



Alice Ballard

Macedonian Pepper

White earthenware and terra sigillata

10.5 x 6.5 x 5.5"

\$5000.

In August of 1998 I was invited to the International Ceramic Colony in Resen, Macedonia for a 3-week experience with a small group of ceramic artists from Europe and the Middle East. I was very excited to take advantage of this unique experience, however, that area was where the United Nations had a presence during the Balkan War. The decision I had to make whether to go or not felt like "a trial by fire" I decided I would wait until the last possible moment and if the war had not started, in that region, Kosovo, I would go. It was a scary proposition to say the least. I decided to rely on my instincts and intuition. The war had not started so I decided to go, hoping that the Colony's representative would meet me as I arrived to the region. We immediately left for Resen, a resort area bordering Greece and Albania. My three weeks in Resen was indeed a life changing experience that I will never forget. I will love this time and the people I met.

For me, the pepper became a metaphor for the region, in part because it is a staple in their diet. At the same time, peppers are voluptuous and beautiful, the type of form I am attracted to. When I returned home I created "Macedonian Pepper" in white earthenware and terra sigillata. It captures both the incredible and sensuous beauty of Macedonia as well as, the feeling of unseen danger represented by spikey hornlike projections on the dark underside. This was the heightened reality of the three weeks I spent in Resen.

My Macedonia experience changed me forever – and for this I am deeply grateful. My "Macedonian Pepper" is a visual symbol of that gift. When I see it, my Macedonia experience comes rushing back!



Meghan Bernard

Damask

Slab built porcelain, hand sculpted, and glazed.

7.5 x 14.5 x 4"

\$325.

For me a trial by fire describes a test of ones abilities and grit. And making these "tea-bags" does both. There are so many steps involved in make them, and each step has its own risk of failure. Each one is constructed over two days, dried slowly to prevent cracking and fired 3 times. Each firing stresses the clay, so if there is a flaw in construction it will get worse after each firing. The entire process can take up to a month to complete. They test my skill with porcelain and my patience, but I love a challenge and the result.



Travis Berning

Silhouette

Metal/Clay

16 x 15.5 x 2"

\$450.

As a potter, I have stayed more on the function side of the ceramics world. For the past 25 years I have made the functionality of my pottery my number one priority. I never felt a draw into the fire, into the unpredictable, unfamiliar side of pottery. My work has been constantly changing as I changed and as my target audience changed. These changes were gradual, I would add a new glaze, think up a new form, but more recently I felt a pull to add something new. I had a newfound interest in the many branches of my art. This was the first time I was moving away from functionality and the high temperature style of firing.

I had not explored the world of low temperature and raku firing since my Ceramics 101 class as a freshman. Recently I have felt particularly drawn back to the raku side of low fire. I feel that this method of firing can loosen my tight techniques and the unpredictability of raku can sweep away my tight forms and reliable colors of glazes of high fire pots. Also, I felt particularly fascinated by the different colors and textures associated with raku, moving away from pure functionality has also allowed me to feel comfortable using new materials like wood and metal.

Stepping into the fire had great effects on my work and me as an artist.



Lucy Clark

Equanimity

Coil built low fire earthenware with
metal leaf

12 x 17.5 x 12"

\$975.

There are times when “trial by fire” refers to a struggle, a getting through to the other side sort of thing. Where, after the gnashing of one’s teeth, the “banging of the head against the wall ritual” and the cries of the weary result in a happy ending. ***This*** is not one of those struggles.

This is a story of process. The process of allowing a piece to come to fruition, though it may take years. And, I can assure you, this piece did just that.

“Equanimity” started out as a natural fired piece. I left her in the kiln after firing to cool down and simply be the natural color of the clay. She then sat in my studio for quite some time never feeling quite finished. I then decided to re-fire her and finish her off in sawdust, thereby rendering her a beautiful, deep black. Again, she sat.....and waited for me to listen. I had my own ideas about what, how and who she should be. Silly, silly girl that I am.

Finally, the light dawned, I listened and she has come to fruition with the addition of copper leaf to show off her best bits.

This “trial by fire” was a slow burn, a repeated firing and a gentle listening to the clay. Taking away the struggle, leaning into the unknown and allowing the piece to finish whenever it decides leads to a quiet and yet profound knowing that she has found her finished form.



