



THE OTTAWA GUILD OF POTTERS LA GUILDE DES POTIERS D'OTTAWA

Volume: April 2021
Issue: 29

Fired Up!

Next meeting:

When: April 12
2021

Time: 6:30

Where: Zoom



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Message from the President

By Amy Bell

The snow is just about gone, a few crocus and snowdrops are peeking out. And yet the forecast is for more snow, and the looming probability of another lockdown as covid rates are too high again. But there is still clay!! A new construction project started in my neighbourhood and I will be walking that way more often to see if they find clay when they dig. The clay here is Leda clay, also known as quick clay or marine clay. It is known for not being stable, (particularly by the Museum of Nature) so my goal is to use it for surface decoration, not as a clay body. I am also eyeing my charcoal BBQ differently after Joanna's presentation at last months' meeting.

The Sale Committee and the Great Bowls of Fire team are busiest right now, planning, pivoting, adapting, making contingencies as we work to offer each other opportunities. It is also the time of year when we are asking Guild members to step forward to take on a task for our Guild, as some folks have taken their turn and need to step back. Please contact Barb Minish (Barb.minish@gmail.com) if you can take on a task. Newsletter editor, Vice President, Sale Committee, Standards are all in need of some energy.

E-Clay Learning and Teaching Project

The research project about teaching clay online is coming to the end of its first phase. It has been a privilege to be part of this project. Participatory research is part of my training and a method that I believe is important. I

will share results when they are available, and there will be a next phase!

Guild 50th Anniversary 2023

The first brainstorming session has happened, and we have a lot of great ideas to get us started! This is all at the soft clay stage, and I'm looking forward to see what we can create together to celebrate 50 years of clay and community in Ottawa through our Guild.

Ceramics Congress 2021 - Mark your calendar

This year's Ceramics Congress will be May 27-29th, 2021. For more information, check out <https://ceramic.school/the-ceramics-congress/>.

Make and Do Ceramics has a call for entry, looking for short videos to highlight what is happening in Canada. See <https://www.musingaboutmud.com/2021/03/16/make-and-do-call-for-entry-for-the-ceramic-congress/>.

Membership

By Carol Badenoch

It's time to renew your membership -- it's easy -- trust me!

1. April 1st, your membership status will change from "Member" to "Needs Renewal."
2. Go to <https://www.ottawaguildofpotters.ca/>
3. Log in: you can use your log-in name which is your first initial and your last name. My name is Carol Badenoch, so my log in is cbadenoch, -- or -- use your email address
4. Fill in your password. If you have forgotten your password, simply click that option and you can generate a new one.
5. Go to "Member's Area" and scroll down to "Renew Your Membership". Fill in the form, and submit it.
6. Follow the payment instructions for an e-transfer, or mail a cheque as directed to: OGP Treasurer, 52 Drouin Ave. Ottawa K1K 2A7. **Early bird pricing is available until April 30, so don't delay.**
7. Once I receive confirmation of your payment, I will approve your renewal and you will receive a receipt.

Sales committee

By Sue-ann Blakley

The results of the survey are in and since the number of members interested in the Outdoor Sales this summer were not strong, we will begin with one sale to be held Sunday June 6, 2021 at Twin Elm Acres, 2075 Twin Elm Rd, Richmond. This event will be held at the same time and place as the Richmond Village Farmers Market. This sale will be evaluated and if successful, then another sale will be held Saturday, September 11, 2021 at Lac Leamy Plaza, Lansdowne Park, Ottawa.

The application will be sent out around April 5 in order to give members a few days to renew their membership (and for Carol B to complete her work). The application due date will be close to the end of April in order to give us enough time to go ahead or back out ... depending on the committed entries.

Those of you that indicated you could help as a volunteer at the sale, please email sales@ottawaguildofpotters.ca since the survey was anonymous, we don't know who you are 😊

Great Bowls of Fire

By Barb Minish

Spring is here! Are you up for a challenge?

This year's Great Bowls of Fire (GBOF) is going to be... different. We expect to hold the event in mid to late June. We are still working out the logistics with our restaurant partners but one thing we've already concluded is this - without the actual face-to-face event with all it provides, this year the bowls will need to have great visual appeal. Are you ready to make some fabulous bowls? Will you be one of our "featured potters" and donate 25 bowls to GBOF 2021?

GBOF 2021 bowls:

- Need to hold a minimum of 400 ml and be bowls that would sell for at least \$25*.
- Patrons will choose their bowls, based on images of your "model/sample" bowls, so bowls should be reasonably consistent (i.e. "as illustrated").
- Sample bowls will be needed by May 1st with remaining bowls by June 1st.

As a featured potter, your bowl and name will be promoted on posters distributed around town, our website and our social media campaign. This is an excellent chance to "strut your stuff", get your pots and your name out there, show what Guild members can do, and, most importantly, help raise much needed funds for the Ottawa Food Bank.

If you are interested in participating as a featured potter, or if you are not sure and need more information, please contact Barbara Minish

Standards and Education

By Jocelyn Jenkins

Copying and Originality – The Hidden Story

Every so often members of the Standards and Education Committee are called upon to mediate in circumstances where a charge of copying has been levelled by one Guild member against another. The discussion that ensues invariably has two characteristics. First, the discussion is difficult - it is uncomfortable and fraught with anger and feelings of betrayal. Second, it is hushed up, to spare the feelings of those involved. How many Guild members, who have not been involved in these discussions, even know that they take place? While discretion around individual cases is called for, a general discussion of the issues involved would underline the fact that the Guild upholds the value of

striving for originality in the work we produce. At the same time, acquainting members with the Guild's expectations regarding originality may lead to fewer accusations in the future.

