

January 2010

www.novascotiapottersguild.com



The Dish

CO - PRESIDENTS' MESSAGES:

Sharon and Louise

Greeting everyone! We've had a year where many of our members have experienced personal and professional growth.....and that's what we're all about. As Sharon will be mentioning a number of our members have worked very hard to enable the "*Shaping Space*" Exhibition and the Randy Brodnax workshop to be successful. Our heartfelt thanks to you. We've all benefited from your labours.

We'll be having our annual general meeting with all guild members and guests are welcome along with finger food, drinks on Sunday, February 14, 2010 from 2:00 pm to 4:00 pm at Sharon Fiske's home at 7031 Fielding Ave. in Halifax. You may call Sharon or email her for directions. Her information is at the back of the newsletter. Here is a list of some of things we'll be discussing. If you have other ideas please forward them to me before the meeting to be added on the list.

- Privacy issues on NSPG web site.
- NSPG advertising in the provincial Guide publication and Halifax Art Map.
- Secretarial position.
- Guild submission for a future exhibition at the -
- Canadian Clay and Glass Gallery in Waterloo, Ont.
- Wood Kilns: Cape Breton invitation from Jane Herold
- NSDCC/NSCADU building of a wood kiln.
- Visiting artists/ workshops.

We look forward to seeing you there and getting to know you a bit better.

Till then, on behalf of Sharon and myself and all the Guild executive, we would like to wish you and your families a wonderful new year. Be healthy, peaceful and prosperous and may your next creations in clay be AMAZING!!!
Happy New Year!

-Louise Pentz

Greetings to all, past, present and new members- we are now 75 members in the Guild. This is an increase that reflects the interest in our workshop and exhibition. The show, *Shaping Space: A celebration of Lantz Clay* at the Mary E. Black Gallery in September and October, brought recognition to many who submitted work to a curated show for the first time, as well as to those who already have had more exposure. The workshop by Randy Brodnax was a tremendous motivational success. Between Randy's sayings and his Texas ways he put on quite a show, enlightening us as to methods of throwing, decorating and firing never seen in these parts before!

Louise and I have to individually credit Judy Gordon and Carol Smeraldo for making these two events come to fruition. Judy worked endlessly on both the projects which even overlapped at one point. Our "Saint Jude" compiled the information for the catalogue and provided transportation for Randy and his friend Glen. Judy and husband, Dwaine, also fed and housed these two motley characters, making their home hospitality central. What fun we had! Thanks also to Carol and Art for making their home available to us, property, studio and Carol's pristine "Randy Brodnax Kiln" for all of us to use. Special thanks to these two outstanding members, and as well,

thanks to everyone who helped out by bringing food, moving wheels, cleaning up etc.

Our other major event was “*Shaping Space*” the Lantz clay show. Ray Mackie worked tirelessly -- using insight and a wealth of knowledge to make the overall theme of the show come together -- Historical to Contemporary. Our Editor, Susan MacAlpine-Foshay and our Graphic Designer, Nancy Roberts, both went above and beyond the expected. As Louise said, “The catalogue professionally documents the members’ work and will be used in the future to promote the NSPG to galleries and other ceramic events outside of the province.” Since the show, Louise has introduced us to the Canadian Clay and Glass Gallery in Waterloo, Ontario.

The Guild is in good shape financially. We worked hard to obtain additional funding for the Lantz Clay Exhibit from The Shaw Group, NS Centre for Craft and Design, Atlantic Pottery Supply, and a discount from Halcraft Printers, as well as our grant of \$1,500 from the NS Department of Tourism, Culture and Heritage. Workshop fees covered most of the expenses for the Randy Brodnax workshop, and Carol and APS contributed their fabulous work spaces and materials at special rates. It was with great satisfaction that after two years of cooperative efforts these events were so well received by our members and by the public.

And now for a call to action: We need a meeting of wood firers to outline a strategy for reconstructing the NSCAD wood kiln. Email clayworks@eastlink.ca if you are interested in getting involved and we will propose a date to get together. Let’s make this happen!

