

## NCECA'S CHINA SYMPOSIUM: An Extraordinary Success

From October 23rd to November 2nd, NCECA, along with Jingdezhen Ceramics Institute (JCI) and West Virginia University (WVU), hosted 'Shared Journeys: Chinese/American Ceramic Art and Education Symposium,' in Jingdezhen, People's Republic of China. In addition to Chinese and American contingents, France, Canada and Korea were represented by Symposium participants. By all accounts, the Symposium was an extraordinary event.

### By The Numbers...

So how do we quantify success? In terms of participants, NCECA was able to successfully achieve projected goals, bringing 61 participants to Jingdezhen, including 6 presenters (Val Cushing, Linda Arbuckle, Peter Beasecker, Clarence Cruz, Elaine O. Henry and Beth Cavener Stichter), 6 working Board members (Joe Molinaro, Richard Burkett, Holly Hanessian, Skeff Thomas, Robert Harrison and Shoji Satake, who also represented WVU), 2 working Staff (Morgan O'Brien and Kate Vorhaus), 6 other Board members (Dan Hammett, Linda Ganstrom, Jessica Orlowski, Keith Williams, Lydia Thompson and Josh Green), and 15 students, 7 of whom received scholarship funds from NCECA.

**Linda Ganstrom**, Board member (Exhibitions), Art Professor (Ft. Hays State University, Hays, KS) and longtime NCECA member, prepared an

overview of the Symposium, wherein she noted, 'Having 15 students from across America attend this symposium added so much energy and excitement to the experience. It will be exciting to see how the experience impacts their lives. NCECA students were invited and participated in a Roundtable discussion with students from JCI about their educational experiences. It is very rare for Chinese students to be allowed this type of unfiltered and sanctioned expression. The discussion was difficult, but it happened, an important first step in cross-cultural communication among students and faculty.'



Beth Cavener Stichter demonstrates

In addition to the comprehensive programming of lectures, panels and demonstrations by both Chinese and American ceramists, there were extensive opportunities for field trips to local sites of interest, including:

- Slab making factory
- Throwing factories
- Sectional Throwing factories
- Industrial production Franz factory
- Decal factories

*Continued on Page 5*

## The First Ceramics Criticism Challenge: The Results Are In...

### A CRITICAL IMPERATIVE

As you begin to read this year's NCECA Journal, you will notice that seven articles approach ceramic art criticism head-on, while a number of other pieces address critical thinking in more oblique manners. Significantly, this was not an intentional strategy on the part of NCECA's conference program committee; but the burgeoning growth of ceramic art criticism speaks to the fact that an object's medium – clay in this case – no longer precludes it from a place at the art table, where an art work or object can stand and be considered on its own merits.

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. Go to page 2 to read selected critiques, then go to page 8 for the next challenge!



### INSIDE this issue...

China Symposium & Ceramic Art Criticism: Page 1  
Criticism - Paul Mathieu: Page 2  
Criticism - Shana Salaff: Page 3

Studio Tips: Page 5  
NCECA Staff Update: Page 6

Upcoming Deadlines & Calendar: Page 8  
NCECA Ceramics Criticism Challenge #2: Page 8

*The teapot connection, somewhat ambiguous anyway, is the only obvious connection to ceramics we have here. The "teapotness" of this object serves to give it a clear identity, as a thing that can be clearly named, an identity that would be confusing otherwise.*

*This is also a strategy (efficient but hypocritical) employed by much contemporary ceramics, to gain instant meaning through identity and identification...*