Darin Gehrke

Pushing the Boundary

Porcelain with stoneware base

10 x 15 x 10"

\$585.

In life, we make mistakes, test limits and push boundaries. Our ability to gain information from these events will (hopefully) prepare us for future challenges. In clay as in life, those occasional failures, can lead to an informed success. The exhilaration and excitement experienced in these moments encourages our continued exploration.

The piece I selected for "Trial by Fire" is a vase I liked after the first glaze firing, but felt it could be better. Previous mishaps with this particular glaze and porcelain combination informed my decision to glaze fire the vase a second time. Armed with the knowledge of prior experiences, I knew what precautions to take and the risk paid off. I am excited by the results of this informed success!



Jennifer Halli

Wai

Earthenware

9.5 x 4 x 8"

\$1200.

Small piece, big departure. This piece symbolizes a transition in my making and firing process. It is the release of carefully crafted, geometrically minded work, always finished with the use of a wood kiln. Letting go allowed me to embrace work with imprecision to the point of carelessness, manipulating clay in solid blocks and, instead of the long 5-8 day wood firing, placing them in an electric kiln overnight.

I was not far into my first year of graduate school when I began to work in this manner, which means the piece would be *seen*. Would be critiqued by my colleagues before I had the chance to consider it. Being of a shy nature, this was quite distressing, but from this a significant change occurred in my work and one which has allowed for more freedom moving forward and less concern for what others think when working through an idea.



Gary Huntoon

Everglade

Stoneware

15 x 61 x 14"

\$1200.

Being a ceramic artist (potter) we are well aware of "FIRE". Without fire or the process of firing, our work would be difficult to use or to become a permanent record of our efforts. The firing (final process) can make or break a wonderful piece. We are at the mercy of the kiln gods, like it or not. As a person who tends to work outside their comfort zone, "TRIAL BY FIRE" is a constant challenge, one that makes me more determined to accept the challenge of baring ones soul working in clay. I find working under pressure a stimulant, but by working in clay you also will find the material can take its own direction, no matter how hard you fight it.

I found the following statement many years ago, and it sums up what we deal with when we work.

"I've a confession to make: I've been telling myself a lie ever since I met you, and I've been lying to you too. I told myself that I could control you. I make pots of you on the wheel, and I told you that I should, even though you kept telling me to stop.. Can we compromise? I'll listen to you and you listen to me. Each time I find a new way to deal with you our relationship changes...you make me mad and you make me happy. You make me think and you make me want to stop thinking. You deserve nothing, yet I want to give you everything." Anonymous



Lonnie Johnson

Margie Johnson

Blaze – Full of Life

Stoneware with glaze

\$349.

This delicate, hand built ceramic sculpture is representative of the strength, grace, and life that is seen in the Southern Magnolia. The name for this piece, “Blaze – Full of Life”, is symbolic as well as inspirational in its choice.

The transformation of clay to ceramic is a life-changing concept when one considers that once the clay has passed through the fire of the kiln, it has been forever changed and will never return to being what it once was. In our lives, we have found that this theme of transformation runs deep in us both and we have experienced the beauty of its reality.

Whether you are considering the process that the clay undergoes during its journey, or the process that we undergo through our own experiences, there is the hope of beauty and the anticipation of something stronger and greater once the “Trial by Fire” has been endured.

Consider the seed that enters the ground so that it can bring forth new life and ultimately become a thriving and fruitful display of loveliness as it extends its blooms. There is also the clay that is pulled from the ground and then formed and passed through the fires of the kiln in order to emerge as a new creation that captures an inspirational snapshot from the life of the seed. Both of these contain the same essence of creation, fire and transformation.

The magnolia is a subject that evokes a sense of strength, grace, beauty, serenity and hope. It is our desire that these creations would resonate with the life and vitality of creativity, purity and goodness – the very essence of which, each magnolia captures as it blooms.



Nina Kavar

Tranquility

Porcelain

18 x 11 x 6"

\$1600.

It is in times of tribulation that we most often are challenged to face life's imperfections and grow within ourselves. "Tranquility" embodies this state of being while embracing this complicated yet vulnerable transformation. Reminiscent of bone, this work is highlighted to expose its fractures while symbolically representing the core essence of the inner self and its resilience within personal growth.

