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Vibrant Amusement

Bretton J. Kern

Thesis submitted to the
College of Creative Arts
at West Virginia University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts
in
Ceramics

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Abstract

Vibrant Amusement

by. Bretton J. Kern

This thesis is a description and analysis of the ceramic work of Bretton J. Kern. This thesis includes a description and images of the work as well as a discussion of the technical and conceptual content of the work.

Acknowledgements

I want to take this time to express my gratitude towards my committee and the entire faculty of the West Virginia University Creative Arts Department for providing the necessary resources and encouragement to explore and find my voice. A very special thanks goes out to Shoji, Boomer and Jen. I didn't necessarily come to WVU to study with you guys, but I couldn't have been happier with the situation I found myself in. Thank you for all the support.

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Introduction

I am intrigued by the transition that happens when children grow into adulthood and they lose their inner child. I am fascinated by this phenomenon because this transition never happened to me. Therefore, my work is meant to entertain the child within us.

Round forms, curious textures and kinetic elements in my work give it a very playful feeling. Saturated, vibrant colors evoke ideas of children's toys or the environments children play in. I install the work in order to create an encompassing environment. For instance, when a child relates to their environment, everything appears bigger and taller and inconceivable. I reintroduce adults to these feelings as they enter the gallery and see pieces suspended high above their heads. Through the use of color, texture, form, movement, scale and space, my work encourages playful and creative interactions. When people look at my work I want them to feel the urge to have fun, to play and to act a little silly without being embarrassed.

The recent birth of my niece Hannah has been inspiring. It has made me more aware of infant toys and their inherent complex purposes. Rattles and mobiles aid in childhood development and pacification. Certain toys or objects also have a calming effect on adults. Just being able to feel something interesting in my hands or observe something swing or bounce soothes me.

The work is made from molds of household, everyday objects. I distort and mix these objects to transform them into compelling, playful and ambiguous forms that challenge the viewer's imagination and memory. This ambiguity allows everyone to approach my pieces creatively and uniquely.

Ever since an early age I've always been drawn towards creating. My childhood practices of art and creativity that provided outlets for my active imagination continue in adulthood. This paper discusses, in detail, the research and discoveries in my work through my three years at West Virginia University as a graduate student in ceramics.

Chapter 1

Personal History

It was not until college that I discovered my love of clay. Throughout my elementary and high school years I had always worked in two-dimensional media. In 2003, I enrolled at California University of Pennsylvania (CalU) as a graphic designer. Fortunately, in my second semester I took an introduction to ceramics class on a whim.¹ Working with clay on the wheel immediately drew me in. I have always been a very hands-on person. In order to experience things, I need to touch and feel or play with them. Clay reacts to the touch in such a unique way that I fell in love with it. The construction processes of building with clay were also very intriguing. My early years involved in ceramics were spent building my skills as a potter. Countless nights were spent alone in the studio refining my skills. Up to that point in my life I had never experienced anything quite like making pottery on the wheel. I knew I had to be working because I was sweating and tired, but I was having so much fun!

During my final year as an undergraduate at CalU, I decided that I had acquired the needed skills and I had developed the desire to pursue graduate school. West Virginia University (WVU) accepted me and I decided to enroll in their Master of Fine Arts program to study ceramics.² Graduate school proved to be full of new opportunities and experiences. My work was bound to grow during my three years at WVU.

While in graduate school, I was introduced to new methods of clay construction. In my second year I registered for a slip-casting (see chapter 4) class taught by Robert “Boomer” Moore. This class was my first foray into mold-making and the sculptural side of ceramics. It turned out to be a match made in heaven. Slip-casting provides me with the ability to transform any object or texture into the realm of clay. With the use of molds I can also make shapes that are difficult or impossible to make on the wheel. Molds also enable me to reproduce the same shape repeatedly. My introduction to slip-casting provided the essential connection in order to open my mind to the infinite possibilities ceramics presents.

¹ The professor for this ceramics class was Richard “Duke” Miecznikowski. I credit Duke with introducing me to clay as well as being a friend and mentor.

² Bob Anderson and Shoji Satake were the WVU ceramics faculty in my first year. Bob Anderson retired and Robert “Boomer” Moore and Jennifer Allen were added to the faculty in my second year.

Chapter 2

My Inner Child

It has been called several things, divine child, wonder child, true self or the child within, but the inner child refers to that part of everyone which is ultimately alive, energetic, creative and fulfilled.³ The inner child is the emotional self. It is where the feelings live inside a person. When feelings of joy, sadness, anger, fear or affection are experienced, it is the inner child coming out. When a person is playful, spontaneous, creative and intuitive the inner child is being welcomed and encouraged to be present. The act of making art is a perfect way to cultivate the inner child. Lindsey Scott Suthren puts it perfectly, "Creativity is expressed by the child-in-us. If the child is constrained, little creative expression occurs. Only when the child is liberated and takes its place as a valid part of our self do we feel complete as a person, able to produce our own art."⁴

A healthy connection to the inner child is recognized as having numerous psychological health benefits. When a person denies their inner child, problems such as addiction, depression, troubled relationships, chronic dissatisfaction, anxiety, fear, confusion and emptiness develop.⁵ When thought of in this way, being in touch with the inner child becomes something that is necessary for emotional satisfaction in life.

Growing up in my family, I always felt like the odd man out. I was not interested in all the things the rest of my family enjoyed. As a family we went on trips to my sister's gymnastics meets or to tour civil war battlegrounds for my brother. Because of this I had to entertain myself by escaping into my own fantasies. Sticks became swords, trees became monsters, rocks became grenades and sometimes the ground became lava. Interactions took place with people and things that were not present. Although all children do this, what is significant for me is that my imagination never stopped. I still have a tendency for seeing things that are not real, holding complete conversations with nobody, and imagining events and scenarios that will never exist. Certainly most of this

³ "Your Inner Child - Divine Child - Child Within Pamela Brockman." Light Reign Consulting, Pamela Brockman - psychotherapists, life coach, hypnosis, serving Boulder/Denver, Colorado.. <http://www.brockman-counseling.com/child.htm> (accessed April 8, 2010).

⁴ Suthren. "Transforming the Self Through Creativity." *The Creative Child and Adult Quarterly*. Vol 13. No. 4 (1988): 227.

⁵ "Inner Child." Elevated Therapy International. <http://elevatedtherapy.org.uk/index-page5.html> (accessed April 12, 2010).

imaginative escape is accidental, and resulting from boredom, often to the disdain of those seeking my attention.

