey of contemporary American ceramic art, but were determined to choose the "strongest" 39 works.



It is a matter of conjecture to determine if we succeeded in doing so, and, as a juror, I can only say that we agreed to disagree. There are a few works in this exhibition that I would not have chosen had I juried the show alone, and I am sure that my fellow jurors would express similar observations. However, none of this diminishes the overall high quality of the majority of the works in the 2013 NCECA Biennial.

The ratio of pieces that did not make the final cut to those that were ultimately accepted is thirty-three to one. In other words, only three percent of the entries in the competition were chosen. Adhering to the numerical constraints necessitated that some damn fine pieces -- and many more that were quite competent or exhibited strong potential -- do not appear in the exhibition.

I once read that Andy Warhol, when questioned about his methods in jurying an exhibition, responded, "First, I pick all of my friends. Second, I give them all of the prizes." Andy could evidently get away with such outrages; in fact, it was part of his persona, part of the calculated performance that was designed to establish his mythological status, part rebel, part clown. I can't -- and wouldn't try to -- get away with such nonsense. I attempt to choose work which simply impresses me, and sometimes even amazes me, with both its conceptual strength and the skill of its execution.

The large pool of entries contained an unusually high number of works which referenced the human figure and/or addressed social and political issues. This was not unpredictable, given that two of the three jurors are ceramic sculptors who exemplify these branches in the ceramic



arts. As could reasonably be expected, I often gravitate towards images and/or narrative works which reference the social/political/environmental dilemmas of our deeply troubled world. While one would expect that this would have resulted in an exhibition heavy with such narrative work, this is not the case. Some pieces which I highly favored did not garner a consensus, and thus did not make the final cut. Also, being a practitioner of politically charged art for more than four decades, I may have developed an overly fastidious critical eye in reviewing such work. I believe that art work which ventures into this realm must be, first and foremost, aesthetically strong work. The message won't carry the art -- the art must carry the message.

Some final thoughts: We are living on a planet which is undergoing changes that threaten our very existence as a species. In the not too distant future, a collision of several forces is looming. Climate change, pollution and spreading radiation contamination endanger the food chain in our vast oceans, and are causing disruptions in our land-based agricultural output. These coming environmental disasters threaten our abilities to sustain a viable food supply for a rapidly expanding population. And the self-absorbed nations of the world -- our own as much as any other -- continue to squander money, lives and the technological capabilities and natural resources of our planet on militarism and unethical, unnecessary warfare. As artists, what can we do? Our response must be to continue to create works of beauty and works that illuminate and question our foibles and follies, works that both amaze and provoke a response. The creative endeavors of dedicated artists are capable of touching people in profound ways. We must also be more aware and active in matters pertaining to the planet outside of the narrow parameters of the somewhat insular "art world". Above all, artists need to continue to advance the notion that there is something inherently good in the human spirit through the conceptual depth, the technical skill and, occasionally, the sheer joy of our creations. Regardless of the medium or mode of expression, the greatest works of art have the power to rekindle our sense of wonder and infuse our spirits with a unique magic. In this world-gone-nuts, we need as much enchantment and illumination as artists can supply.

Richard Notkin

Above: Richard Notkin, *"The Last Syllable of Recorded Time"*, 2010  
White earthenware, glaze, watercolor and pastel  
77.5" x 51.5" x 2.5"

### **BIOGRAPHY: RICHARD NOTKIN**

Richard Notkin lives and works in Helena, Montana, creating works deeply influenced by the centuries-old tradition of Yixing pottery from which he has adopted the precise working methods and a penchant for trompe l'oeil. With his artwork serving as an extension of his conscience, Notkin's ceramic sculptures and tile murals are visual explorations into social and political commentary questioning military misadventures and foreign policy around the world with particular focus on nuclear weaponry and energy. Richard Notkin received his BFA from Kansas City Art Institute and MFA from University of California, Davis. His awards include: Artist Fellowship, National Endowment for the Arts, 1979, 1981, 1988; Fellowship in Sculpture, John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation and The Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation and the Hoi Fellowship from the United States Artists Foundation. In 2008, he was elected to The American Craft Council College of Fellows. His work is in over 60 public collections including: Metropolitan Museum of Art, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Cooper-Hewitt Museum, Carnegie Museum of Art, Charles A. Wustum Museum of Art, Mint Museum of Craft and Design, Montreal Museum of Decorative Arts, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, Shigaraki Museum of Ceramic Art and Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

