



The Slip Trail

The Newsletter of New Mexico Potters & Clay Artists | www.nmpotters.org | P.O. Box 26811 Albuquerque, NM 87125

February 2010

New Mexico Potters & Clay Artists

"...to promote excellence and creativity in the clay arts, and to further their understanding and appreciation throughout New Mexico...."

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A change in Schedule.....

It all started with the delay of the September issue of the Trail. We waited to include the report on the wonderful Ghost Ranch Workshop. Then November appeared so quickly that we moved on to do a December issue. It also had the benefit of not having to do a January issue in the midst of the crazy Christmas season. So here we are with a shift in schedule which will probably stay. Issues will come out in February, April, etc., bi-monthly from now on. Hope it works for you.

Phil Green, Editor

"Dance With My Kiln"

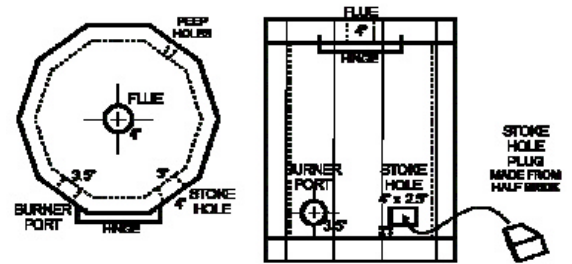
by Michele Chisholm

Our relationships with our kilns are like a slow, sexy dance. But first you have to build it. I used to live on the grid in Albuquerque's South Valley where I would bisque fire my pots with a 35-year old electric kiln handed down from Grandma Melba. My glaze firings were with propane. When I moved off the grid (not a grid in sight) a couple of miles south of Madrid, NM I realized I would not be able to fire with electricity. My battery bank would not sustain that much of a draw on the power system for an extended period of time. I make 100% of my electricity from the sun (photovoltaic panels) and the wind (a 50-year old Jacobs wind generator...the old gal is still kickin). As I'm working at the wheel I will look up at the wind generator turning quietly in the breeze powering my wheel. In order to keep a good supply of power and to maximize solar harvesting, I manually align the photovoltaic panels to hand-track the sun several times a day.



Just about the time I moved out to "the land" an article was published in Ceramics Monthly, February 2004 on how to convert your old electric kiln into a gas/wood kiln. Well, I wasn't about to tear apart Grandma Melba's perfectly good electric kiln so I scavenged for parts. For \$75 I was able to buy the bottom half of an old electric kiln from Donna at

New Mexico Clay. The top part I got for \$25 from Brant at New Mexico Clay. I drilled a 4" diameter flue hole in the top. Then I sawed a wood stoke hole, 4" x 2 1/2" tapered to 3" x 2 1/2" two inches above the floor of the kiln. Finally, a 3 1/2" burner port hole was also drilled. I pulled out the old elements from the kiln and made a mixture of 50% fireclay and 50% sawdust to fill in the gaps where the elements used to be.



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Got the Lead Out, Now What Do I Do??

by Brant Palley

Wow the complaints and panic are coming in daily! Duncan, Mayco, Gare and Amaco all got the toxic (but loveable) heavy-metal LEAD out of their products. Why? Most people using the glazes didn't know about the lead. Let's put that behind us and see what we can do today to get back to work.



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“Bowls for Haiti, A Collaboration of Potters and Artists”

Mudfish Pottery is planning a fundraiser for early June: “Bowls for Haiti, A Collaboration of Potters and Artists”. There will be a one-day exhibition offering these bowls for sale at \$20 apiece (or more, as the buyer may wish). The Harwood Center has generously agreed to host us. We hope members of the New Mexico Potters Association will join with us to raise money. We are asking all ceramic artists in our community to make bowls for sale at this event or help with other kinds of work.

If potters want to contribute bisqued bowls for volunteers to decorate that would make it possible for other people to get involved with this project. Ceramic Artists are encouraged to leave their business cards in the bowls. We are also asking artists who work in other mediums to contribute bowls and other services.

We will be partnering with and fund-raising for “Partners in Health”, a Boston-based organization that has already been working in Haiti for some years. This partnership guarantees that all money raised will go directly to Haiti.

A number of people and organizations are already involved and have made commitments of time and materials. New Mexico Clay and Coyote Clay have generously offered clay for this event. Louis D’Amico and others have offered their wheels, kilns and colored slips to potters who don’t have their own equipment and a number of potters and artists in our community have already volunteered to make bowls.

