



# RIVERS CONNECT

Unstoppable Forces in Contemporary Ceramics

# **RIVERS CONNECT**

**UNSTOPPABLE FORCES IN  
CONTEMPORARY CERAMICS**

**MARCH 8 - APRIL 2, 2021  
Northern Kentucky University**

Jee Eun Lee, David Hiltner, Brooks Oliver, Chelsey Albert,  
Alberto Veronica, Britt Thorp, Renqian Yang, Margie Hughto

With essays by:

Viviane Le Courtois, Nick Deford, Sara Felice, Emily Ann Francisco, Lynn Hai,  
Garth Johnson, Gareth Mason, Natalie McGrath, and Myka Allen Hayden Wysor

**Northern Kentucky University  
Syracuse University  
College of Visual and Performing Arts, School of Art**

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Rivers Connect: Unstoppable Forces in Contemporary Ceramics  
Curated by Sara Felice

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Important to this exhibition are the contributing authors, whose essays celebrate the creative ferment and diversity of the artistic voices within Rivers Connect.

Sara Felice  
Curator

## Preface

The Northern Kentucky University Art Galleries serve as a premier venue for the exhibition of high-quality artworks from regional, national, and international artists as well as a creative forum for students, the campus community, and region. We also showcase and engage the art of traditionally underrepresented groups and individuals who have contributed to the richness and diversity of our region.

To this end, the gallery will strive to create educational opportunities through outreach programs, experimental projects, and institutional collaborations. Our exhibitions include challenging and engaging contemporary work by nationally recognized artists as well as faculty and student shows such as the student juried exhibitions and BFA senior exhibitions.

As Director of Exhibitions and Collections I am pleased to host "Rivers Connect: Unstoppable Forces in Contemporary Ceramics" in our Main Gallery. The NKY and Cincinnati region is rich with ceramic history. Showcasing these contemporary ceramic artists will be an excellent opportunity for our students and our patrons in the region to see what is being produced today in ceramics.

I would also like to say a big thank you to the Northern Kentucky University College of Arts and Sciences and the School of the Arts for support of this major exhibition. Additional thanks are extended to the Spring 2021 Gallery Interns and the select Spatial Arts students for their assistance in the installation of the exhibition.

David J. Knight  
Director of Exhibitions and Collections  
Northern Kentucky University

## Introduction

### Sara Felice

“Rivers Connect: Unstoppable Forces in Contemporary Ceramics” serves as a metaphor for humanity’s relationship to the natural world. Running parallel to the twists and turns of our waterways, the work produced by this group of artists is ever changing, a reflection of their life story. Rivers connect and change course as they flow through time, similar in the way artwork is influenced by our social and cultural exchanges. As the work of the artist is an extension of self, the vast interconnectivity of our rivers is a representation of the multiple directions our lives take.

Rivers have influenced how we live, grow, and survive. As they change, we have learned to adapt alongside them. Similarly, our treatment of our environment manifests within ourselves. As our rivers become unpredictable as we dive further into climate change, we find ourselves in a moment of social, financial, and existential crisis. How do we cope internally with the choices humanity has made for our world? Who will we become as we face the interconnecting rivers of choice? Will we learn to float on the surface, adapting to uncertainty and change, or do we face our finality, destined to sink to the bottom?

The abstract of these artists and their interconnectivity flows together as part of a delta, representative of our communal cultures, the rise and decline of human interaction and nature’s reclamation of space, personified through the tide. We begin with Albert, in her collection of memory and familial history where these cultures intersect. While she is making sense of the past and present in their relationship to one another, she is also calling us to contemplate our interactions with one another and how this impacts our collective environment. She floats between earthly and spiritual dimensions, expressing the delicate balance in human relationship through mythological elements past and present.

Albert’s work is in constant conversation with Lee, whose narrative of the human experience and life cycles pushes and pulls the viewer through these dimensions. Lee’s work exists where the spiritual and physical bodies meet in convergence through the undulating river of memory. Through wave-like motions, her figures dance within echoes of loneliness. She calls us to be introspective, reflective of our actions and their consequences.

Veronica is actively mapping these shared experiences, making sense of our every day, highlighting our commonalities of language both verbal and non-verbal, the pinnacle of which is represented in our rituals. Both through common practice and cultural worship his work reminds us of our communal ties, existing on an endless cycle of life and death, both for our loved ones and our environment.

In one of our most celebrated common rituals, Brooks Oliver and Britt Thorp serve us at the table for which to practice. Both used as every-day tools and objects of symbolism, their use is woven into the fabric of culture. The vessels in which we carry these traditions become part of the rituals themselves. Oliver reminds us in these practices not to take ourselves too seriously, as there is still room for enjoyment, play, or even magic.

As we come together in celebration and sacrament, a cycle observed through a changing of seasons and landscapes, we find the voice of David Hiltner. In Hiltner we observe an undulating reality: the rise and fall of changing landscapes serve as a collection of memory, the ebb and flow of the Montana plains where he resides, encapsulated in a process of earth, water and fire.

An echo of this motion exists within Yang, as she demonstrates delicate processes to create forms without rule and method. In the almost cerebral nature of her work we witness clay not just as a tool that illustrates message, but personifies memory itself. Through her we experience our own fragility, a mutual understanding that our actions shape the course of our futures.

Just below the surface of contemporary civilization we encounter Margie Hughto, an echo mirroring our past, an excavation of what is left. Here, she unearths the relics of our history. We begin a new process of examination of memory, how the past influences our future, and what lessons we can learn. Hughto has been a force in contemporary ceramics for the last forty years. While all artists in “Rivers Connect” were chosen for their ability to interconnect abstractly, the convergence of their individual stories rests in the mentorship and guidance of Margie Hughto. Having taught and mentored these artists at various points in their careers from 1997-2021 at Syracuse University, Hughto shaped who they became, weaving together the delta into the culminating river. While sharing the commonality of their mentorship, each artist also demonstrates careers at varying stages, highlighting key issues on our humanity. The human experience is ephemeral where nothing is promised. It is the duality of choice that influences the outcome of our futures, both for each other and the natural world.

Sara Felice  
Director, Point of Contact Gallery  
Syracuse University, February 2021

# JEE EUN LEE



## Jee Eun Lee's Water Memories in *Drift Series: A Dream within a Dream*

Emily Ann Francisco

For over twenty years, water has remained a powerful motif in Jee Eun Lee's work. Earlier in her career, while reflecting on the rejuvenating and symbolic qualities of water, Lee read Gaston Bachelard's *Water and Dreams: An Essay on the Imagination of Matter* (1942). The philosophical text would continue to influence her artistic practice. She is drawn to Bachelard's discussion of the "imagination" of water and its ties to narcissism, motherhood, and the inevitable cycle of life and death, all themes that Lee addresses in her work. Beyond these concepts, the artist thinks of water as both a meditative force and a projection of her creative spirit. *Drift Series: A Dream within a Dream* is an expansion of these ideas. In this installation, a large group of figures cascade down the wall like a waterfall, surrounding the viewer with an immersive arrangement of tumbling female forms.

Figural clay modeling was always a fascinating process for Lee, who holds a BFA and MFA in Sculpture from Ewha Womans University in Seoul and an MFA in Ceramics from Syracuse University. The artist points out that ceramics and sculpture are inherently interconnected fields, due to their shared use of clay. When creating traditional figurative sculpture, an artist must first build a clay model that is then used for casting the same work in bronze or other materials. Modeling remains a key part of Lee's process, as the human figure is central to her work.

Compared to other sculptures in her *Drift Series*, which typically emphasize a single figure, *A Dream within a Dream* bombards the viewer with a wall of them. Each body position is different, and the twisting gestures immediately catch the eye. The poses range from arching backs to gentle fetal positions, suggesting bodies that are slowly drifting down a river. In addition, the small, unglazed figures are rendered wearing lightweight dresses that almost seem to ripple in a watery current. Together, the stationary bodies appear to be caught in mid-motion, as if they are floating underwater.

The artist explains that she wanted to capture a "calm, serene moment," or a moment of meditation in the midst of our tumultuous time. Fittingly, all components of *A Dream within a Dream* were created during the coronavirus pandemic. The artist describes the experience of watching the news every day, and the feeling of being surrounded by death. Reflecting on the struggles of people around the world, she began to construct gray figures with closed eyes, suggesting a dreamlike, meditative, or sleeping state. According to the artist, the grayscale tone (created from the underglaze) symbolizes the "shadow" of our lives, as well as the ephemeral qualities of time and human life.

Throughout her work, Lee harnesses the human figure as a representation of the soul. The hand-built ceramic sculptures that compose *A Dream within a Dream* are physical bodies that may stand in for spiritual bodies, human souls, or memories. Much of Lee's art explores the relationship between human life and the natural world, particularly as it intersects with self-identity and emotions. Similarly, the artist considers the figures in this installation to be extensions of herself, both formally and metaphorically. They represent her emotions and memories, preserved in clay. At the same time, the mass of suspended figures form one celestial body of water, a river of the mind that projects the viewer's own thoughts and quiet reveries.



