Claymakers Arts Community, Inc., a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization

Year in Review 2019

Executive Director Ana Howard Departs After 12 Years

After 12 years at Claymakers, Executive Director Ana Howard decided to hang up her cutoff wires and head out for her next great adventure.

Throughout her tenure as Executive Director, Ana worked tirelessly to expand Claymakers’ offerings to the Durham ceramic community, and to strengthen Claymakers’ finances for the future.

"Ana has worn many hats and has constantly adjusted the focus of her attention to accommodate the needs of our growing community," says Claymakers board president Roberta Wood. "Combining organizational and educational vision with an extensive knowledge of clay processes and clay arts, Ana has given Claymakers a strong foundation to support our continued growth long into the future."

Ana is missed by our community—not only as a potter, or director, but as a friend. We wish her all the best in her future!

New Staff to Lead Claymakers

In the wake of former Executive Director Ana Howard’s departure, two new staff members joined the Claymakers community. Both Executive Director Emily Lassiter and General Manager Mac McCusker come from clay-based organizations in North Carolina, bringing connections to regional and national ceramic networks.

Originally from Burlington, North Carolina, Emily’s background is in historic site and museum administration; she holds an M.A. in History with a concentration in Museum Studies from UNC-Greensboro. Prior to arriving at Claymakers, she spent five years as the Educational Program Manager/Project Coordinator at the North Carolina Pottery Center in Seagrove, developing clay-based educational programming, exhibitions, and supporting its fundraising activities.

Originally from Savannah, Georgia, Mac holds an M.F.A. in Ceramics from Georgia State University. After gaining significant teaching experience at Georgia State University and Armstrong State University, they served as an Artist in Residence at Asheville’s Odyssey Clayworks from 2015-2017; Mac has also spent time at Penland as a Winter Resident Artist. Mac is involved in craft activism on a national level, and was named a Ceramics Monthly Emerging Artist in 2018.

“Mac and I have felt so welcomed by everyone involved at Claymakers, and are inspired by the energy of the community,” says Emily. “I’m looking forward to building on Ana’s incredible work to increase access to the ceramic arts throughout the Triangle.”
November 1, 2019

Dear Claymakers Community,

2019 has been a year full of change! In June, after 12 years at Claymakers, our dedicated and beloved executive director, Ana Howard, departed for new adventures. During her tenure here, Ana poured remarkable skill and energy into building a community where innovation, creativity and love of clay thrive. We are amazed at what she accomplished, and grateful for all she gave to our community. To say that she is missed is an understatement. We wish her fulfillment in all her future endeavors!

This summer, Claymakers welcomed two new staff members: Executive Director Emily Lassiter and General Manager Mac Star McCusker. Both hail from North Carolina ceramics organizations, and bring energy and expertise. I am sure they will build on Ana’s foundation to propel Claymakers to new heights. If you have not met them yet, please say hello the next time you’re in the studio!

Next year, Claymakers will turn 20—a momentous occasion for our community! Founder Leonora Coleman’s vision of an incubator for the clay arts has been carefully nurtured throughout the years, and today Claymakers is the nucleus of the Triangle’s ceramic sphere. Since 2000, both Claymakers and the Geer Street neighborhood have seen tremendous growth. Though largely positive, growth can come with downsides; because of the neighborhood’s popularity, Claymakers faces challenges in the form of rising rents and limited parking for our growing community of students, renters, and retail customers. Claymakers’ greatest strength is in its people, and the strong bonds of community that each of you form through your interactions in the studio. Together, we can ensure the future of Durham’s ceramic arts community.

As we move into our twentieth year, here are a few ways you can help Claymakers remain vibrant:

- **Become a Sustaining Donor.** Our generous donors safeguard Claymakers’ long-term stability. If you’re able, please consider becoming a monthly sustaining donor!
- **Become a Store Patron.** Claymakers’ retail store is a convenient resource for students, and is the longest-running, most extensive ceramic supply outlet in the Triangle. We provide artists, studios, and schools in the area with clay and a variety of ceramic supplies, from tools to chemicals to glazes. It is a vital resource for area ceramic artists and students.
- **Volunteer.** Do you have special skills that you’re willing to share? We’d love to hear about them! If you’re interested in volunteering, feel free to reach out to info@claymakers.org.
- **Visit the Gallery.** Take time to enjoy exhibitions throughout the year. Patronizing the Claymakers Gallery furthers Claymakers’ educational mission and supports local and regional ceramic artists.
- **Share the Joy.** Considering giving friends or family a gift certificate for a class or workshop, ceramic supplies, or artwork from the Claymakers Gallery.
- **Year-End Donation.** Every donation is meaningful and appreciated, and supports Claymakers’ mission of promoting the joy of working with clay.

We hope that you will help us celebrate as we look toward the next 20 years!

Sincerely,

Roberta Wood, Board President
Claymakers achieved its primary financial goal of continuing to build financial stability during the period spanning October 1, 2018 – September 30, 2019. We continue to contribute to a reserve fund that will enable us to maintain at least three months of operating costs, and to handle any unexpected displacements that the future might bring. A major financial achievement was the completion of the purchase of the Claymakers business in June 2019, which will allow us to redirect funds toward improvements or expansions to meet the needs of the Claymakers community as it grows.

