THE OTTAWA GUILD OF POTTERS
LA GUILDE DES POTIERS D'OTTAWA

Volume: January 2019
Issue 6

Fired Up!

Next meeting:

When Jan. 14 '19

Time:

6:30 – 9:00 p.m.
(library is open
6:30 – 7:15 p.m.)

Where: Hintonburg Community Center

Laroche Room
1064 Wellington St.
Ottawa K1Y 2Y3

Website
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Message from the President

By Barb Minish

Spring sale in April, Compass - Peace in All Directions through the summer, Annual Exhibition in November, another great holiday sale in December with several Celebrating Clay exhibitions throughout the year…. well 2018, that's a wrap. 2019? Bring it on!

I decided several years ago to dispense with "New Year's resolutions". I still think of things I want to change or do in the coming year but I call them "intentions" rather than resolutions. Somehow the term seems a little gentler and less self-critical to me. So what are my "intentions" for 2019? I want to see more beauty around me. I want to create more beauty and, more importantly, I want to recognize the beauty that already surrounds us. Showing holiday visitors around Ottawa, I was reminded of the beauty both natural and human-made that this region is endowed with. Later, I delivered my decommissioned Christmas tree to a parking lot along the Sir John A MacDonald parkway to be used along the cross-country ski trails. There, not far from the river, I saw a tangle of dead deciduous tree branches spray painted bright blue and arranged around the base of a tree. I loved it. I smiled to think that someone created this simple, informal art installation to share with passersby - to spark joy or even to just spark curiosity. It made me reflect on what we do as ceramicists. We don't always know the connection people make to the ceramic pieces we give or sell them. Whether the piece is functional or purely aesthetic, the thoughts provoked in the eye of the beholder, whether joyous or sad, are important. Whether you consider yourself an "artist" an "artisan" or both, I hope that in 2019, you are inspired by the beauty around you and share more of your own beautiful creations with those around you.

Best regards,
Barbara Minish
President

Compass

By Kirstin Davidson

Can you believe that this historic project of The Ottawa Guild of Potters is now coming to a close after 3 years? On December 31st, the final online order was delivered; bringing the total number of orders we packed, delivered and/or shipped to 38. As part of the December Guild Meeting, we held our Locker Sale with many items heading to new homes and helping with the beginnings of the locker clean-out. Thank-you to all those who supported the sale! We will be finishing the clear-out task soon as the lease on the locker ends on January 31st. December also brought another successful and profitable presence of the sculptures at the Guild Sale. Although the numbers are still being tabulated, we estimate the project has earned in excess of $20,000. We look forward to closing the books on this project officially at the end of this fiscal year!

Standards and Education

By Jocelyn Jenkins

Firing your work in a Community Studio

This is the fourth and final article in a series intended to familiarize potters who are not firing their own work with the issues that are important to making pots that can be sold to the public with confidence.
Firing your work, aside from being the final step in a process that may have had many other time-consuming steps, puts a seal on how your glazes look and how well your work lasts.
This is truly the moment where you relinquish control of the process, when you are making work in a community studio. To a lesser extent, the technician firing your work also passes control over to the firing program being used with the kiln, but not until after the work has been placed on the shelves and the particular firing schedule has been selected.

Loading the Kiln

In order for a kiln to fire evenly, it must be loaded properly. There must be adequate space around the work, (between the work and the shelf above), for air to flow and for heat transfer to take place between the elements, the work and the kiln shelves. Work that is an awkward size or shape may have to wait, while work which makes a better kiln-load streams right in. It may not seem fair, but there are constraints to firing a kiln properly. Plan around this! If you're making awkward sizes, make a kiln shelf or a half kiln shelf full of work. It can all fire together.
The kiln must also contain enough work for heat transfer to be efficient (and economical). This is why, in periods when there is not much work being produced in a studio, you may have a lengthy wait for your work. You can plan around this too.

A few words about heat work

Understanding heat work and how to use pyrometric cones is important to being able to fire a kiln properly and consistently. Even if you're not firing the kiln, it may be useful to understand this. Firing a kiln is not only about reaching a set temperature as measured by some device: all of the work in the kiln must reach that temperature too and that the chemical processes that control vitrification and glaze development must have

adequate time to take place. Of course too much time and heat are also a bad thing, as glazes with a narrow maturity range can easily be overfired.

