

HOORAY FOR THE HOME TEAM

THE STAFF OF SANTA FE CLAY IS FEATURED IN A SHOW AT THE GALLERY

By Kate McGraw

For the Journal

The combined expertise and talent of five staff members at Santa Fe Clay go on display today at the national ceramics studio's in-house gallery. Owner Avra Leodas said her small staff manages a supply store, national gallery and educational studio program. Staffer/exhibitors include studio director Birdie Boone, retail manager Cindy Gutierrez, retail assistant Jennie Johnsrud, warehouse manager Jesse Ring and gallery assistant Amy Slater

"These five co-workers at this ceramic facility have varied and extensive knowledge of the ceramics medium," Leodas said. "Their individual skills and techniques range from wheel-thrown to hand-built and slip-cast. The processes, glazes and finished pieces are as varied as the individuals who make them. This exhibit showcases the people who sell, ship and answer hundreds of questions about ceramics daily."

Birdie Boone

Boone first had her hands in clay "as a 5-year-old," she said. "I think I've been working with clay all my life." She earned a bachelor's degree in art at the College of William and Mary in Virginia, and a bachelor's in fine arts in ceramics from the University of Massachusetts at Dartmouth. She came to Santa Fe to take the job of studio director at Santa Fe Clay.

"I'm just getting back on my feet after a transitional period, dealing with new clays and getting settled in here," she said. For the show, she has been making functional pots. "I develop all my own glazes, which everybody doesn't do," Boone said. She is using a midrange red ware clay. "I like color; that's very much what it's about," she said. "But they're not bright colors, they're subtle."

Cindy Gutierrez

Gutierrez did graduate-level work at Texas Tech in ceramics. She sold work in Santa Fe in both two-dimensional and three-dimensional pieces and then taught in the public schools for a while. "Then I got back and did production work in Santa Fe, all clay," she said. She started at Santa Fe Clay as a teacher and came into the retail side as an employee about eight years ago.

"For the show, I'm doing woodfired and soda-fired functional pieces, some vases and bowls, kind of open forms or slightly enclosed forms," Gutierrez said. "They're sort of minimal in their approach. I'm interested very much in the form. I'm very drawn to wood firing and soda firing, because of the effects of the wood and soda—the surface quality and the type of colorations one might get. You can't really duplicate some of their effects in any other way. My work is only glazed on inside, so I depend a lot on what happens in the firing process for the results I get. My work is very minimal in color," she added. "It's not that I'm opposed to color; I'm just very drawn to minimal palette, things like black clay with incised lines filled with white porcelain."

Jennie Johnsrud

Johnsrud earned a bachelor's in studio arts from St. Olaf College in Minnesota. "I sort of focused my senior work in clay and that's when I got hooked," she said. "I was on a road trip and ran out of gas and money here in Santa Fe 10 years ago and never left. I knew that Santa Fe Clay was here as a national ceramic art center, so I was really excited to be working here."

Johnsrud teaches adult wheel classes at Santa Fe Clay and children's' classes in her studio at home and works part-time in the store. For show, "I am most interested in really minimal kinds of surfaces

and forms, simple, clean serving pieces,” she said. “I am most drawn to really quiet objects and how they exist in their environment, and their relationships with the spaces

around them.” She works in a mid-range porcelaineous stoneware clay. “There’s little to no color. I’m mostly glazing everything white, with maybe a little decoration, but mostly a tonal shift. I prefer a monochromatic palette, for sure,” Johnsrud said.

Jesse Ring

Ring started working with clay seriously in high school and got a bachelor’s in fine arts in ceramics from the Kansas City Art Institute in 2006. “I’ve done many, many things involving clay since then, both art and semi-industrial use,” he said. “Through residencies and field, I have been diligent about maintaining a personal practice.”

He’d just finished a residency at his hometown pottery “when a job here came up and I was ready to move and see a new place,” Ring said. “The residencies I’ve done have taken me to Colorado, Iowa, Montana, Oregon, Ohio and Missouri and now Santa Fe.”

For the show, his new body of work is primarily sculptural. “They are highly detailed miniatures exploring the ideas of ceremonial mounds, temples and ritualistic sites,” he said. “I’m representing, kind of, the monumental qualities of them on a miniature scale. From a formal perspective, I’m also incorporating two-dimensional imagery into the three-dimensional sculpture. Some of the sculptures are in a way pedestals, holding drawings on tiles that represent the rituals taking place at those sites. I’m incorporating my twodimensional practice directly into my three-dimensional. In the past, I’ve shown drawings alongside my sculptures and here I’m trying to kind of meld them together,” he explained.

Amy Slater

Slater’s background is in technical theater. “I moved to Santa Fe to work at the opera, where I build props,” she said. “I took ceramics in college as fill-in course at the University of Memphis. I’ve worked at operas around the country, and everywhere I went, I visited ceramics studios. When I came to Santa Fe, I worked in the back in the studios and ended up working as the gallery assistant, doing all the press.

For this show, Slater said, “I’ve dropped down in temperature — I’ve gone from gas-fired to electric kiln — so I’m trying a different clay body and glazes. I’m using a red mid-range stoneware, and under glazes that I paint on and carve through. There are lots of roses and dogwood flowers and skeletons and skulls; I do love Halloween. They are functional pieces: tea bowls and cups and vases.

“It’s been interesting to see what it’s like to work full-time and try to be an artist,” Slater said. “I do still work at the opera, making whatever they need. It’s hard work but it’s interesting. Every day is different.”

If you go

WHAT: “Home Team,” a show of ceramic works by the staff of Santa Fe Clay

WHEN: Today through Dec. 31; reception 5-7 p.m. today

WHERE: Santa Fe Clay, 545 Camino de la Familia, in the Railyard

CONTACT: (505) 984-1122



Santa Fe Clay staff member Jennie Johnsrud made this 2011 stoneware colander.



This 2010 stoneware tulipiere is by Santa Fe Clay studio director Birdie Boone.



Santa Fe Clay gallery assistant Amy Slater created these 2011 stoneware pieces, two cups and a vase.

“Top of the Heap”
is a 2011 wood-fired
stoneware and cast
earthenware sculpture by
Santa Fe Clay warehouse
manager Jesse Ring.



COURTESY SANTA FE CLAY

“Top of the Heap” is a 2011 wood-fired stoneware and cast earthenware sculpture by Santa Fe Clay warehouse manager Jesse Ring.