Across the globe, for organizations of all sizes, budgets and missions, the calendar year 2020 was dense with introspection, fraught with fear, and incapsulated with the unknown. For Northern Clay Center, the year began with business as usual in its efforts to advance the ceramic arts and to support and celebrate ceramic artists. Then, the global pandemic forced a closure of our space and a pause in our in-person efforts to advance our mission. Mid-March through summer’s end, our strategies for reaching artists, learners and champions of clay changed dramatically; access to our clay facilities was extremely limited; income earned off of the sale of artist wares and their teaching efforts was greatly diminished, but, nevertheless, Northern Clay Center persisted. Amidst the global health crises and cultural reckoning that was seemingly born in our backyard and subsequently rippled across the entire country, NCC struggled to learn how to live, to work, to just function in this new reality. Our year ended with substantially more questions about our purpose, our value, our impact—to our neighborhood, our city, our field—and few answers.

But, nevertheless, we began to learn how to deliver substantive content to our community despite the reality that the very nature of clay has historically required in-person interface? We worked to provide opportunities for creative expression that didn’t require the traditional approach and tried to reach those for whom it had the mightiest impact. We attempted to navigate within the midst of systemic racism that has run deep in our community for too long and for which finally has a critical mass dedicated to change. We put forth efforts to increase the diversity of ceramic artists and our community, and to cast a wider net with its services to artists in general. We are fully aware that our efforts must continue on these fronts and that they will take time, reflection, and inspired initiative, well into 2021 and beyond.

What follows is a summary of Northern Clay Center’s programmatic highlights and challenges that occurred during our 2020 calendar year, all of which were shaped by questions about our purpose, value, and impact.
In a typical year, NCC produces an average of ten exhibitions in our two gallery spaces; such exhibitions feature work by contemporary artists, emerging and prominent, from this region and from around the world. Throughout 2020, and despite the global pandemic, our exhibitions program remained timely, relevant, and comprehensive, with attention to contemporary themes and techniques. We’ve long relied on a peer review process for the selection of artists to work and exhibit at NCC with an aim to feature work that exemplifies the best work possible in contemporary ceramics. In early 2020, we transitioned from a long-held model of exhibition development, which included a team of local artists/educators/ academics who helped to guide the roster of our exhibitions. This model was outdated, lacked a global view of the material and diversity. Our newly-established Artist Advisory Committee, comprised of select artistic staff and distinguished makers, writers, and academics from around the country, began to shape the future exhibition roster and ensure artistic programming in general at NCC is relevant, challenging and engaging. Active members include: Heather Nameth Bren and Kelly Connole (Twin Cities); Chotsani Dean (newly relocating to Twin Cities for instructor position at the University of Minnesota); David East (Maryland Institute College of Art); and Sequoia Miller (Chief Curator, Gardiner Museum).

The Clay Center’s 2020 calendar year of exhibitions looked quite different from what we had originally imagined, with the global pandemic putting a pause in our regularly scheduled programming and requiring creative responses and ever-evolving strategies to address the federal and state guidelines. As such, we produced fewer, longer-tenured exhibitions, which included:

1/10 – 2/23 Main Gallery and Emily Galusha Gallery | Emerging Artist Grant Recipients

Emerging Artist Grant Recipients featured the work of the recipients of the 2019 Jerome Ceramic Artist Project Grants, including Erin Paradis, Zoë Powell, and Lynn Wadsworth; the 2018 Fogelberg Studio Fellowship recipients Maia Homstad and Keather Lindman, and the 2018 recipients of the Anonymous Artist Studio Fellowship, Soojin Choi and Peter Ronan. The exhibition also included work by Nick Earl, The Red Wing Collectors Society Foundation Award recipient.

3/6 – 6/21 Main Gallery | Triaxial Blends

Our spring exhibition, the result of some two years of planning, was only just installed before the Minnesota state shutdown in mid-March, but nimble NCC staff ensured both in-person and online visitors had the opportunity to interface with the work. Triaxial Blends was curated by Angelica Pozo, maker and educator, and explored the concept of the triaxial blend, a method of testing glaze ratios to develop new surfaces. Three pairs of established ceramic sculptors were paired together in collaboration and six artists were challenged to enter the world of sculptural collaboration and to embrace the elements of surprise, negotiation, and successful navigation of equal contribution, scale, subject matter, surface treatment, and each other’s creative experience.