Income this fiscal year follows trends set in previous years. Student enrollments rose yet again this year, from 788 to an astronomical 909; throughout the year, a large percentage of classes filled to their maximum enrollment. New general manager Mac McCusker’s reorganization of the studios increased the capacity of our student shelves; we are now able to accommodate 13 classes, as well as a few communal studio renters, during each session. The resulting uptick in enrollments brought a 21% increase in class and workshop income throughout the year. Retail sales increased nearly 12%, while studio rentals remain constant: all upstairs studios remain occupied and kiln rentals have increased 27%. Gallery sales and fundraising income were slightly down over the past year.

This year presented some new, and in some cases, unexpected expenses. Our HVAC system has given us trouble a few times over the past year, necessitating multiple service calls. Additionally, this summer, we learned that to stay in the good graces of the state Board of Labor, an annual no-load elevator test is required. Though expensive, this test allows us to ensure the safety of our community members who use this equipment on a regular basis. Other expenses were more expected. This year, Claymakers had one-time expenses related to advertising the new staff positions and interviewing candidates. Now that Claymakers has two full-time staff members, the cost of salaries and benefits can be expected to grow. Other staff expenses include hourly help to receive clay deliveries. Freight expenses on our clay deliveries also increased by 20%, a notable expense for us to shoulder.

Claymakers has experienced steady growth over the past few years; in many senses, this is desirable. However, as our community expands, these gains place a strain on our space, staff time, and budget; finding a balance between these variables, while maintaining our high standards of service, can be a struggle. We always want to do more, but eventually, there is a limit to what our given staff and space can sustain.

Claymakers’ conservative fiscal approach has paid off over the past few years, and put the organization in a more stable position. The funds that Ana so carefully fostered over the past 12 years will allow us to be resilient in the face of changes that will arise as Durham grows, and Claymakers grows along with it.
Classes

Each year, Claymakers presents seven class sessions. Sessions are six and seven weeks in length, and for the most part, classes cycle continuously, keeping our studio bustling! For the period from October 2018-September 2019, Claymakers offered a total of 85 individual classes. There is truly something for everyone at Claymakers, from beginning wheel-throwing, to sculpture, to advanced special topics, such as atmospheric firing. Attendance from October 2018 through September 2019 was the highest in Claymakers’ history, an astounding 909 enrollments!

A highlight of the summer was Marie Wright’s Beginning Glaze Design class, in which our students’ chemistry knowledge was put to the test. Many reported being challenged but growing, and having a greater understanding of glaze failures. Best of all, as a result of the class, a new glaze joined the studio mix: a bright, fun pink! An exploratory class, Low Fire Soda Surprise!, tested out Claymakers’ new soda kiln. The kiln was a longstanding dream of Ana’s, which she built in the alley before her departure.

Claymakers 2018-2019 Classes

Core Wheel Classes
Pottery 101: Introduction to Clay Wheel for Absolute Beginners!
The Next Step: Intermediate Wheel
Continuing Wheel
Saturday Clay

Wheel Special Topic Classes
A Magical Holiday
Gift-Making Spectacular!
Bowl-Making
Casseroles
Chinese Inspired Pottery
Combined Techniques, Cohesive Forms
Illuminations
Korean Inspired Pottery
Stackable
Throwing Taller Pots
Utilitarian Handmade Renegade
You are the Boss of Clay!

Sculpture & Handbuilding Classes
Pottery 101: Introduction to Clay Sculpture
Introduction to Ceramic Sculpture
Intermediate/Advanced Sculpture
Sculpture and Handbuilding
Coil-Built Pottery
Monsters & Mythological Creatures
Narrative Clay

Surface Treatment Classes
Beginning Glaze Design
Decorating Functional Pots
Introduction to Crystalline Glazes
Patterning with Colored Clay
Slippery Surfaces

Firing Classes
Carbon Trapping with Reduction Firing
Low Fire Soda Surprise!
Cone 6 Soda Firing
Raku I & II

Pottery Appreciation Classes
Do You Know What’s Coming Next?
Big Thanks to Claymakers’ Studio Assistants!

Claymakers’ studio assistants offer help with studio operations in exchange for class tuition and studio access. From mixing glazes to tidying the studio and helping with facilities repairs, they put in hundreds of hours each year to keep our workspaces clean and complete the countless unseen tasks that keep a studio running. Collectively, they load, unload, and program over 1,000 electric kiln firings each year! Their work truly helps keep our community going, and we are grateful for their efforts.


Claymakers Turns 20!

Claymakers was founded by arts visionary Leonora Coleman in September 2000, in an old awning shop near downtown Durham. An anchor in the revitalization of Durham’s Central Park district, Claymakers quickly grew into a community of dedicated clay artists and enthusiasts. Following Leonora’s untimely death in 2008, Catherine Lidov purchased the business, with the goal of converting it into a non-profit organization. That effort began in earnest in mid-2011.

