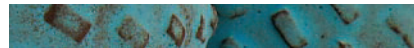


# ceramic excellence



FELLOWSHIPS AT THE  
ARCHIE BRAY FOUNDATION  
2012-2013

**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, the MJD Fellowship in 2007, the Anonymous and Speyer Fellowships in 2011, and most recently, four Windgate Fellowships in 2012. Each fellowship provides \$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

2009  
**Martha Grover**, Taunt Fellow  
**Sean Irwin**, Lilian Fellow  
**Gwendolyn Yoppolo**,  
 Lincoln Fellow  
**Kelly Garrett Rathbone**,  
 Matsutani Fellow  
**Kensuke Yamada**,  
 MJD Fellow

2010  
**Jana Evans**, Taunt Fellow  
**Mathew McConnell**, Lilian Fellow  
**Courtney Murphy**, Lincoln Fellow  
**Nicholas Bivins**, Matsutani Fellow  
**Aaron Benson**, MJD Fellow

2011  
**Lindsay Pichaske**, Taunt Fellow  
**Jonathan Read**, Lilian Fellow  
**Kenyon Hansen**, Lincoln Fellow  
**Sean O’Connell**, Matsutani Fellow  
**Andrew Casto**, MJD Fellow  
**Alanna DeRocchi**, Speyer Fellow  
**Jeff Campana**, Anonymous Fellow

2012  
**Mel Griffin**, Taunt Fellow  
**Giselle Hicks**, Lilian Fellow  
**Sunshine Cobb**, Lincoln Fellow  
**Peter Christian Johnson**,  
 Matsutani Fellow  
**Chris Pickett**, MJD Fellow  
**Andrew Gilliatt**, Speyer Fellow  
**Jeff Campana**, Windgate Fellow\*  
**Alanna DeRocchi**, Windgate Fellow\*  
**Sean O’Connell**, Windgate Fellow\*  
**Jonathan Read**, Windgate Fellow\*

*\*Windgate Fellow stories featured in previous year’s monograph.*

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 Northway.

I first discovered clay as a child digging in the dirt in my backyard. I have been enthralled with it ever since. During my first class of college ceramics, I chose to build my lifelong passion for the arts into a career as a working artist and educator. Pursuing this passion, I met my wife, Theresa Welty, and some of my closest friends. Theresa and I live and teach in San Antonio, Texas, and we have two beautiful children, Cole and Jody. I received an MFA in ceramics from the University of Montana and currently serve as Assistant Professor of Art at Northwest Vista College, San Antonio, Texas.

The Jentel Critic at the Bray was a gift, bestowed through the generosity of artists and art enthusiasts who were eager to share their thoughts, energy, time and patronage. At the Archie Bray Foundation, I met exceptional emerging and established ceramic artists. They welcomed me into the intimate space of their studios and into the creative underpinnings of their work. Critical writing became my witness to the journey of six artists, whose artistic creations reflect their distinctive life stories and the role of the supportive community offered by the Archie Bray Foundation.

–Paul Northway



**Sunshine Cobb**  
 Lincoln Fellow



**Mel Griffin**  
 Taunt Fellow



**Andrew Gilliatt**  
 Speyer Fellow



**Giselle Hicks**  
 Lilian Fellow



**Peter Christian Johnson**  
 Matsutani Fellow



**Chris Pickett**  
 MJD Fellow

This publication is generously funded by the Joliet Foundation.



# enticing imperfections

Artists of all types know well that our senses are trigger points for nostalgia. Their keen sensitivities develop early in life, along with the desire to capture and share sensations from formative experiences. Sunshine Cobb understands that her challenge lies in finding something that is tactilely enticing but ordinary to hold, accessible in use but rare to find. This is an aesthetic of faded blue jeans and worn vinyl records: objects we regard as priceless, even when market value may indicate otherwise.

