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A MAGAZINE FOR CLAY & GLASS



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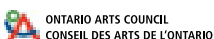
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 Toronto, Ontario, Canada
 M4L 1E1
Phone: 416-438-8946
Fax: 416-438-0192
E-mail: fusion@clayandglass.on.ca
Website: www.clayandglass.on.ca
Office hours: See website for current hours

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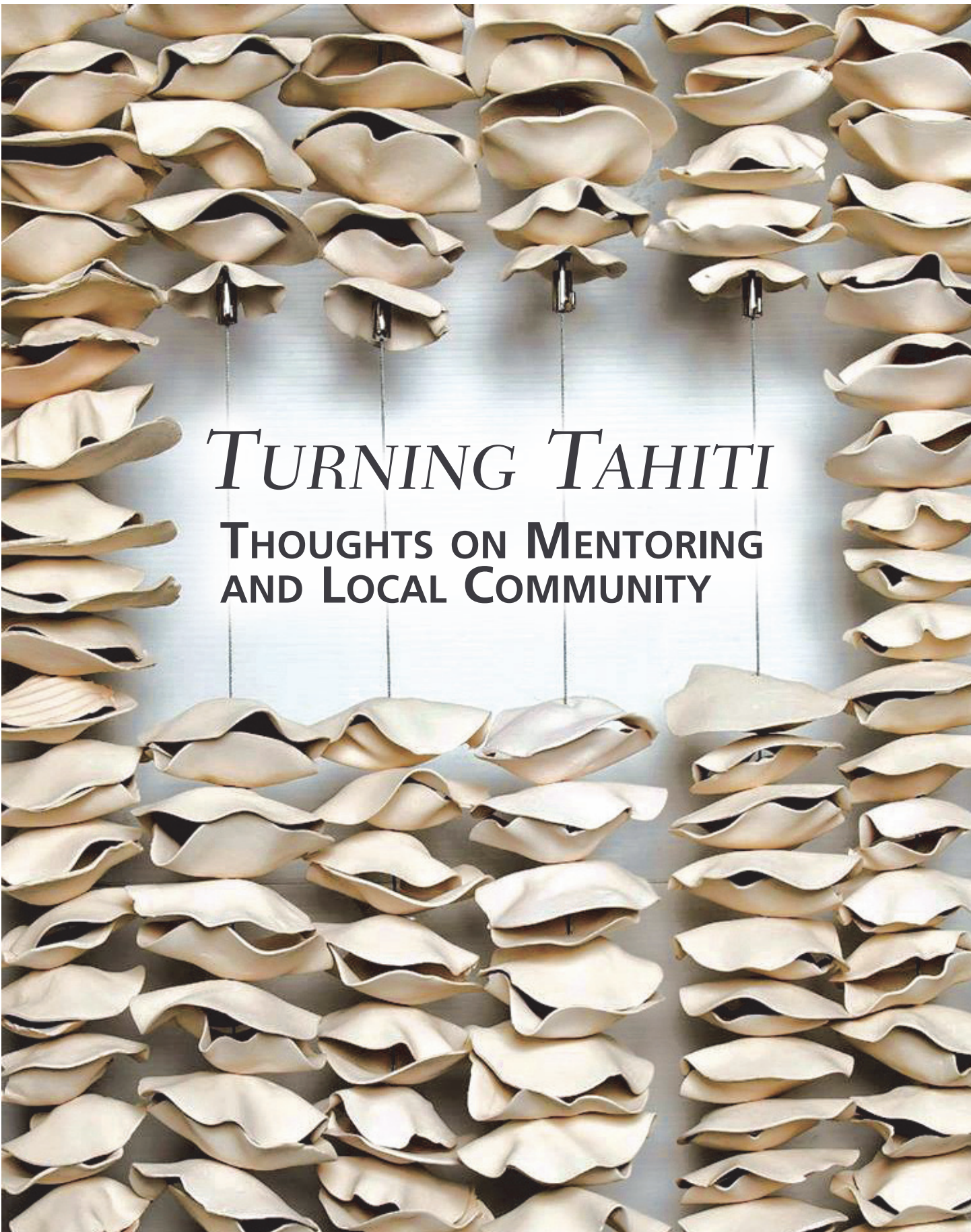
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TURNING TAHITI
**THOUGHTS ON MENTORING
AND LOCAL COMMUNITY**

Susan Card, Petal House



Marlene Zagdanski, "Remnant Memory: Forest"

By Geordie Shepherd

Bathed in blue light, Michelle smiles as she sits in the blue seat of indignity. We all know the room is too narrow, the projector too close to the screen, and whoever sits beside it can't avoid being illuminated by the images spilling off the screen. Michelle doesn't even blink; we're used to this and will gladly suffer minor troubles to be seated in this darkened room. However this time, something is different. Marlene laughs, Mary giggles and soon everyone facing Michelle is laughing too. Michelle grows uneasy. "What?" she asks. I don't know; I'm seated

beside her and cannot see the big "#1" that glows on her forehead. It's like that party game where you stick a word to your head so everyone but you can see, and you have to guess it, but Linda quickly tells her; there's no need to keep secrets here.

It's a snowy, cold Sunday morning in downtown Toronto, our fifth meeting and half-way point through a mentoring program group run by FUSION, the Ontario Clay and Glass Association. FUSION has represented the clay and glass community of Ontario since 1975, and offers a wide variety of workshops, grants and an annual conference. The mentorship program started in 2010 after the



Jen Leis, "The Dust of the Living" (detail)

association recognized the need for an organized forum for practicing artists to counter balance the isolation many studio artists experience when working alone. Guided by accomplished artists, the forums would offer constructive critical analysis and encourage artists to forge new directions, concepts and techniques in their work. Generously supported by the Ontario Arts Council, Craft Ontario, The Potters Guild of Hamilton and Region and the Mississauga Potters, as well as a wide variety of organizations and individuals, the program offers mentorship to 14 participants, starting every two years rotating their locations throughout the province of Ontario.

Our group is led by Linda Sormin, professor and head of Ceramics at Sheridan College, an artist who we gladly travel to work with, coming by bus, train and car from Toronto, London and other towns across southern Ontario.

