



Ceramic
Excellence

FELLOWSHIPS AT THE
ARCHIE BRAY FOUNDATION
2009-2010



FELLOWSHIPS AT THE
ARCHIE BRAY FOUNDATION
2009–2010

Gwendolyn Yoppolo
Lincoln Fellow

Kelly Garrett Rathbone
Matsutani Fellow

Kensuke Yamada
MJD Fellow

Sean Erwin
Lilian Fellow

Martha Grover
Taunt Fellow

ARCHEOLOGICAL EXPEDITION
FIELD JOURNAL, SPRING 2101

A Shrine, Possibly.

We landed in a wide, circular valley surrounded by large, round, soft hills and, a bit farther away, mountains. As we flew over this beautiful landscape, it was evident that although now deserted, some remnants of prior occupation could be felt. Hugging the south side of the valley and nestled at the foot of the rise of the mountains, we noticed four perfectly circular ruins, one hollow and the other three resembling small mounds dotting the land, on the outskirts of what must have been a relatively large settlement. Guessing the potential site for some ritualistic, possibly even sacred activities, that is where we decided to land. Right away, strewn all over the very surface, we found artifacts, fragments and shards mostly, but a few intact pieces too, reaffirming our suspicion as to the purpose and importance of the place. We found utensils for rituals, guardian figures, votive effigies of the celebrants, reliquaries for precious objects, and offerings to the deity.

What kind of worship, to what kind of God(s) took place here?

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 Paul Mathieu.

Paul is a potter. He teaches ceramics at the Emily Carr University in Vancouver, Canada. His new book-length series of 14 essays on the history of ceramics, *The Art of the Future*, can be downloaded for free, images and text, at www.paulmathieu.ca.

LINCOLN FELLOW

Gwendolyn Yoppolo Utensils and Implements



Round, smooth, and soft, like the hills all around, as if, like the hills, they had been eroded and shaped by time. The objects beg to be touched, as if the visual experience itself had become palpable. The sensuality of the forms, combined with the intimate, tactile function and the erotic softness of both the pastel colors and the silky textures of the surfaces, conveys an intimacy that transcends domesticity. Other aspects of the work, their undersides, are somewhat rougher, and, moving from one surface to the other, one is reminded of the hand passing from soft shoulder to somewhat rougher elbow. These sensations somehow shift the experience from practicality to metaphor, from the possibilities of the kitchen to the expectations of the bedroom.

If the body, the eyes, the hand, the skin itself are first engaged, the mind and the soul rapidly find their

own satisfaction in such generosity and lushness. Such objects may seem to fulfill basic tasks (holding, squeezing, draining, transferring), yet it remains that the intent and the effect operate at a much deeper level. There is an apparent excess in such simplicity and directness. The full, total meaning of such obviousness may appear to reveal itself completely and instantly, but that would be a mistaken assumption to make. These reasonably familiar things are not invested with function and practicality (although they perform whatever task they were created to fulfill with ease and efficiency), they do not simply embody physical experiences in their making and their appreciation. They above all contain and materialize time as an experience.

The exquisite sensuality slows, possibly even arrests, the gesture when skin comes into contact with the hard, cool feel of the tool. This slowing down of sensory experience permits a deeper phenomenological assessment: of the object itself first, of ourselves as physical beings in space next. This pause in experience created by the esthetic of the implement imbues our perception, visual, then tactile (and possibly olfactory, auditory, and gustatory, when food, liquids, smells, and sounds are added to the mix), with fluidity. Nothing is fixed or static, everything changes, shifts, and transforms. The inattentive user may miss such subtle effects,

but then, these objects command attention and care.

The work is simple, understated, organized around a limited vocabulary of basic shapes and forms, a limited palette of colors. Doublings and couplings, as well as larger groupings, speak of community, of communication, of the coming together of individuals in proximity.

I have mentioned excess, but here excess is understated, somewhat contradictory. Excess can operate in either direction, toward the ever more complex or toward extreme simplicity. These effective objects are excessive in their aim for a simplicity that speaks of complexity.

They demand that we take a clear position in relation to them and in relation to any other object in our lives. It is in that sense that they are critical. They remain ever more essential in the world as we experience it now, fleeting, instantly obsolete, in constant flux. They arrest time and make reflection and assessment possible.

They make the nourishment of the body an enhanced sensory experience, yet they provide and distribute other nourishments with equal efficiency.



sieve funnel
microcrystalline-glazed porcelain
5" x 8" x 6", 2010

eat for two dinner service
microcrystalline-glazed porcelain
9" x 13" x 7", 2010



MATSUTANI FELLOW

Kelly Garrett Rathbone Guardians and Angels



The gaze is clearly directed toward a figure of worship. First of all, my very own gaze, taking in the convincing and expressive realism, appreciating the rather impressive necessary skills, the deft handling of the materials, the dynamism of construction. And then, the represented figure itself is engaged in an act of looking, which is not directed at me but toward an otherworldly presence, absent but felt. Observation is at play, that of the maker, then my own, and also that of the figure itself. The communication is efficient, the effect operates seamlessly despite the disjunctive system of assembly.

