

ceramics

M O N T H L Y



Cover: Naomi Clement
Annual Competition: Drink Up!
Technical: Cone 6 Chun Glazes
Feature: Color Theory
for Ceramic Artists

neighborhood show

by Suze Lindsay

Every year on the second weekend in October, a group of clay artists gather for the Spruce Pine Potters Market in Spruce Pine, North Carolina, where ceramics from more than 30 artists can be found under one roof.

The idea of renting a former textile factory to house an event for this community of potters and sculptors originated with Ken and Connie Sedberry in 2006. The former factory that the Spruce Pine Potters Market (SPPM) is held in features a large, open room with banks of tall windows on the south, west, and north sides. Tall ceilings create a sense of brightness and openness, while wooden posts and beams promote a warm and welcoming feeling. Fall foliage is in full splendor on this weekend in the mountains, and adds to the excitement.

The show brings together artists who live and work in a two-county area of western North Carolina, which is close to Penland School of Crafts. A majority of these exhibitors work and support themselves as studio artists. Many of the participants have trained and worked at Penland—taking and teaching classes, working on the staff—or are former artists in residence and/or core fellows. Many have been established in the area for decades, and there are even a few natives. The show embraces its esteemed elders (those potters who have been at it for 40 years or more) and welcomes younger contemporaries as well.

Unique Approaches

Many collectors and enthusiasts in the region attend, and the work exhibited represents makers using a variety of techniques and processes: some artists dig local clay and fire in atmospheric wood/salt/soda kilns, some work at lower temperatures with terra cotta and

decals, some sculpt, representing the figure or choosing abstraction, some use gas-fired reduction kilns, and others use electric kilns. Encompassing a variety of surface embellishments, pieces are enhanced with resists, monoprint transfer, sgraffito, and mishima. Each exhibitor possesses a unique approach to the way they work with clay. As a result, the show's scope represents a profusion of aesthetic and stylistic interpretations.

Studio tours are already popular in this area, so the gathering of this group in such an inviting space, in one weekend event, provides a rare opportunity to see a large body of work from each exhibitor in one place. Most of us have just fired our kilns before the market weekend and are bringing our latest and best work.

Participants

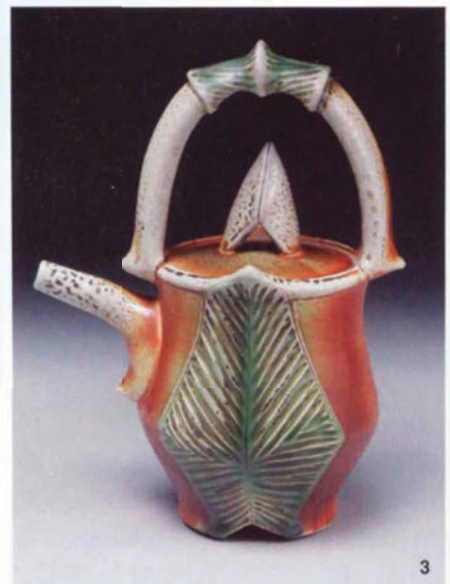
Now in its 12th year, the show is organized and managed by the artists and has evolved into a collective that is finite in its numbers due to space constraints. Artists/members can choose to take part or skip the show, depending on personal commitments for that year. Sometimes there are invited artists from outside the two-county perimeter, as a way to create an extra buzz for the show's patrons. Several exhibitors may decide to share a booth together, and esteemed elders can make the choice to invite someone outside the group to participate in their space with them. Members are: Stanley Andersen, William Baker, Bandana Pottery (Michael Hunt and



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1 Kent McLaughlin's lidded jar, wheel thrown and altered, fired in a gas-reduction kiln to 2380°F (1304°C). 2 Ken Sedberry's salamander plate. 3 Joy Tanner's teapot, thrown and altered, soda fired to cone 10.



4 Visitors to the Spruce Pine Potters Market browsing work by more than 30 artists on display in a renovated textile factory in North Carolina.

Naomi Dalglish), Barking Spider Pottery (Rebecca Plummer and Jon Ellenbogen), Cynthia Bringle, John Britt, Melisa Cadell, Cristina Córdova, Claudia Dunaway, Susan Feagin, Terry Gess, Becky Gray, Shawn Ireland, Joerling Studio (Nick and Lisa Joerling), Michael Kline, Suze Lindsay, Shaunna Lyons, Jeannine Marchand, Courtney Martin, Linda McFarling, Kent McLaughlin, Shane Mickey, Teresa Pietsch, David Ross, Michael Rutkowsky, Val Schnauffer, Ken Sedberry, Jenny Lou Sherburne, Ron Slagle, Gay Smith, Liz Zlot Summerfield, and Joy Tanner. Past esteemed elders include Norm Schulman (1924–2014) and Jane Peiser (retired).

