

Exhibit showcases breadth of ceramics art

BY LAUREL BLACK

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When John Hasegawa sits down at the pottery wheel, the rest of the world disappears. For Hasegawa, working in clay is all about enjoying the process, but the ceramics professor recognizes that others may have a different approach.

As an instructor at the Paducah School of Art, Hasegawa knows that his students' creative goals are as varied as the forms they craft from clay. Some favor the journey, as he does, while others are more concerned with the outcome.

As the curator of Paducah School of Art's National Ceramics Invitational Exhibition, Hasegawa hopes to show the public the full range of techniques and styles that ceramics artists use. To this end, he invited a diverse group of national artists to the exhibit.

"A lot of our students haven't been exposed to these really great artists that are out there," he said. Work in the show ranges from traditional, functional forms, such as jars and teapots, to abstract sculptures. Some artists, such as Fong Choo of Louisville, find ways to blend convention and innovation.

In photographs, Choo's teapots look like they're meant to be used. But the studio potter says his work is more prone to dribbling than pouring. "What I do is non-utilitarian and sculptural, but it essentially evolved out of function," Choo said. "I use all the elements of a teapot, but I start to make it as dysfunctional as I possibly can."

Choo's teapots will be displayed alongside the work of 10 other ceramics artists — including fellow Kentuckians Todd Burns, of Louisville; John Utgaard, of Murray; and Hasegawa, a Paducah resident.

Other participating artists include Bruce Dehnert of Layton, N.J.; Annelies Heijnen, of Mt. Vernon; Steven Hill of Independence, Mo.; Marc Leuthold of Potsdam, N.Y.; Jennifer McCurdy of Vineyard Haven, Mass.; Andy Rogers of Maryville, Mo.; and Vince Pitelka of Smithville, Tenn.

Hasegawa said that every time he goes to a museum, he takes photographs of the art that stands out to him. When it came time to put the show together, he went through his photos and chose artists whose work is not only high-caliber, but unique.

"It's almost like the person's in the room. The



When Fong Choo, a studio potter and adjunct professor at Bellarmine University in Louisville, crafts teapots, he focuses more on elegance and form than on function. Choo says his work is a playful variation on traditional vessels. Photo contributed



Jennifer McCurdy's "Wind Bowl" highlights the sculptural possibilities of clay. McCurdy's work will appear in Paducah School of Art's National Ceramics Invitational, opening at 5:30 p.m. today in the Clemens Gallery, 4810 Alben Barkley Drive. Photo contributed

work is so distinctive and separate from everyone (else's)," he said.

The exhibit opens with a reception at 5:30 p.m.

tonight at the Clemens Gallery at West Kentucky Community & Technical College, 4810 Alben Barkley Drive.

The opening is the same day as the groundbreaking of the Paducah School of Art's Madison Hall location, 919 Madison St., to



"Pierced #12," a clay sculpture by Marc Leuthold of Potsdam, N.Y., demonstrates the range of textures available to ceramics artists. Curator John Hasegawa's goal for the National Ceramics Invitational Exhibition is to include a variety of unique, high-caliber work from nationally recognized artists such as Leuthold. Photo by Eva Heyd

be held at 4 p.m. The new location will offer ceramics and metal arts studios.

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