## CERAMICS CRITICISM CHALLENGE!

*On Jason Walker's "Timing Chain"*

by Paul Mathieu

Ceramics, as a distinct and autonomous art form, implies the coming together of a form and a surface. This form generally (if not always) is volumetric in nature, that is to say that it is hollow inside and has been generated from the inside out, as a volume. The surface, whatever quality it takes, although it may describe the volumetric form, as it does here, remains distinct from the form itself, as it does here, as well. The surface is another layer of information added to the form. Only ceramics behave in such a fashion in all art disciplines and these characteristics are specific to ceramics (and pottery) as art forms. The fact that the object is made with (fired) clay is of some importance too, but I would argue that it is not, by far, the most important aspect to define an object as ceramics. Conceptual aspects like a volumetric form and a distinct surface are much more important than mere material. In fact, in the object under discussion here and in Jason Walker's work in general, the "clayness" of the work is of little significant importance, for a variety of

reasons. For example, there is little if any obvious tactility perceivable, a characteristic so often found in objects made with clay. The various forms used in this assemblage do not specifically refer to the vocabulary of forms usually found in the ceramics lexicon. We are confronted here instead with a variety of geometric forms combined with mechanical parts, all referring or imitating metal, as well as a stylized duck head. The teapot connection, somewhat ambiguous anyway, is the only obvious connection to ceramics we have here. The "teapotness" of this object serves to give it a clear identity, as a thing that can be clearly named, an identity that would be confusing otherwise. This is also a strategy (efficient but hypocritical) employed by much contemporary ceramics, to gain instant meaning through identity and identification, meaning which would be much poorer to nonexistent otherwise. The ambiguity of this object as a ceramic object is also manifest at the level of surface, which remains graphic and illustrative, with no readily identifiable ceramic aspect (it imitates drawing or prints imitating metal) and has none of the expected shininess, fluidity, depth and reflectivity of glazes, for example. In fact, this object could be made of plastic.

*What to my wondering eyes did appear?* Blue Heron Tools, The Axner Bead System, Bat Grippers, Cookie Cutters, Rolling pins, Display Stands, Moist Clays

Laguna Banding Wheel, Brushes, Bamboo Handles, Magnets, honey dipper, Hummingbird feeder tips, Gleco traps

Inspirational and Instructional videos and DVD's, Books, Laguna Glazes, Rolling Thunder Slab Rollers, bisque tiles

POINT  
CLICK...

www.**axner**.com  
pottery supply



*All the gifts you need...*

One time only \$50 total maximum discount per customer when customer presents code ANN108. Applies to online orders placed before February 14th, 2009, and cannot be used with other sales prices or special offers on www.Axner.com.

Clay Bonker, Steve Tool, Axner Power Arm, Axner Super Pro Wheel, Slump/Hump System, Groovy Tools, bats ...a gift for each potter on my list this year!

Going as far back as Bernard Palissy in 16th Century, France (whose work, in connection to Walker's, was also informed with natural references related to ecology, in an illusionist manner), but certainly since the middle of the 19th Century, hand made pottery and ceramics were largely made for the personal, expressive needs of individuals. Going from the practical to the personal, ceramics now finds itself at a junction point where it desperately needs to rethink its identity and role within culture, since we have no real needs anymore for practical objects made by hand and we have all experienced the inherent limitations of personal expression in generating new forms and new meanings, beyond self-indulgence.

I propose that due to its particular properties (its resistance to time), ceramics is the best archival material ever devised by humankind. Thus, the ceramics we now make will become the archives of the future, like all the ceramics made before. This archival nature of ceramics is probably its most potent claim to meaning within culture, beyond its practical aspects and certainly beyond its individual potential for personal expression.

Jason Walker's "Timing Chain", a non-functional

object with limited personal individuality (there is an anonymity to both the forms and the surfaces), with its references to the hybridity of opposing realities, the mechanical versus the natural, comments on our present schizophrenic relation to the world and as such is an efficient archive of our present state of mind as a species. It will transmit that information efficiently. By being aware of this archival potential, it is my hope that Jason Walker will take this responsibility, as will others, with all the seriousness it deserves.

