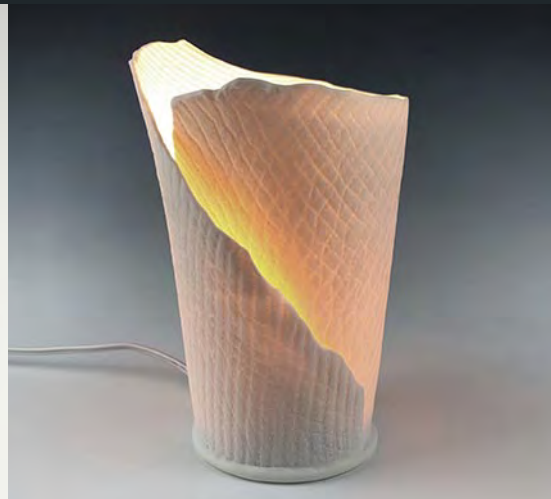


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A MAGAZINE FOR CLAY AND GLASS





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FUSION

A MAGAZINE FOR CLAY AND GLASS

FUSION MAGAZINE

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an idea for an article, or have a comment,
please contact Lucie Grys, Editor, at
fusion.editor@clayandglass.on.ca

FUSION

A MAGAZINE FOR CLAY AND GLASS

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ON THE COVER

The work of FUSION's Creative Directions Mentorship Program

Top - Danielle Skentzos, Claire Nicole Waddick, Silvana Michetti

Middle - Kristina Albright, Juana Berinstein

Bottom - Eekta Trienekens, Aneela Dias-D'Souza, Jason Schniedel

Please note that, as required by Canadian government and public health directives to prevent transmission of COVID-19, advertisers in this Fall 2021 issue of FUSION Magazine may have changed their retail shopping practices, course and workshop dates, or travel offerings. Please check directly with our advertisers for updates.

Message from FUSION's President

It is with great joy that I am introducing this new grassroots magazine to you! Over the course of the year-and-a-half long COVID period, many arts organizations had to face their share of adversity, but now that life slowly and steadily resumes again, FUSION is emerging refreshed and new.

We have a small but strong board and staff who will be introducing themselves to you in this issue. Part of our catharsis is our newly revamped magazine brought to you by our incoming editor, Lucie Gryś. Lucie's focus is to make the magazine more relevant for our members with additional columns featuring members' studios, tips and tricks as well as a travel section.

Our new Director of Operations, Karen Williamson, was hired in August and has been relentlessly working to update and streamline our association. Karen brings a myriad of organizational experience from her work at the University of Toronto and is applying her digital talents to updating and improving our website. FUSION has received an operational grant from the Ontario Arts Council again and we are looking at other grants that would help us rejuvenate our virtual platform to offer more member services.

I hope that you have had a chance to check out the Instagram Live feature, [FACES of FUSION](#), that was started in April while we were still under lockdown and virtual meetings were the only way to reach out. I have been chatting with more than 24 artist members every Wednesday at noon for about 30-40 minutes. All chats are available for viewing on the FUSION Instagram page under the IGTV tab. This is an excellent way to showcase your work, yourself or your organization and talk about what is important to you. If you would like to be featured, please message FUSION on [Instagram](#) or email fusion.magazine@clayandglass.on.ca.

For 2022, we are working on reinstating and building on our programs as well as introducing new features for our members. Stay tuned and check the FUSION website www.clayandglass.on.ca as well as our newsletters.

I will conclude by thanking you for your enthusiastic response to our recent member survey and encourage your continued input and ideas to improve our organization. Please read about your Board members, reach out to connect, ask questions and offer suggestions.

Catharina Goldnau
FUSION President and Director of Magazine

MEET THE BOARD



Catharina Goldnau
President and Director of Magazine
[@catharinagoldnauceramics](#)

Growing up in the rural countryside among fields, rocks, lakes and trees, I now work in a large urban centre, immersed in concrete. Oscillating between these poles, my work strives to be a coupling of both, rough and smooth, craggy and gilded. We need nature to regenerate our soul and culture to challenge our minds.

I joined the FUSION Board to find a community of artists and work on pulling the community together and facilitate exchange. My goal is to further strengthen the organization into an important resource for clay and glass artists.



Alison Brannen
Secretary
[@alison_brannenceramics](#)

Alison is a Toronto ceramic artist, educator and sailor. Her large, abstract, saggar fired vessels have been exhibited in Ontario and the USA. She has served on ceramic juries, presented workshops to guilds throughout the province and has won several important ceramic awards. She has an MA from the University of New Mexico Albuquerque, a BFA from York University and a Bachelor of Education from the University of Toronto.

My involvement in FUSION began buying beautiful pottery at the Clay and Glass Show at the CBC building. I travelled to FUSION conferences in North Bay and Waterloo and had a wonderful time meeting other like-minded artists. I applied successfully to several clay and glass shows at Wychwood Barns and exhibited in several Fireworks travelling exhibitions. I taught ceramics in high school for 15 years and taught saggar firing courses at St Lawrence College. Chris Snedden asked me to present two workshops at the Korean Masters Conference in 2016 in Toronto. I joined the Board as a Director at Large in 2019, helped with conferences and became secretary in 2020. I love connecting with other artists and creating programs. I am simply following a long line of dedicated potters who have volunteered countless hours to help build their community.



Bep Schippers
Treasurer

Fibre artist and clay enthusiast, Bep Schippers brings a passion for arts education to her role as Treasurer of the Board for FUSION. Bep is a scientist, teacher, and master planner with specialist knowledge in strategic and financial planning, project management, data analysis and creative problem-solving. She has been involved at a senior level with museums and galleries of various sizes and interests, and has handled the development of multi-million-dollar gallery and museum projects at the Royal Ontario Museum and Beaty Biodiversity Museum (UBC), both successfully opening to the public while under her purview. Currently she is a consultant for museums and galleries and is serving as Education and Exhibitions Manager at the London Clay Art Centre in London, Ontario.



Silvana Michetti
Creative Directions and Mentorship Program
[@silvanaceramics](#)

Silvana Michetti lives in Toronto, Ontario. She studied Visual Arts at York University (BFA Honours, BEd) and taught visual arts in Ontario high schools. As Chair of the Creative Directions and Mentorship programs, she is committed to creating opportunities for clay and glass artists to develop their practice through hybrid programs which combine remote learning with in person meetings that help develop supportive group dynamics and creative growth.



Karen Franzen
Outreach
[@karen.franzen](#)

Karen Franzen is an east-end Toronto based ceramic artist who graduated from the Ontario College of Art in 1989. She has maintained a studio practice for over 30 years making functional ware, teaching workshops and exhibiting in Canada, Bermuda, Japan and the United States. Karen creates playful, optimistic work dedicated to the rituals of sharing food and drink around the table.

I'm pleased to be serving on the FUSION board focusing my efforts on community outreach. I'm particularly interested in forging connections between our urban and rural communities enabling us to learn from each other and benefiting from our collective wisdom.



Danielle Skentzos
Membership
[@shiraleepottery](#)

Danielle Skentzos grew up on a farm in Oro-Medonte and founded Shiralee Pottery to share her functional work. Her pottery is inspired by the beauty of home and her love of a craft that keeps her hands in the dirt. Recently, Danielle developed a new line of work exploring surface design while participating in FUSION's Creative Direction's program with Angelo di Petta. She looks forward to serving the FUSION board to help enrich membership opportunities for the clay and glass community.



Amee Raval
Glass Programming
[@niravanadesigns](#)

My work is a reflection and celebration of the rich Asian culture, traditions, and heritage, they guide my spirituality and echo in my art.

I am a marketing professional armed with a Master's in Business and have more than a decade of experience as a business professional. I decided to pursue my passion for glass and enrolled in the glass program of Sheridan. A recent graduate from Sheridan College, my exploration of the medium led me to explore my culture and heritage and inspired me to use glass as a medium to make sculptural objects.

Exploring one's cultural identity often leads to nostalgia and mystique. The deep-rooted cultural beliefs have been the inspirational force guiding my body of work.

In the nostalgia and mystique of cultural identity, I introduce feminist, progressive ideals to my Hindu, Indian heritage. Through traditional temple architectural forms that have been reproduced and altered in coloured and clear glass, I balance respect and acknowledgment of tradition with new opportunities and ways of living for women. It is in the subtle alterations from traditions that we find something special, a hope for new opportunities and ideals.

Eventually, life comes full circle. I am honoured to return to the role of editor for FUSION Magazine. It's been over 20 years since I last edited the magazine - a printed copy mailed to members across the province and beyond. Today, it's delivered instantly to your inbox as a PDF. This issue is very interactive with live links to exhibition tours, catalogues and artist talks on YouTube. If lockdowns taught us anything, it's how much we value our guilds and studios - and how quickly we had to embrace Zoom meetings and other software to connect.

