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Cover image: Blanka Groves, Covered Jar.
It is nearly impossible to predict a theme for a particular calendar year at NCC, though we do spend copious amounts of time outlining specific goals and objectives to guide our work some 4+ months prior to the start of any given year. Only after the year has ended and a good few months has passed, can we appropriately reflect on all that we did and didn’t do, and summarize it into a few powerful words and pages. While some years can be summed up with words like growth, change, loss, or risk, 2015 really seemed to scream, “Good better best! Never Rest!” 2015 was filled with good work from our staff and board; with good and strong and reliable programming efforts. 2015 was filled with opportunities to make things better, such as our MN NICE program, our efforts to expand our programming to our neighbors from East Africa and other diverse populations, our online sales methodology, our attempt to take some thousand pots on the road to NCECA.

2015 was also filled with “bests” for the organization as in we did our BEST to balance the budget and control spending and increase earned income streams; we demonstrated to our MN NICE graduates that our program was really the best of its kind and the best fit for them; we put forth our BEST efforts to identify and secure new sources of funding like the NEA; our artists reported that their experiences with NCC were some of the BEST they’ve had in their professional careers.

And, 2015 was filled with “never rests” as staff and volunteers worked tirelessly through countless hours and late nights and weekends, working towards our strategic objectives. Our facility was a-buzz some 24-hours a day between extensive open studio hours for students, business operation hours for the general public, and 24-hour access for our studio artists, and constituents finding resources in NCC’s online presence.

And so, with the words “Good, Better, Best, Never Rest” ringing in your ears, we’d like to share with you some highlights from our 2015 calendar year.

The following pages are a tribute to numerous successes from 2015, through both statistical and visual means.
Through our exhibitions program, we produced 10 shows that demonstrated the range of expressions in clay created by accomplished emerging and established ceramic artists. Work by 132 artists was included in the exhibitions; 88 of these artists were from MN. We produced an exhibition of contemporary Mexican ceramics, which enabled three artists from Mexico to visit NCC and conduct education programs, reaching 400 new constituents.

1/16 – 3/1  Gallery M | Three Jerome Artists
Recipients of emerging artist project grants awarded in 2014: Margeaux Claude, Matthew Krousey, and David Swenson.

Emily Galusha Gallery | Fogelberg, Anonymous Potter, and Red Wing Artists
Annual exhibition of work by recipients of grants to underwrite short-term studio residencies at NCC. Fogelberg Fellow: Ian Petrie; Anonymous Potter Fellows: Victoria Dawes and Ryan Archibald; Red Wing Fellow: Jason Trebbs.

3/13 – 4/26 Gallery M | Sexual Politics
Curated by Kelly Connole, this exhibition brought together six artists, at various stages in their careers, who skillfully gave voice to themes of sexual politics, from quiet suggestions to overt articulations, through a full variety of ceramic forms—functional vessels, wall tiles, and sculptures. In the past four decades, our society has seen dramatic shifts in the visibility and social acceptance of sexual and gender identities and expressions once dismissed simply as deviant. Through humor, irony, and tension, Sexual Politics aimed to acknowledge these changes, pause in the moment, and problematize the future. In addition to the exhibition, NCC sponsored artist visits from Kathy King, Ron Geibel, and Mark Burns. In addition, the works of Jeremy Brooks, Christina West, and Dustin Yager were included in this exhibition.

Emily Galusha Gallery | Eat, Drink and...: Minnesota Women Ceramic Artists Exhibition
Special occasions and significant life events are frequently celebrated with food, drink, and companionship. People want and need the opportunity to slow down and take time to enjoy good food, good company, and to celebrate important moments in their lives. Of course, ceramic wares are central to presenting the food in an elegant, fun, or simple way. Twenty ceramic artists from the Minnesota Women Ceramic Artists organization chose a special occasion to design a table setting around, complementing food and celebrating life. This exhibition was juried by Pattie Chalmers, assistant professor of ceramics at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, Illinois.

5/9 – 6/28 Gallery M | NCC Members Exhibition
In late spring, the NCC Members Exhibition featured the talent of NCC’s broad range of members: from professional artists and students, to collectors who dabble in the material.

Emily Galusha Gallery | Mondale Collection
Alongside the Members Exhibition was the Mondale Collection. In honor of the late Joan Mondale, and her long-time passion and advocacy for the arts, Northern Clay Center presented an exhibition of works from the ceramics collection of the Mondale family and pieces made by Mrs. Mondale herself. A founding member of Northern Clay Center, Mrs. Mondale spent a great deal of time working with her mentor, Warren MacKenzie, developing a love of Japanese-style pottery, which influenced both her making and collecting. Mrs. Mondale’s inspired interest resulted, over the decades, in an exemplary collection of Japanese and American ceramics, which NCC was proud to exhibit with the support of her family and the institutions that are now home to her artistic legacy.