Children naturally seek adventure and push boundaries in part due to the fact that they are unaware of the existence of limits. As a person grows to maturity this sense of adventure can be lost. An individual starts to become aware of boundaries, whether they are real or subconscious, due to a longing for societal approval. A child's parents may be responsible for constructing these unnecessary boundaries that help form the child's inner critic. The inner critic is the greatest deterrent to creativity. It is a voice inside a person that tells them they are not good enough, nobody will approve of what they are doing and that nobody really likes them anyway. The inner critic originally develops as a survival mechanism. Part of a parent's job is to teach their child socially acceptable behavior. In doing so, even the best parents can inevitably curb a child's natural instincts. Usually this makes a person feel that there must be something innately wrong with them and it can be hurtful or embarrassing. Often people begin to tell themselves what is wrong with them even before others get the chance to do so.⁶ A person's inner critic can completely wreck their self-esteem by keeping their inner child at bay.

It is a natural tendency for all children to play and create. Some people unfortunately lose touch with this as they enter adulthood. However, a major component to my personality is my tendency to still behave in that manner. Children can turn cardboard boxes into castles. They can turn a wrapping paper tube into a rifle and I am no exception. As a child I would try to build robots out of anything I could find including trash. In one particular instance I can remember constructing a dinosaur out of a tin can, a few empty cardboard toilet paper rolls and some play-doh. I went as far as to even synthesize my own substitute for blood in order to give life to the dinosaur. Obviously, it did not work but that is not the point. Even at an early age, I was creating things to amuse myself from everyday household objects. This creativity came out of necessity, as my family did not have the means to supply me with all the toys I desired as a child. Deborah Jaffe explains, "The need to play is so strong that, even without mass-produced toys, children will improvise, make their own or turn a natural object or household utensil into a plaything."⁷ Not only was my creativity due to a necessity to play, it was out of a necessity I found to invent. Invention and play have a lot in common. The best inventors are playful and the best players are

⁶ Good. "The Inner Critic." Talent Development Resources - the psychology of creativity, personal growth, advanced development, gifted adults. <http://talentdevelop.com/articles/innercritic.html> (accessed April 13, 2010).

⁷ Jaffe. *The History of Toys: From Spinning Tops to Robots* (Chicago: Sutton Publishing, 2006),1.

inventive.⁸ I played through exploring my creativity and took great joy in making things that had never been seen before. In adulthood I find myself still searching to create what others have never seen.

In addition to possessing this child-like playfulness and imagination, there are other aspects of my personality that creep into my work. In some ways, although I have not been diagnosed, I seem to possess the same personality traits a person with ADD would have. The specific needs of an ADD adult are:

- To be constantly stimulated
- To feel excitement
- To change their pace often
- To be able to innovate
- To create structure rather than follow others⁹

Bright colorful or shiny objects still magnetically grab my attention. In this way I am a marketer's dream. My shopping is driven by impulses. Most of my behavior and interaction with others is driven by whims, impulses and erratic feelings typical of an individual with ADD.¹⁰ When something sticks out, I buy it. Vibrant colors, curious textures, lights, shiny packaging or a button that says, "try me" make certain products nearly impossible for me to resist. Every time I see a variety pack of colored sharpies I experience the urge to buy them. I already have too many sharpies but the vibrant assortment of colors creates a feeling of joy for me and draws me in. The utilization of contrasting, vibrant, neon colors as well as interesting textures creates an overwhelmingly alluring palette. Whether a person has the same personality traits as me or not, I want them to feel these impulses. The viewer should enter the gallery and have an overwhelming urge to touch and interact with my work. Giving in to impulses is one way a person can connect more closely with their inner child.

⁸ Pink. *A Whole New Mind: Why Right-Brainers Will Rule the Future* (Upd ed. Boston: Riverhead Trade, 2006), 203.

⁹ Honos-Webb. *The Gift of Adult ADD: How to Transform Your Challenges and Build on Your Strengths* (Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications, 2008), 33.

¹⁰ Honos-Webb, Ph.D. *The Gift of Adult* (Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications, 2008), 99.

Chapter 3

Object Design

Inadvertently through studying ceramics and making pottery, I became an object maker. Personal objects have the ability to act as souvenirs for the remembrance of a specific place, time or even feeling. Donald Norman says:

Beyond the design of an object, there is a personal component as well, one that no designer or manufacturer can provide. The objects in our lives are more than mere material possessions. We take pride in them, not necessarily because we are showing off our wealth or status, but because of the meanings they bring to our lives. A person's most beloved objects may well be inexpensive trinkets, frayed furniture, or photographs and books, often tattered, dirty, or faded. A favorite object is a symbol, setting up a positive frame of mind, a reminder of pleasant memories, or sometimes are expressions of one's self. And this object always has a story, a remembrance, and something that ties us personally to this particular object, this particular thing.¹¹

The power of objects to evoke memories is somewhat magical. Treasured personal objects make their owners recall a specific time, place and experience. People become attached to things when they have a significant personal association; if they bring to mind enjoyable, comforting moments. As an object maker, I create things that can generate these personal memories. My work will become a symbol for a time and experience that its owner will recall with each viewing of the work. In a 1991 interview, Allan McCollum put this very well; "Objects exist in some way to represent that which is not present, that which is absent, that which is gone, that which is beyond recall."¹²

A person buys a souvenir to remind themselves of a specific happy time in their life. The souvenir then gets placed on a shelf in order to remind its owner of that experience. Once on a shelf, a souvenir can also function as a conversation-starter. It is there to remind the owner but also importantly, it is there to help the owner convey their experiences to others. Personally, my toys are souvenirs of my younger days. Most of these toys are ones that I played with as a child. I can still remember when I received or purchased the toys and even tell a story about them. Also, I

¹¹ Norman. *Emotional Design: Why We Love (or Hate) Everyday Things* (New York: Basic Books, 2005), 6.