Louis D’Amico and Kathleen Whitney, Organizers.
Interested people can contact us at louisdamico1@mac.com.
Or call/leave a message at 505 452-9514

AND THE WINNERS ARE:

Kathleen Koltos of Santa Fe won the coveted "WARNING: I THROW THINGS" apron in the 2010 New Mexico Potters and Clay Artists membership drawing held Wednesday, January 6th. The apron appeared to be the favorite prize among the approximately 100 members who paid their dues by December 31.

"I will wear it with pride," Kathleen promises, "and maybe scare my husband a little, too." The apron is from the Potters Council, as are the three lushly- illustrated color calendars which were won by:

Carol Wawersik of Albuquerque--- the cover image is of bowls which were featured in one of the "500" series by Lark Books;

Barbara King of Galisteo--sculptures which may inspire her this year;

Joan Prokopiak of Los Lunas--mugs and other functional pieces to inspire playing with clay--or drinking a lot of coffee or tea!

The drawing was held at the home of Judy Nelson-Moore of Santa Fe who literally pulled the winning entries from a hat. The drawing was held Wednesday to allow the post office to deliver entries postmarked by Dec. 31st.

Computer Queen Judy can take credit for the idea of offering these Potter Council items as incentives for members to pay their dues early.

Thanks to everyone who participated!

Layne Vickers Smith - Membership Manager

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Now it was time to build the kiln shed. That was a huge job which mostly my husband, Grey worked on...ain't husbands great? We leveled the floor of an old greenhouse, took out the old structure and laid brick. Neither of us knew how to do this so we bought a book and asked lots of questions. Once the floor was laid, Grey built a 3ft. high adobe wall around the perimeter. The metal roof came next. Grey and his Dad, Hap, put the roof in. With the kiln shed in place it was time to set up the kiln. We laid 4 cinder blocks in a cross pattern, then placed the kiln on top.

Next came the issue of the burner. We called Marc Ward of Ward Burner Systems and he was very helpful by steering us in the right direction...for



free! For \$30 we picked up a Venturi burner from New Mexico Clay. Since I already had a 1,000 gallon propane tank for house use, there was no need to purchase or rent another tank. The tank is 42-feet from the kiln shed so Grey dug an 18" - 24" deep trench to the shed. Our propane supplier installed and inspected the gas line then we were ready to go. Let the dance begin!

As with any first dozen or so firings, it's a matter of trial and error. The first firing is a quick fire to burn out the sawdust. The first couple of times I tried to do a cone 10 firing I could not get the kiln to go much past cone 8. She would stall out. So I networked with our wonderful group of New Mexico potters from the New Mexico Potters and Clay Artists and put out an APB for help. I spoke with Dave at Santa Fe Clay who had some experience with this method and he suggested I use forced air. An old hair blower would work fine, he suggested. I got out my old hair blower from my disco days and gave it a second life. Grey attached a tapered metal pipe as a nozzle. The next time I fired it worked! I was able to fire the kiln to cone 10.

The wood ash melting on the floor of the kiln was making the floor really crusty so I positioned four really thin soft bricks in front of the wood stoke hole to catch most of the ash. The bricks were short enough not to interfere with the flame entering the burner port. I use 4" stilts on the floor which keeps the first kiln shelf high enough so as not to interfere with the flame shooting into the burner port. At UNM's art department I learned how to fire Big Mama (shared by many students) and how to really pack a kiln efficiently. Old habits die hard so around the edge of the floor is where I typically fire shorter pieces of pottery.

The 16" octagonal kiln shelves I had from Grandma Melba's electric kiln were great for firing in this newly built 7.6 cubic foot kiln. In order to fire fairly efficiently, enough space was left from the edge of the shelf to the wall of the kiln to allow air flow for sufficient combustion. The inside walls of the kiln were washed with equal parts alumina and kaolin.

The dance begins with small adjustments. Open the damper slightly and the kiln responds to my touch. She will let me know when another dance move is needed and the I, the potter, respond. It's this back and forth silent communication which is so sweet.

A typical firing schedule goes something like this: At 6:00 a.m. turn the gas on to a low flame, just enough for the burner to stay lit. The primary air flange on the venturi is



opened 2 ½ times. The lid is ajar and all of the peeps are unplugged. One half hour later close the lid (150°). One hour later (325°) turn up the kiln slightly and every hour thereafter. The rise is usually about 200° - 300° per hour on the pyrometer. At cone 013 (about 1500°) start a body reduction. To achieve this, close all peeps except for the middle one which the pyrometer is in, close damper down by 1" and open primary air flange 1 full turn. Continue doing hourly turn-ups until cone 2 on the bottom begins to bend (about 1950°). Unplug all peeps, remove pyrometer from kiln as this heavy reduction process can erode it quickly, open damper and begin feeding 6 pieces of applewood or

