

RIO GRANDE SUN

Arts

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Celebration of Clay

Statewide Organization Holds Its Annual Show Of Pottery And Ceramics

Celebration of Clay



Judy Nelson-Moore "The Last Confrontation"

Judy Nelson-Moore's "The Last Confrontation" (above) has a very we're-becoming-extinct, Galapagos Isands kind of feel to it, which is appropriate for this year's New Mexico Potters and Clay Artists Association "Celebration of Clay" exhibit's theme: Confrontations.

Nelson-Moore's piece features birds that could easily be on the verge of extinction and probably don't even know it, at least in a mental, logical sense. They look as if they are peering out onto the horizon and looking for something to explain all that is going on around them. One bird near the center has its mouth open slightly as if asking the question aloud to the others.

Nelson-Moore graduated from Colorado State University with a degree in humanities.

"Over the years, I have studied with many wonderful clay artists, including James and Nan McKinnell. I realized that what I admired about many artists' work was not the technical expertise, but the spirit and soul in their work. So I started to pursue a study of Jungian Psychology, studied creative imagery work with Edith Wallace and Steve Gallegos. At the same time, I was working with many different companies around the country as a database software developer and implementation specialist. The combination of these experiences,

plus a strong interest and affinity for primitive and indigenous art of many cultures, has helped to form the imagery and motivation for my sculpture."

Association board member and artist Sara D'Alessandro comments of this year's theme.

"The choice of 'Confrontations,' for the theme for New Mexico Potters and Clay Artists' annual Celebration of Clay exhibition, shifts the paradigm to focus on the medium of clay as thought-provoker and away from the paradigm of function. The tradition of fired clay in human history is long and essential. An easily accessed material, ubiquitous

around the globe, is worked many ways and provides necessities such as pottery, building materials, and liquid containment. The plastic quality of unfired clay promotes spontaneous expression. When working small, this is akin to playing with dolls. Clay can convey gesture directly into the material and record it. In some cases it can even record the intent of the gesture. This spontaneity is the initial seduction of clay for most clay artists and invites a non-verbal release of ideas."

Andrew Connors, Curator of Art at the Albuquerque Museum, was this year's juror, and in an interview he said he finds it interesting the number of people wanting to restore

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Joe Bova "Mad Mopsey"

art forms in clay, whether it's Baroque or Rococo.

"People are making contemporary commentary using historical mediums. People using the medium in ways that you would never expect," Connors said.

There are 60 pieces in this curated show and numerous artists will be familiar to Norteños and *Rio Grande SUN* Arts readers: Lee Akins, of Embudo; Sheena Cameron, of Rinconada; Betsy Williams, of Dixon to name a few.

Sheena Cameron focuses on a subject she has visited numerous times over the years: horses. This time with a oceanic element infused in her "Navigating The Archetypal Water Element" piece (page 6). The large horse figure seems to represent the ocean and a small figure sitting in a boat a wayfarer in life navigating through one's myriad choices. The boat is heading toward the tail end of the horse/ocean and you find yourself wondering if it is going over the waterfall — the "waterfall" being the tail — or whether there will be some divine intervention to curtail the seemingly inevitable catastrophe.

Cameron says, "I call the clay horses featured on this website 'Messenger Horses.' I received a Bachelor of Fine Arts in ceramic sculpture in 1969 and spent the next 33 years making art jewelry. I moved to New Mexico in 1981. Finally in 2003 I got back into working with clay. I soon started experimenting with making horses and they seemed to take on a life of their own."

Cameron says on her website that in many mythologies horses were thought to be messengers from other realms.

"My pieces use the form of the horse allegorically," Cameron writes. "There are no elements of human subjugation such as saddles and bridles. They represent humans in their free and natural state as well as the symbolism associated with the horse itself. I combine many other elements with the clay horse, each with their own symbolism. But in combination a new meaning

is created. I use my jewelry skills and tools to make unique elements to add. I draw sometimes on my Celtic heritage. Like that of Native Americans, Celtic culture and spiritual life was nature-based.

"Each horse comes with its own miniature book. On one side is a horse picture and several paragraphs about the general symbolism. Handwritten on the other side is the name of that particular horse, a list of all the components and gemstones, their symbolism, and the symbolism of the piece as a whole. And of course each owner will be bringing her or his own personal symbolism to the piece."

Most of Cameron's pieces are raku. Some are fired in a Japanese style woodburning kiln and some are stoneware.

Betsy Williams has two porcelain cups sitting side by side at the exhibit. As with all of Williams work, the cups are meticulously crafted with thin walls and elegant and graphic, almost geometric decoration.

D'Alessandro comments on Williams' cups.