**Paul Mathieu** is a potter, living in Vancouver, Canada, where he teaches ceramics at Emily Carr University. He is presently completing a new book, *The Art of the Future: 14 essays on ceramics*. Which will soon be available on his website at [www.paulmathieu.ca](http://www.paulmathieu.ca)

**Time for Transformation**  
by Shana Salaff

Jason Walker's *Timing Chain* presents us with an opportunity to explore the layers of meaning that can exist in a ceramic artwork. *Timing Chain* is a playful combination of visual references, the most obvious being a teapot form. With a round "body," a bird's

*Jason Walker's "Timing Chain", a non-functional object with limited personal individuality (there is an anonymity to both the forms and the surfaces), with its references to the hybridity of opposing realities, the mechanical versus the natural, comments on our present schizophrenic relation to the world and as such is an efficient archive of our present state of mind as a species.*

www.northernclaycenter.org

**NORTHERN CLAY CENTER  
FELLOWSHIPS & RESIDENCIES**

**McKnight Ceramic Artist Grants**

Mid-Career Awards plus Exhibition & Catalogue

**Fellowships**

Two @ \$25,000  
Minnesota Residents

**Residencies**

Four @ \$5,000, plus free studio  
Non-Minnesota Residents

**Deadline: April 24, 2009 at 5 pm**

**Fogelberg Studio Fellowships**

**Emerging Artist Residencies**

- Two artists share a fully-furnished studio space for one year
- Materials/firing allowance

**Deadline: April 24, 2009 at 5 pm**

**FOR DETAILS AND APPLICATIONS SEE  
WWW.NORTHERNCLAYCENTER.ORG**



2424 FRANKLIN AVENUE EAST | MINNEAPOLIS, MN 55406  
PHONE: 612.339.8007 | FAX: 612.339.0592  
EMAIL: NCCINFO@NORTHERNCLAYCENTER.ORG

## BONE ASH?

I'm looking  
for glazes  
that contain  
bone ash.

I'll swap:  
recipe for recipe.  
fields@csp.edu  
or call:  
612.978.0069

*Walker is explicitly presenting the contrast between the organic and the industrial, with a title that suggests that we are at a crucial moment in our struggle to keep the industrial from completely consuming our organic world.*

*His use of the medium of porcelain sends a conflicting message, however. On the one hand he is successfully exploiting clay's ability to mutate, to take on any given form, and to receive surface imagery. On the other, he is presenting an important and universal message via a medium that tends to be relegated to the sidelines in both general critical discourse and exhibition spaces.*

head "spout," exhaust pipe "handle," pressure gauge "lid," and a gear chain "base," all the necessary teapot ingredients are in place. This in turn references the use of the teapot as social commentary à la Richard Notkin, setting the stage for a receptive audience. Walker gives us other visual scenarios to choose from as well. In one, we see a bird, with a duck-like head. This, in combination with signifiers of petroleum such as the grey pipes, the fill cap on the base, and the muffler-like exhaust "tail," reminds us that the use of oil as a fuel has had many unfortunate consequences to water birds.

*Timing Chain's* components can also be seen anthropomorphically, perhaps as a figure reminiscent of the tin man in the Wizard of Oz. If we remember that the tin man was looking for his heart, we can imagine that the bird at the center of his body is acting as his new heart, but this is a heart that has had to be reclaimed from the industrial matter that makes up his (and our!) world. Only the leaves that have sprouted from these pipes have allowed the bird to nest; perhaps it is this transformation that is relieving the pressure on the gauge on his head?

Walker is explicitly presenting the contrast between the organic and the industrial, with a title that suggests that we are at a crucial moment in our struggle to keep the industrial from completely consuming our organic world. His use of the medium of porcelain sends a conflicting message, however. On the one hand he is successfully exploiting clay's ability to mutate, to take on any given form, and to receive surface imagery. On the other, he is presenting an important and universal message via a medium that tends to be relegated to the sidelines in both general critical discourse and exhibition spaces.

One has to ask, has he used porcelain merely as a display of skill? Or is there another message encoded within this choice?

As humans in the 21st century, we are in the middle of a chain of events that has the capacity to transform our planet. We are headed either towards an even more heavy reliance upon fossil fuels and the eventual destruction of our natural world, or the alternative: to relieve the pressure caused by our actions by allowing the natural world to take root at the "heart" of our decision making, thus relieving the pressure we have placed upon our environment. As does Walker's nesting bird, we sit at the center of a crossroads, where the decisions we make concerning our environment today will affect not only ourselves, but also all the other species of life on this planet.

