



# Ceramic Excellence

Fellowships at the Archie Bray Foundation 2004-2005

Kowkie Durst  
Lincoln Fellow

Miranda Howe  
Lilian Fellow

Trey Hill  
Taunt Fellow

# Stage of the Everyday

## Kowkie Durst's Visual Language

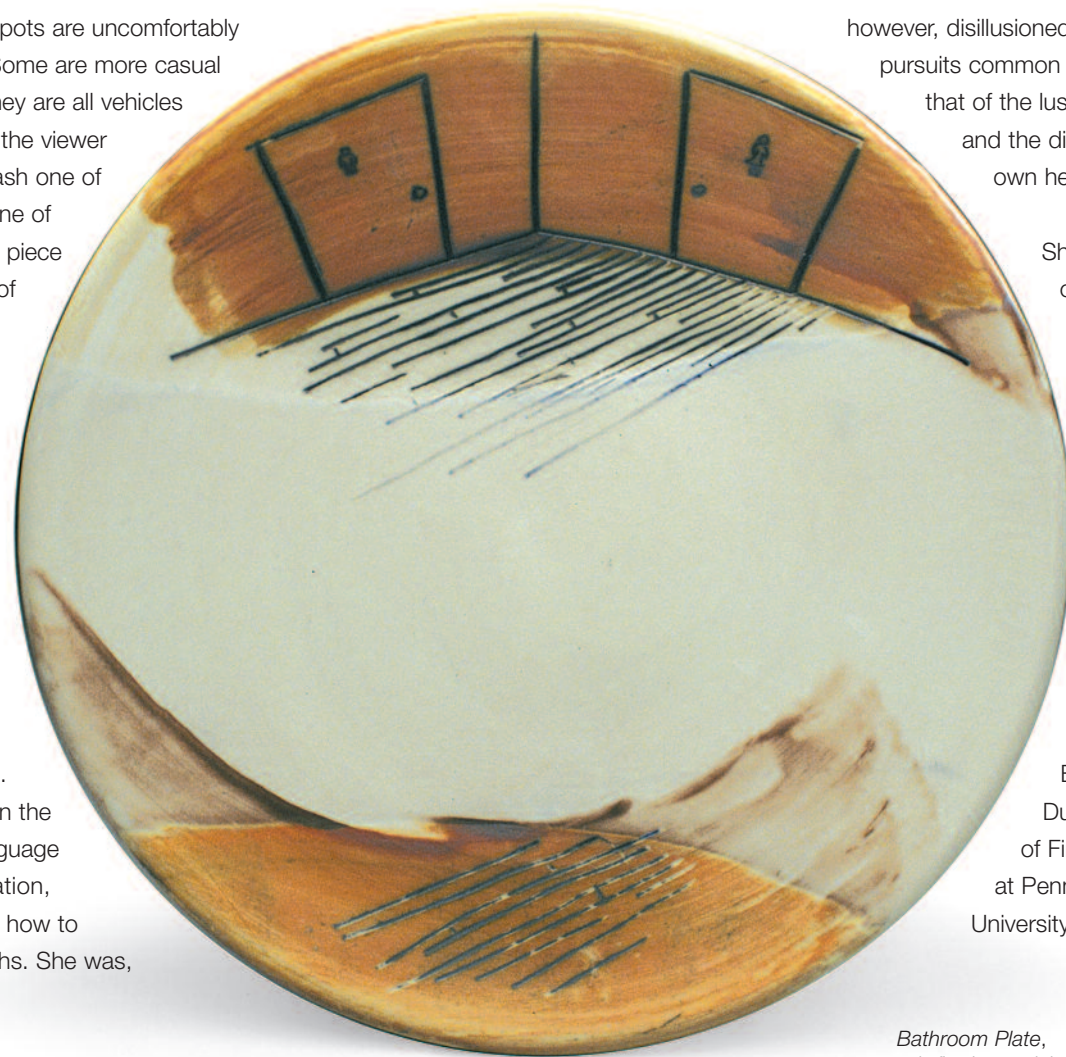
Kowkie Durst, Lincoln Fellow



Eliza Wiley, Helena  
Independent Record

Kowkie Durst's pots are uncomfortably meaningful. Some are more casual than others, but they are all vehicles that intersect with the viewer every time they wash one of her bowls, fill up one of her mugs, or cut a piece of cake. The idea of everyday use is essential to Durst, as her images are reminders of conditions that many take for granted.

