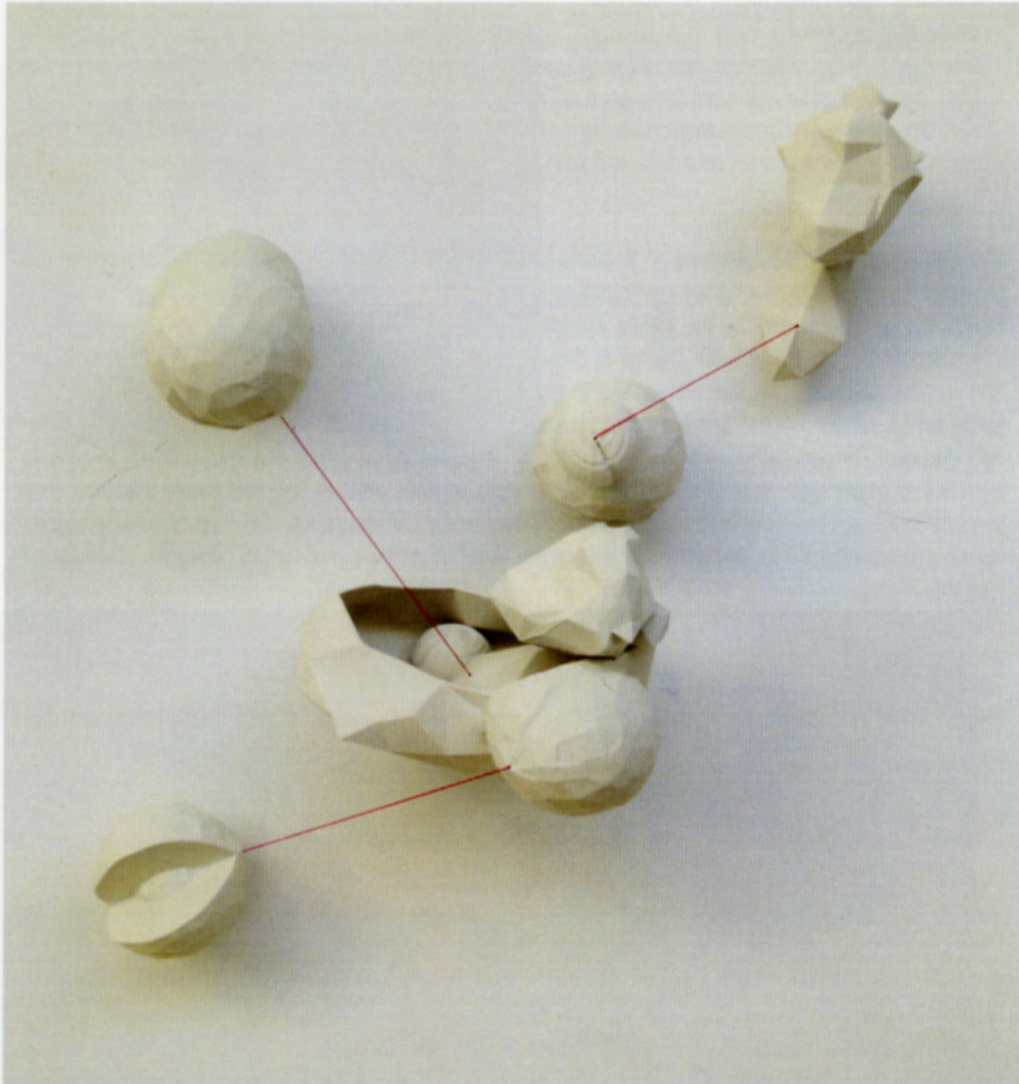


## *360 Degrees of Separation*



Megumi Naitoh

**PURDUE UNIVERSITY GALLERIES**

Fountain Gallery, Lafayette, Indiana  
January 12 through February 20, 2016

# 360 Degrees of Separation

Most people hear the words 'clay' and 'ceramics' and immediately think of pottery bowls and vases. The purpose of this show is to expose the viewer to some of the most experimental and sculpturally-focused work being made in the field of contemporary ceramics. This show is a celebration of the incredible transmutability of a material that is truly restricted only by the limitations of the ideas of the artists themselves. Our intention is to show that both material and artist, when working together at the highest level of ability and experience, can achieve a result that, in the words of George Bataille, allows the spiritual to be rooted in the physical