Cobb uses the term “visual hoarding” to describe her eclectic source material. A recent visit to a local antique mall with a digital camera only adds to

her stockpile. Scrolling through images with a quick flip of her thumb, Cobb pauses periodically to explain why buckets of old hats and bins of mismatched knickknacks contain the potential to arouse a whole new series. Lately, the receptacles of these oddities have been the inspiration for her “tote” series. Cobb’s tumblers are beginning to appear in shallow rectangular boxes with sectioned compartments, fabricated to look as if they might house old Mason jars stuffed with vintage buttons and costume jewelry.

When we find something of significance in a secondhand store, it makes us feel unique, especially when these things may



have been overlooked by others or perhaps deemed flawed or imperfect. Finding a diamond in the rough reinforces the idea that our experiences have shaped discernible characteristics, i.e., quirks and eccentricities that impart a distinctive aesthetic. We place these found objects in our homes and build our surroundings as a reflection of our individuality. Sunshine Cobb is particularly interested in the area of a kitchen she refers to as the “countertop landscape” and the mismatched objects that might not fit well into our cupboards precisely because they are special and different from the rest.

When Cobb’s vessels are unloaded from glaze firing, they possess a slick and shiny appearance that is later dulled when she sandblasts and sands the surface of the vessels. The glaze is transformed from garish colors of

*Bowls*  
2013, red clay, glaze, cone 3, sandblasted  
5" x 5" x 5"



commercial intensity to the flesh-like qualities of weathered beach glass. Cobb’s techniques give us an artificial sense of wear and tear on a retro color palette of baby blues, creamy oranges and chartreuses, which speaks to a generation that recalls shag rugs and station wagons in faded photos. The final hand sanding exposes the stamped surface patterning, throwing rings from the potter’s wheel and the pinched seams of overlapping clay—a reminder that Cobb’s fingers have molded every inch of the vessel.

A resident artist travels light, transporting only the essential and a few helpful tools. They adapt and find a comfort zone in an unfamiliar place. Two years can go by fast, but it is still a long enough time that artists will accumulate more stuff than they arrived with. Cobb will have to tote these objects with her when she leaves. Since Cobb is a self-proclaimed “visual hoarder,” one could assume that she has probably amassed more than a few objects that will remind her of memorable times at the Archie Bray Foundation.

*Cool-tumbler and tray*  
2013, red clay, glaze, cone 3, sandblasted, rubber coated wire  
9" x 9" x 8"





ANDREW GILLIATT SPEYER FELLOW

# alluring play of design

In the resident kitchen at the Archie Bray Foundation, when no resident alone has adequate ingredients for a decent meal, they call it pizza night. When creative minds come together and pool their resources, interesting combinations are pulled from the heat of the oven. Deciding which plate to use for taco or Thai pizza is important because this is a kitchen full of prominent ceramic artists and the house cupboards offer a mini-retrospective of its residents. Someone is going to select Andrew Gilliatt's lemon-yellow plate covered with images of hotdogs as a dinner companion. This is exactly the kind of selection process and circumstances that intrigue Gilliatt.

Gilliatt holds a fascination with the objects we choose,

especially when the options are many. He pays attention to the clothes we wear. He notes the things we buy. Cynics might dismiss this as simple market research; his income is dependent on the sale of work. But his awareness of our aesthetics is far from superficial. Gilliatt's success as a maker did not materialize by reasoning "If people like birds and clouds and we can never get enough blue, then perhaps a blue mug with birds and clouds will work." Gilliatt's thought process reveals much more perception and intimacy. The hotdog image emerged after talking to a buddy on the phone in his studio about baseball and expressing a desire to go to a baseball game. A friend, a memory and an object to connect the two translated into the hotdog plate. Gilliatt creates vessels that reflect his



relationships to people and places: image-based connections Gilliatt has discovered, but upon experiencing his work, we want to share with him as well.