Drift Series (A Dream within a Dream), installation, various sizes (each figure - between 10-18 in), 2021



Drift Series (A Dream within a Dream) (details), installation, various sizes (each figure - between 10-18 in), 2021



Drift III, 20 x 20 x 10 in,  
white stoneware, 2021



Drift I, 20 x 20 x 10 in,  
white stoneware, 2021



## Shaped by Land, Shaped by Water

Garth Johnson

Anyone who has spent time in Montana's vibrant ceramic scene knows that any negotiation or discussion is best conducted in hip waders and Tilley hats. The finer points of kiln building and terra sigillata suspension are casually debated while casting with their latest hand-tied flies. David Hiltner knows this better than most. When he's not in the studio or overseeing the Red Lodge Clay Center, a residency program that he founded, he's probably fishing the Yellowstone or the Stillwater, both home to large populations of brown, brook, rainbow, and cutthroat trout.

Hiltner lives close to the land with his family—on a rural plot in Southern Montana that adjoins vast expanses of undeveloped ridges and rock formations massaged into being by countless millennia of water and glaciers, perfect for hiking, hunting, and being alone with one's thoughts. This connection to the land comes naturally for David Hiltner. He was born and raised on a farm near Wichita, Kansas, and has never strayed far from areas that are rich in agriculture. The evolution of a mud-covered farm kid into ceramic artist doesn't require a big leap of faith. Hiltner's studio practice still involves losing himself in the act of creation, not unlike the reverie of childhood play—or fishing, for that matter.

Over the past two decades, David Hiltner's work has always retained a connection to the land, whether subtle, overt, or even satirical. His functional pots are covered in tactile lines inspired by the furrows tilled into the soil during planting. These furrowed forms reached their apex in a series of covered jars that balanced swelling volumes with a lively interplay of lines that reflect the ingenuity that it takes for farmers to be responsive to both the land and their yields. Some jars are neatly subdivided into sections—with furrows radiating at 45-degree angles. Others wrap around the forms improvisationally, as if adapting to complex topography.

With this series, Hiltner began creating landscape on top of landscape by building miniature tableaux of corn cribs and grain silos atop his lids. Depending on the form of the pot, the silos either blend into the slope of the land, or tower vertically above it. Like an experienced angler responding to changing depths or weather conditions, Hiltner continually plays with the relationship between nature, the built environment, and the shifting geometry imposed on it through agriculture.

Hiltner has also been known to probe the blurred boundary between agricultural romance and realism through satire. Starting in 2014, he created a body of work that probes the ethical questions raised by industrial agriculture. Increasingly, corn production has been turned into a monoculture, and corn syrup has found its way into a staggering array of processed foods. Genetically modified to resist herbicides and improve yields, the vast majority of America's corn crop is used to produce ethanol and feed cattle in industrially-scaled feedlots. Farmers are locked into contracts with massive agri-business conglomerates, forbidden to plant their own seeds. In response, Hiltner created a series of tongue-in-cheek sculptures that recall the work of Prairie Funk sculptor Victor Cicansky with vintage die-cast tractors towing massive ears of corn, many of them fitted with nipples from baby bottles.

With his most recent series, Landscapes, Hiltner has untethered himself from the vessel. These Landscapes are tabletop reveries that allow the artist full license to lose himself in the language of clay. As with his covered jars, as the pieces have progressed, the silos are in the process of being subsumed by the landscape. A series that began as manicured, geometric depictions of furrowed fields and center-pivot irrigation is gradually morphing into increasingly abstract, muscular manipulations of the clay. Like ice-age glaciers advancing and retreating across the prairie, Hiltner deposits cut, twisted, and torn boulders and rock formations into his manicured furrows. Tearing is an important part of the visual vocabulary for the Landscapes. By tearing rather than cutting the clay, Hiltner exposes the chunky texture of his clay, evoking the strata of earth that support the fragile topsoil.

## DAVID HILTNER



Hiltner has other tricks up his sleeve as well. Rivers Connect contains an astonishing pair of jade green landscapes that were created under COVID-19 lockdown during the depths of Montana winter. The compositions were made from the same dark stoneware clay as his other sculptures; dark brown furrows and crenelations appear just beneath the surface of the glaze. The verdant greenery even covers Hiltner's signature grain silos, signaling an all-consuming renewal after a long, dark winter.

When fishing season begins in Montana in early March, snow still blankets much of the landscape. Even so, the midges, scuds, and sowbugs begin to hatch, and the anglers reach for their dry fly lures. As the days get longer, more of the landscape peeks out from its snowy blanket. For Hiltner, the river becomes the lure. Water has shaped the Montana landscape—through silt laid down by meandering rivers and the work of ancient glaciers, depositing boulders through advances and retreats. Clay itself is formed by the action of water endlessly weathering rocks. As much as David Hiltner has spent his life shaping clay, the reverse is certainly true.



Landscape DHLS-21-3, 6.5 x 15.5 x 11 in,  
soda fired stoneware, 2021



Landscape DHLS-21-6, 5.5 x 9.75 x 8 in,  
soda fired stoneware, 2021



Landscape DHLS-21-8, 4 x 10 x 5.5 in,  
soda fired stoneware, 2021



Landscape DHLS-21-7, 4.5 x 10 x 6 in,  
soda fired stoneware, 2021

# BROOKS OLIVER



## Sleight of Hand: The Misdirection of Brooks Oliver's Vessels

Nick DeFord

"Magic has but one dogma, namely, that the seen is the measure of the unseen." - W. Somerset Maugham, from *The Magician* (1926). "I eliminate my hand from being seen in the work" - Brooks Oliver, on his ceramic process.

When he was growing up, Brooks Oliver's parents owned a toy shop, and as a young child, Brooks spent weekends there, particularly gravitating toward the magic section and perfecting illusions and sleight of hand. While his talents appear to have shifted to ceramics in the years since, that is also an illusion. Brooks, at heart, is still a magician. He still speaks to creating wonder through his colors, surfaces and forms. His meticulous process of developing his sculptures and vessels takes an exquisite knowledge of the process of design, ceramic mold making and casting, but at the same time, we as the audience never see that hand at work - only the flourish of the final bouquet.

Also, in a strictly literal sense, he is still a practicing magician. He claims to never go anywhere without balloons on his person for making balloon animals. "You'd be surprised at how often it comes in handy," Brooks mentions off-hand, "it's also the best bar trick." At first glance, both Brooks' ceramic vases and balloon animals have much formally in common. They are both twisty and evocative, curvy and cartoonish, and most of all completely covered in color. But even beyond the surface and form, they share common utilitarian ground: they are both containers. Brooks' final sculptures are vases, thus vessels to hold flowers. Balloon animals, as containers, are less obvious. But after all, the latex skin of balloon animals is just the outside casing that carefully holds something within: they are vessels of the maker's breath.

Stop. Right there. Did you see it? Watch it again, but more closely. There. That was Brooks' sleight of hand, his misdirection. While we were watching one hand, the other was left unseen. And that unseen hand was doing all the magic, making the switcheroo right before our eyes. We thought the pip was under one shell, when it was actually beneath the other; the King on top of the deck is suddenly now a Queen. In an illusory gesture, Brooks does the same with his artwork, transmogrifying their forms and their purpose. When are we supposed to see the container, and when are we supposed to see the contained? How much does one depend upon the other? While the balloon artist quickly folds and twists, accompanied with playful banter, we keep our eyes on the vessel, willfully ignoring what the vessel actually contains: the life of the maker themselves. And as the customer walks away smiling, they do not yet realize that they are carrying away the breath of the artist all neatly contained in a fragile curving animal form, and all hidden in plain sight.

With Brooks' ceramic vases, he does the same, but it is a mirror act, a sleight of hand in reverse. It is not the contained that is hidden in plain sight, but now the container itself. A vessel that asks the most important existential question for a utilitarian vase to ask: do I need to hold a flower at all? The balloon animal, in an ironic (and wondrous play on words) twist, cannot actually exist without what it contains. Without breath, the balloon animal is formless and pitiful. Brooks' work, on the other hand, seems to relish its independence from its collaborator. The vases swirl and dance, bend and shimmy, strut across pedestals and tables and walls. Flowers will only hold them down! Or, perhaps, with another flip of the coin, the flowers are not burdens, but adornment. As we pictured the vases before, to be dancing or strutting like figures, then we should also allow for their decoration of flora to be like corsages, boutineers, or chaplets. The vases are dressing up and ready to go out.

But like any adornment for a person, the beauty was already there to begin with. Their colors and curving lines were always going to be brighter than petals, and more evocative than filaments and pistils. And their presence in a space - whether it's a gallery or dining room - means that they will never need to go out. Their form and manner brings the audience to them. With the same intriguing declaration spoken from a street magician, they lure the viewer around them: Everyone gather 'round! Gather 'round! Would you all like to see a trick?



Legs4days, 12 x 5 x 4 in,  
porcelain, 2021



Banana Phone, 22 x 8 x 4 in,  
porcelain, 2020



Bowtie, 10 x 17 x 6 in,  
porcelain, 2021



Pearly Gates, 9 x 23 x 5.5 in,  
porcelain, 2021

## In Dreams We Thrive

Myka Allen Hayden Wysor

Somewhere between the most earthbound reality and the vast, mysterious realms of mysticity is where you can find Chelsey Albert. She dances in the light and the shadows with dreams and visions, guided by the stories of her ancestors. Cloaked in whimsy and lore, Albert's work tells the stories of not just the ancient past, but her own life and continuing journey.

