New works in clay I & II
New Works In Clay
By Contemporary Painters and Sculptors

April 26—June 26, 1979
Syracuse University
Lubin House Gallery
11 East 61st Street
New York City, New York 10021

Exhibition organized by the
Joe & Emily Lowe Art Gallery,
Syracuse University School of
Art, College of Visual &
Performing Arts, Syracuse,
New York

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Introduction
The Syracuse Clay Institute at
Syracuse University began in
September, 1974 and had its
roots in a joint effort between
Syracuse University School of
Art and the Everson Museum. It
grew out of a need recog-
nized first by the founders,
Margie Hughan, to promote new
imaginative approaches in the
creation of art from clay.
The first workshop was based
on the idea of inviting inter-
nationally renowned artists,
who were not ceramicists, to work
in clay in order to discover new
directions and create new
visual imagery with the clay
medium. This is not an original
idea, since many great painters
and sculptors, such as
Gauguin, Picasso and David
Smith had worked in clay in
the course of their careers. But
it was new in that it estab-
lished a unique environment
at Syracuse University and the
opportunity for the artists to
work and create in clay under
ideal conditions. Artists in the
first two years (1974-1976) of
the Syracuse Clay Institute
Workshop included: Billy Al
Bengston, Stanley Boxer,
Anthony Caro, Frieda Dahms,
Helen Frankenthaler, Michael
Hall, Dorothy Hood, Jules
Olitski, Larry Poons and
Michael Steinbruner. The first ex-
hibition of their work was
entitled "New Works In Clay" by
Contemporary Painters and
Sculptors, and was held at the
Everson Museum of Art,
Syracuse, New York, in Jan-
uary, 1976.
The next workshop (1976-
1978) of the Syracuse Clay
Institute included: painters,
Frieda Dahms, Sheila Girling,
Kenneth Noland, sculptors,
Anthony Caro, Stephen De
Staebler and Mary Frank,
ceramists, John Glick and
Margie Hughan. Their work cul-
mated in a second major
exhibition, "New Works In Clay
II" held at the Joe and Emily
Lowe Art Gallery, School of
Art, Syracuse University,
Syracuse, New York, in De-

Catalog of the Works

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Artist</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tr>
<td>Billy Al Bengston</td>
<td>Salad Plate, 1978</td>
<td>Glazed stoneware</td>
<td>10 1/4 x 7 3/4 x 4</td>
<td>Private collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stanley Boxer</td>
<td>untitled, 1975</td>
<td>Earthenware</td>
<td>19 x 19 x 15 1/4</td>
<td>Lent by Everson Museum of Art</td>
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<td>Anthony Caro</td>
<td>untitled, 1975</td>
<td>Stoneware, porcelain slip</td>
<td>15 x 36 x 15</td>
<td>Lent by Andre Emmerich Gallery</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stephen De Staebler</td>
<td>Cross Torso, 1978</td>
<td>High-fired clay</td>
<td>18 x 18 1/2 x 2 x 4</td>
<td>Private collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frieda Dahms</td>
<td>untitled, 1975</td>
<td>Colored stoneware, engobe</td>
<td>25 x 20 x 8</td>
<td>Private collection</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sheila Girling</td>
<td>Landscape Slab no. 7, 1978</td>
<td>Colored clay, slips and stains</td>
<td>19 x 20</td>
<td>Private collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Glick</td>
<td>Wall Slab no. 4, 1978</td>
<td>Stoneware, porcelain</td>
<td>20 x 24</td>
<td>Private collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Hall</td>
<td>untitled, 1975</td>
<td>Colored stoneware</td>
<td>19 x 17</td>
<td>Lent by the Everson Museum of Art</td>
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</tbody>
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We are grateful for the cooperation of the following galleries: Aquavella, Andre Emmerich, M. Knoedler and Co., Inc., Meredith Long and Gables, New York City; Nina Freudenheim, Buffalo; New York; Thomas Segal, Boston; Willis, San Francisco; James Cowan, Los Angeles; James Yaw, Birmingham, Michigan.

