

Guild *at a* Glance

South Vancouver Island Potters' Guild meets the 2nd Monday of the month at 4733 West Saanich Road, Victoria

October 11, 2011

www.victoriapotters.ca

Volume 13, Issue 2

September's Meeting – 'MISSA 2011'

What has become a tradition, for our first meeting, is for members who have attended MISSA (Metchosin International Summer School of the Arts) workshops in the summer to share highlights of their experience. It was a challenge to compress a week of intense activity and creative energy into a 10 minute talk. The presenters did a great job treating the audience to stories, sharing tips and providing impetus to attend next year.

Helen Pedneault and **Kris Jeffrey** attended Alan Burgess' workshop; "Throwing, Surface Enrichment, Decoration and Form". The goals of the course included throwing larger forms and exploring surface decoration. Students had lots of hands on opportunities and were encouraged to experiment. Kris and Helen described a group glazing for a salt firing - 90 pots in about 45 minutes

and the results? Spectacular !



The pottery workshops that **Priska Stabel** was interested in were full. She took a risk and attended Bisia Belina's; "Body Talk, Vocal Arts & Improvisational Movement".

She feels she was given a gift. Bisia provided a safe environment to improvise, to find your voice and to use movement. Priska expressed her delight in the experience. She recommends attending Bisia's workshops, which are held in Victoria. Check out www.bisia.net for details.

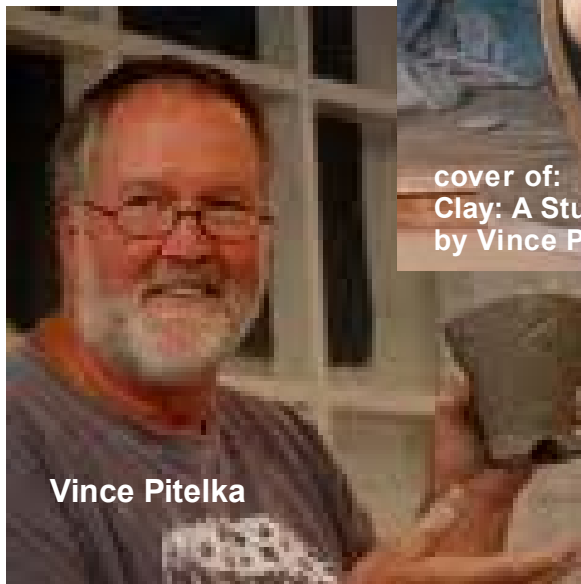
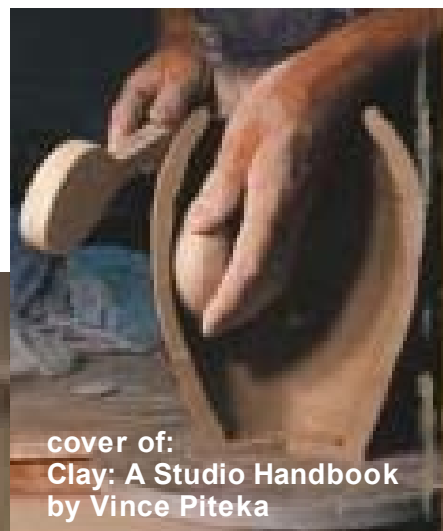
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**The next Guild Meeting is
MONDAY
November 14th
7:30 St. Michael's
Anglican Church
4733 West Saanich Road**

***Don't forget
the Raffle !***

Susan Nichol and **Deb Clay** had a week of exploring handbuilt forms and experimenting with many tools in Vince Pitelka's; "Handbuilding - Tricks of the Trade". Vince was tireless -working long hours, giving many demos and practical advice. He shared lots of ideas for handmade tools. Only disappointment was that there wasn't enough space to work with large slabs of clay and that the handbuilt pieces didn't have time to dry and to be fired on site.

As Friends of MISSA, **Betty Burroughs** and **Barb Lovick** were able to register early and were able to get into Steven Hill and Pete Pinnell's; "Glaze -Building a Personal Repertory of Cone 6 Color & Surface." They highly recommend taking this workshop when it is offered again. Both presenters are very knowledgeable and accessible. Students were challenged but also had lots of fun. Barb and Betty were so absorbed in their work that they were unaware of a fire alarm and when the firefighters left they continued working.



