2024

Formed by Fire: A Global Story of Women and Clay

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FORMED BY FIRE

A Global Story of Women and Clay

Image: Hamish Jackson Pottery 2016

Formed by Fire:
A Global Story of Women and Clay

by

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CURATORIAL STATEMENT

In 1971, art historian Linda Nochlin implored the art world to be introspective of its long-held, male-centered narratives when she published the profound essay 'Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?' Nochlin articulated the individual and societal factors that have disadvantaged women collectively and have historically kept them from receiving the same level of recognition as male artists for the same quality of work.[1] This essay, compounded with growing feminist sentiments of the late 20th century, insighted art world institutions to highlight and recontextualize the art of women. These institutional efforts have culminated in female artists having a renaissance in the last fifteen years as the 2022 Burns Halperin Report purported that in 2009 museum acquisitions of female artists peaked only to have a resurgence in 2018 following the #MeToo movement.[2] As acquisitions were reaching their peak in 2009, the major traveling exhibition *WACK!: Art and the Feminist Revolution* was completing its run across the United States and Canada. This show was the first major survey of art made under the influence of Feminism.[3] Over a decade later, the trajectory of inclusivity has brought more groundbreaking shows like *Artemisia* at the National Gallery of Art in London in 2020, the first solo exhibition of the Italian Baroque artist Artemisia Gentileschi in the United Kingdom.[4] These two exhibitions demonstrate the range of

[1] Nochlin, Linda. 1971. "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" ARTnews.
[2] Halperin, Julia, and Charlotte Burns. 2022. *Exactly How Underrepresented Are Women and Black American Artists in the Art World? Read the Full Data Rundown Here.*
[3] Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles. 2007. *WACK!: Art and the Feminist Revolution*.
[4] The National Gallery of Art. 2020. *Artemisia.*

shows that have been developed to highlight the art of women and facilitate a more holistic narrative of art history.

The reality is that a significant portion of exhibitions on women artists favor the works of fine artists, leaving women dedicated to craft and applied artforms to go underrepresented in exhibition offerings. A significant demand for female fine artists has been established and continues to grow, making now an opportune moment to leverage that demand and include major exhibitions on female applied artists. *Formed by Fire: A Global Story of Women and Clay* will specifically feature female ceramic artists from 1870 until now who originate from multiple cultures and time periods. Previous scholarship and exhibitions have kept the stories and art of female ceramic artists isolated by their respective cultures or time periods. Placing this art in a new dialogue will result in a visual progression of the ceramic medium through the work of women and it will show synergies between cultures that have previously been unseen. Every woman and culture will have a unique perspective on the medium and its purpose, but there are undeniable similarities present in works form opposing sides of the globe that deserve to be displayed. As a historical survey, *Formed by Fire* provides an educational through line that will show audiences how one medium can evolve from being perceived solely as a craft to become one of the most adaptable and innovative art forms today. The path that the medium of ceramics has taken since 1870 has been immense and beautiful, and largely facilitated by women who now deserve to be spotlighted for their collective contributions.

VENUE

As an exhibition that has two main subjects – women and clay – *Formed by Fire* would be optimally exhibited within a museum context that will allow the subjects to harmonize and even amplify one another. The overarching goal of the exhibition is to introduce and expand audiences knowledge of ceramics and the women who have perpetuated the medium through a survey structure. The array of works and traditions exhibited ranges across 150 years of history and six continents and when compounded with the specialization of content by medium and gender, this show requires an institution with the proper balance of bandwidth of knowledge and physical space to match its scope. A small, highly-specialized museum dedicated to craft may not have the physical exhibition space needed to faithfully execute a multifaceted survey exhibition to the extent needed here. On the other hand, a significant encyclopedic institution with numerous moving parts and educational agendas could create an environment in which *Formed by Fire* was drowned out by an imposing collection. Therefore a medium-sized museum would be the best fit to provide resources and let the exhibition have a singular moment of impact.

The category of museum from which the exhibition is presented will dictate the audience demographics and overall reception and interpretation of the messaging. There are museums dedicated solely to the applied arts such as the Museum of Arts and Design in New York City. Other museums go one step further and are dedicated solely to ceramics such as the American Museum of Ceramic Arts in Pomona, California, or the Gardiner Museum in Toronto. These institutions are more than capable of putting on an exhibition dedicated to any area of ceramics, including one through the lens of women's

experiences. However, the primary audiences of museums that specialize in craft will likely already possess an interest in ceramics and potentially have background knowledge on the history of the medium. If these museum visitors were the majority of potential consumers of *Formed by Fire*, the goal of the exhibition, to introduce and expand audiences' knowledge of ceramics, would be harder to achieve and potentially less impactful. Alternatively, *Formed by Fire* would be better received by an audience that is inherently interested in the art of women across a variety of mediums. In this situation, the medium of ceramics would have a greater potential impact on the average museum visitor consuming the exhibition.

To find a museum that is both medium-sized and dedicated to the art of women is no small feat. In fact, there is only one option in this category, the National Museum for Women in the Arts (NMWA) in Washington DC. The founding of the museum by Wilhelmina Cole Holladay and her husband Wallace F. Holladay can be linked directly to feminist ideologies and their subsequent impact on art history. The couple's collecting habits were inspired by the burgeoning discussions within the scholarly communities of the 1970s regarding the representation, or lack thereof, for women artists and other cultural minorities in museum collections.[5] Their singular dedication to the art of women prompted them to incorporate as a private, nonprofit art museum in 1981 making the NMWA the first museum in the world dedicated to championing women through the arts. The NMWA operated out of the Holladay's Washington DC home for the first six years of its life until 1987 when the permanent collection was moved to its current location. The NMWA as an entity is considered young compared to neighboring institutions, such as

[5] National Museum of Women in the Arts. 2024. *About Us.*

the Smithsonian, that surpass it in age by over 100 years. However, the NMWA's permanent collection is housed in what used to be a Masonic Temple that was built in 1908. Such a stately facade and storied history provides the NMWA's building with gravitas and allows the institution to hold its own within the context of a of a city that contains over 70 museums in only 68 square miles.[6]

Looking further into the demographics of the NMWA and the city of Washington DC at large, the message of *Formed by Fire* could cast a net over a large target audience. Starting from the scope of the museum, the exhibition would be received by the NMWA's dedicated members who number over 9,000 and represent all 50 states and 25 other countries.[7] While this body of people are the most likely to engage with the NMWA's special exhibitions, they are supplemented by two other demographics in Washington DC. The first being the population of the city which, according to US Census data, was estimated to be 678,972 individuals in July of 2023.[8] The second group constitutes the tourists who filter through the city and totaled 21.9 million people in 2022.[9] There is no guarantee that any potential visitors to the NMWA will have a background knowledge in the history of ceramics, but when they purchase a membership or ticket, they are assumed to be primed to learn about the art of women in different contexts. This target audience is global in nature and having an interest in the art of women does not have geographic borders.

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[6] Britannica. 2024. *Washington, D.C.*
[7] National Museum of Women in the Arts. 2024. *Fact Sheet.*
[8] United States Census Beueau. 2023. *Quick Facts - District of Columbia.*
[9] Flynn, Meagan. 2023. "D.C. aims for more international tourists after signs of pandemic recover." *The Washington Post*,

The NMWA possesses only eight pieces of ceramic art in its permanent collection. These works while few in quantity, span across cultures and time periods, paralleling the scope of *Formed by Fire* on a smaller scale. The NMWA has already established its ability to present works of ceramic art in shows such as *The Legacy of Generations: Pottery by American Indian Women* in 1997 and *Casting a Spell: Ceramics by Daisy Makeig-Jones* in 2015.[10] This ceramic collection is an area that the museum can expand as they continue growing, and an exhibition dedicated to the medium would be a justified impetus.

The museum is dedicated to its growth and evolution and has undergone significant changes recently. The NMWA reopened their doors in October of 2023 following two years of major renovations that increased gallery capacity by 15% and allows for more community programming.[11] The programming that is naturally associated with an exhibition of ceramic art is often hands-on including pottery demonstrations and classes; the new space for public programs at the NMWA would allow the impact of *Formed by Fire* to expand beyond the gallery walls. The exhibition and associated programming of *Formed by Fire* would therefore be aligned well with the National Museum of Women in the Arts in terms of the museum's size, category, demographics, collection, and physical space.

[10] National Museum of Women in the Arts 1997. The Legacy of Generations: Pottery by American Indian Women.
[11] National Museum of Women in the Arts. 2023. *National Museum of Women in the Arts reopens October 21, 2023, after major renovation.*

CHECKLIST

The contents of *Formed by Fire* are broken up into four parts which are defined by the roles women play in the production ceramics: decorator, fabricator, sculptor, and champion. These distinctions will be embodied through divisions in the physical layout of the exhibition space detailed in the following section. This section, however, will identify all works proposed to be exhibited and emphasize the need for the division of works through supplementary text describing each part and the evolution of women's participation in the roles of ceramic production. This supplementary text could be used as explanatory wall text in the exhibition space. Commentary is also provided for individual works and artists justifying their relevance to the exhibition and connection to other works; this acts as the precursor to label texts. At the end of this proposal are two essays intended for the exhibition catalogue that provide more detailed scholarship for exhibition visitors with the most vested interest in *Formed by Fire* and its message.

Arts and Crafts: A Decorator's Dream

As a direct response to the automation of industrialization, the Arts and Crafts movement was born in the United Kingdom in the 1860s. This movement called for handmade objects, including ceramic works, of the highest caliber of craftsmanship and design. It was in this post-industrial era of Arts and Crafts that women began to change the narrative of ceramics to include their efforts and not just those of men.

This new narrative meant women availed themselves to previously unparalleled levels of social and economic freedom through their employment at ceramic factories. Within the context of these factories, the division of labor that acted as the framework for production combined with contemporaneous gender norms only allowed women a narrow

scope of responsibilities. The most prominent of these duties was that of a decorator which allowed women creative freedom and greater recognition.

The prominence of the Arts and Craft movement lasted from around the 1870s to the 1930s and was predominantly practiced in the United Kingdom and the United States. While this movement was not felt in other corners of the world, it had lasting effects on women's representation in the art of ceramics for the generations that followed.

Hannah Barlow (British, 1851-1916)
Doulton Pottery
Fox and Lion Pitcher
1871-1875
stoneware
10 1/4 x 5 in.
Private collection

Hannah Barlow was the first women hired by Doulton Pottery and became known globally for her surface designs of animals and other wildlife including the 1876 Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia.[12]

Laura Fry (American, 1857-1943)
Rookwood Pottery
Pitcher
1881
earthenware
8 13/16 x 6 1/8 x 5 3/8 in.
Metropolitan Museum of Art Collection

Inspired by Hannah Barlow's techniques, Fry creates an incised scene in registers here. She would go on to innovate new decoration techniques for Rookwood pottery including the use of an atomize for even glaze application.[13]

Florence Lewis (British, 19th Century)
Doulton Lambeth Pottery
A Faience Vase with Flowers and Birds
ca. 1885
glazed faience
13 in. high
Private Collection

Lewis was the head of Doulton's Faience painting department, and her work was featured at the 1893 Chicago World Fair.[14]

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[12] United States Centennial Commission. 1876. "Official Catalogue: Part I Main Building and Annexes." Philadelphia: John R. Nagle and Co. p. 146.
[13] The Metropolitan Museum of Art. n.d. *Laura A. Fry Pitcher.*
[14] Irvine, Louise. 2017. *A Tale of Two Vases.*

	Mary Seton Watts (British, 1849-1938) Compton Pottery *Large Cobra Pott* ca. 1900 terracotta 20 x 24 in. Private Collection	Around 1900, Mary Seton Watts co-founded Compton Pottery with her husband, George Frederic Watts (1817-1904), where she found success by infusing her Scottish and Indian roots into complex patterns of symbolism in devotional figures, bowls, and terracotta garden pots.[15]
	Maria Longworth Nichols Storer (American, 1849-1932) Rookwood Pottery *Vase* 1882 earthenware, Limoges glaze line 18 x 9 in. Cincinnati Art Museum Collection	Maria was one of the first woman to establish a pottery company in America. Rookwood Pottery was the first American Art Pottery company to garner international acclaim and was supported by a host of female decorators who helped to establish this legacy.[16]
	Mary Louise McLaughlin (American, 1847-1939) *Vase* 1880 earthenware, slip decorated, gilding 39 3/4 x 16 1/2 in. Metropolitan Museum of Art Collection	McLaughlin developed a revolutionary underglaze slip decoration technique that became synonymous with the Art Pottery of Cincinnati.[17]

[15] Calvert, Hilary. 2019. *Mary Seton Watts and the Compton Pottery.* London: Philip Wilson Publishers. p. 109

