

RIO GRANDE SUN

Arts

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Celebration of Clay *at Ghost Ranch*

Cover: Judy Nelson-Moore

Celebration of Clay at Ghost Ranch

For lovers of ceramics, there are three events that will be of extreme interest. 'Celebration of Clay' at Ghost Ranch Abiquiú (runs through October 2); 'New World: Timeless Visions' at the New Mexico Museum of Art (runs through September 23); and 'Ceramics S,M,L' which will open with a reception for the artists on September 15, at the Rift Gallery in Rinconada, with a story coming up on the Rift show next week in the Arts section.

'Wise Men Sailing... and the cup ran away with the spoon' by Judy Nelson-Moore (on this week's Arts cover) is akin to a whimsical illustration in a children's book only brought more to life via its three-dimensionality but with a more serious, adult look to it than one might find in a children's book.

Sitting atop a pyramidal shaped base, there is an implied history of sorts in the faces below the coat itself, and the faces are of the people are somber, as is the body language of the figures and animals in the boat itself. Since it feels like it is teetering upon the crest of a wave, you expect it to drop down into the trough at any moment, and then rise and fall as the saga of this vessel unwinds before your eyes.

Nelson-Moore says of her work:

"My images are metaphors of an inner self which is discovered through life events. They are visual illustrations of personal tales. We refer to different 'worlds'... The art world, business world, civilized world, natural world, everyday reality. We fragment and compartmentalize our lives. My art is an expression of my



Daisy Kates

dreams and visions as I attempt to balance and integrate these separate frames of reference."

Cheryl Muceus, Director of Ghost Ranch Museums, recently spent some time with SUN Arts and talked a bit about the Celebration of Clay show and spoke about some of the pieces.

"This is the first time we've had the New Mexico Potters and Clay Artist Association (NMPCA) at Ghost Ranch and we're very glad," Muceus says.

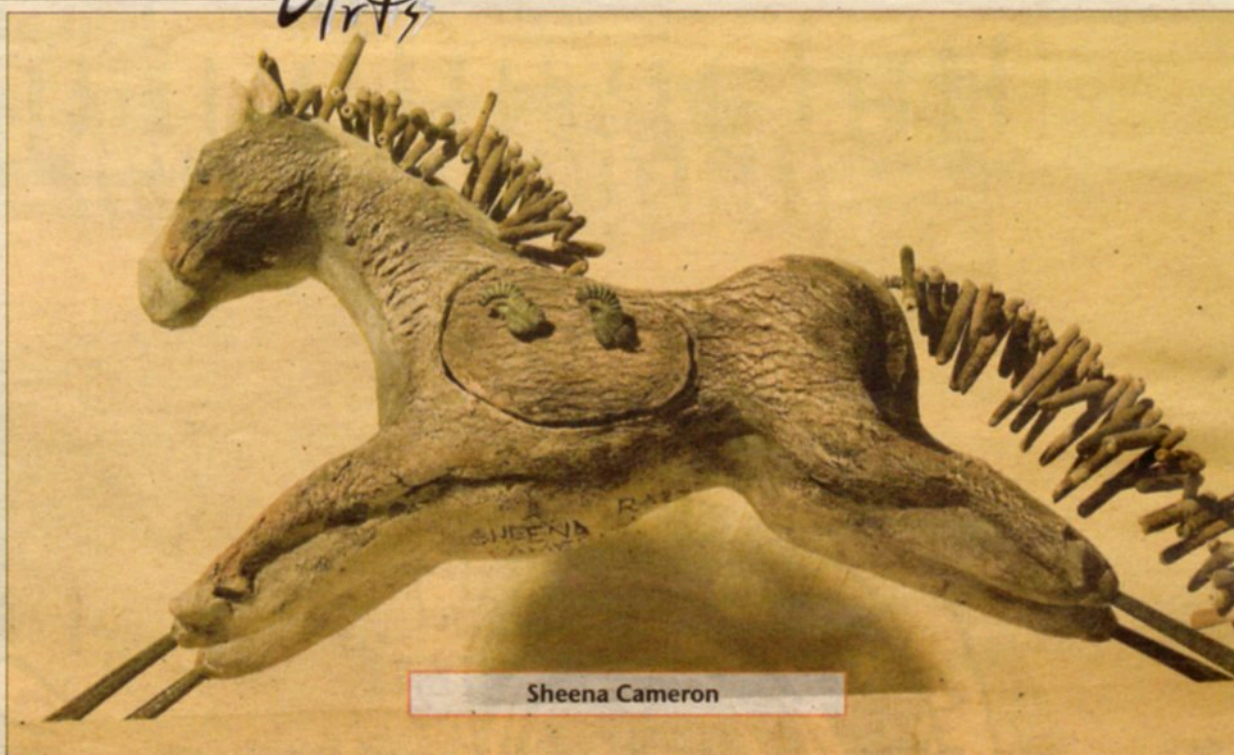
The show will feature 80 ceramic artworks by 51 members.