7/11 – 8/30 Gallery M & the Emily Galusha Gallery | Six McKnight Artists
Six McKnight Artists featured the artwork of the 2013 McKnight Fellowship recipients, Kelly Conolle (Northfield) and Kip O’Krongly (Northfield), as well as the 2014 McKnight Resident Artists, Claudia Alvarez (New York, NY), Sanam Emami (Fort Collins, CO), Sarah Heimann (Lebanon, NH), and 2015 resident artist Jae Won Lee (Mason, MI). This annual exhibition provides the artists who have been generously supported by the McKnight Foundation with the opportunity to showcase the successes of their residency or fellowship. Conolle’s McKnight work was later featured in an episode of MN Original, a PBS series that features Minnesota artists.
**EXHIBITIONS**

9/25 – 11/8

**Gallery M | Out of the Labyrinth: Contemporary Mexican Ceramics**

In the fall, we produced Out of the Labyrinth: Contemporary Mexican Ceramics—the sister show to last fall’s True North: Contemporary Canadian Ceramics, which surveyed contemporary Canadian studio ceramics. In the United States, “Mexican ceramics” often calls to mind pre-Columbian pottery, folk ceramics such as those created in the village of Mata Ortiz, or the beautiful majolica Talavera ware and others. Out of the Labyrinth: Contemporary Mexican Ceramics went beyond these traditional approaches. Curated by Robert Silberman, this exhibition presented the work of established figures in contemporary Mexican studio ceramics. NCC partnered with the local Mexican Consulate to enable the shipping of work from Mexico, as well as artist visits by three of the participating artists. Artists included in the exhibition were: Eduardo Sarabia, Gerardo Azcunaga, Gloria Carrasco, Gustavo Pérez, Isadora Cuellar, Javier del Cueto, Maribel Portela, Paloma Torres, and Xawery Wolski.

Emily Galusha Gallery | MN NICE Exhibition

Alongside this exhibition, work by the inaugural year’s participants in NCC’s new MN NICE program (New Institute for Ceramic Education) was exhibited. Artists included: Vered Binyamini, Juss Heinsalu, Dawn Malcolm, Robyn Peterson, Denise Rouleau, Kate Smith, and Phil Smith.

11/22 – 1/4

**Gallery M | 2015 Holiday Exhibition and Sale**

Emily Galusha Gallery | Scenes from the Side of the Road

Scenes from the Side of the Road featured the work of Denver artist, Jamie Lang. Through a successful crowd-sourcing campaign, Lang created a collaborative mural employing images taken by the artist, or contributed by the general public. Lang used the photos to create large composites of cast adobe tiles, constructed through a process of encaustic and image transfer. By inviting people to send him photos of their daily lives, he encouraged them to take a moment, look around, and capture the things they might miss in their daily routines. Through this process, he hoped to explore how “our subconscious influences have a direct link to our self-identity.” This particular piece featured 90 photographs by over 45 contributors from around the country. In addition, the exhibition also included tiles that reference architectural structure, pattern, and ornamentation, that exuded a sometimes haunting, sometimes romantic sense of presence and longing.

In addition to these unique exhibitions, we published three catalogues, including the annual McKnight exhibition publication. While we do not have an explicit sales objective for our exhibition program, we were very fortunate to sell a great number of pots and sculptures from various exhibitions, well surpassing our budget, with over $28,000 in sales (25% higher than 2014). Also, with the launch of Northern Clay Center’s new website in 2014, exhibitions continues to have a greater web presence, with works for sale online, additional images, and downloadable didactic material.

In addition to producing the onsite exhibitions and catalogues, the Center continued offsite exhibition collaborations. NCC acted as co-curator for exhibitions featuring St. Croix Valley Watershed ceramic artists, hosted by the Phipps Center for the Arts, in Hudson, Wisconsin. Additionally, we toured the Jerome and McKnight exhibitions to Paramount Theater Visual Arts Center in St. Cloud, and to Winona State University, Bemidji State University, and MacRostie Arts Center in Grand Rapids, respectively.