Albert grew up in an ethnically diverse family connecting Lebanese, Syrian, and Nordic heritage; bound together by the American dream. Her family is one where storytelling, folklore, and spiritual legend are the foundation. As the eldest daughter, Albert holds the responsibility of guiding her siblings through legends of their ancestors and the warning lores that direct their morality. Albert was born to tell stories, and through the ceramic medium has found new methods of sharing her tales to a wider audience.

Albert's physical appearance does not reflect her Arabic heritage; her very existence provoking the question, "is anything ever as it seems?" The answer: probably not! This is proven true time and time again through Albert's work. Surrealist self portraits in the form of sculpture create artistic synapses between the functional and decorative arts. The viewer may simply see a figure sculpture, but, with further investigation, one may find the head of the figure can be removed to reveal something more. Her teapots, hidden as memorial deities, tell stories far beyond their functionality.

Albert combines hand building, mold making, and sculpting techniques to create dynamic stories told through physical objects. These stories go beyond any language, culture, or background. Albert has the innate ability to connect so deeply with her medium and imbue it with emotion, storing her stories in this physical form forever. Albert continues to feel her connections with peoples from the past, present, and future; her work looking between the lines of time and space.

Albert's work may draw the viewer in with its colorful disposition and playful symbols, but through that immediate attraction does the viewer find themselves transported to a chapter or moment of Albert's choosing. The viewer is now invited to pause and reflect. As with the duality of Albert's work between decor and function, there also lies the duality of positive and negative energies that evoke a sense of wonder and magic. Breaking boundaries, blurring lines, and weaving illusions are all in a day's work for Chelsey Albert.

# CHELSEY ALBERT





How Do You Feel About Home? 10 x 10 x 14 in,  
sculpture, pearl luster, gold luster, underglaze, 04 glaze, 2019



A Letter to Boundaries, a Sunset, 18 x 18 x 20 in,  
ceramic, luster, underglaze, cone 6, 2019





The Visitation, Apparitions of The Past, 14 x 12 x 10 in,  
sculptural teapot, underglaze, porcelain, 04 glaze, 2021



The Taste of Sunrise, 15 x 9 x 21 in,  
ceramic, underglaze, 2019

# ALBERTO VERONICA



## Natural Impossibility

Viviane Le Courtois

Alberto Veronica has always experimented with techniques and pushed them to their impossible boundaries. As a teenager, he threw giant vessels on the wheel using 25 pounds of clay at once. His interest in natural and chemical reactions have always pushed him to discover new processes from bread clay to 3D printed ceramics and translucent porcelain. More recently, he has been obsessed with controlling crystals to write messages.

My Love, Thank You and I Miss you, the crystal glaze panels featured in this exhibition, show not only his love for chance reactions, but his technical control of every step. The panels display messages to the dead written with crystals. Humans have made art, steles, plaques, vessels and altarpieces to honor the deceased for thousands of years. In times of social distancing, these short messages matter, especially when someone spends so much time and dedication writing them. They transmit his love and care for others, his study of human habits and beliefs. They do not replace hugs but share concepts that cannot be shared through typed words. They are sincere communications of feelings through chemistry.

Similar to a Zen ink painting with controlled ink splashes, they appear to be a poetic calligraphy in clay. This work, like all of Alberto's works, takes extreme patience and perseverance. The element of chance appears through the crystal formation that he has no control on. The Dadaists, and many artists since, have used chance to remove themselves from making aesthetic decisions, letting the process create the result. However, Alberto originally places the crystal seeds in particular configurations, and attempts to calculate their fluid movements.

The crystal formations recall the natural crystal formations in stones described by Roger Caillois' in *L'Écriture des Pierres*, or to the natural formations of lichens and mosses on ancient tombstones. The crystals may align themselves like star configurations in the universe, but here, Alberto's generosity is transmitted to the deceased and to all humans. He plays with dualities: control and chance, perfection and imperfection, fragility and eternity, life and death... He analyzes the living's thoughts about death. Listening to family members talking to their loved ones who had passed on, triggering these pieces.

Most of Alberto's works deal with the feelings of human life: sympathy, empathy, trust and love. The concept of conviviality is transmitted through his works in very subtle and symbolic manners. Alberto has always cared about others as a student, as a teacher or as a friend. He has always pushed boundaries to make a permanent impact on the people he interacts with. International influences from Mexico, France, China and Hungary, as well as other places, have transformed his views on the world. Inspired by the dedication of his teachers, he blends technical research with conceptual art, relational aesthetics, and social practice in a poetic manner. He captures and transmits emotions through objects that become receptacles for human interactions. He takes coincidences to another level, by creating natural impossibilities.



Messages to the Dead: Thank You, 24 x 24 x 3 in,  
handbuilt stoneware and crystal glaze, cone 11 oxidation, 2020



Messages to the Dead: My Love, 24 x 24 x 3 in,  
handbuilt stoneware and crystal glaze, cone 11 oxidation, 2020



Messages to the Dead: Thank You (2), 24 x 24 x 3 in,  
handbuilt stoneware and crystal glaze, cone 11 oxidation, 2020



Messages to the Dead: I Miss You, 24 x 24 x 3 in,  
handbuilt stoneware and crystal glaze, cone 11 oxidation, 2020

## A New Modesty

Gareth Mason

Seeking an “...intimate intersection between art and life” is a subtly modest goal, and in stating this so straightforwardly Britt Thorp sets out his stall as a potter/designer with a time-honored concern: the relationship between pottery and food—or, more accurately, between ceramics and celebration—be it played out in the commonplace setting of a convivial meal or on a grander scale of social gathering. Ceramic objects have long accompanied such moments of commune, whether by means of utility or symbolism. Britt’s modest sense of connection to this collective heredity is played out in the objects he makes. For, in spite of the pressures of modern-day living, such moments and the utensils that adorn them share the essentially modest and time-honored purpose of nurturing our bonds and fellowships as well as our bodies.

A tough thing to reconcile with the sophistries and affectations of consumer society, the ‘modesty’ of ceramic heritage is an enduring conundrum for potters. A timeless medium yet an anachronism in the digital age, handmade pots occupy an uncertain cultural niche. Flawless industrial standardization has all but put paid to the idea of ‘the handmade’ in the minds of the teeming majority of citizen-consumers. Worry about the loving outputs of “the head, heart and hand” being usurped by desirable, practical, affordable manufactured goods has been around for a long time—it was of prime concern to William Morris!—but this is no Luddite’s lament. Because, in spite of the ambiguous status of the hand-crafted product in 21st century economies, the idea of craft is a compelling marketing tool, co-opted and deployed with a power and sophistication that would have bamboozled poor William. Ubiquitous mass market commodities like bread and coffee, cosmetics and even Pepsi, nowadays vie for competitive advantage on an ‘Artisan’ bandwagon. Whilst in all sincerity, the touch of the highly skilled artisan is venerated in the echelons of Haute Couture and high-end design. Yet ironically, professional ‘studio’ practitioners in, for example, glass, metal or ceramic are wary of craft’s ‘folksy’, unsophisticated connotations and rarely self-identify specifically as craftspeople. Thus, the ‘craft’ of pottery is a slippery, context-sensitive issue in a cut-throat and cynical cultural ecosystem.

Soetsu Yanagi eulogized the modesty of craft in his 1930s essay on the ‘Kizaemon Ido’ Tea-bowl (from his book ‘The Unknown Craftsman’). But this was a modesty mindfully extracted like a rare elixir from anonymous Korean peasant wares and pressed into the service of a nostalgic craft philosophy, which could only ever succeed theoretically. Though a vague sense of yearning for their values lingers, the vernacular practices Yanagi revered were effectively wiped out by globalization. Today, craft needs to compete in a lifestyle-accessory market saturated with designer labels and luxury goods. It is self-aware, social-media-friendly, comes at a premium and frequently in disguise. To create the unique, or limited, hand crafted item nowadays is to embrace what Peter Dormer once decried as “unrestricted individualism”: the antithesis of Yanagi’s vision of modesty.

So what is today’s craft modesty? It is engaged, evolving. It is the modesty to believe that the skillful hand-manipulation of material, once encountered, still has a power to give us pause. It is the modesty of human connection; of careful touch, transmuted. It is the modesty to seek to defy obsolescence; to assert that mastery still harbors a kind of poetry and mystery. Surely even Yanagi would appreciate its spirit.

This ‘new modesty’ is one in which a generation of makers like Britt Thorp are contending steadfastly. One way in which to assert the beauty of craft practice in a hyper-industrial world is to embrace technology. Britt’s expert slipcasting employs extensive prototyping, Computer Aided Design, CNC milling and recently 3D printing, but his hands remain the consistent arbiters of quality. Although a technician par excellence, his relish of the notoriously fickle soda-firing process ensures his impressive palette of glazes retain a flavor of fiery serendipity. This, alongside his acceptance (within reason!) of clay’s pyroplastic tendency, contrasts refreshingly with the meticulous design principals that guide his evolving practice.

# BRITT THORP



Forms—a drinking vessel, a vase, a platter—may refer to Art Deco or to other more timeless geometries from the mathematical or mineralogical world: perhaps also to architecture and the built environment, enhancing the sense that the work is embedded in 'today' rather than leaning on, or seeking to perpetuate, notions of tradition.

