

contemporary ceramics

FAMILIAR

UNKNOWN

**ARTISTS:** Susan Beiner, Rebekah Bogard, Rebecca Hutchinson, Anne Drew Potter. **CURATOR:** Ovidio Giberga. **RECEPTION:** Thursday, December 3, 2009. **DATES:** December 3, 2009 through February 13, 2010.

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## The Familiar Unknown

Ovidio Giberga

**E**xpectations, preconceptions, and what we overlook or take for granted are states of mind that close us off from considering other possibilities or perspectives. At the risk of becoming out of touch or obsolescent we must continually survey the world around us and consider our perspective. This exhibition shares some of the exciting works being created in the field of ceramics today. While each of the four artists works from her own aesthetic and conceptual framework, the exhibition represents only a portion of today's expanding field of ceramics. I hope to pique peoples' interest in contemporary ceramics and inspire them to continue to seek out all its forms.

Looking across the ceramic discipline today we might find a familiar landscape with some new landmarks but a significant change has taken place just below the surface. There has begun a fundamental shift in the way ceramic art is perceived and discussed that is in turn inspiring new ideas and methodologies. This is in part, symptomatic of current trends in the art world at large; the blurring of what defines art, craft and design. It is also due to an increase in the quality of education and scholarship in the field. More importantly however, it is because ceramics has become more accessible. The globalizing effect of the internet has provided unprecedented access to images and ideas that lie outside traditionally defined boundaries,

forging links between unlikely perspectives and communities. This has facilitated a wave of critical dialogue and aesthetic analysis that is further defining the ceramics vernacular. While these developments have broadened the field it has also reaffirmed ceramics historical relevance to global politics, economics, culture, and the everyday human experience. This is nowhere more evident than in the numerous websites and blogs such as [Criticalceramics.org](http://Criticalceramics.org), [Artaxis.org](http://Artaxis.org), [Extremecraft.com](http://Extremecraft.com), and Dennis Stevens' online podcast "Redefining Craft for the 21st Century." However, the mediated experience of the internet one cannot attain a true sense of the world outside. This exciting and dynamic development in ceramics is best experienced in person in front of the work.

Rebecca Hutchinson's delicate and ephemeral forms challenge conventional ideas of the vessel and the permanence of ceramics. They are constructed on site from mostly locally gathered materials: wood, fibers and unfired clay.



Rebecca Hutchinson

Having the appearance of nest or hive structures, the forms take shape as the artist responds to the physical realities of material and space with her own aesthetic sensibilities. The forms exist only for the duration of the exhibition. Over the course of the exhibition the pieces undergo subtle changes. One can smell the damp clay and fibrous materials and as time goes by the clay dries and develops cracks and small fragments that may fall to the floor. Aspects of her work certainly cross over into other disciplines such as performance, fiber and time-based arts. There are many levels of meaning to this complex work, whether alluding to questions of ecology and sustainability, or aesthetics and material culture.

Industry and new technologies have encouraged many newcomers to ceramics. It is now less technically burdensome and more user-friendly because of the availability of computerized kilns, premixed, clay bodies and specialty glazes, including faux effects and a new spectrum of commercial colors. This has also encouraged crossover and experimentation by artists who normally work in other mediums such as Tony Cragg, Cindy Sherman, and Beverly Semmes among others. Despite these advances, ceramics still requires some degree of training or technical assistance. For centuries, artists working in clay also had to be like alchemists developing new technologies and processes to broaden their aesthetic. Over time, this specialized practice, an intersection of art and science, led to the natural development of an aesthetic unique to ceramics. The importance of this aesthetic and tradition is not diminished by today's broadened methodology. Quite the opposite, it provides fodder and a tangible presence to engage new ideas.



Susan Beiner

Clay is one of the most common and base materials, but historically it is also one of power, privilege, and wealth. While not always politically overt, ceramics history is full of controversy and contention. Artists such as Greyson Perry, Adrian Saxe, Fred Wilson, and Susan Beiner exploit this high/low status of ceramics to reinforce ideas in the work. Beiner's large wall piece "Synthetic Reality" is made up of hundreds if not thousands of individually rendered porcelain flower and plant varieties. This work makes subtle reference the opulence of King Louis XV who decorated his palace and gardens with thousands of realistically rendered and glazed porcelain

## Curator Biography

### OIDIO GIBERGA



Ovidio currently lives and works in San Antonio, Texas where he heads the Ceramic program at the University of Texas at San Antonio. He received his M.F.A. from the University of Florida in 1996. Ovidio is a first generation American of Cuban heritage. He spent much of his life living and working in Spain, Italy, Colombia, Venezuela, and various regions throughout the U.S. These experiences have provided him with a broad cultural perspective that has become a source of inspiration for his work.

Ovidio has been invited to present workshops and lectures throughout the U.S. including NCECA, Alfred University, California State University Chico, University of Hartford in Connecticut, University of Montana, and recently at The Potters Council Symposium 2008 "Surface, Form and Substance" in Indianapolis. Ovidio's works are exhibited nationally in museums, galleries, and college and university venues. Publications include: "Finding the Balance" April 2008 issue of *Ceramics Monthly*, "The Best of New Ceramic Art" by Hand Books Press, and "The Figure in Clay" by Lark Books. Ovidio's work is also in a number of public and private collections.



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