Pyrometric cones measure heat work, or the impact of temperature over time, to a given top temperature. They are often used in sets of 3 cones, set in clay, called a cone pack. The cone pack has the cone that the kiln is being fired to in the middle and one cone above and below (witness cones) on either side. By placing cones or cone packs throughout the kiln, the technician gains insight into what actually takes place in the kiln during the firing. The technician will know if all shelves are firing to the same cone or if there are cooler regions in the kiln. The cones can also flag problems in the kiln such as a thermocouple that is not reading properly or elements that are starting to wear. When the kiln is firing well, with fresh elements, cones may not be used all the time, but when things start to go awry, they're a valuable diagnostic tool.

Due to the inevitable wear of elements, relays and thermocouples, no kiln fires the same every single time. The technician (and the computer program) will do their best to minimize the impact of changes to ensure consistent firing conditions over time. Whether you are firing your own kiln, or whether you are having work fired for you, the equipment will have an impact on your work that cannot be overlooked or completely eliminated.

Firing Schedules

Most community studios in the Ottawa area use computer-controlled firing processes. The moment the kiln is turned on for the firing cycle, what happens to the work is beyond your control. If you haven't cleaned enough glaze off the bottom of your pieces, if the glaze is too thin or too thick, if multiple glazes do not work well together…it's too late to change these things now. If the elements in the kiln are brand new and firing hot, or if they are getting old and taking longer to get to top temperature, all of these variables have an impact on the firing. The technician can mitigate the impact of these things, as can the kiln's firing programs. Placing cones and/or cone packs throughout the kiln is a way for the technician to track whether the loading and programming of the kiln have succeeded in heating the kiln evenly, to the desired cone.

When firing a computer-controlled kiln, the technician can either use preprogrammed schedules or can choose to program their own firing schedule. The firing schedule determines many variables which have an impact on the clay, the glazes and the bond between the two.

A computer kiln comes with a fast-fire and a slow-fire preset for both bisque and glaze firing schedules. Usually these schedules turn the kiln off at the top temperature and the kiln cools naturally. The technician can program holds, preheats and delays to these preset programs: for more individuality, the entire schedule can be programmed.

As a rule, individuality is what community studios lack. There are studios that fire to different top temperatures. You may have a choice of firing to cone 5 or cone 6 – more likely you will not. You also do not have a say in the temperature profile that will be used to fire a given kiln. If you make large, heavy sculpture or large flat tiles, this can matter. In my experience, kiln technicians usually have considerable experience with firing pieces with special requirements. They see all manner of work in the run of a year…or even in one class session! However, they also have constraints: if a piece is an awkward fit or if a kiln has to run to produce work for classes, you may have to wait.

In my personal studio, because I fire a range of sizes of work in each kiln, I usually elect to bisque relatively slowly, to ensure that work heats evenly and that organic material burns out at this stage so I am not troubled with off-gassing in the glaze firing. Because I also fire large work, I glaze fire relatively slowly and control cooling. This ensures that my glazes reach maturity, my clay is vitrified and large work is less likely to dunt. Depending on the requirements in a particular community studio, the technician will make the decision to fire quickly or to slow the process down. This decision will not be made for one piece of work, it will be made for the majority of work in the kiln. If one piece needs special attention, it either won't get it, or it will be put aside until another kiln runs.

What could possibly go wrong in the glaze kiln?!

Assuming the kiln is properly fired, work can still emerge from the kiln with pinholes, crazing, shivering, blisters, crawling or dunting… and that's not even a complete list! Of course, some of these problems are more common than others – I'm sure you've all met pinholes and blisters. Some are easy to fix, others are not. In the right place, some of these so-called flaws are actually aesthetic choices: crawling and crazing for example. Although the Ottawa Guild of Potters' guidelines for sales asks that these glazes not be present on food surfaces, their use on the outside of bowls or on sculptural work is welcome. However, since some crawl

recipes are prone to spitting in the glaze kiln, your community studio may not be willing to fire these glazes for you, due to the risk of collateral damage to other people's pots and the kiln shelves.

