

A tall, square brick tower, likely a lighthouse or monument, stands against a cloudy sky. The tower is constructed of light-colored bricks and has a flat top with a small decorative finial. The sky is filled with soft, white clouds. A horizontal orange band is superimposed over the middle of the image, containing the title and subtitle text.

Ceramic Excellence

Fellowships at the Archie Bray Foundation 2003-2004

Jeremy Kane
Taunt Fellow

Karen Swyer
Lilian Fellow

The Archie Bray Foundation

Nurturing Creative Excellence

The Archie Bray Foundation for the Ceramic Arts is a public, nonprofit educational institution founded in 1951 by brickmaker Archie Bray, who intended “to make available for those sincerely and seriously interested in any branch of the ceramic arts, a fine place to work.” Located on the grounds of the former Western Clay Manufacturing Company, the 26-acre site provides a unique environment that stimulates creativity and nurtures an ongoing experiment of free and individual expression in the ceramic arts.

From the beginning, the Bray has fostered an atmosphere of creative excellence that has attracted ceramic artists from around the world. The extensive facilities, the freedom to explore, and the creative exchange that occurs within the community of artists compel residents to participate fully and think critically about their work. The result is a profound opportunity for artistic growth, both at an individual level and for the field.

To further encourage this environment, Robert and Suzanne Taunt established the Taunt Fellowship in 1998. Their generosity and vision inspired others to establish additional awards, including the Myhre Fellowship in 1999 and 2000, the Lilian Fellowship since 2001, and the Lincoln Fellowship in 2004. Currently the Taunt, Lilian, and Lincoln fellowships each provide \$5,000 and a one-year residency to a ceramic artist who demonstrates exceptional merit and promise. This support gives each Fellow the opportunity to focus his or her attention more completely on producing and exhibiting a significant body of work during the fellowship year.



As the Bray moves into its second 50 years, the fellowship program helps ensure that leading ceramic artists will continue to visit and work at the Foundation. In this way we will make our future as artistically diverse as our past, and continue the legacy that distinguishes the rich heritage of the Bray.

—Josh DeWeese, Resident Director



Bruce Capdeville

Jentel Critics at the Bray

The Archie Bray Foundation was in the beginning and remains an on-going experiment, a place and experience with no artistic boundaries. This environment of creative exchange and experimentation is ideal for an interested writer to explore and learn about the ceramic arts and gain a more complete understanding of the materials and science involved in creation.

The Bray recently began a collaboration with the Jentel Foundation in Banner, Wyoming, on a shared residency to promote critical writing and thinking about the field of ceramic art. The Jentel Foundation is a newly established residency program offering one-month residencies to visual artists and writers in the quiet countryside of northeastern Wyoming. The joint residency will create

opportunities to develop more informed and thoughtful critical writing about the ceramic arts on a national and international level, and it will further enrich the creative environment of both the Bray and Jentel Foundations.

Each year, a Jentel Critic will spend time at the Bray meeting ceramic artists, learning about their work, and experiencing firsthand the Bray’s inspirational environment. Afterwards, the writer will spend the remainder of the residency at Jentel developing the material gathered and producing essays about the Bray fellowship artists and their artwork.

Stephanie Lanter of Wichita, Kansas, was selected as the first Jentel Critic at the Bray. A visual artist, Lanter uses ceramics in her mixed media sculpture and is a visiting artist and ceramics

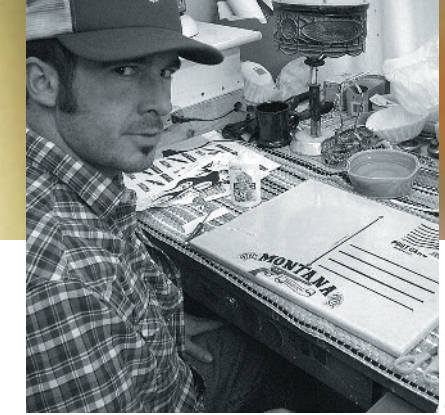
instructor at Wichita State University. Lanter’s writings have been published in several periodicals, including the Greek publication *Keramik Techni*.