"Tranquility" is a part of a series of porcelain sculptures called "Growing Pains." This body of work developed a year and a half ago when faced with multiple life changes that forced me to contemplate my work and myself. The adversities assisted me in recognizing I wasn't being true to my heart and my potential. This series started as a personal challenge to be present and intuitively create. No planning, no expectation, simply make. Within this experiment I found the ease in quieting the mind and allowing the material to speak to me. This meditative state of mind is a space in which my work resides. In my creative practice I strive to be open to the unknown and let go of any judgment of what comes to fruition. The foundation of this work is grounded in healing, awareness and introspection.



Eric Knoche

Form from Basauri, Spain

Wood fired stoneware with slips

23 x 11 x 12"

\$3000.

During the winter of 2015/2016 I spent two months working in Basauri, Spain, near Bilbao, in Basque Country. I concentrated on making palm size models of fluid forms that I could imagine, but were difficult to sketch accurately and very difficult to build without a visual reference. Prior to this, I had never worked in this way. Over the last year I have been building the full size versions. This is one of the forms made from those models.



Christine Kosiba

Hare Totem

Hand sculpted stoneware

42 x 10"

\$1200.

As I strive to take my pieces larger logistical challenges arose. Incorporating a metal base which provided support and stability and a rod which acts like an internal object allowed me to go vertical. By stacking the pieces it also makes transporting a large piece easier.



Dian Magie

Trapped Flame

Wood fired porcelain/stoneware

9.5 x 9.5" each

\$225. each



Wood firing is always a “trial by fire.” Firing only four times a year provides new insight each time but also a long wait to try for a specific desired effect. Trying to achieve the flame action represented on these plates has taken a couple of years of trial and error. These two plates were fired face to face, like clams, with a small space in between, forcing the flame to enter a small opening and dance on the plates. They were placed on the kiln shelf closest to the flame rushing from the fire box, through the pots, to the chimney.



Barry Rhodes

Very Big Bowl

Hand built stoneware, iron saturated glaze

14 x 13 x 17"

\$1800.

Let me start by saying how much I love wood fired, salt fired, soda fired pottery - - the crustier and flashier the better. However, many years ago - 26 to be exact - when my son was 6 months old we moved to an in-town neighborhood in Decatur, GA. Two things became obvious very quickly. I needed to have a studio in our back yard to stay close to home and any outdoor kiln was not going to go over well with the neighbors or the fire marshal. So I took it upon myself to figure out a way to make pots that I could feel good about in an electric kiln. I started mixing and testing hundreds of glazes seeking out ones that had a depth of surface and variations in color and texture. My intent was not to try to mimic wood fired pottery as that was clearly impossible, but to extract all that I could out of what has often been referred to as "dead heat" from an electric kiln. My breakthrough occurred when I finally got a computerized kiln that allowed me to control the temperature over time. I realized that a lot of good stuff happens to glazes in the cooling process. By programming how the kiln cools, I could dramatically change the nature of some glazes. A rich dark brown iron glaze with the right ingredients could grow crystals and change into something that surprised me with its variation of color, viscosity and translucence. And because I was working in an electric kiln, I could utilize the graphical nature that electricity promotes. My goal is to combine a graphical approach that coexists with the richness and depth of surface more commonly associated with flame and fire. The pieces you see here today are the result of my own trials by fire



Kate Donovan Roache

Freedom from Bereavement

Stoneware clay with 22kt luster

6 x 7.75 x 6"

\$450.

A week before Thanksgiving 2016, I got the call. It was time to come. I packed my suitcase and into my carry-on, I placed the urn my father had wanted from my BFA solo exhibition at UNC Asheville from 2013. He hadn't come back to Asheville to pick it up after the show, and I had never got around to shipping it, so here I was, lugging it through x-rays and layovers. He passed away 36 hours later.

My thesis at UNCA dealt with alchemical transmutation: the changing of a base substance into something greater through purification. My interests lay in the metaphysical aspects of transmutation: how our experiences change us as we go through life, distilling us; as well as following the ceramic tradition of vessel as metaphor for human body.