None of these exhibitions and related programming would have been possible without the support of some very special donors: Continental Clay Company, Jerome Foundation, McKnight Foundation, George Reid, Windgate Charitable Foundation, the Minnesota State Arts Board, and a new funder, the National Endowment for the Arts.
Claudia Alvarez  
Marion Angelica  
Ryan Archibald  
Michael Arnold  
Bob Arnoldy  
Gerardo Azcunaga  
Leonard Baskin  
Joseph Bennion  
Sue Bergan  
Vered Binyamini  
Beth Bolgla  
Bob Briscoe  
Jeremy Brooks  
Mark Burns  
Lynda Buscis  
Rose Cabat  
Gloria Carrasco  
Pattie Chalmers  
Linda Christianson  
Kate Christopher  
Margeaux Claude  
Eileen Cohen  
Mariette Cole  
Elizabeth Coleman  
Kelly Connole  
Guillermo Cuellar  
Isadora Cuellar  
Peter D’Ascoli  
Sandra Daulton Shaughnessy  
Victoria Dawes  
Javier del Cueto  
William Dikel  
Amanda Dobbratz  
Sarah Dudgeon  
Sue Dunwell  
Craig Edwards  
Sanam Emami  
Debra Evans-Paige  
Joel Froehle  
Diane Gamm  
Ron Geibel  
John Glick  
Bill Gossman  
Guillermo Guardia  
Angela Heida  
Sarah Heimann  
Juss Heinsalu  
Kristine Hits  
Rachel Hoffman-Dachelet  
Karln Holen  
Norman Holen  
Maia Homstad  
Franny Hyde  
Peter Jadoonath  
Samuel Johnson  
Josine Kayser  
Kathy King  
Maren Kloppmann  
Matthew Krousey  
Jamie Lang  
Haejung Lee  
Jae Won Lee  
Mark Lellman  
Glynnis Lessing  
Warren MacKenzie  
Brynne Macosko Paguyo  
Dawn Malcolm  
Marta Matray  
Kate Maury  
Nick McNeely  
Karen McPherson  
Lotte Melman  
David Menk  
Keisuke Mizuno  
Kathy Mommsen  
Joan Mondale  
John Morse  
Linda Morse  
Yanagihara Mutsuo  
CJ Niehaus  
Claire O’Connor  
Kip O’Krongly  
Polonia Odahara Novack  
Ann-Charlotta Ohlsson  
Wendy Olson  
Amber Parsons  
Marcia Paul  
Rick Penning  
Gustao Perez  
Robyn Peterson  
Ian Petrie  
Maribel Portela  
Nick Renshaw  
Colleen Riley  
Sara Rogers  
Kathryn Rosebear  
Kimberlee Joy Roth  
Sara Rothholz Weiner  
Denise Rouleau  
Monica Rudquist  
Jack Rumpel  
Brenda Ryan  
Niwa Ryochi  
Eduardo Sarabia  
Sue Schweitzer  
Lynnea Schwieters  
Chris Scott  
Kato Seiji  
Tsujii Seimei  
Juliane Shibata  
Michael Simon  
Ginny Sims  
Chris Singewald  
Amy Smith  
Kate Smith  
Philip Smith  
Mic Stowell  
David Swenson  
Kato Takuo  
Shimaoka Tatsuzo  
Iren Tete  
Beth Thompson  
Julia Timm  
Paloma Torres  
Ohi Toshio  
Jason Trebs  
Brittany Trushin  
Mary Ann Wark  
Christina West  
Faith Wicklund  
Xawery Wolski  
Dustin Yager
Through strategic community partnerships, in-house offerings, and college and university collaborations, Northern Clay Center’s education and outreach staff reached record numbers of learners. From multi-week classes at NCC and around the community, to short, experiential workshops and weeklong clay camps, we tailored our educational offerings to all ages and stages and abilities.

- Our ClayToGo program reached 8,275 youth, families, and school children in 2015, up 24% from 2014, which had been our record year. This continuing increase in participants reflects both the need and interest from the greater community and the quality and diversity of our outreach programs. The diversity of our outreach partners was beyond our anticipation, with clay classes, offsite workshops and artist demonstrations, lectures and conversations taking place with the usual suspects: Twin Cities schools, community centers, care centers and institutions serving aging adults, as well as with the Uptown Art Fair, Northern Spark, Dangerous Man Brewing Company, and Khazana Tea Shop, among others. In reality, NCC operates in an era of increased interest and dependency on digital entertainment, and competition among not just other arts and cultural centers, but every other possible way in which people can spend their time. NCC continued to experiment with new ways in which to reach new audiences outside of the traditional means of scheduling a class or experience at the Clay Center, and had great successes of such through our ClayToGo outreach program.

- The ART@HAND program served adults 55+ in a variety of settings (at NCC, in nursing homes and care centers, at independent living centers, etc.) In 2015, we conducted 95 partnerships, reaching over 2,400 individuals (up from 2014 by 30%). Programs included short workshops and artist demonstrations, extended classes and residencies, and other activities that specifically met the needs of adults 55+ at various ability levels.

