



FROM FUNCTION:
Paula Murray & Jim Thomson
November 18, 2006 – February 25, 2007
Permanent Collection Corridor.

FROM FUNCTION:

More than any other medium, ceramics is first taught by construction methods. The youngest child can be shown how to make a pinch pot from a ball of clay. The creation of a vessel from rolling coils or slabs of clay is not that much more difficult. Even in art school or college, beginner students make pots, mugs and bowls. The idea of making a vessel is inherent in the understanding of the medium. While the production of the functional, useful object can be raised from that of a craft to the level of art, (both the Ancient Greeks and the Far Eastern ceramists have shown us this for millennia) many a time the vessel that is not just a pot is more expressive, commands greater attention and continues to fascinate long after the simple pot has merely become its function (it must be said that the vessel that is designed so well, so that you do not notice it while you are using it is of the highest order of the craft).

Paula Murray and Jim Thomson are two artists who have pushed their work well beyond the limits of function. Both of them have honoured the craft and the history of the medium while searching out a higher understanding of their art. Human beings want to understand their surroundings and so give meaning to what they see around them. This characteristic pertains to all things from the physical nature of things to the questions that are the realm of philosophy and religion. Each artist has taken the function form and ascribed a further meaning to the form.



Paula Murray, FRAGMENTED EARTH, 2005
Porcelain incorporating fibreglass, sandblasted, salt fired, wood base

Murray's work has its origin in the simple bowl form. From there she has incorporated elements from the landscape into her work. Living on the very edge of Lake Meech, her home opens up on the panorama of the changing seasons and the ebb and flow of water at her doorstep. It is very easy to find the physical references to the land in her work, from ripple patterns that the water makes in the sand in the work titled 'Tidal Pool', to the layering of rock strata seam in 'Open Shell'. But Murray has gone beyond these physical reminders of the landscape to investigate the forces of nature. While the surfaces of her work often seem to resemble surfaces eroded by wind and water, (the changes wrought by stress, whether they comes from the way mud cracks as it dries in the heat of the sun, to the slow shift of tectonic plates against each other), these forces that pull the physical world apart are always present. Murray continues to push the physical limits of her medium in her quest for expression, exploring processes that enhance and test the limits of clay.



Jim Thomson, 22 FAMILIARS. 2006 (Installation)
Stoneware, slip, glaze

As Murray has delved deeply into the processes to gain greater understanding and expressiveness in her work, Jim Thomson has looked into the very nature of the vessel form. His 'Familiars' are the product of some twenty years of pot making. He calls these works 'Familiars' as the various parts that make up these pieces – the colours, the geometric and organic surface patterns, the clay textures and the forms all appear as important stylistic elements in his work. He has looked at the vessel form in terms of the processes involved. The storage of materials, the way that things change while being stored and the passage that happens to materials from one place to another are all-inherent in the vessel form. At the same time Thomson has looked at the metaphor for the vessel and remembered that many different religions and philosophies use this term to represent the individual in society.

Murray and Thomson have both extended their understanding of the functional form to encompass a larger view of the world around them. Murray with her exploration of her material and processes and Thomson through his investigation of the metaphysical have added to our greater understanding. They both have created objects of great physical beauty, a trait that continues to entrance us, but their quest for understanding is what continues and will continue to fascinate us. Functionality, which is the goal of many ceramists, here is the starting point for them. They have not forgotten where they have started from, they remind the viewer of this, but have shown us how much further one can go.

Jonathan Smith
Permanent Collection Curator

LIST OF EXHIBITION WORKS

PAULA MURRAY

TIDAL POOL. 1986
Thrown and assembled porcelain, salt fired, bronze base
Collection of the Artist.

BOWL. 1980
Thrown porcelain, salt fired
Collection of the Artist.

SLIT BOWL. 1983
Thrown porcelain, salt fired willow base
Collection of the Artist.

JOURNEY. 1004
Coiled paper clay, salt fired
Collection of Hans Adler.

TIDAL POOL. 1989
Thrown and assembled porcelain, salt fired
Collection of the Artist.

TORSO SERIES. 2000
Porcelain incorporating fibreglass, sandblasted, salt fired
Collection of the Artist.

TORSO SERIES. 1998
Porcelain incorporating fibreglass, salt fired
Collection of Hans Adler.

FRAGMENTED EARTH. 2005
Porcelain incorporating fibreglass, sandblasted, salt fired, wood base
Private collection.

EROSION BOWL ON BASE. 1988
Slip cast porcelain, salt fired, wood base
Collection of the Artist.

EARTH MOVES. 2004
Porcelain incorporating fibreglass, sandblasted, salt fired, wood base
Private collection.

SHELL. 2004
Coiled paperclay, salt fired
Private collection.

VEINS. 2004
Porcelain incorporating fibreglass, sandblasted, salt fired, wood base

MEDITATION ON BREATHING. 2005
Porcelain incorporating fibreglass, sandblasted, salt fired, wood base
Private collection.

MACKEREL SKY. 2002
Porcelain incorporating fibreglass, sandblasted, salt fired, wood base

SLICED VASE. 1984
Thrown porcelain, salt fired
Collection of the Artist.

ERODING LANDSCAPE. 2006
Porcelain incorporating fibreglass, sandblasted, salt fired, wood base
Collection of the Artist.

OPEN SHELL. 1988
Slip cast porcelain, salt fired, bronze base
Collection of the Artist.

NESTING BOWLS. 1987
Thrown porcelain, salt fired with lustre
Collection of the Artist.

TIDAL POOL. 1996
Thrown and assembled porcelain, salt fired
Private collection.

JIM THOMSON

22 FAMILIARS. 2006
(Installation)
Stoneware, slip, glaze

FAMILIAR. 2006
Stoneware, slip, glaze

THREE FAMILIARS. 2006
Stoneware, slip, glaze

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

The Burlington Art Centre gratefully acknowledges the financial support of our Membership; Corporate Members and Sponsors; the BAC Foundation; Arts Burlington; the Volunteer Council; the City of Burlington; the Ontario Art Council; The Canada Council for the Arts; and the Federal Department of Canadian Heritage.



Canada Council
for the Arts

Conseil des Arts
du Canada



ONTARIO ARTS COUNCIL
CONSEIL DES ARTS DE L'ONTARIO

ISBN: 1-897052-34-0

BURLINGTON
ART
CENTRE



Burlington Art Centre
1333 Lakeshore Road
Burlington, Ontario L7S 1A9

Phone: (905) 632-7796 Fax: 632-2078
info@BurlingtonArtCentre.on.ca
www.BurlingtonArtCentre.on.ca

Gallery Hours
Monday to Thursday 9am to 10pm
Friday and Saturday 9am to 5pm
Sunday 12pm to 5 pm

Curators: Jonathan Smith
Photos: courtesy of the artists, Jonathan Smith
Publication: Chris Howard

Cover image: TORSO SERIES. 1998
Porcelain incorporating fibreglass, salt fired
Interior photos: Jim Thomson Installation photo with
studio photo inset