**Shana Salaff** is a graduate of Nova Scotia College of Art & Design, Halifax, NS, as well as the School of Crafts and Design, Sheridan College, Oakville, Ontario. As a studio potter, Salaff operated *Wareshana Pottery* in Halifax, NS, before closing up shop to attend graduate school. She is an MFA candidate at California State University, Fullerton.

**Note:** It was our original intention to publish three of the submitted critiques, but due to space constraints we could not run a piece by student **Kierstin Egge** of SUNY New Paltz. Not all the critiques of Walker's *Timing Chain* were favorable, Ms. Egge's among them. To read all of the critiques, go to NCECA's website at [www.nceca.net](http://www.nceca.net). NCECA does not endorse the thoughts or ideas of its members by printing their articles or making them available on our website.



Lots of Inventory! Lowest Prices!

**THE REFRACTORY SUPER STORE!**

**Larkin Refractory Solutions**

**Unparalleled Service & Refractory Design Assistance for  
Over 30 Years by the Folks who Truly Care about Your Business!**

Firebrick: Straights, Arches, Wedges & Tiles • Insulating Firebrick: Straights, Arches & Wedges  
Ceramic Fiber Blankets, Boards, Papers & Textiles • Mortars, Patches & Inexpensive Coatings  
Castables in Several Insulating & Density Compositions • **We Have It All!**

**Nitride & Fines Bonded Kiln Shelves!**

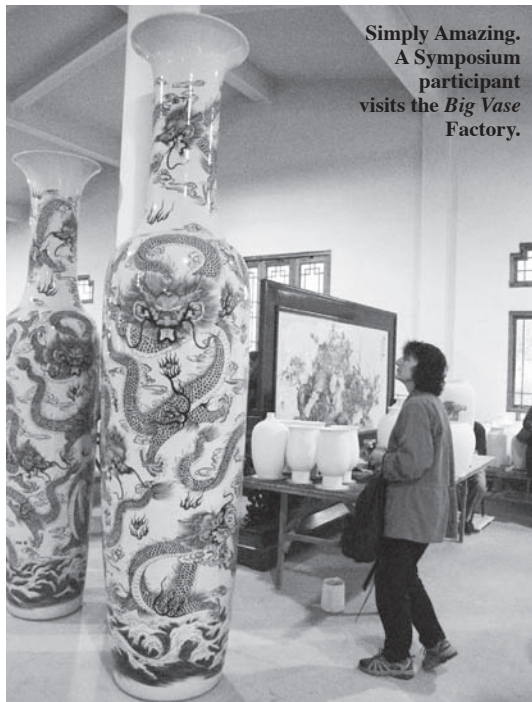
2331 Varkel Way, PO Box 716, Lithonia, GA 30058 CALL US! 678-336-7090  
Fax: 678-336-7094 • Email: [LRS@LarkinRefractory.com](mailto:LRS@LarkinRefractory.com) • Web: [LarkinRefractory.com](http://LarkinRefractory.com)

**Kiln Furniture Galore! ALL Sizes Available!**

China Symposium  
Continued from Page 1

- Ancient Kiln Museum
- Gaolin Mountain and Yaoli Village trip and museums
- Long dragon Kiln Museum
- San Bao, Residency program of Jackson Lee
- The Pottery Workshop, Residency program of Caroline Cheng
- Shard Market
- Antique Ceramic Market
- Jewelry Market
- Ceramic Porcelain Market

'English speaking (Chinese) students were available to help conference participants travel around the city. Taxi's were cheap and readily available from the hotel. Getting back was not always as easy,' Ganstrom reported.



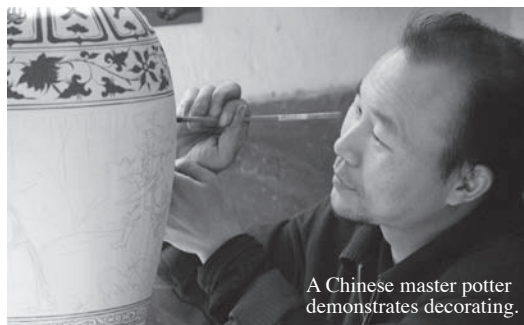
Simply Amazing.  
A Symposium participant visits the Big Vase Factory.

www.Lagunaclay.com



## B Mix Wood Fire

Ask your local Laguna distributor for **WC-899** the B-Mix formulation for optimum performance in your wood kiln.