- In May of 2015, we graduated seven students in the inaugural year of the Minnesota New Institute for Ceramic Education (MN NICE), designed to provide college-level instruction for art educators, adults 55+, serious hobbyists, and post-BFA students. This certificate program is the result of over two years of planning and is now one of only a handful of comparable programs around the world. The program, led by artist and educator Ursula Hargens, works with well-known artists living and working in the region, as well as with visiting artists through NCC’s grant and exhibition programs. We had 11 new students enroll in the 2015/16 iteration of the program.

- NCC laid the groundwork for increasing the cultural diversity of our constituency in response to the reality of the homogeneity of our field. We designed 2015/16 exhibitions and related outreach to better serve communities of color and bridge the gap of clay education—from youth to professional artist. In an effort to engage our neighbors, we conducted two classes in spring of 2015, which provided hands-on, tailored clay programs to persons from Oromo, Ethiopian, Tigre, and Somali cultures.

Overall, attendance in NCC’s educational programs totaled 27,376—an increase of 36% over 2014.
We designed a framework for specialized instruction for art educators in 2015, and sought and secured substantial financial support from the Minnesota State Arts Board’s Arts Access program. We laid plans for a major expansion of our educator programs in 2016, all of which will be summarized in NCC’s 2016 annual report. Cities outside the metro, including Duluth, St. Cloud, and Mankato, were slated to hold workshops in collaboration with other ceramic makers from across Minnesota.

2015 was a record year for adult classes and enrollment, with 78 unique offerings and 935 learners, an increase of 23% and 33%, respectively, over 2014. While the overall numbers of workshops and attendees were lower than 2014, the diversity of our guest presenters ensured voices from outside of the state and the country were represented. The organized tours of our facility (with artist demonstrations) were higher than previous years, and the number of recorded guests on tours increased some 12%, with visits from local colleges and high schools, as well as a dramatic increase in numbers of visitors from our ClayToGo and ART@HAND programs, which typically have been a challenging audiences to bring in considering the time, travel and financial constraints many of these constituents are facing.

91 ceramic artists led workshops, lectures, events, and classes for NCC in 2015; 31 of these artists were from outside of Minnesota. Overall in 2015, education attendance—including participation in classes, workshops, tours, lectures, and outreach—totaled 27,376—an increase of 36% over 2014. The number of unique offerings/partnerships/collaborative programs also increased to 724, a 12% increase over 2014.

2015 TEACHING ARTISTS 92 individuals

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Our artist services program continued to serve artists at all stages of professional development—from advanced student and emerging artists, to mid-career and established ceramic artists.

NCC continued to regrant funds on behalf of the Jerome and McKnight Foundations, as well as through our Fogelberg, Anonymous Potter, and Red Wing Collectors Society Foundation Award programs.

We also made the second year of awards under the newly developed Warren MacKenzie Advancement Award, a travel/study grant for current students, recent college graduates, or recent apprentices to continue their education in any number of ways. Two grants ranging from $2,300 to $3,500 were awarded for artists to attend summer workshops, pursue public art projects, and study specific techniques with mentors. Awardees have also contributed to our online blog: www.northernclaycenter.blogspot.com. This grant program complements our emerging artist residencies, project grants, and mid-career residencies and fellowships, by providing important funding for current students and recent graduates around the country, while honoring an American master potter, Warren MacKenzie. The sales gallery also raised $5,000 through recollect, the sale of secondary market pottery, proceeds from which go to support NCC’s Anonymous Artist Studio Fellowship program.

We recently secured funding from the Jerome Foundation to support a new Multicultural Artist of Color Residency, which will provide an individual emerging artist with the opportunity to be in residence for a year at NCC, where s/he can develop work, exchange ideas and knowledge with other ceramic artists, and pursue further educational opportunities. This Residency is part of a long-term strategic goal for the organization: to enhance the offerings to artists at all stages of their careers.

The 2015 grant recipients and respective jury panels included:

- **Jerome Ceramic Artist Project Grants**—three grants of $6,000 were awarded to Brett Freund, Adam Gruetzmacher, and Joe Singewald. Funded by the Jerome Foundation, St. Paul. Selection panel: Mark Burns, Paul Eshelman, and Jae Won Lee.

- **McKnight Foundation Fellowships and Residency Grants**—two $25,000 fellowship awards to Ursula Hargens and Mika Negishi Laidlaw; three $6,000 residency awards (plus free studio space and other funds) to Kathryn Finnerty, Lung-Chieh Lin, and Helen Otterson. Funded by the McKnight Foundation, Minneapolis. Selection panel: Sam Harvey, Jennifer Komar Olivarez, and Linda Sormin.

