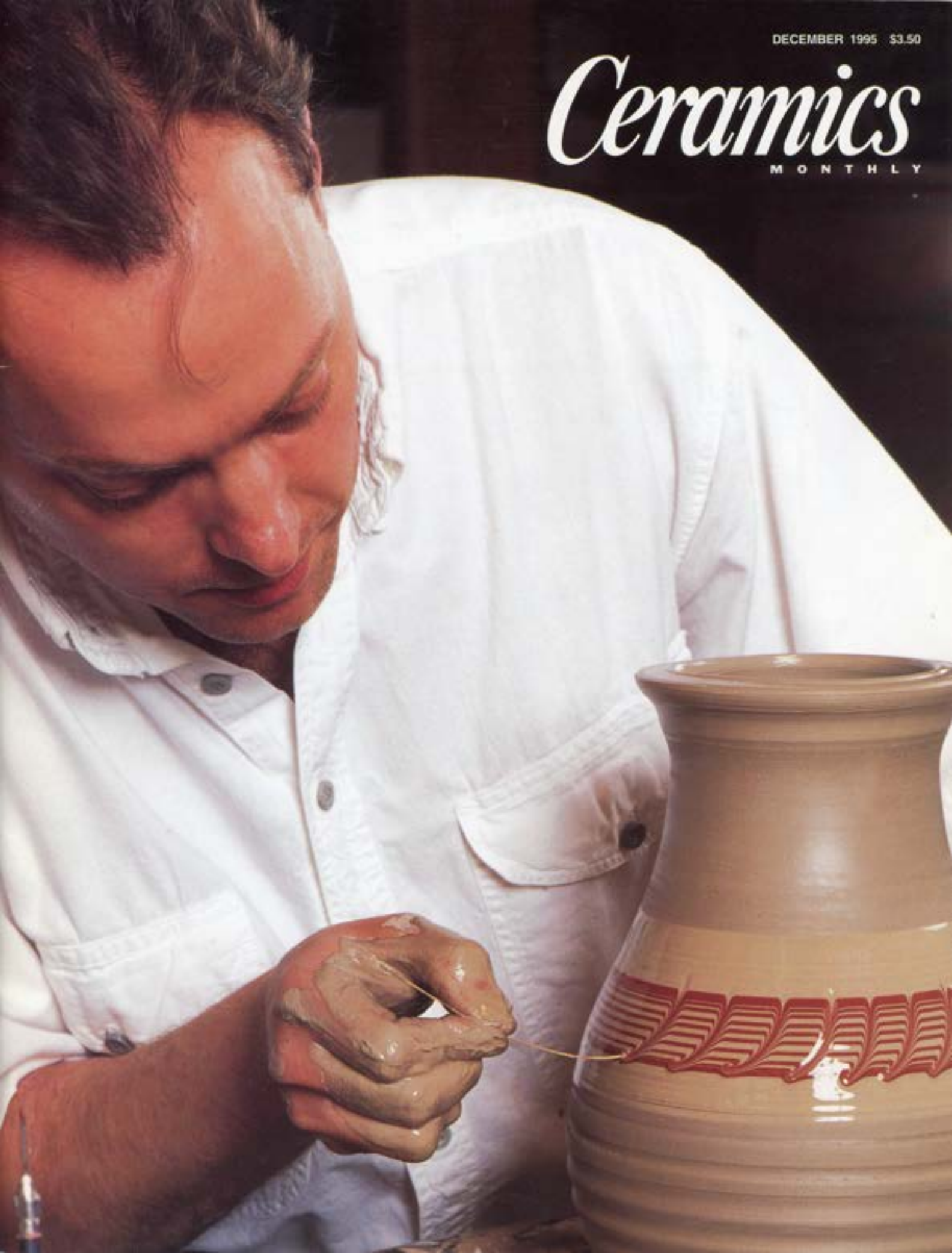


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Mata Ortiz Twenty-five years ago, self-taught potter Juan Quezada (above) single-handedly revitalized the Casas Grandes ceramics tradition in Mata Ortiz, Mexico. Today the number of practicing potters in the area has grown to over 300; see page 51

Spodumene for Low Thermal Expansion Research has shown that including spodumene in a clay body alters its thermal expansion; turn to page 39