## JUROR STATEMENT: NAMITA GUPTA WIGGERS

The process of creating exhibitions through a jury fascinates me. It is a complex and layered endeavor - and never, never the same experience twice. An invitation to participate reaches a particular group. Of that group, a smaller subset self-selects and devotes time to submit work for consideration. Then, an even smaller group selects the final works from the submissions. The whittling down of all to some to a select few is challenging at best, whether you are jurying on your own or with colleagues. Last, but definitely not least, the curator at the exhibiting venue organizes the works into a spatial arrangement through which visitors experience individual objects, their relationships to one another, and the overall impact of the collective whole.

I mention this because I want to thank each and every person who took time to create a submission for this exhibition. It was a sincere pleasure to see the range of work artists value as compelling and representative of their own individual practices. I was reminded of work we've all admired for many years, and introduced to new work I appreciated seeing for the first time.

From a curatorial perspective, I found the survey particularly intriguing. We witnessed a span of forms, techniques, processes, aesthetic perspectives, scale, and thematic approaches. I found the forays into social engagement and environmental questions quite compelling - alongside exquisite explorations of the material properties that make clay an incredible material with which to work. There are countless ways in which the hundreds of submissions could have been organized into a single exhibition. At the conclusion of days of exhaustive discussion, I believe that the exhibition presents a cross-section of membership entries that will have something to offer every ceramic artist out there.

The works selected by the jury are varied. The vessel as a container and a connector is examined through a variety of forms - concrete and through social engagement. Historicity and the impact of European decorative arts traditions are visible through objects and performance (video). Classical themes of nature and the figure are evident, alongside contemporary social commentary and questions about human relationships with natural and constructed environments. The figure and the vessel, glaze techniques and conceptual content thrive in ceramics today. What was absent, however, was a reflection of a fully global perspective beyond European and East Asian influences. It is my hope that future exhibitions will be able to reveal perspectives and influences from, perhaps, Africa, India, or Morocco more fully into the submissions.

As a curator, I believe that the exhibition will prove compelling to NCECA - and also to those visiting the Houston Center for Contemporary Craft throughout the duration of the exhibition. It is a fantastic opportunity to connect with communities beyond ceramics circles - to introduce the city's residents to the myriad possibilities of expression offered through the medium of clay. I look forward to seeing the work in person, to seeing you all and to hearing your thoughts about the exhibition at NCECA in 2013.

Namita Gupta Wiggers, Director and Chief Curator  
Museum of Contemporary Craft in partnership with Pacific Northwest College of Art



#### **BIOGRAPHY: NAMITA GUPTA WIGGERS**

Namita Gupta Wiggers is Director and Chief Curator, Museum of Contemporary Craft in partnership with Pacific Northwest College of Art, Portland, OR, where she has directed the curatorial programming since 2004. Her curatorial work combines her experience and training as an art historian, a museum educator, ethnographer and design researcher, teacher, writer, and studio art jeweller. Through exhibitions and programming, Wiggers considers how craft and design function as subjects and verbs, and as simultaneously distinct and intersecting practices, and how the exhibition operates as a site and space for cultural inquiry. She is the author of several publications, including *Generations: Betty Feves* (2012), *Ken Shores: Clay Has the Last Word* (2010), and editor of Garth Clark's *How Envy Killed the Crafts Movement: An Autopsy in Two Parts* (2009). She is the co-founder of Critical Craft Forum, and serves on the Board of Trustees, American Craft Council, and the curatorial board of accessceramics, an online clay-focused database.

