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BACKGROUND HISTORY AND SHOW CONCEPT

50 Women: A Celebration of Women's Contribution to Ceramics will be one of many exhibitions at the 50th annual NCECA conference in Kansas City in March, 2016. NCECA is an acronym for National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts. This organization was founded in 1966 by a group of ceramic artists who wanted to “swap pots and ideas, to show slides, to look and listen to others with similar interests.” The primary purpose of NCECA was to guarantee that this annual gathering of ceramic artists would continue. The long term aspiration was to be a professional organization giving “identity and support to ceramic teachers and artists, and to promote advancement of ceramic arts”.

During its first decade, NCECA was a small gathering of a few hundred artists. In the 1980s it grew to more than 1,000 members. Today it has more than 6,000 members including artists, students, individual and corporate patrons, gallery owners, museum curators, and providers of ceramic arts-related products and services.

The NCECA conference is the world’s largest event held in the field of ceramic arts. It includes dozens of panel discussions, lectures, and exhibition areas.

50 Women: A Celebration of Women's Contribution to Ceramics will be a landmark exhibition at the 2016 conference. It will be the first large-scale exhibition of women’s contribution to ceramics.

The first panel on “Women in Clay” took place at the NCECA 1979 conference. Paula Winokur opened the meeting saying, “her concern was not to create a sense of separation or sexism, but to point out the strengths of the many women who work in clay and the tremendous contributions they have made to the field as teachers and artists.” The purpose of our exhibit in 2016 resonates with her statement.

This exhibition showcases the fact that there are more highly skilled women ceramic artists producing work and being recognized than there ever were before. Public recognition of ceramic arts is increasing. Ceramic arts are BLOOMING. This show is to document the past, to celebrate the present, and to look forward to an exciting expanding future.

PREPARATION FOR THE SHOW

We took several steps to help distinguish our proposal from the many others the NCECA committee received for 2016.

1. We recruited an accomplished executive committee—with documented curatorial, arts management, media management and not-for-profit experience.
2. We established social media platforms to document demand for the exhibition. The Facebook page currently has over 4700 “likes” from countries around the world, and is averaging more than 2,000 post clicks a day.
3. We continue to utilize crowd-funding campaigns for donations to offset artists shipping and exhibition costs.
4. We received a commitment from the University of Missouri—Kansas City, UMKC Women’s Center to be the local liaison and provide logistical support.
5. We secured the Changing Gallery space at the American Jazz Museum to host the exhibition.
6. We compiled a roster of 50 outstanding ceramic artists including several internationally acclaimed artists.
7. We established long-term relationships with several international ceramic journals. This ensures the proper promotion of the exhibition.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SHOW

The contributions women have made to ceramics have been beyond calculation. This exhibition recognizes a cross section of women working in clay today. The intention of the show is to present the art of fifty contemporary female artists who make works inside and outside the paths of tradition and of contemporary practice. Sculpture, pottery, tile, and installation will be present. The diverse group of artists selected has a varied range of experience, training, and recognition within the field of ceramics. In order to showcase the widest range of possibility, we have intentionally chosen artists working in a broad spectrum of the ceramic material with varying formal and content driven concerns.

The three parameters of the curatorial process were simple:

- The artist must be female.
- The artist must make exceptional work.
- The artist must be known to the curators and interested in participating this collaboration.

Here is an overview of works by select artists who are in the exhibit. I intentionally paired images that I feel have visual or thematic similarity.

I will let the images speak for themselves.

POWER POINT - ARTISTS TO BE EXHIBITED

An unexpected consequence of utilizing social media has been the feedback from women ceramic artists all over the world. We were surprised and gratified to discover many other female artists who do amazing work. In response, we set up a platform for exhibiting, and giving recognition online. The original show has turned into a much larger project than first envisioned. It has become an International Women's Platform for ceramic arts.

Submissions continue.

Here are some examples- from the *Women around the World* Facebook album. I selected a brief look at what these artists from different ends of the earth are doing. I intentionally paired images that I feel have visual or thematic similarity.

Again the images speak for themselves.

POWER POINT IMAGES FROM WOMEN AROUND THE WORLD FB- PLATFORM

These artists were not necessarily aware of each other's work until the Women around the World site was established. The show is nurturing international communications in ceramic art, and is fulfilling the NCECA mission statement: "dynamic organization that fosters global education and appreciation for the ceramic arts".

CREDITS THANKS TO –

NCECA web site for brief history and current mission statement

"NCECA The First 25 Years 1966-1991" by Harriet E. Brisson (1991)

This lecture was presented at the May, 2015 *Scanceram Conference* in Tolne, Denmark in an effort to raise awareness of women in ceramics and the exhibition and social media platforms.