

# Ceramics

MONTHLY







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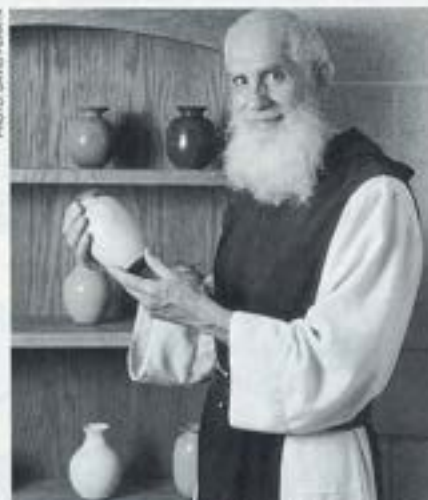
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**A Monk Potter** With the abbot's permission, Father Anthony turned his interest in pottery into a small, but profitable, mail-order business; see page 40.

**Clay Currents** Works by ten Los Angeles artists share conceptual concerns; see the exhibition review beginning on page 28.

**Continental Drift** As the European continent "lumbers its way toward political and economic union," pots can move much more freely between member countries—to the delight of bargain hunters at a recent London auction; page 46.



**Mirek Oliva** Despite grim surroundings, a bit of "humor that arises from and comments on the nature of ceramics itself" can be seen in this Czech artist's work; page 37.

**The cover** Kansas City potter Steven Hill considers his work "not so much a product line developed to fill a particular need, but a functional reflection of my personality aesthetic sensibility and maybe even a bit of my soul" page 53. *Photo: Al Surratt.*

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# The 49th Scripps Annual

a review by Jo Lauria

The "49th Ceramic Annual" exhibition at Scripps College in Claremont, California, offered strong testimony to the assertion that conceptualism is a vital movement in the ceramic arts today. The idea-based emphasis of the exhibition was directly attributable to guest curator Nobuho Nagasawa, a sculptor (known internationally for her earth installations) and assistant professor at Scripps. In previous annuals curated by Paul Soldner, the artists were selected by various gallery owners, educators, other ceramists and collectors. Therefore, past shows did not purport nor attempt a predetermined direction. Nagasawa chose,

however, to approach this show with a preconceived theme: "I wanted this annual to be idea based rather than material based. I am interested in work that crosses over and redefines the traditional limitations of ceramics."

Nine artists from seven states were selected to explore the medium of earth and clay: Ron Fondaw, Florida; Bill Gilbert, New Mexico; Diane Kempler, Georgia; Walter McConnell, Connecticut; Antonette Rosato, Colorado; and Glen Husted, Joyce Kohl, Brook Le Van and Ingrid Lillgren, all from California.

The most arresting piece in the show, both in terms of scale and

conceptualization was "Mythos (Braille for God)," a 9-foot-high pair of adobe binoculars set in front of a panel of dots conceived and constructed (with student help by Brook Le Van, faculty artist at Pomona College. Covered with adobe slurry, the 8x12 panel of dots tactilely spells out the word God.

"Mythos" is not about upscaling binoculars. The symbolism of binoculars and the use of Braille force viewers to consider the issues of extension of vision, involuntary sightlessness and willful blindness. In essence, it impels us to question our perceptions of the spiritual—whether we have become

"Mythos (Braille for God), adobe binoculars, 9 feet in height, with slurry-coated panel 12 feet in length by Brook Le Van Claremont, California.







"Communion" 66 inches in diameter cast stoneware with Cone 6 gold glaze on lead "picnic blanket," by Walter McConnell Hartford, Connecticut.



Detail of "Communion" McConnell made molds of actual objects (Styrofoam containers, bagel, etc.) for this "city picnic."

blinded by science/technology to where we can no longer envision the presence of a higher being.

This concept is further reinforced by the physical structure. As one walks through the opening of the binoculars toward the Braille panel, there is a distinct sensation of passing temple walls and approaching an altar.

Le Van has used a simple mixture of adobe earth to create an artwork that is layered with variant levels of meaning, and functions on both a cerebral and a tangible plane. This is clay taken to its highest ground.

Walter McConnell, faculty artist at the University of Connecticut, also uses the medium as an expressive forum for ideas. His pieces are about environmental destruction, decomposition and the ultimate absence of life in death. For example, "Communion," a wreath of food-related debris, speaks of a world befouled by detritus and eventually annihilated by neglect. He is obviously using clay to make a statement of admonishment and provocation.

It would be misleading to suggest that all the work in the 49th annual carried direct messages. Other pieces were more about mood, movement and form. Suffice it to say that this exhibition was visually and intellectually stimulating, and covered considerable conceptual ground. ▲