In keeping with a growing Internet presence, the NMPCA has expanded the show and viewer participation to include a "People's Choice Award." Viewers can preview the show online at celebrationofclay.com and beginning on September 6th they can vote for their favorite piece in the show. The show includes a broad range of ceramic art from student work to that of nationally known artists. NMPCA has 214 members in seven states, although most are from New Mexico. Besides the "People's Choice Award," which will give the winner a high profile on the internet, there are six cash awards: Best of Show; Harnack/Lancaster Award; Arita Award for Beauty, Quality & Functionality; and three Merit Awards (\$50 ea). The Judges are Sara D'Alessandro, winner of last year's Harnack/Lancaster award; Amber Archer, long-time NMPCA member from Abiquiu; and Cheryl Muceus, director of the Ghost Ranch Museum.

Coinciding with the exhibition the annual NMPCA Ghost Ranch workshop, titled "New Mexico Connections," September 21-23, features regionally and nationally known instructors, including, Debra Fritts, Arthur Gonzales, Betsy Williams, Alex Kraft, Mario Quilles, and Frank Willet. They will cover a broad spectrum of ceramic disciplines, from figurative to functional and purely sculptural. Participants are traveling from throughout the United States to attend. The workshop will also be held in conjunction with the IAC (International Academy of Ceramics) biennial assembly, held this year in Santa Fe.

The first piece that Muceus gravitates toward is a blue piece situated directly to the right of the entrance door to the museum.

"This one was awarded the Harnack/Lancaster Award; Arita Award for Beauty, Quality & Functionality," Muceus explains. "The piece is titled 'I'm So Blue' and is by Mario Quilles. We gave it this award for a few reasons. It's very different. I wasn't sure



Sheena Cameron



Penne Roberts

Celebration of Clay

at Ghost Ranch



Linda Kastner

if it was slab work or hand-built. Everything is finished off nicely and all the jurors liked its form. It's different. To me it sort of looks like a prickly pear, but I'm thinking of Sam Taylor's work when I say that — but that's what it looks like (to me). We liked the way it worked together. As far as an image, it flows nicely."

Quilles says of his work, "I grew up in New York City. After graduating from the High School of Industrial Arts, I began The Cooper Union Art School, then I went on to work in the New York advertising and graphics world as an art director for a number of years. I bought a loft in SOHO in its early years and was there

for over twenty years. In 1985 I moved to Los Angeles where I went on to study ceramic arts, glaze chemistry, Raku and low firing techniques. In 1990, on my way to Portugal, I stopped to see and old friend in Santa Fe and have been here ever since. I have continued to work in ceramics for three decades. After those

many years of living in urban areas, when I arrived in Santa Fe, the arroyos and skies, and wild cacti, led me to start making clay pieces which reflected my new surroundings. To this day I'm still influenced by the abstract shapes of the cactus above ground and the roots below ground. I found an oyster shell in my back yard



Marcia Clasgens

and came to realize that at one time this area was covered by ocean and then glaciers. This has been reflected in my work. The work reveals itself in colorful images and shapes, which I hope then resonate with the viewer. The pieces are low-fired stoneware, which allows me to get a range of engobe (A white or colored clay slip coating applied to a ceramic body to give it decorative color or improved texture. A clay slip which is colored with metal oxides or stains, used for coating the surface of a pot either before or after bisque firing) bright colors. Some of the glazes are airbrushed and some are hand-painted. The pieces are all slab built, rolled out with a rolling pin, and then hammered from the inside to create the surface shapes. I am using handmade tools, which I make from roots and branches that I have found along the arroyos, to do the hammering. I also use industrial mats for additional textural effects. The pieces are never perfectly symmetrical, but reflect nature's

asymmetrical designs."

The next piece Muceus talks about is called 'Old Meets New' and it was created by Daisy Kates and earned an award of merit. There were three of the merit awards given to pieces the jurors felt needed special recognition but were not going to win one of the other awards.

"This (Kates' piece) interested jurors because it is multi-media, combining canvas, wood and ceramics," Muceus explains.

Kates has been a ceramic artist for over forty years. For the past several years she has also been painting in acrylics and sometimes creates assemblages that include small ceramic elements.

In addition to being a studio artist, Kates has had a long-term career as an educator of ceramic arts in social service settings. She has taught students of all ages including those with special

needs and disabilities and was the ceramic art teacher at an agency for the blind for ten years. She also developed and taught the pottery program for the City of Albuquerque, Department of Senior Affairs, for twenty-eight years.

