

SCAA Jury Statement

I would like to thank the SCAA for inviting me to judge their 47th Annual Earthworks Exhibition. Over those 47 years I have seen many of these annual exhibits and I have participated in a number of them too. This 2020 version finds us all in a very strange place and time. The SCAA should be commended for 'keepin on,' renewing their commitment as a vital clay center in our region. It is a lively and important presence for ceramic making.

From the beginning it was my goal to be more inclusive rather than exclusive. Now doesn't seem to be the time to be over critical or haughty in any way. I wanted to include at least one work from everyone that entered, from those in their early stages of working in clay, to those with a more sophisticated approach to manipulating the material. As I observed the works, my comments were meant to be constructive not destructive. I tried to offer historical references or technical/skill-based comments where appropriate. The intent was to be helpful, always trying to help each artist be better in expressing their vision in clay. Of course, all of this is tempered by own sensibilities and experience as a potter who has been looking at and making pots for over 45 years. This is both my limitation and strength.

During the last six months it has been difficult for many people to even find a place to work. Helm House has been that refuge in South County, RI for many wayward potters looking for a place to encounter clay and a community to share it with. The artists here found that place and I expect they will continue to share their ideas about clay and the potter's craft.

The range of technique and idea was also interesting to observe. I was surprised to see how many artists were experimenting with saggar and smoke fire techniques of all kinds. The active mark of the fire has led many of these folks to "draw with the fire," allowing these marks and colors to reveal themselves through this active process.

In the end, the cream rose to the top and the three Award Winners and four Honorable Mentions all showed a sophistication of idea and technique that would allow the work to compete anywhere. Essentially this exhibit offers a snapshot of our Covid Time in Clay in our region. My hope is that some of the feedback and the ability to participate in this exhibit offers all a bit of encouragement to continue your search in clay.

Like Jerry Springer, I thought I'd offer one final thought, "Make More."

Jay Lacouture
Carolina, RI
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