North Carolina geography feeds our pottery tradition—there is a substantial supply of local clays, providing artistic materials. Many of our exhibitors choose to use local and regional clay and glaze materials. As we see a resurgence of locally made and shop small concepts flow into the marketplace, we can give our collectors the chance to see the work in the context of where it comes from.

Sharing the Workload

The group works together to host the event. It is operated solely by the local potters who participate. We have generated a mission statement, set the guidelines, and met together to form operating committees. There is a general meeting once a year, and then the group separates off to do their committee work. Emails and texts, phone calls, and Doodle calendars keep communication open and flowing. The committees are:

- **Steering:** Oversees organization, including budgeting and committee oversight, implementing policy, postcard and mailing list, venue food, tables, seating, signs, booths, etc.
- **Display/Clean Up:** Sets booth parameters, orders tables, prepares lightning, suggests standards, rotates artists on floor plan, cleans up and restores venue to original state.
- **Marketing:** Plans communications and advertising campaigns.
- **Web/Social Media:** Writes posts for Facebook and Instagram, schedules frequency of post publication, increasing frequency as the show date becomes closer. Creates promotional videos of artists in their studio for posting on social media.
- **Design:** Designs and updates the SPPM postcard and website.
- **Program:** Updates the following in the program: show artists, sponsors, ads, contact information, food vendors, and raffle donors. Works with the local printer to print the program.
- **Mailing Lists:** Updates the mailing list—each artist involved is required to submit 100 names each year.
- **Postcard Distribution:** Distributed to local businesses, mailing list; each artist receives 100 postcards to distribute.
- **Raffle:** Raises funds for show development and donation to a community charity, which is determined by a group vote. Five people are asked each year to donate a piece to the raffle. The pieces are on display and tickets are available for purchase. Previous charities include: United Way, Mitchell County Community Programs, and Safe Place women's shelters.
- **Food Service and Food Court:** Organizes and schedules food trucks to be on site during the event.
- **Signage/Parking:** Creates directional and informative signs.
- **Reception:** Does a head count and a name check for each patron entering, to add to the SPPM mailing list.
- **Potter's Party:** Organizes the potluck dinner after the show.



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5 Suze Lindsay's rectangular vessel, salt-fired stoneware. 6 Teresa Pietsch's poppy platter, red clay, colored slip transfer, fired to cone 1 in a gas-fired soda kiln. 7 Cynthia Bringle's tall vase. 8 Claudia Dunaway's luncheon plate, stoneware, fired in a gas reduction kiln. 9 John Britt's bowl, wheel thrown, oil-spot glaze. 10 Stan Andersen's plate, majolica-glazed earthenware. 11 Melisa Cadell's teapot from the *Mcadell Border* series. 12 Michael Kline's plate, stoneware, inlaid porcelain slip.

The SPPM's structure requires each exhibitor to serve on two committees to support the show's scope, with five members acting as a steering committee to oversee and answer questions. These positions rotate, so that participants can make recommendations and propose changes. Whether you are measuring and taping booth perimeters (Display Committee), writing, posting to Instagram and Facebook (Marketing and Web/Social Media Committees) or checking in with the food truck (Food Court Committee), the artists make all the decisions. Keeping this oversight in-house has allowed us to retain the initial vision of a simple, top-quality, local show. We find the committee structure very valuable, as it allows for adaptations every year.

Guidelines

Guidelines specify that the participating artists must be full-time professionals whose primary medium and work is clay, and have a studio location in the two-county area. Our artist/members maintain good standing in the SPPM group according to the following criteria:

1. Making and showing work that is of the highest quality.
2. Consistently contributing time and effort to help organize and produce the SPPM show (i.e. active participation on two committees).
3. Honoring deadlines (i.e. responding promptly to application/contract notifications, paying all fees, submitting mailing lists, imagery, and requested information by deadlines stated in the contract/application).
4. Participating in the SPPM's annual meeting.

Economic Considerations

The entry fee is low and affordable, and the organization supplies tables for easy set up and break down. Because our display units do not have walls, an airy, open atmosphere results. And, because it is in our neighborhood, we all get to sleep in our own beds each night! The show has steadily provided local potters with income, as well as wide exposure to a broad range of customers.

We feel that this is also a valuable show for our local economy, bringing people to the mountain towns of western North Carolina. Being such a rural area with diminished economic opportunities, the venue provides financial stimulation not only for exhibitors but also for other local businesses.

Creative Connections

An added perk for all the artists is getting to visit each other's studios and see work in progress when we attend different committee meetings. We share information on new equipment and techniques, stimulating the exchange of ideas.

The participating artists also look forward to the annual event, because as friends and colleagues, many of whom have known each other for decades, they share a deep knowledge and mastery of the ceramic medium.

the author *Suze Lindsay is a potter who lives in Bakersville, North Carolina, where she and her husband, Kent-McLaughlin, run Fork Mountain Pottery. To learn more, visit www.forkmountainpottery.com. To learn more about SPPM, visit www.sprucepinepottersmarket.com.*