MJ is our notice/news letter person, so blow your own horn--send us notices of your events and reviews of your accomplishments. Don’t be shy, we want to know.

The Potters’ Guild will continue to schedule artist workshops and develop exhibition proposals if you tell us what you want. Voice your opinions and we will respond.
Happy New Year!

- Sharon Fiske



Self Expression

With the new year now upon us many of us give ourselves new goals and resolutions to start with...then fine a month or so later we’ve fallen back into our old habits. I think sometimes we expect things to happen more quickly than what we give time for. Every change and challenge we put to ourselves takes time and patience. Like in our creativity when we’re creating a new design out of clay, we never achieve it on our first try. We have to go back again and again until it looks and feels and carries our true expression of who we are. Imagine yourself like a pot that can be shaped and molded on the wheel. The wheel is life. It can go fast or it can go slow. You have the knowledge to create and shape your life like that pot. All you need is patience and always remember

“Slow and Steady wins the race”.

Happy New Year!

Communication Director and Editor.

-Mary Jane Lundy



Joan Bruneau Teaching Adventures and more:

I was invited to teach and demonstrate advanced wheel-throwing and altering techniques through the Distance Diploma Program at the Glasgow School of Art in Scotland last spring and also at the Distance Diploma programs at Red Deer College in Alberta and the Australia National University in Canberra in 2007. Bill Brown, a master mold maker, is the department head of ceramics at Glasgow School of Art and while the department has a throwing room, slip casting appears to be the main focus for students. Unfortunately, the ceramics program at the Glasgow School of Art is slated to close within the next two years. The ceramics programs in Dundee and Edinburgh have since closed as well.

After teaching in Glasgow, I spent a week in Istanbul visiting the many mosques clad with stunning Iznik tiles as well as other famous sites like the Hagia Sophia and Mosaic and Islamic Museums and Turkish baths. I highly recommend visiting this city for its many historic sites, and rich cross cultural influences from Roman to Byzantine to the Ottoman Empire.

In July I taught a summer workshop at Peters Valley Craft Center in New Jersey. Peters Valley is one of several Craft Centers in the US that like Haystack, offer workshops in all craft disciplines.

What I loved about being there besides the physical beauty of the area (rural, lush parkland in the Delaware Water Gap) was meeting artists working in other disciplines and visiting the other studios. For instance there was an amazing young metal-smith/sculptor, Evelyn Beer teaching Blacksmithing and a 7th generation Navaho Weaver teaching a fibre workshop.

Fusion, the Ceramics and Glass association of Ontario hosts an annual conference in Ontario. I will be presenting a demonstration and lecture along with potter, Sam Chung at this year's conference in Ottawa from May 28-30. The Fusion website as well as Fusion magazine will have information on the Conference.

www.clayandglass.on.ca

- Joan Bruneau



Congratulations Joan!

Lunenburg Ceramic Artist, Joan Bruneau, was awarded the 2009 Established Artist Recognition Award (\$5000) from the Nova Scotia Arts and Culture Alliance on Saturday, October 24 at the Creative Nova Scotia Gala in Yarmouth.

Over the past fifteen years Joan has developed both a national and international profile as an inspiring teacher and innovative studio potter while maintaining her full-time studio, Nova Terra Cotta in Lunenburg and regular part-time ceramics faculty position at NSCAD University.

Joan has maintained a regular exhibition record in public and private galleries across Canada and the U.S. Her work has been featured in ceramics books and periodicals and is in the permanent collection of The Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, Sykes Gallery in Pennsylvania and Jingdezhen Ceramics Institute in China.

Congratulations Louise!



Louise Pentz has an exhibition at:
Canadian Clay and Glass Gallery,
Waterloo, Ontario
January 17th-March 21st, 2010.