The meetings always begin with a plan, a signup sheet and schedule, then Linda shows us images of artists works she thinks will inspire us - that's when Michelle's blue #1 incident happened. I'm always amazed at all the artwork going on around me in the world that I am clueless about. Twenty years focusing on my practice has given me tunnel vision, I only see what I think is worth looking at – a bad habit I am hoping to break. Afterwards, the meetings



Michelle Mendlowitz, "InterCourse: the connection between... #1" (detail)

quickly devolve, kind of like my kids evening routine. However, no one seems to mind or express frustration. Instead, they wait and listen, or if things are quiet, they chat to their neighbour about no end of things. With 14 people ranging in age from their 20's to their 60's, everyone has something to add. And if not through words, then through biscuits, crackers and nuts that magically appear on the table, then gradually disappear, as hands reach across, snatch bits and pieces and retreat back, bellies satiated.

I drove in the night before, enduring an arduous and occasionally terrifying 2-hour drive through a snowstorm. Somewhere near Hamilton, I asked myself why I was risking life and limb to be mentored? Couldn't I just stay home or in my studio? No, I needed to go to challenge my ideas and build my sense of community, to expand my knowledge base, and get much needed feedback from Linda and the other participants. I choked. It sounded like school. I barely got out of my MFA alive and another year of school was definitely not on my bucket list. Then another voice spoke.

"You could always go to Tahiti," The words struck me like slush kicked up by a semi. I nearly drove off the road. In undergrad we called it selling out, then years later a Zen Monk spoke about his commitment to his faith: You could leave anytime, the door was always open. It was the same questioning voice that haunts every artist, tempting with the promise of easier, more fertile fields.



Krystal Speck, "Sweet Profusion" (detail)

I cracked, "Yes, yes, Tahiti now please!" I hollered and felt the warm rush of instant gratification, then glanced in my rear-view mirror and saw the tops of my boxes of artwork for our mentoring meeting the next morning and my resolve hardened. Actually, I didn't want to go to Tahiti, none of us did. Mentoring wasn't school; we were not driven by grades or hounded by a curriculum. Our only real requirement was to do the best, most challenging work possible. We'd all made a conscious decision to pull time from our hectic schedules and re-engage our practice on a new level, put it all out on a limb and ignore life's pounding surf, brilliant sun, bamboo skirts and swarthy towel holders that beckon us away. We could leave anytime, and yet we all keep coming back. But if this mentorship isn't school, what is it?

It's my turn to present my work. Crystal stands on one side of the table; Jen rises from her chair to get a better view. LeeAnn's arms pivot in unison upwards then downwards as if chopping the air. Her eyes narrow. My sculpture disturbs her; it does something she doesn't understand, it's too unfinished. Out of the corner of my eye I notice Linda has picked up a small female figure and is tucking it underneath a totally unstable sculpture that towers above it. I panic; it's going to crush it, but then I calm myself as I begin liking the arrangement. LeeAnn waits. She looks at me quizzically, but I have no answer. She's right, my sculptures annoy me too, and I'm not sure why. But that's why we're here. We have questions we need



Barbara Banfield, "Making Connections" (detail)



Celia Zveibil Brandao, "Spatódia" (detail)



LeeAnn Janissen, "Pool" (detail)



Mary McKenzie, "Cloud Nine - Work In Progress" (detail)



Geordie Shepherd, "Trapped Defying Gravity"



Kimberly Davey, "Emergent Growth" (detail)



Dianne Lee, "Mechanically Damaged Capacitor Leaks Liquid"

answered, opinions to discuss, aesthetic and creative dilemmas to bring into the open. In Tahiti, no one wants to discuss tough questions.

Our group is an eclectic mix of potters, sculptors and everything in-between and beyond. Dianne has been videotaping herself creating installations using a chair, spray foam, ceramic forms and tarps. They remind me of the movie *Sixth Sense* and the young, ghost girl who videotaped her stepmother poisoning her – but I think this poison is all good. We move from serious discussion of vessel form and surface, to sculptural voids, then wonder at

the creative voice of video performance. I'm amazed at the breadth of our voyage and the confidence and insight with which we cover every topic. Nude figures, wide-mouth bowls, slab paintings, moulded flowers, serving platters, jugs laden with baby pacifiers, glaze tests, hidden worlds twisting the laws of physics, and minimal, gestural sculptures. Nothing seems taboo, I feel we can talk about most anything.

Well meaning people always tell me Art is a passion, a phrase that makes me wonder if I forgot to read the artists' book of faith, because underneath the enjoyment and

Joon Hee Kim

My work reflects the continuously persevering burden of human relationships, behaviours, and emotions. Objects are often defined by their physicality. Their forms can convey a sense of detachment and indifference. My work reconsiders the relationship between people and objects. I use the shape of trophies and Baroque inspired decoration to stretch beyond the traditional function and to test the imagination of the viewer. Decoration is almost never just ornamental; it also illustrates my private, hidden memories. Connections emerge between past and present, offering the user an engaging narrative. For me, human social interaction becomes ceramic form + surface = an instrument of commutation.

Combinations of slip casting, hand building, and press molding are used in my sculptural process. Technical challenges fill my life on a daily basis. Often I am not aware of where my work is in relation to success. The rational thing to do is to do my best regularly and to consistently challenge the limits of my materials, process, and ideas.

My trophies celebrate each and every moment of life, rather than the short glory at the end.



Bernadette Pratt, "After the Fall"

freedom, ignoring the penny pinching and dollar store or thrift shop compromises, an artist's work ethic is no different than a plumber's. Through habitual practice, you are paid back rarely with money, occasionally fervent zeal, but most often with a gradual enlightenment climaxing in a blissful high that tickles your forehead as you expel the sweet exhalation, "Yea, that's it. Got it." And perhaps, if we repeat that enough, then we might make some sales and break even on our studio costs, or God forbid, make a living. That's not passion, it's just plain reality.

This mentorship is rooted in that reality. Outside of the mentoring we all have busy lives and have either finished our schooling, or have no time for it, or no desire. The mentorship program invites a conversation of equals, perhaps not in experience or knowledge, but equal in the sense that there is an absence of judgement. As a teacher myself, I accept that grading is an essential part of school, but sometimes wish it weren't. There is much more to an artwork than a simple letter grade can describe and that is where mentoring focuses its efforts.

I'm driving home and the weather is much more pleasant, the storm has passed. Voices fill my head, voices that I know in time will settle into a comfortable background murmur as I sink back into the solitude of my studio practice. But for now, I welcome the plenitude of phrases from today's meeting that swirl through my mind, "keep it sexy, because your original idea was about the sex



Marney McDiarmid, "Altogether, elsewhere" (detail)

life of flowers," vies against "how do you shape what holds the fractal landscape," bounces off "it's a journey not a destination," and finally slams into "Don't be cautious," sticks for a second, then zips away as another comment roars in. These comments were not meant for my work, and yet I feel as if they somehow also apply to me. We are not only mentored by Linda, but by each other, exactly how it was intended to be.