Paralyzed from my loss, I was fortunate to have a studio practice to turn to. For the first time, through my profound sense of loss and grief, I was able to give myself complete freedom to create what ever it was I wanted to create, freeing myself from any self imposed restrictions on what was 'marketable' or what I thought would appeal to others. I was creating only for myself. Although this piece is rather small, it is a definitive turning point in my practice, where I finally gave myself permission to make what I was meant to.



Sarah Wells Rolland

Strength, Grace and Beauty

White stoneware

8 x 18 x 8.5"

\$950.

This piece is a pouring vessel. I have been exploring the pouring vessel for over 30 years now. These pieces have always been influenced by the form of graceful women. Some are tall and slender with long necks and some strong and full. This piece with her buxom shape speaks of women in midlife, women who have lived the "Trial by Fire". Women of significant purpose. Those women who have stood strong through years of

trial, who still press on and pour out into family, work, community, and the world.

We all experience "Trial by Fire" and sometimes to still be standing is the victory. This piece depicts strength, purpose and one still standing.

One of my role models is Elizabeth Cady Stanton, a world changer and suffragist, she wrote the speeches for Susan B Anthony while raising seven children. She was vilified and persecuted but she pressed on with the support of her husband and the suffragists of her time.

"The best protection a woman can have is courage."

"The heyday of woman's life is the shady side of fifty."

Elizabeth Cady Stanton

This piece is a tribute to all women like her.

The clay began on the wheel. I then altered, darted, and sculpted to create a form full of strength. Creating a graceful negative space between the piece and the handle was essential to her beauty in fullness. She was fired to 2345 degrees F. with a volatile glaze, a glaze that can easily move off the pot and destroy the piece. But when successful it creates life and movement with subtle crystals.



Akira Satake

Embrace

Wood and saggar fired, natural ash
glaze

11 x 9 x 12.5"

\$8000.

When I heard the distinct sound of a vessel cracking in the initial kiln firing, I didn't know what to expect - but I didn't necessarily expect whatever happened to conform to my best expectations. It's a heart-wrenching thing to know there's damage on the pieces you've spent so much time preparing. Waiting to see what was damaged and exactly how it was damaged is a particularly anxious kind of vigil for artists working in clay.

The tanka vessel here had split neatly into two segments, I discovered as I opened the kiln. A student or artist newer to the practice of working in clay might have considered the break a total loss, but on looking deeper I perceived a kind of elegance in the piece, and decided to add the broken-off section into a wood firing and the larger section in a saggar firing, to gain completely different effects.

Mistakes can lead to a new vision: the sections complement each other seamlessly in a physical way, as well as visually by their contrasting surfaces. The breakage is not my doing, but inherent to the piece itself.



David Voorhees

Unintended Inspiration

Wood/soda fired stoneware

8 x 5.75 x 7"

\$160.

For a functional potter, the teapot is almost sacred. Complex and challenging, balancing form and function, scale and weight, feel and flow; so much goes into a well made teapot that it is a life's work to pursue this one single pottery item. All that goes into a single teapot, only one thing must come out: tea!

This teapot was a failure as no tea could come out of it. The lid fused down in the wood/soda firing due to high heat, running glazes and soda fumes that penetrate everywhere. It did not pass its trial by fire. I know many tricks for releasing lids and have been successful on many occasions but something held me back on this one teapot; I loved it and I was afraid that I would break it!

You see, this teapot was a special one for me. I had tried some different-for-me ideas and they all worked well and the various elements fit together. I did not want to lose the success, so I kept it as an example for future teapots. It has been sitting on a shelf above my potters wheel for years reminding me of that successful blend and balance of "all things teapot".

It has served me well with dozens of teapots inspired by this one dust collector. I am now ready to release this non-functioning teapot to not be used, but rather to gather dust in someone else's world. It offered me many gifts through the years and I'm so glad that the trial by fire let me hang onto it for a bit longer.



Toby Wolter

Samurai

Clay

5 x 21.5"

\$525.

This piece is considerably different from most of my other work. Not only is it a totally different scale, but it required different techniques: sculpting the head, separately, on a pedestal, and assembling a sectional body and collar in multiple layers. There is always the possibility of a mis-fire, so the amount of time that went into this sculpture could have easily been wasted at the very end!