Kiln Building in Cape Breton

When something is a bit overwhelming for me I have, for years, dealt with it by closing my eyes and leaping, trusting I'll land more or less where I hoped to be. In this way, back at the end of 2004, I bought my husband a plane ticket to Halifax and said, "Go to Cape Breton, and buy us a house!" I had never been to Cape Breton, or even Nova Scotia, but I'd looked at a map and figured out that if you're going to be on the east coast of this continent, Nova Scotia is probably the right place to be. And if you're going to be in Nova Scotia, it would probably be nice to be near Mabou. Robert spent three days in a whirlwind of house hunting and came home the proud owner of our soon-to-be-home, in Glenville, just up Route 19 past Mabou on CB's west coast. We've spent each summer since working on the house and pottery, and finally, this summer, completed a bourry-box wood kiln. I've been potting full time for about 30 years, firing a round down draft kiln, outside of NYC, and I took all those years of experience and designed what I refer to as "my comfort kiln" for the pottery in CB. This kiln has one large firebox, which can be stoked from a chair, if you have a wheelbarrow of wood at your side. There's an open grate for preheating, no groveling about on your knees or bricking up a 700 degree C firebox door. You enter the chamber at grade, no stepping up or crawling on your belly while loading, and the doorway is ½ an inch taller than I am. There's even a nice little spot for a teakettle on top of the collection flue, to keep the stokers well watered, and a little "blow hole" in the flue, so you can check the flame without having to

step outside the shed. There are a few adjustments we'll still have to make to fit the kiln to the realities of CB. We built a shed with a roof, thinking that would keep us dry, and didn't realize we should have built a wall, and worked in the lee of it. Who knew the rain came horizontally?

I've always wanted to work with relatively unprocessed materials. In NY I dig clay along the Hudson River to make a glaze, and wash and sieve ashes for all my glazes. In CB I finally have the space to use locally dug clay, not just for glaze making, but for the pots themselves. I had 15 tons of local clay dumped in the yard this August, that when mixed with some Musquodabois kaolin, some ball clay and some sand, makes a very nice stoneware throwing body. For the first time in all my years of potting my pots will truly be OF the place in which I make them. Clay from the local ground, glazes utilizing the barley hull ash from the Distillery next door, fired with edgings from the sawmill right up the road. There's something deeply satisfying to me in working with unprocessed local materials, seeing the pots through from being mud in the ground to serving dishes on somebody's table. These will be pots that could not have been made anywhere else.

Building a kiln in Cape Breton offered many challenges I hadn't anticipated. In NY you make a phone call, or two or three, and your bricks arrive. In CB I made about 40 phone calls, and then guess what? The bricks didn't quite get here before August came to an end! Eventually I hired a friend to drive some used bricks up for me on his truck, but after scrubbing bricks clean through most of one summer I had the balance delivered, brand new, last summer. I laid brick all summer, casting the arch keystones with Robert's help, and our hope is to fire in the summer of 2010, perhaps with a group of open-minded souls who would enjoy being in on the first firing, which is when you learn the most, even if the results are not safely predictable.

My goal at the pottery in CB is to use local materials to make beautiful, useful pots that are affordable enough for people, including local

people, to be able to enjoy using them every day. There will be some hum-dinger pieces that make a grand statement on someone's coffee table, and wedding platters and baby plates, but I hope most of my pots will end up on kitchen shelves, and an integral part of someone's daily routine. Nothing makes me happier than hearing from someone who drinks their tea, or eats their cereal, every day, from one of my mugs or bowls.

If you're in the area, please stop by this coming summer 2010 and say hello, and if you'd like to be part of the first firing, in August, send me your name and I'll let you know what we get organized. You can see my work and writings at my website: www.janeherold.com

- Jane Herold

Randy's Bonanza Workshop



Photos by Suzi Cameron

For a great end-of-summer get together, about 20 members of the Nova Scotia Potters Guild gathered for the *Throwing/Firing Bonanza* with Randy Brodnax www.iflyfish.com from Dallas, Texas. This enthusiastic big white-haired guy with Louisiana roots is a life-long potter and educator with a gift. He entertained and involved every one of us in this valuable learning experience. An uncertain weather forecast prompted a change to the schedule, so on Friday and Saturday we glazed, decorated and fired at Carol Smeraldo's lakeside studio in East Preston. Then on Sunday, we descended on the studio at Atlantic Pottery

Supplies for a daylong elbow-to-elbow throwing session.