Another merit award was given to a fairly massive piece by Tamara Cameron called 'A Part of Me', which reminded one viewer of the Stone Man in the movie 'The Point' by Nilsson.

It has a massive feel to it, as if you have just walked upon a large group of boulders stacked upon one another, but instead of the feeling of boulders, you get the impression of a body made out of separate elements.

Cameron is a clay artist whose sculptural work is inspired by and derived from the human form. Her first memory of clay is indelible. Passing through a pottery studio at the age of eight, she was mesmerized by a woman throwing

a vase on a wheel. Being witness to a spinning ball of clay guided by a pair of hands into a vase was momentous, wowing the seeds of what would eventually become Cameron's life passion. During her earlier professional career in Atlanta, Cameron attended several art classes at Georgia State University. While sketching one of Henry Moore's sculptures she fell in love with the intelligibility and fluidity of his forms, which is evident in 'A Part of Me'.

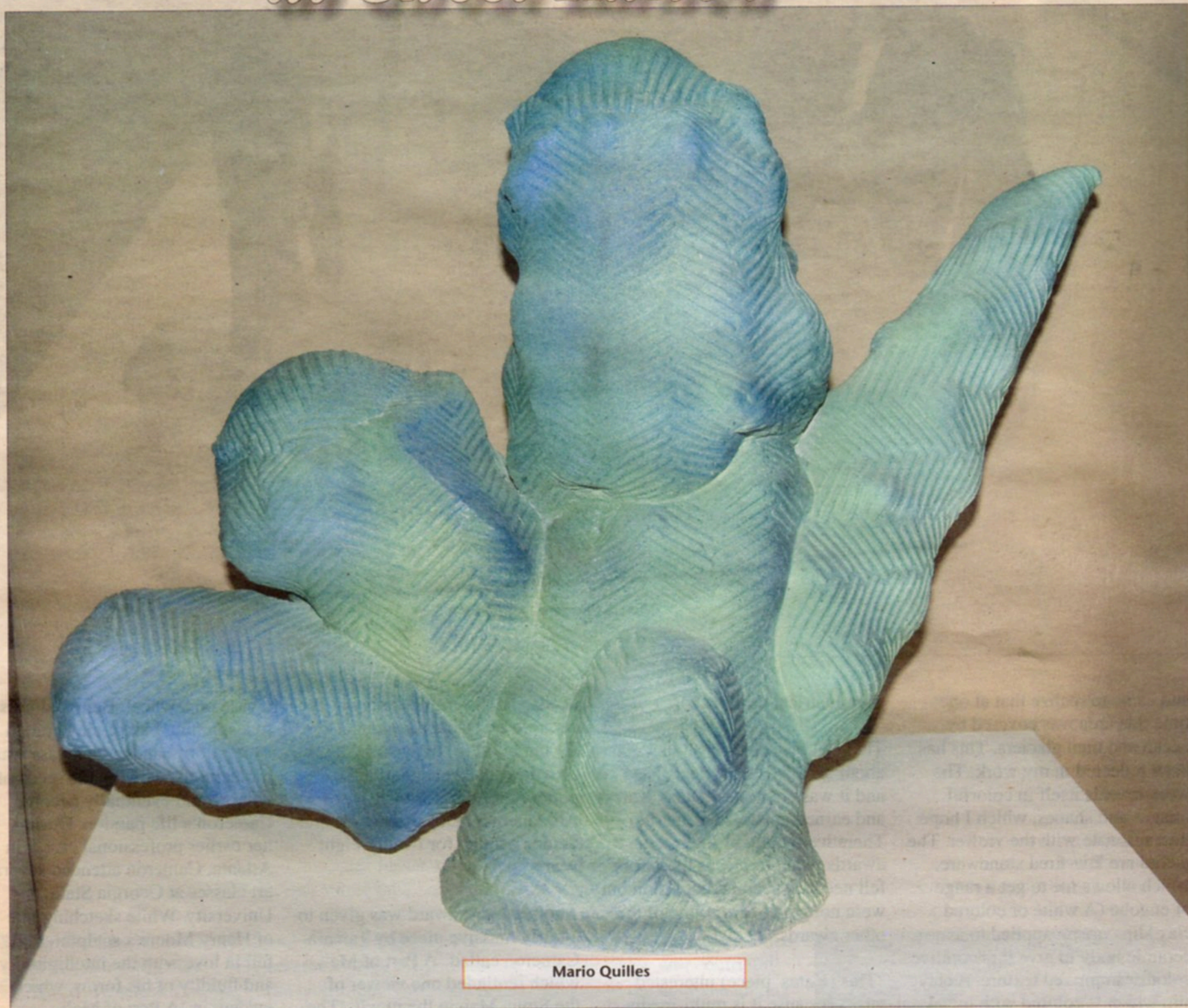
'Best of Show' was a sleek, modern looking piece titled 'Unrecorded Places' by Penny Truitt.