- **Fogelberg and Anonymous Potter Studio Fellowships**—four awards of free shared studio spaces, plus firing and materials allowances, to Megan Mitchell, Joshua Woof, Pat Barnick, and Amanda Dobbratz. Fogelberg Studio Fellowships were funded by Soup It Up for Kids, Inc.; Anonymous Potter Studio Fellowships were funded by Smith Sharpe Firebrick Supply and secondary market sales of pottery.

- **Red Wing Collectors Society Foundation Award**—$1,000 to an emerging potter, Anna Metcalfe (selected through a nomination process). Supported by an endowed fund at NCC.

- **Warren MacKenzie Advancement Award** to support continued ceramic education for clay artists at emerging/student/post-student levels—two awards to artists Stuart Gair and Jacob Raeder. Selection panel: Ben Carter, Sarah Jaeger, and Amy Santoferraro.

We worked closely with each of our artist grant recipients, throughout 2015, to provide professional development, chances to engage with other artists and the public, and teaching, intern, mentor, and exhibition opportunities.
2015 for NCC’s studio artist program was a year of opportunity—professional and creative alike, as we worked to help develop artist skills; expose our makers to new ideas and techniques and traditions; and enable our artists to contribute to and benefit from our other areas of our programming.

• In the fall, visiting exhibition artist Isadora Cuellar spent three weeks in a private studio, creating work for the late September, *Out of the Labyrinth: Contemporary Mexican Ceramics*, exhibition. Her presence—both personally and professionally—helped to invigorate the studio program, as she became a lively addition to the community and freely shared her own experiences and techniques with her new Minnesota ceramic friends.

• In the early spring, NCC replaced the windows in the northeast corner of the building, near the kitchen and the McKnight Studio, which greatly improved the retention of heat the following fall and winter. Additionally, we gave that particular corner/entrance to the studio program a modest facelift, which went a long way for morale and first impressions of our space. Additionally, the studio artist glazing area was remodeled to better accommodate the actual act of glazing. Finally, late in the year, we renovated the southeast corner studio to better accommodate four of our MN NICE student artists and their work.

• Our new studio technician, Heather Barr, instigated a test glaze recycling program for our artists, wherein studio artists could offload their small batches of test glazes. These are then recycled into existing studio and class glazes, which has decreased NCC’s waste and will, over time, be a cost savings for the organization.

• NCC’s first *Members Exhibition*, in spring of 2015, offered studio artists a chance to put their wares in front of a critical eye of jurors. Ultimately, 21 studio artists were included in the juried exhibition, with David Menk’s work on the cover of the exhibition card, and Brenda Ryan’s work included in the promo materials as well.

• Two studio artists had the opportunity to produce tea bowls for a sizeable commission for Traditional Medicinals, which was made possible through our sales gallery.

• Studio artists had many opportunities to volunteer and teach on behalf of the organization in 2015, most notably through an event with Northern Spark in June and through the Holiday Open House family workshops in November.

• While offered for a few years, our Hot Seat Firing workshop took on a new life as it was retooled in an effort to be used as a training tool for studio artists who are relatively new to NCC and/or the firing process. We developed a “Firing Pathways” document, which is essentially a guideline for those wanting to learn to fire at NCC. Our attendance at such workshops has been very strong, and includes both advanced students and studio artists alike!

• The Annual Studio Artist Spring Sale took place in conjunction with the opening reception for the *Six McKnight Artists* exhibition. This exhibition always has a great draw, which boosted traffic and visibility for our 60+ studio artists.

• Throughout 2015, our studio program was also home to several artists enrolled in the MN NICE program, including spring graduates Kate and Phil Smith, Dawn Malcolm, Robyn Peterson, Vered Binyamini, and Juss Heinsalu; and year-two artists Audrey Jellison, Jamie Brogdon, Brenda Ryan, Debbie Schumer, and Polonia Odahara Novack.

• In the annual handing of the baton, we thanked Maia Homstad for her leadership of the SPOT program and events in 2015 and welcomed John Morse as the new coordinator.

• NCC’s gang of studio artists continued to be a unique mix, with emerging and mid-career makers, those seeking post-academic programs and pre-retirement, graduates of our adult classes and professionals on sabbaticals, and locals and visiting international artists. Our studios were home to 61 artists in 2015.

