

Seduced by Clay

MARCH 10 – MAY 13, 2007



BURLINGTON ART CENTRE

CURATED BY
GAIL CRAWFORD AND
JONATHAN SMITH

Kinichi Shigeno, *Teapot*, 1990

1333 Lakeshore Road, Burlington, Ontario
www.BurlingtonArtCentre.on.ca



Victor Cicansky Garden Talk, 1987



Ann Roberts, Dreams of Voyages, 1990



Alexandra McCurdy,
Small Bowl with Ladders and Bridges, 1996

Seduced by Clay

INTRODUCTION

We are pleased to present *Seduced By Clay*, a selection of ceramic works from the permanent collection of the Burlington Art Centre. The works were selected by the co-curators, Gail Crawford and Jonathan Smith, as a mini survey of the vigorous and enticing contemporary Canadian ceramics scene.

The Burlington Art Centre plays an important national and international role with our permanent collection focused on contemporary Canadian ceramic art. It is the largest such collection in Canada and has been internationally recognized at the Itabashi Art Museum in Tokyo, Japan and at public art galleries across Canada. A selection of the collection, *Fire + Earth*, is now available as a virtual exhibition through Virtual Museums Canada.

Our exhibitions and publications provide formative research helping to define a position for ceramic art in contemporary art practice and

within the context of material culture. For some time, our collection programs have positioned Canadian ceramic work in historic and international contexts. Our collection policy focuses on acquiring ceramics by Canadian artists whose work ranges from the functional to the decorative to the sculptural.

The Burlington Art Centre has thrived as a vital focal point for the visual arts since 1978. It is the seventh largest public art gallery in Ontario and attracts over 100,000 visitors from Burlington, the Bay Area, Toronto, and across Ontario and the U.S.A.

The exhibition and education programs, studios, and activities are essential to our community and region. The Centre is a non-profit registered charitable organization which provides free admission, seven days a week with full accessibility for the physically challenged.

George Wale, Director of Programs



Jeannie Mah, *Teapot*, 1994



Kayo O'Young, *Raku Vase*, 1984



Laurie Rolland, *Circinate*, 2002

The Canadian clay scene is characterized by its rich variety of forms, be they functional, decorative, or sculptural; by eclectic aesthetic sources; and by distinctive cultural expressions. Although subtle regional differences exist within this matrix, casual viewers might be hard-pressed to identify who has made what, where, and in what decade.

What they will perceive, however, is a wealth of interpretations in clay. Because clay is such an expressive medium, it has the capacity to mirror current tastes and perhaps redefine them for viewers. Through contemporary ceramics we can experience biting wit, political commentary, the exquisite, the playful, the innovative, and the avant-garde.

For this touring exhibition, *Seduced By Clay*, the Burlington Art Centre has taken the unusual step of marrying highlights from Canada's largest contemporary clay collection with the first published history of Canadian studio ceramics. The book concerns itself with objects and object makers and has much in common with a public collection of objects. Both celebrate technical and interpretative skills of a high order, artistic eloquence, historical precedents, and far from least: eye appeal. Artists and collectors will tell you that clay is a seductive medium, and in the hands of the artists we have chosen to highlight, viewers will be rewarded by rich glazes, subtle firings, and unusual forms.

As curators, Jonathan E. Smith and I had the initial task of bringing together a range of work from each region and to balance sizes, colours, scale, and function. It was, of course, difficult to confine ourselves to a mere two or three dozen makers. My book, *Studio Ceramics in Canada*, has more than two hundred illustrations of work and the Burlington Art Centre's holdings number close to two thousand. Thus, without any trouble whatsoever, we could have pulled together another three or four exhibitions, based on the common ground shared by the book and the collection – a testament to the depth of our contemporary scene.

As curators, we also wished to showcase work by our distinguished award winners. The first group has laureats of the Governor General's award for fine craft: John Chalke of Alberta and Robert Archambeau of Manitoba; the second group includes some of the recipients of the annual Bronfman Award for excellence in the crafts: Robin Hopper (British Columbia), Steven Heinemann and Harlan House (Ontario), Léopold Foulem (Quebec), Walter Ostrom (Nova Scotia), and Peter Powning (New Brunswick).

We also wanted to present to viewers a taste of experimental work such as Laurie Rolland's *Circinate* (British Columbia) and Enid Le Gros-Wise's *Wave Form* (Quebec); as well as sculptural work by Joe Fafard Cow (Saskatchewan); Jim Hong Louie *Dodo Bird* (Ontario); Ann Roberts *Dreams of Voyages* (Ontario); and Reid Weir *Whispers* (Newfoundland). And who could resist the teapot confection of Kinichi Shigeno (British Columbia)?

