

# Ceramic Excellence

Fellowships at the  
Archie Bray Foundation  
2008-2009



Birdie Boone  
Lincoln Fellow

Nathan Craven  
MJD Fellow

Donna Flanery  
Lilian Fellow

David Peters  
Matsutani Fellow

Kevin Snipes  
Taunt Fellow





**Birdie Boone** Lincoln Fellow

Birdie Boone has always made deeply personal pottery. In the past, she reconciled familial impressions through cups and saucers, other utilitarian forms, and their self-contained stacked installations. Through these codified travels she achieved an understanding of formative events, calling the work an identity quest. Today, Boone produces vases, cups, bowls, and plates which muse on her day to day internal and external existence. While investigating her work and herself, Boone explains, "My heart is in deciphering domestic intimacy."

Her domestic intimacy begins with a pot taken off the shelf, cradled, and then put to use. By using Boone's pottery, these simple acts blossom into a range of emotional experiences. Through them, Boone asks the question that we often ask ourselves—Who am I at this moment?

Boone's work certainly enhances the relative importance of personal experiences (nurture) over an individual's innate qualities (nature) in determining physical and mental well being. "I think environment is so critical to how people behave and live their lives," she posits. Boone sees a clear link between what we choose to have in our lives and, in turn, how those objects affect how we live. She's come to recognize

*Bowl Stacks*  
Midrange redware, slip, glazes, oxidation fired  
small 2.5" x 4", large 3.5" x 6", 2009

that pottery, as stages and conduits for food, may well reflect and affect states of mind and body.

Birdie Boone's forms are comforting, having soft lips, rounded hips, and generous forms. In fact, these pots are Birdie Boone. With physical resemblance established, one begins to grasp that they could reflect psychological being, too. Her pots are quiet, easy to take in, agreeable. Boone's desire to give comfort finds its way into the glazes too. These are soft and of nearly infinite depth: pastel blues, greens, and pinks. They are sweetness and mystery.

Without dispassion, Boone echoes a common sentiment among the artists at the Archie Bray, "We're all becoming desensitized to real things, actual objects, real people, personal interaction," Boone declares. "It's all technology related," she offers. As personal as her pottery may be, Boone knows she's acting in a larger



*Mug Stacks*  
Midrange redware, slip, glazes, oxidation fired  
each 4" h x 4" d, 2009

context. "I'm trying to encourage social change," she states.

Birdie Boone delivers on the premise that an artist's job is to bring light to issues that she finds important and share them. "People seem to take

# In The Present

for granted that eating certain foods makes them feel good, but don't make the body to mind connection," she states. Boone is determined to make that bridge clear. Ideally, using her pottery causes the user to put down the cell phone, slow down, and pay attention. If Boone can get us to do that, as she has done for herself, then we may have some understanding of a personal experience filled with broad implications.

Through her work, Birdie Boone has traversed her past and now documents her existence. Undoubtedly, at some point in the not too distant future, she'll begin making pots to determine her future. "Can I change my destiny with a pot?" she asks. It is certainly within her grasp to change ours.



**"My heart is in deciphering domestic intimacy."**



**Nathan Craven** MJD Fellow

Eight thousand or more six-inch long ceramic extrusions pack a hole, a stylized floral outline which pierces a wall. These dark maroon and

through custom-made dies, cutting each extrusion into six-inch lengths. Considering that each installation incorporates thousands of pieces, extruding takes a great deal of time. To remain as flexible as possible, Craven re-glazes existing pieces

the illuminated finished work. Another idea is to vary extrusion height, creating new opportunities for light, shadow, and pattern. Similarly, Craven is interested in creating extrusions based on the pixelated geometry that he's seen on the computer screen.

# Begetting Active Spaces

brown pieces completely fill the five feet tall by eight feet wide void. Walking in front of the work, it morphs from nearly solid to a porous light-filled screen. Although the individual components vary widely in shape and size, they share similarities in their proto-fractal outlines and tight fit. En masse, these abstract elements create a dazzling visual conundrum.

Craven's riddle begins with drawings—a design on a tie, the outline of a paint drip. From simple line drawings, he extrudes two foot sections of clay

depending on the demands of each new installation and his current inventory.

As much as he enjoys the labor of making, completing the next piece outweighs any personal desire to mix clay and glazes, extrude each module, bisque, and glaze fire them himself. "I get the idea and just have to figure out how to do it. I'm not concerned about the process, so long as it gets done."

Conceptual primacy notwithstanding, his fine execution is second nature.

**"It implies a kind of kinetic internal dynamism."**

His high standards also incorporate a desire to have the work look hand-made. He doesn't want the extrusions to look manufactured. Therefore, Craven rejects excessive exactitude, constantly evaluating his process along a fine line. Over precision, "leads to boredom," Craven explains, "because you can look at one spot and understand the entire piece."