¹² Cooke. "Excerpts from an Interview." ALLAN MCCOLLUM.
http://allanmccollum.net/allanmcnyc/Lynne_Cooke_Carnegie.html (accessed November 19, 2009).

take joy in sharing them with new children (mainly my professor's children) and watch as they form their own connections and memories to the object as well as creating new memories and associations for myself through their joy. Toys are a special kind of object. Toys are tools meant to provide fun and happiness and forever they represent these pleasurable experiences no matter in what context they are seen. Children can take toys everywhere; they become inseparable from toys, which make them very personal and meaningful. Toys aren't meant to exist on pedestals in museums, like so many impersonal precious objects.¹³

With the creation of any object, design must be considered. I am interested in the emotive powers of design and how certain design choices can create emotions in the viewer. With my work I researched the expressional powers of color, texture and form so that I could utilize them to achieve my desired results. When designing an object there are three aspects to design that need to be considered; *visceral* design, which concerns itself with appearances, *behavioral* design, which refers to an item's pleasure and effectiveness of use and *reflective* design, that considers the rationalization and intellectualization of a product. It is not possible to have a design without all three of these aspects but what is important, is how they interweave a person's emotions and cognition.¹⁴

A. Visceral Design

Visceral design may be the most important of the three aspects of design in that it forms a person's initial reaction to the object. In life, first impressions are key and the same applies to objects! If the object in question is not visually alluring, no viewer will approach it cognitively and they especially will not try to discover its use. If something is beautiful but does not work very well, that fact that it is beautiful is still usually enough to keep it around. However, it does not matter how well an object performs its function if it is perceived as ugly and visually uninteresting, no one will use it. Designer and author Donald Norman says this:

Although the visceral level is the simplest and most primitive part of the brain, it is sensitive to a very wide range of conditions. These are genetically determined, with the conditions evolving slowly over the course of evolution. They all share one property, however: the condition can be recognized simply by the sensory information. The visceral level is incapable of reasoning, of comparing a

¹³ Kuspit. 2001. "Serious Fun: Art Toys for Adult Toddlers." *Metalsmith* 21, no. 5: 38-45. Academic Search Complete, EBSCOhost (accessed January 5, 2010).

¹⁴ Norman. *Emotional Design* (New York: Basic Books, 2005), 5-6.

situation with past history. It works by what cognitive scientists call “pattern matching.” What are people genetically programmed for? Those situations and objects that, throughout evolutionary history, offer food, warmth or protection give rise to positive affect. These conditions include: Warm, comfortably lit places, temperate climate, sweet tastes and smells, bright, highly saturated hues, soothing sounds, smiling faces, rhythmic beats, “attractive” people, symmetrical objects, rounded, smooth objects, and “sensuous” feelings, sounds and shapes.¹⁵

It is genetically wired within most everyone to find bright, highly saturated hues pleasing. In nature, these colors represent life and growth. Flowers are bright colors to attract the insects that pollinate them. Fruits are bright colors to help animals find them for food. Johannes Itten said, “Color is life: for a world without colors appears to us as dead.”¹⁶ Bright, saturated colors remind me of toys and represent play and fun. Each color has its own expressional value. Individual colors can cause people to feel individual emotions. When basic primary and secondary colors are all thrown together, it creates lively, invigorating and bold feelings. Through color, my work exposes these playful feelings for everyone whether they are young or old. The colors attract the eye and urge the hand while reminding the viewer of objects to be played with. Children’s toys are always bright primary colors because they need the colors for their visual development. Vibrant colors help attract their eyes, which in turn helps them learn to focus in the earlier developmental stages. My need for color comes from a compulsion to have fun, remain childlike and be visually stimulated. Anyone who has lost touch with his or her inner-child can hopefully feel the power of vibrant, saturated color in the presence of my work.

In order to create an effective pleasing object design, form must be considered. People are known to enjoy round and symmetrical objects. Something that is round suggests play, and fun. Round objects are visually soft and inviting and encourage the hand to touch them in the same way something sharp and pointed would indicate pain and as a result would not be touched. Symmetry means that the form is proportioned equally on both sides to create balance. Visual balance is frequently perceived as enjoyable. My work is made up of round forms of varying sizes in an attempt to make objects that are visually alluring and pleasing to handle. It is also hoped that when my work is viewed the round forms will instill an emotion of joy in the viewer. There is no contrast of form to create uneasiness; the work all revolves around the repetition of the sphere and round form to elicit joy.

¹⁵ Norman. *Emotional Design* (New York: Basic Books, 2005), 29.

¹⁶ Itten. *The Elements of Color* (New York, NY: Wiley, 1970), 8.

Children react without thinking and act on sudden impulses. If a child feels the urge to touch something, they touch it and it does not matter where they are. Obviously, sometimes this can get a child in trouble if they are in a museum or a store. This represents a person with no inner critic. Children have yet to grow up and develop the inner voice that tells them that acting on their sudden impulses is not socially acceptable. However, through my work, adults can feel free to silence this voice and act on these impulses. I want the viewer to touch without considering the consequences. That is my goal, through the visceral design of my work, to create objects that evoke feelings of joy and urge the viewer to touch them. Hopefully, the viewer will listen to their inner child and give in to their impulses and in return, have fun.

B. Behavioral Design

“If we want to see a thing well, we must use it well.”¹⁷

The behavioral design of an object speaks of its usefulness. With what level of ease does the object perform its function? In this case, appearance does not really matter. Rationale does not matter, only performance does. The components of good behavioral design are function, understandability, usability and physical feel. What does the object do and how well does it perform this function? These are the questions concerned when designing an object to be used. If the object is not supposed to do anything, then it does not matter, but if its only function is to look good, it had better achieve it. Sometimes, function is the most important aspect to an object, if a watch does not keep time or a mug does not hold liquid, then what else really matters?¹⁸

When I made pottery, function was a primary concern. In making utilitarian pots there is an intention for it to eventually be used. Before college, I had never even considered the idea of making art that a person interacts with. When one interacts with pottery, there is a very intimate relationship formed through its use. This personal relationship achieved with pottery is very special and it becomes a challenge for an artist to repeatedly make something different that can still achieve this intimacy. Soetsu Yanagi says; “Things that cannot be used possess something negative, even if beautiful. Ugly things are not fit to be used. Real beauty appeals to us, asks to be

¹⁷ Yanagi. *The Unknown Craftsman: A Japanese Insight into Beauty* (Revised ed. New York: Kodansha International, 1997), 178.

¹⁸ Norman. *Emotional Design* (New York: Basic Books, 2005), 70.

used; beauty cannot be neglected. The seeing eye will urge the using hand.”¹⁹ This suggests that visceral and behavioral design are not only equally important, but co-dependant. Pottery is the perfect embodiment of this relationship between beauty and use. Although I stopped making pots, in my sculptural work I wanted to keep this relationship in the work. I respect the intimacy that forms in the bond between pot and user and I want my work to still have this quality.