Thus, we had many considerations before us during the selection process. What *Seduced By Clay* represents is a window through which to glimpse ceramics of a high order, work which we hope viewers will enjoy and appreciate as much as we have had in assembling them.

Gail Crawford



Sally Ravindra, Ship's Jar, 1996



Enid Legros-Wise, Wave I-59, 2002



Jim Hong Louie, Dodo #1, 1981



Ann Mortimer, Spring Tea, 1994



Maurice Savoie, *Mandela IV*, 1987



Reed Weir, *Whispers*, 2000



Leopold Foullem,
Abstraction 1441 Celadon, 1997



Joe Fafard, *Bull*, 1978

Today the choice of direction open to clay artists is wider than it has ever been. Since the rise of the artist craftsman in the 1950s, ceramists have faced the dilemma of where to concentrate their aesthetic concerns. The simple split between the sculptural and the functional has blurred as artists reference classic vessel forms with sculptural references. Modernism's emphasis on material concerns found a ready audience in the clay community that was eager to push the boundaries provided by new technological advances and the introduction of ancient techniques such as raku. Yet, with the increasing awareness of the history of world ceramics and the opportunity to study abroad, particularly in the Far East where the making of pots is looked on as one of the highest art forms, functional vessel making has flourished and grown. The rise of postmodernism with its emphasis on context and historical reference has rekindled the idea of narrative content, often with political, environmental or sexual allusions.

The latter third of the twentieth century saw clay move away from the world of craft into the realm of the fine arts. This shift in the maker's intention has put the ceramist in the unique position of redefining the accepted definition of the medium, questioning exactly what and where the boundaries of form and function are. The artist-craftsman is now expected to be in a continuous state of evolution.

This has led to different schools of ceramic styles, often regionally centred around an art school or university. With the rise of the ceramist as artist there has been a corresponding growth of public and private galleries, provincial organizations, craft councils and magazines that nurture and promote the medium.

Thus the role of craftspeople has now drastically changed. While still makers of beautiful objects, ceramists are now questioning the very nature of clay. What direction they take has become not only a personal but also a political statement on their outlook on the world. Because there is an audience for almost any style of work, the direction artists follow has never been wider. However, total freedom can be as difficult to deal with as being given no choice of direction. Economics also plays a part in the direction the artist follows. In the Maritime Provinces, where there are fewer jobs, many ceramists work in a functional tradition while the prosperous areas in Ontario and Quebec often attract individuals who work in more sculptural terms with an eye on the latest developments in the art world. The Prairie Provinces have embraced a sculptural tradition that reflects their unique landscape and regional concerns. The West Coast looks toward the Orient for aesthetic concerns. If artists are drawn in a particular direction they often will go there to study at a school in that region and then reinforce the local outlook. Reputations grow up around schools and often the teachers who teach there create the fascinating mixture that informs ceramics in Canada today.

Jonathan Smith

*List of Works: Seduced By Clay **

Robert Archambeau
Covered Jar With Bronze Lid, 1978
Earthenware, glaze, bronze
27.3 x 19.6 x 20.0 cm
Donated by Mr. Herbert O. Bunt,
Toronto, Ont., 1986.

Jeannot Blackburn
Fouet (Whip), 1989
White earthenware, commercial
glazes, metallic oxides
19.5 x 22.5 x 7.0 cm
Donated by Bruno Cournoyer,
Montreal, Que. in memory of
the artist, 1998.

John Chalke
Bowl, 1994
Thrown stoneware, multiple glazes
9.0 x 18.8 x 19.2 cm
Donated by Mr. Herbert O. Bunt,
Toronto, Ont., 1995.

Victor Cicansky
Garden Talk, 1987
Earthenware, oxides, glaze
44.0 x 47.5 x 41.5 cm
Purchased through a generous
donation from Longo's Fruit Market,
Burlington, Ont. and a grant
from the Ministry of Culture and
Communication, Province of Ontario,
1987.

Bruce Cochrane
House Casserole, c. 2002
Slab rolled, thrown and altered
brown stoneware, glazes
26.5 x 36.5 x 18.5 cm
Donated by Joan Bennett,
Toronto, Ont., 2005.

Karen Dahl
The Midas Touch, 1994
Porcelain, hand built, press moulded,
slip cast, multiple glazes, lustre
55.9 x 22.3 x 25.7 cm
Purchased through a donation from
the Walter and Duncan Gordon
Foundation, Toronto, Ont., 1996.