Recently, a chance encounter with recycled glass led to firing the extrusions vertically with glass in the bottom, creating an ethereal glow in

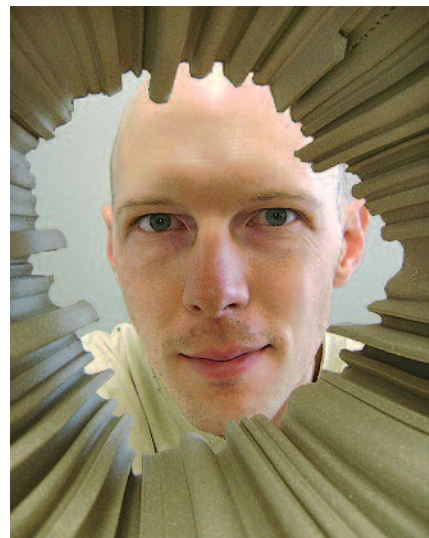
well as the viewer. The forms are so abstracted and unique as to provide minimal clues about their origin or an appropriate context. Given that, the viewer is free to make his or her own associations and connections. When incorporated into architecture, the extrusions seem to be a natural fit. Assembled as a free standing sculpture, the parts work well, too. In this way, Craven's work is indeterminate and, perhaps, undetermined by design.

In summing up how he feels about making art and moving through this man-made world,

Nathan Craven quotes Anarchitect Gordon Matta-Clark: "The thing that I would really like to express is the idea of transforming the static, enclosed, condition of architecture on a very mundane level into this kind of architecture which incorporates this animated geometry or this animated tenuous relationship between void and surface. It implies a kind of kinetic internal dynamism."

Craven's work is vitally potent; the enrapture of a wider audience without question.

Nathan Craven's completed works are largely a mystery, for him as



*Kosmeo Brown*  
Ceramic, size variable, 2009







**Donna Flanery** Lilian Fellow

A potter with a great sense of play, Donna Flanery worries about declining values of aesthetics and, furthermore, that adults and children alike aren't living up to their creative potential. The quantity of time and intense effort people put towards synthetic experiences astounds her. Constant texting, video games, Facebook, and Twitter seemingly flood every moment of consciousness. Because the synthetic is so compelling, not unlike physical addiction, Flanery ponders an antidote; how might she urge children and adults to become more fully engaged in their lives?

"I like the idea of affecting people's aesthetics early on when they're the most malleable," Flanery explains. Clearly, her work provides a sense of play and shares her love of pottery. Throughout her attentive crafting of forms and figurative decoration, Flanery demonstrates the uniquely human ability to affect reality through physical interaction and, in the best cases, causes others to act, too. "I want children to know and think about the handmade, mark-making," she states plainly.

*Large Covered Jar*  
Earthenware  
27" x 15" x 15", 2008



To this end, Donna Flanery has built up a dozen or so characters, like a director assembling an acting company. She employs these characters in a similar way, too. Roles rotate from pot to pot, vignette to vignette. On one teapot, the elephant may play the dominating villain; on the next, a stolid sage, literally supporting a mouse's anxious scuttling, an awkward position for any pachyderm.

At the outset, Flanery employed only stuffed animals for the characters sculpted or painted on her pots. Unlike the worst cases she is intent on engaging, she has grown while working at the Archie Bray Foundation. In response, she has added several human characters to her troupe. Where once she felt that stuffed animals were her best means of expression, she now finds some subjects more appropriately addressed through human form.

At the same time, Flanery is creating more elaborate scenes, filled with greater action and additional props—pianos, bicycles, grand-father clocks, and the like. Each new kiln load of these more complex productions yields increasingly sophisticated and fulfilling pots.

Being flexible and playful with her content when approaching a blank, freshly slipped pot, is a great joy for Flanery. She doesn't employ a clear story in most instances; if there is a semi-autobiographical note, it doesn't develop until the

work is underway. In any case, the imagery isn't meant to be surreal or confounding, rather it is a freeze-frame moment straight from a child's imagination or memory. Often, the imagery speaks of an underlying anxiety, perhaps mirroring her own. Perhaps too abstrusely rendered for an adult, with a child's ability to venture farther into the imaginary with fewer clues, Flanery's pots are filled with prospects.

Donna Flanery likes calling herself a potter. Slyly, she explains, "it's kind of dinosaurish making handmade things in this era. I like that pottery is the underdog thing to do. I love that it's not hip." Concluding a day in the studio, she asks herself two questions: "What can I expect from humanity? What can I expect from myself?" Good questions for all of us.