On the first day, bright and early, we arrived with bisqued pots, tongs, glazes, stains, brushes etc. for one of the most hands on workshops I've ever had the opportunity to attend. Like Judy said, "Randy is like Santa—" on this occasion in a ball cap. He inspired the spirit of exploration, and had a gift for seeing what each of us could use to help us move forward. His good humour, enthusiasm and laidback spirit were infectious. Randy's generosity was equalled by that of Carol and Art who welcomed us to their beautiful property and into their home and studio.

We were all inspired and excited by the new information we received and by the variety of surface effects achieved. For the raku firings, White Crackle or Lo Temp commercial glazes were applied, the kiln stacked, heated until the glazes flowed (visible through the spy hole, about 1750 degrees Fahrenheit), and then the real magic began. Hot pots were lifted from Carol's front-loading kiln, sprayed with a dilute solution of Ferric Chloride (1/2oz +7oz water in a Preval sprayer), producing rich and immediately visible lustrous surfaces. Then, with a wrap in two sheets of news print paper and a damp towel the pots were allowed to reduce in their individual smoking chambers. I so love my golden pots!

A completely different process was the tumble stack sagger firing. Pots were decorated with Ferric Chloride at full strength for pink to red colours, and horsehair, baking soda and rock salt were used for pattern and resist. Each piece was wrapped securely in two layers of tin foil to create individual saggars. All of the ware was piled in and the kiln heated quickly. Temperature was reached when the foil looked like tissue (about 1100 degrees F) and the kiln cooled overnight. Then the pots were cleaned and sprayed with Polyurethane Gloss to seal the inside.

Saturday was more raku and a demo of the Copper Matt Reduction process. The firing portion of this workshop ended with a cone 6-oxidation firing—Lichen Glaze over Alberta Slip Glaze and a light spray of warm coloured stains—that produced great colours and pretty amazing crawly glaze surfaces. While the kiln heated the cooks got busy. After the firing we feasted on a Cajun Cook-up of Chicken Gumbo and Dirty Rice. As well, we were treated to an impromptu drawing

demonstration with canvas provided by a rather giddy France!

On Sunday, we shoe horned all of our wheels into the APS studio for an equally exciting throwing session. We watched, and then tried our hands at throwing tall cylinders with a rib in each hand, and shaping the volume from the inside. Helped by a heat gun, it was possible to really stretch the limits of the clay. Randy also showed us how to create wide bowls, a variety of handles and spouts and amazing surface textures—finishing up with one of his signature pieces—a large turtle sculpture. All in all we had a wonderful weekend. Many thanks to those who helped make this invaluable experience happen—Judy, Carol and Art, APS, the Guild, and especially Randy for sharing his information and technical skills—and spreading the spirit of generosity.

And now on a technical note: since the workshop I've been testing the Lichen Glaze with some success and I'm having fun with the sodium silicate process too. I've tried out two heat guns from Canadian Tire. The inexpensive 10A Jobmate works best for me as I use a Brent wheel that has a rheostat in the foot pedal. The only handy electrical outlet is on the same breaker as my wheel and the better 12.5A digital model causes my wheel speed to vary when the gun is heating up. I was able to get my money back on the one I didn't want (with all packaging and receipt). Has anyone else had this problem? And does anyone have a good photo of me from the workshop?

- Suzi Cameron

Madly off in new directions..... Reflections on the workshop with Jordan McDonald

I love getting all the e-mails from the Potters' Guild. I can't make a lot of events and I don't have much of a presence, but every once in awhile something comes by that I just can't resist. The first was the Steven Hill workshop a few years ago and the next was the spring workshop with Jordan McDonald.

The workshop was focusing on altering shapes, large shapes, cutting, folding, and building..... all things I had read about, but never really taken the time to experiment.

