



Celebrating Philadelphia's American Craft Fellows

By Jennifer Zwilling, Curator of Artistic Programs at The Clay Studio

As a part of Craft NOW Philadelphia, a partnership amongst the Philadelphia Art Alliance, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, and the Center for Art in Wood, The Clay Studio presents *Fellowship in Clay*. This exhibition celebrates four of the most influential ceramic artists working in Philadelphia in the last 65 years. Rudolf Staffel and William Daley represent the first generation of the Contemporary Studio Craft Movement that exploded onto the art scene in the late 1940's at the end of World War II. Paula Winokur and Robert Winokur were part of the second wave; they were among the first students of the origin generation. These four artists have not only developed successful, unique bodies of work during their long careers, but each were leaders of the most important university ceramics programs in the region: Philadelphia College of Art (UArts), Tyler School of Art, and Arcadia University. Together, these ceramic arts educators shaped a large percentage of the college ceramics students in Philadelphia for most of the second half of the Twentieth Century.



Rudolf Staffel
Light Gatherer
Porcelain
Collection of Vincent Lim and
Robert Tooley

Rudolf Staffel is best known for his groundbreaking work with unglazed porcelain and is often credited with inspiring the wider use of porcelain among studio potters. The title *Light Gatherers* highlights Staffel's interest in light as a primary artistic subject. From his initial discovery of porcelain as a light conductor, he experimented for the rest of his life, pushing the medium in a quest for the perfect texture and malleability. Working with the same material for four decades resulted not in repetition, but in continued experimentation with forms that are endlessly surprising, nuanced and varied.

The stoneware vessels of **William Daley** are monumental and complex. Like Staffel, Daley has always pushed the boundaries of his material, experimenting to find the perfect clay body and the most effective method to create his large-scale vessels. His work seems at once to be ephemeral and as old as the cosmos, representing the geometry of ancient architecture, symbology, and the joy of possibilities. Daley himself contains multitudes: he is spiritual and spritely, while being deeply grounded in the earth, calling himself a Mud Man. Daley is a master of forming clay skillfully, infusing his forms with meaning and developing new techniques to achieve his vision. These characteristics are quintessential to the Contemporary Studio Craft Movement from 1946 to the present and the reason William Daley is an exemplar of the Movement.



William Daley, Guardian Vesica, Unglazed stoneware, 2005
Collection of Thomas Daley



Paula Winokur, Glaciers Edge II, Porcelain, black lucite ledge, 2015

Known for her hand-built porcelain sculpture, **Paula Winokur's** work reflects a strong interest in geological formations and the effects on them of time and nature. Her choice of porcelain echoes the subject matter of her work. "I have chosen to work with this clay because it has allowed me to explore issues in the landscape without necessarily making literal interpretations. It can be minimal and sometimes surreal in its starkness." Becoming increasingly politically motivated over the years, Winokur's recent work reflects her concern about climate change and the effects of human activity on the environment. While glaciers are melting and churning, she shows us ice cores with their dwindling volumes. Her peaceful white forms reveal the disturbing reality of earth's changing surface.

For **Robert Winokur**, as for many artists, the material he uses serves as a defining characteristic in the meaning of his work. Themes that repeat throughout his career are houses, trees, vegetables, flying machines and landscapes. He often uses Pennsylvania Brick Clay, a material he calls out to reiterate the importance of home in his work. The house form is one of the most common in his body of work, but he explores the shape of a house in so many ways that the viewer is guaranteed a surprise around every corner and through each doorway. Houses are used to support biblical stories, fairy tales, and sometimes contain or are supported by gardens of vegetables. The prototypical house shape, a square with a triangle on top, is also abstracted; they are stretched, toppled, stacked, or looked at from an aerial point of view.



Robert Winokur, Shrine for a Cage House, Salt-glazed Pennsylvania brick clay, 1999

Fellowship in Clay will also be honoring **Helen W. Drutt English**, Honorary Member of the College of Fellows, by sharing some of the rich materials from her extensive archive. Her role in the Studio Craft Movement in Philadelphia and worldwide deserves a great deal of attention and praise. Her hard work on behalf of the artists working in craft media in Philadelphia helped make the city a major center of the renaissance of craft arts from the late 1960s until today. She was a founding member of the Philadelphia Council of Professional Craftsmen (PCPC) and in 1973 founded the Helen Drutt Gallery, one of the first galleries in the country dedicated to Contemporary Craft.

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The exhibition will run in The Clay Studio's galleries through November 29, 2015.