Shivering is a glaze defect that no potter ever wants to see. It describes what happens to a glaze when it is under too much compression as it cools in the kiln and flakes of glaze actually chip off the pot. (It is desirable that a glaze be under slight compression. Too much tension results in crazing. While crazed glazes can be used for aesthetic effect, they result work that is significantly less strong than un-crazed work.) If you ever see shivering on one of your pieces, all other pieces with the same glaze/clay combination should be suspected of the same flaw. Shivering can appear right after firing or years later. That's the bad news. The good news is that it is very unlikely that the glazes in your community studio will shiver on their own. You don't have the same assurances regarding glazes that you introduce to the studio.

Dunting (cracking) caused by cooling too fast is a firing issue, but cracking caused by glazes that don't fit the clay is something that can be only be ruled out by testing.

What can you do about flaws?

It depends! As we mentioned in the last article, defects that you can control include those that are related to glaze thickness and application. Pinholes or runny glazes can result if glazes are too thick; dry rough areas, if the glaze is too thin. You can avoid defects that result from unhappy glaze combinations by testing beforehand. Glaze combinations can be tricky: while some combinations work well with a thin application of two or more glazes, thicker coats can result in blisters.

Crawling, when it is not the result of a glaze specially formulated to crawl, can be due to dust or oil on the ware before glazing, or too thick application of glaze, which causes cracking of the raw glaze on the pot, before firing. These conditions can both be remedied, by you, before firing. Sometimes crawling is a result of a glaze formulation that starts to misbehave: this should be remedied by the technician.

Since you're not doing your own firing, controlling some types of glaze defects will be beyond your control. The technician will have tested all of the studio glazes with the kiln's firing schedule. The glazes offered by the studio, when applied at the proper thickness, on a properly prepared bisque surface, should not exhibit flaws after firing. When you choose to combine these glazes, it's up to you to work out how they may be used together and whether the combinations are without flaws. Some commercial underglazes or glazes may not work for you in the community studio setting. Test underglazes with the clear or white glazes available to you. All underglazes do not work equally well with a given clear or white glaze: some will blister and others will not give you the colours you're expecting at cone 6 at all.

In the community studio, as in the private or cooperative studio, the only way to ensure that you are producing quality work is to test and keep good records, every step of the way. Good luck with this!

As always, if you have questions on these topics that you'd like to have answered feel free to send them to me at jocelynjenkins1@gmail.com.

For those who are interested, I have attached a copy of the Standards and Education Committee's Table of Pottery Faults and Remedies. It's also available to members on the Guild's website.

Jocelyn Jenkins

January 2019

Standards & Education Committee

Helpful fact sheet:
Pottery Faults and Remedies

THE OTTAWA GUILD OF POTTERS
LA GUILDE DES POTIERS D'OTTAWA

FAULT	APPEARANCE	CAUSE	SUGGESTED REMEDIES
BLISTERS & CRATERS	Glaze has bubbles and/or craters of burst bubbles which have sharp edges.	1. Unwanted gassing of a glaze resulting in bubbles and craters. The bubbles are gases originating in the glaze or in the body beneath (bloating).	1. Many gases are liberated during firing; it may be necessary to replace the offending material.
		2. Blistering occurs where glaze hasn't had time to settle out.	2. Alter the firing cycle so glaze matures more slowly towards top temperature.
			3. Alter the viscosity of the molten glaze. A glaze which is fluid allows bubbles to escape quickly and heals over scars. A slightly thinner glaze may be necessary.
BLOW OUT	Craters in bisqued clay.	1. Presence of impurities in clay.	1. Avoid possible contamination of clay during making.
CRAWLING/ORANGE PEEL EFFECT	Bare, unglazed patches on surface of pottery accompanied by glaze sitting in small beads.	1. Excessive handling of bisque ware before glazing.	1. Minimize handling of bisque before glazing.
		2. Oil, grease, dust, etc. on bisque ware before glazing.	2. Keep bisque ware clean. Sponge before glazing.
		3. Cracking of glaze layer during drying and before firing.	3. Reduce glaze application thickness by dipping more quickly (if dipping) or thinning glaze.
ROUGH BOTTOMS	Rough surface on bottom of pot.	1. Using clay which contains a lot of grog.	1. Smooth bottoms of all pots with sandpaper, sanding stone or grinder.
		2. Chunks of kiln wash, kiln shelf or glaze on bottom of pot.	2. Remove tough chunks with a small grinder.