The function of my work is simple, yet it hopes to affect real complicated feelings. All my work is supposed to be moved or interacted with. Some pieces are on springs, some are on strings, and some are rattles. The pieces all perform their function. They bounce or swing and even rattle when shaken. These are simple functions that are meant to amuse and please the person interacting with them but it is through these simple functions that real personal connections are made to the work. My work is made to create feelings of joy and pleasure for emotional edification. Through the visual elements and simple utility present in my work, this function is carried out and intimate bonds can be formed between the work and the viewer.

C. Reflective Design

Reflective design concerns itself with the message of the object. What is the object saying? What personal memories does the object make the viewer remember? Appearance and function work together to create an object that evokes memories or personal feelings and those are what create an object’s reflective design.²⁰

A souvenir is a great example of how reflective design works. On a trip to China, I purchased a small paperweight replica of the famous terra cotta warriors in Xian. As far as appearances go, it is a shoddy replica at best. It was obviously made very cheaply and I did not have to spend much to buy it. The object’s function is to sit there on a table and do nothing. It is only supposed to be looked at, but it is not even very attractive. Why do I keep it around? Why do I always pack it when I move while I throw other useless things away? There are two answers to these questions. I get a sense of pride from the object because I had to go to China to get it. China is really far away from West Virginia, so that fact in itself is enough to make me feel proud that I have something not a lot of people do. More importantly though, I keep it around for the memories it evokes.

¹⁹ Yanagi. *The Unknown Craftsman* (Revised ed. New York: Kodansha International, 1997), 179.

²⁰ Norman. *Emotional Design* (New York: Basic Books, 2005), 84.

When I see it I remember the terra cotta warriors. I remember the feeling of amazement I had as I walked into the museum and saw the warriors for the first time. I remember the smell of the museum and I remember the temperature of the museum and how my jacket was not keeping me warm enough. When I look at the paperweight I can also remember buying it in the underground sidewalk tunnel market in Xian. My memories of haggling with the cashier also come to mind in the presence of this object. In this way, objects have an incredible power. It is astonishing to think that a piece of wood and plastic can evoke so many memories and feelings about experiences. A designer has to carefully consider this when creating an object; they have to realize how appearance and form can create these memories.

Bright, highly saturated colors and round forms evoke memories of fun and play and environments where children have fun. In the presence of these colors, a person will start imagining playgrounds, toys they had as a child or the McDonald's play place they might take their nephew to. The memories are different for everybody, but they all revolve around the common theme of fun. My work is round or more specifically, the shape of a ball. When someone views a ball, they think of play. A person may start thinking about games they enjoyed like soccer or baseball. Once again it is different for each individual, but the ball is a universal symbol for play. In this way time or cultural barriers do not restrain the perception of my work. In fact, stone marbles have been found in a previously inhabited cave dating from the Stone Age. The marbles are especially interesting because they do not match any of the local geology, which suggests that they were brought from elsewhere.²¹ Imagine that, even in the Stone Age objects meant for play existed and were enjoyed and regarded enough to be kept when traveling. Some of my work was cast from real objects that actually were intended for play at one point. The familiar size will help people recall the specific object and evoke their own personal memories associated with it. When someone recognizes these objects consciously or subconsciously these playful associations will hopefully appear.

Some of my pieces are inspired by and resemble infant toys. The associations to mobiles are also present and deliberate. The fact that these pieces resemble mobiles and are rattles is only important in the sense that they evoke certain memories in myself that I want to remember. My brother and his wife recently had a baby girl. She is six months old as of the writing of this thesis. Hannah was the first baby born to my immediate family and I was designated her godfather. This

²¹ Jaffe. *The History of Toys* (Chicago: Sutton Publishing, 2006), 21.

experience became very special and significant to my life. I make this work that resembles these infant toys because it causes me to think about her. My work allows me to recall meeting her for the first time, getting to hold her and spending time with her. These memories are especially important to me right now because I have only seen her once in her short life and it was only for three days. I do not have too many memories of her yet but it is important to me that I do not forget the few I do have. When I make this work, memories of her stay fresh in my mind and make me happy. Through the reference to these universally recognized baby toys, I hope that others recall similar pleasurable memories of loved ones they might have.

Chapter 4

Process

When I arrived at graduate school, I was naïve about a lot of firing processes and construction methods possible with clay. My first semester of graduate school, spent in China,²² was instrumental to helping me realize how naïve I was. Wood firing, salt and soda firing, low temperature firing, glaze chemistry, slip-casting were all foreign processes to me. My first year and a half was spent trying every method I could, and sorting out what I liked and disliked.

Eventually, I settled on slip-casting as my preferred ceramic construction process. Slip-casting is a process through which liquid clay or “slip” is poured into a plaster mold. The plaster absorbs the moisture from the slip that is touching it. The excess slip is poured out and what is left is a clay shell in the mold. When the slip has dried enough, the separate pieces of the mold are pulled apart and what is left is a clay duplicate of the object that the mold was made from.

Casting slip is particularly complicated, because it has to be deflocculated in order to work. So what does deflocculated mean? Clay particles are plate shaped and octagonal. The edges of the plates have a positive charge and the inner flat surfaces, have a negative charge. Just like in magnets, these opposite charges attract each other and the plates are bound together by an electrical charge. Clay particles literally flock together like sheep, resulting in what is known as flocculated clay. When a deflocculant like sodium silicate is added, the positive charge on the edges of the clay particles changes to a negative charge. The plates then repel each other. Instead of flocking together, they deflock. All of the clay particles have the same electrical charge and therefore they all repel each other. This deflocculated slip therefore never settles as normal clay slips and glazes do. Also the casts are equal in thickness on all sides because the clay is being repelled equally in all directions.²³

Besides the slip, knowledge of the properties of plaster is important for success in slip-casting. Plaster “drinks” water. Think of plaster as a rigid sponge; it moves water from the surface into its

²² I spent my first semester in graduate school studying at the Jingdezhen Ceramic Institute in China through WVU. I worked with American ceramic professors John Neely (Utah State) and Joe Zeller (University of Idaho) during this time in China.