The culminating exhibition Small Transgressions runs until October 31 at Craft Ontario, 990 Queen Street West, Toronto, ON.

For more information about this mentorship group and their culminating exhibition, please visit their Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/events/107277692951850/>

Or you can read their blog, which can be found at <https://smalltransgressions.wordpress.com/>

<p>WOODLAWN POTTERY STUDIO a women's cooperative studio</p> <p>Show & Sale 2015</p> <p>www.woodlawnpottery.ca</p>	<p>DECEMBER 11th - 13th</p>
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<p>Artscape Youngplace 180 Shaw Street Toronto</p>	

Ceramic Boxes

Stir Curiosity, Celebrate Women's Roles



Blue Box with Garnets. Porcelain, wire and beads as connectors, garnets. 13X13X13cm Photo: Steve Farmer

Nova Scotia ceramist merges ceramics and textiles to create cubic structures with hidden secrets.

By Holly Dunn

Halifax ceramist Alexandra McCurdy merges ceramics with textiles to create boxes filled with mystery as part of her new exhibition, *Crossing Material Boundaries*, running October 1 to 25 at David Kaye Gallery. The exhibit marks McCurdy's recent induction into the Royal Canadian Academy of the Arts after a 50-year career in ceramics.

Crossing Material Boundaries features nine ceramic boxes made from layered lines of coloured clay, or slip, which simulate the warp and the weft of weaving. Seven of the boxes are accompanied by wall pieces that feature similar slip trailed tiles on top of silk-screened backdrops.

"Alexandra McCurdy's containers merge the techniques of textiles and clay, decorative surface and form. We are delighted to bring her boxes to Toronto to celebrate her recent induction to the Royal Canadian Academy of the Arts," said David Kaye, owner of the David Kaye Gallery.

For the boxes, McCurdy wires the 'woven' tiles together and embellishes them with coloured computer wire, metallic thread, raffia or other textile symbols such as the spiral, used by women over the centuries.

"The simulation of weaving is another way to celebrate women's work over the centuries," said McCurdy. "In these



Black Box with Lucky Rock, Porcelain, wire and beads as connectors, rock. 13X13X13cm Photo: Steve Farmer

boxes I have deliberately left the 'inner workings' to the viewer's imagination, embellishing the external in an ambiguous way and deliberately leaving the inner workings of the boxes to the viewer's imagination."

For most of her professional life as a ceramist, McCurdy has painstakingly created containers decorated with textile and fibre motifs. Mi'kmaq quill boxes, quilts, and hooked rugs, have supplied a rich source of decoration. Transplanting textiles to clay is one way for McCurdy to tell her story – maintaining the illusion of the decorative while pursuing control.

McCurdy explains that the boxes have been compared to Japanese teahouses, Catholic confessionals and Muslim women's burkas. They intentionally use the feminine principle of containment and enclosure, and are intended as a metaphor for women – decorative on the outside, with substance and secrets hidden within. The boxes also connect conceptually to the hidden potential of Pandora's Box, the black box of an aircraft – influenced by McCurdy's pilot father, who was shot down during World War II – and the *Perspective Box* by Dutch artist Samuel van Hoogstraten.

"I'm combining techniques used in ceramics and textiles to create vessels that push the envelope of traditional ceramics. They challenge the notion that ceramic pieces must always be functional. At the same time, they awaken the viewer's curiosity. They invite the viewer to wonder 'what's inside the box?'"



Blue Box with Copper Wire and Wallpiece. Porcelain, wire and beads as connectors, copper wire. 13X13X13cm (Box) 19X19cm (Wallpiece). Photo: Steve Farmer.

Blue Box with Herringbone and Wallpiece. Porcelain, wire and beads as connectors. Box 13X13X13cm, Wallpiece 19X19cm. Photo: Steve Farmer.

In recent years, McCurdy has explored the connections between women and craft. Women have traditionally done crafts for functional, practical reasons. The fragmented nature of women's lives has influenced their technique – forcing them to work in portable components, just like the panels in McCurdy's boxes.

“Over the years, women have traditionally been responsible for many roles – taking care of children, cooking, homemaking. Component making is often the solution for women artists whose lives are fragmented with children, homemaking and other jobs. It's a way to work for short periods of time, in between other duties.”

Alexandra McCurdy is a professional ceramist and independent curator living in Halifax, NS and Naples, Florida.

In Her Own Words

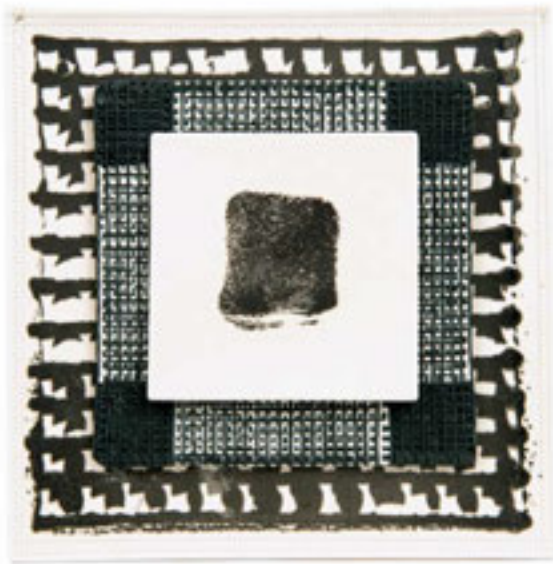
Alexandra McCurdy: Crossing Material Boundaries

My work has long been inspired by the patterns and motifs

drawn from the intricate quill work of indigenous Mi'kmaq and women's textiles, such as quilts, hooked rugs and embroidery. I am also influenced by women's central role in Western textile history, and by my mother's involvement in the British yard goods industry earlier this century.

My new series of boxes merge the techniques of textiles and clay, decorative surface and form. Through a complex process that I have developed, I am able to duplicate woven fabric in porcelain. I am, in essence, weaving the slip, with a warp and a weft. The resulting boxes are microcosms built of fragile layers with screen-like optics.

By combining techniques used in ceramics and textiles I am creating vessels that push the envelope of traditional ceramics. They challenge the notion that ceramic pieces must always be functional. At the same time, they awaken the viewer's curiosity. The fabric texture of the porcelain, combined with the woven slip, tricks people into taking a second look. They also invite the viewer to wonder 'what's inside the box?' The boxes connect



Black Box with Fingerprints and Wallpiece. Porcelain, wire and beads as connectors. Box 11X11X11cm, Wallpiece 19X19cm. Photo: Steve Farmer.