[16] Owen, Nancy E. 2001. *Rookwood and the Industry of Art: Women, Culture, and Commerce, 1880-1913.* Ohio University Press. p. 42

[17] The Metropolitan Museum of Art. n.d. *M. Louise McLaughlin Vase.*

	Harriet Elizabeth Wilcox (American, 1869-1943) Rookwood Pottery *Vase* 1906 earthenware, Painted Mat Inlay glaze line 13 3/4 x 6 in. Cincinnati Art Museum Collection	Wilcox was one of the female decorators at Rookwood pottery who facilitated the transition of Rookwood's designs into new territories such as Art Nouveau.
	Susan Frackelton (American, 1848-1932) *Jar on Stand* 1893 salt-glazed stoneware with underglaze blue decoration 25 x 12 in. Philadelphia Museum of Art Collection	Frackelton was an innovator in American China Painting and an entrepreneur. Her notoriety in decoration grew and this work was featured in the Women's Pavilion of the 1893 Chicago Wold Fair.[18]
	Sadie Irvine (American, 1887-1970) Newcomb Pottery *Pitcher with Pitcher Plant Design* 1933 ceramic, matte glaze 5 5/8 x 8 1/4 x 5 1/2 in. Newcomb Art Museum Collection	Irvine rose in the ranks from student to running the ceramics department at Newcomb Pottery and she was a bastion of the distinctive Newcomb style.[19]
	Mary Frances Overbeck (American, 1878-1955) Overbeck Pottery *Large vase with children picking berries* ca. 1930 carved and glazed earthenware 12 x 9 1/2 x 9 in. Private Collection	Mary Frances Overbeck along with her sisters Margaret, Hannah, and Elizabeth founded Overbeck Pottery in 1911. This operation was an anomaly as it was entirely owned, managed, and staffed by women.[20]

[18] Sable, Charles. 2022. *Susan Frackelton: America's Most Underrated Ceramic Artist*.
[19] Sorkin, Jenni. 2019. *(Feminist) Origins of Newcomb Pottery*. p. 10.
[20] Postle, Kathleen R. 1978. *The chronicle of the Overbeck Pottery* . Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society. p. 50

	Daisy Makeig-Jones (British, 1881-1945) Wedgwood Pottery *Vase* ca. 1928-1931 bone china with underglaze, luster, and gilding National Museum of Women in the Art Collection	After becoming the head designer of Wedgewood in 1914, Makeig-Jones developed a new style of decoration that invoked modern fairytale illustrations: Fairyland Lusterware. This style became highly popular and elevated Wedgwood in the marketplace.[21]
	Clarice Cliff (British, 1899-1972) Newport Pottery *Bonjour Shape Crocus Tea Set for Two* ca. 1932 hand painted ceramic 5 in. high Private Collection	Cliff brought British ceramics into the new age of Art Deco through her "Bizarre Ware." She also spearheaded the trend of selling smaller tea sets for young couples and their needs in the 'new world' of the 1930s.[22]

Studio Pottery: From Painter to Potter

Studio pottery was established in the 1930s by British potter Bernard Leach (1887-1979) following his time spent in Japan with Hamada Shoji (1894-1978). To engage in studio pottery means an individual or a small workshop manage every aspect of the ceramic process instead of a division of labor. For centuries, cultures ranging from India, Japan, and the United Kingdom kept women out of the most physical aspects of creating pottery including fabrication on the potter's wheel and maintaining the kilns. These beliefs were upheld the most in cultures where pottery had been commercialized. Decoration alone was not a sustainable occupation as many women were expected to "put down their paintbrushes" after they married. Studio pottery strayed away from the level

[21] National Museum of Women in the Arts. 2015. *Casting a Spell: Ceramics by Daisy Makeig-Jones.*
[22] Griffin, Leonard. 1999. *Clarice Cliff: The Art of the Bizarre.* London: Pavilion. p. 151.

of decoration of the preceding era. Works of 20th century studio pottery emphasized the craftsmanship of the vessel with decoration taking a secondary role. These form-centric, functional works were more feasible to replicate in a holistic pottery process undertaken by an individual or studio.

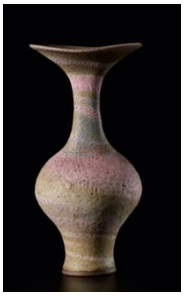
The shift into studio pottery forced women to adapt and ultimately gave them a bigger stake in every stage of the ceramic process: clay preparation, fabrication, kiln operation, and decoration. With a bigger stake came bigger rewards with more women able to support themselves as ceramic artists through the framework of studio pottery. The movement expanded in the Western world from the United Kingdom. Meanwhile in the Chinese, Japanese, and Korean cultures of the East, studio pottery did not need to be formally established as such practices had been in place for centuries. However, women in these cultures had been barred from participating in ceramic production until the post-war period since pottery is considered a fine art. Women studio potters globally had to cross socio-cultural barriers and engage in the practices that had long been unavailable to them. From the 1930s until the 1960s, studio pottery was the dominant force in ceramics. While this movement was progressive by expanding women's roles in pottery, the largely functional output tied the perception of the medium to craft in the cultures that already held ceramics in lower regard.

	Adelaide Alsop Robineau (American, 1865-1929) *Covered vase on stand with teasel* 1912 porcelain 5 in. high Metropolitan Museum of Art Collection	Robineau stands out as one of the first women in American to break through gendered barriers and begin producing vessels on the potter's wheel. As the editor and chief of the *Keramic Studio* magazine she spread her knowledge of ceramic decoration to her devoted readership.[23]
	Katherine Pleydell-Bouverie (British, 1895-1985) *Small Bottle* 1927 reduced stoneware 6 x 3 1/6 in. Tate Modern Collection	One of the earliest women to study under Bernard Leach and she went on to set up her own Pottery and innovate new glazing techniques that solidified her legacy as a pioneer in British Studio Pottery.
	Janet Leach (American, 1918-1997) Leach Pottery *Vessel* stoneware, poured white glaze 15 3/10 in. high Private Collection	Leach abandoned her study of sculpture for ceramics and traveled to Japan in 1954-1955 to be one of the first American studio potters to study pottery under Hamada Shoji (1894-1978). She became one of the most influential artists to come out of Leach Pottery in St. Ives in the 1950s, constantly innovating new techniques and pulling inspiration from her time in Japan as seen in her surface decoration.[24]

[23] The Metropolitan Museum of Art. n.d. *Adelaide Alsop Robineau Covered Vase.*
[24] Cooper, Emmanuel. 2006. *Janet Leach: A Potter's Life.* London: Ceramic Review. pp. 38-61

Marguerite Wildenhain (French-American, 1896-1985)
Double-spouted vase
1960s
stoneware
10 1/2 x 11 3/4 in.
Luther College Fine Arts Collection

After fleeing Nazi persecution in 1940, Bauhaus trained Wildenhain established Pond Farm in 1949, a pottery training program in the forests of California. It was there that she spent the rest of her life producing pottery that fused art and craft while instilling a passion for pottery in generations of young artists through her comprehensive teaching of the fundamentals of fabrication and form.[25]



Lucie Rie (Austrian, 1902,-1995)
Vase with flaring lip
1979
spiraled pink, turquoise and beige clay under glaze
13 3/4 x 6 1/8 x 5 3/4 in.
Private Collection

Rie fled Nazi occupation in the late 1930s from Vienna to London. She is credited for bringing British studio pottery into the mainstream of modern art and design and her work can be identified though sophisticated surface decoration and clean forms that culminate in distinctive flared rims.[26]

Magdalene Odundo (Kenyan, b. 1950)
Untitled
1986
burnished and carbonized terracotta
14 1/4 in.
Private Collection

Just as her techniques oscillate between her Kenyan upbringing and her formal training in the United Kingdom, her works straddle the line between form centric studio pottery and sculpture. Odundo's devotion to the ceramic form and her evocation of the human form in her vessels is subtle and poetic.[27]

[25] Cloutier, Dane Steven. 2007. *Marguerite Wildenhain : Bauhaus to Pond Farm : selected works from the Forrest L. Merril Collection.* Santa Rosa, CA: Sonoma County Museum. p. 19.
[26] The British Museum. n.d. *Dame Lucie Rie*
[27] Berns, Marla C. 2023. *The Shifting Resonances of Magdalene Odundo's Vessels on the Global Stage.*

Toshiko Takaezu (Japanese-American, 1922-2011)
Untitled
ca. 1990s
glazed stoneware
38 x 12 1/2 x 12 1/2 in.
Private Collection

Toshiko Takaezu can be considered a ceramic expressionist. Her simple, closed vessels act as a canvas in-the-round for her expressive and gestural glaze designs. She expanded the concept of the ceramic vessel through her relationship with form.[28]

Bodil Manz (Danish, b. 1943)
Cylinder with Blue Lines
1996
porcelain, glaze transfers
7 1/2 x 9 in.
Los Angeles County Museum of Art Collection

Manz's innovative use of wafer-thin porcelain allows her surface decoration on the interior and exterior of the vessel to be viewed as one cohesive composition and she stands out as a leader of Scandinavian studio pottery.[29]

Jacqueline Poncelet (Belgian, b. 1947)
Large angular slab-built vessel
1977
earthenware
10 1/4 x 14 1/6
Private Collection

Jacqueline Poncelet was part of a group of radical female artists graduating from the Royal College of Art in the early 1970s who laid the foundations for 'The New Ceramics' movement and sought to re-establish the 'vessel' as an abstract form. [30]

Gwyn Hanssen Pigott (Australian, 1935-2013)
Family Portrait
1996
woodfired porcelain, ten pieces
10 1/4 x 19 1/8 in. overall
Private Collection

Gwyn Hanssen Pigott has earned the recognition as one of Australia's most esteemed ceramic artists through her still life groupings. By combining familiar utilitarian forms of the highest caliber of construction in a new conversation with one another her work evokes unexpected emotion in viewers.[31]

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[28] Adamson, Glenn. 2024. *Toshiko Takaezu*
[29] Bodil Manz. n.d. *Bodil Manz Biography*
[30] Roseberys London. 2023. *Jacqueline Poncelet (b.1947) Studio Pottery and Contemporary Ceramics.*
[31] Museum of Anthropology University of British Columbia. 2012. *Introductions by Gwyn Hanssen Pigott.*

Yikyung Kim (Korean, b. 1935)
Jar Form with Handles
1985
white porcelain, clear glaze
15 x 9 4/5 x 11 4/5 in.
Private Collection

Yikyung Kim's Work speaks to the long history of studio pottery practices in Korea. Her use of white porcelain an ancient wheel throwing techniques keeps Korea's ceramic traditions alive in the modern world.[32]

Eiraku Myōzen (Japanese, 1852-1928)
Mizusashi (Water Jar) with Bamboo
Early 20th Century
porcelain, blue glaze
7 7/8 x 7 1/2 x 6 in.
Seattle Art Museum Collection

After her husband's death in 1910, Eiraku Myōzen acted as the bridge between the generations of a male ceramic dynasty to keep the business alive until her son could take over. The quality of her work was so high she was urged to stamp her given name, Myōzen, on her work in the last year of her life.[33]

Kitamura Junko (Japanese, b. 1956)
Vessel 95
1995
stoneware, black-slip and inlaid white-slip
13 3/4 x 6 1/4 in.
Private Collection

Kitamura Junko Applies the 15th century technique of *punch'ong* to her contemporary, thrown forms. This surface technique recalls the qualities of textiles and constellations within one vessel.[34]

Fukumoto Fuku (Japanese, b. 1973)
Kumu (Clouds)
2019
glazed porcelain
19 1/2 x 16 7/8 x 16 1/2 in.
Private Collection

The ceramic form is exalted and reimagined in the layers of Fukumoto Fuku's work. The way the levels of her work encompass and radiate from one another speaks to the artist's inspiration of the celestial actors of the moon, sun, and stars.[35]

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[32] Christine Park Gallery. n.d. *Yikyung Kim.*
[33] Gorham, Hazel H. 1971. *Japanese and Oriental Ceramics.* Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Co. p. 75
[34] Joan B Mirviss Ltd. 2024. *Kitamura Junko.*
[35] Joan B Mirviss Ltd. 2024. *Fukumoto Fuku.*

Beyond the Vessel: Ceramic Sculpture

Beginning in the 1960s, potters sought to push the boundaries of ceramics beyond the utility that had been synonymous with the medium for so long. In the Western world, after decades of operating under studio pottery, ceramic artists wanted to elevate the medium above its cultural perceptions as a craft to become an artform. The non-functional sculptures that were a result of this experimentation were full of color and expression. Sculpture does not have a set framework or aesthetic and such freedom was a new opportunity for women to engage in ceramics and tell their stories through clay. Alternatively, in Eastern cultures where women had been barred from the highly regarded and gendered practices of studio pottery for centuries, ceramic sculpture was a rare avenue into the ceramic arts. In Japan alone there was a veritable boom of inspired ceramic output by women in the post-war period once women had access to ceramic education in universities.