A Chinese master potter demonstrates decorating.

Additionally, a number of NCECA attendees participated in ceramic art exhibitions organized in conjunction with the Symposium.

Continued on Page 6

## STUDIO TIPS: Wood or Soda Firing? Perfectly Wet Wadding!

**Two days ahead of Loading your kiln:** Pack your wad clay in lidded disposable sandwich or storage containers and put them into a box along with some small square bats, plastic knives, empty containers and a bottle of white glue.

**One day ahead:** Make several boxes of long rolls. Cut some into pieces, round off and store in containers.

**Loading day:** Wow, use the pre-made wads while the bats and knives are used to make more, one perfectly moist container at a time! Use white glue to stick wads on if needed.

**Julie Brooks and Joe Koons**

*Thanks, Julie & Joe!*

**Have a Studio Tip? Send it to: [kate@nceca.net](mailto:kate@nceca.net)**  
If it works, we'll share it with NCECA Newsletter readers and give you the credit!

Baltimore clayworks

5707 Smith Avenue  
Baltimore Maryland 21209  
T. 410 578 1919 F. 410 578 0058  
[www.baltimoreclayworks.org](http://www.baltimoreclayworks.org)

**STUDIOS  
RESIDENCIES  
FELLOWSHIP  
CLASSES  
EXHIBITIONS  
COMMUNITY ARTS**

### UPCOMING WORKSHOPS

**DAVID MACDONALD**  
LIDDED VESSELS  
JANUARY 17-18, 2009  
WS1

**MATT KELLEHER & SHOKO TERUYAMA**  
COLLABORATING WITH THE CLAY  
MARCH 28-29, 2009  
WS2

**NEIL PATTERSON**  
THROW, FACET, STRETCH, DART!  
MAY 2-3, 2009  
WS3

All workshops are:  
\$200 for Members  
\$220 for Non-Members  
Please visit our website for more details



Image: Neil Patterson

The NCECA Newsletter is published three times a year by the National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts (NCECA), as a service to members. NCECA assumes no responsibility for the statements and opinions advanced by the contributors to its publications, nor does advertising in this publication constitute an endorsement by NCECA of the products and services of the companies and institutions.

The next Newsletter will be distributed in April, 2009.

**Advertising  
Deadline:  
Mon. March 23<sup>th</sup>  
Writer's Deadline:  
Fri. March 13<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**

©2008 National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts

**NCECA**  
77 Erie Village Square  
Suite 280  
Erie, CO 80516-6996

China Symposium  
*Continued from Page 5*

*"Global Positioning/China"* featured the work of NCECA participants and Chinese faculty colleagues from the Jingdezhen Ceramic Institute. Our members brought 55 works with them over 7,000 miles.

*"Ceramic Passport: An NCECA International Student Exhibition"* was hosted by the branch campus of West Virginia University on the JCI campus in the second floor gallery where the demonstrations were held. *'Most of the 15 student members from NCECA displayed a work, as did students from the West Virginia program,'* notes Ganstrom.



Above, Morgan O'Brien, NCECA Executive Director, left, and Skeff Thomas, NCECA President, enjoy the opening ceremony.

# 500 Vases

Lark Books  
seeks  
photographs  
of vases for a  
collection juried  
by Julia  
Galloway.

For entry form  
and complete  
details go to  
[www.larkbooks.com](http://www.larkbooks.com)

Entry  
deadline  
February 2,  
2009

**NCECA STAFF UPDATE**

NCECA invites you to welcome two new Staff members to the team:

**Barbara Webb and Jacqueline Hardy.**

**Barbara Webb, Membership Services,** is responsible for expanding NCECA's membership base, while developing and maintaining member benefits to assure quality experience and member satisfaction. Barbara earned her Bachelors and Masters degrees from Southern Illinois University, Carbondale. Her professional accomplishments include corporate training, K-12 educator, sales, marketing and management experience. Contact Barbara at [barbara@nceca.net](mailto:barbara@nceca.net).