These six artists, Susan Beiner paired with Christine Golden; Syd Carpenter paired with Sana Musasama; and Kristen Cliffel paired with Angelica Pozo embarked on a creative sculptural endeavor supported by travel, conversation, mutual support, and written documentation throughout the evolution of each new sculpture for the exhibition. In conjunction with the opening reception in early March, we brought Pozo and participating artist, Cliffel, for a short residency, and artist and curator discussions.

During the exhibition, the state mandated a full closure of the galleries that would last far beyond the scheduled run of this production. With all six guest artists in agreement, we extended the exhibition in the gallery through mid-August. Sana Musasama, a participating artist scheduled to travel to NCC for an
artist talk based on her work in developing countries, was the first of our educational events moved to a virtual platform. In addition, after much research, NCC was able to utilize a virtual tool typically reserved for much larger museums or other industries—a 3D Virtual Tour. This virtual platform allows anyone with the internet to visit the exhibition, free of charge, and interact with the space. It also provides a dynamic record of the exhibition and was so successful that NCC will offer and document this service for each exhibition.

Emily Galusha Gallery | It’s Still Political: Gender, Sexuality, and Queerness in Contemporary Ceramics
Curated by Mac Star McCusker, with Kelly Connole as curatorial advisor, the exhibition revisited the themes addressed by Sexual Politics: Gender, Sexuality, and Queerness in Contemporary Ceramics, an exhibition originally on view at Northern Clay Center in the spring of 2015. In that exhibition, Kelly Connole wrote, “Artists have the potential to freeze a moment in our collective cultural history, record it, interpret it, and help us breathe in the truth of our own time.” The theme is just as relevant today. It’s Still Political focused on gender fluidity, specifically, gender expression. McCusker offered, “We are all forced to participate in narrowly defined gender roles. Feminine men and masculine women have assumptions immediately made about their sexuality even though gender expression and gender identity have nothing to do with sexuality.” Five years after the original exhibition, it was still a misconception frequently held in our culture. Included artists: Shane Elliot Bowers, Shannon Gross, Arthur Halvorsen, G.V. Kelley, Mac Star McCusker, Marval Rex, and Maya Vivas.

7/3 – 8/23 Online Only | Six McKnight Artists
This exhibition brought together diverse artists who have each created a set of bookends, presented in a public library setting. Curated by Bryan Hopkins, the show took place at the University of Minnesota’s Architecture & Landscape Architecture Library Gallery and the Wilson Art and Design library. Participating artists included: Susan Beiner, Mark Burns, April Felipe, Ron Geibel, Brian Harper, Courtney M. Leonard, Matt Nolen, Virginia Scotchie, Malcolm Mobutu Smith, and Dustin Yager.

9/2 – 9/6 Main Gallery and Emily Galusha Gallery | 2020 American Pottery Festival
The 22nd iteration of Northern Clay Center’s annual fundraiser and celebration of the honor and community in ceramic studio pottery, 2020’s APF took both a virtual and physical format in an effort to provide a safe space in which to shop and learn from the “guest” artists. Scheduled shopping times were available to those interested, with 24-hour online shopping opportunities for those who were unable to visit in person. The 3-day event was peppered with online artist talks and demonstrations and was very well received. The annual catalog was made available in a digital format, and all printing costs were diverted to 25 different non-profit community organizations chosen by each of the APF guest artists.

3/8 – 4/7 Main Gallery | VOTE!
The fall 2020 exhibition, VOTE!, was curated by artist and academic David East. As the country approached the national election of 2020, there was no more pressing work than the work of civic engagement. VOTE!, a word that is a directive, an action, and an object, originally sought to throw open the doors of Northern Clay Center and to rethink the role that a gallery traditionally serves. The global pandemic obviously required a rethinking of this approach. Ultimately, this exhibition showcased artists who engage with questions of politics, citizenry, and activism through multiple lenses. NCC partnered with the Minneapolis Chapter of League of Women Voters to promote voter registration and provide voter information meetings, and (virtual) town halls. This exhibition attempted to unite the engaged act of looking with that of our public life, and it stretched the boundaries of the gallery with posters, buttons, and voters in motion. Through our efforts, we proudly reached over 110 community members. Guest artists include Ann Agee, Amber Ginsburg, Kris Grey, and Ryan W. Kelly.