Ceramic sculptors continue to engage in every role of ceramic production. However, there is now a greater balance of the roles as decoration begins to play a prominent role once again after being second to the fabrication of form in studio pottery. The decoration of a piece is often a pivotal role to any ceramic sculptor in their efforts to imbue their work with meaning or express a narrative through clay. By shifting the focus of ceramic production from utility to expression, ceramic artist are to be more innovating in their techniques of production and display.

	Beatrice Wood (American, 1893-1998) *Gold Chalice* 1985 earthenware, luster glaze 12 x 8 7/8 x 8 1/4 in. National Museum of Women in the Arts Collection	Wood began her artistic career moving in the same circles as Marcel Duchamp where she was known as the quote 'Mama of Dada.' It was not until the age of 40 that she shifted to making ceramics. Straddling the line between decorator and sculptor, Wood was known for luster glazes on whimsically designed functional wares.[36]
	Betty Woodman (American, 1930-2018) *Napkin Holder* 1978 white earthenware, transparent glaze 14 3/4 x 25 5/8 x 10 3/4 in. Metropolitan Museum of Art Collection	Woodman sought to deconstruct functional forms, often referencing the formal vocabulary of antiquity, and rearrange them in a way that combined ceramics, sculpture, and painting.[37]
	Margaret Dodd (Australian, b. 1941) *Grassed Holden* 1972 earthenware 7 8/10 x 17 1/4 x 8 1/3 in. National Gallery of Victoria Collection	After studying under renowned Funk potter Robert Arneson at UC Davis from 1965-1968, Australian artist Margaret Dodd brought the tenants of the Funk pottery movement back down-under with her. She infused her knowledge of the irreverent pottery into Australian ceramic culture.[38]
	Viola Frey (American, 1933-2004) *Reflective Woman II* 2002 ceramic with glaze 91 1/2 x 28 x 23 in. Chazen Museum of Art Collection	Frey is widely associated with the Funk pottery movement that emerged in California in the 1960s as the figural response to the East Coast Abstract Expressionist movement. Her monumental figurative works use light, color, and scale to evoke emotion.[39]

[36] Gotthardt, Alexxa. 2016. "The Forgotten Legacy of Cult California Artist Beatrice Wood." *Artsy Editorial*.
[37] Levere, Jane L. 2022. "A New Look at a Groundbreaking Ceramics Artist." *The New York Times.*
[38] Art Space. 1993. "MARGARET DODD: SOME WORKS FROM 1965- 1993." *Adelaide Festival Center*.
[39] Viola Frey. 2024. *Viola Frey Biography.*

Lydia Thompson
(American)
Tumble
2023
ceramic
22 x 17 x 6 1/2 in.
Private Collection

Thompson uses her art to explore ancestral memories that examine spaces and the human experience. Her work shows us how human beings create pathways that explore how physical spaces produce visual silence, evoke the imagination, and illustrate a sense of desperation that provides insights to various cultural practices and traditions.[40]

Koike Shōko (Japanese, b. 1943)
Kai Futamono (Shell Vessel)
1992
glazed stoneware
19 in. diameter
Cincinnati Art Museum Collection

As the first woman to graduate from a Japanese university with a degree in ceramics, Koike Shōko is a trailblazer. The responsibilities of motherhood had her producing functional works until the 1980s when she was able to engage in sculptural pursuits. Her organic vessels appear as ethereal, shell-like forms that could have come directly from the ocean floor into the gallery.[41]

Mishima Kimiyo (Japanese, b. 1932)
Large trash-can with ceramic elements mimicking cardboard boxes
2012
glazed stoneware and steel
37 3/8 x 24 3/8 x 24 3/8 in.
Private Collection

Mishima Kimiyo Is a self-taught ceramic artist who is most known for her tromp l'œil sculptures of garbage. Using a tedious and innovative technique of screen printing on both sides of thin slabs of clay, she is able to send a powerful message about the transient nature of objects and the wasteful habits of humanity.[42]

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[40] Lydia Thompson. n.d. *Meet the Artist.*
[41] North, Alice. 2022. *Listening to clay : conversations with contemporary Japanese ceramic artists.* New York: Monacelli. pp. 133-145
[42] Joan B Mirviss Ltd 2023. *JAPANESE WOMEN CERAMIC ARTISTS Taking Space Making Space | A Panel Discussion of Radical Clay.*

	Tashima Etsuko (Japanese, b. 1934) *Cornucopia 03-III* 2003 stoneware, pigments, pâte de verre glass 26 3/8 x 26 3/4 x 23 5/8 in. Private Collection	Tashima Etsuko uses her art to express her experiences as a woman. Her work has evolved from molds of her own body to major abstract ceramic installations, to organic designs mixing ceramics and molded glass that mimics the texture of human skin. She uses color, or its absence, to speak to the societal pretenses women must put on to navigate the world.[43]
	Jiha Moon (Korean, b. 1973) *Leia* 2013 ceramic, glaze 13 x 8 x 8 in. National Museum of Women in the Arts Collection	Jiha Moon's work explores fluid identities and the global movement of people and their cultures. Her influences include Eastern and Western art, colors and designs from popular culture, Korean temple paintings, Internet emoticons, and labels from food products.[44]
	Lucinda Mudge (South African, b. 1979) *Do Nothing, Say Nothing, Be Nothing* 2023 ceramic, gold luster Private Collection	Mudge almost exclusively produces vase forms that would otherwise be commonplace household items if it were not for her provocative and colorful surface decoration. The surface of each vase is an opportunity for Mudge to visualize the complex narrative of South Africans through references to cartoons, pop songs, fabric designs, and Art Deco vase patterns.[45]

[43] Ibid
[44] Jiha Moon. n.d. *Biography.*
[45] Circa Gallery. 2016. *Kill You Eat You: An Exhibition of Vases by Lucinda Mudge.* Johannesburg. p. 49

	Marilyn Levine (Canadian, 1935-2005) *Handbag* 1988 ceramic 11 1/2 x 15 x 10 in. Portland Art Museum (OR) Collection	Levine's tromp l'œil ceramic replicas of leather luggage, gloves, handbags, shoes, hats, and jackets all show signs of wear and tear, as if they have been heavily used. This speaks to the lives of the original objects' owners and the inevitable passage of time.[46]
	Jyotsna Bhatt (Indian, 1940-2020) *Untitled (Cat)* 2016-2017 stoneware 3 1/2 x 13 1/3 in. Private Collection	Considered to be a trailblazer in contemporary Indian ceramics, Jyotsna Bhatt is known for the precision of her craftsmanship and the robust forms of her sculptures of animals and flowers.[47]
	Katie Spragg (British, b. 1987) *The Wilds of 5 Lely Court* 2016 stop-frame animation 1:18 minute duration Private Collection	Spragg's current work explores our relationship with nature; specifically the ways that humans and plants co-exist - how we attempt to curate nature, yet it grows and thrives beyond human ordering.[48]
	Geng Xue (Chinese, b. 1983) *Mr. Sea, trailer* 2014 stop-frame animation 2:40 minute animation Private Collection	Porcelain comes to life in Geng Xue's hauntingly delicate stop motion creations. Her painstakingly produced sculptures and films masterfully blend tradition and modernity, transporting viewers to captivating new worlds of poetry and emotion.[49]

[46] Everson Museum of Art. n.d. *Object of the Week: Maki's Shoulder Bag, by Marilyn Levine*
[47] Sharma, Giriraj, and Anju Paliwal. 2022. "Women Artist in Indian Contemporary Ceramics." *ShodhKosh: Journal of Visual and Performing Arts* 3 (1), p. 380
[48] Katie Spragg. n.d. *About the Artist.*
[49] Colecciòn Solo. n.d. *Geng Xue.*

	Chotsani Elaine Dean (American) *Coded Memory Quilt: 'for the Schoolmarms, the "saintly souls", you teach with me'* 2018 stoneware, porcelain tile, black clay, glass, silica sand, paper clay 66 x 54 x 1 1/2 in. Private Collection	Dean's primary subject matter is quilts due to their connection to the history of chattel enslavement in America. Quilts preserve the historical blending of aesthetics, emergence of distinct material culture, and traditions.[50]
	Brie Ruais (American, b. 1982) *Counting Down (Father Time), 130 lbs.* 2023 glazed stoneware 82 x 80 x 3 1/4 in. Private Collection	Ruais builds very personal connections with her works as each sculpture is made with the equivalent of her body weight in clay, resulting in human-scale works that forge an intimacy with the viewer's body. This practice recontextualizes the idea of the ceramic form.[51]
	Jolie Ngo (Vietnamese-American, b. 1996) *Flatpack Vessel in Dazzle Camo* 2023 3-D printed ceramic 5 1/4 x 12 x 8 1/2 in. Private Collection	Jolie Ngo expands the potential of the vessel form by creating vibrant, "cyborgian" objects that acknowledge past ceramic traditions while advancing forward-thinking practices. She utilizes contemporary technologies such as clay 3D printing and rapid prototyping to create her forms.[52]

Champions of Tradition

For some ceramic artists, pottery is the medium through which they keep their traditions alive; making ceramic art is not the goal but rather a means to an end. The medium of ceramics is almost universally present in all cultures throughout human

[50] Chotsani Elaine Dean. 2013. *Artist Statement.*
[51] Albertz Benda. 2024. *Brie Ruais.*
[52] R and Company. 2024. *Jolie Ngo.*

history for its accessibility and versatility of function. For many of these cultures, the only evidence of their ceramic traditions exist as shards of clay excavated from archeological sites. What few ancient ceramic traditions that are still practiced are outnumbered by those we have lost to time. With a handful of exceptions, it has almost always been the women of these cultures who keep the knowledge of these ceramic traditions alive by passing the information from mother to daughter.

Traditions, like the cultures from which they originate, are not stagnant but are rather living entities that must evolve to survive. For the women who are tasked with keeping these traditions alive in the modern age, they must contest with rapidly changing technology, globalization, and expanded knowledge of other cultures. These women walk a fine line between maintaining the past and advancing into the future. To accomplish their goals of keeping their traditions alive through ceramics, these women take on the roles of educators, entrepreneurs, and pioneers. While they do undertake all of the practical roles of ceramic production, these women have managed to create a new role altogether that speaks more to the impact of ceramics and not just the output: Champion.

	Maria Martinez (American, ca. 1887-1980) *Blackware Jar* 1926-1943 polished blackware pottery with matte paint 15 1/8 x 21 3/4 in. Toledo Museum of Art Collection	Alongside her husband Julian, Maria Martinez revived ancient Puebloan pottery techniques that helped to revitalize her community both economically and culturally.[53]

[53] Spivey, Richard L. 2003. *The Legacy of Maria Poveka Martinez.* Santa Fe: Museum of New Mexico Press. p. 44

	Margaret Tafoya (American, 1904-2001) *Jar, Santa Clara Pueblo, New Mexico* ca. 1965 blackware 17 x 13 in. National Museum of Women in the Arts Collection	During the 1950s, with the rise of interest in Native American art, Tafoya became well-known worldwide for her skill in hand building uncommonly large clay vessels. Working with patterns such as the kiva step, mountain, clear sky, buffalo horn, and bear claw designs, Tafoya used her fingers to impress lines into the clay.[54]
	Nesta Nala (South African, 1940-2005) *Ukhamba with neck* 2003 reduction-fired terracotta 16 1/2 x 13 8/10 in. Private Collection	By adapting the ceramic traditions of Zulu pottery slightly to appeal to outsiders, Nesta Nala revived the dying art form and brought economic stability and notoriety to her community.[55]
	Female Sejnane Artist (Tunisian) *Pair of Dolls* After 2011 painted Ceramic Private Collection	The women of Sejnane, Tunisia have been passing down ceramic traditions from mother to daughter for 3,000 years. To keep the tradition alive, non-utilitarian ceramic objects, such as dolls, are being produced as their beauty appeals to outside consumers.[56]
	Doña Rosa (Mexican, 1900-1980) *Black Clay Virgen de la Soledad* ca. 1950-1980 burnished black clay 13 1/2 x 10 1/2 x 4 1/2 in. Folk Art Museum of Central Texas Collection	Doña Rosa, full name Rosa Real Mateo de Nieto is noted for inventing a technique to make the local pottery type, *barro negro*, black and shiny after firing. This created new markets for Oaxacan ceramics with collectors and tourists.[57]

