

## NCECA Announces Symposium on Criticism: CRITICAL Santa Fe

In recognition of its dedication to advancing education in the ceramics arts, NCECA has taken on the sponsorship and planning of a regional symposium dedicated entirely to developing criticism and critical practices in contemporary ceramics.

This symposium is entitled **CRITICAL Santa Fe: Furthering Criticism in Ceramics**. It will take place in Santa Fe, New Mexico October 27-31, 2010. Registration will be limited to 200 attendees in order to facilitate discussion and exchange. Advance registrations can be made at [dori@nceca.net](mailto:dori@nceca.net).

### WHY A SYMPOSIUM ON CRITICISM AT THIS TIME?

Many people have asked this question, since the amount of writing and publication about ceramics has dramatically increased over the past few years. As well, educational programs have adopted more developed practices of critique and discussion. Some have characterized this interest in criticism as evidence that those in ceramics are simply trying to elevate the status of their efforts by surrounding it with sophisticated discussions employing "art criticism" systems of analysis. This is definitely NOT the inspiration for CRITICAL Santa Fe.

### STUDIO CERAMICS

The absence of serious ongoing critical discussion in contemporary studio ceramics has been noted by a

wide representation of creators, writers, historians, critics and collectors. This alone is not sufficient reason to mount a focused effort to develop critical practices in our field. Rather, it is the expressive developments in the field itself that have stimulated the necessity of creating an active, ongoing, significant practice of criticism in our field. Additionally, ceramics has this odd spectrum of objects, from the functional to the conceptual, that confounds many who look at current expressions in clay.

### IT IS TIME TO "GROW OUR OWN"

There are many significant critical writings about ceramics, some from people intimately involved with the field and others from critics essentially based in other disciplines. But there has yet to be a widespread appreciation in ceramics of the importance and contribution that active critical discussion can make to the field.

Many have waited for the ceramic personification of Clement Greenberg, the famous art critic, to appear and sweep ceramics into high cultural relevance. This will probably not happen anytime soon. And, in fact, the world of painting and sculpture is lamenting the singular voice that Greenberg became. We can learn from the practice of others.

A more valuable critical practice can come from within the field. Many

*Continued on Page Four*

## The 2nd Ceramics Criticism Challenge: The Results Are In...

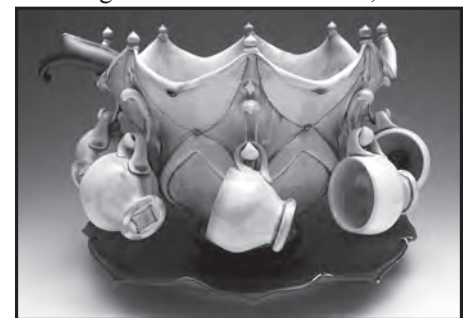
### A CRITICAL IMPERATIVE

In our *Summer 2008 Newsletter*, we featured articles by several ceramic artists and writers, addressing the relevance of and need for critical thinking and writing in the clay world. We followed those treatises with our first **Ceramics Criticism Challenge**, inviting readers to submit critiques of Jason Walker's *Timing Chain*, shown below. We had a



great response from our member-readers, and we published two insightful critiques, by Paul Mathieu and Shana Salaff.

In our most recent newsletter, we presented readers with **Punchbowl**, shown below, by Lorna Meaden, a demonstrating artist at the 2008 NCECA Pittsburgh conference. This time, we



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# 2008 NCECA Annual Report

## Overview by Skeff Thomas, NCECA President

The past year, 2008, was an exciting time of growth and change for NCECA. We continued to build upon our mission to stimulate and promote the ceramic arts through education, research, and creative practice in multiple ways. Here are a few highlights:

- We held our first international symposium, *Shared Journeys: Chinese/American Ceramics Art & Education*, in Jingdezhen, China, produced in conjunction with West Virginia University and Jingdezhen Ceramics Institute.
- We instituted new member benefits, including group insurance, discounts on materials and supplies, member event posting and a searchable, online directory.
- We set records for awards to members for education and exhibitions.
- We launched a new Web site with hundreds of additional images and advanced interactive features such as jurying.
- We have introduced a series on criticism in our Newsletter and annual Journal.