Emily Galusha Gallery | Scale
Alongside VOTE! was Scale, which, prior to the murder of George Floyd in May, and the related civil unrest and protests, Scale, was pursued as an exploration of literal, relative, and metaphorical concepts. Because our home, Minneapolis, was at the epicenter of what is now a global mobilization, Scale instead related to identity politics. It underscored the nature of equality and justice for artists and the work they create. The exhibition engaged the viewer with questions about the inequity of engaging with work. Did the viewer make assumptions about the work based on the gender identity of the artist? The culture? The name recognition? Where placement in the space? Is it “just to” offer accolades to a known artist who might possibly be highly reputable due to benefits reaped from a history of institutionalized prejudices? Are the scales balanced for all who create? Like VOTE!, Scale was a positive exploration that put ceramic art at the forefront in an environment of genuine proactive and educational conversation. Artists included: Morel Doucet, Nuokan Huang, Victoria Jang, and Daniel Velasquez.

11/15 – 12/30 Main Gallery | 2020 Holiday Exhibition
A seasonal favorite, the Holiday Exhibition consumes the majority of our gallery space and celebrates the wares of dozens and dozens of artists, with a backdrop of festive décor.

Emily Galusha Gallery | MN NICE Graduates
We concluded the calendar year of exhibitions with MN NICE Graduates, which featured work from our seven spring 2020 graduates from the Minnesota New Institute for Ceramic Education (MN NICE). NCC continued to experience success with MN NICE, one of myriad NCC programs providing professional development and support for emerging makers. The quality of work produced for the graduation exhibition in November and December of 2020 was nothing short of amazing, as it explored all the possibilities of ceramics, clearly demonstrating the growth these students experienced in just eight months of instruction. Each student had an opportunity to work closely with the exhibitions department to develop an understanding of the exhibition process and to present their year’s efforts in a cohesive and well-designed manner.
Our 2020 exhibitions offered stunning examples of contemporary ceramics from across the spectrum of making—from long-revered and celebrated studio potters, to more emerging makers whose sculptural work employs non-traditional surfaces and building processes, to innovative studio explorations and research, to explorative work and teachings inspiring several generations of makers. The 2020 schedule of exhibitions, in many ways, was the Center’s most challenging year to date. With the global pandemic dictating restrictions on engagement between NCC and the public, artist access to studio space and materials, and allocation of funding, we were afforded opportunities to strategize engagement on a national and international stage, showcasing who, what, and why Minnesota and the Midwest remain such a strong influence in the ceramic arts. All special exhibitions accompanied public and accessible events at the Center and online, including demonstrations, curator-led discussions, and mentoring critiques.

By year’s end, NCC produced ten exhibitions, which featured the works of 63 artists, 22 of these artists were from Minnesota, 41 were non-Minnesota artists, and five of the artists were persons of color. We published three digital catalogs and created digital exhibition tours of six exhibitions. These gorgeously produced catalogs, both in print and digital formats, included essays by our curators, professional images (including installation shots) of each artist’s wares, and biographical information. We do not retain an explicit imperative for exhibition sales, but certainly welcome them. 2020’s exhibition sales were incredibly modest, just over $10,000, considering that 14 weeks of the year our galleries were completely closed to foot traffic due to the pandemic.

**2020 EXHIBITION ARTISTS**

63 individuals, 22 from Minnesota.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ted Adler</th>
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<th>Guillermo Guardia</th>
<th>Mac Star McCusker</th>
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<td>Susan Beiner</td>
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<td>Heather Nameth Bren</td>
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<td>Liane Bromer</td>
<td>Amber Ginsburg</td>
<td>Mika Negishi Laidlaw</td>
<td>Angelica Pozo</td>
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<td>Christine Golden</td>
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<td>Soo Jin Choi</td>
<td>Kris Grey</td>
<td>Heather Lindman</td>
<td>Jen Rogers</td>
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<td>Kristen Cliffel</td>
<td>Gerit Grimm</td>
<td>Kate Maury</td>
<td>Peter Ronan</td>
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**EDUCATION AND OUTREACH**

**Adult Education**

Though the COVID pandemic greatly inhibited our ability to facilitate classes in our customary communal setting, the relevancy and quality of the program’s offerings was maintained by efficiently-implemented virtual ceramics programs; a dedicated variety of teaching and visiting artists who tapped into their arsenal of special topics, alternative techniques, and an array of new perspectives to encourage explorations and evolving thought processes; and an adaptable and ever-curious student body, ready to learn despite all odds. After the requisite cancellation of our spring classes, Northern Clay Center was able to resume in-person classes in July, in a safe manner, in accordance with state and national guidelines.