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**2015 STUDIO ARTISTS 61 individuals**

Marion Angelica
Ryan Archibald
Pat Barnick
Heather Barr
Susan Bergan
Vered Binyamini
Pam Bonzelet
Jamie Brogdon
Evelyn Browne
Tom Carli
Alex Chinn
Elizabeth Coleman
Peter D’Ascoli
Amanda Dobbratz
Katharine Ekszuzian
Sara Fenlason
Diane Gamm
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Jake Hartranft
Juss Heinsalu
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Rachael Hoffman-Dachelet
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Chris Singewald
Audra Smith
Phil Smith
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Michelle Summers
Iren Tete
Brittany Trushin
Mary Ann Wark
Josh Woof
Dustin Yager
Judith Yourman
There were numerous highlights to our sales gallery and APF programming in 2015, which included:

- In 2015, NCC’s gallery extended its representation of high-quality ceramics beyond its own store and website. Over a thousand pots by Minnesota and Wisconsin artists were for sale at the annual ceramic conference of NCECA (National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts) in Providence, Rhode Island, in March. We also continued our partnership with and added one additional local alehouse, where we conducted potter’s wheel demonstrations and offsite sales of ceramic beer steins. Other gallery partnerships included continued relationships with Room & Board, Heavy Table, and Cargill, which resulted in increased visibility as well as direct commissions.

- Overall, throughout 2015 the Center’s sales gallery represented 119 artists throughout the year, including holiday and APF artists, with 49 of those artists residing in Minnesota. Our gallery representation expanded to include nine jewelry artists who work with clay, whose work was on view during the launch of our holiday sale season. We invited three new permanent sales gallery artists during the biennial jury process and presented Featured Artist shows that included 8 guest artists.

- Our year-end gallery sales totaled over $259,000. Online sales increased by 20% over 2014, which accounted for 10% of the overall gallery sales in 2015. In 2015, sales between our Holiday Open House and the end of the year were $74,924, which showed a 10.2% increase over 2014’s sales of $68,009.

- Online analytics were employed throughout the calendar year in an effort to identify and steer traffic patterns on the website, track purchasing habits, and to enhance the link between social media use and advertising and sales. We redirected staff talents and resources to create an updated and more efficient experience in the online gallery.

- Northern Clay Center raised $6,433 from the sale of Warren MacKenzie work online. These funds help to support NCC’s artist services program through the provision of grants, residencies, and professional development opportunities for emerging artists, including the Warren MacKenzie Advancement Award, a research/education/professional development grant for emerging ceramic artists from across the country. The sales gallery also raised $5,732 through recollect, a secondary market sale of pottery, proceeds from which go to support NCC’s Emerging Artist Residencies program. This reflects a 52% recollect sales increase over 2014, and our number of generous collector donors continued to increase and provide us with the means to sustain these valuable programs.

- We continued to balance the national reputation and artists served through our gallery with our local community interest and neighborhood activities as we supported Seward Neighborhood’s Open Streets Festival, as well as the Franklin Frolic, and we hosted the Playwright Center for a special event.
2015 SALES GALLERY ARTISTS
118 individuals

Martye Allen
Linda Arbuckle
Ryan Archibald
Andrew Avakian
Chuck Aydlett
Mary Barringer
Tom Bartel
Jason Bige Burnett
Birdie Boone
Karl Borgenson
Wayne Branum
Andy Brayman
Heather Nameth Bren
Bill Brouillard
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Rebecca Chappell
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Karin Kraemer
Gib Krohn
Matthew Krousey
Jamie Lang
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Cara Long
Lee Love
Warren MacKenzie
Ruth Martin
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Jan McKeachie Johnston
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Branen Mercer
Ron Meyers
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Keisuke Mizuno
Nick Moen
Mike Norman
Lindsay Oesterritter
Jeffrey Oestreich

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Sandi Pierantozzi
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Nick Renshaw
Colleen Riley
Lindsay Rogers
S. C. Rolf
Carrin Rosetti
Kimberlee Joy Roth
Monica Rudquist
Ted Sauge
Pete Scherzer
Tricia Schmidt
Deborah Schwartzkopf
Johanna Severson
Laurie Shaman
Andy Shaw
McKenzie Smith
Erin Smith
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Munemitsu Taguchi
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Kyla Toomey
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Christy Wert
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Judith Yourman

Top to bottom: 2015 Holiday Cups by Linda Christianson and Joel Froehle. AJP Artists Jason Bige Burnett and Matthew Krousey. Shoppers at a busy Holiday Open House.
STAFF

2015 was a calendar year not unlike other years in terms of Northern Clay Center staffing. The organization has remained lucky in its hires, with a steady stream of talented, interesting, experienced individuals who desire to share their skill set with the organization. While, optimally, we’d retain all staff members for five years and beyond, the reality of our field and our world prevents such. Nevertheless, NCC staff members provided the usual high levels of dedication, working tirelessly to ensure our programming went off without a hitch, and, when that task proved impossible, they worked to put out fires, changing direction flawlessly mid-course. With a very big year of programming (completing year-one and starting year-two of MN NICE, hosting a variety of visiting artists, and producing Out of the Labyrinth: Contemporary Mexican Ceramics), NCC’s staff members remained crucial to its success. However, 2015 was not without loss of staff for the organization.