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Recollections of the First New Works in Clay Project
By Ken Carpenter

More than half of the ten artists brought together for the first New Works in Clay project had not worked with clay before. Perhaps the major exceptions were Anthony Caro, who had modeled in clay the massive figures that were his main work of the 1950's, and Michael Hall, who had studied ceramics at the University of North Carolina. Larry Poons was rather more typical in that clay was something new for him. Unlike Caro, who wanted to know the whole history of clay, Poons wanted not to know technical things about it and so ended up using 600 pounds of slip, something a ceramicist might not do in a lifetime. Dorothy Hood had not worked with clay either, and as a result felt "there were no rigid forms set up. One can do what one wants. I couldn't pretend to make something that's the virtue of it; you do the most simple and direct thing with the best results." The artists were not only free from any conventions or established techniques of the traditional clay world; they were also removed from the tendency to repeat their earlier work. The elements they chose to work with might be radically different from those they had used before, as Hall's commercially made, salt-glazed coping tiles were for him. Yet the artists could still proceed with the essence of their usual methods. Jules Olitski got a cake-decorating set from a restaurant-supply store to apply the color to the edges of clay slabs, doing a kind of painting in clay. Caro worked with a so-called "piece pit," a stock of parts such as cylinders, pulled pieces of clay that he called "flappers," so-called sausages, thrown forms, handles, and so on, all hand for inclusion in his sculpture. As the artists adjusted to the needs of clay, they tended to become more aware of gravity. They could see that all a gallon of clay might weigh twenty pounds and want to fall. The first day Caro worked on the project, he had the team drop and throw unfired clay pots on the floor to see how the clay behaved. In a way he was repeating the essence of some of his basically automatic procedures from around 1953 that seem to have served him to "force" his inspiration. Caro found that he could take advantage of the fact that clay wanted to sit or fall in a certain way by making large slabs of clay with canvas bucking and 2% fiber added for body, folding them over, and setting them fall as they would. Turned on their sides, such elements required support, and eventually some of the support pieces (so-called "bodkins") came to be incorporated into Caro's final notion of the finished work. Other artists responded to clay's natural need for support by stacking the elements one on top of the other. Hence Friedel Dzubas' "Shief Series" and various works by Poons.

Responding to the nature of clay as they did, the artists were able to take advantage of some happy accidents. Dorothy Hood, using a rather primitive low-temperature, Raku-like process of firing clay, discovered that the layers of sawdust pilled about the clay slabs in the firing left a carbon trace of the pattern of each successive sawdust pile on the porous clay. The result was bumpy surfaces. Dzubas, who ordinarily works with preparatory drawings, was inspired by the spontaneity of clay and so shifted to working direct. Nonetheless, there were some recurrent problems. Temperature of the clay, the surface and at the same time, the clay's surface was so distracting. Michael Steiner solved some of these difficulties by casting a few of his pieces, losing some of the surface incident in the process. The more reworked sculptures seemed to lose some of their aesthetic freshness along with the freshness of the materials themselves. Perhaps most serious was the problem with the floor and more particularly with the unforeseen incorporating the natural sag of clay into the work, making it part of each sculpture's syntax rather than something outside the work (and its internal tension) being added to the work after its making by the expense of gravity.

The results of the first New Works in Clay project are now a matter of record, not only the development of the medium but also the development of the artists' work. I have been a critic before and for some of the artists there has been a notable consolidation of aspects of the work that may not have been clear before. One thinks of the sort of virtual motion imparted to Caro's sculpture by the folding and falling of his clay slabs, of how consistent it is with his comment of 1960 that "while much of the sculpture that I'm doing is about extent...it might get to be about fluidity." Or of Hall's affirmation with that aspect the artist has identified as a kind of metaphor of simultaneous barrier and access." Or of the sheer quality of Helen Frankenthaler's Mattress and Shroud, with their suggestion of a general reconsideration of the relationship between painting and sculpture. Clearly, while clay had its inspiration for-and influence on-the artists, the New Works in Clay project are having their own influence on the history of clay, lying it more directly and at times more style developments of high art.

The ten artists were Billy Al Bengston, Stanley Boxer, Anthony Caro, Friedel Dzubas, Helen Frankenthaler, Michael Hall, Dorothy Hood, Jules Olitski, Larry Poons, and Michael Steiner.

Conversation with the artist.
Toronto, November 25, 1975.
Convocation with the artist.
Toronto, November 26, 1975.
"Conversation with the artist." Bloomsfield Hills, August 16-18, 1974.

Carpenter teaches art criticism at York University, Toronto, where he is an Associate Professor. He has also taught "Aesthetics and Criticism" at Ryerson Polytechnical Institute and been Guest Critic at the University of Saskatchewan's Emma Lake Artists' Workshop. In 1978 he was one of twenty Ontario professors to win an O.C.U.P. F.A. award for excellence in teaching. He is author of some thirty articles, in print or press, in such publications as Art International, artweek, Art India, Arts Magazine, the Journal of Canadian Art History, Studio International, and numerous others.