When the editorial committee met (yes, over Zoom) to talk about ideas for this issue, it was agreed that every effort would be made to celebrate the work of FUSION members. Results from the e-mail survey that was sent out at the end of the summer told us that you want to read about other makers, profiles, exhibitions, shows, workshops and conferences and recognize the work of FUSION members. To honour this, FUSION'S Creative Directions mentorship program is featured in this issue. Included are links to YouTube videos from artist talks that were held at the Gardiner Museum as well as a link to view the exceptional catalogue created for the mentorship program led by Angelo di Petta. Discover the recent Toronto Potters 21st Biennial show, *Flux*, held at the Gardiner Shop and tour the exhibition on FUSION's Instagram account through [FACES of FUSION](#). Chris Snedden is recognized as the FUSION Volunteer of the Year and we have created a

space for members to share tips, tricks and glaze recipes. The article about Gladstone ClayWorks in Ottawa will resonate with many who found themselves unable to work in their studios and guilds during the lockdown and how we all adapted to working and living within provincial restrictions and guidelines - and still do.

In this issue you will also see new features including a focus on embracing technology and the recent Canada Council for the Arts funded e-Clay learning and teaching research project that so many contributed to as focus group participants. We have also added a studio spotlight along with the popular clay and glass artist spotlights featured in each issue. If travel is on the horizon for the coming year, you'll be inspired by La Meridiana and Catharina Goldnau's visit to tour and interview the people behind the Tuscan ceramics school in our FUSION Travels section.

Please click on the links, dive deeper into the pages on your screen and enjoy more clay and glass content. Let's all hope the coming year brings us together again at shows, workshops, conferences and sales - and yes, even online.

Lucie Grys
fusion.editor@clayandglass.on.ca





Gardiner Shop

Creative Directions: The Role of Mentorship and Its Lasting Impact



Kristina Albright
Juana Berinstein
Ancela Dias-D'Sousa
Silvana Michotti

Jason Schiedel
Danielle Skentzos
Tekta Trienekens
Claire Nicole Waddick

The Milou Kelley
Gardiner Shop Gallery

Creative Directions ceramic artist, Juana Berinstein, walks through the *Cultivate* exhibition at the Gardiner Museum Shop.

For the past two years, FUSION's Creative Directions mentorship program was led by Angelo di Petta and culminated in an exhibition called *Cultivate* held at the Gardiner Shop this past May - July.

Participating Artists

Claire Nicole Waddick	Danielle Skentzos
Dawn Guillemette	Eekta Trienekens
Jason Schiedel	Juana Berinstein
Silvana Michetti	Aneela Dias-D'Sousa
Kristina Albright	

A Brief Review

In 2011, FUSION offered the first two mentorship programs - one group mentored by me, the other by Bruce Cochrane. Barbara Banfield was instrumental in getting the idea of a mentorship off the ground and has continued to organize the mentorship programs annually for the past ten years.

The purpose of the original mentorship program was to foster primarily conceptual development of an idea and consider the technical improvements that are needed to achieve this. It was aimed at more established clay and glass practitioners who were at a point in their careers when a change in direction was contemplated. Meetings generally involved participants presenting their work and ideas followed by group discussion and feedback. Critical thinking and cultural/societal context for the developing work was also important. The scope of the work produced under the various mentors over the years ranged from small functional pieces to non-functional sculptural forms and installation.

Creative Directions, an initiative of Barb Banfield in 2016, balances concept and technical concerns. Demos are given by the mentor as a way to introduce participants to processes they may not have experienced

before. Participants are asked to consider the direction they wish to pursue, formulate an idea and begin the process of developing and producing work to that end.

Early in 2019, Barb asked me if I would be interested in doing another mentorship, specifically Creative Directions. I agreed but specified that my interest in design and function should be the focus of the program. Generally the mentorships have been open to interpretation by the mentor. As already mentioned, functional, sculptural, large and small-scale work have been made in past programs. I wanted to focus on tabletop functional work that was guided by specific use and design considerations, included would also be lighting. With this functional design focus, we launched Creative Directions: Dynamic Design.

Selection Process

With all of this in place, the call for applications went out. Thirty-two interested people applied and submitted a statement outlining why they were ready to take a program like Creative Directions (CD) including a CV and ten images of their work. From this number, my task was to select ten participants - not easily done! The criteria I set for myself was to put together a group of individuals that was more or less equal in technical ability, demonstrated through their application statements and images. They had to express why CD was important to them and show a variety of approaches to making such as hand-building, throwing and casting etc. I also looked for people who had diverse life experiences. I did not consider applicants who were recent graduates from a ceramics program or had previously done a mentorship. My reasoning was that a recent graduate (2 or 3 years) would have gone through a similar process of idea/concept

formulation and development, presentation and group discussion as part of their final year thesis work. Upon graduation, they would need more time to establish their careers and develop their work. Likewise for those that already had done a mentorship – I wanted to give new people the opportunity.



Angelo di Petta reviews sketches as part of the mentorship program.

but also making observations about something that could be improved or reconsidered. I allotted 20 minutes for participants to present their work followed by ten minutes of feedback. I always made sure that everyone made a comment.

My approach was to create an environment which gave the participants an

The meetings

For our first meeting, I had asked the participants to prepare a short presentation as a way for them to introduce themselves to the others. Among the things I wanted them to share was how and when they got into working with clay, their high and low points with the material, the influences and concerns that guided their work and identify one person's work that they admired and why. Each person made a 20 minute presentation which was followed by group response and observations. I was impressed by the diversity of experiences and how open they were to any new directions they might take.

Subsequent meetings involved combinations of mini demos/Powerpoints/discussions on topics that included: design elements and principles applied to ceramics, ergonomics, form and meaning, form and function, concept generation and development, creative use of moulds (casting and press-moulding) and screen-printed imagery. The participants were tasked with doing inspiration/research boards as a way to identify the essence of what was important to them. From this exercise ideas started to be formulated. With each meeting the emerging ideas and concepts took a more resolved form. In some cases there were setbacks when an idea and a forming method could not be reconciled. Different approaches to making processes had to be investigated. The participants supported each other in their endeavours by giving constructive feedback

opportunity to question their creative process in an accepting and supportive environment. As mentor, I challenged them to do a deep dive into their emotional and personal experiences in order to establish a foundation for work that originated from within themselves and was not overly influenced by current styles and trends. This also required them to develop their own visual language of form, surface and image.

COVID delays

The initial timeline for the CD program was to start the eight meetings in September 2019 and finish in June 2020. An exhibition of the finished work was scheduled at the Gardiner Shop for November 2020. The COVID pandemic derailed the plans and we were forced to reconsider how to proceed. Five meetings had been completed, the remaining three were now in limbo – as was the exhibition with the Gardiner Shop which was also forced to close and adjust its schedules.

The lockdowns affected participants in a number of ways. Some lost access to studio space since they used their guilds for working and firing, others had to homeschool their children, still others saw their jobs become increasingly stressful. This all took a toll and the ability to concentrate on developing their work was compromised or put on hold. One participant did withdraw from the program citing the toll this had on her studio work and teaching. She needed to focus and had to let something go. Another chose not to participate in the exhibition since her work



The Creative Directions participants outside of the Gardiner Museum at the opening of *Cultivate*. Back row (left to right): Danielle Skentzos, Dawn Guillemette, Claire Nicole Waddick, Eekta Trienekens, Jason Schiedel, Aneela Dias-D'Sousa and Kristina Albright. Front row (left to right): Silvana Michetti, Juana Berinstein, Angelo di Petta.

schedule was so demanding that she felt that meeting the deadlines was not feasible.

Our regular meetings had been held in my studio but two meetings in July and September of 2020 were held outside. All were grateful to meet again and enjoy the process of seeing each other's work and relished the feedback they received. The last meeting was held via Zoom in December 2020. It turned out that what was at first a setback in terms of our schedule actually benefited everyone by giving them more time to resolve their ideas and work. Adeline La, the Gardiner Shop manager, was very accommodating by giving us new dates for the exhibition in May 2021.

Closing thoughts

Cultivate was the exhibition of the finished work held at the Gardiner Shop this past May, June and July. I was very pleased with the final outcome. Claire, Jason, Danielle, Juana,

Eetka, Kristina, Silvana and Aneela took on the challenge set before them and produced intelligent and meaningful work. Seeing the pieces displayed at the Gardiner was very gratifying for me and a proud moment for the participants. Their journey through a challenging year and a half was an inspiration but the real journey is just beginning. Dawn did not participate in the exhibition but did finish her pieces.