I was cleaning up one afternoon in Studio B and a person who was teaching the one-day class that was coming up remarked on the care I was taking and I told them that NCC and its community was one of the jewels of my life, and that when that realization came and sunk in, I decided to treat it as such. Only fair.

—Michael Monsor, student, volunteer, monitor

**Clay-Along**

During a year in which in-person classes were necessarily halted or reduced due to the COVID pandemic, NCC worked to develop an effective online education platform, under the header of Clay-Along that allowed participants to continue their tactile clay explorations from home through live, weekly classes taught over video by experienced teaching artists, and materials provided by NCC. Clay-Along kits also went out to the community in the form of Self-Guided Kits, that allowed participants to employ independently, with an accompanying lesson packet. Clay-Along kits and classes reached some 360 participants in 2020, from as far away as Hawaii, to as near as our next-door neighbor.

I’m grateful to Northern Clay Center for coming up with Clay-Along. Leave it to an arts organization to respond to a crisis with humanity, agility, creativity, and pragmatism. The Clay-Along format has brought back some of the richness of connection to my clay community. Pre-COVID, I’d not been very interested in handbuilding, but with the constraints afforded by isolation and the structure and motivation of being in a Clay-Along class, I’ve grown to enjoy the physicality of handbuilding techniques. Clay-Along has made it possible for me to use this isolated time to keep growing and changing as a craftsperson. I hope we can have this format at least until the pandemic is over. —Amy Boland, adult Clay-Along student

I really appreciate the effort that NCC has done to make sure that their students and staff are safe. The online classes are a great way for me to keep making art without endangering myself or others. I really like having a Google Classroom to connect with my fellow classmates-- we can post pictures and questions for the teacher and other students. Both the class and the procedures are well thought out: from the sessions being recorded (so participants can access it later) to the teachers having two cameras so we can see the demonstrations from multiple angles.

—Lacey Rotier, adult Clay-Along student

**American Pottery Festival Virtual Conference**

The 2020 American Pottery Festival (APF) welcomed local and nationally renowned ceramic artists for a weekend full of technical demonstrations, presentations and lectures in conjunction with the opening of the exhibition. In 2020, this extensive conference was moved to a virtual format where a diverse cast of 19 artists presented, demonstrated and conversed with an audience that tuned in over Zoom, from all corners of the nation, and as far as the UK. The conference consisted of two, full-day workshops taught by highly-esteemed artists and long-time friends of the Center, Randy Johnston, Doug Casebeer, and Kathy King; four evenings of artist talks featuring multiple artist presentations.
and a social hour; and Saturday & Sunday workshops sessions consisting of three to four workshops each day. For these workshops, artists paired up and selected corresponding aspects of their processes to demonstrate as they shared about themes of their work ranging from the incorporation of animals as symbols, to Middle-Eastern design and influence, to applicable surface decorating techniques. Here’s what a participant shared about their experience attending the workshops:

I had my doubts about a virtual conference, but was so pleasantly surprised by how engaging and rich these presentations were. The demonstrations were dynamic and educational and seeing the artists broadcast from their own spaces was special and intimate. The synergy between multiple presenters was visceral even through a screen. This was such a valuable experience. Thank you to the artists and NCC for creatively embracing this challenge and making the APF conference a thorough success.

—Joanna Manning, student and NCC volunteer

The conference offered full or partial scholarships for students in high school or college, and studio artists were given complimentary access to weekend workshops as a professional development opportunity.

Saint Paul College Partnership
Even with the constraints of the pandemic, NCC and Saint Paul College continued this for-credit, collaborative class led by NCC teaching artist, Ursula Hargens. During the fall term of 2020, we hosted handbuilding courses to aid in the expansion of access to the ceramic arts. The diversity in learner—in life experience, profession, economic status, and background—adds another layer of energy and richness to our adult education program.