²³ Martin. *The Essential Guide to Mold Making & Slip Casting* (New York: Lark Books (Nc), 2007), 116.

mass. The plaster absorbs the water from the slip at a consistent rate throughout the mold. The plaster's absorption rate is primarily determined by the water to plaster ratio initially used to make the mold. The longer the casting slip sits in the mold, the thicker the casting becomes. The proper ratio of water to plaster is 70 pounds of water to 100 pounds of plaster. This consistency is important in order to achieve the proper absorption rate.²⁴

The clay body and casting slip I use are based on the same 50/50 recipe. Fifty percent of the clay body is made of ball clay. Ball clays are a type of secondary clay, which means it is clay that has been transported from the site of the original parent rock. Water is the most common agent of this transportation, but glaciers and wind may also carry clay. Because ball clays travel, they tend to pick up iron and other impurities along the way. Ball clays are also made of fine particles because the larger particles settle whereas the finer particles are moved much easier.²⁵ Specifically, I use Tennessee #10 ball clay because it is much whiter in color than most of the other ball clays. The other fifty percent of the clay body is talc. Talc has widely been used in commercial clay bodies. Talc allows for a clay body that is white and also matures at a low temperature but has a long firing range.²⁶ It is said that using large amounts of talc will result in a non-plastic clay body that is really only suitable for casting. In my experience, this clay body of 50/50 ball clay and talc is excellent for throwing and press-molding despite the warnings. The clay body also proved to be impervious to cracking issues during drying and firing processes. The casting slip I use is the same 50/50 body just made into a slip and deflocculated. Using the same clay for the clay body and the casting slip makes mixing thrown and cast parts much safer. Both have just about the same shrinkage rate and therefore will not crack apart.

I use the 50/50 clay body I do for several reasons. First of all, the clay body is meant for low-fire. I fire the clay to cone 06, which is roughly 1830°F. Firing low has its benefits. Personally, I decided to do low-fire is because I wanted very bright and saturated colors in my work. Only at low temperatures are these colors possible. The clay body, when fired to cone 06, is completely white. This feature is also beneficial to an artist who seeks vibrant colors, as the white background does not subtract from the brilliance of the glaze over it.

²⁴Martin. *The Essential Guide to Mold Making & Slip Casting*. (New York: Lark Books (Nc), 2007), 27.

²⁵Rhodes. *Clay and Glazes for the Potter*. First revised edition (Philadelphia: Chilton, 1973), 20.

²⁶Rhodes. *Clay and Glazes for the Potter*. First revised edition (Philadelphia: Chilton, 1973), 50.

All my recent work is glazed with Duncan commercial glazes.²⁷ I am particularly fond of their neon envision series. In graduate school I spent a lot of time doing glaze tests. However, nothing I could come up with ever satisfied me. Eventually, I chose to go on-line and see what commercial glazes had to offer. I stumbled upon these neon glazes and immediately knew I was going to cover my work with them. The neon glazes just seemed to be the opposite of the traditional high-fire glazes I had been brought up using and thus attracted me. My work had a vibrancy that I had never encountered before in ceramics, and I was extremely pleased with the results.

Every piece I make incorporates Slip-cast, press-molded and thrown elements. In my piece *Sit n' Shake* (fig. 1) all three elements are present. The largest round orange form was press-molded from one half-spherical mold then, two of these half-spheres were joined together to form one ball. In the detail image of figure 1, the black part was slip-cast. The mold was made from a household plastic plunger. Also the ball that dangles from the end of the string was made from the mold of a round Christmas ornament. The green studs connected to the larger orange ball were also press molded, but the blue phallic object emerging from the piece was thrown on the potter's wheel. Care was taken to make sure a high level of craftsmanship was maintained in each element so that they could be joined together seamlessly. This piece is also an example of the neon glazes I prefer to incorporate into my work.

²⁷ www.duncanpaintstore.com

Chapter 5

Influences

Midway through my graduate education at WVU one of my ceramics professors, Shoji Satake, said something that still resonates with me. “The more obscure your source materials are, the more interesting your own work will start to become.” This statement really got the ball rolling for me, pun intended. What followed was a very reflective time in my life. I realized that prior to my professor’s comment, in ceramics, I had only made pots that referenced other pots for inspiration. I found myself hung up on traditional pottery forms and utility, both noble pursuits in pottery, but I needed more. My focus turned to objects that I found amusing and attracted my attention and how they are designed to do so. Of course because of my personality I started to look at toys, most notably infant toys and how the intrinsic properties of playing can influence my work. At that time I also expanded my influences to artists outside of ceramics. Often one gets preoccupied focusing on artists within their medium, and that certainly was the case with me. My interest in ceramic artists continued but I began to look towards mixed media sculptors, Allan McCollum and Alexander Calder for inspiration.

A. Toys

*A toy is an object to be played with in order to develop sensory awareness, language and auditory skills, manual dexterity and physical coordination. Toys help to develop creativity, the imagination and personal understanding. They can be of any size but of a suitable scale to correspond with a child’s ability, size and strength. They may be one-off or mass-manufactured, made from one or a variety of materials, simple or complex to play with, soft, to be nurtured, or hard and durable. They may move, make a sound, be adaptable, and be misused. They are fun.*²⁸

It is hard to give a clear definition of what a toy is, but that is the beauty of toys. Toys can be anything and through them, a child can do anything because they are the starting points of a child’s imagination. Even the initial purposes of a toy are not confining in the hands of a child, as it can become whatever the child wishes. My youth was defined with toys. When I think about it, a majority of my memories revolve around things I had to play with as a child. Presently, toys

²⁸ Jaffe. *The History of Toys* (Chicago: Sutton Publishing, 2006), 14.

define my work through their use as inspiration. Some toys have proven to be able to transcend time and cultures. Balls and rattles have repeatedly appeared throughout history and in different parts of the world. In my work, I reference them in an attempt to harness their transcendent abilities. Mobiles, as a toy, have not been around as long as rattles and balls have. However, their use in development of infants is now as beneficial as any other object. Again, my niece Hannah is the main reason for my awareness of infant toys.

The earliest rattles were dried pods of seed that would make a sound if shaken. The next step of evolution in rattles was clay. The Egyptians made rattles from earthenware clay. Greeks and Romans shaped their terracotta rattles as pigs and birds then filled them with clay pellets. A rattle from Pompeii consists of clay beads threaded on a ring of bent metal fastened to an ivory handle. A rattle is generally the first toy a baby plays with apart from the mother and is a toy that is used at the transition when a baby first becomes aware and starts to focus and play. It is an enormous achievement for a baby to interact with a rattle. They have to develop the skills to grasp it, then the ability to shake it followed with a smile as a response to the sound. For a baby the rattle is an introduction to creating and listening to sounds.²⁹ The idea of making objects that function as rattles may seem like a new idea but actually there is a long history of clay rattles. Since the use of plastics, this history has generally been forgotten. Babies can actually use many of my pieces because they do function as rattles and are glazed in safe, nontoxic glazes. Mostly through the use of rattles I want to reintroduce them to adults. Most people approach my work unaware that they are rattles and when someone picks up a piece, they are treated with a surprise. Babies find incongruity amusing and I find that adults appreciate it too, in the right settings. The unseen clay pellets in my pieces that make the rattle, create the incongruity.