On the following pages, Lanter writes about Taunt Fellow Jeremy Kane and Lilian Fellow Karen Swyler, who each began one-year residencies in September 2003. This publication is presented along with their exhibitions to document their fellowship year at the Archie Bray Foundation.

Semi Porcelain

American Jr. Ware Ceramics

Jeremy Kane, Taunt Fellow



Stephanie Lanter

Stripes of semi truck decals ramble down the sides of “Jr.” Jeremy Kane’s Chinese-looking lidded jar. Pink “His” and blue “Hers” spittoons sit nearby in his studio.

A hillbilly potter with schoolboy savvy, Mr. Kane’s fancy clay and mixed-media

wares satirize the mechanisms of capitalism as well as consumers themselves. Contemporary mythologist Lewis Hyde calls the artist/trickster a “culture hero,” a brand fitting Jr. like Levis on a wrangler. “Most at home on the road or at the [neon] twilight edge of town” and “always out to satisfy an

inordinate appetite” a trickster is a “dirt worker” who “usefully disturbs the shape of things by crossing or reworking the line between the elevated and the excremental.” Kane’s progressive honkeytonkin’ with traditional *objets d’Americana* pushes common and esoteric values into simultaneous question and preservation.

Raised in an antique-filled, nurturing Catholic home in Springfield, Ohio, Kane has been walking the line between two worlds for a while. An unashamed bigamist, in fact, his affairs with ceramics and bluegrass music have followed him from Clark County (the hometown namesake of the band for which he plays banjo, guitar and sings) to Fairbanks, Alaska, for a BFA, back to Ohio University for an MFA, and way out yonder to Helena, Montana, where he is presently the Archie Bray Foundation’s Taunt Fellow.

His struggle to stay true to the studio and the stage is refrained in his attempts to reconcile art and kitsch, new and old, classroom and bar. See his porcelain and chrome sixpack: “Elvis Is America Series #1: God, Guns, Guitars, Girls, Drugs and Cars.” Each cup is plastered with a penetrating mug of the King and a different idiomatic collage. Appropriated imagery bordered by heart-shaped U.S. flags portrays Elvis as “a sign more than a man—the quintessential American success.” Jr. pays homage to the vitality of popular legends, while sneakily subverting authenticity and ownership. Like controversial artist Jeff Koons, Kane works to “document the conversion of the American idea (to be a “self-made” person) into the brazen careerist dream (to be a “media-made” person).” With similar Vegas-style subtlety and disillusionment, Kane endorses his own logo, “American Jr. Ware Ceramics.”

Steering his 1985 Suburban “rig,” in Vans and a red Playboy cap, a box of (unopened)

Budweisers in back, Jr. talks about how “when you grow up, everything falls apart.” His recent solo show in Covington, Kentucky, “Kentucky Fried Ceramics,” surveys an “endemic emotional crudity beneath the polite, slick, social surface” as did funk ceramists of the 1960s. Greasy drumsticks litter nostalgic displays of souvenirs such as a set of 12 sumptuous liquor bottles, backed by a mirror, capped by Blanton’s Bourbon horses. Missing-children-on-milk-carton-esque, each depicts a different local drunk, details included on gold-banded tags. “Like processed food, kitsch avoids everything in the organism that asks for moral energy and so passes from junk to crap without an intervening spell of nourishment,”

according to critic Roger Scruton. Jr. may pull cheap emotional strings by decorating “Sugar” jars with mud flap girls. However, covering Koons again, he exposes the hypocrisy of scorn for pleasures such as these. Bill Monroe on the record player and “Mustache” mugs complete the confident cacophony of this show—horrible, humorous, and “Made in America.”