Black Box with Weaving and Wallpiece. Porcelain, wire and beads as connectors. Box 11X11X11cm, Wallpiece 19X19cm. Photo: Steve Farmer.

conceptually to the hidden potential of Pandora's Box, and the black box of an aircraft – influenced by my pilot father, who was shot down during World War II – as well as the Perspective Box by Dutch artist Samuel van Hoogstraten. Growing up in a Canadian forces family made it necessary for me to attend 14 different schools before graduating from high school. As a result I built a box around myself. In essence, the boxes are self-portraits, with occasional glimpses inside, only available to special people who I trust.

The box is also a potent metaphor for women in ceramics. It is the perfect vessel for containing what we cannot control, and for putting a lid on strong emotions. My porcelain boxes utilize the feminine principal of containment and enclosure. "Black Box" is a term used for something that is mysterious, especially as to function. In these boxes, I have embellished the external in an ambiguous way and left the inner workings to the viewer's imagination.

Method

The thixotropic coloured porcelain slip is trailed, layer upon layer, in opposite directions, onto cheesecloth covered plaster bats, until enough thickness is built up to support itself. I am, in essence, weaving the slip, with a warp and a weft. When sufficiently dry, each tile is carefully lifted off the cheesecloth, which has left a fabric impression, and holes are made at each corner. Each component is fired to 2500 degrees, then wired together to form a closed box and embellished with coloured computer wire, metallic thread, raffia or textile symbols used by women over the centuries. The accompanying wall pieces are made in a similar fashion, and the components are mounted on to a silk-screened larger tile. The silk screened image on the larger tile is of a Xeroxed woven tile. There is always a great deal of warpage during the firing, so I generally make about twenty components in order to get six with corners that will meet to make a box.

Reflections



THE MIRRORED CANOE PROJECT

Reflections – the mirrored canoe. Photo by Brad Copping

By Brad Copping

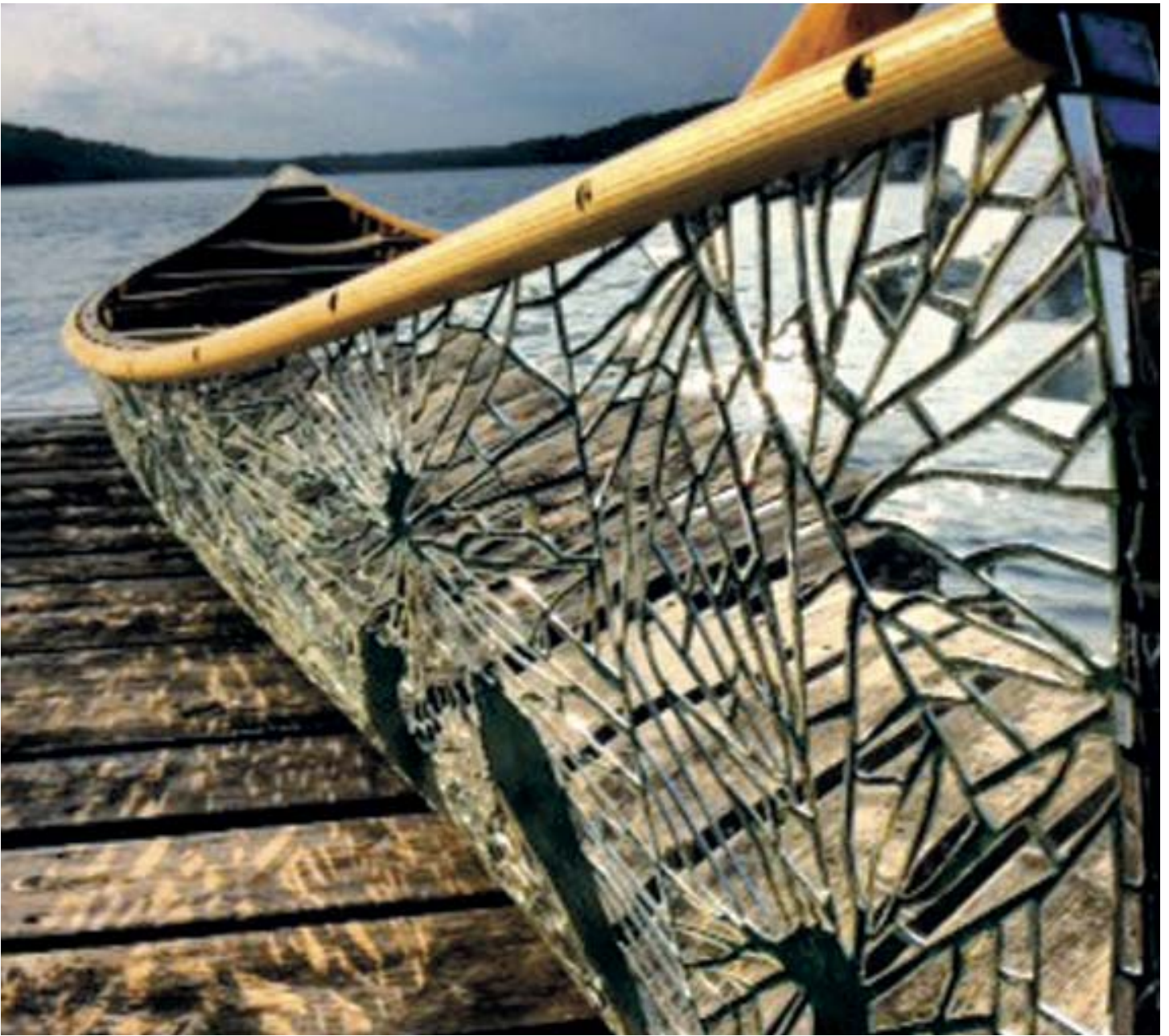
As artist in residence at the Canadian Canoe Museum for the past year I am often asked what initially inspired me to cover a 16 foot cedar strip canoe in a mirrored mosaic map of some of the waterways of central Ontario, Canada where I live. It is the experience of paddling on still and quiet nights, the sky clear and the moon yet to rise that moved me to create this work.

The mirror-like surface of the water reflects the stars and I am given the sensation of moving myself through them. As the moon rises the small ripples from my paddle and canoe cutting through the water sends the reflected light dancing across its surface. It is in these moments that I feel myself in intimate conversation with my environment. Not simply a

creature living in this world but a part of its very nature; the earth, air, water and light living around me, within me and through me. In this project I attempt to make visible the silent language of this conversation.