The title of this exhibition—Rivers Connect—evokes the cyclic nature of human experience. Notwithstanding their differing positions on the professional and human cycle, this theme unites the participants. The social cycles that Britt Thorp celebrates transcend that which is 'on-trend': they are arguably our most fundamental, going to the heart of clay's enduring poignancy, which bridges borders, cultures and centuries. His work stands as an apt testament to his stage of becoming and to his sense of honest endeavor, fully embodying some wholesome and timelessly valuable principals concerning discipline, dedication, perseverance and yes, modesty... This 'New Modesty' continues to hold its own amid the exigencies of modern life, attracting thoughtful, talented people like Britt. It is hard-earned. May it serve him well.



Amber and Grey Platters, 2 x 16 x 9 in  
slip cast stoneware, soda fired, 2019



Amber Vase, 11 x 7 x 7 in,  
slip cast porcelain, soda fired, 2020



Double Necked Vase, 6.5 x 3 x 8.5 in,  
black porcelain and glaze, soda fired, 2021



Round Dish, 2 x 14 x 14 in,  
slip cast stoneware, soda fired, 2019

# RENQIAN YANG



## A Journey Through Antithesis: On Renqian Yang's Ceramic Works

Lynn Hai

Although the sprawling forms and dribbles of colors in Renqian Yang's ceramic works sometimes evoke an impression of splashing water or flowing streams, there's never any symbolic figure that can be designated to a specific motivation or inspiration in her creation. Renqian Yang focuses on a more abstract level of depicting and conveying various feelings shared by humans—"tragedy, ecstasy, doom, and so on". She is interested in basic emotions and the concept of antithesis. The typical contrast in most of her works—the sense of freeness and fluidity expressed through the very hard and brittle material, ceramic—also stems from her subconscious addiction to the duality of things and phenomena. During her creation, she attempts to wander through opposite extremes of things and spark inexperienced scintillation by juxtaposing, combining or counterposing them. The representations of her works always appear to be a state that is flowing, sprawling, spreading and diffusing.

Her work *Gezelligheid* has inherited her signature visual language from 2016–2020, but has extended it to an unprecedented exploration—the duality of entity and emptiness in topology, compared to her past works. It consists of clusters of soft-looking wrinkled ceramic pieces, with delicately-applied colors in multiple kinds. Viewing the whole, spaces enclosed by forms and interconnected voids appear naturally in this frozen porous flow. For Yang, colors and forms are instruments to approach the ultimate essence—emotions. All aspects in this work, both entities like physical existences and emptiness like hollow external and internal spaces, constitute a journey of the strolling mind. It is a period of experience that is perceived, visualized and materialized in its time and space, without a beginning or an end.

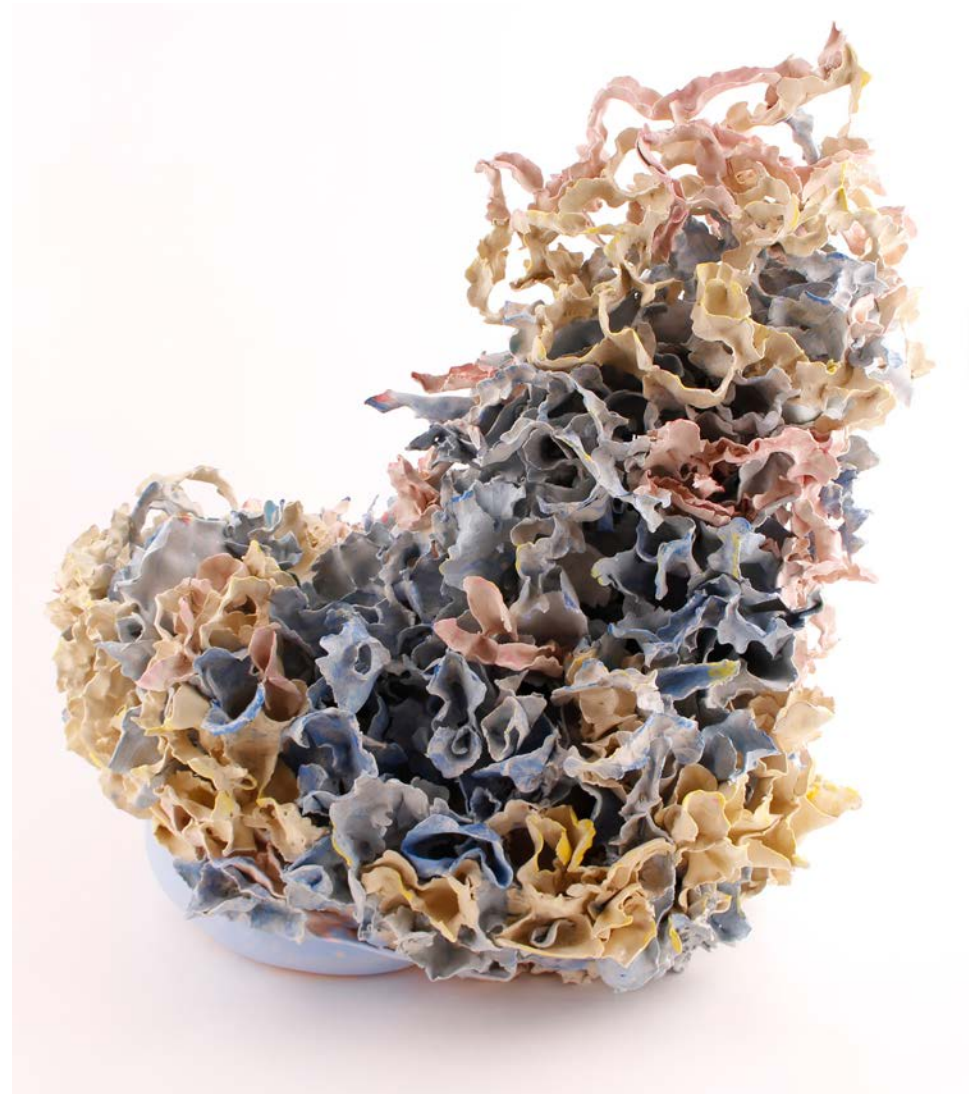
The changefulness of ideas and emotions in the human mind resembles the vicissitudes of rivers in nature. All kinds of thoughts emerge, converge, diverge, transform, and disappear, slowly but constantly remold the terrain of the mind, just like how rivers change natural landscapes. Renqian Yang's ceramic works reflect a state of ever-changing randomness—even though whose drastic variations seem under some invisible rules—through her meticulous making process. Apparently, a ceramic work like hers is not deduced from any of its kin which are always shaped with a solid structure. The subtle dynamic and fragility of her work precisely challenges the general stereotype about the characteristics of ceramic, and thus arouses further thinking on strangeness in familiarity among the viewers with its dramatic contrast. The way to achieve this is extremely laborious and elaborate. Yang uses a unique material she carefully creates and scrutinizes called paper clay, which consists of paper and clay both in their liquid state. Yang would blend the two materials into one, wedge them together, and dry them on plaster. In her later series of works, she also mixed different colorants into paper clay to create an organic texture of flow of colors. Then, she carefully experiments on bending and deforming each piece into a complex curved surface, and adheres it to other pieces. The whole process is a growing-up from a single point in space. Yang would stop building up the work when she feels the structure is reaching its limit of self-supporting. After that, she will send the work into a kiln and repeat firing it for two to five times, until she is satisfied with the glazed surface. She captures and follows the natural emergence and flow of emotions in the making process and lets them guide her creation until the last second.

A precursor who experimented in ceramic to explore this medium's potential and unanticipated future is Lucio Fontana (1899–1968), although he's far more famed for his monochrome paintings with holes and slashes on the surface in his late period of career. Fontana first experienced ceramic as the medium to make art in 1930 right after his studies at the Brera Academy of Fine Arts in Milan, and began to make his earliest significant works in clay five years later. His ceramic works are always a series of vivid grotesques, nimbly poised at the intersection of figuration and abstraction.



These works reflect influences from the past—prehistoric artifacts, baroque architectural ornament, terracotta sketches by Bernini—yet they also anticipate later developments in the medium. Fontana arrived at sophisticated forms without losing touch with the immediacy of clay. “I am a sculptor, not a ceramicist,” he had declared more than once in his writings. Ceramics were a continuous expressive outlet for him throughout his singular artistic journey to “conquer space.”

As a contemporary ceramic artist, Renqian Yang apparently treks further into this medium’s possibilities by targeting the contrasts of antithetical characteristics of phenomena. Her representation also shows signs of influences from abstract expressionism, standing as a reflection of her individual psyche tapping into universal inner sources. Browsing her works in a group, the spontaneity and improvisation in her thinking process become conspicuous through the two inclinations among her works: an emphasis on dynamic, energetic gesture, in contrast to a reflective, cerebral focus on more open fields of color. At this level, her ceramics naturally possess something deep and essential which might be a universal duality of art in history: they resonate with both the discipline’s ancient past, and its previously unforeseen future.