"Dance With My Kiln"continued from page 3

whatever hardwood you have into the kiln. The wood is typically cut into 6" - 8" lengths and small enough around to be able to fit into the stoke hole. Feed them in 5 minute intervals. When the wood is first added, flames lick out of the flue and peeps and after about 5 minutes the flames go back to normal. After about one half hour all 6 pieces should have been eaten by the kiln. Plug up all peeps except for the middle which is where the pyrometer goes, close damper by 1" and turn on forced air into the back of the burner port. Don't get the forced air too close to the burner port as this will melt the hair dryer. When cone 8 begins to bend on the bottom (about 2150°) start a glaze reduction by adding wood. (Repeat the same process as with cone 2.) Turn the forced air back on, plug up all peeps except for middle and close damper down by 1". About one hour or so later cone 10 should be down in the middle. It's usually between 4:00 p.m. and 5:00 p.m. when cone 10 is down. There seems to be a range between a soft cone 9 at the top of the kiln to a hard cone 12 at the bottom. I've learned over the years which glazes like the top and which like the bottom. Most glazes have a temperature range. The shino I fire likes to be next to the wood box (stoke hole) as well as anywhere on the wood box side of the kiln. I get some really nice blushes throughout the kiln, but when the shino's next to the wood box, oh baby, the pot just shines. I also get some really deep reds with

subtle purple tones which just about makes my heart melt! Every dance with every partner is different. Take the step and have fun!

Here we are 6 years and 150 firings later and we're still dancing. Sitting next to her is a 24 cubic foot Olsen kiln who used to belong to Rita Wilson. Rita, if you're out there, you're old kiln will be getting another life within the next year or two.



For further information, contact Michele at MicheleChi@aol.com or to see her work go to www.chisholmpottery.com.

Got the Lead Out, Now What Do I Do??continued from page 1

We tested every low-fire clear glaze we could find and after much testing I decided they are equally okay. The problem is that of application, the old glazes you could slap them on and they looked great! Now not so much..

THE RULES!

1. Bisque low fire clays to Cone 04, either leave the kiln lid ajar until 800 degrees F or use a [vent system](#). This is very important as you must burn the carbon out of the clay during the bisque firing so it will not affect the glaze on the glaze firing. Carbon trapped inside the clay comes out as ugly blisters in the glaze on the second firing. Take at least 6 hours for the kiln to fire, faster firing is uneven firing and it takes time for the carbon to burn off.
2. Thin your glaze clear glaze and apply two even, thin coats. Non-toxic glaze is much less forgiving.
3. Glaze fire to Cone 06.

Problems like crazing (crackled glaze) and shivering (glaze falls off pot on cooling) are easily avoided. Follow the RULES! We cannot re-create shivering on our clay bodies unless we bisque to Cone 4 (not 04). Crazing is caused by way underfiring, say to Cone 08 bisque and glaze.

Red Clay is a problem, the lead glazes of the past wetted the clay (as if you got it wet) and this gave us the bright colors we loved. Now we have a tradeoff between a durable glaze ([IN1001](#)) and a less durable or softer glaze that gives a little brighter colors. ([Mayco's S2100](#))

Another new problem is that the Talc mine in New York was shut down. All the glaze companies made their traditional underglazes out of this lovely white talc. The only mine left is in Texas and the talc is a dark grey color. The dark color of the talc makes the light colored products look funny in the bottle.

All the big companies had to reformulate the clay bodies and underglazes at the same time as we were getting the (forgiving) lead out. Be careful about putting opaque underglazes on bisque without testing. New Mexico Clay has used the Texas Talc for 25 years and so don't have the reformulating problems.

Brant Palley - [New Mexico Clay Inc.](#)
1-800-781-2529 - brant@nmclay.com

New Mexico Ceramic Artists keep getting into Sunset Magazine!!! Way to Go.....



LEARN SOMETHING NEW

3 beginning pottery classes that will get you hooked

SANDIA PARK, NM

GET EXCITED ABOUT MUD! is the motto of **Aspects of Clay**, a large studio off State 14 between Albuquerque and Santa Fe. Great for beginners who want to try a bit of everything, it has classes in wheel throwing, sculpture, raku, and glaze formulation. The popular mural class teaches you how to create ceramic tile displays for backsplashes or fireplaces. *Workshops and classes from \$25; reservations required; architile online.com*

SANTA FE

Potters from all over the country come to teach at **Santa Fe Clay**, in the city's rising Railyard District. Anyone who signs up for a class is welcome to use the studio (*open 9-9 daily*) on their own. On Saturdays, visit the gallery to see witty, forward-thinking exhibits by new and established artists. *Gallery closed Sun; lessons from \$50, weekend workshops from \$230; reservations required; santafeclay.com*