We look forward to building on this momentum going forward. We want to make NCECA relevant to ceramic artists 365 days a year, not just the five days of the annual conference. We plan to do this in part by producing smaller, local and regional events in addition to the annual conference. We also plan to improve the quality and timeliness of our publications, and to provide robust and frequently updated Web content. Items on our drawing board include:

- *Continental Divide*, a juried exhibition for the Rocky Mountain states produced in conjunction with the Arvada Center for the Arts, in September 2009.
- Revision and update of the popular *NCECA Ceramic Assignment Handbook*.
- Reprints of the best articles from ceramic and other art publications on the NCECA Web site.
- Symposium on criticism, CRITICAL Santa Fe, in October 2010.

- Reciprocal China symposium in conjunction with Jingdezhen Ceramics Institute, West Virginia University and Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts in October 2010.

NCECA is reaching more people in more ways than ever before, but we are not resting on our laurels. We continue to grow and respond to our members.

With your support, we look forward to an outstanding future together.

Skeffington Thomas  
President



## NCECA Support and Awards

Providing educational and artistic support for members throughout their careers has long been a hallmark of NCECA. Educational support includes scholarships, fellowships and international residencies. *The following members were provided with NCECA support or recognized for their artistic or educational achievements during this past year:*

### Educational Support

#### International Residencies

Sasha Reibstein, Zentrum fur Keramik, Germany  
Megumi Naitoh, International Ceramic Center, Denmark  
Meredith McGriff, Shigaraki Cultural Park, Japan

#### Regina Brown Undergraduate Student Fellowships

Nora Creahan, Syracuse University  
Mahlon Huston, Ohio University  
Janelle Songer, College for Creative Studies

#### NCECA Graduate Student Fellowships

Autumn Cipala, University of Nebraska  
Nathan Craven, Rhode Island School of Design  
Ian Meares, Pennsylvania State University

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*We want to make NCECA relevant to ceramic artists 365 days a year, not just the five days of the annual conference.*

*We plan to do this in part by producing smaller, local and regional events in addition to the annual conference.*

### Shared Journeys Symposium Scholarships

Nava Berg, College of William and Mary  
Andrew Cho, University of North Florida  
Brianna Fulton, Fort Hays State University  
Chanda Glendinning, Florida State University  
Jeff Goldberg, Fort Hays State University  
Lori Presley, Metropolitan State College-Denver  
Amanda Stigant, Utah State University

### Artistic and Service Recognition

#### Regional Student Juried Exhibition Awards

Rachel Bleil, Indiana University  
Seth Payne, Alfred University  
Rachelle Guenther, SUNY New Paltz

Sean Gallagher, Rhode Island School of Design  
Guy Michael Davis, The Ohio State University  
Laura Thompson, University of Wisconsin  
Shauna Fliegel, Southern Illinois University  
Brooke Noble, Southern Illinois University  
Joe Kraft, Wabonsee (IL) Community College

#### Outstanding Achievement Award

Ichi Hsu

#### Excellence in Teaching Awards

Harris Deller  
Ron Myers

#### Regional Awards for Excellence

Elvira Peake  
Frank Ross

## STUDIO TIPS: 'Green' Ideas for Potters...

After a day in the studio, I let my throwing water settle over night. The clay particles settle and in the morning I use the clear water to nourish the plants outside my studio. Reuse, Recycle, Reduce! The slop in the bucket gets recycled, dried a bit, re-wedged and re-thrown!!!  
- Kate

I pass out a terry cloth towel to each of my students at the beginning of the semester for them to use for drying their hands. It reduces the paper towel waste, and makes your students feel like they are helping to reduce their impact. At the end of the semester they return the towel, and I wash and reuse them for the next semester. - Brian

Quick tip: Use the standing water in your sink for most clean-up and washing needs. Only turn on the faucet when you absolutely need fresh water.