"...Human life is erroneously seen as an elevation. The division of the universe into subterranean hell and perfectly pure heaven is an indelible conception, mud and darkness being the principles of evil as light and celestial spaces are the principles of good: with their feet in mud, but their heads more or less in light, men obstinately imagine a tide that will permanently elevate them, never to return, into pure space. Human life entails, in fact, the rage of seeing oneself as a back and forth movement from refuse to the ideal, and from the ideal to refuse..."<sup>1</sup>

The exhibition title, *360 Degrees of Separation*, suggests both a circle and the global nature and provenance of the artists who are participating in the show. Chosen from countries all over the world, the common denominator for the artists' selection is having spent a residency at the Guldagergaard International Ceramic Research Center in Skaelskor, Denmark. This residency provides an intimate and well-run studio space that allows one to work and explore new ideas, while rubbing elbows with fellow artists working in the same medium but with extraordinarily diverse methodologies and ideas. 360 degrees Fahrenheit is also the approximate temperature at which organic material begins to burn out of a clay body in a kiln firing. Sometimes the ceramic artist is only too aware that their own physical body will burn out well before the work they make disintegrates, and thus one experiences both humility and awe for the material, one of the most ubiquitous and varied on earth, when faced with this reality.

Artists included in this show use hand-building, glazing, and firing methods that range from the ancient, such as wood firing and terra sigillata burnishing to the most recent innovation in 3D printing with clay.

The aged brick walls of the Fountain Gallery, in the historic Perrin Building in downtown Lafayette, seem a fitting backdrop for the timeless products of those who manipulate earth and fire.

Sigrid Zahner, associate professor of art and curator of *360 Degrees of Separation*

<sup>1</sup>Bataille, Georges, *Visions of Excess, Selected Writings, 1927-1939*, Stoekl, Allan, Ed, University of Minnesota Press, 6th Ed, 1994, p36.

Sigrid Zahner speaking at the opening reception for *360 Degrees of Separation*, January 15, 2016







Ane Fabricius Christiansen

**Ane Fabricius Christiansen** (Denmark)

"The qualities of the clay are explored in various stages: as liquid, plastic, dry before firing and hot melting in the kiln. These qualities are developed and fine-tuned to exploit natural regularities to create works that balance between the deliberately created and the accidental. The final result cannot, and should not, be fully predicted, and I seek to let the process take me to the finished result. This is a way of obtaining a material expression with distinctive tactility and sensuality, which cannot be achieved by traditional making with ceramic tools, or with the hands. The process is both enabling and limiting, and can be compared to simulation of nature in a kind of controlled geology."

**Justin Novak** (Canada)

*"Like any other bunny, 21st Century Bunny is vigilant. At all times. Tired of living in fear, 21st Century Bunny has armed himself. He's become a danger to others now. But all he's ever wanted is to protect his way of life."*

*Bunny is a response to living in a condition of high alert, in a world increasingly mediated by a state security apparatus. This hyper-vigilant creature has become so paranoid that he'll shoot at anything that moves. Needless to say, he's become a danger to others: an unwitting predator."*



Justin Novak



**Renata Cassiano (Mexico)**

"My current work has to do with two concepts: to seep out and to be engulfed by, to be drowning by that which is seeping out from within. The forms are crude and almost primitive, there is no refinement of the surface, the marks of the hands and tools during the construction are left unaltered as a witness of the human touch. There is a freedom and space for the materials to interact and contribute to the final result... Crenelations and architectural forms appear taken from buildings dedicated to faith, pyramids and temples. The forms are intuitive, I allow my instinct to dictate the path of construction, there is a general plan but the details are resolved as the work is progressing."



