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Image: Margaret Boozer

Topsoil

Curated by Bill Van Gilder

March 11-May7, 2017

Baltimore Clayworks is excited to host ***Top Soil***, an exhibition about experimentation and exploration where risk taking and an industrious attitude is required. All of the artists featured in this show dig and process their own clay and glaze materials. Part of a “local clay” movement, they use earth from their studio region or from the Stancil Clay mines in Perryville, MD. Processing your own clay is labor intensive: digging, drying, pulverizing, sifting, soaking, drying out and finally wedging the material before you even get to make a thing. The artist is rewarded for this effort with clays that possess a nuanced depth, rugged aesthetic and persnickety personality. The local clay artist thrives on this challenge and seeks out imperfections from the earth to enhance the work.

In addition, they employ intriguing or non-traditional approaches to finishing their works. One artist experiments by taking a wood-fired vessel and doing a lower temperature majolica glaze on top and another even forgoes firing altogether and lets the raw clay be her palette. This show celebrates the natural beauty inherent in the earth with very little adornment, just a lot of ingenuity.

Here is the full list of “native clay enthusiasts” from Top Soil: Bandana Pottery: Naomi Daghish and Michael Hunt (NC), Margaret Boozer of Red Dirt Studio (MD), Josh Copus (NC), Warren Frederick (VA), Perry Haas (MT), Mitch Iburg (CA), George McCauley (MT), David Peters (MT), Nick Schwartz (CA), Willi Singleton (PA) and Catherine White (CA).

SOLO GALLERY: CHRIS GUSTIN- *SLOW BREATH*



“My work explores the vessel form on a human scale, taking simple pottery forms and jumping them up in scale as a vehicle for abstraction. Though my work only alludes to function through the context of the vessel, I am trying to make pots that speak to a “body” reference. This “body” scale speaks on a subliminal level to the entire histories of our experience.

The surfaces inherent in wood firing that come as a result of the heat, flame, glaze and ash all add a sense of “skin” to the surface of the clay, giving it an almost organic sensibility that plays with the form. I’m interested in the ‘breath’ of the piece, the inhaling and exhaling of energies. How that “skin” holds the interior space of the pot, and how I manipulate my forms “around” that space, constraining it, enclosing it, or letting it expand and swell, can allow analogy and metaphor to enter into the work.

By using forms that evoke generosity, sensuality, fullness and humility, I am asking the viewer to make connections on a deeply personal level. This is what I depend on: the desire in all of us to reach out and touch, and by doing so, to trigger memory that is both felt and connected, memory that quietly waits to come to consciousness. This innate connection is for me the primal language of ceramic vessel form. It has the potential to reflect our universal human story, regardless of politics, culture or history.

Chris Gustin is a studio artist and an Emeritus Professor at the University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth. Chris received his BFA from the Kansas City Art Institute in 1975, and his MFA from Alfred University in 1977. Chris lives and works in South Dartmouth, Massachusetts.

Chris’ work is published extensively, and is represented in numerous public and private collections, including the Renwick Gallery of the National Museum of American Art, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Victoria and Albert Museum, the World Ceramic Exposition Foundation in Icheon, Korea, AMOCA, and the Daum Museum of Contemporary Art.

With over fifty solo exhibitions, he has exhibited, lectured and taught workshops in the United States, Caribbean, South America, Europe, the Middle East and Asia. He has received two National Endowment for the Arts Artist Fellowships, and four Massachusetts Cultural Council Artist Fellowships, the most recent in 2017. He is a member of the International Academy of Ceramics and was elected to the

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American Craft Council College of Fellows in 2016. He is being awarded the Masters of the Medium award from the Renwick Alliance in 2017.

Chris is cofounder of the Watershed Center for the Ceramic Arts in Maine, and currently serves as Honorary Trustee on its board.

PROJECT SPACE: CRAIG HARTENBERGER- *TRANSLATE*



“TRANSLATE is based around a body of work inspired by the artist’s travels between Mexico, Denmark, and the United States with each locale leaving its distinct impression on the finished work. Central to this exhibition, as the name says, is the exercise of translating familiar ideas into new materials and exploring outcomes across a diverse body of materials and firings. This exhibition is not just an exploration of material and touch, but also of thought and placement. Questions relating to entropy and momentum are at the foundation of these works -

are they the skeletal remnants of something left behind, or the structure of something still yet to be? No tidy explanation exists, but rather this work inhabits the undefined area in between.”

Craig Hartenberger is an American-born artist who uses clay as his primary sculptural medium. Hartenberger has shown his work in a variety of exhibitions both nationally and internationally and has work in collections in Denmark, Germany, Latvia, and Slovenia; he is currently working from his studio in southern Massachusetts. In the summer of 2011, Hartenberger was a community artist in residence at Baltimore Clayworks as well as a wood-kiln intern.

Baltimore Clayworks is a nonprofit ceramic art center located in the Mt. Washington neighborhood in northwest Baltimore. Founded in 1980, Clayworks is housed in two reclaimed and renovated buildings located across the street from one another. We offer classes, artists' spaces, exhibitions, and programs throughout the community.

Visit Us: Gallery hours – Mon-Tues: Closed
Wed- Fri: 10-5pm
Sat-Sun: 12- 5pm

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