*These tips supplied by Brian Kohl and Kate Vorhaus, members of NCECA's Green Task Force.*

*Thanks for the tips!*

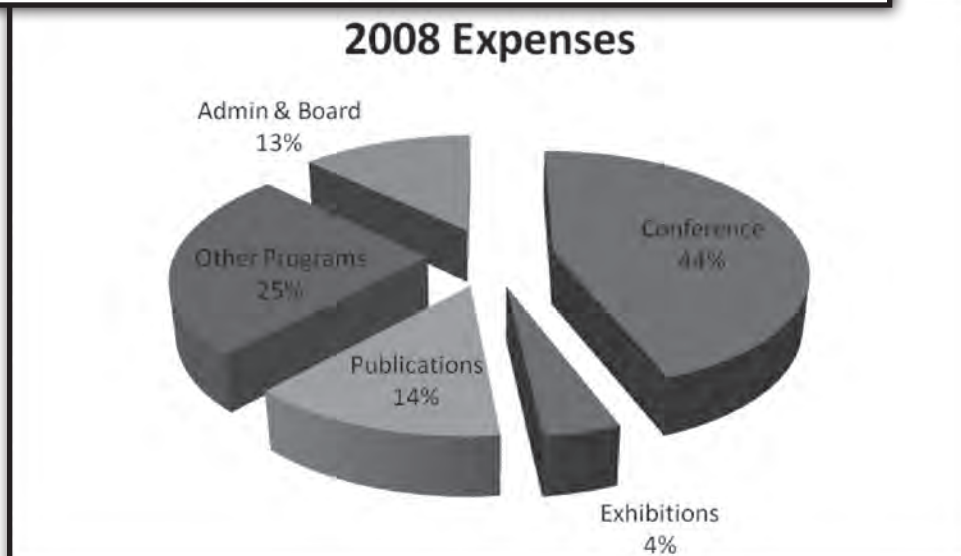
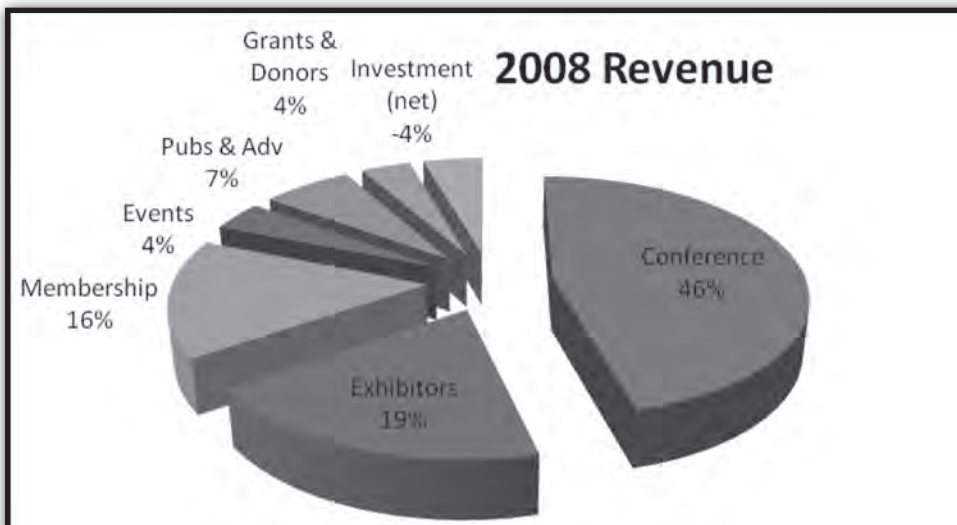
### Have a Studio Tip? Send it to:

**kate@nceca.net**

If it works, we'll share it with **NCECA Newsletter** readers and give you the credit!

## 2008 Financial Summary

NCECA is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization in the State of Colorado. It utilizes an annual budget of \$1.2 million to provide its 4,500 members with educational programming, publications and other services.