[54] National Museum of Women in the Arts. 2024. *Margaret Tafoya*
[55] Perrill, Elizabeth. 2016. "Burnishing History: The Legacies of Maria Martinez and Nesta Nala in Dialogue: Part I: An Historian's Perspective." *The Journal of Modern Craft* 8 (3): pp. 268-272
[56] Manansala, Lilian, and Barbara Corbellini Duarte. 2022. *3 generations of women potters keep a 3,000-year-old tradition alive.*
[57] Folk Art Museum of Central Texas. 2024. *Artist Profile - Doña Rosa.*

Julia Isidrez (Paraguayan, b. 1967)
Lago 7 cabezas
2023
8 5/8 x 17 3/4 x 17 3/4 in.
Private Collection

After learning Guarani ceramics techniques from her mother, Juana Marta Rodas, Julia Isidrez infuses her works with references to imaginary, mestizo animality.[58]

Natalia Arbelaez (Columbian-American)
Colonización Española
2019
terracotta, majolica, and luster
20 x 17 x 9 in.
Private Collection

Arbelaez uses her ceramic sculpture to visually describe the people of South and Central America through the history of how our people came to exist through colonization.[59]

Georgia Blizzard (American, 1919-2002)
The Weeper
ca. 1989
low-fired clay
10 7/8 x 8 1/4 x 9 1/2 in.
Smithsonian American Art Museum Collection

Self-taught, Blizzard was a folk potter from Virginia of Apache heritage, who made expressive portrait pots that were sometimes self-portraits and sometimes people she knew. Ceramic face jugs have a historic presence in the American South and Blizzard is reinterpreting this iconography in the 20th century.[60]

Ladi Kwali (Nigerian, 1925-1984)
Water Pot
1951
stoneware
14 1/10 x 13 3/10 in.
Private Collection

Ladi Kwali's pottery is a hybrid of Nigerian Gwari hand building and studio pottery techniques which she learned from British potter Michael Cardew.[61]

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[58] Giunta, Andrea. 2023. "Representation and Participation: Indigenous Latin American Artists in the Transition Between Two Centuries." *Aware*.
[59] Arbelaez, Natalia. 2022. "Natalia Arbelaez: Mestizo, 2019-2022." *Ceramics Now.*
[60] The Folkaholic. 2021. *Georgia Blizzard.*
[61] Das, Jareh. 2023. "Black Clay: Black Women, Ceramics and Contemporary Art." *The Journal of Modern Craft* 16 (1): p. 65

Thancoupie (Australian, 1937-2011)
Creation (Land and Sea)
1998
earthenware
7 7/8 in. diameter
Private Collection

As an Aboriginal woman, Thancoupie's ceramic vessels are a conduit through which she keeps the stories of the land and people of Thaynakwith alive.[62]

Tokuda Yasokichi IV (Japanese, b. 1961)
Jar - Mizuho (Fresh Ears of Rice)
2017
porcelain with vivid colored glaze (yôsai)
13 x 14 1/2 in.
Private Collection[63]

Tokuda Yasokichi IV stands out as a rare example of a woman carrying on the legacy of a family's ceramic practices in Japan's dynastic system. She adapts four generations of Tokuda glazing techniques while applying her own female sensibilities.[64]

Eiko Maeda (Japanese)
Floral Bowl
after 2013
colored porcelain
8 2/3 x 8 2/3 x 4 1/2 in.
Private Collection

Eiko Maeda has dedicated her ceramic efforts to keeping the 15th century *nerikomi* technique alive. This technique uses multiple colors of porcelain to create designs in the vessel itself.[65]

Jane Yang D'Haene (Korean)
Untitled
2023
stoneware, porcelain, glaze
21 x 20 in.
Private Collection

Jane Yang D'Haene is recontextualizing the moon jar form that has long been a staple in Korean Ceramics for centuries. She applies expressive surface decoration and glazes while maintaining the classic silhouette of the moon jar.[66]

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[62] Isaacs, Jennifer. 2022. "Thancoupie." *Artist Profile.*
[63] The Cincinnati Art Museum contains a similar work.
[64] Earle, Joe, et al. 2023. *Radical Clay: Contemporary Women Artists from Japan.* Edited by Joe Earle. Chicago: Yale University Press. p. 44
[65] Eiko Ceramics. n.d. *Biography*
[66] Yang-D'Haene, Jane. 2024. *Biography.*

EXHIBITION LAYOUT

The National Museum of Women in the Arts has a dedicated special exhibition space that encompasses the entirety of the second floor of the museum. The schematics of this space, provided by the museum, indicate there are four preexisting zones for organizing an exhibition (Fig. 1). This, fortunately, aligns with the four parts of *Formed by Fire* as outlined in the preceding section. To best accommodate a flow between the works and the physical space, only two walls would need to be removed to unify two of the zones (Fig. 2).[67] This adjustment results in four distinct rooms in direct succession from the main entrance. As visitors advance from the entrance, the rooms progress along with their contents until they reach the conclusion. The first three rooms will be chronological, and the layout will culminate with the Champions of Tradition. With a total of 56 works, the most feasible way to illustrate the layout is by isolating each room and its works.

[67] Email correspondence with the museum confirms the layout of the exhibition floor is capable of slight modifications including wall removals.

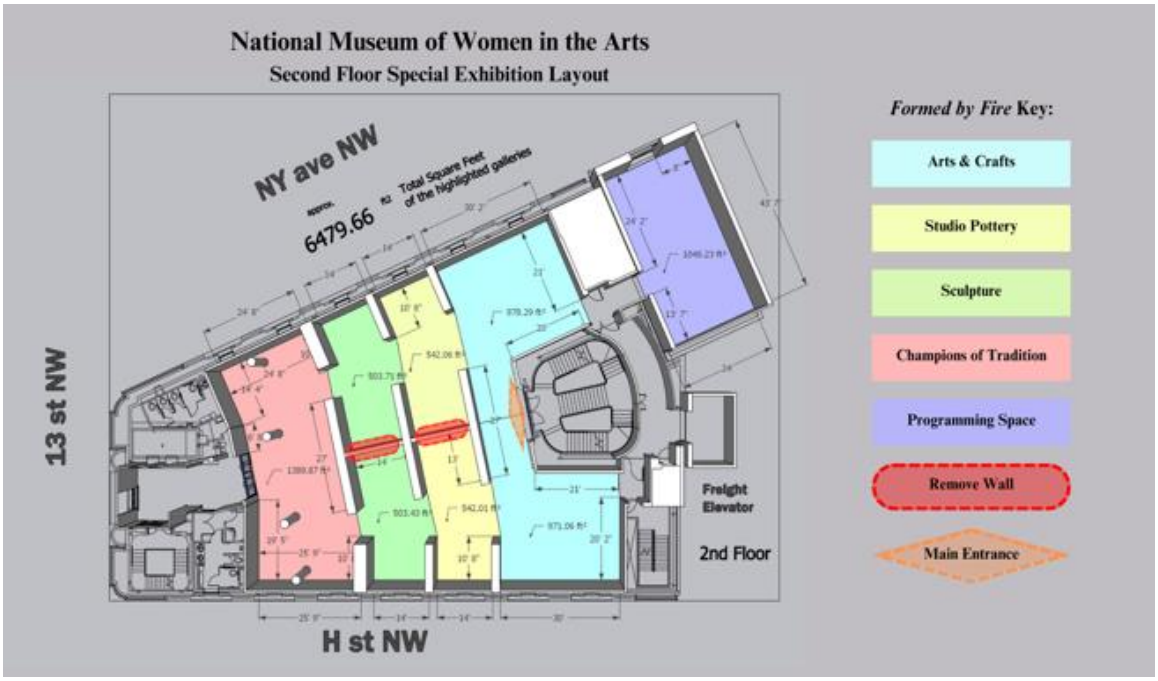


Figure 1 *National Museum of Women in the Arts Second Floor Special Exhibition Schematics and Key*

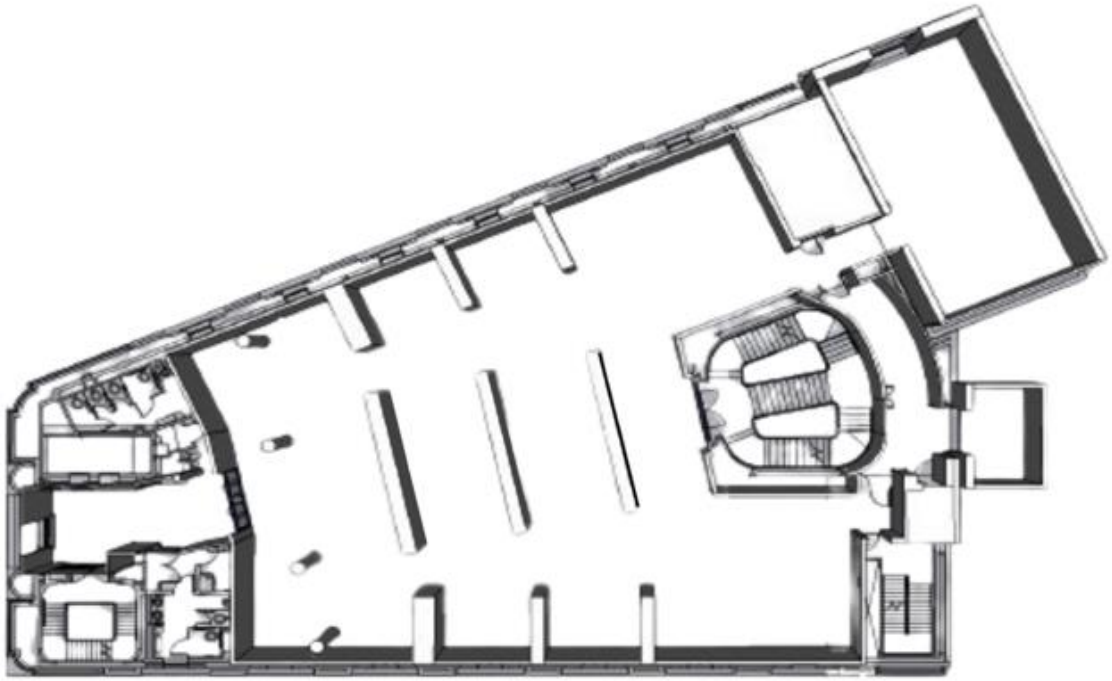
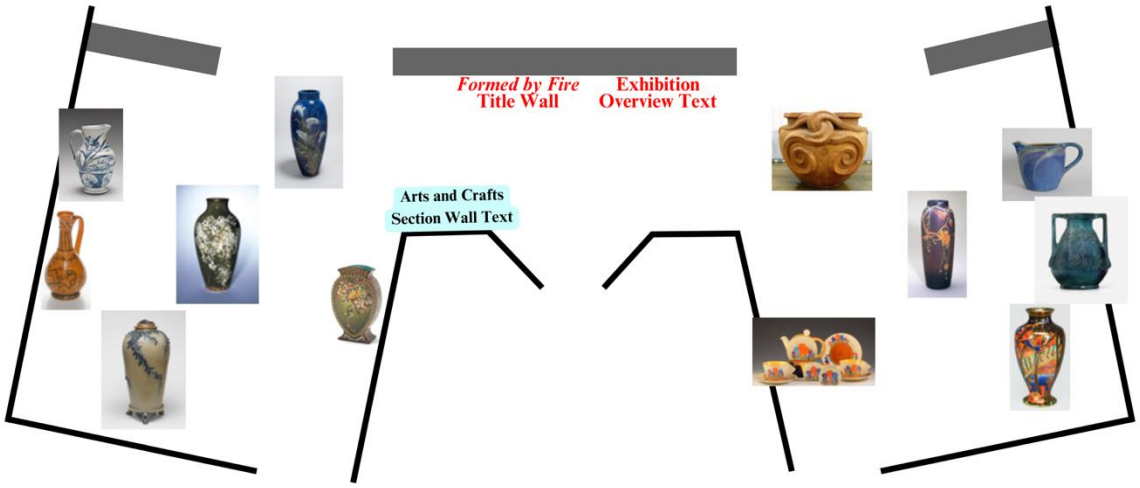


Figure 2 *Second Floor Layout Adjusted for* Formed by Fire

Arts and Crafts: A Decorator's Dream



Not to Scale

The first room will contain the works of the Arts and Crafts era as they represent the earliest chapter in this story of women and clay. The physical layout of the works must contend with the existing structure of the museum. The first room of the space is functionally divided in half to accommodate the grand staircase most visitors will take to reach the exhibition. When dividing the twelve works of this section in half, they are more balanced in number by time period rather than by nationality. Hence, the left side of the room will be works produced before 1900 and the right side of the room will be works produced after 1900. This illuminate the difference between the earliest works of Arts and Crafts pottery and later iterations of Art Nouveau and Art Deco.