Angelo di Petta
Platter, 1985
Red earthenware, glaze, terra sigillata
6.0 x 35.0 x 35.0 cm
Donated by Gail Crawford,
Mississauga, Ont., 2000.

Joe Fafard
Bull, 1978
14.9 x 38.0 x 25.2 cm
Donated by Mr. Herbert O. Bunt,
Toronto, Ont., 2005.

Léopold Foulem
Abstraction 1441 Celadon, 1997
Thrown porcelain, celadon glaze
17.2 x 20.2 x 16.7 cm
Donated by the Artist,
Montreal, Que., 2005.

Steven Heinemann
Untitled, 1982
Coloured cast clays, sandblasted
13.0 x 19.5 x 18.5 cm
Purchased through a grant from
the Ministry of Culture and
Communication, Province of Ontario,
1991.

Robin Hopper
Chado Series, Lidded Jar, 2002
Thrown porcelain, slip trailing, glaze
22.0 x 23.0 x 19.3 cm
Donated by the Artist,
Victoria, B.C., 2002.

Harlan House
Flower Boat, c. 2000
Hand built porcelain, glazes
20.7 x 42.6 x 14.6 cm
Donated by Joan Bennett,
Toronto, Ont., 2005

Gordon Hutchens
Denman Island Lustre Low Wide Form, nd
Thrown white stoneware, glaze, lustre
29.2 x 36.8 x 36.8 cm
Purchased through Collection
Committee funds, 2002.

Enid Legros-Wise
Wave I-59, 2002
Handbuilt clay, paint
17.8 x 24.0 x 17.5 cm
Purchased through Collection
Committee funds, 2002.

Marilyn Levine
Two Tone Bag, 1979-80
Stoneware, oxides, lustre
19.3 x 17.2 x 8.3 cm
Purchased through a grant from the
Ministry of Citizenship and Culture,
Province of Ontario, 1987.

Jim Hong Louie
Dodo #1, 1981
Stoneware, glaze
38.4 x 30.8 x 55.4 cm
Donated by Mr. Herbert O. Bunt,
Toronto, Ont., 1984.

Susan Low-Beer
Mutable Selves II, 1994
Clay, laser cut steel, oxides
102.0 x 64.0 x 17.5 cm
Donated by the Artist,
Toronto, Ont., 1999.

Jeannie Mah
Teapot, 1994
Slab built porcelain, glaze
44.8 x 10.2 x 14.0 cm
Purchased through a donation from
the Walter and Duncan Gordon
Foundation, Toronto, Ont., 1996.

Les Manning
Vessel, 1983
Thrown porcelain and stoneware, glaze
30.4 x 17.6 x 18.4 cm
Donated by Marla Milrad,
Vancouver, B.C., 1999.

Paul Mathieu
The Common Denominator, 1985
Earthenware, porcelain, glazes
61.5 x 21.7 x 17.4 cm
Donated by the artist,
Vancouver, B.C., 2005.

Alexandra McCurdy
*Small Bowl With Ladders
and Bridges*, 1996
Porcelain, copper wire, beads
9.5 x 13.0 x 13.0 cm
Donated by the artist,
Halifax, N.S., 1999.

Sally Michener
Forget-Me-Not Portrait Plant, 1985
Earthenware, acrylic paint, wood
97.5 x 45.0 x 20.5 cm
Purchased through a grant from the
Ministry of Citizenship and Culture,
Province of Ontario, 1987.

Richard Milette
Hydra, c. 1995
Earthenware, plaster, glaze
40.0 x 28.0 x 28.0 cm
Purchased through a donation from
the Walter and Duncan Gordon
Foundation, Toronto, Ont., 1996.

Ann Mortimer
Spring Tea, 1994
Handbuilt porcelain, glaze
7.1 x 13.5 x 13.1 cm
Purchased through a donation
from Lillian Forester,
Trent River, Ont., 1995.

Diane Nasr
Basket, 1994
Slab rolled porcelain, glazes
47.0 x 20.0 x 18.4 cm
Given by Stephen and Barbara Pustai,
Burlington, Ont., in memory of their
son, Robert James Pustai, 1997.

Wayne Ngan
Covered Jar, c. 1981
Stoneware, salt fired, glaze
13.0 x 13.0 x 13.0 cm
Donated by Ingrid Nicolai,
Oakville, Ont., 1991.