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*...it is the expressive developments in the field itself that have stimulated the necessity of creating an active, ongoing, significant practice of criticism in our field. Additionally, ceramics has this odd spectrum of objects, from the functional to the conceptual, that confounds many who look at current expressions in clay.*

## CRITICAL Santa Fe - continued from Page 1

seem to shudder at the mention of criticism, and many notions that exist about criticism will have to be dispelled. We will have to work hard to create frameworks that are intellectually rigorous, as well as of use and relevance to those in the field. But those of us engaged with ceramics must take the responsibility of encouraging and creating active critical practices.

## CRITICISM, CRITICISM, WHERE ART THOU? WHAT ART THOU?

Many are mouthing the mantra of "criticism" yet there is often confusion about what it is and where it is to be found in ceramics. Rightly so! It has not existed except in singular efforts to date, and certainly in educational critiques, but not as a widespread practice to improve the quality of work and expand the audience for expression in ceramics. The location and definition of criticism will emerge from many voices and much discussion. Any one voice or any one definition will prove immediately inadequate or dictatorial. NCECA continually invites broad participation through its annual conference, and now through the creation of CRITICAL Santa Fe, to provide focused resources and discussion to fashion the attitudes and practices that will nurture criticism in our field.

Those of you attending this year's conference in Phoenix will receive a CRITICAL Santa Fe informational postcard in your registration totebag. We hope you look it over, and ponder the significance, relevance and challenge of ceramics art criticism.

We encourage you to participate in our ongoing *Ceramics Criticism Challenge*, by submitting a critique of Karen Swyler's work, shown

on Page 8. Your critique will be posted on NCECA's website, and it may even be printed in the next newsletter!

-Jim Romberg, *Delegate at Large, Criticism Symposium Project Director*



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*Criticism Challenge* continued from Page 1

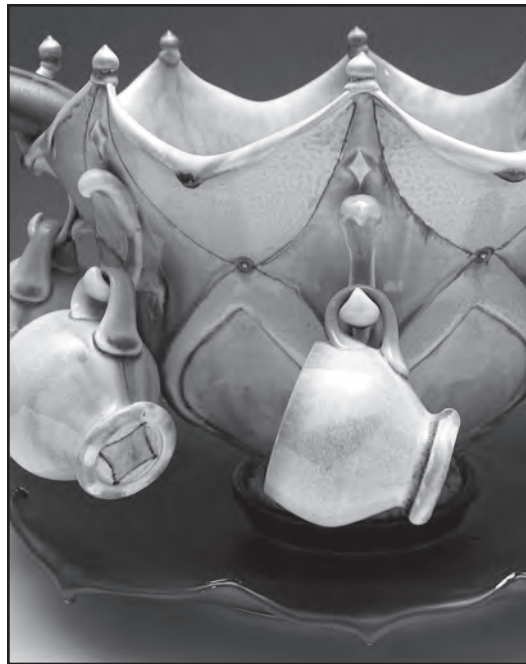
share with readers a review by **Edith Erlich**, simply entitled, *Critique of Punch Bowl* by Lorna Meaden:

“Form follows function,” but in this case they fight against each other, so that neither seems to work. I can’t imagine carrying this punch bowl (full or empty) anywhere. The cups would crash; they have no safe nesting place on the bowl. They drag the bowl down visually. The piece seems heavy and cluttered. So I have to denude the bowl.

The cups relate to the bowl only through their glaze. The cups seem to square-off and stop the flow of all the round forms of the piece. Their size does not relate to the curves of any other shape on the bowl. In fact, the cups are camouflaging the basic form. So I visually remove the cups and change their hooks into something decorative, perhaps suggestive of handles.

The bowl by itself is majestic, lotus like, reaching upward. The glazing, which I assume is a shino, works perfectly on the form, accentuating the shapes and indentations. The black accents on the rim help to establish the upward reach of the pot, counterpoint to the crowning edge, creating a subtle pull.

I can’t tell if the dark base is a separate dish or connected to the bowl. The curves of the dish’s rim echo the rim of the bowl. There is a visible ambiguity concerning whether or not to remove the dish. Its black glaze tends to oppose the upward sweep of the bowl a bit even though this base is less obvious and therefore less heavy than if it were light colored. The bowl without the dish and ladle, although less utilitarian, would be successful and elegant. The voluminous yet soaring shape would



Lorna Meaden: *Punch Bowl* (detail), porcelain, soda-fired

present more of a dichotomy without the clash and clatter of dissonant elements.