A Ball is the simplest and most basic toy. It's size, manufacture and capabilities have varied around the world. But the challenges, skills, amusement and fun, for children and adults, emanating from it basic function to be thrown, caught, kicked, bounced, juggled or hit remain the same. At its most fundamental a ball was and is a pebble to be thrown and caught or used to play games.³⁰

I would venture to guess that there is not a person alive who is unaware of the playful properties of a ball that develop hand-eye coordination in children. Even without the presences of manufactured balls, humans still have rocks to play with that function in the same basic way. Balls have are universally recognized as objects to be played with. I use round spherical ball

²⁹Jaffe. *The History of Toys* (Chicago: Sutton Publishing, 2006), 22

³⁰Jaffe. *The History of Toys* (Chicago: Sutton Publishing, 2006), 20.

forms in my work as a symbol meant to evoke the memories of these playful activities and happy feelings.

Nature provides much inspiration for toys. This is because before toys were invented or recognized as toys, all that people had to play with was nature. Rocks were the earliest balls and dried seedpods were rattles. Mobiles, in nature, would be trees and leaves that hang and move in the wind. They can be flags that flow in the breeze or even clothes hung out to dry. The movement and changes in the shapes of leaves and branches of trees have provided amusement for babies over generations.³¹ At about the age of six weeks babies' eyes start to focus thus presenting the need for an object to focus on. Objects that move, and especially move in the wind, help babies develop their sight and depth perception while discovering the cause and effect relationship of wind on objects.

B. Artists

It is impossible to discuss or create mobiles as art forms without the consideration of Alexander Calder's work, which introduced mobiles as an art form in the 1940s (fig. 2). Calder was ingenious in that he was really the first to make art that moved. In an essay about Calder's mobiles, philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre writes:

*Sculpture suggests movement, painting suggests depth or light. A "mobile" does not "suggest" anything: it captures genuine living movements and shapes them. "Mobiles" have no meaning, make you think of nothing but themselves. They are, that is all; they are absolutes. There is more of the unpredictable about them than in any other human creation. No human brain, not even their creator's, could possibly foresee all the complex combinations of which they are capable. A general destiny of movement is sketched for them, and then they are left to work it out for themselves. What they may do at a given moment will be determined by the time of day, the sun, the temperature or the wind. The object is thus always half way between the servility of a statue and the independence of natural event; each of its evolutions is the inspiration of a moment.*³²

Whereas Calder's work reacts to natural occurrences in nature, mine is meant to react to the viewer of the work. A piece remains motionless until the viewer interjects in some way, whether through touch or the wind and vibration their own presence creates in the environment. Calder's

³¹Jaffe. *The History of Toys* (Chicago: Sutton Publishing, 2006), 72.

³²Sarte. "Calder Foundation." Calder Foundation. <http://calder.org/historicaltexts/text/13.html> (accessed April 15, 2010).

work remains an inspiration though and a monument to the beauty of natural movement. His incredible melding of stunning design and movement in sculpture supplies an example to strive for. Many designers adapted Alexander Calder's ideas for use with babies. The mobiles were meant to exercise the muscles in the baby's eyes. In the 1970s Fisher Price introduced a mobile that could be attached to the side of a crib and, instead of relying on moving air to activate the suspended shapes, came with a motor and music box that could spring into action by turning a handle.³³ This design has been a mainstay in baby toys and continues to be updated.

Recently, I find myself looking at the work and reading the words of artist Allan McCollum. His work titled *Individual Works* (fig. 3), which consists of 10,000 objects made from casts of household items, I find particularly intriguing. McCollum's work is interesting to me because it is made from molds of quotidian objects and has a "toy-like" appearance, which is something that I attempt in my own work. His work functions as objects of desire, souvenirs, keepsakes and symbols of transcendence. Remaining ambiguous, his objects are devoid of a subject. Whereas a specific souvenir is a sign for a place that someone has been, McCollum's *Individual Works*, are not signs for anything. McCollum says about this:

*With all of my artworks, I have always meant to withhold the creation of specific meaning, or surface meaning, because I am so much more interested in the quality of meaningfulness in and of itself. That people should desire to build and imminent meaning into things, and to produce symbolic objects, to keep them, to exchange them, to love them; this is more touching to me by far than any of the more precise meanings a specific artwork might attempt to convey.*³⁴

Also, McCollum makes work that blurs the line between art and mass-produced objects. He suggests that through mass-produced objects we make our distinction as to what art is. What happens when art is made from mass-produced objects? On this topic McCollum says:

Lately I've been thinking quite a bit about the way we construct our distinctions between art-objects and mass-produced objects, because I'm kind of doing both. I've been taking note of all those qualities we expect of an artwork — spontaneity, expressivity, passion, uniqueness, reflexivity, and so on — all of these qualities are precisely those qualities which are never found in a mass-produced, machine-made object. We never hear an artwork applauded because, say, it is predictable, repetitive, methodically-produced, and commonly available! I think we must be extremely frightened of machines and their products, and that we have come to accept a philosophy, which can only recognize as "human" those qualities, which are not like the qualities of our machines, and we have come to expect our artworks to express this particular

³³ Jaffe. *The History of Toys* (Chicago: Sutton Publishing, 2006), 72.

³⁴ Essink. "Allan McCollum | Selma Klein Essink." ALLAN MCCOLLUM. <http://www.allanmccollum.net/allanmcnyc/vanabbe/essink.html> (accessed April 2, 2010).