Betty strongly suggests staying at Pearson College when attending MISSA , as much happens in the evening but be warned that the dorm mattresses are very hard - bring extra foam to sleep on.
Nancy A.



TAKE AWAY LESSON

I very much enjoyed these presentations ... and this is what I learned:

MISSA IS WONDERFUL!

TO BE MORE LIKELY TO GET INTO A POTTERY CLASS JOIN THE FRIENDS OF MISSA

**or
TAKE A CLASS OUTSIDE YOUR USUAL AREA**

Editor

For More Information:

Check out **Bisia Belina's** website at <http://www.bisia.net/VoiceWorks/Home.html>

Alan Burgess is building a website at <http://alanburgesspotter.com/01reductionfire.html>

See the work of **Vince Pitelka** at <http://accessceramics.org/results/artist/186/>

Watch an interview video of **Steven Hill** at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I_R5hafdS_U

Watch a documentary on **Pete Pinnell**: 'Thoughts on Cups' at <http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=302550256698394321>

2011 -2012 Program Coordinators

At the September meeting, the following people agreed to continue or take on these important roles.

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Raffle	Ester G.	250-658-4523
	Tobias T.	250-383-3893
Coffee	Priska S.	250-642-7422
	Nancy W.	250-479-3524

Coming in the next edition

Your Executive & Directors

MANY THANKS TO ALL OUR VOLUNTEERS!

Did You Know?

This is the first in a planned series that will present topics of interest to those of us who work with clay which may serve a number of purposes to Guild members – providing new information, reminding us of processes we learned in the past but no longer practice, or even making us feel good because the topic just isn't a problem for us.

If you disagree with the content of these – or if you have experiences of your own – please respond to eartharts@me.com

Your response will be published in the next Guild newsletter.

This month's Focus:

Minimizing Cracking and Warping – Part I of III

adapted from a 1997 article by John Hesselberth

Introduction - Cracking and/or warping of pottery during drying or firing is a class of problems that frustrates almost every potter at one time or another. While there are no absolute answers to avoiding cracking and warping, this article will identify changes we can make in the way we process pottery through our studios that will tend to minimize the number of cracked or warped pots, total elimination, however, is not possible in the real world. The guidelines in this article are (hopefully) helpful, but they are not absolute solutions.

Why Clay Warps & Cracks - At the basic level cracks and warps are caused by the same phenomena: buildup of stress in the clay beyond its inherent strength. When this happens the clay will first attempt to deform in a way that the stress buildup is relieved, i.e warp. If it is constrained from warping by geometry or other factors the piece will eventually crack. Logically, reducing stress requires changing either our handling process or the strength of the clay itself. This article focuses on the former. (*Properties of clay will be covered by a future article in this series – Ed*)

Process Issues & Their Mitigations

#1 Non-uniform Drying - the most common cause of stress buildup in a piece of pottery. We all know that clay shrinks as it dries. We also know that a partially dry piece is drier on the outside than it is in the center. The faster we dry a piece, the more the outside shrinks vs. the center and the more the stress builds up. Stress can also be built up by non-uniform drying from one side of the pot to the other. Those stresses may not cause immediate cracking or warping, but they will still be there during firing. When the clay approaches maturing temperature and is a bit less strong stress is often relieved via a crack or a warp.

Mitigations

- whenever possible, dry pots slowly
- use a well designed drying box that provides good circulation of air past all the surfaces of the pot (including the bottom) and/or turn the pot regularly to dry as uniformly as possible
- avoid forced drying until the clay is leather hard. Clay shrinks significantly more in going from wet to leather hard than it does going from leather hard to bone dry
- always join pieces of clay that are approximately the same stage of dryness.
- dry pots on an absorptive surface – unpainted wood or drywall is ideal – but a layer of newspapers on a painted or plastic surface works well too.
- dry plates and tiles evenly on both sides, place them on screens to promote air circulation from below.
- throw and/or trim pot bottoms and the lower part of the sides to have a relatively uniform thickness. If that is not possible or desirable with your particular design then very slow drying becomes much more important.