Minnesota New Institute for Ceramic Education
Northern Clay Center has continued to cultivate success with the MN NICE program. With seven participants graduating in 2020, the cumulative list of program alumni from four graduating classes now totals 43. Continuing into the program’s seventh year, we have maintained our commitment to tailoring the educational experience to each student’s needs by providing access to rigorous personalized instruction for a diversity of experience levels and daily schedules as well as supporting individual development through intimate dialogues with established artists in the local community and visiting exhibition artists, through onsite studio visits, and technical demonstrations. The program launched in 2014 and was designed to provide college-level instruction for art educators, adults 55+, serious hobbyists, and post-BFA students. With ever-increasing diversity, representing different generations, backgrounds, and experience levels, MN NICE continues to draw attention from larger audiences which has been reflected by annual increases in application numbers.

Even in the face of challenge and growth, and as other alternative ceramic education programs crop up, the quality of programming available to students in MN NICE remains an exemplar throughout the country. The level of work produced for the MN NICE graduation exhibition demonstrated a level of risk-taking and mature, substantial artistic development that is only possible when supported by a cadre of engaged teachers. Program head Ursula Hargens who keenly nurtures individuals while orchestrating and synergizing a diverse group of emerging and established artistic voices, among her many accolades was named 2020 Ceramic Artist of the Year by Ceramics Monthly, the world’s most circulated ceramics magazine.

This program puts you at the heart of discovery. Learning is built around self-discovery through historical observation, with the freedom to test and experiment. Ursula seems to understand each of her student’s goals and provides the questioning and motivation to help keep you on track. She is skilled in listening and observing, often picking up on what isn’t being said—such as any anxieties a student may
have—and then helping the student build their skills and confidence. Her love for ceramics and education is a gift to her students, by making a positive, lasting impression that can totally change the trajectory of their lives.—Mel North, MN NICE student 2020-2021

An advantage of the MN NICE class dynamic is the great diversity of participants. There is diversity in backgrounds, age, experience, and interests. I think it is a real strength of the program and something that really sets it apart.—Billy Hicks, MN NICE Alumni

Programs for Youth

In summer 2020, despite many cancellations and the adjustment of enrollment capacities in compliance with state and national public health guidelines, we reached 94 youth through our summer in-person Clay Camp program, and 129 youth through our virtual Clay-Along Camp Kits, well over 50% of our typical enrollment. A total of 13 camps were offered, and they ran at a maximum of eight students with thorough safety procedures implemented. We have continued to cultivate larger audiences for future Clay Camp participants through strategic promotion, the wide reach of our Clay-Along Camp Kits, and affordable, monthly family clay workshop offerings. By offering a wide array of camp themes, age ranges, meeting times and available scholarships throughout the seven-weeks of the summer term for youth, we remained as accessible as possible. We provided four full scholarships and saw an increase in the diversity of our camper population.

Clay-Along Camp Kits were created as an effective alternative to in-person kids Clay Camps. Five unique kit themes were offered and included pre-recorded video lessons, a packet of written instructions, and clay and decorating materials. Fifty Camp Kits were donated to our neighboring Common Bond Towers for children in their community.

Thank you for organizing the Clay-Along Camp kits this summer. My son and I (first grader), had a great experience with the Monsters & Minions series and I envision us signing up again. Very well done and I will recommend it to others in the future.—Clay-Along Camp Kit participant

I simply want to thank you and your staff for your active communication and safety efforts/plans and attention to detail. My child is having a great week at Clay Camp and I appreciate all of your work and creativity. In a year of cancellations, it is a gift to have an in-person, communal experience where I am comfortable sending my child.—2020 Clay Camp parent

Outreach

Traditionally, our ClayToGo and ART@HAND programming has been the leader in our efforts to build future audiences of ceramic makers, learners and supporters. Provision of educational, accessible, and inclusive ceramic arts experiences have provided myriad entry points into the material and arts community for youth in school settings, and all ages through collaborations with myriad community-based organizations, care centers and clinical settings. NCC’s outreach programs paused in mid-March and an estimated 7500 individuals had to forgo participation in school- or community-based, NCC-led programs between the first government shutdown and the end of the calendar year.