**Jacqueline Hardy** is NCECA's new **Membership Coordinator.** Jacqueline has a degree in arts management from Colby-Sawyer College, and has worked in office administration for theatre companies in Connecticut and Vermont. She was also owner and manager of the Pottery Caffé, a paint-your-own pottery studio in Boulder. Jacqueline is a ceramic artist, but is currently focusing on her oil painting. In her spare time, she is also an avid runner and gardener. Contact Jacqueline at [jacqueline@nceca.net](mailto:jacqueline@nceca.net).

**The Glaze Room...**

The following are 2 of *Lorna Meaden's* favorite glazes; **cone 10 reduction, soda firing;** try them:

<b>Pizzaz Black</b>		<b>Yellow Salt</b>
Red Art	55	Neph Sy 63.9
Neph Sy	20	Dolomite 21.1
Talc	15	Zircopax 16.0
Strontium Carb	10	OM4 4.3
Chrome Oxide	1	RIO 1.0
Cobalt Carb	2	Bentonite 4.0
Mang Dioxide	2	

*As always, practice safety when handling glaze materials, even if you look and sound funny in that mask.*

**This is an Amazing Ad and it could have been YOURS!**

**Check this out: It's only \$55.00; It's only available to NCECA Members; and, with a circulation of 5000, It's absolutely the best advertising deal in the clay world!**

**Call Kate for Details: 1.866.266.2322**

Peters Valley Craft Center, NJ  
60 miles from NYC in the  
Scenic Delaware Water Gap

**PETERS  
VALLEY**



**CRAFT CENTER**

## 2 - 5 Day Workshops

May through September  
in 8 Professional Studios with  
Nationally Recognized Instructors  
*Beginner ~ Advanced*

**BLACKSMITHING  
CERAMICS,  
FIBERS (Surface & Structure)  
FINE METALS  
PHOTOGRAPHY  
WOODWORKING  
SPECIAL TOPICS  
(Glass, Painting, Sculpture, Etc.)**

**HOUSING/DINING HALL  
SCHOLARSHIPS - ASSISTANTSHIPS  
WORK STUDIES  
APPS & INFO ONLINE!**

**2009 CATALOG  
ONLINE  
JANUARY 1<sup>st</sup>**

**[www.petersvalley.org](http://www.petersvalley.org) ~ 973-948-5200**

PHOTO: Rustic Furniture with Wayne Hall ~ August 14 - 18, 2009

## NCECA'S Ceramics Criticism Challenge No.2!

For this challenge we have selected an artwork by studio ceramist, **Lorna Meaden**. We've seen her work a lot lately, whether as a demonstrator 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 3 will be chosen for publication in the Spring 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.



*Punch Bowl,*  
10x13x13"  
Porcelain,  
Soda-Fired, 2008

## DATES TO REMEMBER:

**January 2009:**

**2008/2009 Membership Directory & 2008 Journal to be mailed;**  
**2009 Conference poster to be mailed;**  
**2009 International Residencies to be announced;**  
**2009 Conference Registration to be announced.**

**January 23, 2009: 2009 Video Screening Opportunity deadline.**

**January 30, 2009: Undergraduate & Graduate Student Fellowships deadline.**

**February 13, 2009:**

**2009 Early Bird Conference Registration – ONLINE and POSTMARK deadlines;**

**2009 Exhibitor final payments due.**

**March 13, 2009:**

**2009 Regular Conference Registration POSTMARK deadline;**

**2009 Exhibitor Representatives' final names due.**

**March 20, 2009: 2009 Regular Conference Registration ONLINE deadline.**

**April 8-11, 2009: NCECA 43rd Annual Conference in Phoenix, AZ.**

**May 1, 2009: Call for 2010 Program Proposals deadline.**

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

# nceca

NATIONAL COUNCIL ON EDUCATION  
FOR THE CERAMIC ARTS

77 Erie Village Square, Suite 280

Erie, Colorado 80516-6996

*Address Service Requested*