Durst studied Anthropology and German at Tulane University in New Orleans, Louisiana. She took classes in the Philosophy of Language and Mayan civilization, eventually learning how to translate hieroglyphs. She was,



however, disillusioned by the romantic pursuits common in museum practice—that of the lust for other cultures and the disregard of one's own heritage.

She began to take ceramics classes at Supermud Pottery in New York, moving on to several clay venues, including Haystack Mountain School of Crafts in Maine and Penland School of Crafts in North Carolina. Prior to becoming a Lincoln fellow at the Archie Bray Foundation, Durst earned a Master of Fine Arts in Ceramics at Pennsylvania State University.

*Bathroom Plate,*  
salt-fired porcelain, 10"

The study of hieroglyphs stuck with her; Durst enjoys the simple beauty of pictorial language. Instead of deciphering which Jaguar king ruled in the distant past, she turns her knowledge of visual languages inward, creating a cast of object-characters that reenact vignettes, providing a stage of contemporary societal issues.

Durst's methods are enticing; she draws a uni-cycle, so innocent and alluring—it is easy to imagine someone on top of it, with arms out gently pedaling back and forth to avoid hitting the ground. Scenes like these, with cycles, lawnmowers and grills, are invitations, gathering the attention and empathy of the viewer by entertaining imaginations with nostalgic imagery. At this level, one is easily charmed.

Then, just as one is easing into her iconography, it gets more assertive. On a large platter, there is a drawing of a three-tiered wedding cake. The scoring is so courageously elemental, depicting oversize utensils and swirled stringers hanging mid-air. Above it reads a banner, "Congratulations John and John."

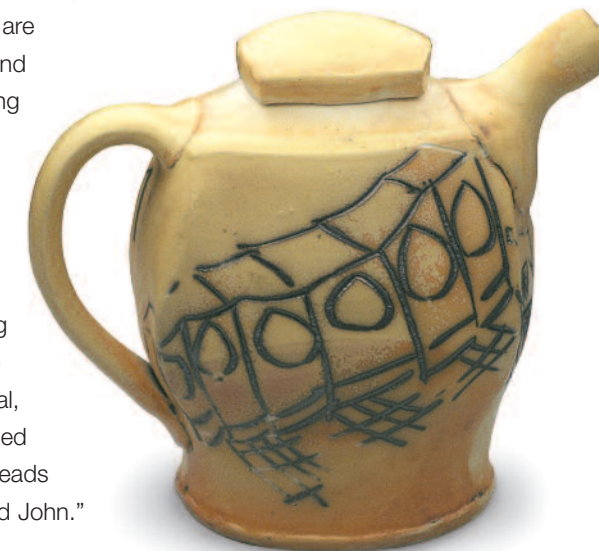
Although Durst rarely depicts figures in her drawings, her work is charged with human presence. She fills the space with objects a viewer can relate to, but cleverly withholds any depiction of actual people. It is done so as not to exclude one who wouldn't fit the parameters. Durst's work often considers those limited by our "binary culture."

Take public restrooms for example, most don't think twice about choosing between the men's or the women's public restroom. But this cultural construction of gender,

based solely on one's biological parts, negates the idea of gender as a social process. She created a series of bowls and plates that confront this issue, drawing two doors that represent the standard two choices.

Durst selects her subjects with the insight of an archaeologist. One need not translate each aspect of the imagery to appreciate her visual language; but they are honest capsules of information that confront social injustice. The resulting humor is less easy to explain ... partly because these struggles within society are currently unresolved, and partly because they may never change.