# Infective Mud

**"I like the idea of affecting people's aesthetics early on when they're the most malleable,"**



*Birthday Cake Vase*  
Earthenware  
10" x 13" x 8", 2008



**David Peters** Matsutani Fellow

David Peters prospects the hills surrounding Helena, Montana in search of gold. He's not looking for the gold that made Helena

unique cuisine. Correspondingly, limiting himself to local materials is key to developing Peters' pottery. In turn, he takes a less romantic view of historic pottery than many of his peers. For example, Peters speculates that Shigaraki Ware is

quality is something one won't find anywhere else."

Finally, David Peters' forms stem from Helena and its original miners. A number of his pots—gold pan plate, crucible creamer, scale pan fruit bowl—derive from discarded mining camp items. So, like his material restrictions, his forms

are of a place and its history. At this point, evoking time, wear, and place are more important to Peters than technical perfection. He's willing to sacrifice some smoothness or weight for more expressive pots. He states excitedly, "When something works that's nice because 'here it is. *I dug that out of the ground.*'"

Arriving at the studio dirty and tired after a day prospecting in the mountains, David Peters wears a knowing smile; even without rocks in hand, his forays are rarely fruitless.

# Meaning Through Material

a destination in 1864, but the promising resources of local ceramic materials—clays, silica, calcium, iron, bentonite, manganese, copper, and more. Rarely are his discoveries workable clay. Most of what he finds are rocks—red, black, yellow, and rust. Some flake apart in the hand. Others take hours of hammering and milling. Through his explorations in the field and studio alike, Peters is building a frame of reference, inserting himself into his environment as fully as possible with the speculation that local material, community, history, and place will produce a rich amalgam to inform his creative prospects.

what it is because of the rough, rocky clay available to those potters and their limited range of tools, not because of some preconceived idea about an aesthetic direction.

After Peters hauls raw materials back to the studio, he faces processing them into usable form. That problem brings its own rewards.

**"That weird quality is something one won't find anywhere else."**

As he explains, "Once you sit there with a hammer and break rock up, you know how hard it is, how it fractures, what it smells like, how it reacts to water, how heavy it is. If you have that kind of physical relationship to material, that's an entirely different kind of understanding."

This attuned awareness presents itself while making, too. One particular clay cannot be thrown, but yields a beautiful black color and surface when fired. Rather than fight or adulterate the material, he forms the clay with press molds. Peters explains, "That's an example of 'so, what can I do with it?'" He continues, "I could reject it out of hand, but that weird

A tenet of Peters' practice is that restrictions promote creativity. He compares his situation to the 'buy local' food movement. A winter staple of potatoes forces the cook to be creative in whole new ways, perhaps developing a regionally

opposite:  
*Crucible*  
Wood fired,  
reduction cooled,  
local clay  
12" x 14" x 16"  
2009

*Tea Pot*  
Wood fired,  
reduction cooled,  
local clay,  
forged steel  
3.5" x 5" x 6"  
2008







## Kevin Snipes Taunt Fellow

Ten nearly bone-dry white tumblers sit on Kevin Snipes' studio table under a layer of dry cleaning plastic. The eleventh, three-sided and footed, with perplexing interior bottom ridges, has a loose graphite sketch on one side of an Asian girl, breasts exposed, gesticulating. Incomplete, it is hard to determine if she is smiling or frowning, her mood vague at this stage. When Snipes renders lines in black slip and clothes in colored underglazes, his characters become more defined and his layers of supporting ephemera multiply; clues notwithstanding, when the final glaze firing is complete, his rich narratives remain cryptic.

Nonetheless, Kevin Snipes' quirky pottery is disarmingly accessible. His adorable characters, like Aztec hieroglyphics, figures, words, and diagrams, are depicted distinctly but leave leeway for much interpretation. Sneakily, these holes in narration enable the user to insert themselves, making the pot much more than Snipes could accomplish on his own. However, with tea bowl or tumbler in hand, Snipes' two-sided stories begin to reveal themselves as perhaps something less than adorable. The once sweet girl glares sideways towards her boy adversary. He looks back, exclaiming, "Take Dat!" "Well, that's the way relationships are," sums up Snipes.

Riffing on relationships between men and women, Kevin Snipes draws scenes from his own experience

"Do You Like It Me" Double Box  
Porcelain, 5" x 7" x 4", 2009

and of those around him. Like the characters in the comics "Sally Forth" or "Blondie," his young men and women become worked up, discombobulated, or neglected in their often selfish quests for fulfillment. Unlike the comics, Snipes rarely, if ever, offers resolution.



Unapologetically, Snipes' regard is very much a male gaze. Political correctness isn't that much of a concern, he concurs. Often, his own faults are revealed by one or the other of the two characters found on most of his pots. In between, Snipes plants a reoccurring foil, the imaginary Mister Rabbit Ears. He's a trickster on one pot, offers emotional support on another, and stands aloof on a third.