It is very evident from the large response to the Mentorship and Creative Directions programs that they are very popular with FUSION members. Participants crave the group interaction, discussion and feedback that these programs provide. It is probably the most cited reason that applicants give for wanting to take the program. All of this takes money, planning and a lot of organizing.

I would like to thank FUSION for giving me the opportunity to mentor this group and in particular Barb Banfield who started it all and



Danielle Skentzos' work in *Cultivate*.

had confidence in me to lead this Creative Directions mentorship. Thanks also to Silvana Michetti who assisted Barb and did most of the post meetings work for the exhibition. Thanks to Danielle and Claire for their work on the brochure and Aneela for the photography. Silvana is now the new Chair of Creative Directions and Mentorship on the FUSION Board. Many thanks to Adeline La, Manager of the Gardiner Shop for accommodating our changing timelines and providing enthusiastic support for the recent exhibition. Thanks to the participants who did the work.

I am proud of you.

To view the *Cultivate* exhibition catalogue online, please visit the [FUSION website](#).

Angelo di Petta studied at OCAD University and upon his graduation in 1972 was awarded three scholarships to study industrial ceramics in Italy. He returned to OCAD and began his teaching career. He taught courses in mould making, domestic ceramics, ceramic materials, 3D design, imagery/surface and rendering drawing. His artistic career has included numerous solo and group exhibitions, workshops, architectural installations and features in ceramics magazines and books. In 2021, he retired from formal teaching and continues his involvement in ceramics through exhibitions, workshops, mentoring and jurying shows.

A History of Mentorship and FUSION's Creative Directions Program

Barbara Banfield

FUSION has delivered seven mentorships and two Creative Directions programs. The success of these has been truly dependent on the fantastic mentors and facilitators who have taken on the challenge to work closely with the participants to help them fulfill their own ideas and visions of their artistic practice.

Angelo di Petta and Bruce Cochrane were the first to lead mentorship programs with FUSION. These programs were followed by Koen Vanderstukken (glass out of Sheridan College) Keith Campbell (North Bay), Leta Cormier (Ottawa), Linda Sormin (Toronto), Susan Low-Ber (Toronto), Michelle Mendolwitz (Peterborough), and currently Lesley McNally is leading a program in London. Each of these mentors are so talented in their own artistic practice but also teachers and facilitators who have the insight, knowledge and expertise to assist others to develop their creative path.

This program has been generously supported by so many including The Ontario Arts Council, Craft Ontario, The Potters Guild of Hamilton, Living Arts Centre Mississauga, Kawartha Potters, W.K.P Kennedy Gallery and the Gardiner Museum. I am sure the list is much longer, and I apologize if I missed anyone.

FUSION is continuing to develop new ideas for different types of mentorships and Creative Directions so that we can deliver educational programs that meet the needs of our members. It certainly has had its challenges over the past couple years as we have navigated the circumstances of COVID-19. We thank everyone for their patience.

If you are interested in the artist talks about the latest Creative Directions program recently held at the Gardiner Shop, please visit the following links:

In this session, ceramist and founder of the FUSION Creative Directions program, Barbara Banfield, exhibiting artists Claire Nicole Waddick and Aneela Dias-D'Sousa discuss their recent mentorship with artist Angelo di Petta. Past-participant Hana Balaban-Pommier reflects on the program's lasting impact. Click the link to watch the video. <https://youtu.be/mXTnv5fbAj4>

In this session, hosted by Barbara Banfield, exhibiting artists Danielle Skentzos, Jason Schiedel and Eekta Trienekens discuss how their mentorship with Angelo di Petta guided their creativity and the refinement of their works. Click the link to watch the video. <https://youtu.be/s7PP18r-IY>

Claire Nicole Waddick

www.veryclaire.com

The structure of the Creative Directions program accelerates the process of developing a new body of work. It helped me to achieve the personal milestone of creating work that fully integrates my artistic ideas with functional pottery. Previously, my artistic work was non-functional sculpture and my functional pottery conveyed only a watered down version of my artistic vision.

The dishes in the *Hill and Dale Dinnerware* series are uniquely decorated by hand to express the landforms and colours of the farmlands of the Waterloo Region where I live. They are designed to be practical and the plates and bowls can easily be lifted from a table with one hand. The dishes stack, nest and fit into dishwasher racks. The sculpted feet allow water to drain.

I plan to continue to create work that is both artistic and functional. However, it will be more expressive and loose. While preparing



Claire in the studio.

for the exhibition, I focused on perfecting surfaces. Now, I am ready to let go and embrace a wabi sabi aesthetic.

Danielle Skentzos

[@shiraleepottery](https://www.instagram.com/shiraleepottery)

I applied for Creative Directions as a long shot thinking that I would use the application process to gain experience and feedback. Although I had been introduced to clay years before, having a family and teaching left little time to pursue clay in a serious manner.

Working alongside Angelo and fellow artists was an excellent opportunity to push the boundaries of my knowledge and explore new work. I decided early on to focus on surface design. Finding my grandmother's old book on Ontario Weeds was the spark to my consideration on our connection to the land around us.

The natural beauty of my surroundings continue to inspire me and I plan to refine this line of work. The process of carving my designs is slow and reflects my appreciation of the small, simple pleasures of everyday life.



Danielle Skentzos shares her inspiration board as part of the Creative Directions mentorship process.

Dawn Guillemette
[@parkwood_girl](#)

Having been a hobby potter for over a decade, I decided to pursue a lifelong dream and apply for Creative Directions in June 2019.

Angelo di Petta chose a diverse group to support each other through their creative path. I was inspired by how well we worked together and learned from each other. My visit to NCECA left me with wondrous visions of what was possible but I had no idea what to do with this knowledge.

With the program came a new way of looking at art and bringing it to life. Focusing on one idea for an extended period was new for me. It forced me to go deeper into my plan to draw inspiration from my ancestry. Throughout the pandemic the project gave me strength as I paid homage to my ancestry through my personal artistic vision, realizing they too had faced unprecedented challenges.

Eekta Trienekens
[@claykta](#)

The Creative Directions program was important to me in more than one way. The opportunity to discuss progress with others going through similar stages was very helpful. But more, it gave me the chance to try a completely different technique, one that I would not likely have used otherwise. Slip casting is so different from how I usually work that I have not yet found a way to incorporate

it in my other work, though I am open to it. It has now found its way on to my little list of possibilities, one that I hope to keep expanding.

The focus on functional work was initially a little disappointing for me as I really like to wander off to the non-functional. But, it was a good way to stay focussed and create limitations. This resulted in a more complete concept.



Eekta's work on display in the foyer of the Gardiner Museum.

Jason Schiedel
[@regionofplenty](#)

I was drawn to the Creative Directions program to develop a better understanding of design and to improve my ability to create functional ceramics. I have a background in sculpture and am largely self-taught with clay, so of all the people involved with the mentorship, I probably had the most to learn in terms of understanding the language of pottery and how meaning is made through use and function. Creative Directions challenged my fixed ideas about ceramics and opened up many practical approaches to my working process.

Participating in the program revealed my tendency to approach new work with fully conceived forms in mind, which I would now characterize as a “top down” approach. Instead, I learned how to build a new body of work from the roots up, beginning with its backstory. Key to this was a discovery exercise where each participant identified a set of personal interests independent of current trends in ceramics. From this individualized collection of images, stories, and observations, we cradled the DNA that would eventually feed into our physical prototypes.

My research pointed towards a form, which in turn suggested a method of forming.



Jason working on his process.

Changes and refinements arose out of the making process. Critical feedback demonstrated how my work was actually functioning and raised key questions to be addressed through future effort. I am grateful to Creative Directions for helping me to develop my unique voice in ceramics by guiding me to the source of my inspiration, and for establishing a design framework that treats the studio as a place of ongoing discovery, leading to more surprising, distinct and impactful work.



Kristina Albright
[@kristina_rose_studio](#)

Nature's Lasting Moments water jug and cup set was inspired by my lifelong adventures in the epic forests and fields of Haliburton, Ontario. It captures unique moments of nature's beauty—especially flowers, foliage, and water—that I remember seeing. These moments would have been hidden from me if I had not been paying close attention.

Silvana Michetti
[@silvanaceramics](#)

After exploring diverse art making processes as an art teacher, I focused on the potential of ceramics. This opportunity came at an optimum time; I was investigating the idea of light transmitting sculpture and needed the challenge of functional and design considerations, with structure and guidance. From the beginning, the work we embarked on was intense and inspiring. We were tasked with thoughtful exploratory exercises as our mentor encouraged a solid foundation from which to move forward.