TAOS, NM

For novices who have never fired a pot and weekend visitors looking for a drop-in class, owner Logan Wannamaker (above, at wheel) of **Taos Clay Studio** created Throw & Fire. The 2½-hour soup-to-nuts class covers how to throw on a wheel and the ancient method of raku firing, which leaves an iridescent sheen on the pot. Bonus: The beautiful, functional pottery on display in the studio is all for sale. *Classes from \$53; Throw & Fire from \$75; reservations required; taosclay.com*

—JILL KOENIGSDORF

I live near a small town of about 900 people nestled in the Manzano Mountains that is an hour and a half southeast of Albuquerque named Mountainair. Fortunately for those creative souls among us we have a growing artist community living in the surrounding area of the town and one of the few businesses in our small town is a co-operative art gallery. An



active arts council is at work and we are the gateway to the beautiful and spiritual ruins of Abo, Quarai and Gran Quirvira.

One spring day in 2008 a few of us responded to our local arts council email announcement regarding some new clay classes starting in town. The emphasis of the class was to be on hand building techniques- pinch, coil and slab. During the 8 week session we would also explore making masks and whistles.

Our teacher, someone many of you already know, was Tomas Wolff and there was only room for 6 students in his town based studio. Beyond our individual needs to create the overwhelming reason for taking classes was due to the fact that most of us live several miles outside town on very rural property and we were looking for an opportunity to meet other people!

The last session of class was a special raku and smoke firing at Tomas' place. Well, if any of us weren't already hooked with this clay thing, the firings certainly

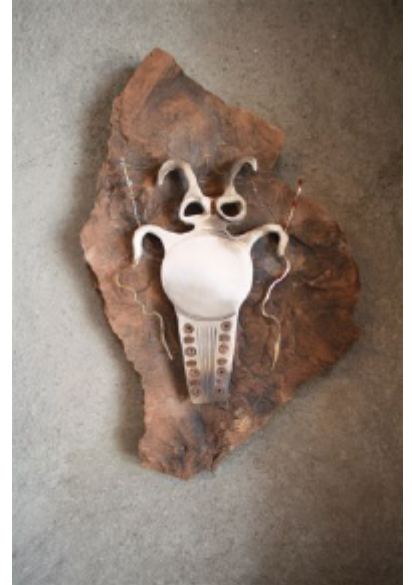


cinched it for some of us. We were enthralled with the process. As we set our first smoke fire ablaze we all held hands and danced around the flaming can. It was a bonding moment for each of us and we knew we wanted to continue to create together forever. Well, ok, at least for a long time.

Like all good things the classes ended. Tomas offered a new class which 5 of us quickly signed up for. Only now we weren't newbies and together we began exploring beyond primitive techniques, trying out different clays and glazes. Sadly those classes ended as well and in our despair we were driven to find a way to continue to play together.

Mountainair Clay Works was born. Tomas continued teaching

new classes and the rest of us had a place to continue our love of clay and each other. This past summer a group of us attended a pottery workshop at Ghost Ranch arranged by NMPA. We had so much fun. It was like summer camp for grown ups! The other participants in our class are all wonderful artisans, friendly and so much fun to be with. Together we learned to create black pottery in the Mata Ortiz tradition and we still have such warm memories of that workshop. A few of us joined the NMPA simply because we were so impressed with the changes they are bringing to Ghost Ranch's Pot Hollow.



Tomas and with his wife are enjoying full time retirement together so we 5 former students have stayed together as Mountainair Clay Works. Our raku firings are still done at Tomas' place and we are getting ready to try our hand at the outdoor barrel firing we learned at Ghost Ranch.

Clay Works moved to a home in town that has been donated to us for the time being. We have a large living room, large clay classroom, 2 smaller studio rooms, a small kitchen and a garage. It's a cozy place when we open for evening gallery shows. There is no running water or heat but that doesn't stop us. 4 new students have signed on and we are teaching our love of clay to them. Laughter continues to be a large part of what we are. Of course when we get together we discuss all sorts of topics and solve all the world's problems. Most of all we continue to feed and nurture creative support for each other as we explore the limits in all our clay play. Clay Works remains our soft place to fall.



The "No Rain" Dance

Shows, Announcements, Classes, Workshops

Gallery Exhibitions at Santa Fe Clay

December 11 – January 9

“Cups” and “Pots that Pour”

National Invitational Cup and Pouring Vessel Show

Opening Reception: December 11, 5-7 pm.

January 15 – February 27

Peter Beasecker & Edward Eberle, “The Space Between”

Opening Reception: January 15, 5-7 pm.