Gilliatt began his ceramics career with a solid graphic design background, evident in his superb understanding of color, pattern and form. He wields command over playful content in which he displays a balance of elements that emerge from an arduous design process. A studio artist accessing a designer's realm, Gilliatt refers to his pots as "containers for color," and his extensive image repertoire as "the greatest hits." His slip-cast forms were conceived as prototypes through the use of a lathe,

*Lost & Found  
Mug Set*  
2012, colored  
porcelain,  
laser transfers  
each 4" x 5" x 4"



bandsaw and belt sander. Gilliatt selects stickers, stencils and printers when we envision a ceramicist's main studio tools to be potter's wheels, slab rollers and extruders. One might even wonder if Gilliatt may eventually devise other alternative methods and materials to fulfill his creative impulses. However, Gilliatt's approach to ceramic design has provided him with a distinct voice and his pots have been the vehicle that delivers his message to the viewer.

Andrew Gilliatt conceives of making pots people will live with and use on a daily basis. He recalls an early influential experience that arose from using a novelty nose pencil sharpener and the onlooker's chuckle when sticking a pencil up the nose. Gilliatt wants to make a pot for that person; their joyful reaction is his motivation. His pots are customized reflections of people and places and his humble intention is tied up with our desire to smile and share a new experience with him.

*Mix Tape Lunch Set*  
2013, colored porcelain,  
laser transfers  
6" height





MEL GRIFFIN TAUNT FELLOW

# a history to draw upon

From her time as an outdoor educator to a stint as a dogsled apprentice, Mel Griffin has always carried a sketchbook on her adventures. The pages are filled with youthful wanderlust from another place in time, all documenting the meandering pathway that has led Griffin to a place she playfully refers to as “ceramicland.” Always looking to broaden her horizon, Griffin admits her beginnings in intensive pottery study had more to do with “character building than building a career.” To her surprise, something clicked when she made pots. Griffin’s latest concentration began to find permanence alongside her lifelong love of drawing.



*Rabbit Platter*  
2012, earthenware  
14" x 14"



After completing her drawing, Griffin develops the clay forms. The surface will be determined by the composition and scale of her initial drawing. Griffin constructs a clay landscape into which she places her drawing; this contrasts with a more common approach of finding an appropriate drawing that will complement the form. She adds layers of slips and sands the surfaces, continues painting and sgraffitto work, staining and glazing; the list goes on and on. Griffin works the surface of the clay the same way an oil painter would attack a canvas: by adding and subtracting material, blending and accenting to create an illusion of space and depth. The majority of Griffin’s work is completed prior to the kiln firing, leaving the heat to polish the composition by encasing the drawing behind glaze.

Expanding her creative horizon, Griffin’s compositions now appear on the flat planes of terracotta tiles. A new set of steps governs her process. Griffin keeps to the routine with initial

drawings followed by layers of slips and stains, building depth on the surface with color and texture. She fires the tiles, establishing an ideal matte surface to complete her compositions in watercolor pencils. Griffin delays the immediate satisfaction she finds in drawing until the end, and in doing so, deprives the tiles of utilitarian function, but elevates them as objects for adornment.

The tiles read as if we were flipping through the journal of a 19th-century naturalist, a departure from her singular wildlife studies captured on the surface of vessels. Griffin constructs an entire ecosystem of unusual pairings of birds and insects, often mating and devoured by prey in the same scene. Her playful narrative balances artistic liberty and a sense of adventure through a naturalist’s illustrative depictions, showing an ability to display fact and fiction, reality and fantasy for the viewer’s delight. Quick to smile, Griffin shares some of the fantastic species discovered just recently by scientists. Perhaps this new wildlife will work its way into Griffin’s future drawings.

*Bird Tile*  
2013, earthenware  
12" x 12"





GISELLE HICKS LILIAN FELLOW

# a memory made still

Our private and communal surroundings carry deposits. Giselle Hicks has become a miner of sorts, sifting through dense layers and identifying objects that witness our intimate surroundings. Like sediment, these layers of personal exchanges accumulate over time and sometimes find their way to the surface. The richest sites emerge from our domestic settings where we maintain our bodies through rest and nourishment and our souls through love and affection. Absorbing our pain along with our joy, beds, dinner tables and the walls that enclose them are all prime sites for excavation.

