

International Conference and Expo on **Ceramics**

August 17-18, 2015 Chicago, USA

Primitive firing techniques in high art ceramics

Cindy Ingraham Keefer

Susan Schomburg Gallery, USA

Over the course of human history, survival has depended in part by the successful storage of food in solid containers. Ceramic objects have also served us for many domestic purposes from birth through life and into death. Due to industry, Ceramic wares made by hand are now less essential for our survival. Historically, ceramic wares made only for decor demonstrated a wealthy culture, where people had ample time for art; as in the classical period of ancient Greece, or in the fertile lands of Asia and the Americas. These firing technologies that were integral to cultural growth are what inspire me to create less useful objects of art. The physical science of oxidation and reduction known to cause coloration is fascinating. The organic and flammable materials used are transformed into colorants under the high temperatures and these surface colors vary based on the sensitivity to oxygen. Clay vitrifies at various temperatures, depending upon their elemental composition. Firing techniques have developed based on the available clay bodies within the region. For example, red clay which is high in iron may fire to hardness, or vitrify, at 1000°F therefore; the firing technology to bring ceramic vessels to vitrification was created to achieve the greatest success rate with the least breakage or melting. My interest has brought me to mining clay, processing it to a workable body and throwing on the wheel small works of art, functional and non-functional. I also like to create large multi sectional works of art that are fired using a Saggar kiln, a pit fire or a Raku kiln which are used to impart color on low fired bisque ware. My presentation will demonstrate the life process of one of these large works of art that was inspired by the ceramicists throughout history.

Biography

Cindy Ingraham Keefer has a Bachelor of Science in Art from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where she studied ceramics with Don Reitz for 3 1/2 years. She then moved to Montana to receive her graduate degree in Art Education and met Francis Senska who taught her about the native clays and glazes in the area. She incorporated primitive ceramic processing techniques into her own teaching curriculum in Nelson. Now she is a studio artist working in Hermosa Beach, CA and creates paintings, ceramic vessels and bronzes.

cindyikeeper@gmail.com

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