Looking at the pre-1900 works, the two pitchers by Hannah Barlow and Laura Fry are paired together in conversation as Fry was inspired by the work of Barlow that was presented at the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition in 1876.[68] The three cylindrical vases are diagonally placed in chronological order with the oldest work closest to the entrance. The final vase in this section by Florence Lewis is placed on the opposite wall from the work by Barlow, creating tension between the two Doulton Pottery works in the room.

[68] The Metropolitan Museum of Art. n.d. *Laura A. Fry Pitcher.*

The works produced after 1900 follow a similar layout that is a near mirror of the left side of the room. The works of Sadie Irvine and Mary Frances Overbeck are paired together on the same wall as the two smallest pieces in the grouping to increase their visual impact amongst larger works. The three large vases are diagonally places in chronological order with the oldest work closest to the entrance. The final tea set by Clarice Cliff has been given a wall for all of the pieces to be displayed together.

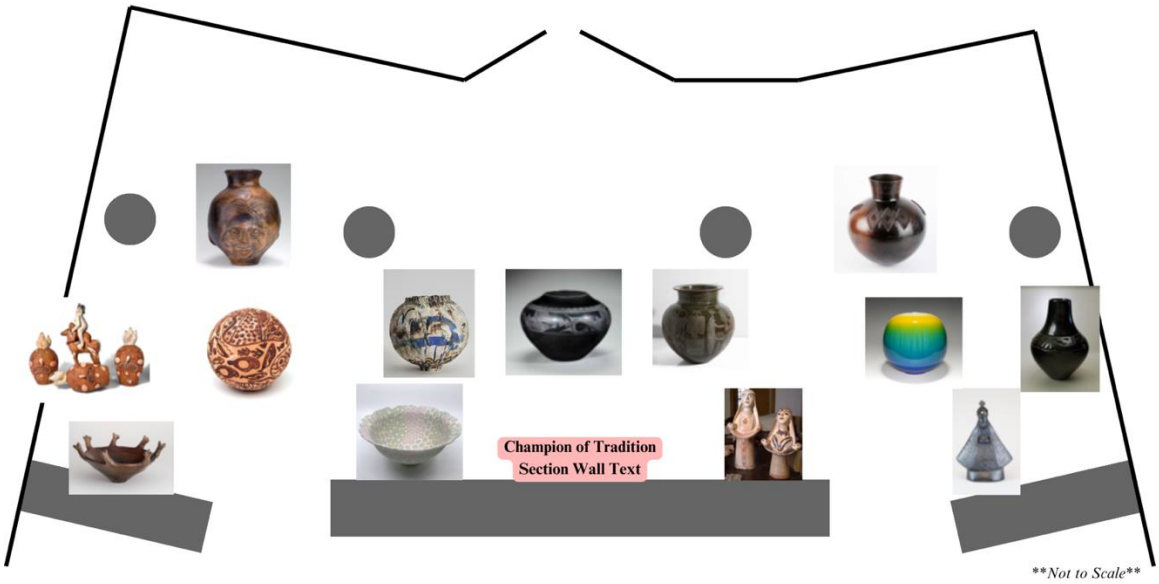
Studio Pottery: From Painter to Potter

The second room featuring works of studio pottery is proportionally wide and the works are therefore organized thematically across the space. The left side of the room includes works that utilize highly intricate surface decoration to enhance the form. The latest and more dominant work by Kitamura Junko is placed at the center of the array to ground the smaller works by Bodil Manz and Jacqueline Poncelet. The works in the center of the room are all works by women who were pioneers in studio pottery in their respective country. The multi-figural work by Gwyn Hanssen Pigott acting as the central anchor for the surrounding works. The right side of the room features the works that embody the poetic qualities of the ceramic form. These three works are grounded by the vessel of Toshiko Takaezu.

Beyond the Vessel: Ceramic Sculpture

Similar to the room for studio pottery, the third room intended for works of ceramic sculpture is proportionally wide and is divided into three sections. The works in the left side of the room either tell a story or send a message through their form and decoration. In the middle of the room, the monumental and easily recognizable work *Reflective Woman II* by Viola Frey will be the central figure watching over the rest of the sculptures. There are two pairings in the center section. First are the works by Beatrice Wood and Betty Woodman for their sculptural adaptation of functional objects. Second, the works of Margaret Dodd and Jiha Moon are paired together for their whimsy and references to popular culture. The two stop motion videos are placed diagonally across the central area for a sense of balance. The videos will be playing on a loop and would ideally have headsets attached to them to ensure their respective audios do not clash and distract visitors in the space. The works in the right side of the room all speak to some form of ceramic innovation. Jolie Ngo's work is innovative in terms of technology, Tashima Etsuko's work is innovative in the combination of materials, Marilyn Levine's work is innovative in its trompe-l'œil execution, and Brie Ruais's work is innovative in its concept.

Champions of Tradition



The inclusion of columns in the floorplan of the final room increases the variety of the arrangement of the works. However, the division of these final works continues to follow the pattern set by the preceding two rooms in a threefold division across the space. In the left side of the room the works are using collective and individual narratives in both form and decoration to keep their traditions alive. The works featured in the center of the room are intended to keep long held techniques or forms alive. The work by Maria Martinez is set purposefully in the center of the room for its large size and the notoriety of the artist; her work will likely be quickly recognized by any visitors with a preexisting knowledge of ceramic art history. Finally, the works on the right side of the room are all members of ceramic dynasties all working to keep their traditions alive.

CATALOGUE ESSAY ONE:
The Modern Evolution of Women and Clay

A Global Medium

If you were to walk through the galleries of any museum of natural history, you would be faced with artifacts from every stage of human civilization. Eventually, a pattern would emerge showing that one medium has a near universal through line across culture, time, and geography: ceramics. The presence of ceramics in human culture was born of necessity and has evolved to meet our need for both utility and beauty through a perpetual cycle of tradition and innovation. Women have always been present to some degree in the production of ceramics. However, the level of access to the medium and the amount of recognition women received for their efforts varied based on their culture's classification of the medium combined with their social standing as women. In many ancient cultures globally, ceramic goods have been viewed as functional, handmade necessities or crafts. According to ceramic scholar Moira Vincentelli, this has relegated these goods to a woman's ceramic tradition "where the production of pottery… is identified as part of the female role, either because all women know how to make pottery or because making it is an exclusively female activity.[69]" On the other side of the same coin, in cultures where ceramics has been viewed as a higher art form - such as the cultures of China or Japan - women were historically barred from the highly specialized aspects of ceramic production and instead acted in secondary roles such as administration or clay preparation.[70]

[69] Vincentelli, Moira. 2004. *Women Potters: Transforming Traditions.* New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press. p. 15
[70] Ibid, p. 80

One important factor that adds a layer of complexity to the gendered traditions of ceramic production occurred around the 4th millennium BCE when the potter's wheel was invented in Mesopotamia.[71] As this technology spread to civilizations across Asia, Africa, and Europe, the physicality of using the potter's wheel compounded by shifting perceptions of gender roles and physical ability created a stark divide in ceramic production. Men started to dominate the lucrative mass production of pottery leaving women to continue their traditional hand-craft and other decorative pursuits.[72] This chasm between men and women's contributions to ceramics is not universal as John Kantner, a researcher at the University of Florida, discovered in 2019 through archeological remains of Puebloan pottery of the Southwestern United States. By analyzing the fingerprints on pots from the 10th and 11th centuries CE, a time before the Puebloan culture was introduced to the potter's wheel, Kantner found direct evidence that showed both men and women were routinely involved in pottery production.[73] This scenario, while relevant to the larger narrative of the medium, is in the minority of cases. For most of human history since the advent of the potter's wheel, men remained steadfast as the main characters in the story of ceramics and their narrative kept them in control of the labor intensive, professional production of pottery. *Formed by Fire: A Global Story of Women and Clay* shows the journey of women globally who rewrote the narrative and placed themselves as the protagonists of pottery.

[71] Doherty, S. K. 2015. *The Origins and Use of the Potter's Wheel in Ancient Egypt.* Oxford: Archaeopress. p. 4
[72] Parenti, Deanna. 2020. *Women in Ceramics.*
[73] Kantner, John, et al. 2019. "Reconstructing sexual divisions of labor from fingerprints on Ancestral Puebloan pottery." *PNAS* 116 (25): p. 12224

Ceramics is one of the most ubiquitous mediums in all of human history thereby making a compressive survey exhibition of women's contributions to the medium objectively overwhelming. The result of such an effort would likely require its own wing in a museum and a catalogue in several volumes. Past exhibitions of female ceramists have duly limited their scope to singular artists, cultures, or themes. The work of German ceramic artist Beate Kuhn will be given a solo exhibition at the Carnegie Museum of Art starting in June of 2024.[74] The Art Institute of Chicago has put on an exhibition of solely female ceramic artists from Japan titled *Radical Clay*.[75] And in 1995, Jo Lauria curated *Exploring a Movement: Feminist Visions In Clay* that featured solely feminist works of ceramic art.[76] These exhibitions are valuable as they facilitate the narrative of women's roles in ceramic art history, nonetheless, they keep these women's stories siloed by their culture or time-period. Even the latter most of the aforementioned exhibitions presented works from women across multiple cultures, but only exhibited works from the last two decades of the 20th Century.

Formed by Fire seeks to chart the evolution of women's contributions to the medium of ceramics from 1870 to now. This survey places the ceramic art of women across the globe in a never-before-seen visual conversation. A presentation this broad both in terms of the number of cultures represented and the timeframe used, creates an opportunity to group of works that can convey the progression of the ceramic medium though the prismatic experiences of women globally. To put this array of pieces together in dialogue makes the sheer magnitude and innovation of women's output of ceramics

[74] Carnegie Museum of Art. 2023. *Beate Kuhn: Turn.*
[75] Art Institute of Chicago. 2023. *Radical Clay: Contemporary Women Artists from Japan.*
[76] Lauria, Jo. 1995. *Exploring a Movement: Feminist Visions in Clay: A Multi-site Exhibition of Feminist Ceramics Presented in Four Themes.*

undeniable. The seemingly disparate cultures and eras represented in *Formed by Fire* are unified by the strength of the women who continued producing against the odds of cultural and gender oppression. Like the fire that vitrifies clay in a kiln, female ceramic artists have persevered in their efforts to establish their art in a world that would have otherwise seen them forgotten.

It has been established that limiting the timeframe of ceramic works is a necessity for the coherence of messaging and the practical limitations of exhibition spaces. While 1870 acts as a solid point of entry into the timeframe of this particular story, there cannot be a solid exit point.[77] Clay is inherently malleable and its progression as an artistic medium has been similarly incongruous across cultures since 1870; one movement or interpretation of ceramics might be established in the United Kingdom, for example, but it may not proliferate to other corners of the world at the same time or at all. As no two cultures evolve at the same rate, there is not one singular chronology to follow when assessing the works of female ceramic artists. Alternatively, *Formed by Fire* divides ceramic works into four overlapping chronologies that build upon one another. These chronologies are driven by the roles of ceramic production that women have assumed in their efforts to establish their legacies through clay.

Ceramic Roles: A Framework

The roles needed for ceramic production are nearly universal and genderless in their most basic forms. That being said, women's participation in the following roles has been dependent upon their respective culture and its perception of gender roles at the time in question. While the roles remain constant, the progressive practices that allow women

[77] Buckley, Cheryl. 1990. *Potters and Paintresses: Women Designers in the Pottery Industry.* London: Women's Press. pp.21-23

to fill these roles is entirely context dependent. Throughout the entirety of the ceramic production process, certain ancillary roles are constants no matter the aesthetics or functionality of the final product. These roles include mixing and wedging clay to prepare it for construction as well as managing the kiln to cement all creative efforts in fire. Outside of these supportive roles, there are three main roles that directly address aesthetics and functionality: fabricators, decorators, and sculptors. Fabricators are the individuals tasked with the physical manifestation of a form - functional or not - be that through hand-building, wheel throwing, or slip mold casting processes. The gender division present in fabrication techniques differs between cultures and their applications of technology, such as potter's wheels or advanced kilns. The primary justification for keeping women out of the fabrication process, especially at a commercial scale, was they lacked the physicality needed and were better suited for less demanding tasks.[78] For the pioneering women who first crossed the line into fabrication, it meant they subverted the gendered practices that had been engrained into the medium of ceramics for centuries. Fabrication stops at the completion of the clay body and does not venture into glaze and surface embellishment. Instead, that is a role left to decorators, a position that has historically been accessible and often dominated by women. Instead of applying a single glaze and calling it a day, decorators have been key to elevating the perception of ceramics as a medium globally by using surface designs to entice viewers to engage with the fabricated forms beyond the functions they serve. Despite such an immense potential impact, decorators can be easily dismissed as a group as their output is not necessary to the wares that have historically valued functionality before all else. For that reason, it is

[78] Buckley, pp. 21-23

no coincidence that women have filled the role of decorator for so long. Finally, it is a sculptor's job to imbue a story or meaning into one ceramic vessel through a combination of form and decoration. Sculptors are often able to abandon the functionality of clay forms that tethered the medium to the concept of craft for so long. In doing so, sculptors can break the boundaries of clay's known capabilities. The scope and impact of women's roles in ceramic art have progressed as their rights, voices, and access to education expanded in the world at large. Along every step of this progression we can see a story of passion and persistence that is articulated by the works themselves. Although *Formed by Fire* is just one account of women and clay, there are many more stories being molded.