From this initial inspiration, through the long process of its creation, this work has evolved and triggered connections beyond my private experience. The canoe's exterior maps the waterways from my home in Apsley, Ontario, southward into the Trent Severn Waterway and on into Rice Lake. The changing cut patterns of the mirror reflect the changing landscape from the granite shield north of Stoney Lake to the limestone plane south of this waterline.

The canoe's interior is mirrored in a much simpler fashion. I mimic the planking of this old cedar strip canoe by placing



Detail of exterior. Photo by Brad Copping



Reflections – the mirrored canoe. Photo by Deana Huntsbarger



Interior reflection. Photo by Brad Copping



Glass rib forms taken from canoe mold. Photo by Brad Copping

mirror between the ribs. The effect, when actually paddling the canoe is of floating in the skeleton of the small vessel, sky and water joined.

This year Belgium and the Netherlands are celebrating their close historical and geographical ties with a program called *Beste Buren* or *Good Neighbors*, which supports a large number of collaborative artistic and cultural projects. In 2009 I had the good fortune to work with Jeroen Maes of the *GlazenHuis* in Lommel, Belgium, putting together an exhibition titled *Tenuous Tenacity: Contemporary Canadian Glass*. It now seemed a good time to work together again on a new project. The Dutch National Glass Museum in Leerdam, Netherlands, and the *GlazenHuis* had already begun to plan a collaborative project and the mirrored (glass) canoe was a perfect fit to strengthen these connections.

These two glass centres are 100 kilometers apart, as the crow flies, and, as it turns out, about 135 kilometers apart via water. There are water roads throughout Europe connecting the interior of many countries using natural waterways and manmade canals via locks and tunnels. And so, the idea of paddling the mirrored canoe from one glass centre to the other became a part of this project.

This journey connects back to the Canadian waterways mapped on the canoe's exterior. The Peterborough Lift Lock, opened 1904, is part of the Trent Severn Waterway in Ontario and is still the world's highest hydraulic lifting lock. The designer of the Peterborough Lift Lock, Richard Birdsall Rogers, looked to a series of lifting locks in England, France and Belgium when designing the Peterborough Lift. Those most closely related to Rogers' design are in central Belgium and are now designated a UNESCO world heritage site.

My trip between these glass centres began on September 7, 2015. I am journaling my experiences using a rotary diamond engraver on the mirror inside the canoe. I will also attempt to post images and comments via my Instagram.

As part of this project, I have been working at the *GlazenHuis* in Lommel, on the creation of a 10 foot canoe made from hot glass. This part of the project will be continued at the Glass Museum in Leerdam when I return in November.

Reflections: the Mirrored Canoe Project has been generously supported by the Canada Council for the Arts, the GlazenHuis, the Dutch National Glass Museum, and the Canadian Canoe Museum.

GYEONGGI INTERNATIONAL CERAMIC BIENNALE 2015

WHY I KEEP GOING



Paula Murray, Canada, Detail, Moving Towards the Light.

by Paula Murray

Koreans know how to celebrate ceramics. The Gyeonggi International Ceramics Biennale is an event of incredible scope and scale. I have had the privilege of participating three times since 2009 and wanted to share some of the reasons that keep drawing me back.

This Ceramic Biennale has multiple components and runs concurrently with potter's festivals throughout the province of Gyeonggi. May 2015 marked the opening of the 8th International Competition. Over the last fifteen years the Korea Ceramic Foundation (KOCEF) has established a competition that is regarded as the largest and most comprehensive of its kind in the world. It has become a stage for exploring new horizons in the development of contemporary ceramics, setting new paradigms with broad participation from internationally acclaimed ceramists. This year the Biennale featured six exhibitions in three different cities, a symposium in Seoul, and artist talks and workshops. The main event, the International Competition, was held an hour's drive from Seoul at the Icheon World Ceramic Centre. This venue also hosted an international invitational

exhibition entitled "Convergence and Transcendence", intended to seek and suggest the future of ceramics. Work from Limoges France was on display as well as many works from the KOCEF permanent collection in the Toya Museum.

The Traditional East Asian Ceramic Art, and the 4th Beautiful Korean Ceramics were exhibitions presented in Gwangju. These exhibitions were very much about the vessel; showing ceramics that connect the cultural heritage of Korea, Taiwan and Japan and the spirit and beauty of traditional Korean ceramics suited for modern times by artists today.

In Yeosu, Multi-coloured Stories to Know offered a variety of works that were the result of collaborations between Korean ceramic artists and artists from other genres including lighting, fashion, and animation. A very moving exhibition of exceptional work made by the disabled community underscored how deeply working with clay is integrated in this society.

The context in which the exhibitions are presented is profoundly rich. Gyeonggi is a province in South Korea that abounds with historic kiln sites. Thousands of people flock to these festival sites where families can enjoy the



Paula Murray with Mr. Lee Wan-Hee, Chairperson.



Andrew Burton, UK, Gold Prize, Things Fall Apart, 200 x 200 x 220 cm.

exhibitions; and can partake in fun and games, live music, fireworks, good food, observe the firing of a wood kiln, and purchase the wares of hundreds of potters.

Many exhibiting artists find the means to attend the opening week of the exhibition. In previous years we were all offered the chance to take in a cultural tour of Korea. This was a great opportunity to develop friendships and connections from around the world. I was disappointed this year when it was restricted to invited guests only. However, I found ample time within my week to establish a wonderful network despite this. In 2013 and again this year there was a wonderful exchange opportunity when I presented a talk about my work for participants and students.

I am moved by the reverence the Koreans have for their cultural heritage and how they draw on this strength to keep ceramics relevant in society; by embracing the present and looking to the future. This attitude is reflected in how the KOCEF is continually evolving its vision, aspirations, and

processes for the international competition. From its inception until 2009, the competition was divided into two categories: ceramics for expression and ceramics for use. These boundaries have dissolved and have been replaced by an interest in contemporary ceramic art as it is developing in parallel with change in the contemporary visual art world. This year, an international committee was selected, who agreed upon a preliminary jury to select the work included in the competition, and a second jury was selected to allocate the prizes. Previously, the juries were often comprised of academics and practicing artists. This year, the jury of 11 people included art critics, curators, and artistic directors well acquainted with the overall trends of contemporary art. There was no discussion amongst the jurors. Names, biographies and countries of origin were withheld. Only the artist statements and images were available to consider. A total of 2,629 entries by 1,470 artists from 74 countries were received. Originally 108

FUSION MAGAZINE SPOTLIGHT FEATURED EMERGING ARTIST

Cheng Ou Yu

I begin my making process by combining contemporary Western approaches (trying to work towards innovation and originality) with the influence of Chinese traditions in ceramics (a high level of respect for historical forms and using repetition and technique to reach the ideals of “quality” and “beauty”).