*definition of human-ness. So in this way, we have paradoxically both allowed the machine to determine for us what it is to be human and also what our art should be. Our industrial methods have determined the nature of our subjectivity.*³⁵

Ultimately, as I began to rediscover my child-like personality in graduate school, I began to seek out work that had toy-like influences that I connected with. In ceramics, Robert “Boomer” Moore and Von Venhuizen, embody the sort of playfulness I enjoy and strive for in my own work. Boomer is one of my professors, but I want to speak of his work objectively and how studying his work alone was influential separate from his teaching. I was attracted to the playful nature of both artists’ works. Boomer took something traditional like pottery, and put a fun and enjoyable spin on it by referencing toys. Boomer often incorporates kinetic elements into his work. Some pieces actually have moving ceramic parts (fig. 4). He incorporates spring-mounted feet, moving ceramic wheels and even spinning ceramic propellers.³⁶ Boomer’s work got me thinking about clay in new and interesting ways. Never had I thought that clay could be fired, and still move. Up until that point my pieces were fired, and then forever remained inert. Boomer’s work encouraged me to try to create playful motion in my clay pieces. Von’s work also has a very toy-like presence. His piece *Hot Rod* (fig. 5) appears as if it’s supposed to be pulled around by a child. Von takes the idea of industry and references the innocence of youth. Von even references toys in his own artist statement; “The idea that children would actually play with such industrial looking toys is part of the question. But so is the ability of the industry to create such items for children. Children are given safe, colorful plastic tools, toys and cars designed not to cause injury, but to help learn. Toys are designed for certain age groupings, and many are for all ages. My pieces are to give reference to a society that tries not to grow old too fast.” Both artists have been examples for how I can infuse my own playful personality into my work.

³⁵Power. "Interview between Allan McCollum and Kevin Power." allanmccollum.net. www.allanmccollum.net/allanmcnyc/kevinpower.html (accessed March 25, 2010).

³⁶Post. "The Signature Style of Robert "Boomer" Moore." *Clay Times* (Jul. - Aug. 2002.)

Chapter 6

Vibrant Amusement: Analysis of Thesis Work

Just in my last semester, thanks to a lot of this research, my work grew and evolved in exciting and fun ways. The conceptual framework for my work had been laid down. The purpose of my work had been decided. Preparing for my thesis show was a new, but welcomed, challenge. Not only did I have to design individual objects, but also I needed to come up with interesting and engaging ways to display the work in the gallery. My thesis exhibition became a sort of experiment. I set up the work and I observed to see if my attempts to engage the viewer were rewarded.

Earlier I talked about how children have the ability to turn everyday objects into toys through their playful creativity. Also, I recalled a story about how I used to try to create dinosaurs and robots with trash and found household objects. Much of my research was about incorporating this child-like technique of creativity and play into the creation processes of my own work. Slip-casting allowed me to find everyday household objects that I found interesting, visually or tactilely, and create something new with them in this creative child-like manner.

The objects I cast always get slightly distorted, becoming unrecognizable yet still somehow familiar. Ambiguity is an important element to my work. When I leave the objects abstract, the viewer is forced to define the objects themselves. Each individual will be able to look at my work and add his or her own meaning. Will they remember toys they used to own? Will the viewer be reminded of children in their own life? I don't know what the viewer will see. My works are my own personal souvenirs of childhood. They cause me to recall my own playful, happy childhood memories. Hopefully, the viewers have had similar enjoyable experiences as children and will be able to relate to the work. These objects function to keep society and myself from getting too serious and forgetting how to play.

Baby toys, as stated earlier, often inspire my work. *A Mobile for all Seasons* (fig. 6) clearly references the ideas of infant mobiles. However, the piece is very large and hung very high to show that it is meant for adults to interact with. Full-grown adults can stand underneath it and feel surrounded by the piece. *Going Mobile*, (fig. 7), is another example of a larger than life mobile

meant to remind people of babies they might have or know, and allow the viewer to be engaged by an object similarly to what an infant experiences. *Shake, Rattle and Roll* (fig. 8) shows an object, obviously influenced by a baby's rattle. It is engaging and invites the viewer to hold it. Often the piece, when touched, is inadvertently shaken and the viewer is surprised to discover that it makes noise. This viewer object relationship symbolizes the experience babies have when they are first learning how to grasp and hold objects and rattles and make noise themselves.

Noticeable visual kinetic elements also create a piece that invites the viewer to touch. Springs and objects hanging from strings suggest potential movement. When that object is not moving, I hope the viewer feels compelled to touch it performing the task that is inherent visually. There are prime examples of how I translate these ideas into my work. *Springy Thingy III* (fig. 9) demonstrates how the elements of color, texture and kinetic potential create a piece that is visually alluring as well as inviting to the touch. In my work, I want the viewer to feel the same compulsion I feel. This experience is very child-like because it is through touch and feel that children interact and discover their environment. Children live in the moment and are driven by their impulses. Most adults have become rational, they need to think things through before they react. When I make work, I consider these impulses I experience in everyday life and then strive to translate them to the viewer. I want the adult viewers to once again experience this magnetic compulsion and allow themselves to act in order to satisfy their impulses. I want to provide a safe haven for them to react based on feeling and less on rational thought, as a child would. The more natural instincts one suppresses, the more their lives become meaningless. I hope that through my expressiveness I can give others the permission they need to begin to recognize their own inner children

Other visual elements such as texture and visual kinetic components are utilized in my work to create the emotions of joy and fun. Interesting and soft textures also genetically create an emotion of pleasure because they are inviting to the touch. When the texture is apparent visually, it urges the hand to reach out to it and feel it. I use soft rounded bumps to create texture on my pieces. These bumps are meant to be pleasurable and somewhat sensuous feeling creating the sensation of joy in those who venture to touch it. The glazes I use in the ceramic pieces add interesting texture as well. I switch between glossy and satin textured glazes. Both forms of the glazes have the appearance of a material that is not ceramic. The satin glazes especially have the look of plastic and are very smooth and pleasing to touch. My work contains the combining of these two types of glaze to create a pleasurable visual contrast. There is no contrast in the glazes to the point

were uneasiness occurs, rather the contrast in textures is subtle urging the viewer to feel it in order to discover the differences.