Renata Cassiano

**Amanda Small (US)**

"I am exploring the interval between the finite and infinitesimal, as well as humanity's relationship to the universe. I create installations that combine mundane materials and ambiguous imagery that can be concurrently microscopic and stellar, conveying multiple dimensions and perspectives. I choose to consider each piece as an 'environment-system,' and part of a greater 'collection' or collective experience.

By looking with curiosity at the landscape and merging rational and technological order with notions of beauty and the transcendental, I use technological methods to visualize aspects of the natural world, taking micro and macro views of the earth, cells, satellite mapping, topographies and systematic patterning and translating that information into installations that contemplate the meaning of 'home or 'place'."



Amanda Small





Kyung Won Baek

**Kyung Won Baek** (South Korea)

"My works are vessel-sculptures using pinching and coiling technique. Inspirations come mostly from architectures and mechanical devices. Once it comes into my mind, I keep them for days to develop the ideas. After drawing some blueprints, I start building coils on the slab. Mostly, I don't know about the result before I finish it. It is more interesting that being unexpected outcome what I did not know. Making new forms by my hands is always amusing."



Justin Novak (foreground), Megumi Naitoh (background)



Lesley Baker



Sigrid Zahner

**Lesley Baker (US)**

"By using ceramics to represent preciousness, raw materials, and history, the various mutated natural forms are meant to ask the viewer to look more closely at the world around them. The animals and flora are the innocents not quite understanding the changes that are happening to them and around them. Much like how we are presented information through mass media, the true message is not always obvious. The uncertainty is if it is ultimately good or bad."

**She-Mei Chan (China)**

"The syllables 'zhua jin shijian' have been ricocheting between my ears since childhood. This Chinese idiom translates literally into "grasp tight time," and my mother frequently used it to hasten her children on chore days. Ironically – and I'd like to think partly due to a literal interpretation of her directive – I felt compelled to marvel at and collect, rather than efficiently discard, the runaway fingernail clippings and evasive dust bunnies. I suspect this secret game of collecting mundane detritus was an effort to preserve the physical embodiments of otherwise fugitive increments of time. As an installation artist, I think of myself as a constructor of tenuous moments which similarly oscillate between labor and play, propriety and impulse."



Shu-Mei Chan





Keith Ekstam

**Keith Ekstam (US)**

"For the past several years my sculpture has incorporated imagery that makes reference to a diverse range of items. These are as far reaching as children's toys to weapons, architectural elements to geology, exalted objects to everyday mundane objects. Recent trips to Europe, Taiwan- the Republic of China and the People's Republic of China have made an impact in that I have procured various images from those places including such things as scholar's rocks, architecture, cultural and flora and fauna images. Although made primarily from hand-built clay, wheel thrown and simple press molded parts are used at times. The idea of mixed ceramic media has become interesting to me, so a variety of finishes and surfaces are often combined, including low fire, high fire, salt, wood and luster glazes. Most pieces are assembled after firing."

**Megumi Naitoh (US)**

"Many 17th century European still life paintings revealed how the artists lived, or showed their thoughts or the environment they lived in by series of objects that surrounded the artists. Some of these objects possess symbolism, some reflect social, cultural changes in their lives. My work evokes our cultural changes that associate with the current technology. It directly references our accessibility to 3D technology, open source software and online resources. My studio practice reflects these changes.

In the 21st century, I am virtually surrounded by many digital objects. Google 3D warehouse, Thingiverse, Autodesk 123D catch gallery are some examples of online 3D file share sites that I often visit. I search and collect these digital objects to create my still life compositions in clay."



Megumi Naitoh



Nina Hole (foreground), Lesley Baker (middle), Ane Fabricius Christiansen (background)



Paul Scott