Gezelligheid, 25.5 x 22 x 19 in,  
colored stoneware paper clay with glaze, 2021



Litost, 28.5 x 16 x 19 in,  
colored stoneware paper clay with glaze, 2021



Oime, 10 x 7.5 x 8 in,  
colored porcelain paper clay with glaze, 2021



Ilinx, 9.5 x 9 x 9.5 in,  
colored porcelain paper clay with glaze, 2021

## All That Glitters: Margie Hughto's Excavation Series

Natalie McGrath

Is it possible to measure a life against the ordinary things that we leave behind? Margie Hughto explores the figurative and aesthetic significance of trash and treasure in her Excavation Series (2016-Present) by approaching the common landfill as the equivalent of an archaeological dig site. Through this lens, Hughto redefines obsolete and discarded items as objects of study and beauty. Her work invites us to question our connections to the objects we surround ourselves with, and how wastefulness correlates with our inclination to collect items that we perceive to be necessary or special. The Excavation Series demonstrates that the contents of a landfill can tell us a great deal about how our attachments to the physical world form, change, and dissipate with time.

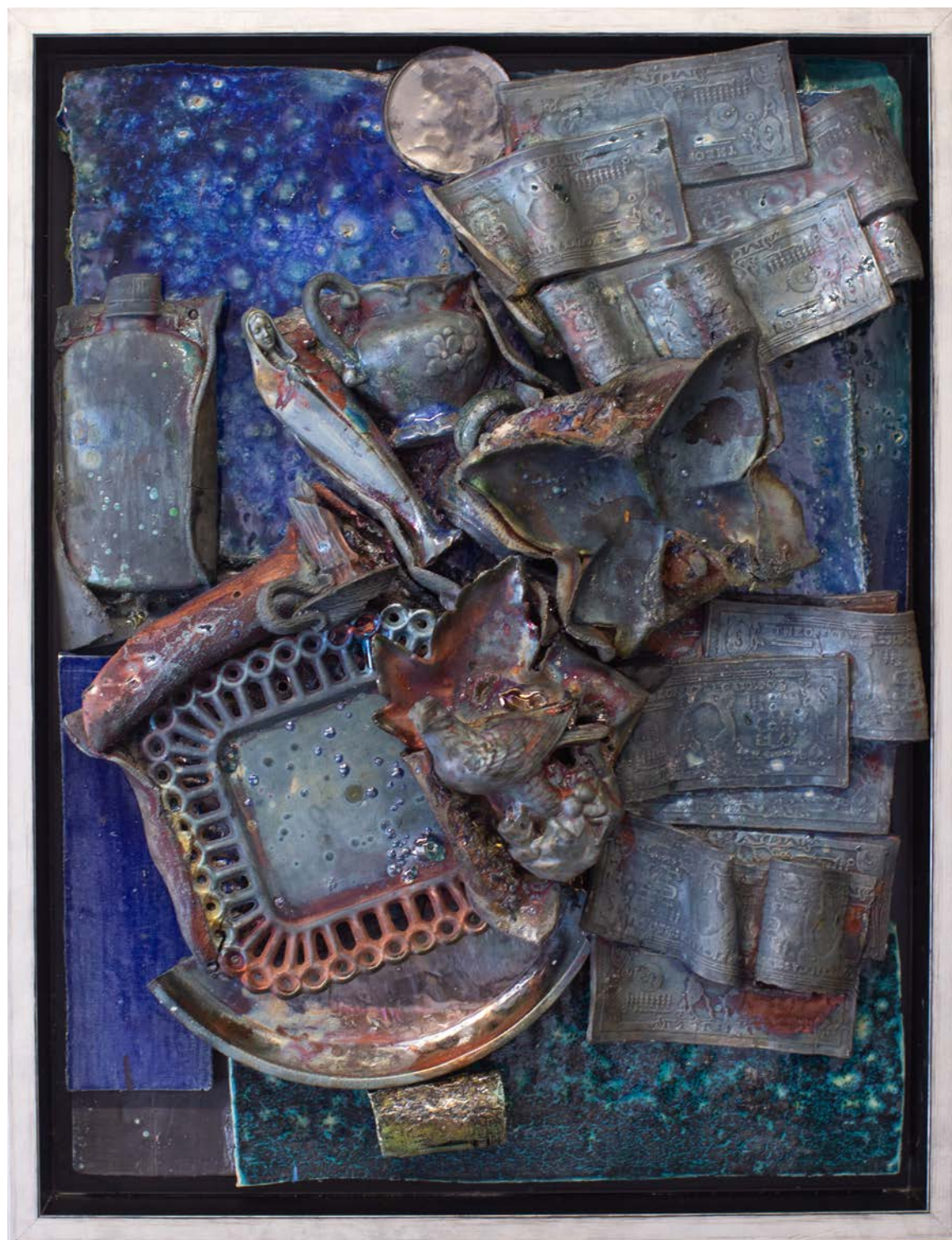
As the practitioner of a timeless art form, Hughto has looked to the distant past for inspiration in the current moment. While conceptualizing the Excavation Series, Hughto has studied a distinct archaeological find known as a "midden hole" or "shell midden." Not unlike our present-day landfills, midden holes contain the fossils and remnants of household refuse, shells, and animal bones left behind by early societies. These sites are extremely valuable to archaeologists and scholars of antiquity, as they provide a helpful glimpse into the daily lives of our ancestors.

Hughto refers to her most recent additions to the Excavation Series as a distinct body of work, known as the Treasure Trove Pieces. These Raku fired compositions evoke curiosity through the artist's unique approach to both form and representation. She produces stoneware facsimiles of common household items such as vessels, keyboards, and computer mice, and arranges them into sculptural collages. In keeping with the Dadaist concept of ready-made art, Hughto includes found objects in her compositions which create compelling variations in texture and the appearance of the eventual fired glaze. For those who are less familiar with ceramic production techniques, the Raku method of firing is equal parts intense and unpredictable. The artist herself has likened the process to the work of a mad scientist. After firing her ceramic objects to a staggering eighteen-hundred degrees Fahrenheit, Hughto dons a heavy-duty protective suit and tongs to extract the work from the kiln. She then transfers the red-hot ceramic into a metal trashcan filled with sawdust. Once the can is sealed, the sawdust burns around the sculpture, creating an uncontrolled reaction through the depletion of oxygen. This type of glazing environment, known to ceramicists as a reduction atmosphere, results in striking color profiles and metallic luster. Hughto chose this firing technique to produce the Excavation Series specifically for its unique and arbitrary results.

The artist's spiral-shaped installation, *Excavation Series: What Lies Beneath* (2021), presents several dozen collages of refuse artifacts arranged in a larger than life formation. The viewer is drawn in by the installation's visually compelling form and kaleidoscopic glazing, and is also confronted by a representation of humankind's collective material waste on a grand scale. Through this work, Hughto treads a fine line between outright criticism of human consumption and an almost playful reflection on the concept of the "treasure trove." Upon closer inspection, Hughto's compositions cleverly mimic the appearance of natural decay through the delicate draping of ceramic leaves amongst the vessels and outdated technology. Dark and intense hues dominate the composition and contrast elegantly with gleams of what closely resembles oxidized metal. The installation's graceful and orderly spiral arrangement is visibly at odds with the entropy of Hughto's subject matter. Likewise, in several other wall-mounted compositions from the series, Hughto encapsulates each collage within a simple frame. This method of installation redefines the work, effectively blurring the distinction between a traditional painting and a ceramic sculpture, and according to the artist, also presents the fossils as something precious.