Pandemic restrictions forced my move from a community studio to set up a home studio and kiln. I began experimenting with fiber clay, resulting in more confident hand-building. My work evolved through many exploratory designs and techniques: coloured panels, embossing, sgraffito, piercings, wall reliefs and paper models. Group feedback helped in the refinement process of creating my final series of tabletop light sculptures. It takes time, a strong commitment to an idea, and a supportive structure to evolve in a new direction.



Silvana Michetti presents her work process to the group.

Aneela Dias-D'Sousa
[@aneeladceramics](#)

My series of work titled *Incubate* was developed through the Creative Directions program. Angelo led us on a journey of introspection, research, exposure, understanding and meaningful discovery. The observation of gatherings and identifying the instances when people engaged the most, initiated the idea for this piece. I found the greatest interactions took place over libations. There exists wise counsel, nurturing of ideas, views exchanged, humour, and communication on many levels during these pockets of time. This piece seeks to encourage those connections.

I regard people and these transient moments as fragile and valuable. I want to preserve them as precious as eggs in a nest.

For me, this series of work is about creating an opportunity that prioritises human connections. Giving importance to those meaningful interactions that we took for granted until they were no longer possible.





Juana holds Seder plates from her Creative Directions explorations.

Juana Berinstein
[@juana_berinstein](#)

I wanted to make a plate for celebrating Jewish Passover dinners which reflected the politics at my table – queer, anti-colonial, and diasporic. My considerations included wanting to have a functional piece that honoured, but also built on (in the reconstructionist tradition) Jewish history and tradition.

Creative Directions was a place to bring these considerations, and to let my process evolve – both conceptually and in terms of design. In the end, the refinements made to my plate, and the many iterations the plate took over the year that we met as a group, allowed me to reflect traditional as well as newly incorporated foods on the plate through screen-printed images. The construction of the plate through 12 distinct slip-cast pieces fit together to both form a plate and create a space in the middle which can be read as a Star of David.

I gained a deep appreciation for process and have transformed my way of working with clay, at times subverting my impulse to simply dig in with my hands and make, and instead to dive into an idea first, and to mindfully, over time and steps, consider how this idea will take shape and communicate through clay.

e-Clay: Innovation in Learning and Teaching Ceramics On-Line



The art and craft of ceramics is tactile and visual. Learning ceramics brings students and instructors together, and guilds are hubs and hearts of communities. Ceramics need tools, equipment and facilities - much of that is shared. What happens in a pandemic, in the isolation from each other and facilities?

Across the internet, on-line learning ramped up dramatically, but did not meet the needs of pottery guilds. Guilds found ways to help their members continue to some degree, but a guild's survival often depends on revenue from courses for their communities. That stopped completely. 'Pivot' and 'distance learning' were buzzwords of 2020. Pottery guilds were struggling, and many were asking

how can we 'pivot'?

Mississauga Potters Guild (MPG) President, Salina Szechtman, began connecting with other guilds across Ontario. 'What are you doing', and 'what can we do'? Waves of restrictions were mandated by governments at all levels. In the confusion, networking was helpful and the six guilds involved agreed to continue as the 'Cross Provincial Ceramics Network' (CPCN).

At the same time, the Canada Council for the Arts, as the principal federal organization for funding public arts, responded by streamlining the process for its Digital Strategy Fund to help artists and arts organizations find ways to adapt.

Salina made a proposal to her MPG colleagues and the CPCN: apply for a Canada Council for the Arts grant to research how guilds can offer online dynamic and interactive learning and teaching for clay. Although there is already an enormous volume of videos and workshops online for potters, they don't include any means to work in real-time with instructors looking on and giving feedback; that would be the ultimate goal.

The CPCN agreed, supporting MPG's application with a commitment to participate. The initiative was also supported by the prestigious Gardiner Museum of Ceramic Art.

Two months preparing a grant submission, four months waiting, then success - the MPG was awarded the e-Clay Learning and Teaching grant. It was a moment of exhilaration and anxiety.

By the end of 2020, the project was underway. MPG's 'Team e-Clay' was the backbone of the project structure and organization, and soon hired a project manager, Lucie Grys. CPCN morphed into the Cross-Provincial Steering Committee (CPSC) who met weekly, providing strategic direction and oversight. Within team e-Clay and CPCN there were potters with training and experience in research methods, administration, technology and teaching - a lot of strengths that would make this project a success.

There were two parallel activities for the project - identifying challenges to the ceramics communities, especially the guilds, and understanding the technological possibilities for dynamic, interactive on-line learning and teaching for clay. In the end, the two had to come together in one set of recommendations.

Learning from Ceramics Communities

The CPCN represented a wide cross-section of potters and guilds, but the project was committed to a much broader, community-driven research approach. The project was to engage as many voices as possible - guilds, students and instructors, rural, urban, newcomers, varied ages and ceramic experience - so that its recommendations 'would really work in practice', noted Amy Bell, president of the Ottawa guild.

Focus groups, ceramic experts in discussions, interviews with key informants from ceramic programs in colleges and universities and community studios, and a session on sustainable solutions were all planned and carried out through February and March - a period of intense activity.

This research engaged over one hundred people representing fourteen communities in Ontario and five provinces across Canada, producing a rich array of information, insights and questions.

The guilds currently involved in the Cross Provincial Ceramic Network include:

Mississauga Potters' Guild
Kawartha Potters Guild
Kingston Potters' Guild
North Bay & Area Potters' Guild
Ottawa Guild of Potters
The Potter's Studio Inc.
The London Potters Guild
Thunder Bay Potters' Guild
Deep River Potters' Guild

What was learned?

It's no surprise that traditional in-person community teaching is the preferred experience, especially for beginners. On-line learning or 'hybrid' models impose new demands, including re-thinking course design, new teaching, learning and technology skills. These new models also create new challenges for access and accessibility, including uneven internet quality.

Participants recognized that on-line and hybrid courses are increasingly necessary to provide opportunities to innovate and create more professional experiences for artist-instructors - but at a greater commitment to

preparation and support time. For potters, on-line learning can increase access to courses, especially where guilds are distant or there are safety and accessibility concerns.

The trajectory of learning was captured by Lindsay Hadcock (member and instructor at the Kingston guild) who facilitated some of the project focus groups. At the beginning she 'couldn't see it [on-line ceramics] working' but by the second focus group she thought 'oh, I think this is more doable than I thought' and by the third focus group 'I'd already begun planning our on-line classes'. She also noted how the demands of on-line courses create new and interesting ways to learn.

Technological Possibilities

Concurrent with the community-based research, e-Clay researched technological possibilities for on-line learning in clay. The objective - to come up with a web-based, user-friendly and affordable way to approximate a ceramics studio classroom using existing technologies.

Instructors and students need to interact, showing and talking while learning. In a classroom, all this flows naturally - students gather around the instructor to watch and discuss, then practice at their own workstation with the instructor watching and giving feedback, one-on-one, immediately. In 'distanced' learning, technology must support this interaction between instructors and students.

With the help of a technology consultant, e-Clay's approach was to research existing technologies and evaluate all options, and to determine what technical components are

needed at different price points to create 'virtual' learning and teaching studios.

Although there is already an enormous volume of videos and workshops online for potters, they don't include any means to work in real-time with instructors looking on and giving feedback; that would be the ultimate goal.

...perhaps the most robust outcome of the e-Clay project - a connection between communities is growing where there was none before - and that foretells other good outcomes in the future.

The wheel has already been invented

The recommended components are commonly available, familiar to most, and often already owned. They include a video camera; monitor; lighting; microphone and speaker/headset; video-conferencing capability; and controls that need to be hands-free because, as every potter has learned, clay-covered hands are not kind to technology.

The most important step in the technology research was to dovetail its findings with the

community-based research and make recommendations that would meet the communities' needs for on-line, dynamic interactive teaching and learning. The recommendations focussed on the key

requirements for both guilds and students -

instructor/student interactivity, high quality video and audio, ease of use, hands-free operation, and a tiered cost structure.

Hardware, software, and internet requirements do create barriers for some. For example, internet connectivity is uneven across the province, some equipment is novel, and not everyone is comfortable with this technology. Such barriers need to be addressed before guilds are confident in moving

forward with on-line interactive learning. With all this in hand, e-Clay went back to the communities.

The Town Halls

In late April 2021, e-Clay brought the results of the community-based research and the

technology research together at two 'Town Hall' online Zoom events for the research participants. Over eighty people watched the presentation, answered topic-focused 'polls' and joined the 'Kiln-side Chat'.

Much was presented and discussed. Participants were heedful of the challenges to implement on-line and hybrid learning in their own guilds, but discussion in the 'Kiln-side Chat' after the presentations was enthusiastic, with a lot of optimism. It's worth reiterating some typical thoughts expressed by participants. Overwhelmingly, they felt optimistic and encouraged, that the technology is very learnable with a road map and the right equipment, and that there are lots of possibilities for on-line learning and teaching clay.