These figures are transient beings between my reality, which they inhabit and another reality with which they connect. They are guardians of the gate, opening and closing entry depending on the effort I take or resist toward their intention. Their aim is not to restrict and forbid, but to invite and make accessible. Their great seduction is an efficient conceit in that regard and they promise a magical world. What is this world? What is this promise?

It is a world where everything is clearly described, yet offers much more than what may appear at first

glance. The completeness and integrity of the form are constantly challenged by cuts, breaks, and segmentations into parts, to contest wholeness and bring forth the fragment. The assembly of individual parts demonstrates a process of accumulation. This spatial sketching is improvisational and confidently intuitive. There are numerous points of juncture where identity shifts, sometimes in obvious, sometimes in more subtle ways. Thus, a nude leg covered in a black glaze can altogether be read as a ceramic surface that connotes other such familiar surfaces, or as sheeted in a long dark stocking, or as paler skin shifting suddenly to black, or again as representing another material, ebony or black marble, possibly. Identity is in constant shift and each new identity, each new naming (leg, nude or covered skin, sock, another material, etc.) elicits a new interpretation. And the points where these shifts are located, strategically throughout, articulate the movements of our perception, animating through disruption and orchestrating our experience, effectively. The presence of other materials plays a similar role, as effectively.

We are readily seduced by the deft tactility of the modeling and we vicariously connect with the skillful hands and fingers of the maker through the transformation of the soft, responsive clay into hard, unyielding matter. The original inchoate mass now embodies another reality while retaining all aspects of its original potential nature, as if the image could still change form and transform yet again, endlessly.

Each figure is introspective and self-contained, while projecting, through its insistent gaze, toward transcendence. There is no clear or even implied narrative and their descriptive aspect is purely self-referential. Their significance is not contained in their physical being. It must be completed and discovered anew by each of us, independently. Like angels, their convincing existence remains doubtful.

This is where their ultimate efficiency resides.

L'annunciazione
ceramic, sculpted glass
29" x 16" x 16", 2010

Studio shot
2010



MJD FELLOW

Kensuke Yamada Celebrants and Celebration



There remains a certain stilted gesture to their ecstatic dance. The dynamic expression of what they celebrate has been arrested as if frozen at the exact moment of apogee. Their small eyes, barely open if not altogether closed, confirm their outward dance balanced by their interiority of introspection. They are of the larger world through their reaching, galactic limbs, grabbing at space beyond themselves, yet they remain self-contained, within themselves, in a condensation of being that projects inward and outward, from the pinpoint core from which they expand, bloated and pneumatic, toward infinity. They celebrate their own existence, yet that celebration transcends their effective and

affecting presence. They are here and somewhere else, all at once.

There is something so simply joyful in their expressiveness, childlike and innocent. Any form of malice is absent from their range of possibilities, yet there remains a distinct ominous impression, bordering on the threatening. Everything about them oozes generosity: their shape, their decoratively patterned faces, bodies, and clothing, and their giving and inviting gestures. Exuberantly large, dare I say tumescent, heads confirm the introspective inwardness of their orgasmic yet stilled excitement. One can reconstruct a previous stance that is now in the process of shifting into another one, frozen at the moment of amplitude, in a trance.

The initial perception is one of easy accessibility, as if they embodied known, familiar experiences whose emotions and

sensations are common, universal. We can enter their world through this inviting space of connection, through this shared humanity. Yet, they are not me, or you or even us. They may be within the world, but they are not of our world. While invading our consciousness, they remain separate, oscillating between the real and the imagined. If their perceived inertia is at the centre of their efficiency, this implied momentum between two states at once, between two worlds at once, is where their subtle yet potent power as effigies finally resides. Similarly, they transition ambiguously between their origins in their tactile, physical making, from the place where they were conceived to the place they now inhabit. They seem to be more at ease in the former than the latter. One intensely feels the pleasure of the maker transmitted to the figure itself, now equally pleased to exist; and my own pleasure in being a part, somewhat less active, much more receptive, of this exciting transformation from formlessness to descriptive presence.

Their effect is altogether immediate and long lasting.



Stubborn Tangle
Thread of Love
ceramic, wood
25" x 22" x 7", 2010

Elephant Rider
ceramic, wood
27" x 14" x 12", 2010





LILIAN FELLOW

Sean Erwin Relics and Reliquaries

The first impressions are provided by the exacting details and the obsessive commitment to process. The pleasure of making is evident and communicative. The work doesn't seem laborious as there appears to be a certain ease coming from the confident making. That these objects were made individually and with extreme care is instantly obvious. Certain repeated forms reappearing in the series speak also of mechanical means of production, an impression reinforced by the references to industrially produced forms and objects. The appearance of other materials, notably metal, plays a similar role. It is as if nothing was exactly as it appears to be, as if each part, as well as the whole, was but a simulacrum, a reproduction for which an original doesn't actually exist.