CRAZING	Fine cracks in glaze surface (but not through the clay body).	1. Mis-match of glaze and body thermal expansions.	1. Fire clay to higher temperature. Or soak longer at peak temperature.
		2. Glaze applied too thickly.	2. Reduce glaze thickness.
		3. Underfiring of body or glaze.	3. Reduce porosity of clay body by bisque firing to 1100 C, and always fire the glaze to the recommended temperature.
		4. Firing cooled too quickly.	4. Do not open the kiln door after a firing until the kiln has cooled to 100 C.
DUNTING (STRUCTURAL CRACKING)	Splitting of ceramic ware due to silica inversion. (When glaze has run into crack, dunting has occurred during heating cycle.	1. Too rapid heating and/or cooling of clay body especially around 575 C and 225 C (silica inversion temperatures).	1. Fire and cool the body more slowly through temperature ranges at which silica inversions take place.
	Crack with sharp edge, dunting has occurred during cooling cycle.)	2. Large variations in wall thickness of article giving rise to thermal variance.	2. Give careful consideration in design of shapes.
		3. Overfiring of clay body.	3. Reduce firing temperature of clay body.
GLAZE PEELING/SHIVERING	Glaze lifting away from body. (Occurs mainly on edges of pots such as cup rims and handles).	1. Glaze under excessive compression.	1. Reduce firing temperature and/or soaking period.
		2. Migration of soluble salts to surface of clay body in drying or firing giving rise to poor adhesion of glaze.	2. Sand off soluble salts before glazing.
		3. Excess cleaning (sponging) of clay to expose excess silica particles.	3. Reduce sponging in cleanup.
PINHOLED GLAZES	Pin holes in glaze after firing.	1. Gas release from body and/or glaze during firing due to:	
		a) Underfiring of clay body.	a) Fire body to recommended firing temperature.
		b) Air trapped in clay.	b) De-air clay before making pots.
		c) Over application and overfiring of underglaze colors.	c) Reduce application of underglaze colours.

		d) Underfiring of glaze.	d) Fire glaze to recommended firing temperature. Ensure kiln is heating evenly throughout.
		e) Overfiring of glaze giving rise to volatilization.	e) Reduce firing temperature of glaze.
CRACKS	An unwanted break on the piece.	1. Cracks in raw ware arise from faults in the making.	1. Good design, uniform consistency of clay, uniform thickness and uniform drying.
		2. In finished ware, observe where the crack started (the wider end is the starting point). If it started at the rim, the problem is probably at the raw stage; if in the base, it usually means it occurred in the firing.	2. Cracks that show themselves in the firing stage are often caused by faults in the making.
		3. Some cracks that occur in glazed ware are caused by the difference in expansion/contraction rates of body and glaze.	3. Make sure glaze is a good fit for clay being used.
		4. Whether a crack is hairline or wide is due to the amount of stress. See Hamer's The Potter's Dictionary of Materials and Techniques section on "cracks" for illustrations, causes and remedies for 18 different types of cracks.	4. Stress can occur during making (see no. 1) or firing. Slow down initial firing rate (take 4 - 6 hours to 300 C.)

Sources: Northcote Pottery Supplies www.northcotepottery.com.au
The Potter's Dictionary of Materials and Techniques by Frank Hamer

Check out these links to help solve pottery problems:

1. http://digitalfire.us/4sight/troubleshooting/index.html
2. http://ceramicartsdaily.org/ceramic-glaze-recipes/glaze-chemisty-ceramic-glaze-recipes-2/how-to-correct-five-common-ceramic-glaze-defects/?floater=99
3. http://www.potters.org/

