



Ceramic artists speak through necklaces, mural



M. THOMAS ✓
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette
mthomas@post-gazette.com

FEB 28, 2018

6:30 AM



A community mural and a Beltzhoover native's work are among the many exhibitions and events connected with the National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts Conference March 14-17 at the David L. Lawrence Convention Center, Downtown.

"Sharif Bey: Dialogues in Clay and Glass" opens Friday at the Pittsburgh Glass Center, 5472 Penn Ave., Garfield. An artist's reception will be held from 5-9 p.m. March 15.

Mr. Bey is an associate professor of art education at Syracuse University. In November, his work will be featured in the Renwick Gallery of the Smithsonian American Art Museum during the 2018 Renwick Invitational.

He grew up in Beltzhoover and learned about clay as a teenager at Manchester Craftsmen's Guild on the North Side. Mr. Bey holds a bachelor's degree in ceramics from Slippery Rock University, a master's degree in studio art from the University of North Carolina and a doctorate in art education from Penn State University. While a doctoral student he was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship and conducted research on post-socialist art education reforms at The Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Bratislava, Slovakia.

albertz benda

515 w 26th st | new york, ny | 10001
tel 212.244.2579 | www.albertzbenda.com

One of his trademark series comprises oversized clay necklace forms that reference notions of power, ornamentation and natural history associated with traditional African jewelry. African slaves produced beads thought to have been connected to slave barter systems, and in the 1960s beads emerged as political symbols.

Mr. Bey has said that juxtaposing this history with images and values reflected in bling-bling culture generates questions regarding social responsibility vs. social status, tradition vs. trend and wealth vs. power.

Mr. Bey recently participated in the center's Idea Furnace residency program, which supports artists working outside the medium of glass by providing opportunity to create a body of work with the help of an established glass artist.

This exhibition comprises work from the residency including large-scale clay necklace wall hangings and a new series of necklace forms made of large glass beads. The exhibition continues through May 6. Hours are 10 a.m.-7 p.m. Tuesday through Thursday and 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Friday through Monday. Admission is free. Information: www.pittsburghglasscenter.org or 412-365-2145.

Community call

Even if you're not a ceramist or potter, you probably have a clay connection, whether tiles in the kitchen or a dainty tea cup passed down through the family. Pittsburgh artist Laura Jean McLaughlin is inviting conference attendees and community members to contribute a ceramic shard — from a broken mug that you made or purchased for example — to her "Unity Shards" project.

albertz benda

515 w 26th st | new york, ny | 10001
tel 212.244.2579 | www.albertzbenda.com

During the NCECA conference, she'll turn the individual pieces into one of her signature mosaic murals, which will later be installed permanently in City of Asylum's Alphabet City Garden on the North Side.

The idea for "Unity Shards" came to Ms. McLaughlin during her morning meditation, she told NCECA. "I thought about people coming together from all over to attend the conference and how each person attending somehow contributes to the overall outcome of the conference much like pieces of ceramic tiles coming together to create an image or design."

Ms. McLaughlin will work in the Projects Space at the convention center, which is free and open to the public. A reception will be held from 6:30-8 p.m. March 13, and her hours will be 9 a.m.-5 p.m. March 14, 9 a.m.-6 p.m. March 15 and 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. March 16.

Shards may be dropped off before March 10 at: Contemporary Craft, 2100 Smallman St., Strip District; Pittsburgh Center for the Arts Ceramics Studio, 6300 Fifth Ave., Shadyside; The Union Project Ceramic Studio, 801 N. Negley Ave., Highland Park; Clay Penn, 5111 Penn Ave., Garfield; Alphabet City Bookstore, 40 W. North Ave., North Side; and Manchester Craftsmen's Guild, 1815 Metropolitan St., North Side.

NCECA wood firing

A pre-conference wood-salt firing with two American clay legends, Kevin Crowe and Jack Troy, will be held March 9-11 at Touchstone Center for Crafts, Farmington, Fayette County.

albertz benda

515 w 26th st | new york, ny | 10001
tel 212.244.2579 | www.albertzbenda.com