*Note: By printing a critique, NCECA neither agrees nor disagrees with the observations and conclusions of the reviewer. We encourage all members to participate in our **Ceramics Criticism Challenge**; all critiques will be posted on NCECA's website. As well, we invite participants to go to the website for a full-color image of the featured artwork.*

*...the cups are camouflaging the basic form. So I visually remove the cups...*

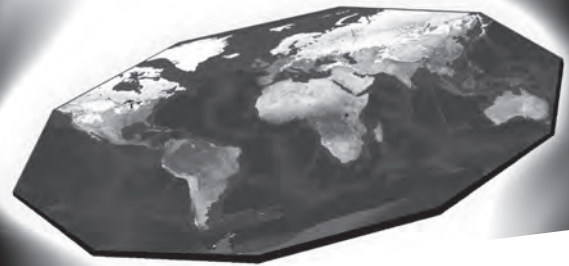
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**NEWS  
LETTER**

**SPRING 2009**

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*The next Newsletter will be distributed in Aug, 2009.*

**Advertising Deadline:  
Fri. July 31<sup>st</sup>**

**Writer's Deadline:  
Fri. July 24<sup>th</sup>**

Unsolicited manuscripts are welcome and all will be read; for writing guidelines, Email: Marko Fields, Publications Director, at [fields@csp.edu](mailto:fields@csp.edu)

**Questions?**

Visit our Website:

**[www.nceca.net](http://www.nceca.net)** or call toll-free: **866.266.2322**

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**MEMBER Benefits**

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**For Your Studio...**

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**NCECA STAFF UPDATE**

NCECA invites you to welcome our newest Staff member to the team:

**Jonathan Hopper.**

Jonathan is our new *Webmaster/Marketing Coordinator*. Jon was a self-taught computer animator out of high school, and was a game designer for *Sega* and *Electronic Arts* before going back to school for degrees in communications and business. Since then, he has managed development projects for *GoDaddy*, *Disney*, the casino gaming industry and others. Jon also teaches extensively, including courses in 3D animation, advanced digital effects and game analysis and playability. He is also a musician, having released 4 albums, recorded in his *ProTools*-based studio. Jon and his wife, Olga, are proud parents of 4-month-old Brandon.

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## NCECA'S Ceramics Criticism Challenge No.3!

For this challenge we have selected an artwork by studio ceramist, **Karen Swyler**. We've seen her work a lot lately, whether as an emerging artist at the Pittsburgh NCECA Conference, in shows, or in publications. We challenge you to write a critique - *500 words or less* - of the piece shown below. Go to our website to see a color image! Every submission will be posted, in full, on NCECA's website, and 2 will be chosen for publication in the Summer '09 issue of this Newsletter. Send your critique as an attached *Word* document, by March 12, to: [critclay@nceca.net](mailto:critclay@nceca.net), or mail to: NCECA CritClay, 77 Erie Village Sq., Suite 280, Erie, CO 80516-6996.

**Karen Swyler:**  
*Give and Take,*  
Porcelain,  
2008



## DATES TO REMEMBER:

**May 1, 2009:** Call for Entries for 2010 *National Student Juried Exhibition* - open

**May 8, 2009:** Call for 2010 Program Proposals - deadline

**June 1, 2009:** Call for Entries for 2010 Invitational Exhibition, *Earth Matters* - deadline

**July 15, 2009:** Call for Entries for 2009 Regional Exhibition, *Continental Divide* - deadline

**Oct 1, 2009:** Call for Entries for 2010 *National Student Juried Exhibition* - deadline

**March 31-April 3, 2010:** *NCECA 44th Annual Conference* in Philadelphia, PA

For more information and updates about these, and other, upcoming NCECA events, visit NCECA's website at: [www.nceca.net](http://www.nceca.net) or call us toll-free at 866.266.2322.

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