—Allison Zimmer



*Laundromat  
Teapot and Mug,*  
salt-fired porcelain

# Intuitive Design

## Miranda Howe's Subtle Entities

Miranda Howe, Lilian Fellow



Trey Hill

Miranda Howe takes small steps, but in relentless succession. She is persistent, organized, and disciplined. Infused with spiritual attentiveness, her compositions balance the efforts of man with the structure of the natural world. Howe persuades one to survey existence, including mans role within it.



Howe attended Lubbock Christian University and Texas Tech University, where she earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts in 1995. Her emphasis was in Ceramics, although she took extra courses in Religious Studies, Geology, and Plant Biology. Prior to becoming a Lilian fellow at the Archie Bray Foundation, she attended Montana State University in Bozeman earning a Master of Fine Arts in 2002.

Howe approaches most of her work by creating, then assembling



maneuverable pieces. Bowls in her studio house organized varieties of bisque and green objects, including balls of clay, spaghetti-sized rods, and coiled buttons that resemble seashells. Sustained in her activity and daily routine, her effort parallels the eventual actions of time, slowly accumulating like rings in trees or multi-colored sediment.

Shapes of living and man-made ornament often share space within her compositions. Whether it is the boundaries of a square restricting two merging bodies of clay, or the inclusion of architectural detail among crumbling bits of rubble, Howe joins the domestic intentions of man with the causality of nature.

Influenced by geological surveys, Howe has begun a series that

*Patterned Boxes*, salt-soda fired porcelain, 5 1/4" x 5 1/4" x 2 1/2" each

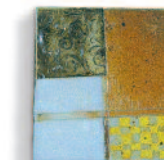


*Safety*, salt-soda fired porcelain, 10" x 11 3/4" x 3 1/2"

she refers to as core samples. Cylindrical holes pierce through the depth of thick wall tiles, leaving a number of short tunnels. Like a catacomb, she often fills the holes with solid incarnations of shaped matter. These restored embodiments are embellished with rich patterns and carvings unlike their originating environment.

It is as if these samples of core have spent their time mingling above the surface, assuming the textures and qualities of foreign influence. They return with impressions of alternative experiences, including spiraling designs or checkered patterns, leading one to examine the process of transformation—ultimately begging the question of belonging.

Then there are parts that are absent their cores, focusing attention on the void left behind. Howe often provides a sharp contrast between a pierced hole and a rough, organic surface. To have a part removed from the center is a forceful act, even if the mass returns it will never be as it was. This absence unveils a variety of layers, including those of consciousness.



Howe's work is a landscape of emotion that allows the viewer to ponder the relationship of objects just as one might consider their own familial relations. Her work is comprised of personified objects that follow different paths. Just as one is the sum of experience, Howe makes painstaking considerations that cut through her own surface ... exposing a diligent character. One never forgets her configurations are man-made, yet they are infused with the presence of a greater being.

—Allison Zimmer

# Forging the Boundaries of Attraction

## Trey Hill's Sublime Exploration

Trey Hill has developed an insatiable curiosity for beauty, and its origins may lie within the use of a single can of spray paint. To some, it is a minor issue—a little paint here, a little clay there—but in Hill's early educational career the purity of materials was a major issue. He spent a long time concerned about this and other formal aspects of sculpture like proportion, light, line, shape, and color.

Before becoming a Taunt fellow at the Archie Bray Foundation, Hill attended Bowling Green State University in Ohio. He studied Ceramics, Glass, and Sculpture, earning a Bachelor of Fine Arts in 1999. He later earned a Master of Fine Arts in Ceramics from San Jose State University of California in 2002.

*Sorry Charlie*, ceramic and mixed media, 29" x 10" x 14"



It was only a matter of time before Hill began to feel frustrated by the limitations of material, and after the suggestion of a friend, he began to experiment—using Bondo, spray-adhesive, and the infamous spray paint.

Since incorporating such audacious materials, Hill has equally assumed, or identified, with the outer fringes of culture. His illicit attraction to degraded material merges with eccentric subjects, resulting in a progressively higher threshold of visual fixation.

Hill takes influence from downloaded images of figures contorted into prideful, Olympic, poses that border on the grotesque. Backs arch into impossible

configurations; legs are casually tossed and twisted. It isn't a far cry from the blasphemy of material. It's a similar betrayal—one finds the formal display of these contortionists pleasing to the eye, yet when one measures the position of sprawling limbs, the display of grace and grandeur delves dangerously close to the profane.