Post-Industrial Ceramics Los Angeles potter/teacher Rudy Fleck applies metal alloys to bisqueware to achieve an "ever-alterable" surface; an interview with him begins on page 57



Jill Bonovitz Whether creating tableware or large decorative vessels, Philadelphia ceramist Jill Bonovitz concentrates on developing nuances of texture and color "so as to use as little as possible to express what I want" see page 59

The cover Mark Nafziger pulling a straw through slip trailed on a wheel-thrown pot. As the resident potter at a living history museum in northwest Ohio, Nafziger "can't just loaf about when visitors are present. They expect to see a potter at work. It is show time, as well as production time" page 29 *Photo: Jim King, Royal Images.*

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PHOTO: STEVE COOPER

"Votive" 28 inches in height, with metal alloy fired to Cone 5, aged with corrosive, on lemon wood and slate base

Post-Industrial Ceramics

An Interview with Rudy Fleck

by Jo Lauria

Rudy Fleck is a potter and teacher (at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles) whose current work challenges the construct of permanence. According to the laws of physics, all matter is mutable, unstable; change is inevitable. Fleck believes that attempting to cover clay with an impermeable glaze denies the aspect of change so inescapably present in today's world. He therefore has developed a process of applying metal alloys to bisqued clay to achieve an ever-alterable surface. This postfiring surface instability is his response to the end of the industrial era as we know it.



Interviewer: This epochal ending, how does it specifically affect your work?

Fleck: By surfacing my clayworks with metals that corrode and change, I'm allowing the instability of our existence to have its say. This century has witnessed profound changes in the way we live, and what we live with daily is an acceleration in that rate of change. The age of steel is rapidly becoming one of the silicon chip.

I find myself producing objects of contemplation, incorporating permanence, the ancient pedigree of the clay object; but also presenting, through the

corroding of a metal alloy surface, an opposite sensibility of time.

The alloys are meant to weather with age as a reflection on postindustrialism and the flawed ideals contemporary existence harbors. This surface seems more applicable to our present than the traditional silicate-based glaze guarantee of centuries of an unchanged surface. In essence, I'm creating these hybrid forms to make a statement about transition and permanence. The formal clay object is viewed as permanent, stable. Over time, the metal alloys will continue to change, show age. Mutability, corrosion, possibly decay—these are the underlying concepts.

Interviewer: How do you achieve this mutable surface?

Fleck: The metal alloys are mixed with water and applied to the bisqued clay surface in the same manner as traditional glazing. The starting point was a standard recipe for bronze: 80 parts copper, 10 parts tin, 5 parts zinc. Lately, I've been adding 5 parts Macaloid; this suspends the alloy mixture, and helps with green strength and adherence to the bisqued surface. The application can't be very thick, as the metal tends to



"Sensitive Hunter" 50 inches in height, wheel-thrown stoneware with Cone 5 glaze and metal alloy aged with corrosive, by Rudy Fleck, Los Angeles.

fry off the surface during the firing. I've fired this recipe at Cone 5 and up to Cone 10 in both oxidation and reduction without a significant change in the results: a black matt surface.

The surface can then be aged through the application of corrosives. One of the most effective is a 40% solution of ferric chloride. After a number of days, a green to yellow patina appears; although this surface can be scrubbed off, over a period of time it starts to reappear. A close analogy would be the rust that appears on a nail.

Interviewer: The use of the corrosives

sounds as if it could be hazardous. What safety measures should be considered?

Fleck: All the usual precautions you'd take with chemicals need to be exercised, although ferric chloride in solution is not what you'd call a very potent chemical. It is available over the counter as an etchant for circuit boards. Listed in the MSDS as an irritant, but not a carcinogen, it can be dangerous with chronic exposure, just like the bulk of the materials commonly found in a clay studio. I'm very cautious in my forays into chemistry, and try to avoid falling in love with a result that calls for a serious health or environmental risk.

Interviewer: What's next? Where is this work going for you?

Fleck: I can't get over a sense of my life hurtling along. When I'm able to work with clay I have a sense of unfolding events that is unique. Touching the clay is very much like touching another person, and just as that other person responds in a complex manner, so does the clay.

The interviewer: *Jo Lauria is a ceramics artist, arts writer and independent curator living in Southern California.*