I should also add that my primary background is theatre. And although some unknown force compels us onto stage and to do sometimes outlandish things, we tend to be the most insecure and unsure group of people I have ever encountered. So, as an untrained potter who six years ago, just bought a wheel, rented a video and basically went to it, it is always overwhelming for me to throw myself into a situation where I am just not sure I will measure up. But, I want to learn more!! And this sounded so exciting! Besides, they were going to reduction fire everything so I would have some pieces (I hoped) that might look like some of my favourite pieces – because I am drawn to the look of reduction fired work. So I signed up.

There were a few impediments to my comfort at first. One, I had never thrown without a batt and could not for the life of me figure out the clay pad to make a batt stick. So, the next week I brought batt pins and other things to let me work more at my comfort level and not feel like an inept idiot!! Then I could relax and throw.

I found it very empowering working with peers. To not be insulated in my own world or in a vacuum. To have the peer evaluation; to watch incredible potters work; to be immersed in the process of creativity and imagination as a group was nurturing to my soul.

Jordan McDonald was fabulous. He was younger than any of us and patient as the day is long. He had us looking at different forms and shapes and looking at things that were not pottery with the eye of potter examples such as plumbing, architecture, historical collections.

The thing that most grabbed me was an image of an ancient Minoan ewer. So, I started using the various techniques of folding, cutting, building in layers to construct water ewers. Mostly they looked

birdlike, but I had no issue with that. In fact, I was rather amused by it.

As I was making these ewers, and cutting and folding, attaching handles, the body would often make a beautiful sound. So, as much as I am really focused on water ewers, now I am thinking about drums.....and starting to wonder about adult A.D.D.

So, I Googled clay drums. I couldn't resist. I just couldn't help myself. Jordan McDonald didn't have any advice for me about drums except he was sure you could make them. After several searches and clicks and links I discovered a potter named Frank Giorgini and the Udu drum. My heart stopped beating and I fell in love. They give off a watery and ancient sound. I have discovered that I should not high fire them, and thus need to develop ways I like to decorate the bisque. I hate painting and I am still tied to my electric kiln at this stage of my life. I have been throwing my drums as two thrown bowls put together with a neck and then a hole – very much like the way Jordan McDonald had taught us to make some teapots. It is all related and weaving itself together. I want to go back to the water ewers and the Minoan shapes and some of the early slip work too. But right now, I am fairly obsessed with the drums. Wood firing is something I would like to see as the surface decoration, so I will bring some to the next wood firing event.

Of course, it is also December 1st and I can't really focus on anything except what might be the thing everyone wants this year of which I have not made enough.....

So writing articles for the Potters' Guild is exactly the kind of distraction I needed Sharon to throw at me!!!

I am looking forward to January, when I have more time for just me to play and explore and take the techniques I learned from Jordan McDonald to continue exploring the forms of the pitchers as well as improving my drums.

-Danielle Sawada

Inclaynations Pottery launched a new Canadian Clay forum

site: <http://forum.inclaynations.com/index.php>

I invite you to sign up and participate if you like, or pass on the information to other people you know. Voice your opinion, make announcements, ask questions or simply connect with people with similar interests...

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Great Tip!

This is a great promotion idea while working your booth at a craft shows when people ask for your business card also give them a CD made up of some of your best work.

CDs are not expensive to buy these days,
Thanks Bob Campbell for sharing.

Pottery Tips:

- Fire on low over night to thoroughly dry pots to stop pots from cracking, exploding, etc.
- If a lid sticks after firing, put piece in the freezer. The lid will shrink quicker than the pot.
- Add Kyanite to almost any clay body to produce a clay much better for Raku.

Turn, turn, my wheel! Turn round
and round

Without a pause, without a
sound:

So spins the flying world
away!

This clay, well mixed with
marl and sand,

Follows the motion of my
hand;

For some must follow, and
some command,

Though all are made of
clay!

- Henry Wadsworth

Longfellow, *Keramos* (l. 1)

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Happy Potting !