Matthias Ostermann
Tray, nd
Clay, glaze
4.4 x 20.8 x 20.2 cm
Donated by Susan Eckenwalder,
Toronto, Ont., 1985.

Walter Ostrom
*Flower Brick With Cizhou Pot And
Shrubs*, 1988
Earthenware, thrown, altered, con-
structed, maiolica with resist, poly-
chrome and on-glaze decoration
24.0 x 30.0 x 17.0 cm
Purchased through a grant from the
Ministry of Culture and Communication,
Province of Ontario, 1989.

Kayo O'Young
Raku Vase, 1984
Thrown porcelain, raku fired, glazes
36.0 x 30.2 x 28.6 cm
Donated by Elinor A. Racine,
Toronto, Ont., 2001.

Greg Payce
Vase With Snails, 1990
Red earthenware, glazes
41.0 x 22.5 x 22.0 cm
Donated by Colleen Dullian,
Vancouver, B.C., 1997.

Dwayne Perkins
Dinner Place Setting, 2004
Thrown porcelain, glazes
6.3 x 40.5 x 40.5 cm (dinnerplate)
Functional Piece of the Year, 2005
Donated in memory of Wm. (Bill)
Cooke by the members of the
Collection Committee.

Peter Powning
Yellow Horned Vase, 2003
Thrown and altered porcelain, glazes
26.0 x 26.5 x 14.5 cm
Donated by Louise Cooke,
Burlington, Ont., 2005.

Sally Ravindra
Ship's Jar, 1996
Coil built stoneware, rope, glaze
73.6 x 38.0 x 38.0 cm
Donated by Bill and Louise Cooke,
Burlington, Ont., 1998.

Ann Roberts
Dreams Of Voyages, 1990
Handbuilt stoneware, glazes
63.0 x 44.0 x 32.0 cm
Donated by the artist,
Conestoga, Ont., 2002.

Laurie Rolland
Circinate, 2002
Handbuilt stoneware, glaze
15.2 x 51.0 x 33.9 cm
Purchased through Collection
Committee funds, 2002.

Maurice Savoie
Mandela IV, 1987
Clay, spray paint
53.0 x 47.0 x 17.0 cm
Purchased through a grant from the
Ministry of Culture and Communication,
Province of Ontario, 1989.

Kinichi Shigeno
Teapot, 1990
Handbuilt porcelain, glaze, lustre
32.6 x 23.4 x 12.9 cm
Donated by Phillippe Au,
Toronto, Ont. 1994.

Tom Smith
Vase With Copper Collar, 1987
Clay, wheel thrown, raku fired with
forged copper collar fitted post-firing
10.0 x 11.0 x 11.0 cm
Donated by Mr. Herbert O. Bunt,
Toronto, Ont., 1991.

Jack Sures
Bowl, 1984
Porcelain, glaze
15.0 x 70.0 x 70.0 cm
Purchased through a grant from
the Walter and Duncan Gordon
Foundation and the Canada Council
Art Bank Special Purchase Assistance
Program, 1986.

Sam Uhlick
Dinner Place Setting, 2001
Thrown stoneware, glaze
4.0 x 27.5 x 27.5 cm (dinner plate)
Functional Piece of the Year.
Donated by Marie and Stan
Semaniuk, Burlington, Ont., 2001.

Wendy Walgate
Fruit Basket, 1996
Low fire talc based clay, glazes
23.7 x 39.0 x 26.4 cm
Purchased through a generous
donation from the Walter and
Duncan Gordon Foundation,
Toronto, Ont., 1996.

Reed Weir
Whispers, 2000
Low fire talc based clay, glaze
57.5 x 36.0 x 25.0 cm
Purchased with a donation
from Bill and Louise Cooke,
Burlington, Ont., 2002.

* Please note that not all works
are included in the exhibition
while on tour.



Diane Nasr, Basket, 1994



Steven Heinemann, Untitled, 1982

OUR VISION:

Inspiring imagination, enriching lives.

OUR MISSION STATEMENT:

The Burlington Art Centre champions the role and value of art in life. We provide diverse experiences and discovery as a leading and sustainable organization through:

- Nurturing artistic development
- Being a home to our art and fine craft guilds and groups
- Exhibition and education programs, special events and community outreach services
- Our acclaimed permanent collection of ceramic art
- Volunteer and active community participation opportunities
- Retail services, memberships and corporate partnerships

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Curators for the exhibition:

GAIL CRAWFORD AND JONATHAN SMITH

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Karen Dahl, *The Midas Touch*, 1994