

StudioWorks2011

Review by Judit Trunkos



Virginia Scotchie Exhibits with Her Best Students

Virginia Scotchie. *Bronze Square Bowl*. 2009. Stoneware and glaze. 12 x 14 x 22 in.

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA'S (USC) CERAMICS program is a highly competitive and developing art program that offers MA and MFA degrees. Ceramics students' personal interests vary from a strong vessel orientation to sculptural and conceptual art forms in clay. In addition to the technical classes and studio work, students are encouraged to develop a sense of ceramics history and contemporary art issues through graduate seminars, guest speakers and art history classes. The size of the program allows for considerable interaction between students and faculty and allows the students and professors to establish an extraordinary artist community which further supports the artists' work. *Studio Works: Selections from the Ceramic Art Studio at the University of South Carolina* was a display of such cooperation.

In this exhibition, students featured mostly non-functional ceramics using various techniques including wheel thrown, woodfired, soda-fired pieces as well as found-fired brick and painted tile and porcelain pieces. The exhibition, which was a collection of both undergrad and graduate students and some former BFA and MFA students, included

a wide variety of techniques and styles. The show provided an excellent sample of USC's extraordinary Ceramic Art Studio's skills and talents.

Virginia Scotchie, Professor at USC, is proud to mentor many students in her studio. The group exhibition featured some new and older ceramic pieces by 11 art students including Dana Childs, Danny Crocco, Frieda Dean, Hayley Douglas, Katherine Radomsky, Laura VanCamp, Jelene Morris, Bri Kinard, Robin Jones, Stetson Rowles. Also exhibiting was Jon McMillan Adjunct Faculty together with USC alumni Ken Baskin and Rocky Lewicky.

Last year, professor Scotchie's group was fortunate to find such a great location for the group exhibition at ART+CAYCE gallery in Cayce, South Carolina. The building is a few miles away from the studio and is a beautiful collaboration between art and community as it simultaneously serves as an active architecture office (owned by architect Maryelline Cannizarro) and an art gallery. ART+CAYCE gallery opened in 2009 with the mission of exhibiting local art and supporting new artists. The *Studio Works: Selection from the Ceramic Art Studio at the University of South Carolina* was open to viewers from 22 April through 13 May, 2011 and was the first exhibition to be showcased in the newly renovated section of the building.

Article by Judit Trunkos



Jon McMillan. *Postponed*. 2010. Terracotta, steel and resin.
20 x 16 x 12 in.

Scotchie has been a professor at USC's ceramics department since 1992 and has worked with many students but she is especially proud of last year's capable artists. Scotchie's works are not new to the ART+CAYCE gallery as she has shown here numerous times in the past. In 2007, Scotchie presented another comprehensive group show with former and current students. *Studio Works* represented the newest collection of current and former students. Scotchie has served as the Head of Ceramics Department at USC for more than 15 years and is a nationally and internationally exhibited artist. She previously received the Sydney Meyer Fund International Ceramics Premier Award from Australia and was artist in residence in Taiwan, Australia and the Netherlands. In last year's exhibition, Scotchie featured three of her larger pieces titled *Light Green Crucible*, *Dark Green Crucible* both ceramic and steel tables and the *Bronze Square Bowl* from 2009.

"I try to have a group exhibition once a year for my students. The truth is that we make art because we are artists and not particularly to exhibit our pieces but we all have to get feedback on our new works so it becomes important to get the pieces outside of the studio and seen by others. This show is a broad spectrum of working, firing and glazing clay.

My program is not producing clones. They work process, technique and make their own original works. I want my students to find their own voices," explained Scotchie.

Scotchie's large *Bronze Square Bowl* became the signature piece of the exhibition for a good reason. It summarises all of the things professor Virginia Scotchie stands for and teaches. She advocates great technique, brave shapes and colours and interesting texture. Most of all, it represents the degree of freedom of encouraging students and artists to try new and unusual things working with clay.

McMillan joined the exhibition for the first time and showed his terracotta, glass and resin pieces titled *Interrupted* and *Postponed*. These works were born out of the symbiosis of complex and simple and often rely on the subjective interpretation of the viewer. McMillan's almost surrealistic multilayered complex forms capture the attention of the viewer and hold him as hostage until his mind comes up with an explanation of the out of space shapes and forms.



alumna. My piece had been on display for 15 years at the USC Visitor's Center, but I decided to remove it to be a part of the alumni show which was last year, as well as this show at ART+CAYCE gallery," explained Morris about the group exhibition.

Morris' exhibited work was influenced by the great American ceramics artist, Rudy Autio. Autio's works represent the most masterful and influential clay pieces in the US today. Morris manipulates the female figures so that the shapes of the pottery pieces become inseparable from the decorative female bodies, often making it difficult to separate the two. Morris,

It seems quite appropriate to start the student reviews with Professor Scotchie's first BFA student, Jelene Morris. She is currently a professional artist who earned her Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) from USC. In this

similar to Autio, creates a symbiosis between the clay vessel and the decorative female bodies painted on them. Vivid unexpected colours also connect the two artists.

One of the main events of the Spring 2011 semester's Ceramic Studio was the woodfired Anagama kiln, which was built by the students with financial support from College of Arts and Sciences and the Department of Art. As artists select the techniques and finishes that they need to complete their works, four students decided to use this time consuming work-intensive method to create the final pieces. Crocco, Nicholas Boismanu, Kinard, Rowles chose woodfiring to achieve a more raw finish of the clay pieces.

Kinard's exhibited work titled *Northern Pots* represents an interesting mixture of almost organic and functional clay. Kinard hangs clay pieces that may seem organic at first (possibly a flower or a fruit) but upon observing the pieces more closely, the viewer discovers more domestic object-like shapes such as a deformed bowl or pitcher. By experimenting with gravity, Kinard adds a unique personality to

group exhibition she showed her large vase titled *Face Vessel*. "The *Face Vessel* is the largest piece that I have ever made." Explained Morris. "At the time, I was painting faces on all of the pieces that I created. It was all about the decoration on my work . . . lots of colour, filling every available space of the piece. It was made my last BFA year at USC in 1995. I was Professor Scotchie's first BFA student, so it was nice to be asked to be a part of this show, since I am an



her artwork. "I use the material as a raw resource leaving evidence of what the object is composed of. Working in the three dimensional realm, I have found it important not only to the viewer but to myself to present these works in such a way. The solution I have found is to suspend or stack the pieces in space. When doing this, a sense of relief and dissection of the piece is presented. This allows the viewer to investigate the construction and delicate nature of the work," explains Kinard in her artist statement.

Some of the exhibited works, together with new ceramics, were also shown at the Spartanburg Museum of art in 2011. Professor Virginia Scotchie concluded her summer in France, where she was the artist in residence from 12 July to 4 August at the Vallauris Institute of Arts (VIA). Later in 2011, she held a ceramics workshop 1000 miles away at the University of Manitoba's Conference.

Judit Trunkos is the Arts Editor of the *Columbia City Paper* who covered local, national and international art shows. Trunkos is also a PhD student focusing on cultural diplomacy and the importance of art and culture in international relations. All photos by Jelene Morris.

Facing page, left: Bri Kinard. Northern Pots. 2010. Terracotta clay. 5 x 3 in.

Facing page, right: Jelene Morris. Face Vessel. 1995. White earthenware with coloured slips. 20 x 36 in.

Above: Virginia Scotchie. Light Green Crucible and Dark Green Crucible. Ceramic and steel.

Below: Virginia Scotchie viewing the exhibition.