Hicks' latest instrument for tapping the emotional history of our settings is the floral still-life painting, which feeds our desire to recapture the fleeting but significant moments of life. Hicks plucks the still life out of the confines of the picture frame and back into its place of conception, returning it with new purpose for the audience to observe. The momentary beauty and ritual reflection of the still life are transferred into the space by a torrent of fluid forms. Floral motifs, patterning and beautifully rendered flowers now inhabit a niche previously held by the viewer. We are invited to witness a dream-like state of flux where

the object and the emotional weight of its contents move freely between growth and decay. Hicks permits some flowers to rejoice in full bloom, but others are partially rendered and void of color as if to display the melancholic side of recollections.



The austerity of the color and surface treatments prevents what could otherwise have been a gaudy presentation. Invasive and embracing properties are equally represented as the flowers move to occupy a dominant place before the viewer. The still life is further deconstructed by depriving the flower of its ephemeral properties and replacing them with lifeless porcelain replications.

The intrinsic nature of the flower and Hicks' choice of material share the same essence of fragility, delicacy and purity, but Hicks does not attempt to offer the same realistic disguise found in classic still-life oil paintings. The presence of porcelain in Hicks' installations and sculpture reveals an important conceptual link to domesticity. Often secured behind glass or high-reaching shelves, kitchens and dining rooms showcase our fine porcelain objects and dinnerware.

They are inaccessible for everyday utility, but their prominent display renders them accessible to trigger the nostalgic moments from their memorable times of use. Hicks safeguards our sentimentality by enshrining it into a material of lasting permanence, similar to porcelain objects adorning the household, available only to experience through sight and memory.

Hicks' use of the flower and floral motifs moves beyond pure investigation of decorative function in the home, but it still carries an unmistakable link to our perceptions of domestic femininity. Her work stealthily departs from the feminist genre but is careful to defend the root of its accomplishments. Hicks' bold use of complicated content and context elevates the textile and ceramic arts that are often trivialized for their function in domestic utility. We bring flowers into our home to capture something pretty; Giselle Hicks brings flowers into her objects to remind us to capture something beautiful.



*Frame with Tulips*  
2013, porcelain  
13" x 11.5" x 5"

*And Then It Was Still II*  
2012, porcelain, glaze, wood  
50" x 60" x 24"





PETER CHRISTIAN JOHNSON MATSUTANI FELLOW

# constructing labor

If an ideal setting exists to showcase Peter Christian Johnson's sculpture, one would be hard-pressed to find an environment more suitable than the grounds of the Archie Bray Foundation. The work would appear as welcome guests among the remnants of industrial decay, joining an audience of objects proudly displaying surfaces etched with the evidence of wear and tear. The relationship would be short-lived though, for this is a well-documented landscape of artifacts from which a purpose and function can be affixed. Isolate Johnson's sculpture away from the rubble and the circumstances switch from eroding objects to an erosion of context. What remains is a genuine tribute to human labor and engineering, conceived by intuition and honed through

his methodical construction process.

Although some might legitimately argue that a CNC router, a 3D printer or other machines of industrial fabrication could provide an easier path to a resolved sculpture, the use of one of these devices would come with the risk of rendering Johnson's motivation obsolete. The argument could be further bolstered because Johnson does not leave any trace of the maker on the surface of his objects. Therefore, we trust that his meticulous process must be intrinsically linked to the content of his sculpture. The conceptual link may arise in our own amazement when we try to comprehend how something was constructed, and in our wonderment as to why it was



constructed. To illustrate this concept on a grandiose scale: We are amazed at the incredible feats of human engineering of the Incas and Mayans, but we do not possess a definitive answer as to the motivation behind this tremendous investment of labor.

We are left to wonder what an artist thinks about during those countless hours of labor in the studio. This is a complicated question and the answer changes as the work moves toward fruition. For Johnson, the birth of an idea is a very small moment in time when compared to the entire process from start to finish. Sketches are drawn, drawings are rendered through 3D software, patterns are printed, but the majority of Johnson's time is spent rolling out slabs of clay, taking measurements, making tests, and analyzing results. It is during these lengthy periods in the studio when Johnson spends enough time with his intuition that he emerges with a confident product.