Arts and Crafts: A Decorator's Dream

Women did not establish themselves collectively as leaders in the ceramic production process until the end of the 19th century and did so mainly as decorators. This cultural change was one small tremor within the larger seismic shift emanating from global industrialization and subsequent modernism. Just as painters, sculptures, and fledging photographers were grappling with artistic expression in the post-industrial landscape of the late 19th century, ceramic artists were coming to terms with their new place amongst the technology that could out-produce a single potter without any blood, sweat, or tears. As a way to take a stand against the automation of the industrial revolution, a new artistic movement began in the United Kingdom that advocated for handmade goods of the highest caliber of craftsmanship; the Arts and Crafts movement was a guiding force for many artists who felt lost in the culture of commerce.[79] The rise of Arts and Crafts compounded by the larger social development of the cult of

[79] Jenni Sorkin *(Feminist) Origins of Newcomb Pottery*, p. 4

domesticity in the late Victorian period of early to mid 1800s created an environment in which women were considered "the natural guardians of the arts.[80]" This shift in perception justified the surge in education and employment of women in the arts, particularly those applied arts that contributed to the aesthetics of the domestic sphere such as pottery. Around the 1860s, well-established British potteries began to include Arts and Crafts techniques into their offerings. In a progressive effort, Doulton & Co. set themselves apart by employing over 200 women decorators by the early 1880s.[81] The first and most notable of these female decorators was Hannah Barlow (1851-1916) who became known for her animal designs (Fig. 3). These progressive opportunities did not exist in a vacuum and were subjected to the societal beliefs of the era. The founder of Doulton Pottery, Henry Doulton believed the "true sphere of woman is the family and household…." and the female decorators were expected to put down their paintbrushes after marriage.[82] The foundations that Barlow set allowed subsequent British potters to expand the role of women in the medium as artists and entrepreneurs.

Figure 3 *Hannah Barlow (British, 1851-1916), Doulton Pottery,* Fox and Lion Pitcher*, 1871-1875, stoneware, 10 1/4 x 5 in., Private collection*

A parallel tension between art and industry reached a head in the United States at the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition. One visitor to the Centennial was Maria Longworth Nichols (1849-1932) who saw the works exhibited by the Japanese delegation

[80] Owen, p. 18
[81] Bayer, Patricia, and et al. 1989. *The Encyclopedia of Arts and Crafts: The International Arts Movement, 1850-1920.* London: Headline. p. 110
[82] Irvine, Louise. 2020. *Deeds Not Words*

and was inspired to establish her own pottery. Nichols founded Rookwood Pottery in 1880 in Cincinnati, Ohio which would go on to become America's leading producer of Art Pottery.[83] The company found success as they enacted Nichols's vision of making

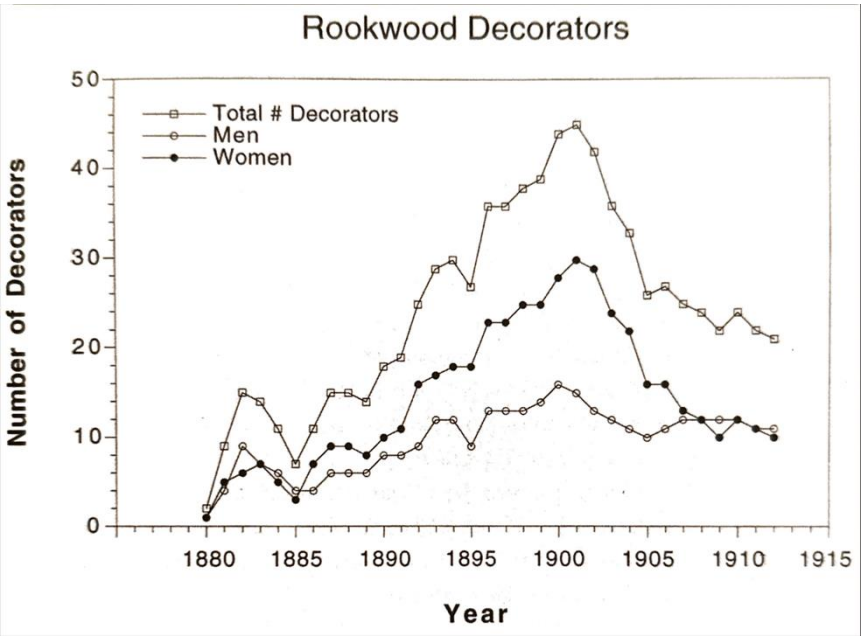


Figure 4 *Gender of Rookwood Decorators, 1880-1913 (Owen, p. 79)*

every piece an original through individual decoration. During the peak years of Rookwood's production from 1880-1913, women were the largest group of decorators at the company (Fig. 4).[84] These women were the driving force behind much of Rookwood Pottery's innovation and success. In 1895 in New Orleans, Rookwood Pottery was soon joined in its efforts to elevate American pottery beyond the confines of simple utility by Newcomb Pottery and its host of female ceramic decorators. A collective style developed amongst the women including a signature palette of soft blues, greens, pink, yellows, and

[83] Owen, p. 1
[84] Ibid, p. 79

cream along with graceful motifs of the local flora establishing the style as Louisiana's Art Nouveau.[85]

There was a distinct shift in design aesthetics following the 1925 *Exposition des Arts Décoratifs et Industriel* in Paris that moved away from the sinuous motifs of Art Nouveau in favor of the style coined Art Deco after the wares presented at the *Exposition*.[86] This stylistic shift is most notably seen in the prolific oeuvre of British ceramic decorator, Clarice Cliff (1899-1972).[87] Her work was differentiated by the bold colors and graphic designs she used which went against convention and prompted Cliff to designate them as "Bizarre Ware" in 1928.[88] Cliff's legacy ranges from having her work be widely collected by Hollywood stars to empowering the 'Bizarre Girls' who were employed in her studio to continue her legacy of decoration.[89]

Studio Pottery: From Painter to Potter

In the factories that produced art pottery at the end of the 19th century, there was a strong division of labor and specialization of tasks. This environment meant women's roles were almost exclusively that of a decorator or the most menial of the ancillary roles, such as clay preparation; the heat of the kiln and the strength needed for the potter's wheel clashed with most culture's perception of women's abilities. While decorators were credited for their efforts, which can be traced through indexical marks on the base of each

[85] Ormond, Suzanne, and Mary E. Irvine. 1976. *Louisiana's Art Nouveau: The Crafts of Newcomb's Style.* Gretna, Louisiana: Pelican. p. 67
[86] Green, Richard, and Des Jones. 1995. *The Rich Designs of Clarice Cliff.* Bidford-on-Avon: Rich Designs. p. 20
[87] Clarice Cliff was honored on April 26th, 2024, with an official plaque from Historic England for her significant contributions to English Ceramics; Cullinane, Alice. 2024. "Life of ceramic artist celebrated with blue plaque." *BBC News.*
[88] Ibid, p. 28
[89] Victoria and Albert Museum. n.d. *Art Deco: Clarice Cliff.*

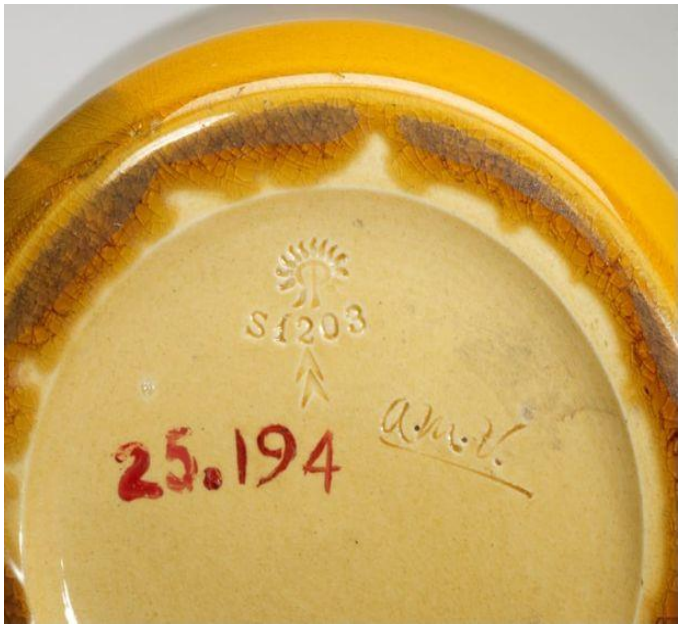


Figure 5 *Signature of Rookwood Pottery Decorator Anna Marie Valentien (1862-1947) inscribed "A.M.V" on Underside of* Vase

of their pieces (Fig. 5), they were unable to participate in the fabrication of said pieces.[90] This gender divide had been established on every continent around world for centuries with men producing high value and high-volume ceramics on the wheel for large scale enterprises.[91] The status quo shifted with the introduction of a new field of ceramics starting in the 1930s, studio pottery. As one of the pioneering figures of studio pottery, British ceramist Bernard Leach (1887-1979) established the definition of a studio potter in his influential text *A Potter's Book* (1940) as someone "who performs all or nearly all the processes of production with his own hands.[92]" The risk for women to cross the long-established gender divide and begin fabricating work, especially on the potter's wheel, had the potential return of social and economic freedom.[93] Studio pottery provided a path for women to establish a livelihood as active participants in all ancillary roles, fabrication, and decoration to create high-quality pieces of form-centric, functional pottery. This also allowed women to acquire greater recognition as the sole creator of their works. Decades before Bernard Leach defined this

[90] Buckley, pp. 21-22
[91] Vincentelli, pp. 13-14
[92] Leach, Bernard. 1940. *A Potter's Book.* London: Faber and Faber. p.1
[93] Sorkin, Jenni. 2016. *Live Form: Women, Ceramics, and Community.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. p. 7

type of pottery production, American potter Adelaide Alsop Robineau (1865-1929) was already challenging gender roles by throwing, decorating, and glazing her own pieces at the turn of the 20th century.[94]

In Western society, British studio pottery not only spread to continental Europe, North America, and Australia, but the style absorbed influences from other cultures as it evolved. This phenomenon can be seen between three women. First, American born Janet Leach (1918-1997) infused her American and British background with Japanese processes following her studies with Hamada Shoji (1894-1978) in Japan from 1954-1955. [95] Alternatively, Japanese-American artist Toshiko Takaezu (1922-2011) imposed her cultural background onto American pottery processes. Finally, Kenyan born potter Magdalene Odundo (b. 1950) seamlessly blends functional forms of studio pottery and sculpture imbued with meaning is. Odundo mixes ceramics traditions established by the women of sub-Saharan Africa with her formal training in the United Kingdom to create vessels with anthropomorphic references to the female body.[96]

The advent of studio pottery in the 20th century was not necessary in some Eastern cultures as generations of potters had already been producing high-quality, ceramic wares by hand with little to no division of labor for centuries.[97] Unlike most of the world, ceramics has long been viewed as a fine art form in Japanese, Chinese, and Korean cultures and the traditions associated with the medium are passed down from father to son; women of this region were historically barred from ceramic production until the

[94] The Metropolitan Museum of Art. n.d. *Adelaide Alsop Robineau Covered Vase.*
[95] Cooper, 38-61
[96] Salon 94. n.d. *Magdalene A. N. Odundo DBE.*
[97] Earle, et al. p. 13

post-war period.[98] Such a barrier was more severe than the gender norms in the West and the extent to which women who overcame them exemplifies their strength and passion for the art of studio pottery.