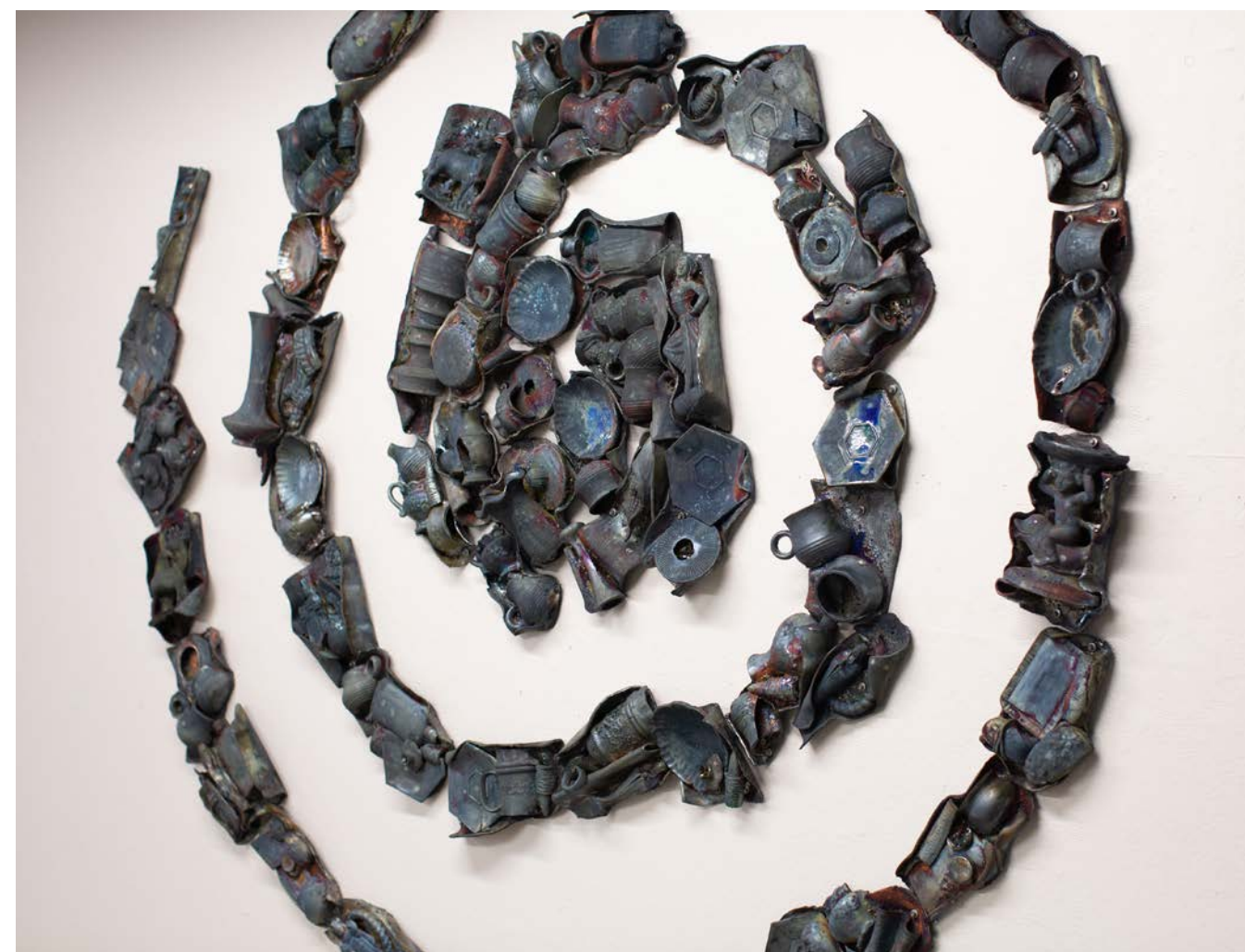
## MARGIE HUGHTO



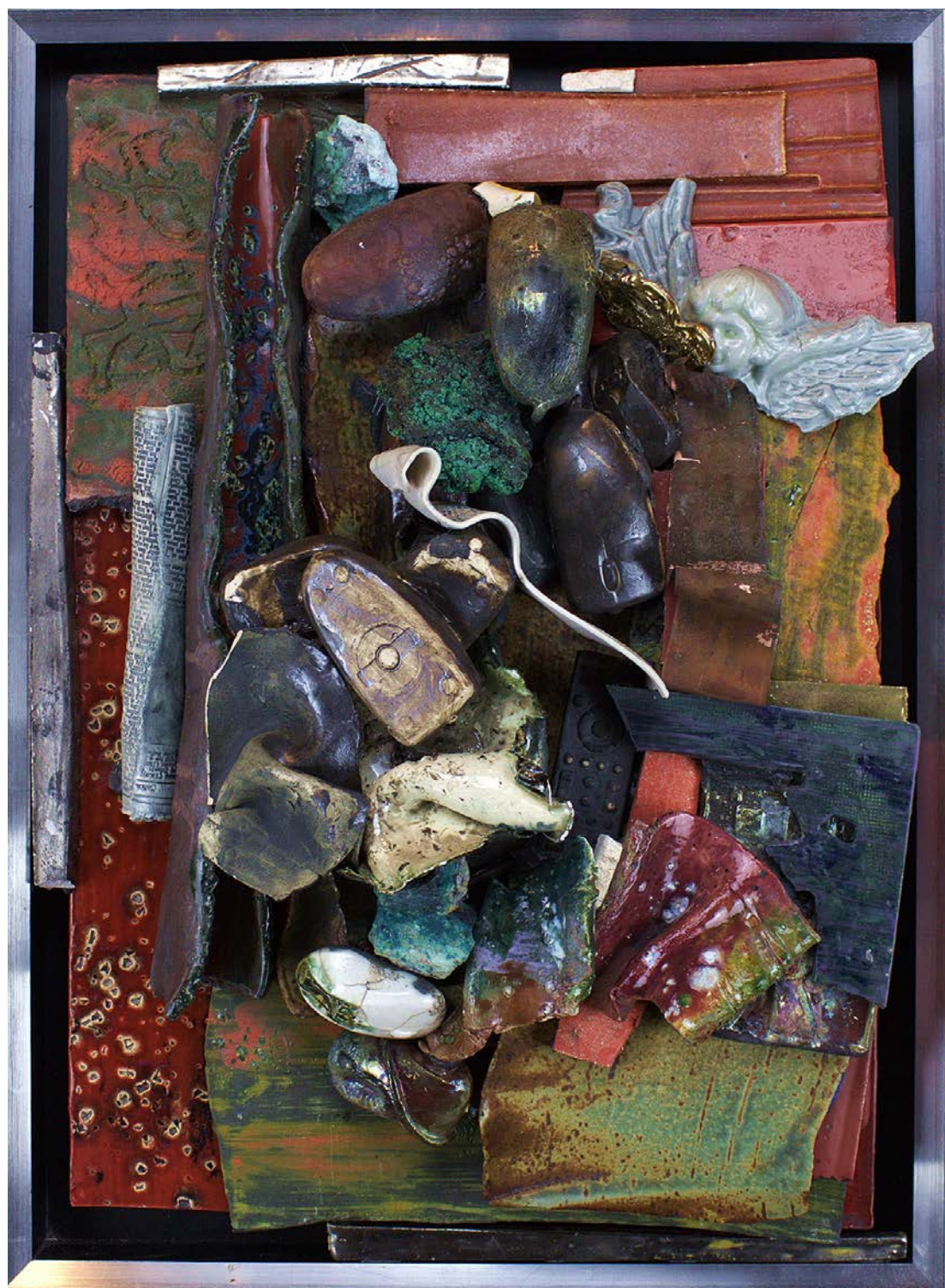


Treasure Trove, 26 x 20 x 6 in,  
raku and electric fired elements, 2021

Margie Hughto's Excavation Series invites viewers to find beauty in ordinary things, and to reflect upon their own notions of artifacts, fossils, and treasures in the present. This work encourages us to study our own material world with the same level of curiosity and care that we ascribe to objects of the distant past. Likewise, the series is a stark reminder that the hidden waste of consumerism is indeed a disruption to the natural world, and much of it lingers for all of time. By looking closely at the surface of our material lives, we may catch a glimpse of what lies beneath.



What Lies Beneath; Discarded and Rediscovered,  
8' diameter, raku fired, 2021



Red Layer: St. Petersburg Angel,  
26 x 19 x 6 in, 2019



Second Layer: Blue Water and White Mice,  
27 x 21 x 6 in, 2019

## Artist's Statements & Biographies

### Jee Eun Lee

In recent years I have focused on exploring through sculpture how nature influences my sense of self, which for me feels similar to searching for the fundamental truths of nature. Nature is mysterious. It creates in me a sense of awe for the universe while urging me to reconsider the meaning of life and to be more self-aware.

I am interested in making a wide range of relationships between nature imagery/symbols and human experiences such as memory, movement, time, and encounters with life and death. I believe that these elements have provided protection, strength, and sustenance throughout our evolution and existence, and a magical connection to nature.

Birth:  
1974, Seoul, South Korea

Education:  
1993-1998, BFA in Sculpture, Ewha Womans University, College of Fine Arts, Seoul, Korea  
1998-2002, MFA in Sculpture, Ewha Womans University, Graduate School of Fine Art, Seoul, Korea  
2010-2013, MFA in Ceramics, Syracuse University, College of Visual and Performing Arts, School of Art and Design Syracuse, New York

Present Employment:  
Assistant Professor in Ceramics, Spatial Arts, Visual Arts Program, School of the Arts, at Northern Kentucky University

Biography:  
Jee Eun Lee, born and raised in South Korea, has been an exhibiting artist for twenty years. She received her BFA & MFA in Sculpture at Ewha Womans University, Seoul, Korea, and moved to the U.S in 2010, where she earned a second MFA degree at Syracuse University, New York. She is currently a head of the ceramics area at Northern Kentucky University. Lee has exhibited solo exhibitions in the U.S., Korea, and Japan as well as numerous group exhibitions. While clay is her primary medium, her work includes large-scale installations with mixed media, sculpture, public art, and functional objects.

### David Hiltner

Born and raised in Kansas, much of my time was spent hunting in the fields and working on my family's farm. The diverse weather transformed the landscape into vivid colors and textures. Slowly, the fall colors faded against the gray of winter. Light snow covered the repetitive rows of milo. Spring storms brought rain, flooding the fields, filling ditches, bringing nourishment to the wheat, moving the soil, eroding it to its own liking. The dry hot summer wind would crack the earth open, and the landscape would be transformed into a surface resembling an Old Dutch master's painting.

I am interested in rural landscapes, silos, rolling hills, and furrowed fields. The patterns, textures, and colors translated into the vessel are memories, moments, and thoughts frozen by fire. These vessels are created to celebrate the land that inspires and sustains me.

Birth:  
1968, Wichita, Kansas, USA

Education:  
1988-1993, Wichita State University, Wichita, KS, BFA Studio Art Ceramics Major  
1994-1997, Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY, MFA Studio Art Degree in Ceramics

Present Employment:  
Executive Director Red Lodge Clay Center

Biography:  
David Hiltner is the Founder and Executive Director of Red Lodge Clay Center in Red Lodge, Montana. In the summer of 2005 David and his family moved to Montana to establish the Red Lodge Clay Center. Prior to moving to Red Lodge David was an Assistant Professor of Ceramics at Wichita State University in Wichita, Kansas. Before joining the faculty at Wichita State University in 1999, he taught at Syracuse University, Northwest College, and at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks. He received his BFA in Ceramics from Wichita State University in 1993 and completed his MFA at Syracuse University in 1997. His work is shown nationally and is in private and public collection across the country.

