

## Collector's Tour at the Tennessee Craft Fair

A Collector's Tour was established at the Fall Fair this year on Sunday morning. This tour was the second of a two-part program coordinated by the Tennessee Craft organization and the Frist Center for the Visual Arts where there is currently an exhibition of works by the Newcomb School, with an emphasis on the pottery.



The fair tour was led by Susan DeMay, Principal Senior Lecturer at Vanderbilt University. Professor DeMay is very familiar with the Newcomb style and includes many examples of Newcomb Pottery in her

slide lectures to her beginning clay classes. She was thrilled to see in real life many of the pieces that she includes in her presentations. For the fair tour DeMay narrowed the selection to a corner of the fair and first chose clay artists whose work had a connection to the techniques of the Frist Center exhibition. One obvious choice was Timothy Weber for his sgraffito designs. While his motifs are primarily abstracted and repeated around the vessel, the designs of the Newcomb artists were abstractions based of the flora and fauna of the region and were also repeated around the pot. The forms of vessels, though certainly functional as vases or jars, were created largely for their classically proportional shapes.

Selected also was the work of Cathy McMurray. She employs interesting repeated textures that are enhanced, like Newcomb pottery, by the use of metallic oxides that are brushed on as a watery solution all over the textures and then wiped off the high spots. So the color produced by the oxide is concentrated in the depression of the carved or impressed texture - in ceramics this process is called "staining."

Other artists selected were Shauna King, John Selberg, Anderson and (wife,) and Shadow May. In addition to making pottery connections, the purpose of the tour was to point to the value of craft work of current fine craft artists as collectible and as

heirloom objects that will not only retain their value but will likely increase in value and appreciation in decades to come.

The tour covered unique techniques in clay types, construction, embellishment, and firing. A number of the selected pieces were made of fine porcelain and the ceramicists who use it find ways of enhancing its properties often through clear and translucent glazes with an embellishment that revealed its handmade nature. Selberg, for example, adds an obviously hand-brushed iron band to many of his clean and pure forms. Shauna on the other hand adds delicately hand-modelled critter to her elegant porcelain forms glazed with softly colored transparent/translucent glazes. Works on the other hand by the Bailey team are uniquely constructed porcelain forms embedded with colorants. These quirky works do result in not only very contemporary forms and expressions but in ones that will have a lasting appeal as well. The consumers of even the most traditional of pottery types can appreciate the quality and integrity of the new pottery.

The use of color is another common denominator among all of the aforementioned potters, both Newcomb pottery and the clay artists picked for the tour. The rise of the studio potter and enduring model of the pottery workshop has seen the introduction of pottery that is not limited to the genre of earthy browns. The public enjoys choice

of color and these artists deliver. Intense and soft blues and greens, burgundy reds, rich browns and yellows, are all brought together in a way that does not detract from their forms but enhance them.

The members of the tour group were given loads of information about the making of such works, and they were further introduced to the rationale behind the pricing of handcrafted art works. They came away with a deeper appreciation of all craftwork and, hopefully, a desire to purchase and include such works in their own living spaces.

Susan DeMay