I use pottery techniques to inform my design process and this is one of the core concepts in my studio practice. I use molds as a method of exploring and generating new forms, by interchanging various parts of the mold itself. This has become a game that introduces an exciting element of play into the making. Molds, for me, are not about mass production. My process is inefficient yet flexible in several ways. By changing the mold parts each time and shaping the objects by hand, each piece is unique. This allows the user to get a sense of making through the details I leave on each piece.

As a designer-maker, I am also working on the possibilities of using visual language to explore the relationships, feelings and situations between me and other people. In Canada and China, we have contrasting understandings of the generation gap, how couples disagree, and so forth. Sometimes the distances between people are invisible but still strongly felt. In my vase series, each form has a different identity, yet there is a connection between the objects.

They are diverse; the relationships are strong.



Jenna Turner, Canada, *Subversion*, 360 cm x 360 cm, wallpaper

pieces by 101 artists were chosen, but 11 withdrew due to the prohibitive costs of installation and shipment to Korea. A second group of jurors came on site to determine the ten prizewinners, which comes with significant cash; the Grand Prize being \$50,000 USD.

Given that the call for this competition looked towards the future of ceramics, it was interesting to observe that several of the entries were devoid of clay. Conceptual aspects of work were given more attention than technical aspects. Of the works that passed the preliminary screening, about 60 were made of clay, 25 works were mixed media, eight were films, and five were installations.

The tired debate of art versus craft - beaten to death - had no place in this forum. There was strong interest in works of social, economic, and political commentary; of the tension between industry and labour; and of decay and waste, as evidenced by the top prizewinners. Grand Prize winner Neil Brownsword's fabulous piece, *National*



Neil Brownsword, UK, Grand Prize Winner, National Treasure, 250 x 250 x 250 cm, Ceramic, Performance, Video, Tools.

Treasure, addressed the decline of the ceramic industry in Stoke-on-Trent, England, and questioned the value and relevance of intergenerational skills through the use of performance, film, and repurposed remnants salvaged from the factory.

The daylong symposium that preceded the opening of the exhibition was very thought provoking. Several papers challenged contemporary practice rooted in process. When I spoke with Dr. Jorunn Veitberg, professor in Bergen, Norway and Gothenburg, Sweden, she suggested that the inclination towards incorporating new media with clay had come about because contemporary society does not know how to read ceramics. Kyoungsoo Park, the artistic director of the Biennale wrote in his comments “I am concerned that works of exquisite and delicate technologies are perhaps being neglected.” We observe a proliferation

of literal imagery and narrative content in contemporary practice. Our fascination with new media, new technologies, 3D printing are very seductive. The broad spectrum of contemporary practice was all represented here to experience and consider.

I work alone in my studio. It is good to be challenged, to stretch and re-examine one’s choices. It is exciting to view my work through an international lens, to see where it fits or where it doesn’t, or how it contributes to this discourse. The line added to my C.V. is indeed a great honour. More importantly the stimulation I receive from participating in this forum and how it informs my work when I return is central to why I find the time and money to make the work, ship the work, and go. It is an investment in my professional development that I feel is a good one.



Paula Murray, Canada, Moving Towards the Light, 250 x 150 x 40 cm, ceramic



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TAGS ON CUPS

Ceramic Tradition Meets Street Art - Graffiti Meets Pottery



By Bernadette Pratt

Ceramics and graffiti are two distinct art forms that exist on the periphery of the mainstream arts community. Both struggle for recognition. Both have a long tradition and history. A collaboration between ceramic and graffiti artists might seem like an unlikely partnership; not so, graffiti artists make marks and mark making enhances pots.

Tags on Cups was the brainchild of Francis Pratt, Carol Ann Apilado and Bernadette Pratt. The trio - painter, designer and potter - collaborated and curated a first-of-a-kind show, featuring 45 artists from the Toronto area. The graffiti artists' canvas: the porcelain cup.

An open call for artists went out in April 2015. The

response was highly favorable, and in a short time many accomplished artists had responded. Generally, the majority of these artists wanted to maintain their anonymity and used their graffiti names in keeping with the culture of the art form.

During a period of 3 months, boxes of greenware cups were shipped from Bernadette Pratt's studio in London to Toronto for decoration and then back to London for firing and glazing. The participating graffiti artists were mostly new to ceramic; their traditional medium, the raw two-dimensional surface of the urban streetscape. The porcelain cups brought a number of unique challenges to the artists. They had to adjust to a vastly different scale and a three-dimensional surface, to a limited pallet, and they had to respect the



Cups by Thehomesickpotter, Carol Ann Apilado, Francis Pratt



Cups by Ekwil, Vuducatz, Kare

vulnerability of the material. Some artists chose to work only on one cup; others like Vuducatz, Kare, Aphex, Answer, and Pua worked on a larger number of cups. Vuducatz said, “It was a lot of fun experimenting with a new medium, and bringing my graffiti characters into a different realm of art.”

The artists would meet in small groups for kitchen graffiti workshops, facilitated by Francis Pratt who would demonstrate the techniques of sgraffito, carving, mark

making, the use of an oxide wash and more. The artists explored the new material in a fearless manner. As an example, one of Vuducatz’s pieces is a miniature depiction of graffiti characters, rendered beautifully on the porcelain cup. Vuducatz states, “It was really interesting to see such a variety in the approach each artist took with regards to technique and design. As a painter, I personally appreciated the opportunity to create something a little more tactile; the



Cups by Pua, Eaturpie, Anser



Cups by Pasystem, Ahex, Egr

cups' functionality gave my characters a new purpose". Other pieces convey a sense of vulnerability in their depiction of a female character. The flowing hair in Kare's line drawings seems to act as veil, hiding or sometimes revealing itself to the viewer. Similarly, the quick sketch of an Anser face is easily recognizable and has found a permanent host on the cup. Other pieces have the urgency of graffiti bombing, using the "wildstyle" of interwoven letters or line

drawings that convey a sense of immediacy, found in Ekwal, Aphex and Rask's work. Francis Pratt's style harks loosely back to renditions of portraiture that recall 19th century Delft ceramics. Other portraits by him are reminiscent of Käthe Kollwitz prints. Whereas Pua's cups are explorations in clay with intricate relief imagery, the very same images can be found around the Toronto streetscape.