### Brooks Oliver

The ambition of my work is to reimagine and reinterpret the familiar functional vessel. By isolating, altering, and exploiting the necessary components of a vessel, I attempt to provide new visions of utilitarian ceramic wares.

My work inherently blurs the boundaries between craft, design, industry, and technology as I am inspired by the charged grey areas between these binaries. By marrying the production techniques of CAD software and rapid prototyping technologies with the creation techniques of the hand, a unique dialog can be formed between the digital and clay that ultimately influences both ways of making.

Birth:  
1988, Dallas, Texas, USA

Education:  
2012-2014, MFA, Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA  
2006-2010, BFA, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, TX  
2011-2012, Post Baccalaureate, Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY

Present Employment:  
Assistant Professor and Program Coordinator of Ceramics at the University of North Texas

Biography:  
Brooks Oliver is a studio artist based out of Denton, Texas. He recently completed a long-term residency at the Archie Bray Foundation in Helena, Montana. He has taught in Jindezhen, China in 2016 with West Virginia University and regularly teaches workshops in and out of university settings, including Haystack Mountain School of Crafts and the Anderson Ranch.

In 2017 he was named an Emerging Artist by the National Council on Educations in the Ceramic Arts. He actively exhibits work and has recently been included in exhibitions at the Dallas Museum of Art, Ulrich Museum of Art, the LacosteKean Gallery, Northern Clay Center, The Archie Bray Foundation, the Artstream Nomadic Gallery, the Dallas Pottery Invitational, the Penland Gallery, Santa Fe Clay, Belger Crane Yard, and Western Carolina University Fine Art Museum.

## Chelsey Albert

An encapsulated memory within an object whether large are small connects us all. As every human being has their own collection of objects that sums up their life filled with experiences and memories that we are drawn to. These objects that might appear mundane but are often considered sacred to us in our attempts to hold on to the intangible lenses of memory and time. If you were to assemble each object of your most important milestones what would a year in your life look like? What do we define as our most precious treasured moments and memories?

I was Born and raised in Pittsburgh Pennsylvania, one of five children and within my earliest of fond memories I could always be found in the Carnegie Museum of Art. Having family that worked and volunteered at the museum I would take my little sketchbook and draw the figures in the paintings and sculptures found there. I would weave stories that brought different characters interacting from different paintings to life. I was rather mischief in my pursuit of knowledge for what each work meant and its background by pestering the security guards with endless questions. My favorite work of all time that brought me to where I am now is by John D Batten, "The Garden of Adonis- Amoretta & Time." Within my mixed ethnic childhood home, I was exposed and captivated by Lore from all cultures, fairytales and influenced by yogis and other spiritual thinkers. It is from these fascinations of mythology, fiction and allegorical themes that are my foundation of which I use these lenses to encapsulate my memories in clay.

My most treasured object is my book by Edmund Spencer and his encapsulation of truth in time:

"That in the Gardin of Adonis springs, Is wicked Tyme: who with his scythe adrest  
Does mow the flowering herbes and goodly things,  
And all their glory to the ground downe flings...He flies about, with his flaggy wings,  
Beats downe both leaves and buds without regard, Ne ever he pity may relent his malice hard"- Edmund Spencer.

Regardless if time is sometimes cruel, in time there is redemption & healing. In these moments in time memorializing those moments is what makes life both beautiful & complex. Within this time in my clay objects are a distortion of dreams in relation to reality and others are just slices and glimpses of fleeting moments of life.

Birth:  
1988, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA

Education:  
2009-2013, Carlow University, B.S. Art Education, BFA Ceramics  
2015-2018, Syracuse University, MFA in Ceramics

Present Employment:  
Head Lecturer of Ceramics & 3D Design at Wells College Auara, New York

Biography:

Chelsey Albert the Head Lecturer of Ceramics & 3D Design at Wells College in Aurora, NY. In the summer of 2015 she moved to Syracuse NY to pursue a career in Higher Education. Before joining the faculty at Wells College in 2020, she taught at Syracuse University, for three years. She received her BFA in Ceramics & BA in Art Education from Carlow University in 2013 and completed her MFA at Syracuse University in 2018. Her work is shown nationally and is in private and public collection across the country.

## Alberto Veronica

My methods of art making are derived from the world's history of art and in most cases from the immemorial art of ceramics. Though many traditional arts are immemorial or have no recorded beginning. Ceramics was the first to be introduced to me at an age where I could use it to connect to thoughts, feelings, and very kind role models in my community. As such, I use every conceivable method to be able to bring into being a ceramics object or installation to bridge the gap of inconsideration in human culture. My bridge is a small one made of deep consideration. Depending on the gap of inconsideration I fashion tools, mix chemicals, fire in specific atmospheres, print make, woodwork, and conduct surveys for research.

Ceramics has the ability to be any form, its brittle most times it is made, it's inflexible if fired, and makes for a perfect physical and silent metaphor for the way in which freedom can act in any context. If a limit exists for clay, my creative spirit experiments until I can overcome the limit. I create through observation of the unimaginable lives of human beings around them and when I am able to represent their lives or interact with them, I feel a deep sense of awe, of belonging or purpose, and gratitude.

Birth:  
1986, Ventura, California, USA

Education:  
2004-2008, Kansas City Art Institute, Kansas City, MO, BFA Ceramics  
2013-2016, Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY, MFA in Ceramics

Present Employment:  
Technical Specialist + Adjunct Faculty, Ceramics Department, Cleveland Institute of Art

Biography:  
Alberto Veronica received his Master of Fine Arts at Syracuse University in Syracuse, New York and his Bachelor of Fine Arts at Kansas City Art Institute in Kansas City, Missouri. Upon completing his MFA in 2016 he was accepted as the two year Midwestern State University Artist in Residence, in Wichita Falls, Texas. His travels and short residencies while earning his degrees have taken him to: The international Ceramics Studio in Kecskemet, Hungary; The Pottery Workshop in Jingdezhen, China; Egon Schile Art Centrum in Cesky Krumlov, Czech Republic; The Calderon foundry in Mexico City, Mexico; and The Smithsonian Institute, Sackler Gallery in Washington D.C. He is also a co-founder of the Ceramic International artist group which has shown at Art Aqua in Miami, Florida. He currently resides in Cleveland, Ohio and is the Technical Specialist and Adjunct Faculty at Cleveland Institute of Art.

## Britt Thorp

Food and pottery are inseparable. They are symbiotic catalysts that connect us. As a chef and ceramic artist, I elevate and personalize the dining experience. My goal as a maker is to craft ceramic objects and culinary dishes that serve as a conduit for conversation, interaction, and celebration. The work is part bystander and part active participant, advocating for slow time and adding a layer of meaning and pleasure to daily life. Using a specific geometric language, I make functional forms that allow the viewer a moment to slow down and appreciate the intricacies of life. The handmade objects I craft reside in the background until used, then reveal themselves in our quiet times and communal gatherings. They enhance the simple act of refueling the body and in turn, nourish the soul.

### Birth:

1984, Sioux Falls, South Dakota, USA

### Education:

2004- 2008, Ohio University, BFA in Ceramics

2011-2013, University of Arkansas, Artist in Residence (Ceramics)

2017-2018, Michigan State University, Post Baccalaureate (Ceramics)

2018-2021, Syracuse University, MFA in Ceramics

### Present Employment:

Adjunct Professor of Ceramics and Graduate Candidate at Syracuse University

### Biography:

Britton Thorp is a ceramic artist and chef. In between graduating from Ohio University and his current position, Thorp was a resident artist at The University of Arkansas and Michigan State University. He has received Emerging Artist Grants from NYFA, CERF, Syracuse University VPA and Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts. In addition, he has acted as Jury Advisor for The Everson Museum Architecture and Design Competition and Juror for "30 Plates in 30 Days" Competition. He has also been featured as a guest Artist on The Potter's Cast. His work has been exhibited in venues such as Charlie Cummings Gallery - FL, The Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum - MI, Grand Central Arts Center - CA, The Dayton Art Institute - OH, Busch Gallery - CO, Center Gallery - AR and National Council on Education for Ceramic Art, in multiple Cities throughout America. Britton's current studio practice includes functional pottery, virtual design, 3D printing and curated dining experiences.

## Renqian Yang

I am interested in the concept of binaries. My work addresses the unity and the contradiction of dichotomies: restriction and freedom; pessimism and optimism; complexity and simplicity; representation and abstraction; the human society and the natural world. At the same time, my work explores how an individual is related to nature, society, and oneself. My artwork reflects my experiences of migration and survival, while also exploring the emotional conflict. The physical and social tensions that individuals experience during periods of transition highlight human vulnerability, desire, desperation and lack of belonging. Anxiety shapes my clay. I create pieces that symbolize everyday known and unknown emotions. In my art practice, while primarily focusing on ceramic sculpture, my work also extends to installation, mix medium, drawing, painting and functional everyday objects.