The conclusion of the research is that on-line, dynamic, interactive learning and teaching is possible but there's no 'one-size-fits-all' solution. Workable business models, technical support, instructor training, course curricula, and ways for guilds to include glazing and firing were key pieces of the 'toolbox' approach presented at the Town Halls. The e-Clay project team came away from the Town Halls feeling like the recommendations can indeed work for guilds, instructors, and students of clay.

Where from Here

Actual implementation was not the planned outcome of the e-Clay project. That is to come later. The e-Clay research is an important first step towards accepting the possibilities and building a robust environment for teaching and learning clay on-line.

Out of the project came a commitment to the Cross-Provincial Ceramics Network (CPCN), which has grown from the original six guilds to nine with more guilds expressing interest. Already there is talk about pooled videos, manuals, curriculum documents, instructor training, and learning technological skills.

CPCN member Anne Pedersen observed that 'we're going to apply for a grant to do a pilot project, and if that doesn't happen, we'll still have our network and we'll see where that takes us'. That positivity is perhaps the most robust outcome of the e-Clay project - a connection between communities is growing where there was none before - and that foretells other good outcomes in the future.

On-line communications and technology is a barrier for many, but for others the new medium has broken down barriers. There can be a 21st century social evolution for pottery guilds, building on the new connectivity and possibilities of the internet but have its heart in personal connections - as communities always have.

The conclusion of the research is that on-line, dynamic, interactive learning and teaching is possible but there's no 'one-size-fits-all' solution.

To find out more about the project's findings or to join the team that takes the work into the next phase, visit www.eclaylearning.ca or contact info@eclaylearning.ca

Peter Shepherd is a photographer, sculptor and occasional writer in Toronto, Ontario. He can be reached at watershed96@icloud.com

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Canada Council
for the Arts Conseil des arts
du Canada

Members from the participating guilds continue to meet to review next steps in creating pilot projects for online learning and teaching, researching and writing grants and connecting with possible project partners. If you are interested in participating, please connect with a representative from your guild or contact info@eclaylearning.ca



Entrance of Gladstone ClayWorks. Image: Elizabeth Davies.

Gladstone ClayWorks: The Story Continues

When a new member generously gave Gladstone ClayWorks his test kiln, we suggested that one day, if he set up his own studio, he might want it back. "Who needs their own studio when they have Gladstone ClayWorks?" he replied. Who indeed? On any normal day you might walk in and see half a dozen or more potters throwing at one of the ten wheels, working with slabs at the hand-building tables, using the spray booth or making glazes. Others might be mentoring new members, loading a kiln or congratulating one another on the results from the latest firing.

Gladstone ClayWorks, a cooperative of 25 potters, was founded in 2003 when a small number of local ceramic artists decided to

pool their resources and share working space. Those early days were described in an article by Penelope Kokkinos, in *FUSION Magazine* in 2005. The members moved into premises at 949b Gladstone Avenue, Ottawa, in the lower level of the old Standard Bread Company building, in Ottawa's Little Italy.

Gladstone ClayWorks has thrived since those early days. Over the years, the studio has maintained the number of members at the co-op's full complement. Many have stayed for the long haul, enjoying the conviviality and pooling of skills and knowledge. Some have moved to live in other places, and others have moved on, often to launch their own pottery companies.

But things have changed with the COVID

pandemic. Before, Gladstone ClayWorks actively participated in promoting the city's arts community by providing classes on throwing and slab building, by opening its doors to the public and actively demonstrating the skills of the trade through participation in events like Doors Open Ottawa and the Fall Annual Open House (in conjunction with the artists at EBA upstairs). COVID put a stop to all of that.

For a cumulative total of six months starting March 2020, Gladstone ClayWorks was closed due to mandatory lockdowns. The doors were locked, but the Board was busier than ever. Instead of meeting just twice a year, they met as needed, often as frequently as once a week, working out how to keep the studio alive while circumstances changed and knowledge about the virus evolved.

Would members keep paying their dues if they couldn't use the studio? How did an artists' co-op fit into the rules for non-essential services? How many potters would be allowed in at one time, and how would distancing be managed? The Board contacted the City of Ottawa by-law officer for help resolving these issues. Whenever there was doubt, the Board chose the safest option: the repercussions of misinterpreting the rules were too dire.

Even in those dark times, members were still free to schedule a quick visit to borrow wheels and materials so as to create their works at home. But motivation and inspiration was hard to come by without the usual venues for showing their work. Instead of exhibiting as they would normally do at their gallery on the studio premises, at the Shenkman Arts Centre, the Ottawa Art Gallery's shop or elsewhere, members participated in virtual exhibitions and sales, such as those organized by the Ottawa Guild of Potters.

As society began to open up again, the main concerns were physical distancing and sanitation. Gladstone ClayWorks turned to using an online scheduling system, Skedda. Instead of members being free to come and go as they pleased, they were required to book ahead to fire a kiln or to work during



Top: Glazing table and spray booth; kiln room behind glaze materials shelving unit.

Bottom: Work tables and members' shelves; wheels further to the left. Images: Elizabeth Davies.

one of the scheduled time slots available during the day. The system worked well. People adjusted, and each person worked separately in one of the four different areas of the studio for throwing, hand-building, glazing, and firing.

Keeping the premises safe from contagion was a more difficult problem to resolve. With droplets on surfaces viewed in the early days as being carriers of infection, the Board researched the safety of working with clay, especially reclaimed clay, but to little avail. That was a risk members would have to accept. But masks would be worn at all times; each person would use only their own towels and tools; and everyone was required to bring their own cleaning rags to sanitize all surfaces they worked on. Fortunately, the air purifiers purchased the previous year to keep down the dust would also help reduce the risk of viral transmission.

Today the situation is still not quite back to normal. As vaccination has become increasingly available and accepted, and the perception of danger to themselves and others has decreased, members' motivation and enthusiasm has returned. With lockdowns seemingly behind us, studio life is returning to what it was. We are back to in-person teaching, holding events and giving free rein to our bottled-up creativity.

There is, however, one more challenge awaiting the cooperative. The building still stands proud over the neighbourhood as it did almost a hundred years ago when it was built. But the pace of change has accelerated since Gladstone ClayWorks moved in eighteen years ago. The O-Train south extension's Corso Italia Station is currently under construction right at the cooperative's door. Fortunately, the EBA building has been declared cultural heritage and will be restored. However it will soon be dwarfed by towering neighbouring buildings.

The area has become prime real estate. What will this mean for Gladstone ClayWorks, Enriched Bread Artists and others who make up the artists hub currently located in the building? A 1924 plaque beside the front door of the old Standard Bread building reads *Audaces fortuna juvat* which translates as "fortune favours the brave". Whatever the future holds, it will be but one more challenge to be managed with courage.

Gladstone ClayWorks has thrived over the years and the Board has successfully run the studio during the pandemic. Members look forward to many more years at this thriving cooperative, mixing and mingling freely, holding in-person shows and once again participating fully in fostering the artistic life of the community.

Elizabeth Davies has been a member of Gladstone ClayWorks since 2016. She is Exhibitions Chair at the Ottawa Guild of Potters. She can be reached at www.elizabeth-davies.com and on Instagram [@eliz.m.davies_ceramics](https://www.instagram.com/eliz.m.davies_ceramics).