"I loved this collaboration for many reasons," said Pua,



Images of the process

“this was my introduction to this medium and you allowed all of us to do something I have never seen before, which is mixing pottery and graffiti/street art, not just with one or two artists, more because you got the interest of at least 45 people who wouldn't normally do this”. There was a collective buzz around the event and many artists shared their thoughts. Kare said, "I enjoyed how the curators were able to bring artists who normally wouldn't collaborate or work with each other into one unique show. At the show, it was nice to see the collection of works; the variation of styles and techniques all come together as one. Despite some differences and the clashes between egos, every artist complemented each other somehow. I felt a sense of unity for a moment and there's something beautiful about that."

Tags on Cups, a fringe show, featuring 129 cups, 45 artists, 3 curators, a new concept, and an unlikely collaboration ended up being a tremendous success. Carol Ann Apilado was particularly pleased about the equal participation between male and female graffiti artists. She said: “I enjoyed how Bernadette Pratt, the ceramic artist, Francis Pratt, the painter, and myself, the designer were able to collaborate and share our skills and ideas. We made a great team, especially in managing 45 artists and 129 vessels.” For Francis Pratt it was important to: “give the artists a way to immortalize their mark making in an intimate, non –invasive



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Opening of the show at the Black Cat Artspace

way.” For the potter, however, the most nerve-wracking part of all was the responsibility and the trust the artists had placed into her hands. At times, there were 45 voices in her head saying, don’t mess this up, and at other times she was

keenly aware of the remarkable body of work that was passing through her hands and that she would give the permanence of ceramic to the otherwise ephemeral nature of tagging and graffiti.

Opening of Show

Tags on Cups was on show from July 2 to 12, 2015 at The Black Cat Art Space, 2186 Dundas St. West, Toronto, Ontario.

For more images go to instagram: tagsoncups

For more information email: tagsoncups@gmail.com

Curatorial Team:

Francis Pratt: multidisciplinary artist and curator

Carol Ann Apilado: multidisciplinary artist / designer and curator

Bernadette Pratt: ceramic artist curator and blogger

List of participating artists:

ALICE • ANSER • APHEX • BEHAVE • CAFIEZ • C P • CHECO • COZ • DYSIS • EATURPIE • EGR • EKWAL ERONS • FLIPS • FRANCIS PRATT • GUSTO • HONE • JHONG • JIMMY CHIALE • JOSHE • KAIRO • KARE • KTSB JULES • LASER • LI-HILL • NEDO • PA SYSTEM • PERU143 • PHEZ • PUA • RANDOM • RASK • REKOE • SNAIL SPINO • SRINALIE • SWEETMAN • TENSER • THEHOMESICKPOTTER • TOEST • TYLER ARMSTRONG VUDUCATZ • YUNG TY + CARTIER

Photography: Gerhard Pratt,

Photo editing: Carol Ann Apilado

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(What's So Funny 'Bout)

Peace, Love and Understanding



Se Yeon Jo

by Tony Clennell

I have had the good fortune to have my passion with clay take me to many different countries in the world. I've been to many of parts of Canada and the US, England, Wales, Italy, Japan, China and now, most recently, the trip of a life time took me to Korea. It is a wonderful thing when a passion becomes a career.

As often happens when you travel to another country, your friends ask you on your return how that trip influenced your work. I always try to resist the immediate absorption of the

techniques and ideas I see and experience. Then somehow, at some later date, it surfaces when I least expect it. I think it is better this way so that you don't come home and make poor imitations of fabulous work.

Before I go on about this most fabulous trip I better explain to you the title of the article and how it is the answer to how this trip influenced my work and thought process. The song by English singer/songwriter Nick Lowe- (What's So Funny 'Bout) Peace, Love and Understanding comes to mind. This song was made popular by Elvis Costello.



In Gyu

*(What's So Funny 'Bout)
Peace, Love and Understanding*

*As I walk through,
This wicked world,
Searchin' for light in the darkness of insanity
I ask myself
Is all hope lost?
Is there only pain and hatred, and misery?*

*And each time I feel this inside
There's one thing I want to know
What's so funny 'bout peace, love and understanding?
Ohhh, Ohhh what's so funny 'bout
peace, love and understanding?*

Sometimes in our lives we experience just plain ole dumb good luck and, sometimes, we think it is some kind of cosmic energy or guardian angel looking after us. Through several courses that I taught I became friends with a Korean born Hamilton, Ontario potter Unha Yi Hill. Unha is now a proud Canadian citizen who went back to her homeland of Korea in the summer of 2014 with her daughter Adriana who was singing in the Hamilton Children's choir.

While in Icheon (a clay centre in Korea), Unha stumbled on a round table discussion in the pottery studio of one of the

5 Korean masters that are featured in a youtube video that went viral world wide (Icheon Master Hand- youtube). Unha, although short in stature is not short on nerve. Unha was invited for tea and a discussion opened up on how these 5 potters would love to visit Canada. Canada is the home of many Koreans and our country is well loved and respected by the Korean people. At the round table were 5 potters that are recognized as Masters in Korea. Since the tap root of the tradition of ceramics in Korea is very deep indeed, it is no small distinction to be given Master status. In short, these guys are considered Ceramic Rock Stars in their country.

Unha had a seed of an idea planted in her mind when she, Chris Snedden (then FUSION Vice President) and I met over lunch to discuss the possibility of bringing the Masters to Canada for the FUSION Conference. Well, we thought we better not put the cart before the horse. Chris and I had seen the youtube video and were awe struck by the incredible skill and artistry of these potters. We were well aware of Unha's overflowing enthusiasm and her pride in the Korean ceramic traditions and she had made this serendipitous connection. We would have to organize a tour of Canadians to Korea to meet and see what the Masters had to offer. The old theory of best to drive the car before you buy it was on our minds. This would be a HUGE effort to bring the whole Korean Rock Band and roadies to Canada.

So we left the lunch table with plans for Unha to crunch the numbers and give us an itinerary and a cost breakdown.



Hyang Gu Lee

It wasn't long before she had made all the contacts in Korea and we were to go to Korea in May of 2015 for the Korean Biennial Exhibition and the Icheon Potter's Festival. I announced the trip details on my blog and within 2 weeks we had all we could handle. There were 12 of us going, along with our fearless leader Unha. There were 5 members of the London Potter's Guild, 4 from the Hamilton Potter's Guild, and 4 friends of my blog (two of which are my pottery friends from the US). This became our family and I do mean family. Friendships were made that will last a lifetime.

Here's an introduction to our Korean family. By the end of our two weeks together we were brothers and sisters and as close as any family can be. Here is a brief introduction to each potter and the description I gave to each of them to describe how they watched over and attended to us.