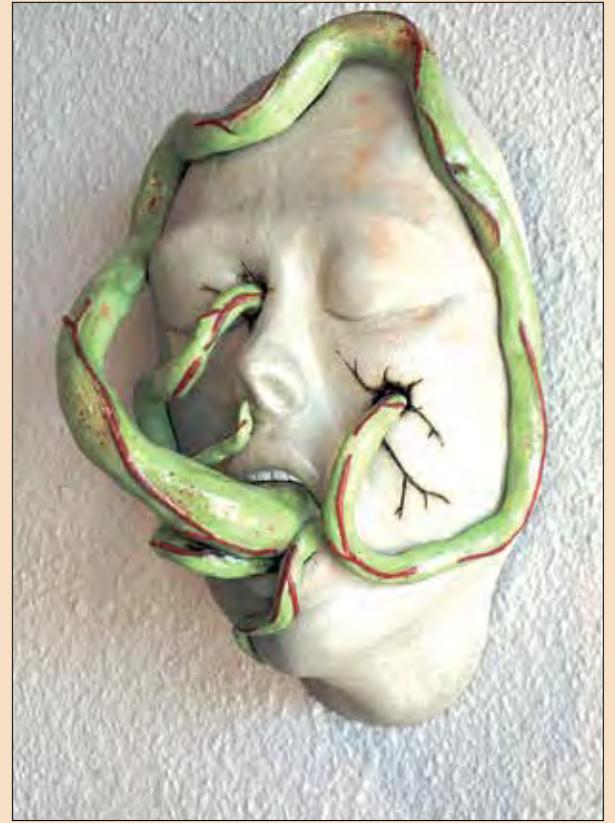
"The theme is explicit on the outside as a design, a form of signage. The theme is offered at an intellectual remove. The message is secondary to function in the same way of pictured tee-shirts. The tee-shirts may be crass and the cups are elegant but the relation of function and use of message are the same. Williams' cups calmly reassure the observer of the continuum of culture," D'Alessandro says.

Betsy Williams says of her work, "Calm and simplicity are the hallmarks of my work. I make bowls, cups and plates - the basics. The essentials. If you begin to notice these very 'ordinary' things, these simple, slightly imperfect, subtle things, you see that it matters that they are handmade, subtle, distinct. They have the potential to communicate something essential and ineffable about the human spirit, bringing an element of the sublime into the everyday. In my own work, I am always searching for just the

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Jacquita Beddo "Encounter"



Julia Shahvar "Cirragalmatophilia"



Karin Bergh "Please Stop! Please Yield To Us"

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right kind of imperfection - a concurrence of subtlety and self-expression, minimalism and warmth, delicacy and usability, tradition and originality. I focus on objects as they relate to one another and express an idea without losing any of their usefulness. I like repetition. The details change, but the premise does not.”

D’Alessandro, who has her studio in Cuba, N.M., is well-known for her wasp-nest style, but in this exhibit, she moves toward a more representational vein with her piece titled “Yolk.”

“Yolk” (page 8) has an egg yolk held delicately between two fingers with the shell and remnants of the egg white — evidently a hard boiled egg — sitting below the suspended yolk. The potential “confrontation” can come in a number of ways: the yolk being eaten or used in some manner, are just two. The fact that D’Alessandro leaves the manner of confrontation up to the viewer is what makes this piece so strong. It would have been easy for D’Alessandro to have the hand putting the yolk in someone’s mouth, or into a bowl, but she leaves the yolk’s destiny entirely up to the viewer.

Embudo artist Lee Akins took a more traditional route in this exhibit, relying on traditional shapes that on sculptural or imaginary treatments.

Akins says, “My work seeks to combine figurative imagery with the format of the traditional clay vessel. The vessel has historically been a powerful metaphor for the body, with each part of the pot being named for the corresponding area of the body. A full lip, a gentle curve of the neck, a rotund belly or a broad shoulder all combine to provide animation to the pot. Some of my pieces are predominantly male, some are a synthesis of male and female but most are female forms inspired by fertility figures found in most early cultures. The Venus of Willendorf and the stone



Betsy Williams "Compare And Contrast 2 And 1"



Mario Quilles "Gathering Of Squids"

carvings of the Cycladic culture are some of the most powerful to me. My most recent work strives toward an elegant organic form, one that is obviously a hand-made object but has an internal natural order.”

And with these pieces, as does D’Alessandro, Akins leaves the “confrontational” aspects or interpretations to the viewer.

Jacquita Beddo’ “Encounter” (page 5) features a nude female torso with a lizard climbing up one side. The woman is peering down at the lizard in a “This is a strange confrontation” kind of way. The expression on the woman’s face is more of interest rather than fear.

Julia Shahvar’s “Cirragalmatophilia” (page 5) compliments her “Necroculolinctus,” and shows her avid interest in the unusual aspects of relationships.

Karin Bergh’s “Please Stop! Please Yield To Us.” is a statement on the number of animals killed by motor vehicles.