Outreach is built on partnership, so it follows that the capacity and need of our partner organizations are tantamount to both our ability to host our programming, and the overall program success. Overnight, a majority of our partners found themselves unable to bring outside programming, or any programming that required additional efforts on their part, back to their constituencies. Educators and those who work in health care settings have been heavily burdened during this pandemic; many are working beyond their capacity and having to deal with constant changes and threat of sickness that require time, energy, and sustained effort. They are working outside of their normal roles and settings to continue to support the basic needs of their communities. Clay programs for their students/clients/those in their care was not a basic need at that time. As such, the extremely low level of NCC’s outreach programming in 2020 is more reflective of the reality of our partner organizations capacity than NCC’s capacity.

ClayToGo

Outreach programs for schools and community groups were produced in partnership with Twin Cities’ schools, senior services organizations, and other arts organizations. We provide short visits and, early in 2020, extended artist residencies using our ClayToGo van; tours of NCC, and artist demonstrations for groups (corporate employees, students, civic groups, birthday parties,
Etc.) 2020 was clearly a year like no other, with a majority of our planned activities cancelled and unable to be rescheduled; however, we were still able to reach over 1,600 individuals (down substantially from 15,000+ in 2018 and 12,000+ in 2019). Participation in high populous events (such as school-wide residencies, Uptown Art Fair, the American Craft Council spring show) was simply not possible.

Our ClayToGo programing with schools and the community (excluding specialized programming for seniors, art educators, and on-site/private events) reached 900 youth, families, and school children in 2020. We did our best within what was possible to continue long-standing relationships with our partners, though programming was greatly downsized. The beginning of 2020, however, looked like many other years, and our partners were numerous and diverse: Kulture Klub, Kaleidoscope Elementary, Braham Elementary, Columbia Heights School District (four school sites), Moreland Arts and Health Sciences, Scott County Library, and new partner school—Crossroads Elementary Science + Montessori.

The spring and summer months found NCC outreach staff and teaching artists directing their efforts towards the development of digital/virtual/kit-based activities for school aged youth and towards supporting Minnesota K-12 art educators who were suddenly expected to teach their curriculum through online means.

Fall programs were modest at best, but we were able to transition what was to be in-person learning with Moreland Art and Health Sciences, and the Columbia Heights school district to distance-led learning. In a usual year, NCC outreach teaching artists work with dozens of Minneapolis/St. Paul and first ring-suburb public schools, as well as special learning programs within these schools, and as part of after-school programming. While our audiences reached were few, we proudly maintained our program quality and continued to expand the depth of our collaborations, this year with special focus on adapting to distance led clay activities and instruction.

By the end, the regulars were interacting and giving each other feedback and ideas, which was lovely to watch transpire. Their conversations included ah-ha moments and understanding the science behind the clay. Ella decided to build a huge creature-inspired clay sculpture out of air-dry clay using techniques we explored, and shared it with the class. In the last class I showed them my studio and kilns so they would have a better understanding of what would happen to their artwork in the next steps.

—Chloe Rizzo, NCC teaching artist, distance teaching with Columbia Heights Elementary Encore students.

Art Educators
NCC continued for the fifth year our series of multi-day workshops designed specifically for K-12 art educators, creating distance-accessible lessons and curricular support materials for K-12 students and teachers, and supporting educators through expansion of our online resources and creation of discussion spaces for support and exchange of ideas among teachers. We worked with nine ceramic artists (six from Minnesota; three from out of state) to provide opportunities for professional development and supports for distance led clay learning for art educators. Teaching artists demonstrated clay techniques and provided platforms for K-12 art educators to revitalize their classrooms, engage in critical dialogue, discuss new lesson plans, create and retain peer networks, and critique actual works of art.

Since mid-March, NCC’s outreach team worked with teaching artist to collect resources usable in the distance classroom. We have created ceramic-centric art history lectures spanning 10,000 years of history across the globe and other thematic lessons, including curating from a distance; clay bodies; a demonstration video lesson on building your own armature; and alternative material activity lessons on paper pulp creations; and creating thank you notes using the foundations of artistic design. Lesson plans have been added to the NCC website on topics such as analyzing the clay content in your own backyard; kindness and community (five-part series); and more! 1,533 individuals accessed these web resources in the first six months that the new resources were online.