Beyond the Vessel: Ceramic Sculpture

Figure 6 *Viola Frey (American, 1933-2004),* Reflective Woman II*, 2002, ceramic with glaze, 91 1/2 x 28 x 23 in., Chazen Museum of Art Collection*

Starting in the 1960s, ceramic artists, like Peter Voulkos (1924-2002), began to abandon much of ceramics functionality and started exploring the sculptural abilities of clay. It was around this time that the general perception of ceramics, in cultures where the medium had previously been considered a craft, were shifting to view the medium as an artform through these new sculptural efforts. This new direction allowed women globally to either continue to be fabricators as they had been in studio pottery or become fabricators in the context of cultures where the potter's wheel and studio pottery were inaccessible, as seen it the women of India.[99] Sculptural pottery added a layer of complexity to fabrication to include decoration and greater expression. Studio pottery did not disappear when ceramic artists started producing

[98] Ibid
[99] Sharma, Giriraj, and Anju Paliwal, p. 377

sculptural forms, it simply became a latent force that anchors ceramics to its history of craft.

If the Arts and Crafts movement and studio pottery both provided women with greater social and economic freedom than the systems that preceded them, then sculptural pottery gave women unprecedented artistic freedom. While studio pottery often had a clean aesthetic that highlighted the ceramic form and its construction, sculpture provided a space for ceramic artists to lean into the possibilities of decoration. By this point in the mid-20th century, the role of the decorator had evolved beyond the purely aesthetic role of the Arts and Crafts movement to instead prove a point or send a message. Some artists like the Funk potters of San Francisco sought to make irreverent works of representational ceramics in response to the cerebral Abstract Expressionist movement (Fig. 6).[100] Other ceramic sculptors used the medium as a conduit for statements ranging from feminism, cultural injustices, the power of nature, and climate change. And as technology evolves, many ceramic artists are incorporating these innovations into their production practices through techniques such as stop-motion animation and 3-D printing. There are women participating throughout all of these sculptural endeavors and advancing the medium to new heights of creativity and innovation.

Champions of Tradition

There is one aspect of ceramics that extends beyond borders and decades and that is its ability to bring people together, uplift communities, and retain traditions between generations. Women have historically been situated at the center of this phenomenon as pioneers, educators, and entrepreneurs. Instead of being guided by ever-changing ceramic

[100] Museum of Arts and Design. 2023. *Funk You Too!*

Figure 7 *Nesta Nala (South African, 1940-2005),* Ukhamba with neck*, 2003, reduction-fired terracotta, 16 1/2 x 13 8/10 in., Private Collection*

movements, certain women are preserving long held traditions within the context of a modern age. One aspect of this preservation began at the beginning of the 20th century with women revitalizing ancient pottery techniques to meet the needs of outside consumers rather than producing utilitarian wares to be used within their community. Both Puebloan potter Maria Martinez (ca. 1887-1980) and South African potter Nesta Nala (1940-2005) adapted their respective ceramic artforms to meet the demands of tourists in two different decades and hemispheres (Fig. 7).[101] Their appeal to tourists garnered the attention of galleries and museums allowing both women to gain greater recognition and bring their culture's ceramic traditions back from the brink of extinction.[102] The common thread between these women is the self-determination they demonstrated over their art that kept their cultural heritage from being reduced to a price tag in a gift shop and instead allowed it to flourish and evolve as a living entity. Subsequent generations each bring a new perspective that slowly changes the established ways and makes ceramic traditions more resilient. For instance, if ceramic traditions had remained stagnant, Tokuda Yasokichi IV (b.1961) would not exist as a rare example of a woman carrying on the legacy of a family's ceramic practices in Japan's patrilineal dynastic system. With no sons to carry on

[101] Maria Martinez was active in the early 20th century and Nesta Nala was active in the 1980s.
[102] Perrill, pp. 5-9

the legacy of her father, Tokuda Yasokichi III (1933-2009)[103], she is now able to adapt four generations of *saiyu* glaze techniques while applying her own female sensibilities as a result of this progression of ceramic traditions and gender norms.[104] The space between maintaining traditions and allowing those traditions to evolve naturally is where the most change can occur, and women are taking advantage of that to the benefit of their cultural heritage.

Other women have taken alternative, educational routes to preserve their culture's ceramic traditions. In Australia, Aboriginal artist, educator, and linguist Thancoupie (1937-2011) used the surface of her pots directly to illustrate the stories passed down to her from the elders of her culture to preserve them for posterity.[105] From the 1950s to the 1980s, Nigerian potter Ladi Kwali (c. 1925-1984) connected directly with foreign audiences during her educational and interactive performances. Kwali's work had a broad appeal as it was her own hybridization of indigenous Gwari hand building techniques and European practices favored by the few women who studied under British studio potter Michael Cardew (1901-1983) [106] during his time in Nigeria.[107] In addition to playing every role associated with ceramic production, by using their art to enrich their community and preserve their traditions, these women have created a new role: Champion. It is in this role that the production of the pottery is not the end goal but rather

[103] Tokuda Yasokichi III was designated as a Living National Treasure in 1997, an honor given to Japanese ceramists who best embody Japan's traditions in their work; there have been no women to achieve this distinction.
[104] Earle, et al., p. 44
[105] Heffernan, Elizabeth. 2019. *Thancoupie (1937-2011).*
[106] Cardew's practices of transforming and upgrading locally produced pottery in the British colony of Nigeria is considered controversial as it brings into question the creative autonomy of the locals within the context of an occupied state.
[107] Das, p. 65

the means through which they can actively advocate for the future of their culture and keep their traditions alive.

Conclusion

The women who have dedicated their lives to pottery have carefully balanced the inherent qualities of the medium that allow for unbelievable innovation and utility; neither is superior to the other and there is limitless beauty in the spaces between these two extremes. Women have always been present wherever and whenever clay has been formed into something more, something stronger. Despite centuries of neglect in ceramic communities globally, women have persevered and have only recently started to earn their rightful laurels. If the world is a kiln, then the strength of these women is like the strength of their pots, formed by fire at every stage and stronger as a result.

CATALOGUE ESSAY TWO:
Gendered Practices in Ceramic Education

The education of potters needed to transfer the knowledge of ceramic production is often a shared venture between student and teacher due to the highly tactile nature of the medium. For instance, to learn the ways of the potter's wheel will often result in two sets of hands on the same rotating vessel, allowing the student to directly feel the cause and effect the pressure of one's fingertips from their teacher's experienced hands. Ceramic education is inherently experiential whether one is learning about the basics of construction, the life cycle of clay, or how the medium reacts in various environment, e.g. summer versus winter conditions. Many people have dedicated their entire lives to learning and subsequently teaching the endless possibilities art, craft, and inspiration present in the ceramic medium. The modes of ceramic education can be broken down into two main categories: legacies and institutions. While there may be a strong correlation between one of the two modes of ceramic education and one of the four roles of ceramic production featured in *Formed by Fire* – decorator, fabricator, sculptor, and champion – there is no direct connection; one mode of education cannot be universally applied to any specific role. Instead, examples of each form of education are outlined below, indifferent to the categorization of role.

Transference of ceramic knowledge through legacies is built upon relationships, shared history, and community. Legacy-based systems of ceramic knowledge are often matrilineal, patrilineal, or utilize apprenticeships. By creating a lineage of potters determined either by heritage or the subjective decision of the masters creates high barriers to entry in cultures that follow a legacy-based system. Some of the best examples of patrilineal ceramic lineages can be found in the pottery workshops of Japan. On the

other side of that same coin, their matrilineal counterpart is exemplified well by the Indigenous women of the Americas.

Alternatively, the modern development of formal institutions at universities globally has allowed for a more democratic dissemination of ceramic practices to anyone who is interested. The practices of these institutions regarding their overall pedagogy and their inclusion of women depend on their respective culture. For instance, ceramic education for women began as early as the 1890s in the United States at places such as Newcomb College where the enterprise was directly connected to the commercial practices of Newcomb Pottery and restricted women's ceramic education to decoration. Looking again to Japan, but now at their formal universities which began to expand their ceramics programs to include women only in the post-war period. Formal institutions can promote less community amongst students and instead insight competition though juried exhibitions and other prize-based competitions. While not always the case, if a competitive nature is present it can lead to increased innovation amongst the students and their works. We can then look to Marguerite Wildenhain (1896-1985) as a case study for her work at Pond Farm that bridges the gap between the community of legacy-based systems and the structure of institutional programs.[108] Her students were able to build a stronger relationship with the medium of ceramics and one another in the context of an industrialized world.

Patrilineal Traditions: A Spotlight on Japan

The there is a strong correlation between technology and the gendered practices of ceramic production. Historically, once a culture adopted the potter's wheel and other

[108] Ibid, p. 56

advanced ceramic technologies, pottery became the purview of men.[109] This strict gender division based on technology is directly connected to the highly physical nature of using the potter's wheel; it can require full-body strength to operate the machine and produce a vessel. This was compounded by gendered stereotypes and contributed to the assumption that women would not succeed in using the potter's wheel to the same extent as their male counterparts.[110] Within these male dominated systems, knowledge was passed down from father to son and/or a male apprentice.[111] This system of knowledge conveyance has high barriers to entry which are indicative of the reverence and care many cultures reserve for ceramics and the traditions linked to the medium. For women to be on the outside of these barriers for centuries is also indicative of women's perceived inability to contribute to these ceramic traditions.

In cultures, such as Japan, where pottery has surpassed functional craft into an artform, there can be dozens of nuanced techniques in which individual lineages can specialize.[112] Dedicating their lives to perfecting niche practices generates a sense of duty and honor within these pedigrees of potters.[113] Women's roles in patriarchal practices were historically limited to that of assistant, administrator, or decorator, but almost never creator.[114] Due to the relationship between pottery and utility, being the artisan responsible for the quality of the functionality of a vessel can bring more prestige than non-functional decoration. Therefore, the secrets of treasured and specialized techniques were not deemed worthy of women for centuries.

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[109] Vincentelli, pp. 12-14
[110] Ibid
[111] Earle, et al., p. 14
[112] Gorham, p. 91
[113] Hamanaka, Sheila, and Ayano Ohmi. 1999. *In Search of the Spirit: The Living National Treasures of Japan.* New York: Morrow Junior Books. pp.4-5
[114] Vincentelli, pp.79-80

Despite Japan's patrilineal ceramic education system dating back hundreds of years, there are only isolated occurrences of women participating in the more active and respected roles of ceramic production.[115] Women were not brought into the fold until the post-war period in many patrilineal ceramic lineages, and even then it is rare. This is best exemplified by Japan's response to the rapid industrialization of the early 20th century to protect its traditions following the devastation of World War Two. In the 1950s, the Japanese government made the decisive effort to formally honor the elders who had devoted their live to keeping Japanese craft and performing art traditions alive between generations. Those who have been bestowed this honor are known as Bearers of Important Intangible Cultural Assets, commonly referred to as Living National Treasurers, and are provided grants to practice their arts and train apprentices.[116] While women practicing other crafts and performing arts have been given the title of Living National Treasure, no female potter has been given the same honor for their efforts in the ceramic arts.[117] There are many female Japanese potters who have dedicated their lives to upholding invaluable ceramic techniques, such as Eiraku Myōzen, but do not receive full notoriety or status for their contributions within the patrilineal system of ceramic education in Japan. Even when overlooking the gendered status of Living National Treasures of ceramics, there are only a few women who act as the official heads of traditional Japanese pottery lineages who are responsible for educating future generations

[115] Gorham, p. 9
[116] Hamanaka, Sheila, and Ayano Ohmi, p.5
[117] Joan B Mirviss Ltd., *Taking Space Making Space*

on ceramic techniques. One of the most notable examples is Tokuda Yasokichi IV, born Tokuda Junko, she took her family's name when she succeeded her father, Tokuda Yasokichi III, in 2009. The Tokuda family are known as innovators in using colorful *saiyu* glazes in striking gradients over pristine, wheel-thrown porcelain vessels allowing the colors to be the subject of the surface decoration rather than figurative designs of birds, flowers, or figures.[118] With no sons to pass the family's secret glaze recipe onto, Yasokichi III prioritized the protection of the legacy over the protection of the patriarchy when electing to make his daughter the next head of the ceramic dynasty.[119] In *Jar - Mizuho (Fresh Ears of Rice)* (Fig. 8) Yasokichi IV used her family's proprietary glazes to create a representation of the changing of the leaves ranging from white to yellow and then to green, subverting the archetypal Japanese landscape through abstraction.[120] Tokuda Yasokichi IV is an outlier in this education system and for patrilineal ceramic practices in Japan to be inclusive of women would require a dissolution of the entire system with a more egalitarian structure created out of the ashes.