HYANG GU LEE

Hyang Gu is a throwing master of unbelievable skill. 100 lb moon jars without breaking a sweat. To witness his throwing skill was indeed a humbling experience. Rooster - Hyang Gu is very animated and crows his love of learning English words and sentences. He is character personified.

SEONG TAE KIM

Seong Tae is a second generation potter with an amazing skill at multi coloured slips which he delicately carves into the most beautiful floral patterns. Crane - Seong Tae appears very shy and quiet but like the crane his eyes never miss a movement. At any moment he would be there to assist you in any way he could.

YONG CHUL YU

Yong Chul has a Master's Degree from the University of Seoul. His expertise is the stamping technique known as puncheong. The pots are stamped, a thin layer of slip is applied and then scraped away. Superman - Yong Chul is a man of action. He is a driving force and to say he means business when he sets out to do something is an understatement. He has an unearthly ability to focus and take charge.

IN GYUCHOI

In Gyu seems to master many of the decorative techniques that we experience. The work in each of his pieces is beyond comprehension. In Gyu is the recipient of many prestigious



Young Chul Yu

awards in Korea. Bear - In Gyu wandered out of his cave to growl and make sure all were safe and sound. He would then disappear only to resurface to see what was going on with his forest friends.

SE YEON JO

Se Yeon is the master of the crane. The crane is believed to have a life span of 1000 years and it is much revered in Korea. Se Yeon with just a few quick gestures can do the most amazing cranes. Cloud - Se Yeon is also quite quiet and reserved but always overhead watching and giving rain when it is needed.

Unha Yi Hill

Unha Yi is a bundle of nervous energy with a willingness to go anywhere, tackle anyone or anything. She knows what she wants and isn't afraid to ask for it. We were so blessed to have her as our guide and interpreter. She made things happen that were almost unimaginable. Makulee - This was our favourite rice wine beverage with lunch and supper. Unha is such a great companion with any meal, making it always a celebration of food and friendship.

So after this introduction, let the Korean experience begin.

When we arrived at the airport in Seoul there were all 5 of the Masters with a banner welcoming us to the Icheon Potters Festival. From that moment on they would always be present like our shadow for the entire 2 weeks - day in and day out, early and late each day. Their lives basically came to a halt to be our hosts and treat us like royalty. Loaded on the bus we arrived at our accommodation where the 5 masters' wives had been busy preparing a feast of Korean barbecue that was fit for kings and queens.

Our accommodation, JR Land, was a ski chalet with all the amenities for our fearless leader Unha to cook up meals for the entire Canadian/ Korean family. Unha had gone to Korea a month early to make sure all the i's were dotted and all the t's were crossed. Everything was in place for an amazing experience.

As it turned out we were invited and treated to dinner after dinner by a pottery collector, the mayor of the city, a city councillor, The Korean Potter's Guild President, the Icheon Potter's Festival and an Olympic Star athlete. Oh, the thought of all the makulee, soju and beer swallowed makes me think I really should enter detox. Oh yeah, the Koreans know how to party! Good thing we Canucks have been to training camp.

Each day we attended the Icheon Potter's Festival where there were hundreds of booths of ceramics, demonstrations and a climbing kiln firing that we got to participate in by stoking the kiln. Apparently, we the Canadians were given special celebrity status and the entire 4th chamber of a multi-chambered climbing kiln was ours to fill and fire off. How did Yong Chul or Unha pull this one off?

For 5 consecutive days we were invited to the studios of the 5 Masters to watch them demonstrate and then try our hand at pots they had stayed up late in the night to prepare for us. Many of these pots would be fired in the Dragon kiln. At each potter's studio we were presented with a gift of a piece of their work. The generosity of the Korean people just kept coming, and coming and coming. When we tried to offer them a gift



Seong Tae Kim

they would return the gift 3 times over.

Are you beginning to understand what I learned in Korea? What's so funny 'bout peace, love and understanding?

Never have I seen a celebration of a wood firing like in Korea. In the old days a pig's head was mounted above the firebox. People would put money in the pig's mouth and ears and be given a cup of soju. They would then bow three times to the kiln God, take a sip of soju and pour the rest on the kiln to celebrate a good firing. I had the honour to be asked, and all my Korean family dug deep in their pockets to give me money to stuff in the pig's mouth. The pig in modern times is made of clay. I was very proud of our group and applause at our contribution was certainly earth shaking. The money that went into the pig bought the beer for a crowd of hundreds. The kiln poured flame, smoke, love, peace and understanding. What's so funny 'bout that? The flames were also apparent at the barbecue that was happening around the kiln. Charcoal BBQ, drinks and friendship surrounded the kiln firing.

The Koreans don't fire for ash accumulation so a five chamber kiln was fired off in 18 hours total. Amazing!!!! The celadon glazes had a depth unachievable in any other firing.

We visited the Icheon Biennial Exhibition and were thrilled to see the works of fellow Canadian Paula Murray. Congrats, Paula you were among a select few in the world. Sadly, for me the exhibition was more about pieces than pots. It seems multiples are the formula for success. I have seen many multiples, big sculptures but it was a single moon jar at the Leeum Museum in Seoul that brought a lump to my throat and a tear to my eye. I'm a sucker for a great pot!

We visited museums, collections, folk villages, pottery villages, potters' studios and just about all you can think of that is pottery related. Even when you are on the bus, a look

out the window shows you large traditional ongi jars filled with kimchi in every backyard and available piece of land. Kimchi is the equivalent of sauerkraut with the addition of hot peppers. It is the staple with almost all Korean meals. It is fermented in these large jars and is so good for your stomach flora. We in North America have so much to learn from Asia about good health. While we're at it, we also have a lot to learn about peace, love and understanding.

On my blog I was told of a story where Robert Turner of Alfred University gave a lecture on the energy that can be transmitted by a single pot. During his lecture, a single bowl was passed hand to hand throughout the attending audience. By the time the bowl reached my blog respondent the bowl was red hot with the accumulated energy of the group that it had been passed through. In short this is precisely what happened to our family. The energy, friendship, peace, love and understanding was beyond hot. It was surreal! We were brothers and sisters!

So next June the Korean Masters are invading Canada. What can I tell you, except don't miss it! These are the best craftsmen and artists that you will EVER lay eyes on. They are gentle, loving, generous, skillful and will rock your world, as they did ours. You will come away from the conference wanting to be a better maker and, like me, a better person. I have never in my life felt such love. I truly believe if more people in this world would travel and experience other people and other cultures there would be more peace, love and understanding. What's so funny 'bout that?

Peace

PS: May 2017 Mark your calendars. You want the pottery experience of a life time contact – Unha_Hill@hotmail.com or phone 1 905-518-3621