NCC’s long-time sales gallery and special events manager, Karen McPherson, left the organization mid-year when she relocated to be closer to her family in Colorado. She was replaced in early summer, after which time she generously provided her replacement with a month-long overlap for training. Tippy Maurant, the new staff member, brought with her 15 years of experience working in different capacities for NCC over the years, as well as much marketing, retail, and design experience in the for-profit sector. Jennica Kruse, NCC’s materials technician and resident artist (a 2-year position) transitioned from her post in late summer and was replaced by Heather Barr.

BUILDING

2015 continued NCC’s strategic course of bettering our facility at 2424 Franklin Avenue East. We completed Phase 2 renovations in late December, which included a major tuck-pointing project, exterior painting, and window repair/replacement in our studio artist area and in our offices, all of which were paid for by NCC’s building reserve fund.
The organization successfully supported ongoing programming efforts through earned income from classes, ceramic sales, and studio license and kiln/glaze fees. Our earned income increased 9% over 2014 and comprised 61% of our total organizational income. This represents a 10% increase over 2014; however, 2014 did include our final Regional Arts Development support grant from the Bush Foundation. We ended the year with a modest surplus of just over $11,000. Our total ceramic sales for 2015 were $369,245, 2% higher than 2014. Sales gallery sales totaled over $259,000, a decrease over 2014’s $271,000, but we made up that difference in pre-APF and event sales during our annual American Pottery Festival.

Education income topped over $354,000 (due to a sizable increase in demand for adult classes and fees associated with our MN NICE program), a 24% increase over 2014. Studio rental/kiln/glaze fees increased as well, attesting to the continued demand for space and facilities from the greater ceramics community.

The Clay Center ended 2015 with an impressive total paid in support to artists through grants, teaching fees, and commissions. We paid out over $512,000, the highest annual payout to date, bringing the total paid to artists since 1995 to $7.5 million.
We’ve shared with you a number of the “Goods, Betters, Bests” of 2015, all of which were made possible because of the good, better, best people involved in our organization—the partners, the community, the makers, the supporters. A few “people” highlights of 2015 include:

- NCC’s fall exhibition and the sister show to our 2014 Contemporary Canadian Ceramics exhibition, Out of the Labyrinth, Contemporary Mexican Ceramics, was a huge success, an equally huge learning curve, and a giant opportunity for direct work with new people and communities. Unlike any other exhibition of its kind, NCC’s show included a broad cast of contemporary makers who live and work in Mexico. We worked with several galleries across the US and Mexico and coordinated the shipping of the work of nine artists across the Mexican border. We partnered with the local Mexican Consulate to enable the shipping of work from Mexico (saving us over $15,000 in shipping costs), as well as visits by three of the participating artists. In addition, we reached over 400 local youth through partnerships with four community organizations, all of which were co-taught by visiting artist-in-residence for over a month, Isadora Cuellar, and NCC outreach teaching artists. Through joint marketing, we were able to expand the reach of the exhibition to new audiences of ceramic enthusiasts and others new to the medium, specifically Latino and Hispanic communities.

- While always integral to our operations, volunteer efforts for our organization reached a new level in calendar year 2015, with many new volunteers sharing their expertise (teaching, photography, marketing, etc.). We had over 150 volunteers logging over 4,300 hours for the organization. We continued to be humbled by the power of volunteerism at the Center, with our talented ambassadors sharing their time, expertise, talents, networks, etc.

- Support from our individual, corporate, and foundation donors enabled us to take steps in building a new audience of participants and supporters, and it also directly benefited the very individuals who continually participate, see, learn, explore, inspire, research, educate, and share—including the artists. Some 280 individual artists were involved with the Clay Center in 2015, as teachers, studio artists, grant recipients, exhibitors, and gallery artists (165 of those from Minnesota). It was an impressive group that covered a wide spectrum of making and training and teaching. A few of these artists shared their thoughts about NCC:

  “Thinking back to that APF I can only feel so blessed. It was such a highlight in my life at that moment in time. I really love what NCC does as a non-profit and the energy of the place is simply divine. It had been a long time since I felt so welcomed into an environment that NCC holds a special place in my heart.”