March 31 – April 3, 2010

Santa Fe Clay presents “La Mesa” at NCECA, Philadelphia, PA

March 5 – April 17 Two concurrent exhibits

2010 Summer Workshop Preview

2010 Summer Workshop Artists

&

Charity Davis-Woodard and Gwendolyn Yopplo

Two potters present their work

Opening Reception: March 5, 5-7 pm.

April 23 – May 22

“Bricks and Mortar: Inspired by Architecture”

National Invitational Exhibition

Opening Reception: April 23, 5-7 pm.

May 28 – June 26

“Decalomania”

National Invitational Exhibit of Ceramic work using decals, curated by Maggie Beyeler and SFC Staff.

Opening Reception: May 28, 5-7 pm.

July 9 – August 21

Darcy Badiali, David Hicks, Patricia Sannit

Opening Reception: July 9, 5-7pm.

Santa Fe Clay Classes/Workshops

Session 2 (Feb 22 – Apr 10):

Handbuilding & Sculpture:

Michael Corney, Mondays: 9:30 am – 12:30 pm

Lee Akins, Tuesdays: 6:00 – 9:00 pm

All Levels Wheel Throwing:

Jane Miller, Thursdays: 9:30 am – 12:30 pm

Mike Walsh, Wednesdays: 6:00 – 9:00 pm

Wood Fired Pots on the Wheel:

Sean Fairbridge, Mondays: 6:00 – 9:00 pm

Advanced Wheel Throwing (pouring pots) – 6 week class:

Mike Jabbur, Fridays: 9:30 am – 12:30 pm

Handbuilding with Molds:

Maggie Beyeler, Thursdays: 1:00 – 4:00 pm

Earthenware (Building Methods and Surface Treatments):

Kari Smith, Wednesdays: 9:30 am – 12:30 pm

Functional Handbuilding – 6 week class:

Cheryl Crownover, Saturdays: 10:00 am – 1:00 pm

Figurative Sculpture:

Richard Garriott-Stejskal, Tuesdays: 9:30 am -12:30 pm

Kids, Pre-Teens, & Teens (All 3 Sessions):

Children’s Clay: Greta Ruiz, (Ages 6-10), Wednesdays: 3:30 – 5:30 pm

Pre-Teens: Rachel Peck, (10-Middle School), Mondays, 3:30 – 5:30 pm

Teens: Theo Helmstadter, (Middle School – High School), Thursdays, 4:30 – 6:30 pm

Parents & Teens Together: Greta Ruiz, Children ages 7 & under w/ an adult, Fridays: 12:45-2:45

WORKSHOPS: Valentines – Sat. Jan 30, Easter – Sat. Mar 20

Weekend Workshops:

Professional Practices (Photography and Marketing Skills):

Penina Meisels and Avra Leodas, Saturday, Feb. 7

Post-Firing Techniques:

Gretchen Ewert, Mar. 13-14

Smoke Firing Techniques (Pit Fire, Raku, Terra Sig, etc.):

Lee Akins, Apr. 24-25

TEEN WHEEL CLASS - Ages 10 and up

Mondays 3:30 - 5:30 pm, RACHEL PECK

Session 2: \$170 for seven week session includes all materials/firings.

PARENTS AND KIDS TOGETHER

Children ages 7 & under with an adult

Fridays 12:45-2:45 pm, Greta Ruiz

\$235 for 1 parent and 1 child includes all materials and firings

Classifieds

Studio Space for rent – East Mountains

Studio Space Available to Rent, East Mountains east of Sandia Park about 6 miles near Mountain Valley Road and Frost

Road, brand new Building, very light and clean, great views of the mountains, south facing windows for great light, nice quiet space. Not open to the public.. Have your own key and access to equipment. \$100 per month. Call Irene @ 286-1145

Call for Entries: Contemporary Clay Fair

All current NMPCA members are invited to apply for the 13th CONTEMPORARY CLAY FAIR in Santa Fe, New Mexico. The CONTEMPORARY CLAY FAIR is an exhibition and sale of ceramic artwork. Our goals are to present a beautiful show, to sell art, and to educate the public about clay.

SHOW DATES: May 1 and 2, 2010 10AM to 5PM

APPLICATION INFO

POSTMARK DEADLINE: February 15, 2010

NOTIFICATION: March 1, 2010 (by e-mail)

SHOW LOCATION: Santa Fe Woman's Club

1616 Old Pecos Trail

GO TO: <http://www.contemporaryclayfair.com>

OR <http://www.nmpotters.org/ContemporaryClayFair/CCFApplicationSpring10.pdf>

To download a copy of the application.

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