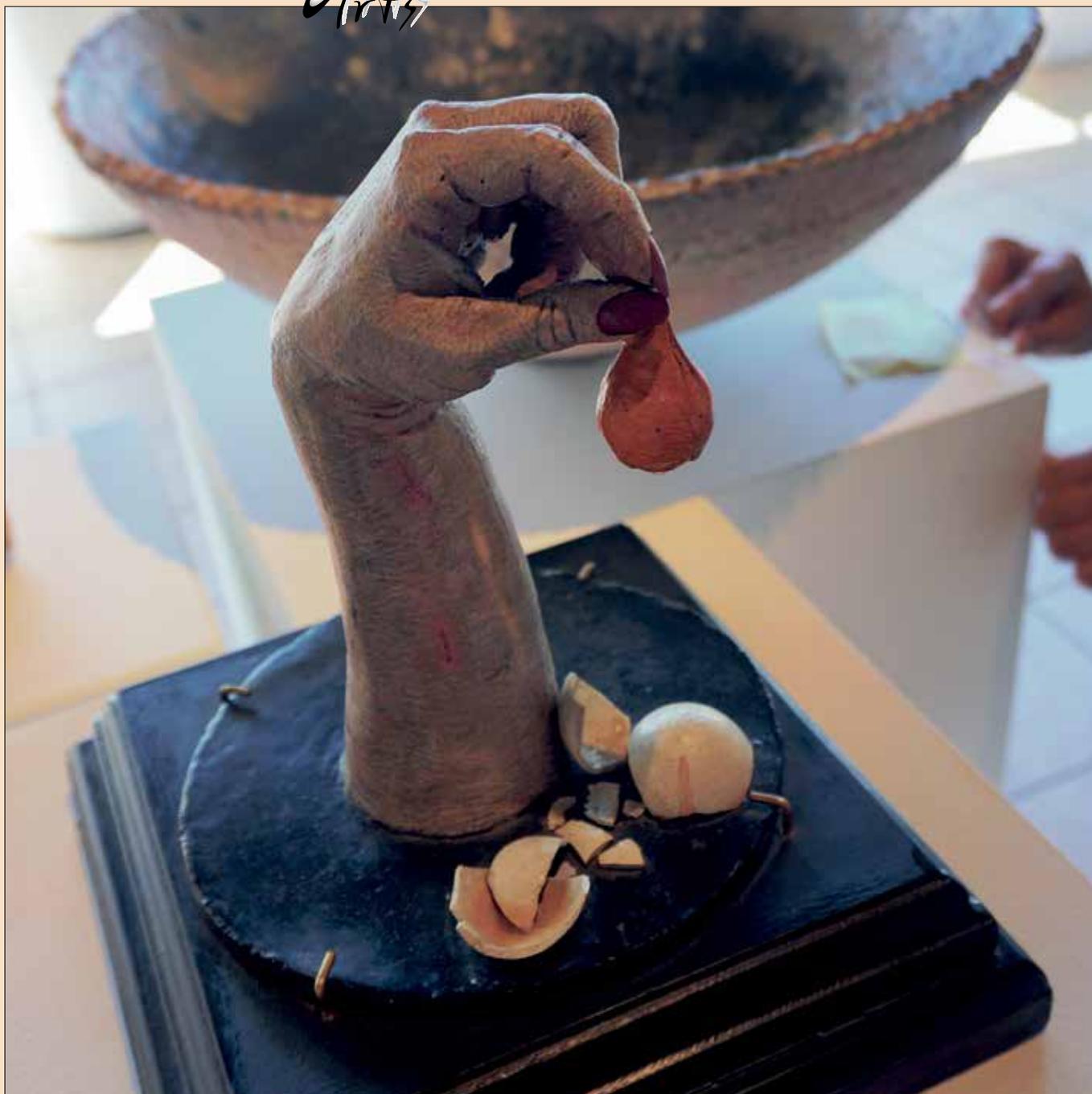
Mario Quilles “Gathering Of Squids” (page 7) left a couple of people asking “Where is the confrontation?” And whether or not one can discern a confrontational aspect to the piece, you can’t help but marvel at Quilles masterful handling of his craft and adept use of color.

With all the talk about building a wall between the United States and Mexico, Penny Truit’s “La Frontera Border Wall” seems to illuminate the theme of confrontation very well, and be timely in a political, sociological way, also.

Although this year’s Celebration of Clay exhibit isn’t as easy to access as in the past three Years — two years at Ghost Ranch and last year at the Fuller Lodge Art Center in Los Alamos — being in Albuquerque, it is still well worth the drive. This annual exhibit really showcases the strengths of New Mexico clay artists, both eclectically and aesthetically.

Essentials

Where: Sixty Six Gallery, 4009 Central Ave. NE, (near the corner of Morningside and Central), Albuquerque
When: Through Sept. 25
Info: 505.545.2030 or show chair Leonard Baca at 505.480.8292



Sara D’Allesandro “Yolk” (above) - Penny Truit “La Frontera Border Wall” (below)