### Birth:

1987, Xiangtan, Hunan Province, China

### Education:

2005-2009, BFA in Ceramics, Sichuan Fine Arts Institute, School of Art & Design, Chongqing, China

2011-2014, MFA in Ceramics, Syracuse University, School of Art & Design, Syracuse, NY

### Present Employment:

Assistant Professor at the State University of New York at Oswego, the School of Communication, Media and the Arts, Department of Art & Design, Ceramics.

### Biography:

Yang's work has continued to exhibit in the U.S. and China. Her recent exhibitions include: Renqian Yang, Cayuga Museum of History and Art, Auburn, New York (2019); Renqian Yang and Lan Zhaoxing: Between Mountains, Fou Gallery, New York (2019); Renqian Yang: Construct Deconstruction, Taoxichuan Ceramic Art Avenue Art Gallery, Jingdezhen, China (2018); Renqian Yang: Complementary Colors, Fou Gallery, New York (2016). In January 2017, she had her first solo exhibition in New York at Fou Gallery. She served as a residency artist at Craigardan (2018), Jingdezhen International Studio (2018), and the Watershed Center for the Ceramic Arts (2017).

## Margie Hughto

My ceramic sculptures have always been inspired by layers in the earth, nature, and time. Although some of the work is free-standing, most are wall oriented. My most recent work (2016-2021), which I refer to as the "Excavation Series," draws inspiration from archeological dig sites and landfills, both bodies of evidence that mark human activity and the passing of time. For this series, my way of working is to press mold or slip cast household items, discarded technology, and things from nature and arrange them in sculptural collages. In some ways, tension exists between the beauty and the serious subject of waste and remains. I try to make work which turns obsolescence and human debris into a provocative spectacle.

### Birth:

1944, Endicott, New York, USA

### Education:

1962-1966, State University College at Buffalo, NY, B.S. Degree in Art Education

1969-1971, Cranbrook Academy of Art, Bloomfield, Michigan, MFA Degree in Ceramics

### Present Employment:

Professor at Syracuse University, College of Visual and Performing Arts, School of Art, Ceramic Department

### Biography:

Margie Hughto lives in Jamesville, New York where she has a ceramics and paper-making studio. For the past 40 years, Hughto has become involved in numerous commissioned site-specific art works and several architectural public artworks. Her most notable public art project was commissioned by the Metropolitan Transit Authority of NYC for the Cortlandt Street subway station at the World Trade Tower II. Entitled, "Trade, Treasure and Travel," the work consists of 12 large-scale ceramic tile murals at the Cortlandt Street subway station. From 1971-1981, Hughto worked at the Everson Museum of Fine art as a part-time teacher, consultant, lecturer and Curator of ceramics. She curated numerous shows including "New Works in Clay I, II, III," "Nine West Coast Clay Sculptors," and "A Century of Ceramics in the United States: 1878-1978." The Century Show was accompanied by a book published by E. P. Dutton, which is a major reference for museum curators, collectors, teachers, and artists.



## About the Authors

### Viviane Le Courtois

Viviane Le Courtois was born in Lesneven, France in 1969. She received a Diplôme National Supérieur d'Expression Plastique from the Ecole Pilote Internationale d'Art et de Recherches at the Villa Arson, Nice, France in 1992. After extensive travels in Asia and a fellowship from the Korea Foundation, she moved to the US in 1994 and completed an MA in Art History at the University of Denver in 2000. She was awarded the Westword Mastermind in Visual Arts in 2009 and a residency at RedLine from 2008 to 2011. She was a Creative in Residence at the Denver Art Museum in 2016. She has exhibited in France, Ireland, across the US, and at many venues in Colorado including the Museum of Contemporary Art Denver, RedLine, the Denver Botanic Gardens, and the Biennial of the Americas. In 2012, she presented her first solo museum exhibition *Edible? 22 years of working with food* at the Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art. She co-founded Processus, the Institute for Art and Life, a shared space for artists, with Christopher R. Perez in 2014.

### Nick DeFord

Nick DeFord an artist, educator, and arts administrator who resides in Knoxville, TN. He received his MFA from Arizona State University, and a MS and BFA from the University of Tennessee. Nick regularly exhibits his fiber and mixed media work, with recent exhibitions at Coastal Carolina University and The Houston Center for Contemporary Craft. His artwork and writing has been published in *Surface Design Journal*, *Elephant Magazine*, *Hayden Ferry Review*, and *Willow Springs*. Currently, Nick is the Program Director at Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts, as well as a board member for the National Basketry Organization. Recently, he was a resident at the Rauschenberg Residency in Captiva, Florida, as well as the juror for the American Tapestry Biennial 13.

### Emily Ann Francisco

Emily Ann Francisco is an art historian, curator, and writer based in Washington, DC. She is currently the Curatorial Assistant in the Department of Modern and Contemporary Art at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, where she works primarily on permanent collection projects and installations. She received dual M.A. degrees in Art History and Museum Studies from Syracuse University and a B.A. in Art History and English with a Writing Concentration from Gettysburg College. Emily specializes in sculpture and American modernism.

### Lynn (Liang) Hai

After graduating from Architectural Association (London), Hai gained her Master's in Design Studies from the Graduate School of Design at Harvard University (Boston). She is active as a curator and art writer in New York, also a partner and the Art Director of Fou Gallery. Her curation and design includes: Chen Dongfan: *Long Past Dawn, Pirates and Poets Whistle in the Dark* (Fou Gallery, New York, 2020); Michael Eade: *Past is Present is Future* (Fou Gallery, New York, 2019); *Dwelling At the Present Chinese Contemporary Interior Design Exhibition and Forum* (Harvard Club, New York, 2019); *Flow Fields - Confluence in Urban Picnic* (Matedero, Madrid, 2013) and *Flow Fields - Dilution* in 2013 Lisbon Triennale (Sinel de Cordes Palace, Lisbon, 2013) et al. Her writings are published on art periodicals including *ArtChina*, *CAFA Artinfo*, *Tussle Magazine* and *ArtPulse* et al.

### Garth Johnson

Writer, curator and educator Garth Johnson is the Paul Phillips and Sharon Sullivan Curator of Ceramics at the Everson Museum of Art, where he oversees their world-renowned Ceramics collection. Before moving to Syracuse, Garth served as the Curator of Ceramics at the ASU Art Museum Ceramics Research Center and Curator of Artistic Programs at The Clay Studio in Philadelphia and spent seven years as a Professor at College of the Redwoods in Eureka, California. Johnson is known for his irreverent wit, which can be explored through his weblog, [www.extremecraft.com](http://www.extremecraft.com). He has also exhibited his work and published his writing nationally and internationally, including contributions to the books *Handmade Nation*, *Craftivity*, *Craft Corps*, and the Smithsonian American Art Museum's Nation Building. He is a self-described craft activist who explores craft's influence and relevance in the 21st century.

### Gareth Mason

Gareth Mason specializes in dramatic clay and porcelain pots and exhibits in solo and group exhibitions internationally. His first solo exhibition in America was in February 2011. Entitled 'Other Forces', it was held at Jason Jacques Gallery in Manhattan and was followed in January 2014 by his second show at the gallery, entitled 'More is More'. A book of the same name accompanied this exhibition. Residencies include Syracuse University, USA (2019), the Jingdezhen International Studio, China (2016) and Long Beach State University, USA (2011). Speaking and 'Master Class' engagements include; Everson Museum Syracuse (2019); Fitzwilliam Museum (2018); 'LabArtz', Taoxichuan, China (2016); International Ceramics Festival, Aberystwyth (2015); Greenwich House New York and The Clay Studio Philadelphia (2014); the American Museum of Ceramic Art, California (2013); SOFA Chicago Expo (2011); International Ceramics Studio, Kecskemet, Hungary (2010). A contributor to *Ceramic Review Magazine*, London, he has also written for *Ceramics Monthly*, *Keramik Magazine Europa* and *Ceramics Art and Perception*. His E-book, 'A Decade In Cahoots', is published online by Jason Jacques Press, accompanying the October 2020 solo exhibition of the same name at Jason Jacques Gallery New York. Other recent exhibitions include; Ceramics Biennale, Hongzhou, China, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge; Side Gallery, Barcelona; Centre Tignous, Paris; Yale Centre for British Art, Connecticut; Hiram Butler Gallery, Houston and Boca Raton Museum of Art, Florida. Represented in public and private collections internationally, he is a Fellow of the Craft Potters Association and Brother of the Art Workers Guild, London. He lives and works in Hampshire, England.

### Natalie McGrath

Natalie McGrath is a guest curatorial contributor to Rivers Connect and is the former Assistant Director of the Point of Contact Gallery in Syracuse, NY. She holds a BA in English from the University at Buffalo and an MA in art history from Syracuse University. McGrath specializes in the study of modern and contemporary art, and has analyzed Margie Hughto's Excavation Series previously in her essay, "Time Changes Everything: Four Artists, One Moment." McGrath currently resides in her beloved hometown of Buffalo, New York.

### Myka Allen Hayden Wysor

Myka Allen Hayden Wysor is a ceramic artist, collector and curator working out of Pittsburgh, PA. She received her BFA from Edinboro University in Edinboro, PA. Myka has curated various shows in the Pittsburgh area, West Virginia, Tennessee and at multiple NCECA conferences. Including exhibitions at Standard Ceramic Supply and "The After School Special", an exhibition including 40 artist held in a school bus during NCECA 2018. Myka's ceramic work focuses around functional pottery with a mix of firing methods and building techniques.





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