#2 Sharp Corners - Most of us have seen cracks develop where the side wall meets the bottom in a vessel like a thrown planter or casserole. While this can be due to non- uniform wall thicknesses and the resulting non-uniform drying, it can also be due to stress buildup or concentration at the corner of the pot. Another place this kind of stress occurs is where a hole is cut in a pot – the more oblique the angle of a cut section, the more likely a stress crack will develop.

Mitigations

- round all corners – to the extent your design will allow. This is particularly critical where a thicker section of clay meets a thinner section, e.g. where the foot of a bowl meets the bottom.
- round the points of cut out sections

Here you may even have to compromise the aesthetics you want to get the acceptable performance from the clay. Don't fight this. Most art is a compromise between what is in the artist's mind and that which the medium will allow.

... to be continued next month.

TIPS – *If you have any, please share by sending them to eartharts@me.com*

SLOWING DRYING – Olive oil, petroleum jelly or liquid wax can be used to slow drying of a particular part of your pot (handle, rim, protruding bit etc.). It will burn away in the bisque firing. BUT do remember it will keep you from being able to add clay in that area. *(submitted by Louise P.)*

ADDING TEXTURE - Cotton lace, burlap, cheesecloth or other cotton, absorbent materials can be soaked in slip and added to pieces for interesting textures. Soak fabric in slip, squeeze out lightly, brush on leatherhard clay surface, dry slowly, and bisque. The fabric will burn out leaving the slip texture behind. *(by Cindi Anderson, at www.bigceramicstore.com)*

AVOIDING SMELLY LIQUIDS – A couple tablespoons of household bleach in glaze buckets or even throwing water will kill the bugs that grow there and make them smell bad - without affecting your work. *(from Ceramic Monthly, 1981, submitted by Louise P.)*

THROWING -If you have trouble with the bottoms of pots cracking after glaze firings - try this! Place the wedged clay on the wheel so the 'spiral' of the wedge is lying on its side, not on end. To ensure this alignment, pat the clay into a cone immediately after wedging. (Also if using a pug-mill, place the pug on its side rather than on end.) This method can eliminate virtually all bottom cracks and is especially effective when throwing plates and large, flat-bottomed pieces.

(R. Hopper, from 'Ceramic Arts Daily' submitted by Nancy W.)

PACIFIC RIM POTTERS are Celebrating 25 years!
Annual Fall Show & Sale
Saturday, November 5th
10 am to 4 pm

FREE Admissions – Refreshments – Door Prizes

WHO ARE PACIFIC RIM POTTERS ?

Linda Vigliotti, Nora Lewin and Betty Burroughs are founding members, well known for their high quality functional and whimsical wares.

Meira Mathison, past Director of Metchosin Summer School of the Arts, has her work featured in books and magazines and is internationally known as a popular ceramics instructor.

Mavis Mooney spent time in Africa setting up a working pottery and teaching local potters.

Peggy Elmes teaches pottery making at Brentwood College.

Ester Galac is known for her strong oval forms and elegant layered glazes.

Darrel Hancock is a master potter residing in Qualicum and gives pottery workshops.

John Robertson and Harriet Hiemstra of Cobble Hill Pottery. Harriet's art pieces have been purchased by such notables as former US president, Bill Clinton.

GUEST THIS YEAR Cindy Gibson – who's garden items such as bird feeders & decorative newel posts are incredible

**For more information, call Linda
at 250-479-5966**

Guild at a Glance

... is the newsletter for the South Vancouver Island Potters Guild.

It is published monthly, September through June, and is available on line at: www.victoriapotters.ca

Articles and items of interest to members are welcome and will be included as space permits. Items for inclusion are best emailed to the editor, Louise P, at: eartharts@me.com

SUBMISSION DEADLINE

The earlier submissions are received, the more likely there will be room to include them. Our meetings are held the second Monday of each month. Be kind to the editor, please send items for inclusion before the **FIRST MONDAY OF EACH MONTH.**

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