Gladstone Clayworks includes the following artists:

Caroline Agnew	Sarah Dobbin	Alexis Shotwell
Iris Arnon	Janet Hofstetter	Neil Tudiver
Amy Bell	Carol Holmes-Kerr	Marie Hennessey
Louise Boulet	Ayesh Kanani	Stefan McKenna
Laura Bourns	Carol Lim	Monica Rosenthal
Jane Bryttan	Sharyn Margach	Louise Smolska
Adrijana Corluka	Barbara Minish	Jennifer Whitehead
Elizabeth Davies	Isobel Salole	

MEMBER QUOTES

"Since March 2020, we have produced unprecedented policies and practices to keep the cooperative alive and ensure members' safety. The experience cemented our ties, kept us laughing and reinforced commitments to the collective and to each other. We are stronger, prepared for challenges that may come our way." - Neil Tudiver



"Never could I have imagined a communal, creative space, where I would feel so supported and happy to be working. We all have different strengths and constantly learn from each other in a congenial atmosphere. Gladstone is really a very special place." - Monica Rosenthal

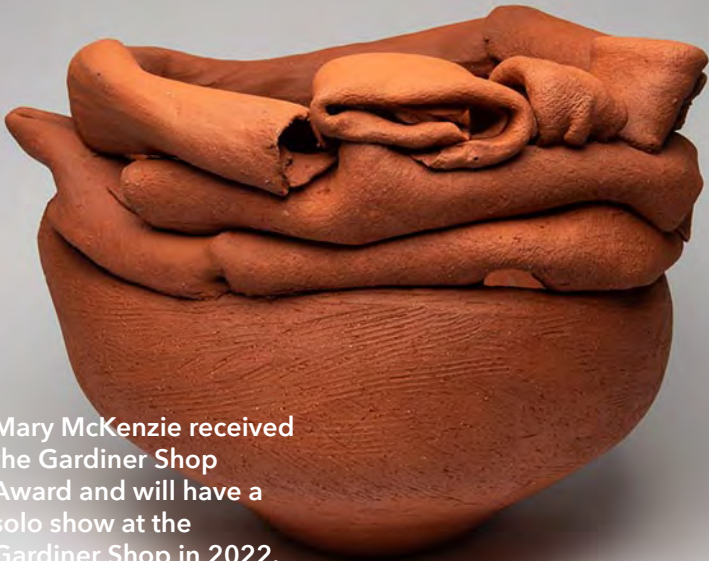


"Many heads are definitely better than one! At Gladstone we collaborate on ideas, we encourage and critique, share materials and workload, and become friends. I've been a member for eight years now, and am very grateful for this creative clay community." - Iris Arnon



Image of Neil Tudiver is by Anne Chambers. The image of Monica Rosenthal is by Elizabeth Davies and the image of Iris Arnon is by Neil Tudiver.

For more information, visit www.gladstoneclayworks.ca or email info@gladstoneclayworks.ca.



Mary McKenzie received the Gardiner Shop Award and will have a solo show at the Gardiner Shop in 2022.



Lindsay Gravelle received the Kris Magidsohn Award for her work, *Untitled*, H 22.86 cm x D 10.15 cm.



The Karen Latorre Award was presented to Celia Zveibil Brandão for her work in wood-fired porcelain.



Heidi McKenzie won the Best in Show Award for her work *Boxed In*, 15 cubes L 11 cm x W 11 cm x H 11 cm, stoneware and copper oxide.

Flux: Toronto Potters 21st Biennial Juried Exhibition

- | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|
| Tanya Atkinson | Barb Banfield |
| Jacque Blondin | Célia Zveibil Brandão |
| Carolynn Bloomer | Alison Brannen |
| Susan Card | Alix Davis |
| Gwen Friedman | Lindsay Gravelle |
| Valentina Guevara | Heidi McKenzie |
| Mary McKenzie | Monika Minnis |
| Judith Morsink | Wendy Lisa Nichol |
| Brenda Nieves | Andrea Poorter |
| Kim Ross | Natalie Waddell |
| Miguel Deras Zapata | |

"Flux" describes something that constantly changes. In ceramic terms, fluxes lower the melting point and make movement happen in clay and glass.

Toronto Potters 21st Biennial Juried Exhibition showcases the journeys of twenty-one ceramicists through twenty-four pieces, representing their explorations and experimentation through ceramic art.

Toronto Potters is an association of clay makers, enthusiasts and collectors. Over the past 41 years, the volunteer-run, non-profit organization has moved ceramics forward

through 20 biennial exhibitions. Many members of this diverse community of makers came to Canada from different parts of the world. Their varied cultural and personal experiences are reflected in the works presented in the exhibition.

After a postponement of 18 long months, *FLUX* finally opened this past August at the Gardiner Museum to a pandemic-limited audience of approximately 30 people. Unlike the normal attendance expected at Toronto Potters' Biennial openings, this was a private ticketed event due to the pandemic. The exhibition participants, a few guests, one of two jurors - Susan Low-Ber and representatives from Craft Ontario and FUSION attended. The 24 selected pieces were set up in the foyer of the museum and the shop and displayed until the end of October. The reception was held on the second-floor Terrace Room in the museum, complete with a bar and snacks.

The many people who brought the exhibition to fruition included jurors Susan Low-Ber and Denis Longchamps, photographer Dale Roddick, Derek Chung for catalogue editing and printing and the awards sponsors including Tucker's Pottery Supplies, PSH-Pottery Supply House, FUSION: The Ontario Clay and Glass Association, Craft Ontario and the Gardiner Museum, particularly Adeline La, the Gardiner Shop Manager. Without a Director of Exhibitions on the slate, Toronto Potters Executive members should also be acknowledged for their contributions including Emily Lim for the initial catalogue design, Linda Cherney for overseeing the jury process, Natalie Waddell and Gillian Newing for their promotion through the website and social media, and Aneela Dias D'Sousa for spearheading the process. The Toronto Potters members who applied, stayed the course over the pandemic and finally participated in the Biennial Exhibition were key to the process.

Nine awards were presented including the **Gardiner Museum Award** of a solo show slated for late 2022 to **Mary McKenzie**, selected by Gardiner Museum curators and

presented by Adeline La, Shop Manager for the Gardiner Museum.

Other notable and truly special awards reflect on the history and contribution of artists in the clay community. The **Kris Magidsohn Toronto Potters Student Award** was set up in honour of Kris Magidsohn, a long-time supporter of the ceramic community in Toronto. Kris was a member of the Potters Studio, a member of Toronto Potters, where she served as President 1998-2000, was a volunteer for the Gardiner Museum Shop, a member of both FUSION: The Ontario Clay and Glass Association and NCECA - The National Conference on Education for the Ceramic Arts.

Her private pottery collection consisted of works she collected locally, from the FUSION conferences and from the very popular NCECA Mug Sales - an international fundraising event where ordinary potters had access to the work of internationally famous potters.

With Kris' passing in 2015, her daughter donated Kris' extensive pottery collection to the Toronto Potters live auction. Proceeds were used to set up an award in her honour. Before the pandemic, this year's recipient was a student who has since found meaningful work with Inspirations Studio and as the technician in Toronto Potters Studio. The recipient of the Kris Magidsohn Award this year went to **Lindsay Gravelle** for her *Jar with Abstract Sculptural Lid*.

Similar to Kris Magidsohn, Karen Latorre was a dedicated young member of Toronto Potters, who as a daughter of an award-winning Toronto potter, Josephine Latorre, and as a graduate engineer, brought her organizational and computer skills to the executive and ran the Toronto Potters sales for several years, revamping the payment system subsequently adopted by other pottery organizations. After her untimely passing, Toronto Potters decided to set aside funds at each exhibition for an award in remembrance of Karen and her contribution to the Toronto Potters association. This year the recipient of the **Karen Latorre Award** went to Célia Zveibil Brandão for her *Set of 3 Cups*.



Flux entrance at the Gardiner Shop.

Other winners included:

Heidi McKenzie's *Boxed In* was awarded **Best in Show**.

Alix Davis received an **Award of Merit for Excellent Achievement**.

Materials Awards were received by **Barbara Banfield (Tucker's Award)** and **Miguel Deras Zapata (PSH Award)**.

The **Craft Ontario Award of a Professional Membership** was presented to **Gwen Friedman**.

The **FUSION Design Award** was presented to **Brenda Nieves** by Barbara Banfield.

To view the catalogue online, visit this [link](#).

To tour the exhibition, visit **FACES of FUSION**, [@FUSIONclayglass](#)

Susan Card opened DISH GALLERY + Studio (2006-Toronto Distillery District) to make and exhibit her ceramics, plus works by others. She has participated in, curated or acted as a juror for over 150 exhibitions and published articles about ceramics in local/international publications. She is a past Board member for TOAF, FUSION: The Ontario Clay and Glass Association, currently volunteers on the Collections Committee, Art Gallery of Burlington, and co-ordinates programmes for two pottery guilds.

From Susan Low-Ber, Juror

It was an honour to have been chosen as one of the jurors for the 2020 Toronto Potters Exhibition and a great pleasure to work with Denis Longchamps.

The two of us met on a cold sunny Saturday morning at the Pottery Studio on Shaw St. The room, although overflowing with pots and sculptures, was well organized, with each entry numbered and anonymous. We started the day by looking at the work alone and in silence, examining each entry carefully. We then started to discuss the pieces together. Once more we went over every work exchanging our ideas, looking and touching the pieces, deliberating, critiquing, deciding. Our responsibility was to choose with sensitivity, consideration and above all with objectivity. The challenge was to determine what should be accepted into the exhibition and who should be the prize-winners when there was such an assortment of styles and diversity of techniques, such expertise and skill and so much variety. The task went smoothly. We were pleased with our choices and felt that our final selection created a strong show and reflected the diversity of traditions and a range of modern approaches that represents the submissions. Congratulations to all the participants and thank you for this opportunity to jury your work.