  “I feel very honored and lucky to have been present for so many beautiful events. I have never felt so feted and respected as an artist, and appreciate all of the arrangements, introductions, and opportunities prepared specifically for me in addition to the well developed and delivered programming present at Northern Clay Center.”

  “The opportunity to engage with respected peers while in residence was a fantastic and unexpected gift. Northern Clay Center and the surrounding Minneapolis area was a constant source of energy and engagement with the greater ceramic community. Shifts and parties across a small hardworking staff are exciting, refreshing, and speak highly of the hiring of motivated individuals and the camaraderie in the workplace.”
“The experience of both the exhibition and the opportunity to speak at the opening was very helpful to me, professionally. While a known personality in the ceramic world for many years, my studio output and visibility had waned over the past several years due to a number of outside situations. [The curator’s] invitation to participate with the other five artists in Sexual Politics came at a time when I wasn’t sure that anyone out there cared to see what I’d been doing...or even remembered me. Producing work for the exhibition was a sharp reminder that I still have things to make, and things to say. I’ve received a number of invitations to other venues, based strictly on my appearance in the NCC show. For that I am extremely grateful.”

“I watched the staff at NCC pull together as a team, time after time, with the most extraordinary amount of commitment. Words like ‘never’ and ‘always’ seem suspect, but I can say this without reservation, I always saw the staff smiling and happy. I love these people. Feeling a part of this community, their own pride for work extended into my own studio. And of course, quality is in the details. Everyone seemed to know their role and routine and how it fit into the larger vision of NCC. For aspiring clay centers, NCC should be the model to study.”

“In addition to the staff, the MN NICE program and its participants, the studio artists, instructors, students and professional artists in the area were all such fantastic hosts and friends it made me remember why I got into the field of ceramics in the first place, community. Being present in large community of diverse makers was one of the highlights of this experience.”

“I have since decided that work resulting from my time at NCC will remain constants in my practice... I credit my time at NCC for giving me the confidence and push to try anything in my practice.”

“The strength of the promotional platform and presence outside of the Twin Cities has lofted NCC onto the ceramic destinations map. I am always kept up to date of what shows, new programs, and opportunities, are approaching due to NCC’s strong web presence, and NO clay center can compete with the design quality of all of NCC’s print materials!”

Clearly, the Clay Center continues to attract an amazing mix of individuals—in our exhibitions program, through our classes and teaching opportunities, in our studios, through our offsite programming for youth, families, educators and aging adults, and in our sales gallery and American Pottery Festival. Clay itself requires a mix of materials, time, resource, and talent, so NCC’s own ability to draw an amazing mix of individuals, who invest varying degrees of talent, time, and resource to the organization, is quite fitting.

Thank you to the community of supporters who elected to be part of our 2015 year of goods, betters, and bests!
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Amanda Dobbratz, Web and Marketing Manager
Jessie Fan, Bookkeeper
Matthew Krousey, Sales Gallery Assistant
Jennica Kruse, Education Materials Technician (to September)
Tippy Maurant, Sales Gallery and Special Events Manager (from June)
Karen McPherson, Sales Gallery and Special Events Manager (to June)
Mel North, Building Maintenance Technician
Justina Ny, Sales Gallery Associate
Ian Petrie, Sales Gallery Assistant and Registrar
Kyle Rudy, Sales Gallery Associate (holiday season)
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Northern Clay Center thanks its cadre of very special institutional and individual donors, who are crucial to our ability to fulfill our mission. Our ability to accomplish the items outlined above and serve a vast group of constituents was made possible because of the support from these entities who love and delight in the material itself. The continued support allowed us to be nimble and responsive to the various trends in ceramics, the changes in audience development and participation, and the needs of our constituents. Their confidence in the management and quality of our programs has been crucial to our ability to remain relevant to our audience, to the clay artists, and to the greater clay and craft world.

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The McKnight Foundation
John A. & Karen J. Meslow Charitable Fund
Sheldon and Lili Chester through the Minneapolis Jewish Federation
Steve Miles and Joline Gitis Charitable Fund
Minnesota State Arts Board
Minnesota Women Ceramic Artists
National Endowment for the Arts
New French Bakery
Peace Coffee
Printing Enterprises, Inc.
Prospect Creek Foundation
RBC Wealth Management
R.E. Swager Family Foundation
Red Wing Collectors Society Foundation
Riverland Bank
Robert Steinman Family Charitable Foundation
Smith Sharpe Firebrick Supply
Sociable Cider Werks
Soup It Up for Kids, Inc.
Target Foundation
Wells Fargo Foundation Minnesota
Windgate Charitable Foundation
Zipps Liquor