These boxes are adorned with a variety of openings, each fulfilling a specific role and function, of exits and entrances. They are mere representation, imitations of something else, bordering on illusion. Their convincing presence, manifested by the attention to detail and the competency of craftsmanship, is manifested in this commitment to obsessive process

Souvenir
porcelain, glaze, luster,
mixed media
10" x 11" x 12", 2010

through the slow, methodical, systematic transformation of a demanding, frustrating material, over significant time. It speaks of a passionate intent on the maker's part to overcome challenges and maintain defiant authority over any difficulty presenting itself. Their psychology operates through associations that, while reasonably obvious to all, remain personal in their permutation. They will appear quite differently to different viewers—from the innocence of toys and childhood to the guilty pleasures of private imaginations.

What connections between these diverse parts, joined and assembled together in a repeated, thus logical system? How to make sense of them? What intention produced such apparent disconnectedness? To what ends? Such questions can be asked of these very objects, but could also be asked of the coming together of all the other objects produced all around us, and coming together in this shared display. Although this connotation is all the more evident in these puzzling boxes, altogether containing

Two Finger Dinger
porcelain, glaze, luster,
mixed media
10" x 12" x 14", 2010

and excreting actual and metaphorical parts, such objects are fundamentally reliquaries, containing preserved relics, sacred and profane, precious and worthless alternatively. They imply rituals that inform experiences as diverse as various bodily needs or even spiritual in nature. Have your pick.

Their preservation through the physical properties of the very material used to make them speaks of the necessity for the maintenance of memory, the necessity for archives. They become witnesses. They permit us to enter into the mind of their maker, where they mingle with the intricacies of our own mind. They provide access and entrances into a culture that one day will long have disappeared.



TAUNT FELLOW

Martha Grover Offerings and Presentations



Another manifestation of excess, a rich and elaborate baroque exuberance where forms within forms, shape within shape answer each other through curves within curves, endlessly. One is immersed in a cycle of continuous regeneration, which ebbs and flows, repetitive and systemic. Such convincing excess is not only apparent in the florid, hybridized profusion of the inventiveness of form, but also in the methodical, careful, attentive, considered, symmetrical, and obsessive making.

Everything has at least two aspects, simultaneously: forms are vessels and the open corolla of flowers; glazes are hard and practical, yet appear soft like petals; the colors and patterns are altogether dynamic, abstract ornamentation as well as descriptive of organic surfaces. Such seamless yet contradictory juxtapositions are characteristic of the art.

Disappearing or certainly threatened aspects of the natural world are captured and frozen in the rigid permanency of their transformation in this new strong yet still fragile material. Another form of care is installed and if we are reminded to think anew of nature in its extreme beauty, so are we now in our responsibility to these precious, exquisite objects. It is in this shift in responsibility that they are altogether nostalgic for an idealized past and reflective of our contemporary position of precariousness.

Although various domestic uses are possible beyond the multiple metaphorical appreciation they engender, such objects primarily exist in a poetic realm, outside the vagaries of daily life. They inhabit another domain, of ostentatious display, where they operate more effectively than in the mundane tasks of everyday activities. What they resist above all is

indifference. They demand explicitly that an esthetic position be taken and, either way, they are too convincing to be in any way ignored. Their stance and defined intent do not permit tergiversation and noncommitment. Their maker has clearly taken such an esthetic position (bordering on morality) and so should we. Doing so will reaffirm the necessity to make such appreciative judgment, in order to fully be aware of the experience offered by the world, in these objects or elsewhere.

One wonders what other incarnations they will eventually embody, as they evolve. If in the natural world such a process of growth and evolutionary transformation takes untold time, here the shift must by necessity be quicker. The work will need to hybridize itself at a much accelerated pace. Like a lush, luminous, and fragrant flower opening in the warmth of the sun and the brightness of day, these organic manifestations of an acute sensibility of touch and thought will take new forms to endlessly surprise and challenge us to wonder.

This is their sole responsibility.

Sauce Set
thrown and altered
porcelain
6" x 12" x 5"
2010



*Wall Mounted Perfume
Bottle and Stand*
thrown and altered
porcelain, wood, fabric
26" x 16" x 18", 2009



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 provide 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, 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.

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
- 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
- 2008
Kevin Snipes, Taunt Fellow
Donna Flanery, Lilian Fellow
Birdie Boone, Lincoln Fellow
David Peters, Matsutani Fellow
Nathan Craven, MJD Fellow

Board of Directors

Dan Anderson
Richard Baiter
John Balistreri
Wally Bivins
Toni Broadbent
Sally Brogden
Mike Casey
Lin Deola
John Green
Ayumi Horie
Beth Lo
Alan Nicholson
Jess Parker
Susan Ricklefs
Jon Satre
Ann Shaner
Bobby Silverman
Rebecca Sive
Norma Tirrell
Margaret Woo

Resident Artist Director

Steven Young Lee

This publication is
generously funded by
the Joliet Foundation.