

# BREAKING GROUND

**WOMEN IN  
CALIFORNIA  
CLAY**







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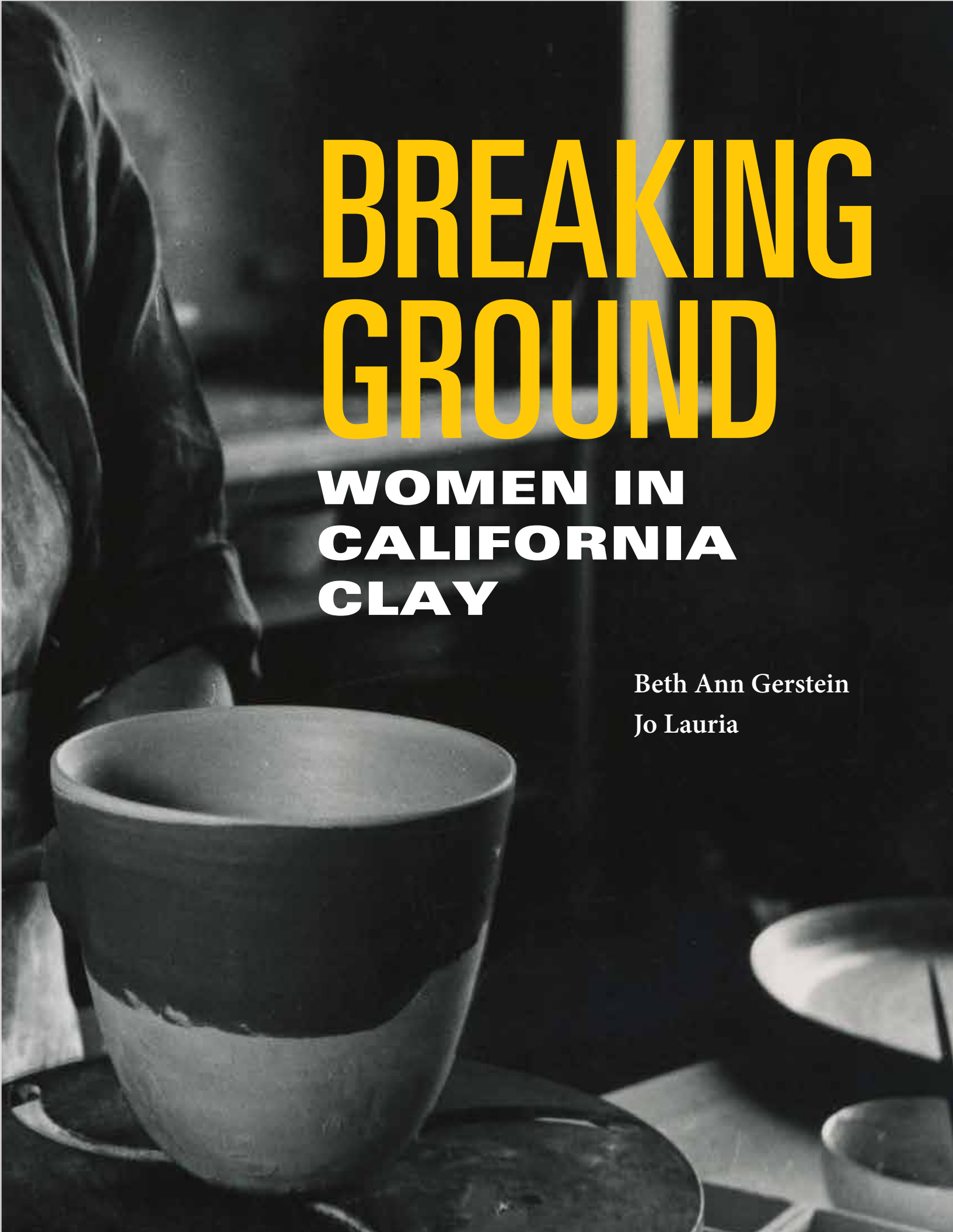


# BREAKING GROUND

**WOMEN IN  
CALIFORNIA  
CLAY**

Beth Ann Gerstein

Jo Lauria





FRONT COVER

FIG. 3.5  
Detail of Crystal Morey's  
*The RePlanting*  
(See page 116)

END SHEETS

FIG. 3.9  
Details of Brittany Mojo's  
*Either, Or*

**CONTENTS**

Margaret Keelan  
*Red Dress, Blue Bird*  
(See page 84)

FIG. 3.30  
Erika Sanada  
*Murmur*  
(See page 141)

TITLE PAGE

Laura Andreson decorating a  
pot, UCLA ceramics studio,  
UCLA ceramics studio,  
c. 1940. Photograph by Imogen  
Cunningham, © 2022 Imogen  
Cunningham Trust.