Rome, Italy  
**PORELLI** | PAOLO



*Excess*, 2011  
Stoneware, porcelain slip  
26" x 12" x 10"

## EXHIBITIONS DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT: LINDA GANSTROM

The National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts is delighted to present the 2013 NCECA Biennial held at the Houston Center for Contemporary Craft in Houston, Texas and the 2013 NCECA National Student Juried Exhibition held at the Glassell School of Art, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.

In the 25 years since the inception of the Biennial, NCECA has experienced tremendous growth, technological change and a paradigm shift in organizational leadership with the board transitioning its priorities to work more collaboratively with staff while devoting greater focus to issues of governance and policy. NCECA is growing up. Keeping pace, our NCECA sponsored exhibitions and the concurrent independent exhibitions program surrounding the conference has continued to grow in size and quality. It is my pleasure to once again steward the development of an outstanding exhibitions program centered around the 2013 NCECA Biennial and NSJE while engaging so many emerging and established creatives working in contemporary ceramics. I am also excited to offer a print catalog that documents and extends the life of this effort by including works from both the 2013 NCECA National Student Juried Exhibition as well as the 2013 NCECA Biennial. NCECA elected to forego publication of a CD ROM catalog this year as the format seems to be nearing the end of its life span with more content shifting away from physical media and towards accessibility of content via the internet. NCECA continues to support the Biennial with a purchase award geared towards building our collection, this year with the acquisition of an exceptional work by Leopold L. Foulem, *Choir Boy and Clergyman*. Foulem's works have been included in numerous NCECA exhibitions and we are thrilled to be able to acquire his work.

The reputation of the NCECA Biennial, as a leading international ceramics competition has grown along with the organization and continues to attract strong entries, highly respected jurors and prestigious venues. On behalf of the Council, I sincerely thank all the artists who offered their work for consideration and our jurors, Cristina Córdova, Namita Gupta Wiggers and Richard Notkin for their service, dedication, expertise and vision in selecting this Biennial's entries. We are deeply appreciative that the Houston Center for Contemporary Craft under the leadership of Julie Farr, Executive Director and Anna Walker, Curator, is hosting the 2013 NCECA Biennial in its main gallery.

A dynamic survey of new talent in the field, the 2013 NSJE, our fourth national exhibition, will feature 54 works by 50 artists selected by jurors, Bonnie Seeman and Kevin Snipes, out of 285 applicants with 500 entries. Sited in the Perimeter Gallery at the Glassell School of Art, these works will be on display during the Glassell School's annual Core Program exhibition, exposing the Houston art audience to some of the ceramic field's best young talent. I extend my gratitude to the NCECA Student Directors at Large that have helped shape this exhibition, Chanda Glendenning, Suzanne Lussier and Kevin Ramler. In addition, I would like to thank our Executive Director, Joshua Green and Projects Manager, Kate Vorhaus, the NCECA Office Staff, and the staffs of the Houston Center for Contemporary Craft and the Glassell School of Arts, for their attention to detail and tireless assistance in bringing these exhibitions to life. Another sincere thanks to Leland Powers, the Chair of the Art and Design Department at Fort Hays State University and Paul Faber, our Dean of Arts and Sciences for their support. And lastly, on behalf of the Council, I would like to thank Candice Finn for her catalog design.

An invitation to engage awaits all who view the 2013 NCECA Biennial and the 2013 NCECA NSJE.