Truitt reflects a bit on her work:

"Contemplative time is an integral part of my approach to my work," Truitt says, "to be mindful of my surroundings and to be connected to the earth through working with clay. Insights that emerge are themes which I continually try to interpret; intersections, perhaps, of an internal and

Celebration of Clay

at Ghost Ranch



Mario Quilles

external landscape. I want to distill the feelings I have about where I live and where we all live in a timeless expanse and to express these feelings within the discipline of ceramics. On looking back, I see an innate connection to the minimalism that defines the oriental aesthetic. I find that making pieces from thin slabs allows an interplay of soft surfaces and decisive edges. Non-symmetrical shapes that contain darkness demand accents which imply movement and

direction towards the inner space. Involvement in the process is of central importance. To capture the marks of the smoke and flames, I fire each piece in a Raku kiln and have chosen a palette of matt glazes. I want the skin of the piece to be imbued with the action of the firing, the random drift of quiet flame printed on the clay."

After discussing award-winning pieces, Muceus walks around the museum a bit and points out

pieces that she particularly likes.

"I really like the 'Silent Village' by Marcia Clasgens because I'm an archeologist. It's not micaceous but to me it still gives me the thought of micaceous. The shape or the architectural lines remind me of the Santa Rosa de Lima chapel ruins in Abiquiú."

Clasgens will be a familiar name to Arts readers since her work has been mentioned many times in conjunction with the End-of-

Semester student art shows at Northern New Mexico College. She is one of those artists that doesn't rely on doing the same thing over and over, but looks to expand her horizons and offerings by constantly doing new things. As Muceus pointed out, 'Silent Village' will look familiar to anyone who has seen Santa Rosa de Lima in Abiquiú, whether that was Clasgens' inspiration or not. The lower wall in front and the opening to the east are distinctive and recognizable.



Christina Sullos

Muceus was also enamored with Sheena Cameron's 'Diana Runs with the Deer', 'Rust and Rhythm' by Pat Cohen, Penne Roberts' 'Leafy Sea Dragon Teapot' and a couple of whimsical plates by Kathryn Blackman, and 'Grace' by Christina Sullo.

Sullo says of her work, "I have always had a love for clay, and when I discovered Raku, I found my passion. The surprise spontaneity of each firing is thrilling. Primitive and ethnic art are especially interesting to me and influence the style of my work. It gives me a feeling of connecting with ancient ancestors."

Sullos' comment about the ethnic influence on her work is very evident in 'Grace'. The combination of textures also makes this piece very alluring.

One large piece sitting next to the Sea Dragon teapot was

a collaborative work titled 'Ol' Dusty (A Collaboration)' by Christ Casey and Teresa Larrabee. The piece really has the look of, hmm, dual personality or that divide within us all.

Casey focuses on making forms and devoting his aesthetic to the movement of the individual line. Larrabee focuses on figurative sculpture and utilitarian vessels that challenge the distinction between 'sculpture' and 'vessel'. Her interest in humorous imagery and facial expressions is very evident in the collaborative piece.

Linda Kastner has what one might refer to as a tapestry ceramic plate called 'Climate Change'. One of the elements remind the viewer of 'Under a Wave off Kanagawa', also known as The Great Wave or simply The Wave, which is a woodblock print by the Japanese artist Hokusai done between 1830 and 1833 and is one of those images that is very



Tamara Cameron

recognizable but hard to attribute to a specific artist.

Kastner says of her work: "In my work I impress upon the clay my interpretation of the textures and images I experience in the world around me. My mother died a few years ago. Among her belongings was a letter I had written to her more than 30 years before. In that letter I said: "I am really getting into pottery. I feel that it is what I would like to do for the rest of my life..." Although I have kept my hands in the clay, it has taken me over 30 years to finally be able to sell pots and teach ceramics. Of course, there is no making a good living, but corny as it still sounds, I feel fulfilled and satisfied."

And you can see a satisfaction in this piece by Kastner. It probably made her smile, or laugh right out loud, as she had this giant wave and tornado-looking swirling mass approaching the sunbathers

on an idyllic island paradise. Climate Change indeed!

'Celebration of Clay' is a wonderful show and one you will not want to miss.

Essentials

When: Through October 2. The Ghost Ranch Museum hours are Monday through Saturday 9-5, and Sunday 1-5.

Where: Ghost Ranch Education and Retreat Center is located on US Highway 84, 14 miles north of Abiquiá

Info: For further information visit nmpotters.org or call Barbara Campbell at 575.581.4430.