

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

"Smoke Signals" at Infinity Gallery

Clay Squared to Infinity, 34 Thirteenth Ave. NE, Minneapolis, MN

Opening reception with the artists: Saturday, July 9th, Noon-4pm

Firing demonstrations to be held hourly during the opening reception

Gallery Show runs: July 7th through September 30th, 2005

Clay Squared to Infinity hours: Monday through Saturday, 11am - 5pm,

Sunday noon-4pm

Admission is FREE.



Infinity Gallery at Clay Squared to Infinity reacts to the impending heat of summer with "Smoke Signals" a show featuring handmade tile and other ceramic art by four local and regional masters in Raku and Smoke Firing techniques.

Raku and Smoke Firing are ancient pottery techniques that date back to early Japanese and Native American cultures. In both processes, ceramic pieces are fired in a kiln until red-hot, and then placed in a container (sometimes a pit in the ground, sometimes a metal garbage can) along with different types of organic material such as sawdust, leaves or discarded newspaper. The organic material almost immediately erupts into fire - a dramatic moment in a lengthy and controlled process. The container is then covered, resulting in a reduction of oxygen that creates a reactive atmosphere for the ceramic piece and its prepared surface. As the enclosed piece cools, carbon is permanently absorbed in the clay, glazes crackle and the surfaces shine in varying tones and flashings.

To fully demonstrate the miraculous possibilities of this ceramic firing process, Clay Squared to Infinity has invited four of its hand-made tile artists to exhibit their wares together in "Smoke Signals." **All four feature artists will be holding demonstrations of their Raku & Smoke Fire processes in the parking lot at Clay Squared during the opening reception.** Visitors to the event will have a chance to experience the dramatic eruption of fire and smoke as pieces are processed during several firings throughout the day.

About the artists:

Controlling the outcome of raku-fired ceramic glazes is something that takes years of practice and dedication. **Steve Hemingway** has spent decades mastering the technique. But Hemingway's mastery is not only in Raku. The surface of many of his vessels are intricately hand-carved while the clay is still leather-hard. Inspired by nature and the seasons, the surface of almost every one of Hemingway's creations becomes a canvas to present an idea.



Laura McCaul practices her own version of a Native American smoke firing technique called 'blackware.' Like Hemingway, the subject matter of her work focuses heavily on nature - birds, leaves, grasses, etc. Formally trained as a woodcut printmaker, McCaul exhibits great skill at accurately, yet artfully carving her imagery into red clay tiles and vessels. Each piece is hand-burnished and rubbed with terra sigillata, a refined slip, before being fired twice in her own highly specialized technique. The resulting varying levels of carbon absorption leave McCaul's work with an earthy, shaded variation in color.

Jude Ryan Reiling is currently working in a version of smoke-firing that she first practiced more than 30 years ago. It is only recently that she has made the switch from tightly-controlled, functional porcelain pieces back to a more 'organic' style of art work. The lack of control and the surprises inherent to the process as well as the chance to work outside in the woods near her home in Wisconsin have her hooked.



Laura Drabant takes 'organic' inspiration in a different direction with her gourd, fruit and egg-shaped objects. She enjoys not only the feel of raw clay in her hands but also the reactions of people who are tempted to touch and feel the finished product in their hands. Drabant, too, makes use of burnishing techniques to smooth all surfaces on her work, using glaze sparingly. One just cannot help but pick up and hold Drabant's small, smooth, smoky-looking egg rattles.

For more information on Infinity Gallery exhibitions, contact Clay Squared to Infinity at 612-781-6409 or josh@claysquared.com.

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