Linda Ganstrom  
NCECA Exhibitions Director



## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR STATEMENT: JOSHUA GREEN

“—Say it, no ideas but in things—”

*Patterson, William Carlos Williams*

Over time the NCECA Biennial, formerly known as the NCECA Clay National, has built a reputation as one of the most important recurring displays of contemporary ceramic art. Inclusion of one's work in the exhibition has come to represent a seal of peer-approval at the most accomplished levels of the field. This hard-earned status, built on the efforts of artists, jurors, host venues and NCECA Exhibitions Directors has also created a set of weighty expectations. If any single event related to ceramic art in the US could be compared to a beast of burden it might be this one, for it carries the freight of expectations involved in representing the current state of an art form. The task of carrying this burden is made even more challenging by the vibrant shifts of inquiry continuing to blossom in the field. Depending on your perspective this state of dynamism and multiplicity can be perceived as thrilling, provocative or frustrating.

As NCECA's Executive Director, I enjoy the special privilege of being able to consider the works included in the exhibition in the context of the organization's efforts throughout the year. Considering the 2013 Conference program for instance, NCECA's call for submissions received a significant number of conference proposals investigating intersections between the roles of artists, designers and craftspeople. Over the past thirty-plus years the single-most argued over dialectic in our field was that of ceramic art's position on a continuum whose opposing polarities were art and craft.

A complex set of factors including declining economic conditions, and increased access to higher quality technology is blurring former boundaries between art and design. Such changes in art and society are influencing today's makers to stake claim on alternate aesthetic territory and career paths marked by more nuanced hybrid modalities. In the 2013 NCECA Biennial, works by Nicholas Bivins and Sharan Elran employ design methodology to explore this terrain while arriving at different destinations. The figure and narrative themes also remain central considerations in ceramic sculpture and pottery. Works by Teri Frame, Paolo Porelli, Triesch Voelker and Joel Schroeder infer that contemporary narrative expression can be simultaneously intimate and global in outlook. Whether performative or concrete in nature, these artists' investigations encompass existential considerations of individuality set within larger contexts of social acceptance or environmental crisis.

Exemplars like those indicated above demonstrate the ways in which ceramic artists are increasingly inclined to navigate the complex currents running throughout the mainstreams of contemporary art. The focus of other artists resides subversively at home in the traditions of craft and decorative arts, wherein recent critical inquiry, scholarship and dialog ranges from social, economic, feminist and gay activism. Michael Strand's *Misfit Cup Liberation Project* represents a new wrinkle in a sustained relational effort he has centered on gift exchange and the insinuation of handmade hand-held, utilitarian objects within people's homes and daily routines. In this case, however, Strand invites participants to bring cups out of the dark recesses of their cupboards and into the public exhibition space. Interweaving values of the Arts and Crafts, hippie, high craft, DIY and Situationist movements, this project poses philosophical questions about objecthood while migrating the interstice between private taste and public space that is always at play when we visit exhibitions.

This 2013 NCECA Biennial engages our minds and imaginations through a diverse array of approaches to ceramic materials and process all of which are committed to the notion that from the common clay we fashion uncommon forms and expressions. Each of them embodies an idea, message or value set. Contemporary ceramic art is systemic in that it integrates interests of technique, style, purpose and meaning. Rather than a survey of all that is taking place in the field at this moment, the 2013 NCECA Biennial presents a special vantage point on our relationships with things made from clay with love, labor and thought. NCECA is indebted to the individual vision and reflective collaboration of jurors Cristina Córdova, Richard Notkin and Namita Gupta Wiggers who framed the vantage point that resulted in this exhibition. They carefully considered and filtered through 1360 images to distill an exhibition of only 39 works by 35 artists. Distinguished as leaders for their artistic and curatorial acuity, their diverse cultural, professional and creative experiences establish a unique aesthetic and critical viewpoint that no single one of them might have arrived at on his/her own. The unselfish work of NCECA's Exhibitions Director, Linda Ganstrom and dedicated staff whose commitment to communications and integrity of process are integral to the outcome of the exhibition. As host for the exhibition, the Houston Center for Contemporary Craft has been a wonderful and collaborative partner. Established in 2001, HCCC has emerged as a leading regional and national resource dedicated to education and exhibition at the highest level.

Joshua Green  
NCECA Executive Director