Just as his sculpture mirrors the physical gesture of contorted figures, these forms also emulate the conceptually bizarre nature of appeal. It is this balance that Hill seeks, the incorporation of material and subject that leaves one to realize the subjective boundaries of attraction.

Stockings and pin striping are equal modes of decoration. Twisted appendages are embellished with woven texture, tattoos, or animal prints, perched atop ottomans and furry tables. Hill constructs only fractions of the figure; he needs only a leg, torso, or occasional tongue to create a spectacle of sexually charged objects. These body parts amalgamate in mechanical fashion, with



Miranda Howe

Trey Hill, Taunt Fellow

hinges and seams welcoming modification with each new attachment. Thighs alternate with fuel tanks. Hands and feet round out into club forms; they all take part in a fantasy of seduction, allowing one to indulge in varied curiosities.

Hill takes all of it, incorporating both the sweet and the sour. In a manner similar to sorting spare parts in machine shop, he develops hybrids of beauty, commenting on all corners of attraction. Influence can come from the bin of a cheap fabric store, a fetish web site, or even a parking lot. Nothing is sacred; now that he is no longer bound by hierarchical concepts of material, Hill is free to explore more truthful motivations of beauty, sometimes exposing its underbelly.

—Allison Zimmer

*Go Ahead, Nobody's Looking*, ceramic and mixed media, 59" x 15" x 28"





### Archie Bray Foundation for the Ceramic Arts

2915 Country Club Avenue,  
Helena, MT 59602  
406-443-3502  
[www.archiebray.org](http://www.archiebray.org)

#### Board of Directors

|                 |                 |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| Dan Anderson    | Jim Kolva       |
| Richard Baiter  | Beth Lo         |
| Toni Broadbent  | Alan Nicholson  |
| Sally Brogden   | Jess Parker     |
| Lin M. Deola    | Linda Schlenger |
| Donna Forbes    | Bobby Silverman |
| John Green      | Akio Takamori   |
| Robert Harrison | Robert Taunt    |
| Ayumi Horie     | Norma Tirrell   |
| Mike Jensen     | Margaret Woo    |

#### Resident Director

Josh DeWeese

## Nurturing Creative Excellence

The Archie Bray Foundation for the Ceramic Arts has always been an ongoing experiment, a place and experience with no artistic boundaries. The extensive facilities, the freedom to explore, and the creative exchange that occurs within the community of resident artists provides a profound opportunity for artistic growth, both for individual artists and for the field of ceramics.

To further encourage the Bray “experiment,” Robert and Suzanne Taunt established the Taunt Fellowship in 1998. Inspired by the Taunts’ vision and generosity, others established additional awards, including the Myhre Fellowship in 1999 and 2000, the Lilian Fellowship since 2001, and most recently the Lincoln Fellowship, inaugurated 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, allowing them to focus more completely on producing and exhibiting a significant body of work during their fellowship year.

Inside, essays by Allison Zimmer introduce you to the 2004-2005 fellowship artists and their work. Zimmer is an artist, critic, and educator. She is currently an educational curatorial assistant for ExhibitsUSA where she performs research and writes for traveling art and humanities exhibitions. Her writings on contemporary art and ceramics have been published in Kansas City’s Review magazine. Her essays on the three fellowship artists provide a glimpse of the ceramic excellence for which the Bray has become internationally renowned.

---

#### Past Fellowship Recipients

1999 Marc Digeros, Taunt Fellowship; Sharon Brush, Myhre Fellowship  
2000 Eric Eley, Taunt Fellowship; John Byrd, Myhre Fellowship  
2001 Jiman Choi, Taunt Fellowship; John Utgaard, Lilian Fellowship  
2002 Jason Walker, Taunt Fellowship; Sandra Trujillo, Lilian Fellowship  
2003 Jeremy Kane, Taunt Fellowship; Karen Swyler, Lilian Fellowship

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

This publication is generously funded by the Joliet Foundation.