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FIG. 3.14  
Detail of Keiko Fukazawa's  
*Peacemaker 82620172*  
(See page 125)

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FIG. 1.16  
Detail of Ruth Rippon's  
*Untitled*  
(See page 39)

All photography American  
Museum of Ceramic Art  
unless otherwise noted.

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BETH ANN GERSTEIN

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JO LAURIA

**75 CHAPTER 2**  
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**111 CHAPTER 3**  
The Third Generation | Now  
EDITH GARCIA



## INTRODUCTION

The American Museum of Ceramic Art is proud to present the exhibition and accompanying catalog *Breaking Ground: Women in California Clay*, celebrating 44 artists who have defined—and redefined—ceramics over the past 100 years. Many of the Golden State’s most innovative and impactful ceramic artists in the 20th and 21st centuries are women who faced adversity due to gender inequality and were often ignored or overlooked in favor of their male counterparts. These incredibly determined women pushed forward, driven by creativity and tenacity.

*Breaking Ground* highlights the significant shifts in California ceramics over several generations of women artists. The story is told in three chapters, using the artist’s “breaking ground period” (rather than their date of birth) to determine their place in history. The story begins with trailblazers Laura Andreson, Betty Davenport Ford, Stefani Gruenberg, Vivika Heino, Elaine Katzer, Mary Lindheim, Martha Longenecker, Gertrud Natzler, Susan Peterson, Ruth Rippon, Susi Singer, Helen Ritcher Watson, Marguerite Wildenhain, and Beatrice Wood. These artists laid the groundwork for the field and inspired successive generations of artists.

The second chapter includes a disparate group of artists who explored—or are exploring—the female figure, feminism, and the creation of the perfect form. Works by Judy Chicago, Dora De Larios, Roseline Delisle, Viola Frey, Magdalena Suarez Frimkess, Phyllis Green, Margaret Keelan, Karen Koblitz, Marilyn Levine, Elsa Rady, Lisa Reinertson, Nancy Selvin, Anna Silver, and Sandy Simon mark a substantial break in artmaking from their predecessors.

The final chapter represents a younger generation of artists working to shift the perspective” and includes Ashwini Bhat, Christina Erives, Keiko Fukazawa, Jenny Hata Blumenfield, Julia Haft-Candell, Anabel Juarez, Cathy Lu, Brittany Mojo, Crystal Morey, Kristen Morgin, Annabeth Rosen, Erika Sanada, Joan Takayama Ogawa, Kim Tucker, Anna Valdez, and Bari Ziperstein. Their work, in many ways, continues the conversation of the artists featured in the second chapter to traverse the themes of politics, identity, the environment, and other prevailing issues of globalization, colonialism, and reclaiming histories that have become increasingly important in the lives of practicing women artists.

Assembled together for the first time in *Breaking Ground*, these works tell the compelling story of how women artists from California made, and continue to make, significant contributions to the American Studio Ceramics movement in profound and singular ways.

**BETH ANN GERSTEIN**  
Executive Director

FIG. 2.28 (LEFT)  
Detail of Karen Koblitz’s  
*Mohammed’s Line*  
(See page 100)







## CHAPTER 1

## THE FIRST GENERATION

## TRAILBLAZERS

JO LAURIA

FIG. 1.11 (LEFT)  
Gertrud Natzler  
*Untitled Bowl*  
(See page 35)

To understand and appreciate this exhibition is to fully comprehend its title: *Breaking Ground: Women in California Clay*. Breaking Ground, or groundbreaking, describes innovational, novel, inventive, creative, or disruptive actions. The remainder of the title functions as a filtering mechanism: the groundbreakers will be women who have resided in California and whose stories are framed through the lens of their association with clay. Men's narratives are included if warranted when acting as collaborating partners or when necessary for context. While the historical portion of this exhibition foregrounds contemporary artists, the focus here is on trailblazing women who laid the foundation for successive generations of California ceramists. This essay aims to pinpoint the singular acts of women ceramists and their breakthrough moments, which have altered the course of ceramics.

## PREVIOUS PAGES

FIG. 1.15 (LEFT)  
Detail of Ruth Rippon's  
*Bottle Vase*  
(See page 38)

## FIG. 1.1 (RIGHT)

Gertrud Natzler's  
two bowls:  
LEFT: *Bowl*  
2.75 x 5.5 x 5.5  
Ceramic  
1956  
Collection of  
AMOCA, Gift of  
Valerie Barnard  
Webster

RIGHT: *Untitled*

2.75 x 5 x 5  
Ceramic  
1950  
Collection of  
AMOCA,  
Anonymous Gift