Aflame like a hot rod, pickin’ all night long, Kane plays the political devil’s advocate. But his devotion to history and craftsmanship prove an inherently reverent intent. So finely tuned, they disappear like voices in harmony, directly delivering the “High Lonesome” lyrics of generations past. Clay remodeled by rubber and carpet, luster and label—you gotta love it. Because after everything falls apart, what’s left?

—Stephanie Lanter

For more, see www.dinermug.com.



Kentucky Fried Ceramics (Greatest Hits), 2004, porcelain, luster, decals, found objects



Elvis Is America Series #1: God, Guns, Guitars, Girls, Drugs and Cars, 2004, porcelain, luster, decals, found objects

The Nurture of Nuance

Karen Swyler's Designs on Time

Karen Swyler has a long, lovely nose. Though she insisted on the most nasally-diminishing photographs for this publication, her pots, unintentional self-portraits, possess a similar quiet elegance. Agnes Martin's verses give a sensitive introduction:

*I can see humility
Delicate and white
It is satisfying
Just by itself. . .*

*The underside of the leaf
Cool in shadow
Sublimely unemphatic
Smiling of Innocence*

Swyler's self-proclaimed "secret dorky hobby"—ornithology—requires the traits most essential to her porcelain work: patience, rapture in nuance, stillness,



Left to right: *Nested*, *Trilogy*, *Nuance*, 2004, porcelain

persistence, and temporal generosity. She gracefully captures the fleeting, like Brancusi's "Bird in Space," but unlike this abstract sculpture, it is important to live and interact with a Swyler piece at home.

Swyler's passion for finesse may have stemmed from her mother's ceramic art or her BFA from Alfred. After discovering Eva Zeisel's "soft, beguiling precision" and Mark Rothko's "White on White," she completed a residency at New York's Stony Brook Union Crafts Center, special student-ship at the University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth, and graduate work at the University of Colorado, Boulder. Currently, she is the Archie Bray's esteemed 2003 Lilian Fellow.

Her whimsical dishes belong together like families: little lidded jars line up, proudly posing. One belly swell reciprocates the



concave contour of another, palely hued or flocked surface shapes magnetize duets, triplets, quads



Amy E. Johnson

and more. Iconic and amusingly animistic, long-necked swan bottles whisper and cuddle Pieta-style, cup sisters share conjoined saucers. Bowls ripple like leaves swimming in synchronicity, teapots reach out longingly. She fosters gentle relationships for her guests as well, choreographing their movements and catalyzing shared experience. Delicately thin lined handles and undulating, specifically fitting edges caution against careless use. As feelings are even more fragile than fired clay, folks can practice nurturing pitchers and cruets and then, hopefully, each other.