Thanks to the financial and volunteer support of the Claymakers community, the transition to non-profit status was realized in January 2012, and Claymakers acquired 501(c)3 tax status in 2013. From small beginnings, Claymakers has become a hub for the ceramic arts in North Carolina and beyond. We are grateful to have served our expanding community over the past 20 years, and look forward to what the next 20 will bring!
In the Gallery

The Claymakers Gallery performs a crucial function for our community: introducing the general public to the ceramic arts and to the work that Claymakers performs; educating students, renters, and professional artists about clay artists and techniques from around North Carolina and the nation, as well as providing them with inspiration for their own work.

Claymakers Gallery begins and ends its annual cycle with “Steinfest,” our national invitational exhibition, now in its seventh year, and more popular than ever. Other shows during 2018-2019 were the annual community holiday show, which featured a wide range of work produced by Claymakers’ students, teacher, renters and friends, and “Slabulous,” featuring slab-built work from local potters Sasha Bakaric, Nathan Hood, and Joseph Sand. In June, Claymakers welcomed general manager Mac Star McCusker with a solo exhibition, “Gendered Clay,” which examined issues of social inequality, spotlighting the policing of gender, anti-discrimination laws, bathroom bills, and issues addressing the LGBTQ community.


Claymakers’ signature national invitational exhibition, “Steinfest,” opened on September 27th, and will remain on view through Sunday, November 10th. Yet again, curators Gillian Park and Evelyn Ward did a fantastic job of selecting top-notch artists from near and far; 54 artists from around the United States and Canada shared their work with us. This year’s show offers a range of interpretations of the traditional form, displaying numerous ceramic techniques and styles. Steinfest’s opening reception, a highlight of the year, is our chance to raise a glass to our dedicated community members and supporters who have helped sustain Claymakers over the past 19 years!

Much appreciation goes to the volunteers who assisted in assembling the show, preview party, and opening reception. Jenny Tenor and Kathleen Miglia once again provided a veritable feast for the opening events, and Marty Warburton created stunning floral centerpieces. Claymakers studio assistants pitched in to get the building and studio sparkling clean. Douglas Tilden was an ace junk-hauler, helping us to spiff up the alley for the opening reception. Board members Charlie Evergreen and Liz Paley collaborated to provide item photography. Anna Schroeder contributed to Steinfest social media promotions.

Many thanks go out to our sponsors! Community member Marty Warburton was our Steinfest headline sponsor. Ponysaurus Brewing Company and Toast contributed delicious food and beverages at the opening reception. Durham Pack and Ship is once again helping us with the cost of shipping steins. Our friends at Geer Street Garden generously offered stein purchasers a free beer. And a very special thanks goes out to the Bulltown Strutters, who brought incredible energy to the opening reception by performing in front of 705 Foster!
**Retail Store**

Claymakers’ retail store is the Triangle’s oldest and most extensive supplier of clay, glazes, ceramic materials, and tools. The store is a crucial resource, not only for the Claymakers community, but artists, teachers, and students from Durham and beyond; Claymakers’ customers come from throughout North Carolina and at times, from other states. The store connects all these audiences to Claymakers’ educational programming and gallery activities.

From October 2018-September 2019, our tiny storage space saw a total of 193,944 pounds of clay and dry materials pass through it before being sold, a 7% increase from 2017-2018.

**Empty Bowls**

Over the past 13 years, the Claymakers community has created, decorated, and donated over 4,000 bowls to Urban Ministry of Durham’s Empty Bowls event, with the goal of preventing homelessness in Durham. Thanks to all who contribute to this effort!

**Please Help Keep the Fires Burning!**

**Make a Year-End Contribution to Claymakers**

Like many small nonprofits, Claymakers relies on contributions to fuel our growth as we pursue our mission to promote the joy of working with clay. We thrive thanks to our community’s generous support.

As we evolve as a nonprofit, our strategic planning includes expanding our ceramic arts services and educational programs, while maintaining financial stability for the long term. We cannot do this without your support.

Please consider making a year-end contribution to Claymakers! Your contribution will help us to become an even more dynamic place for all who love clay.

Use the enclosed envelope, visit www.claymakers.org, or call us at 919.530.8355 to learn how you can support our mission.

Claymakers is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, and your donation is tax-deductible to the extent permitted by law.

**2018-2019 Instructors**

Gaines Bailey
Lisa Brown
Charlie Evergreen
Christopher Donald
Nancy Garrett-Mead
Deborah Harris
Delores Hayes
Nathan Hood
Mac Star McCusker
Marsha Owen
Elizabeth Paley
Ronan Peterson
Jessica Sandford
Evelyn Ward
Marie Wright

**2018-2019 Board of Directors**

Roberta Wood, President
Susan Trabka, Secretary
David Dwin, Treasurer
Ted Corvette
Charlie Evergreen
Robert Feth
Susy Holloway
Elizabeth Paley
Steven Wilson

**Claymakers Staff**

Executive Director
Emily Lassiter

General Manager
Mac Star McCusker

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Claymakers’ mission is to promote the joy of working with clay; sustain a thriving community of artists, students, and teachers; and foster enthusiasm for the ceramic arts through classes, workshops, exhibits, special events, and access to facilities and materials.