

## NEWS RELEASE FROM NORTHERN CLAY CENTER

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*Additional Images and information about the artists are available upon request.*

### Jerome Artists in Retrospect: Reflections on 17 years of ceramic artists project grants

January 11 – February 24, 2008

Gallery M

Opening Reception: 6-8 pm, Friday, January 11, 2008



**Above Left:**

**Gary Erickson**

*Yin Yang Heads*, 2007, porcelain, 6" x 10" x 6"



**Above Right:**

**Robin Murphy**

*Whippet*, red earthenware, terra sigillata, glaze, 17" x 14" x 7", 2006

Northern Clay Center has awarded project grants to emerging Minnesota ceramic artists since 1991, with the support of the Jerome Foundation of St. Paul. This year NCC has invited past Jerome recipients to reflect on the impact of the Jerome grant on their personal and professional lives as artists.

51 ceramic artists have received Jerome project grants since the Foundation first started funding the program through NCC. Visitors to this retrospective will have an opportunity to read reflective statements by past Jerome recipients and view images of their current work. This exhibition pays tribute to the Jerome Foundation's focus and demonstrates the transformative impact the Jerome grants have had on the immediate recipients, as well as on the state of the arts in Minnesota and beyond. Participants in the retrospective will include such artists as Judy Altobell (1991), Frank Brown (2000), Lisa Buck (2003), Kelly Connole (1998), Gary Erickson (1994) Edith Garcia (1999), Joseph Kress (1993), Cynthia Levine (2005), Robin Murphy (1997), Monica Rudquist (1995), Alex Spaulding (2003) and many more. (Note: Year in parenthesis indicates the year of each artist's Jerome exhibition.)

Below are two examples of reflective statements submitted for this exhibition:

"I received the Jerome Grant in 1991 for purposes of buying my first electric kiln. It still sits in the corner of my studio providing me with bisque and glaze firings many elements and kiln shelves later. I am not sure if sixteen years with one kiln represents the frugal nature of an artist, a testament to AIM kiln building or something similar to that love affair we have with our first car. It is shorter with a section removed, there have been flash fires as connector plugs blow and the elements are in a constant quest to take shapes other than what the slots require. Through it all, the kiln has been reliable and helped me finish sculptures, tiles and pottery forms. Our memories are diverse with firings for the organic abstract sculpture bought by the Smithsonian's Renwick Gallery, multiple amazing turquoise tiles for the Shoreview Community Center public art project and two-hundred and forty popcorn bowls commissioned by KSTP-TV. Perhaps I should also mention the warmth the kiln provides during the fall before my building heat is turned on. The kiln has been a lifesaver artistically, metaphorically and physically!

"Every time I fire my kiln I am thankful for the Jerome Grant. What the grant gave me beyond equipment was freedom. Knowing I could buy a kiln, I broke from the kindness of Hamline University and their studio to my personal studio on University Avenue in Prospect Park. Fifteen hundred square feet and a kiln gave me an opportunity to make anything I could imagine. To be limited by only your imagination is an artists dream. The kiln was that first step to my independence as an artist and a professional career."

--Gary Erickson

"My Jerome grant was for time in the studio experimenting with new forms and surface resolutions. During the grant period I was working within a functional context, concentrating on bowls, platters, and ewers. These forms became a vehicle to decorate, to emblazon surfaces with color and pattern. Persian rugs, Russian lacquer-ware, and Post Impressionist painters inspired the decoration.

"With time, some of the decorative sources began to creep physically into the work, a platter becomes suggestive of a flying carpet, and a teapot or ewer conjures up images of a magic lamp. Looking back, two things were happening that I wasn't totally aware of, my work was becoming more sculptural and I was looking outside of functional ceramics for ideas and inspiration. I still saw myself as a functional artist based on the forms I made even though the work was changing, expressing less concerns about use and more about other ideas.

"For the past two years my work has gone through transitions from functional ceramics to animal and figurative sculpture. I'd always been interested in sculptural work, but didn't know where to begin. It's difficult to try something new when you have achieved a certain level of success with your present artistic direction. The initial animals were simple silhouettes resting in pot like forms. Once I decided to abandon the pot and just make the animal a new door opened artistically for me. Function and decoration were no longer the issues but what the animals/figures were saying and doing through posture, gesture, and gaze. A recently completed group of animal and figurative sculptures are on exhibit at the Wisconsin Arts Board. "

--Robin Murphy

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## ABOUT NORTHERN CLAY CENTER

Northern Clay Center's mission is the advancement of the ceramic arts. Ongoing programs include exhibitions of sculpture and pottery by regional, national, and international artists; classes and workshops for children and adults; studio space and grants for artists; and a sales gallery representing many top ceramic artists from the region and elsewhere. Guided tours, hands-on events and artist demos are available. The facility is handicapped-accessible.

The Center is located at 2424 Franklin Avenue East, Minneapolis, MN 55406. It is one block south of Interstate 94, between 24th and 25th Avenues, just off the Riverside/25th exit. Gallery hours are Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday, 10 am to 6 pm; Thursday 10 am to 7pm; Sunday noon to 4 pm; closed Monday.

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