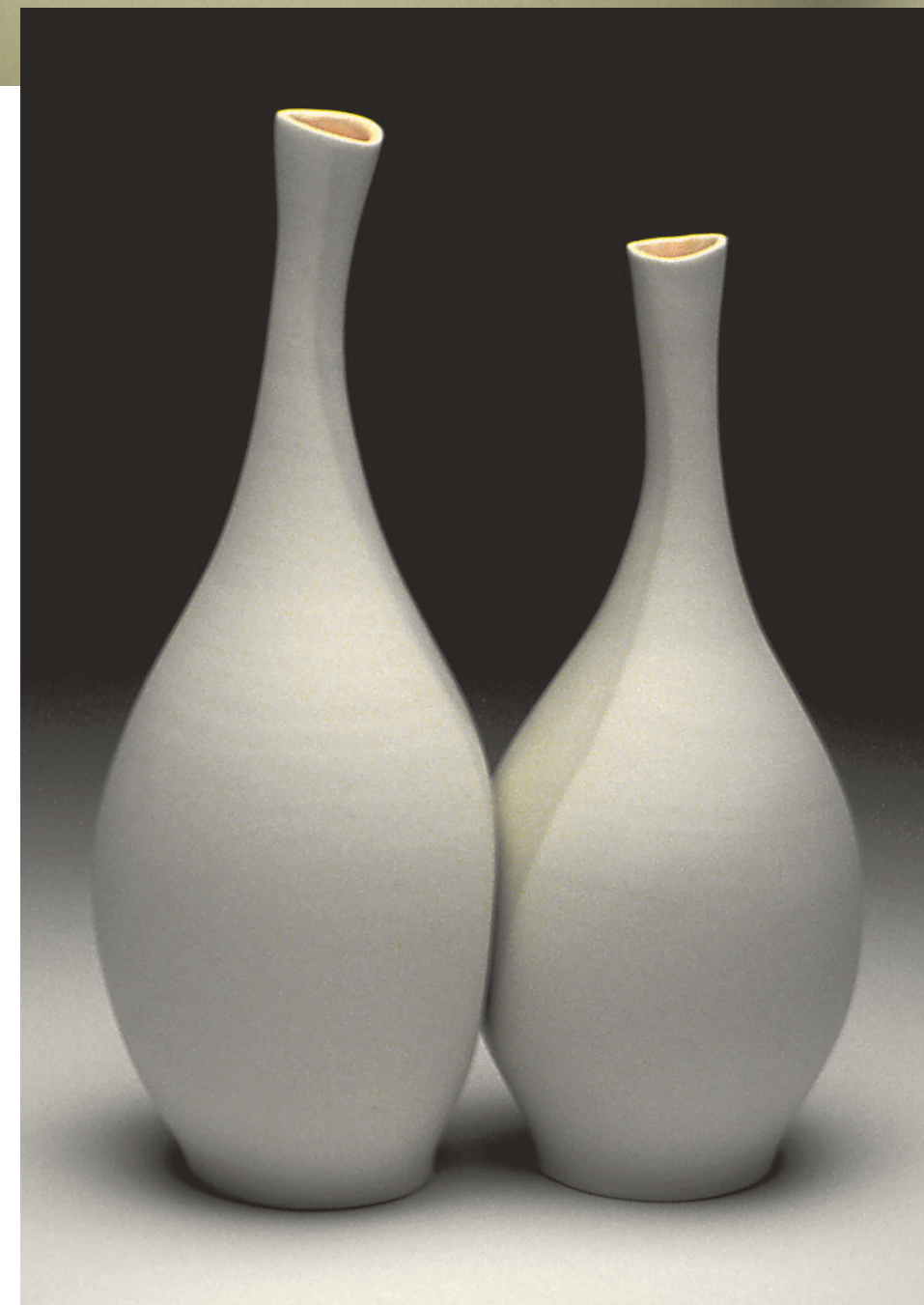
Karen's love for throwing, altering, cutting, obsessively sanding, and fussing over clay to perfection imbues pieces like "Nested," and "Duet" with enticing auras. When the silky solidity of one of these pots rests against the skin, formal visual tension dissolves into egg-like potential. Small, secretive or interlocking openings enhance the visceral nature of these forms, and intimate contemplation reveals their surprising durability.

Karen Swyler, Lilian Fellow

Playful seduction is also inherent in objects which are, in Karen's words, "almost the same but not quite" and "just barely there" glazes. Nude, baby-tush smooth clay is veiled by open curtains of transparency, lined with pinks and other vulnerable shades and her ethereal whites work enigmatically. Do they suggest lingerie or purity? Are they ghostly or baptismal, coldly stand-offish or blank screens open to projection?

Visionary rather than vogue, Swyler has focused on simplicity, committed to the richness of a caress. "Intellectualism has undermined spiritual aspiration in most people," Yanagi wondered, "might not the love of the beautiful perhaps bring peace and harmony?" Karen's favorite feathered friend, the cedar waxwing, bears a tiny yellow tip on its tail. To obtain the sustaining grace of surprises like this, we must pause; take notice.

—Stephanie Lanter



Impression, 2004, porcelain



Archie Bray Foundation for the Ceramic Arts

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Individuals wishing to establish a fellowship at the Archie Bray Foundation are encouraged to contact Resident Director Josh DeWeese.

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