

Connoisseurs of clay

Kate McGraw / For the Journal

12 hours ago



“Bird in Flight Salt and Pepper Shakers” is a 2013 functional stoneware set by Maggie Beyeler. (Courtesy of Santa Fe Clay)

Like most professional ceramicists – or potters, whichever they call themselves – Cindy Gutierrez can scarcely remember a time when she didn’t have her hands in clay, and she loved the feeling of clay in her hands.

If you go

WHAT: “In House II,” show of instructors’ work

WHEN: Today through Feb. 22; reception 5-7 p.m. today; artists’ talk 5:30 p.m.

WHERE: Santa Fe Clay, 545 Camino De La Familia (in the Railyard)

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“I remember making mud pies as a small child with the sandy, clay soil in our yard,” Gutierrez said in an artist’s statement. “I strived to make the perfect mud pie, working the dirt up into a cone-shaped mound, making a curving depression at the top, gently pouring water into it, watching the water soak in through the sand and soil, watching it darken and change the color of it as it went. When the water soaked in to the right depth, I would carefully clear away excess soil from under the moistened depression and oh-so-carefully ease my bowl from off the top of the dirt mound, balancing it on my little fingers and loving the magic of having suddenly made something from, possibly, nothing.



“Sitting Jackrabbit” is a 2013 micaceous clay sculpture by Ann Hunziker. (Courtesy of Santa Fe Clay)

“It seems that I am still at it,” she added. “And these vessels are the latest permutations of my first mud pies.”

As 2014 begins and Santa Fe Clay’s venerable studios and galleries are beset with the chaos of constructing a new kiln building, the urge to exhibit the work of the studios’ instructors struck director-owner Avra Leodas. Hence the exhibition opening today at the Railyard-area gallery: “In the House II,” the second such show featuring the work of 25 instructors in Santa Fe Clay’s classes for children, teens and adults, and weekend workshops for aspiring potters.

Gutierrez is one of those teachers. Born and raised in El Paso, she studied art and art education at the University of Texas at El Paso and did graduate studies at Texas Tech University in Lubbock, where she studied ceramics, sculpture, drawing and art history. Gutierrez has taught in public schools and worked as an artist selling work in galleries in Colorado, New Mexico and New York. In addition, she was a studio potter making functional work for 10 years in Santa Fe. Gutierrez is currently the retail manager at Santa Fe Clay.

She understands her students' enthusiasm for the medium. "I choose to work with stoneware and porcelain clays because those clays are fired at the same temperatures that exist deep in the earth from whence they come," she said. "I focus on form, still hoping to make the perfect one, and I minimize my use of color to minimize distractions from the form. The white lines are a carefully inlaid porcelain clay. They journey around the pieces, as an aid in the contemplation of the form and, perhaps, implying something of a world beyond the pot: a world of lines and planes, spaces and forms that cut through the piece and exist around it at all times."



"Nido-Ayun" is a 2012 stoneware sculpture by Andrea Pichaida. (Courtesy of Santa Fe Clay)

"These local artists bring a tremendous range of skills and experiences to enrich our programs at Santa Fe Clay," Leodas said in a statement. "This is an opportunity for our students to view their teachers' work formally presented and in person."

In fact, there are artists' talks scheduled at 5:30 p.m. today during the artists' reception.

The artist-instructors whose work will be shown include:

Lee Akins, who was born in Texas but spent most of his early years in Taiwan, has taught ceramics at the college level for more than 30 years, including Dallas County Community College and Colin College. In 2008, he retired early and moved to northern New Mexico to become a full-time studio potter. Akins coil-builds terracotta, creating vessels and sculptures influenced by his time in Asia. He covers archetypal forms with matte patina surfaces. His work has been featured in ceramic magazines and publications including *Ceramics Monthly*.

Anita Ginocchio teaches at Santa Fe Prep, as well as at Santa Fe Clay. “Although I have spent most of my professional life as an art teacher at Santa Fe Prep, promoting and encouraging my students’ artistic development, it has been surprisingly difficult for me to embrace my own identity as an artist/craftsman,” Ginocchio said in a statement. “As much pleasure as I have derived from my studio work, it has often seemed slightly illicit – a kind of guilty pleasure, not entirely justifiable in practical terms. While I’ve worked with a variety of 3-D media, including wood, metal and glass, the medium to which I always return is clay, probably because it is so responsive to the touch, and lends itself so well to the sensual forms I prefer.”



“Angular Jar with Split Foot” is a 2013 ceramic vessel by Lee Akins. (Courtesy of Santa Fe Clay)

Frances Parker, who was born in Wisconsin and has lived in New Mexico for the past 16 years, obtained an undergraduate degree in fine arts with a concentration in ceramics from Lewis and Clark College in 1990. Upon graduation, Parker apprenticed with Toshiko Takaezu, a world-renowned ceramicist, and earned her master’s degree from SUNY New Paltz in ceramics. Parker is now a part-time instructor at Santa Fe Community College and Santa Fe Clay. She also works full time creating sculpture in her Santa Fe studio.

Rachel Peck has been a member of the Santa Fe Clay community since her arrival in Santa Fe in 2003. She is well known in the Santa Fe theater community, most regularly as a stage manager. Since her graduation in 2000, Peck has taken countless clay classes in Maine, Boston and Dayton as well as here with many of the Santa Fe Clay instructors, past and present. She teaches the teen wheel class and this session is offering a beginning adult wheel class.

Andrea Pichaida, who was born in Santiago, Chile, and grew up in Germany and Chile, travelled extensively in order to study various cultures, both ancient and contemporary. Pichaida worked to become head of the sculpture department at the Art School of the Pontifical Catholic University (Chile) and published a ceramics manual for students in conjunction with her job. Pichaida now lives in Santa Fe with her family.



This 2013 soda- and wood-fired stoneware and porcelain covered jar is by Cindy Gutierrez. (Courtesy of Santa Fe Clay)

Matt Repsher was featured in a recent two-man show with his father at Santa Fe Clay. At Santa Fe Clay, Repsher's ceramic work begins on the wheel. Hand-built elements are added, and highly layered, architecturally influenced surfaces bring the elements of each piece together to form a sophisticated body of work.

Greta Ruiz grew up in northern New Mexico. She has been teaching adult hand-building and children's classes at Santa Fe Clay since 2000.

Arlene Siegel has been teaching ceramics for more than 40 years. Her work, thanks to 30 years of art fairs and 20 years of owning a gallery, is all over the world. The only thing more exciting to Arlene than getting her hands to do what's in her head is helping her students experience the same thrill.

Todd Volz loves the historical and mechanical elements of ceramics. "My recent work is inspired by things of a mechanical nature," he wrote in a statement. "The work is rooted in a lifelong fascination with mechanical things and an interest in the conceptual potential of mechanical forms and imagery. My sculptures present viewers with objects that seem to have specific purposes, evoking functions like filtration, distillation and the processing of materials. The objects are intended to seem familiar enough for the viewer to relate to, while remaining elusive enough to stimulate curiosity and contemplation."

Mike Walsh has worked as a studio potter in Santa Fe since 1978. He specializes in functional, wheel-thrown stoneware. Born in Bennington, Vt., Walsh earned a degree in art education from Mansfield State College in Pennsylvania. His thoughtful simplicity of line makes his pottery equally at home in both rustic and contemporary settings. Walsh spends the majority of his time producing his wares, but sets some time aside to share his knowledge of his craft by teaching at Santa Fe Clay.