What do we mean by copying? What do we mean when we talk about it as it relates to work produced by members of the Guild? Why does the Guild embrace the idea that it is important to strive for originality in our work? How can we protect ourselves from charges of copying? How do we handle charges of copying? The answers to these questions are not simple, one-size-fits-all solutions, but they are still worth talking about.

What do we mean by copying?

Who hasn't had to copy something at some time? Was your first cooking lesson "copying" someone's process as they threw together a batch of chocolate chip cookies? Now make the leap to art. If you've taken an art class you have probably been asked to attempt to copy another artist's work. Maybe you made a copy of a painting by an Old Master. The copy probably wasn't anywhere near as proficient as the original. (I bet those chocolate chip cookies weren't either, the first time you tried). With practice, copying teaches you valuable lessons about form, composition and working with colour. Are you going to keep copying once you have these lessons under you belt? Yes, likely you will. There are always other lessons to learn. As a student, copying is an important tool in your toolbox. Since we keep learning all our lives, copying, the ability to mimic something, is going to remain useful...but it's worthwhile noting that its usefulness starts out in the learning process. Copying teaches you skills you can use to fuel and drive your personal creativity – your originality.

How does copying relate to the work we create as Guild Members?

Copying is an important tool in learning ceramics. When making functional ware, imitation is a teaching tool used in classes all the way up to expert-level. If you look at a dozen handmade mugs, made by different potters, all with pulled handles, and all glazed blue, there will be differences. They may not be extreme, but there will be differences: the way the handle feels, the size and weight of the piece, the lip-feel. There will be similarities too. But no one is going to level a charge of copying if 12 potters each make a blue mug.

Copying really becomes an issue when you add more thought (creativity/originality) to the process. The same issues that apply to other forms of art, to paintings drawings and printmaking,

also apply to ceramics as work approaches the blurry line that separates craft from art. A mug may be functional but it may also have some of the same elements of originality that ceramic sculpture does.

When a teacher gives you the value of the years, they have spent developing a form or a technique for working with clay they do not do so with the expectation that you will begin making this piece exactly as they do, unless it is solely for your personal use. They do not assume that you will immediately begin to sell work made using all of their techniques, as they do, in one place. You are being offered privileged information with the unwritten understanding that you will use this information to develop your own voice, if you wish to go on to offer your work for sale. Over the years I have had the distinct advantage of working with teachers who were unfailingly generous in the knowledge they imparted. None of them, (not one!) put limits on how they expected the knowledge to be used. To a student that is an incredible gift, but it comes with a responsibility. The next section outlines the responsibilities that we have to uphold the ethical standards in our field. For the most part, a student attempting to copy their teacher's work will fall short. But the student's work may look enough like the teacher's work to cause some embarrassment when the work is offered for sale in the same market, both to the teacher and the student, though it may be years before the student sees this. The Guild can be of service to its members by raising these issues for discussion.

Why is originality important to the Guild?

The first line in the Ottawa Guild of Potters' mandate says that we intend to encourage the growth and development of pottery and maintain a high standard of artistic expression and craftsmanship. In order to meet this standard of artistic expression, ceramic artists must embrace the same standards that other artists do. Ethically this entails producing art *for sale* that is the product of your own creative efforts. If the work is collaborative, this should be noted. If it is wholly the product of someone else's creative genius, maybe you should give it to your sister for her birthday, with the relevant credit to the source of your inspiration!

How do we protect ourselves from charges of copying?

The development of one's creative voice does not take place overnight. It's a process that is a unique blend of your training, the things you have seen and done and the medium you are working with. Over time you will build up a record of your work. You will be asked to write artist statements. You will be asked to talk about your work. You will begin to see what motivates you and what fuels

your creative growth. As you articulate these things for yourself and for others you will have a record of your creative journey. If it happens that others produce work independently that looks like yours, or vice versa, your ability to document how you arrived at that point in your work is the key to the originality of your work and your voice. It matters that we can arrive at similar points by unique paths.

How do we handle charges of copying?

From the Guild's side, charges of copying should be handled with the care and discretion. Decisions should be never be made arbitrarily. When the charge is brought forward, it should be substantiated with documentary evidence and a timeline, not just a suspicion. The first stop after receiving a claim that *appears to be* substantiated should always be a discussion with the artist. The artist's ability to document their creative process is important to this discussion.

From the artist's point of view, such charges, even if unfounded, or perhaps especially if unfounded, can be devastating. The artist's ability to document how they arrived at this place in their work is important to them too. The tone of the discussion is crucial to keeping the inquiry on a professional footing.

While I hope not have to deal with another charge relating to originality and copying in my tenure on standards, the discussion of the Guild's expectations around this issue is a useful one. This is a discussion that rarely takes place, perhaps because the issue when it arises is so devastating; because we assume, we all understand the same thing with regard to these issues, or; because the importance of the issue has not been made clear. I hope this discussion takes a few baby steps towards starting a discussion within the Guild.

Who is who in the Guild:

President	Amy Bell
Vice President	Natalie Gosselin
Past President	Barbara Minish
Treasurer	Michele MacDonald
Secretary	Deborah Lemkow
Membership	Carol Badenoch
Communications	Ayesh Kanani & Kim Lulashnyk (Webmaster: Dave Drapeau, non executive member)
Exhibitions	Elizabeth Davies
Sales	Sue-ann Blakley
Standards & Education	Jocelyn Jenkins
Programming	Natalie & Barb
Great Bowls of Fire	<i>vacant</i>
Newsletter Editor	Sarah Hand non executive member