Art@Hand
This program serves adults 55+ in a variety of settings (at NCC, in nursing homes and care centers, at independent
living centers, etc.) In 2020, we conducted 132 clay sessions, reaching over 700 individuals (2019 had over 3,100 participants and 700+ sessions). Many of these partnerships were possible because of the Minnesota State Arts Board’s Arts Learning grant for 2019/2020. Programs with ART@HAND partner organizations included short workshops and artist demonstrations, extended classes and residencies, and other activities that specifically met the needs of adults 55+ at various ability levels. An additional challenge that we embraced in 2020 was finding ways to support elderly individuals in their lifelong arts learning even when we cannot be in the same room with them, and, ultimately adapting our programs so that they could be led through streaming services, all while accommodating the learning and needs of this constituency.

We praise our partner staff every year, because our success with site specific populations depends on their buy-in and time investments. In 2020, these staff members were literally our hands in the classroom. We applaud the extreme efforts of our partner staff and all healthcare workers supporting elderly populations.

NCC created prepackaged clay kits, wrote lesson plans, recorded demonstration videos, and distributed these resources to our partner organizations so that in our absence, they could provide arts activity and mental stimulation to their residents. We led classes over Zoom and adapted week after week based on the needs of our partners and the level of restrictions they were facing. We patiently waited as our partners tackled the extreme challenges posed by the pandemic.

Obviously, much of our programming with 55+ communities living in a residential setting was restricted for the majority of the year. We were able to resume programs in November at a few locations, though in a much-reduced capacity than our usual class sizes, in order to comply with standards set by our partner organizations and MDH. A few classes could be led in person, with distancing between all participants, artists, and staff, but most of the classes occurred with the teaching artists providing direction over Zoom. We were still able to reach over 600 individuals during the 114 classes that occurred in 2020.

Open Circle Adult Day Services has had the absolute privilege of partnering with NCC for several years. Outside of our day center, the older adults we serve often have little to no access to creative pursuits which offer valuable and unique opportunities for self-expression and reflection. Thus, we strive to provide our membership with quality experiences which provide for creative expression. Our partnership with Northern Clay Center has enhanced and broadened this objective immensely. They provide access to professional artist/teachers and materials that Open Circle would otherwise lack. In fact, we have members who regularly reject art programming opportunities—save for when Northern Clay Center is on site. There is a real draw to working with the clay medium and the unique experience opens minds to trying something new. Northern Clay Center has consistently offered Open Circle’s adult day centers an engaging, accessible, and creative experience of the highest quality that transcends more traditional art/craft activities.

—Mark Rosen, Program Director, Open Circle Adult Day Services

The Northern Clay Center program is greatly missed by our residents who get so much out of creating with clay. This program has been very popular in our building and many of the residents display their creations outside their unit doors on small shelves. They are having to stay in place in their apartments and look forward to the day that we can all be together creating once again!

—Jennifer Rutschke, Executive Director, Park Apartments

I can honestly say that our participants have definitely missed the clay classes during this pandemic! It was something they all looked so forward to—not only for socialization but also hand strengthening and using creativity. I had one participant say it was the one thing that made her feel ‘normal’ again.

—Jill Riley, Recreation Therapist, Bethesda Hospital
### 2020 TEACHING & GUEST ARTISTS 99 individuals

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ann Agee</th>
<th>Kelly Connole</th>
<th>Franny Hyde</th>
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<tr>
<td>Clarice Allgood</td>
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<td>Joel Froehle</td>
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<td>Amber Ginsberg</td>
<td>T. Lee</td>
<td>Soren Priede</td>
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<td>Doug Casebeer</td>
<td>Kris Grey</td>
<td>Forrest Lesch-Middleton</td>
<td>Marcelino Puig-Pastrana</td>
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<td>Guillermo Guardia</td>
<td>Dawn Malcom</td>
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<td>Ursula Hargens</td>
<td>Tippy Maurant</td>
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<td>Mike Helke</td>
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<td>Billy Hicks</td>
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Sue Schweitzer
Ruby Sevilla
Todd Shanafelt
Sandra Shaughnessy
Christopher Singewald
Joe Singewald
Audra Smith
Suzi Sultana
David Swenson
Olivia Tani
Mike Tavares
Priya Thoresen
Brenton Titcomb
Zach Van Dorn
Daniel Velasquez
Jenny Weber
Matt Wedel
Ashley Williams
Lucy Yogerst
ARTIST SERVICES