- Susan Low-Ber, Juror of FLUX with Denis Longchamps

FUSION Travels



The original farmhouse

Catharina Goldnau recently visited La Meridiana, International School of Ceramics in Tuscany and met with the school's director, Claudia Bruhin. La Meridiana is located in a restored 17th century farmhouse and offers beginner to advanced clay classes, workshops and intensive programs and residencies.

Catharina: *How did La Meridiana come about?*

Claudia: The school was founded by Pietro Maddalena, an Italian who trained as an engineer and then moved to England in the 1970s. He happened to fall in love with pottery and decided to train as a potter and attended Farnham College in the UK. He returned to Italy in 1981 to make a living as a potter and to teach.

Catharina: *What is the history of the building?*

Claudia: The building was bought about 5 years after the school opened and is a typical Tuscan farmhouse. On the ground floor were the stables for the animals which are now our gallery, library and offices. There is a big room, which was a wine storage room, which is now perfect for our main studio with big windows and lots of space. On the ground floor there is also a second studio that we call Studio Due that is a little bit smaller. Upstairs is the living space where Pietro and his family live.

Catharina: *How many people work here?*

Claudia: Pietro started the school with his wife and he had some assistance. He hired a cook, a facilities manager and myself. Over time, he added more staff like a technician, a



Claudia Bruhin,
La Meridiana's Director.



Pietro Maddalena,
La Meridiana's Founder

To tour La Meridiana with Pietro Maddalena, the school's founder, please visit [this link](#).



meal served everyday and it's an important part of the day. It's very typical Italian and Mediterranean food with wine and a moment of community because we sit at the table and there is a lot of exchange - just as during the coffee breaks at 10:30 and 4:30. You can stay in the studio until 7 p.m. but we do close the studio at night so people can get some rest. In our experience, some people would stay up all night working. In the evening, sometimes we have slideshows, wine tastings or students can venture out to visit the small towns like our local Medieval town. We do have a van to take people out if they wish and we also take them shopping at the local cooperative. People do prepare their own breakfast and dinner at their lodgings where there are kitchens. You can bring bikes or rent bikes but it is a very hilly area so people rent e-bikes.

second chef and more people to help in the office. Most of our teachers and instructors come from abroad, to teach their specific technique during the one or two week long workshops. We have a lot of people coming to teach and they stay in the farmhouse. The students stay on the property and just a short walk away.

Catharina: *What types of programs are offered?*

Claudia: There are short, one-week courses which include five full working days. We also run two-week workshops with a variety of options like raku, porcelain and jewelry. We also have intensive programs dedicated to the skills related to pottery including throwing, firing and glazing and last one to three months. This intensive program is called On Centre and the

participants are limited to 8 so there is an opportunity for focussed attention. All courses are labeled for the skill level when you are looking online. Everyone can sign up online for the courses but you do need to apply for the intensive classes. We don't necessarily choose people who are particularly advanced, that is not the scope of the application, but because it is an intense program and they are spending their money on this experience we want to make sure it is suitable for them.

Catharina: *What is a typical day like?*

Claudia: The day starts at 9 a.m. but people can come into the studio earlier if they want to. We usually have demos and people work, until at 12:30 p.m. the bell rings for lunch. We have a 3-course, freshly prepared

Catharina: *What are the most recommended day trips?*

Claudia: For potters, I recommend the town of Impruneta which is close to Florence. In that town, the bricks for the Duomo in Florence were made, also huge jars for olive oil. The clay in the area is very good terra cotta clay. We do take people to a local potter who works in the traditional way. He makes these wonderful jars by hand and to see how those are coil built and wood



fired is something really special. We are also very close to San Gimignano with the famous towers and we are in easy reach by train to Florence which is less than an hour away. Siena is also very close by as is Volterra. Volterra is an interesting town as it was the centre of the Etruscans who lived in the area before the Romans conquered them. Their culture was very similar to Greek culture. Volterra was one of the main centres and has a wonderful museum for potters. Tony Clennel calls the museum in this town 'the handle museum' because their pots have very fancy handles.

Catharina: What is the international scope of your instructors and students?

Claudia: People join us from all over the world - wherever there are ceramic communities. Our location in

Tuscany is such a beautiful spot and the idea of beauty has always been present in the past, during the Renaissance and today. The landscape itself is very inspiring.

Our instructors have a very high level and strong technique so are able to offer a variety of classes. We also ask students if they have recommendations for teachers and we do a lot of research to learn more about our teachers. We also can offer opportunities in the Nature Studio for instructors to bring their own students. The Nature Studio can host 6-12 people and we can help arrange lodgings and such. We have 20 wheels on site and we offer classes in sculpture and handbuilding techniques too.

Catharina: What are your COVID-19 protocols?

Claudia: We follow Italian law

with Covid. We do ask for people to be vaccinated or have a negative test. We ask people to wear masks inside, we do check temperatures and we have social distancing at lunches and in the studios. Our protocols are online for you to read.

Catharina: What is the feedback you hear most often?

Claudia: Oh - so much feedback! They love the environment, the lunches, the atmosphere and the possibility to meet like-minded people from so many different backgrounds. New friendships are always created.

To read more about the location, history and programs offered at La Meridiana, please visit www.lameridiana.fi.it



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Lisa Creskey in the studio.
Image: Gregor Allan.

FEATURED ESTABLISHED ARTIST

LISA CRESKEY

www.lisacreskey.com

[@lisacreskey](https://www.instagram.com/lisacreskey)

I am a ceramic artist and painter who explores the visual storytelling potential of the clay medium through sculpture and installation. Investigating themes of nature, history and time, I create immersive worlds in which to look for connections and to pose questions on essential concerns for humanity and the environment.

I was born in Montreal and grew up on a farm in Ripon, Quebec. I studied studio art, painting, and art history at Concordia University, and was later introduced to ceramics through my mother's ceramic and wood-fired functional ceramics practice. Before arriving at ceramics, I was drawn to fresco and egg tempera painting, in which I liked the substantial materiality of the surface that's being painted on. I saw similarities to the materiality of a ceramic body so

when I started sculpting and painting with ceramics, it felt like a natural evolution.

I've been creating ceramic sculptural work for over ten years. I'm constantly exploring and trying new techniques and approaches that will allow me to respond to the subjects that compel me. My subjects always start from the natural world but I then try to be cognizant and engaged with the connective ties between my personal history, history, geography, and the natural world - those in-between places that I like to inhabit. I'm looking for truths outside of verbal language, through colour, line, form, that have their own intelligence.

Expanding my learning, I went to Taiwan on a 3-month residency in 2019. I had the opportunity to work and learn from local artists in a dynamic space, a space with on-going international residencies, so was able to explore all of the potential it offered. I created new work that responded to the local wildlife and I also presented artist talks and ran public art workshops at the ceramics museum.

Creating functional work is appealing to me as people live with the work in a personal way. Similarly, I have a drive to create public art in that it is accessible, to communicate in this larger sense due to its familiarity.

My latest public exhibition *Pression Atmosphérique* (Galerie Montcalm, Gatineau, QC, August - October, 2021) began with the idea of a Great Blue Heron colony in the area that I live and grew up in. Through observing the history of herons, environmental degradation can be made



Lisa Creskey, *Sunset Cruise*, 2021.
Porcelain. Image by the artist.

personal. I create highly detailed diorama pieces that introduce the viewer to the space, and I then construct an environment using large-scale sculptures and immersive installation pieces. I received the *Prix du CALQ 2017 - Work of the Year in the Outaouais* for my 2016 solo public exhibition *Match*, which also involved large-scale immersive work. In another recent exhibition, *Sunset Cruise* (L.A. Pai Gallery, Ottawa Sept-Oct 2021), I like to work with the materials to express the innate fragility of the clay which can resonate with people.



Gallery view of *Match* at Galerie Art-Image in Gatineau, Quebec, 2021. Porcelain and wood. Image: Marc Leveille.



Lisa Creskey, *Conjoint*, 2021. Porcelain. Image by the artist.



Lisa Creskey, *Nous tous toujours*, 2021. Porcelain. 55 x 85 x 60 cm. Image by the artist.



Lisa Creskey at *Pression Atmosphérique* at Galerie Montcalm, 2021. Image: Lisa Pai.



Siobhán Lynch in her studio.
Image: Branko Gregov.

FEATURED ESTABLISHED ARTIST

SIOBHÁN LYNCH

www.siobhanlynchglass.com
[@siobhanlynchglass](https://www.instagram.com/siobhanlynchglass)

I am a Toronto-born stained glass artist working and living in Hamilton, Ontario for the past 23 years. My formal education was unrelated to creating glass, but I feel that any education whether related, formal, casual, or experiential, brings you closer to where you need to be creatively.