Johnson's undergraduate studies are in environmental science, which have afforded

him with more than a general understanding of how our human relationships and perceptions affect our natural environment. His sculptures evoke images of parts from generators, turbines and internal skeletons—perhaps in reference to a 1950s hydro plant tour, or maybe they are fragmented artifacts discovered on the surface of Mars. Either way, Johnson's retro-futuristic aesthetic captivates his audiences. If the study of science has taught him anything, it is that experiments may yield unexpected results, even when they are tightly controlled.

Johnson has taken a yearlong sabbatical from his teaching to experiment in the studio. We are beginning to see patches of pure color emerging in his sculptures, and forms with encrusted shells exposing the internal structures. Johnson is a recent first-time father, so perhaps we are seeing the products of the colorful molded plastic at his feet, or the fatherly impulse persuading him to cast a protective skin over his environment. We will have to patiently wait until the labor of Johnson's intuitive process yields the results.



*Wing*  
2013, diamond polished  
ceramic, stain, 43" x 12" x 16"



*Ovoid #1*  
2013, ceramic, glaze,  
stain, 44" x 11" x 15"



CHRIS PICKETT MJD FELLOW

# constructing comfort

The eye responds to the contours of Chris Pickett's forms the same way the body settles into a cool leather chair on a hot summer day. His matte color palette and pillowed transitions create vessels that speak softly and honestly, much like the Tennessee drawl of their maker. Similar to a child building a fort in the woods, Pickett fashions vessels that reflect a light-hearted approach to process but reveal clear intention through their determined forms. By retaining a childlike constructive methodology, Pickett taps the exploratory comfort we often witness in children and affirm with nostalgic smiles.

The intentional preservation of seam lines in Pickett's work provides evidence of the object's construction and the creative

intent of the vessel maker. His seam lines channel the eye around the vessel and our cognizance towards the origin of Pickett's conceptual lineage, i.e., a place where a potter's identity, rooted in the subtle aesthetics of Zen, intersects with a sculptor's dedication to process and materials. This is the birthplace of Pickett's creative momentum—where the temperament of the maker and the temperature of the flame are equally balanced within the finished product.

Pickett's early inspiration traveled in the vein of a ceramic subset, which identifies with nuanced surfaces and process-driven aesthetics specific to atmospheric wood and soda firing. Pickett's point of departure from this genre occurred rather abruptly. A back injury temporarily forced



him off the potter's wheel and made him re-evaluate his studio practices. This practical reflection came at a time when he was honing the framework of his graduate thesis. Purging the wheel and soda kiln, Pickett has arrived at a place where his interpretations of comfort and the fingerprints of his artistic journey present themselves equally for us to enjoy.

If Chris Pickett's inspiration recalls a time when our responsibilities were few, his sets of drinking vessels do not evoke the same era. Individual vessels retain a casual visual language, but his dialogue alters when geometric compositions emerge through careful placement in relation to one another. Each vessel plays a part in completing the design. Paired together in rows or centered in groups

of four on trays, sets of tumblers and whiskey cups display a yearning for comfort satisfied only in numbers. These are not solitary vessels meant for quiet contemplation; Pickett portrays a sense of obligation and social dependency within a community. One could imagine these cups being used during an informal get-together with a few neighbors or for an after-dinner drink with a close friend.

Pickett's sculptural vessels are visually accessible and invite handling from the viewer, but there is a slight departure from their functional practicality. Although his vessels offer "comfort"—inspired content depicted through soothing colors, forms and textures—Pickett suggests a "beauty before comfort" mantra regarding their utility. In the sense of technically functional items they are ordinary, but they are extraordinary in terms of their unique presentation. These vessels might be out of place at a formal dinner next to extravagant silverware and fine linen, but they could appear at an equally important occasion.



*Rocks Glasses*  
2012, white stoneware  
each 4" x 4" x 4"

*Oil Ewer*  
2013, white stoneware  
6" x 7" x 4"







**archiebrayfoundation**  
for the ceramic arts

2915 Country Club Avenue  
Helena, MT 59602  
406-443-3502  
archiebray@archiebray.org  
www.archiebray.org

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