When preparing for my thesis show I was uncertain if I would be able to set up the work in a way that encouraged viewer exploration. It was my wish to create work that forced interaction despite the sterile gallery setting. As it turns out, the work was playful and compelling enough for the viewers to feel the need to explore my work. People entered the gallery with the sense of wonderment and adventure that I wanted them to feel. Through my choices of installation and presentation I was able to give the viewer the same feeling of adventure a child possesses as they discover the world. The pieces were installed high in the air giving them the appearance of being larger than life. When a child relates to their environment, everything appears bigger and taller and inconceivable. Through the installation, I wanted to reintroduce adults to feelings children experience.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

In three years of graduate school my work grew in unpredictable and imaginative ways. Through my own research and the support of the faculty my mind was opened to new ideas and possibilities available in my own creative processes. My time spent in graduate school proved to be a rediscovery and revival of myself, not only as an artist, but also as an individual in society. My work demonstrates a new found confidence in my abilities to create but also confidence in my beliefs, ideas and purposes. As I graduate, I feel confident in my work's relevance in contemporary art and the world of ceramics. Introducing play into one's personal life is becoming more and more vital to emotional health in society. In this respect my work can be in the forefront of our culture delivering its playful message to everyone willing to hear it. I leave graduate school proud that I make individual work that speaks of my own personality and my own beliefs. I see this work as a great stepping stool for leaping into my professional career where I will continue to make work that attempts to be vital and relevant to what I feel are increasingly important contemporary issues.

Figure 1. *Sit n' Shake* (and detail)

Figure 2. *The Star*, Alexander Calder, 1960.

Figure 3. *Individual Works*, Allan McCollum 1987/88

Figure 4. *Banana Airways*, Robert “Boomer” Moore

Figure 5. *Hot Rod*, Von Venhuizen

Figure 6. *A Mobile for all Seasons*

Figure 7. *Going Mobile*

Figure 8. *Shake, Rattle and Roll*

Figure 9. *Springy Thingy III*

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Curriculum Vitae

EDUCATION

2010 **Master of Fine Arts**, Visual Art (Ceramics), West Virginia University
2007 **Ceramics in China Study Abroad Program**, West Virginia University,
Jingdezhen Ceramics Institute (JCI), Jiang Xi Province, People's Republic of
China
2007 **Bachelor of Fine Arts**, Ceramics, California University of Pennsylvania

EXHIBITIONS AND AWARDS

2010 **Vibrant Amusement: MFA Thesis Exhibition**
April 5-9, 2010. Paul Mesaros Gallery. West Virginia University
You're a Cheese Sandwich: A group exhibition of MFA candidates
from West Virginia University. February 5th – February 26th 2010
Fast Fwd Gallery, 3700 Penn Ave. Pittsburgh, PA 15201.
fastfwdart@gmail.com
Utah State University Clay West International
Jurors: Joe Zeller, Chuck Hindes
January 11th – February 6th 2010
2009 **Clay Times Magazine, Volume 15 – Issue 84, November/December**
2009, p.43
An image of my work *Toy Tube #2*, was featured in *The Gallery*
section of this issue.
Objects of Virtue: A National Juried Exhibition of Contemporary
Pottery
Juror: Julia Galloway,
December 1st 2009 – January 31st 2010
Bedford Gallery, 1601 Civic Dr. Walnut Creek, CA 94596
West Virginia University Ceramics Department Exhibition
ZENCLAY galleries, 2862 University Ave. Morgantown, WV 26505
2008 **Student Group Show**
NCECA/JCI/WVU "Shared Journeys" student participant show.
October 23, 2008. Robert P. Anderson Gallery, WVU/JCI Studios,
Jingdezhen PRC.
Student X 8 (Ceramics by WVU Students)
June 2nd, 2008. ZENCLAY Galleries
Group Show David MacDonald Workshop, Slippery Rock University,
Slippery Rock, PA
WVU Alumni and Graduate Student Exhibition
March 16th 2008, ZENCLAY Galleries
2007 **WVU-JCI International Ceramic Studies Group Show**

Jingdezhen, Jiang Xi Province, PRC
International Contemporary Ceramic Exhibition Catalog
Jingdezhen, PRC. A piece of mine was shown in the catalog for this international exhibition.
Group Show
Val Cushing Workshop, Slippery Rock University, Slippery Rock, PA

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

2008-2010	WVU Graduate Assistant Instructor of Record. I taught Art 102, Non-Major Ceramics for five semesters.
2009	CALU Upward Bound Program Ceramics Instructor. June 2009 California University of Pennsylvania Program Director: Gary C. Seelye seelye@cup.edu (724/938-4039) Teaching Assistant to professors Shoji Satake and Robert “Boomer” Moore of WVU.
2008	CALU Upward Bound Program Ceramics Instructor. June 2008 California University of Pennsylvania Teaching Assistant to professors Shoji Satake, Robert “Boomer” Moore and Bob Anderson of WVU.
2007	Teaching Assistant to Professor Richard Miecznikowski of CalU.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Present	Member of N.C.E.C.A (National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts)
2010	Curator and organizer WVU MFA student exhibition: You’re a Cheese Sandwich. Pittsburgh, PA.
2009-2010	President of WVU Clay Club
2008-2010	Graduate Studio Assistant at WVU
2009	Gallery Assistant WVU Mesaros Galleries.
2008	Student Volunteer , NCECA/JCI/WVU “Shared Journeys” international ceramics symposium in Jingdezhen China. October 22 – November 2 2008. Student Volunteer , “Bridging the Gap: East Meets West” international ceramics symposium at WVU. March 15-17 2008
2005-2007	Studio Assistant at CALU

WORKSHOPS and CONFERENCES ATTENDED

2010	WVU Pre-NCECA 2010 Conference. Workshops by artists: Sarah Jaeger, Steve Godfrey, Von Venhuizen and Tom Bartel
2009	Val Cushing workshop, California University of Pennsylvania Jeff Campana slide Lecture, West Virginia University

N.C.E.C.A. (National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts)
 Conference, Phoenix, AZ
Robert Briscoe workshop, Manchester Craftsman's Guild,
 Pittsburgh, PA
 2008 **Beth Cavener Stichter** demonstration, Jingdezhen Ceramics
 Institute, Jingdezhen, China
Peter Beasecker demonstration, Jingdezhen Ceramics Institute,
 Jingdezhen, China
N.C.E.C.A._Pittsburgh, PA
NCECA/JCI/WVU "Shared Journeys" International Symposium
 in Jingdezhen China
Matt Long workshop, Concord University, Athens, WV
"Bridging the Gap: East Meets West" International Symposium
 at WVU (Included workshops by artists **Josh Deweese, Tara**
Wilson, Jennifer Allen and **Martin Tagseth.**)
 2007 **Val Cushing** workshop. Slippery Rock University, Slippery Rock,
 PA
 2006 **Yoko Bove** workshop, California University of Pennsylvania
 2005 **Laura Jean McLaughlin** workshop, California University of
 Pennsylvania
Linda Christensen Slide Lecture, California University of
 Pennsylvania
 2004 **Nancy Selvin** workshop, California University of Pennsylvania