"Eenie, Meenie, Minie, Mo" Vase  
Porcelain, 14" x 5" x 4", 2009

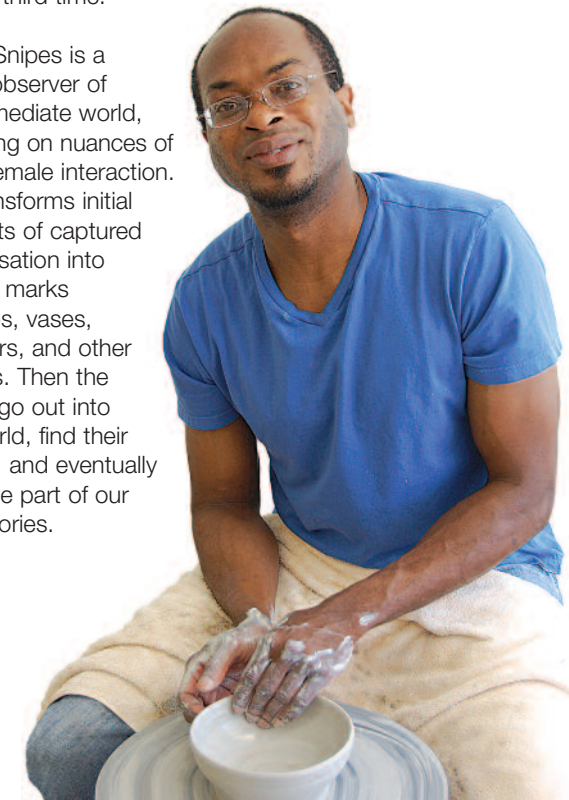
Technically, Snipes readily admits that he is not making perfect pots. They have uneven edges, misaligned feet, or wavy lips. He likes giving the sense that the maker "just got lucky." At the same time, he hopes misaligned edges or other formal quirks take the user through the piece and into the maker's mind for an instant, questioning intent, and therefore adding another layer to the story.

Of course, the viewer's experiences dictate how Snipes' pots grow. Daily use and observation may lead to previously undiscovered facets, like finding new depths when rereading a novel or having an "ah-hah!" moment when viewing a movie for the third time.

Kevin Snipes is a close observer of his immediate world, reflecting on nuances of male/female interaction. He transforms initial snippets of captured conversation into eternal marks on cups, vases, tumblers, and other vessels. Then the works go out into the world, find their places, and eventually become part of our own stories.

# Layers

"Well, that's the way relationships are."







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### Resident Artist Director

Steven Young Lee

This publication is  
generously funded by  
the Joliet Foundation.

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

Annually, the Archie Bray Foundation invites a critic to spend time at the Bray to meet with the artists, experience the Bray's unique environment, and develop essays for the fellowship exhibition catalogue.

This year the residency was awarded to Forrest Snyder. Forrest is an artist living and working in Boston. He is the Founder and Editor of Critical Ceramics, an online journal of issues and ideas of interest to the serious ceramic artist.

### Past Fellowship Recipients

1999  
Marc Digeros, Taunt Fellow  
Sharon Brush, Myhre Fellow

2000  
Eric Eley, Taunt Fellow  
John Byrd, Myhre Fellow

2001  
Jiman Choi, Taunt Fellow  
John Utgaard, Lilian Fellow

2002  
Jason Walker, Taunt Fellow  
Sandra Trujillo, Lilian Fellow

2003  
Jeremy Kane, Taunt Fellow  
Karen Swyler, Lilian Fellow

since 2001, the Lincoln Fellowship in 2004, the Matsutani Fellowship in 2006, and most recently the MJD Fellowship established in 2007.

Currently the Taunt, Lilian, Lincoln, Matsutani and MJD 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.

Individuals wishing to establish a fellowship at the Archie Bray Foundation are encouraged to contact Resident Artist Director Steven Young Lee.

In addition, Forrest has been the Artistic Programs Director at Baltimore Clayworks, an Independent Curator, and Ceramics Instructor. Currently, he teaches in the Harvard Ceramics Program. In 1996, Forrest was awarded an MFA in Ceramics from the New York State College of Ceramics at Alfred. He has exhibited, taught, and worked in Maine, New York, Vermont, Colorado, Maryland, Oregon, Minnesota, Pennsylvania and other such exotic locales.

2004  
Trey Hill, Taunt Fellow  
Miranda Howe, Lilian Fellow  
Kowkie Durst, Lincoln Fellow

2005  
Koi Neng Liew, Taunt Fellow  
Deborah Schwartzkopf, Lilian Fellow  
Melissa Mencini, Lincoln Fellow

2006  
Jennifer Allen, Taunt Fellow  
Christina West, Lilian Fellow  
Joseph Pintz, Lincoln Fellow

2007  
Jeremy Hatch, Taunt Fellow  
Brian Rochefort, Lilian Fellow  
Renee Audette, Lincoln Fellow  
Anne Drew Potter, Matsutani Fellow