My education in glass began through attending workshops and classes with different friends and met a couple of amazing mentors who then coached me along the way. Funnily enough, I had to be persuaded into taking that first stained glass course. Although I had previously experimented



Observer in Amber

with other mediums – painting, textiles, clay – it wasn't until I worked in stained glass that I found "my own" medium. As I began to create my own designs, I became completely enamoured with glass. Glass has so many options and variations just in colour and texture alone that can be hypnotizing. I can get lost looking through my glass collection.

When first making panels, my focus was on traditional Irish knot-work patterns. Most of my original designs still integrate knot-work and/or flowing interweaving lines that to me, represent continuity, balance, and interaction. The sense of movement is what I most like to capture in my glass.

I am also part of a glass artist collective, the Artistic Group of Glass (AGOG). We collaborate on large projects, meeting

monthly to inspire, support and challenge each other artistically. We strive to push beyond the limitations of the "craft" stereotype. Through the exchange of ideas and knowledge we attempt to evolve both cooperatively and individually.

During the lockdowns over the past year, I have enjoyed the focus that I could bring to new pieces, commissions and projects that were larger and more intricate. In addition to commission work, restoration and teaching, I would like to carve out more time to travel and explore a variety of stained glass techniques and styles that inspire me to create in new and imaginative ways.



The Knotty Willow



Spiral



Knotty Vista

*This new Q & A feature in FUSION Magazine explores the working studios and spaces of makers. Yael Novak, an artist living in Haliburton, Ontario was featured on **FACES of FUSION** this past summer. If you are interested in sharing your studio or working space in an upcoming issue or on **FACES of FUSION**, please reach out.*

FEATURED STUDIO: YAEL NOVAK

FUSION: Please tell us about yourself, your work and how you discovered clay.

Yael: As a student at Hebrew University of Jerusalem in the early 1970's, I became involved in art education in the Youth Wing of the Israel Museum. Later, at the Rockefeller Museum in East Jerusalem, I taught highly gifted children with special needs. The space we were given for our classes was originally a warehouse for Nabatean pottery and I incorporated the museum's artifacts into the curriculum. In this environment of exquisite ancient pots is where my fascination with ceramics began. My career path slowly changed and a lifelong commitment to clay ensued.

FUSION: How long have you been a part of FUSION and how has the organization helped you as a maker?

Yael: I have been a part of FUSION for nearly thirty years. FUSION's activities are all about community building. I joined FUSION to be part of this community; a community of like-minded artists who together form an enriching platform for sharing, support and exchange of ideas. Over the years being part of a professional community contributed to my personal growth as an artist.

FUSION: Where is your studio located and how has it evolved?

Yael: My studio "Pottery Lane Studio and Gallery" is located on the edge of Soyers Lake in the beautiful Haliburton Highlands surrounded by water, woods and the sound of birds.



My first studio experience in Haliburton was in a rented cabin in the woods. There was no running water so I collected rain water in a barrel to work with. After two successful years in the cabin and very positive feedback from friends and colleagues, I decided to build a proper studio in a more accessible area to accommodate visitors. The studio was built from an upgraded two car garage kit. The front of the space is designated for display and the back is where I work and fire.

FUSION: How long have you worked in your studio?

Yael: I have been working at this studio seasonally - May to November - for the past 14 years.

FUSION: Tell us about your practice and your workflow.

Yael: Here in Haliburton, I generally maintain a functional ware studio practice. Initially trained as a potter, the wheel is my tool of choice. Forms thrown on the wheel are my point of departure for a creative, practical and often whimsical range of contemporary tableware and one-off pieces designed for domestic use and enjoyment in the rituals of everyday life as well as vessel based sculptural objects. I am mainly concerned with simplicity of form and decoration; repeated decorative designs enhance a simple yet elegant repertoire of forms.

Ceramic objects fascinate me. I regard them as containers of ideas and three dimensional bases for the exploration of personal and philosophical issues concerning the creative process.

My quest is a constant search for harmonious connections both rational and intuitive which will bring my aesthetic values and goals to the fore: perfection, control and clarity of form and concept.

FUSION: What works for you in your space and what would you improve?

Yael: I designed my space specifically for me and the way I work. All my years of experience went into the design of the studio and consequently, there is nothing I would improve at this point in time.

FUSION: How does your workspace inspire you or influence your productivity?

Yael: I am fortunate to be living on an island and since my studio is on the mainland I travel to work by boat and arrive calm and inspired to start my day. Working in a serene and beautiful setting allows for a peaceful creative state of mind.

FUSION: What are your 'must haves' in your studio?

Yael: My 'must haves' are:

Good music

Good natural lighting

An Inspiration Board where I collect ideas, photos, drawings and motivational quotes

Designated areas for the assorted functions in the studio - clay preparation, wheel work, glazing, decorating, firing, storage and display

A clean space throughout my work day. It is imperative for me to come into an organized and clean studio, a cluttered space affects my ability to think clearly. This is what works for me.



Yael Novak in her studio.

FUSION: What advice do you have for people establishing their own studios?

Yael: Every artist is different and has their own personal way of being creative. What works for me may not work for somebody else. I can't, in all honesty, comment on what might work for someone else.

If I were to give one piece of advice it would be to keep in mind that it is all trial and error and don't be afraid to make mistakes. It could be your most creative idea ever.

Learn more about Yael and her work at www.yaelnovak.com and discover the studios and work of other FUSION members @FUSIONclayglass.



Volunteer of the Year Award 2020: Chris Snedden

Barbara Banfield

I first met Chris in 2012 when he joined the FUSION Board of Directors. He was keen to jump in organizing pre-conference workshops and assisting wherever needed. In 2015, Chris became Vice President and would go on to become President, fulfilling a lengthy term.

Chris oversaw FUSION's conferences and workshops but one of his greatest claims to fame must be the year he brought the five Korean masters to Toronto. He delivered the largest FUSION conference at the University of Toronto. Following his term as President, he started the "Meet the Makers" program where he would go on location to record and deliver live demo presentations to FUSION members and the clay community. This was all pre-Zoom days using webinar techniques that weren't quite as refined as they are today.

Chris' passion for the clay community can be seen in his involvement throughout all of Ontario sharing his knowledge and skills with guilds. He continues to teach at Lambton College in London where he has been since 2012.

In 2020, Chris stepped off the board of FUSION for a well-deserved break. In pursuit of his own growth and development, he applied and was accepted into the Lesley McNally Creative Directions program. When COVID-19 put us into lockdown and our only course of action to deliver programming using Zoom, I quickly called Chris to the task. He was adept in assisting me and FUSION in keeping the program on track. He didn't hesitate for a moment at the request. It was this recent gesture of continued support to FUSION that I nominated him as Volunteer of the Year 2020.

Congratulations to Chris and thank you for all you have done - and continue to do for your community. Chris received a piece by Donn Zver, the founding President of The Ontario Potters Association, which later became FUSION: The Ontario Clay and Glass Association.

FACES of FUSION

With an estimated one billion users around the world, Instagram is one of the fastest growing social media platforms that allows users to share their work and stories for free. In the recent e-mail survey to the FUSION membership, nearly half of all members who responded have Instagram accounts. We invite you to follow FUSION at [@FUSIONclayglass](https://www.instagram.com/fusionclayglass) to stay up to date on events and stories.

FACES of FUSION was launched this past April as a way to connect when the province was locked down and seeing friends, working in guilds and studios and being together in person wasn't possible. Since the launch of FACES of FUSION, many members have participated, toured us through their studios and talked about their work in clay and glass. Over 200 people log on to watch the FACES of FUSION talks and we thank you all for your engagement.

If you are not yet on Instagram, getting set up is easy. There are countless videos on YouTube to show you how to set up and manage an account, how to post, how to follow people and even how to market and sell your work.

FACES of FUSION airs live at noon on Wednesdays. Visit www.clayandglass.on.ca for more information.



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Tips and Tricks

- Step 1: Start with an old towel.
- Step 2: Cut about 10 cm from the edge along the long side.
- Step 3: Rip the fabric about 30-40 cm.
- Step 4: Cut the other side of the towel the same way.
- Step 5: Rip the other side of the towel.
- Step 6: Try it on and adjust if necessary.
- Step 7: Finished!

Do you have a tip or trick to share?
If so, please send it fusion.editor@clayandglass.on.ca.
We are interested in glaze recipes too.

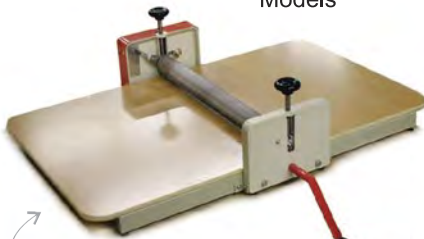




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