Creations in Clay

Exhibition Committee

By Elizabeth Davies
We are pleased that the March show will be a Focus On with Jocelyn, Amy, and Emily (their theme is Flow). The current Celebrating Clay show finishes at the end of the January, and submissions are open for the February show (no specific theme). The deadline is as usual the 20th of the month (please submit if possible by the 19th, to help with planning).
Please note that the Exhibition Committee has simplified the submission procedure set out in the Call for Entry document, posted on the website, under Guild Exhibitions.
Annual Exhibition
Isobel
Following the renovations that have been made at Galerie Côté Créations, and the fact that discussions are ongoing between the Gallery and the NCNS (National Capital Network of Sculptors) about possibly alternating monthly shows with Celebrating Clay, the Exhibition Committee is considering moving the Annual Exhibition back to the Spring Guild Sale (perhaps easier to manage than during the Guild Christmas Sale, when several other competing sales take place at the same time). This would mean that our next Annual Exhibition would only take place in Spring 2020. We would be interested in hearing comments on this possible change.
New Clay Conference
With Galerie Côté Création participating in the New Clay Conference Tour in May, we would like to place special emphasis on the May Celebrating Clay show. Do think now of which of your best pieces you might submit to that month's show; the New Clay Conference will give us an excellent opportunity to promote Celebrating Clay and further raise the profile of our Guild. Submissions should be sent to celebratingclayentries@gmail.com; deadline for submissions, as usual, is the 20th of the previous month, April 20. Should you wish for any assistance in preparing submissions, please contact Puck, Isobel, or Elizabeth.

Sharing Circle,

Submitted by Members

Another article that was submitted by Carol Holmes Kerr :

Tennessee Technological University - Appalachian Center for Craft

Vince Pitelka, 2016

How to Critique

Critique of artwork by instructors or peers is the standard form of evaluation used in most studio art courses. Without it, the student has little sense of what has been accomplished, other than some idea of whether directions have been followed, which in itself serves little purpose. In order to move forwards as a studio artist, you must become confident and self-directed in the studio. This involves building technical skills and knowledge while learning to synthesize diverse influences and information in creating original style and narrative in your work. Among the advantages of pursuing these objectives in an academic setting is the opportunity for individual and group critique. The critique challenges and tests you on several levels. It requires that you present your work to others for critical appraisal, it tests your ability to intellectually articulate materials, process, technique, concept, intent, and narrative in reference to your work and the work of others, and it builds your confidence in art and design.

In the critique, we talk about what works and what doesn't in a piece or a group of pieces, sometimes in terms of particular assignments, and usually in terms of the work's overall success and the personal and artistic growth displayed. The evolution of craftsmanship, concept, design, and originality in your work are the primary indicators of successful studio art education, and much of your accomplishment is revealed in your ability to actively participate in critical dialogue.

Your artwork serves as a prop for the important learning that takes place during critique, when we discuss whether the work is effective. It provides the opportunity and catalyst for discussion of conceptual, technical, and design issues relative to each piece. With that in mind, it is your responsibility to contribute to every critique in a constructive and proactive way and listen carefully to what others say about the work.

The traditional format for art criticism includes four steps: ***description***, ***analysis***, ***interpretation***, and ***judgment***. In this case we are dealing with individual and group critique, rather than written criticism, so we can dispense with description.

Analysis

Consider all the different levels on which you can critically evaluate the work. Think about materials, technique, craftsmanship, concept, formal design, and utility. Has the artist used materials and techniques effectively with good craftsmanship, appropriate to formal and narrative aspects of the piece? Has the artist used color, value, and texture effectively. Are formal design aesthetics key to the success of the work, and if so, does the overall design work visually? Does the overall design seem unified or disconnected?

If the work is functional, has the artist consciously and successfully dealt with issues of ergonomics and utility? Does the work make you want to use it or see it used? Does it seem receptive to use, as if it will gracefully and effectively fulfill its utilitarian purpose?

Classified:

For sale a Paragon kiln, inside measurements approximately
18" X 18" shelves and some other things included. $120

For sale a large kick wheel. $120.

Iroquois, Ontario text or call 343 370 5050

Dwight Aura auraescapes@gmail.com

Editor's note;

I'm sorry for the delay in getting this newsletter out. I got confused with the dates. The deadline for submissions for the February newsletter is February 4 2019

Who is who in the Guild:

President: Barb Minish

Vice-President and Sale Committee Chair: Amy Bell

Treasurer: Ada Brzeski

Secretary: Suzanne Denny

Membership Secretary and Sales Registrar: Jen Littlejohns

Standards and Education Chairs: Jocelyn Jenkins and Katrhin von Dehn

Exhibition Chair: Isobel Salole

Celebrating Clay (Monthly Exhibition) Contact: Elizabeth Davies

Communications Chair: Emily Dore

Workshops and Monthly Program: Natalie Gosselin

Past President and Newsletter Editor: Sarah Hand