Figure 8 *Tokuda Yasokichi IV (Japanese, b. 1961),* Jar - Mizuho (Fresh Ears of Rice)*, 2017, porcelain with vivid colored glaze (yôsai), 13 x 14 1/2 in., Private Collection*

Matrilineal Methods of Indigenous Women

Throughout the world, many of the longest held ceramic traditions are kept alive by women and subsequently their daughters in matrilineal schemes. While this system is

[118] Onishi, Nana. 2018. *Rising Dragon - Tokuda Yasokichi IV.* New York: Onishi Gallery. p. 1
[119] Earle, et al., p. 44
[120] Onishi, p. 2

innately conducive to the inclusion of women, it can possess limiting factors to how far the impact of ceramics can extend within and beyond a community or culture. The most outstanding limiting factor in a matrilineal system is technology. Matrilineal ceramic traditions are largely based in hand building techniques that can date back hundreds if not thousands of years. This has created a sense of inertia in women's practices and reduced willingness to adopt new techniques as it has been proven hard to convince traditional women potters to take up the potter's wheel and abandon hand building. Alternatively, it is much easier to endear both men and women to use the potter's wheel when they have had no prior ceramic training.[121] The prevalence of hand building in matrilineal ceramic systems is further perpetuated by the connection between the potter's wheel and industry. In societies where pottery was commercialized, the efficient nature of the potter's wheel increased the volume of output and profits. Women were not deemed fit to participate in such a labor-intensive industry and men controlled the commercial arena of pottery production.[122] Whether or not the potter's wheel was introduced to a culture, for women to carry on their traditions and share their knowledge of clay, it was to be through the process of hand building.

The Indigenous women of the Americas are one of the best example of women working between generations to systematically keep their traditions alive. The industrialization of the last 150 years has only accelerated the rate at which hand-made

[121] Vincentelli, p. 14
[122] Ibid

Figure 9 *Maria Martinez (American, ca. 1887-1980),* Blackware Jar*, 1926-1943, polished blackware pottery with matte paint, 15 1/8 x 21 3/4 in., Toledo Museum of Art Collection*

goods lose their value in society. While patrilineal systems actively worked to keep women out of pottery production for centuries, matrilineal systems exhibit more leniency in terms of gender. Maria Martinez of Puebloan descent contributed to only one half of the black-on-black pottery she made famous; the matte black designs were painted by her husband Julian. The congress of Maria and Julian's artistic efforts can be seen in *Blackware Jar* (Fig. 9). Maria then went on to pass down her knowledge of ceramics to her sons and their wives who kept the traditions alive and promoted them long after her death.[123] Community and the ability to adapt have been the key tenants keeping matrilineal ceramic traditions alive in the modern age.

Formal Institutions: East versus West

In many cultures globally where pottery is not considered a fine art nor is it deeply engrained in daily cultural practices, the most effective way to train future generations of ceramists is through formal institutions. Starting in the 20th century, the pedagogical practices at formal artistic institutions increased the standardization of teaching ceramic techniques. This standardization is much harder to achieve across traditional ceramic lineages and is not necessarily desired in such as system. Nonetheless. For students who matriculate through a formal institutions, their knowledge of the basic principles of ceramics are expected to be homogenized with the knowledge of their

[123] Spivey, p. 61

classmates. It is how each student adapts or even abandons those principles that determines how they distinguish themselves between their peers.

Women entering into the realm of higher education has consistently been an uphill battle. In the United States, women's enrollment in higher education did not reach significant level until the Civil War reduced the number of available male students, incentivizing the universities to accept more women; by 1880, 32 percent of the American undergraduate population were women.[124] Ceramic education for women in the late 19th century was sparce, often a handful of available courses focused on decoration. This was the case for Maria Longworth Nichols and Mary McLaughlin who both took china painting classes at the Cincinnati School of Design starting in 1873.[125] Soon, an experimental educational endeavor would be established in the southern United States that would give young female ceramic artists an invaluable foundation upon which to learn and hone their skills and gave voice to the possibilities an education could provide. Encouraged by the commercial success of women employed in the decorative arts, President of Tulane University, Preston Johnston, and Josephine Louise Newcomb founded Newcomb College in 1886 as the women's coordinate school associated with the all-male New Orleans University.[126] This was the first degree-granting coordinate school for women in the South and acted as gendered experiment in art education, creating an alliance between higher education and a new, progressive ideal: the economic advancement of women through craft.[127] In 1893, after seven years of operation,

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[124] Graham, Patricia Albjerg. 1978. "Expansion and Exclusion: A History of Women in American Higher Education." *Signs* 3 (4): p. 764
[125] Veith, Barbara, and Alice Cooney Frelinghuysen. 2013. *Women China Decorators.*
[126] Conradsen, David H. 2013. *The Arts & Crafts of Newcomb Pottery.* New York: Skira Rizzoli Publications; New Orleans, Louisiana: Tulane University, Newcomb Art Gallery. pp. 39-40
[127] Sorkin, *(Feminist) Origins of Newcomb Pottery*, p. 3

Figure 10 *Sadie Irvine (American, 1887-1970), Newcomb Pottery,* Pitcher with Pitcher Plant Design, *1933*, *ceramic, matte glaze*, *5 5/8 x 8 1/4 x 5 1/2 in., Newcomb Art Museum Collection*

instructor Ellsworth Woodward proposed the establishment of a commercial pottery as he believed "A business had to be founded – such a business as would furnish employment for those trained and qualified and which should exhibit an object lesson as to the possibilities underlying native raw materials when trained talent takes it in hand and stamps it for beauty and use."[128] Newcomb Pottery was formally established in 1895 and continued producing works until 1940 with Newcomb College providing dozens of women over the decades as the primary decorators for the enterprise. The experiment of Newcomb Pottery revealed that investing in women is not a gamble but rather a sound investment. Sadie Irvine's *Pitcher with Pitcher Plant Design* (Fig. 10) shows the combination of the Arts & Crafts aesthetic and the commercial appeal of Newcomb Pottery's wares that kept women educated and employed for decades in Louisiana. In the early 20th century, as sentiments started to shift and women were establishing themselves beyond decorators as fabricators through studio pottery and sculpture, their increased presence in university based ceramic programs indicated the resilience of women to advocate for their rightful place within a system that more often than not showed them great hostility. Notable ceramics programs within American universities include Alfred University, UCLA, University of California San Diego, and the University of Southern California.[129]

[128] Conradsen, p. 44
[129] Sorkin, *(Feminist) Origins of Newcomb Pottery*, p. 288

More recently, in culture's like Japan where ceramics is a much more restricted medium due to its status and cultural significance, formal institutions provided women with a previously unheard-of access to ceramic education. With the exception of being self-taught – such as Mishima Kimiyo (b. 1932) – if a woman was not an active member of a ceramic lineage, then a ceramic education was improbable without university programs. Koike Shōko (b. 1943) had no prior connection to ceramics as was raised by her mother, Koike Chie (1916-2014), who taught fashion design at Bunka Fashion College in Tokyo.[130] Her path to the ceramic art was self-motivated and driven by Koike Shoko's innate desire to make things to be used. Despite entering the ceramics department at the Tokyo University of the Arts in 1962 as a concession for their lack of a studio glass program, Koike Shōko became the first woman to complete the graduate program in ceramics at the institutions and one of the first women in the country to earn a degree in ceramics.[131,132] Her time spent at the Tokyo University of the Arts involved exercises to build her core skills such as making one hundred bowls of identical size. However, she also used her time to experiment with glazing and surface decoration techniques outside of the traditional Japanese glazes, such as melted glass and the early

[130] North, p. 135
[131] Ibid, p. 134
[132] Koike Shōko earned her bachelors in ceramics in 1966 and her masters in 1969 both from Tokyo University of the Arts.

Figure 11 Koike Shōko (Japanese, b. 1943), Kai Futamono (Shell Vessel), *1992*, *glazed stoneware*, *19 in. diameter*, *Cincinnati Art Museum Collection*

stages of the matte blue glaze she would perfect later in her career.[133] Koike Shōko was one of the first Japanese female ceramic artists of the postwar period to make the evocation of natural and geological forms a cornerstone of her practice.[134] She achieves these organic forms, as seen in *Kai Futamono (Shell Vessel)* (Fig. 11), by incorporating her foundational university training on the potter's wheel, her own experiments with surface decoration, and the techniques of garment construction she was exposed to in childhood through her mother including pinching and darts. Koike Shōko's ceramic journey exposes one of the potential complexities of women and ceramics: the responsibilities of the family. Even though she was a trailblazer in female ceramic education, she did not start engaging in more creative, sculptural works until she was forty years old. This was due to the fact that she and her husband and former classmate, Kawasaki Tsuyoshi (1942-2023), had two young children to raise and she attended to her grandmother in her final years, Koike Shōko solely made functional wares alongside her husband until her responsibilities reduced.[135] Women's progression within the ceramic medium cannot be judged on the same time scale as men due to the added societal and domestic pressures placed on women. Even when a woman has a passion for the medium,

[133] Ibid, p. 138
[134] Earle, et al., p. 57
[135] North, p. 141

inherent talent, and a prestigious education, she may still have to prioritize other responsibilities over her artistic pursuits to retain social capital as a woman.

Pond Farm: An Educational Community

Pond Farm was the educational response to formal institutions that promoted the commercial value of pottery over the experiential value. Pond Farm was founded in 1952 by Marguerite Wildenhain (1896-1985), a Bauhaus trained potter who immigrated to the United States from Germany in 1940 to escape persecution as a Jewish woman, forced to leave her husband, Frans, behind. She initially settled in San Francisco and took up a teaching position before accepting an invitation from Gordon and Jane Herr, Wildenhain moved onto a plot of land in Sonoma County in 1942 that would be renamed Pond Farm. After she was reunited with her husband upon his immigration in 1947, the couple soon hosted their first pottery-making workshop at Pond Farm in 1949. This would go on to become an annual summer workshop until 1980.[136]

Unlike similar artistic communities at the time such as Black Mountain College, Pond Farm actively abandoned any form of institutional status or accreditation, favoring the experience of clay and community. One of the main philosophies perpetuated by Wildenhain was that of the "live form" which she promoted in her 1959 book *Pottery: Form and Expression* as "a wheel thrown vessel, in which the body of the craftsman, through his or her physical manipulation of the clay, determines the size and shape of the most intimate spaces of the vessel itself: its girth and weight, the delicacy of the rim, the strength and placement of a handle, and so on."[137] This philosophy was translated into the

[136] Cloutier, p. 16
[137] Wildenhain, Marguerite. 1959. *Pottery: Form and Expression.* New York: Armerican Craftsmen Council. p. 57

pedagogy of Pond Farm through a course of non-object production that favored process and technique over output retention. Over the eight to twelve weeks that students spent at Pond Farm each summer, they were expected to throw five to six hundred pots and left with none.[138] Wildenhain's aversion to materiality was aligned with avant-garde spirit of the 1960s that sought to critique the materialist traditions of artistic production.

Because the students were not going to keep any of the pieces they produced, they were often cut-through and destroyed to expose a cross section. Not only did this facilitate a more direct understanding of the quality of their throwing and the effects certain techniques had on the final product and any stage of the fabrication process, but it also forced students to let go of the idea that every piece is worthy or precious.[139] This collective experience of destruction for the sake of instruction was viewed by some students as an act of submission and a means of undoing the ego that can hold back a potter from fully understanding the possibilities of the medium. The experiences of those who participated in a Pond Farm summer workshop involved sparce lodgings, long hours, and significant discipline as required by Wildenhain as she imposed her Bauhaus methodology on the next generation of American ceramic artists. *Double-spouted vase* (Fig. 12) represents Wildenhain's dedication to form and the quality of her technique that she instilled within her

Figure 12 *Marguerite Wildenhain (French-American, 1896-1985),* Double-spouted vase*, 1960s, stoneware, 10 1/2 x 11 3/4 in., Luther College Fine Arts Collection*

[138] Sorkin, *Live Form*, p. 57
[139] Ibid, p. 62

students each summer. Many of her students came back year after year and went on to speak of Wildenhain with reverence after becoming ceramic educators themselves.[140] Marguerite Wildenhain was able to create a collective experience and community for her students that bonded them together even after they left Pond Farm. This combined with her insistence that her students master the fundamentals of clay created a hybrid form of ceramic education. Each summer, her new students became part of her legacy and lineage as a ceramic master and in return she provided them with an extensive, structured pedagogy based in principle rather than productivity.

There is not one correct way to educate people on the art and techniques of ceramics. Women have been navigating the world of ceramic education for centuries as students, teachers, and caretakers.[141] Each culture has been forced to adapt their educational practices as the state of the world changes at a rapid pace. The implications of long-held gendered ceramic practices in both modes of education must be contextualized within the impact of globalization and the subsequent boost in women's rights. In most educational spaces, women have had to either fight for their seat at the table or simply make their own table. Even in the instances where women are the primary educators and students, their efforts have not been awarded the same level of protection and require the women to fight to keep their traditions alive.

[140] Cloutier, p. 18
[141] Sorkin, *Live Form,* p. 22

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