Historical Influences on Contemporary Ceramics
March 16 - May 4, 2001

Opening reception: Friday, March 16, from 5:00-7:00 p.m.
Lecture by Sheila Hoffman: Monday, April 2, 7:30 p.m., Leak Room Duke Hall
Both events are free, and the public is cordially invited to attend.

Ten thousand years ago Japanese from the Joman Period discovered that clay under the intensity of flame could produce a vessel of unparalleled strength. From that time forward the art of ceramics has spread throughout the world, changing as each culture places its own fingerprint on the vessel as it adapts to the artist's own particular sensitivity and vision.

Charles Tefft, instructor of ceramics at Guilford College, has curated this exhibition, which features the works of six prominent United States ceramic artists whose modern works have been inspired by various ancient traditions.

The exhibition is presented in conjunction with a ceramics art history class, taught by Tefft this semester at Guilford College, an aspect of which will focus on Eastern ceramic traditions and how artists take these traditions and subject them to the techniques and philosophy of their own culture. The resulting works are creations that speak of their particular time and place. The artists participating in this exhibition claim influence from a myriad of cultures, from the Orient to West Africa.
Artists selected by Tefft include:

· **Malcolm Davis**: Working exclusively in porcelain, Davis is perhaps best known for his exploration of the Shino glaze and his Japanese-influenced teabowls. Davis embodies in his work his desire to make pots that are friendly and intimate, growing ever more personal with daily use. His work has been included in publications such as The Best of Pottery (Rockport Publishers), Creative Pottery (Rockport Publishers), and Wheel Thrown Ceramics (Lark Books). Davis, from Washington, D.C., is currently a Resident Artist at the Lee Arts Center, Arlington VA, and has works in collections nationwide.
Pete Pinnell: An assistant professor of art at the University of Nebraska, Pinnell makes vessels which are both useful and decorative. "I am intrigued by the look a very old object takes on after years of use," he says. "The surfaces I employ are intended to evoke this feeling: the sense that this is in some way a special object." His pottery has appeared in numerous magazines, and has been in over 100 exhibitions throughout the US, and in Europe, Japan, China, and New Zealand.
Winnie Owens-Hart: Owens-Hart is currently a professor at Howard University in Washington DC, where she has taught since 1988. Prior to her teaching career in the states, she was a ceramics instructor in Nigeria. Throughout her career Owens-Hart has researched contemporary and traditional African ceramics, African American clayworkers, and the ceramic techniques of aboriginal cultures. Her own work is imbued with a soft simplicity that invites and intrigues. She has authored numerous publications including Ceramics: From Africa to America, Revivals!, and Influences: Contemporary African and African-American Art.
Ellen Shankin: Shankin is a potter whose widely exhibited functional stoneware is characterized by strong organic form and earth tone glazes. Recipient of an NEA Visual Arts Fellowship, she teaches workshops around the country and has been published in many ceramic books and magazines. Contrasting sharp faceted surfaces with soft glazes, Shankin's works are alive with static motion. Shankin currently works out of her studio in Floyd, Virginia.

Randy Johnston: As an artist, Johnston is keenly interested in sculptural aspects of functional forms. Johnston is a studio potter whose works have been shown in exhibits nationwide, and who presently teaches at the University of Wisconsin in River Falls. Johnston began his career as an apprentice of Shimaoka Tatsuzo, a national living treasure of the nation of Japan and a student of Shoji Hamada. Johnston also worked as a stone mason for nearly fifteen years to support his pottery habits, and found this to have had a profound influence on his work. Johnston's approach to working in clay is as much philosophical, as it is technical.
Randy Johnston
River Falls, WI
Michael Simon: Based out of Colbert, GA, Simon is well known for his beautiful and functional vessels. His works are single-fired in a salt kiln with bold surface decorations using oxides and slips. Simon was a student of Warren MacKenzie, who in turn was a student of Leach. From MacKenzie, Simon assimilated an interest in the integral individuality and personality of form and decoration with respect to the pot. Simon produces off-round thrown jars, subtle in their nuances of form. He often draws inspiration from ancient Chinese and Persian ceremonial jars. Simon describes his aesthetic sensibility as one which "brings to life the dichotomous nature of functional pottery."

In the accompanying lecture, studio potter Sheila Hoffman will discuss the works of each participating artist, focusing on the manner in which each of them is influenced by the Leach-Hamada tradition. Bernard Leach, a British potter, and Shoji Hamada Mashiko, an artist of Japanese heritage, traversed the Orient at the turn of the century and their resulting works, which embrace both Western and Eastern thought, have since greatly influenced American studio potters.

Both the exhibition and the lecture offer opportunities to consider what role ceramic works from other cultures and other time periods have in influencing modern ceramics, and offer a unique opportunity to see the works of six notable ceramic artists from across the nation in one show.