The McKnight Artist Fellowships and Residencies for Ceramic Artists

The McKnight Foundation, provided project, residency, and fellowship support to six artists. The McKnight Ceramic Artist Fellowships were awarded to mid-career Minnesota ceramic artists whose work is of exceptional artistic merit, who have already proven their abilities, and who are at a career stage beyond emerging. The 2020 Fellows were Andrea Leila Denecke (Scandia, MN) and Brad Menninga (Saint Paul, MN). The McKnight Residency Awards were made to non-Minnesota artists for intensive, three-month residencies at NCC. The 2020 awardees (and 2021 artists-in-residence) were Ashwini Bhat (Petaluma, CA), Edith Garcia (El Granada, CA), Tom Hubbard (Attleboro, MA) and Roberta Massuch (Philadelphia, PA). In addition, during the 2020 calendar year, NCC hosted four artists who received their esteemed McKnight Artist Residency Awards in 2019. Two of them shared their experience here:

My summer residence at Northern Clay center has had a profoundly transformative and enriching effect on my outlook and my professional practice. As I worked through the problems of making a work on such a large scale, I had to resolve complex problems of design, construction, and logistics. This process has strengthened my technique and given me confidence in my ability to carry through a complex project. It has also strengthened my confidence in my ability to work with the human figure. I have already featured figurative elements in my latest work. Most importantly, my McKnight summer residency has, at a most crucial time, reinforced my commitment to ceramic art.
—Marcelino Puig-Pastrana, 2020 McKnight Artist Resident

It has been quite a long time since I had three devoted months to just work in my studio. No work, no teaching, no hustling to make ends meet...this residency has been such a gift. It’s such a privilege to be able to work in studio. I can’t thank the McKnight Foundation and NCC enough for this opportunity. Focused time is such a luxury, thank you so much.
—Rebecca Chappell, 2020 McKnight Artist Resident

Three individuals comprised the 2020 McKnight selection panel: Winnie Owens-Hart is highly-regarded as an educator, artist, author, and advocate in various arenas including those of ceramics, art, and culture. Beginning in her formative years, Owens-Hart has long been involved in the ceramics community and has continued as an advocate for education. Throughout her lifetime of travels, Owens-Hart has long been involved in the ceramics community and has continued as an advocate for education. Throughout her lifetime of travels, Owens-Hart has become an advocate and conduit to educate others about the arts, culture, and historical techniques through workshops, exhibitions, publications, and production of documentaries. Owens-Hart’s work has been shown in various gallery and museum settings both nationally and internationally.

Virgil Ortiz is first and foremost a potter, but his creative and inquisitive nature has carried his processes and creations into an exploration combining art, décor, fashion, video, and film. Merging Cochiti tradition with his own storytelling, Ortiz keeps traditions alive with contemporary and individualized vision. Ortiz’s exquisite works have been exhibited in museum collections around the world including the Stedelijk Museum- Hertogenbosch, The Netherlands; Paris’s Foundation Cartier pour l’art Contemporain; the Smithsonian Institution’s National Museum of the American Indian; the Virginia Museum of Fine Art; and the Denver Art Museum.

Marcelino Puig-Pastrana received his BFA and BA in art history in 2000 from Fordham University in New York. Puig-Pastrana’s studies have additionally encompassed dance, drawing, painting, and printmaking, as well as both lighting and graphic design. In 1992, he was a recipient of a young artist grant in choreography from the National Endowment for the Arts and in 2017 he was a finalist with honorary mention in the 39th International Competition of Ceramic Art, Gualdo Tadino, Italy. Puig-Pastrana’s work is placed in permanent collections and has exhibited both nationally and internationally.

Jerome Ceramic Artist Project Grants

The Jerome Ceramic Artist Project Grants were awarded to three Minnesota emerging artists who take risks and embrace challenges, are developing a voice that reveals significant potential,
and who are rigorous in their approach to creation and production. These artists were Casey Beck, Ginny Sims-Burchard, and Rita Panton.

The 2020 panel of jurors included our recent visiting artists Kristen Cliffel and Angelica Pozo, who visited Minneapolis in association with the current exhibition Triaxial Blends, in addition to NCC’s 2020 winter McKnight Resident Artist, Rebecca Chappell. Pozo received her BFA from the New York College of Ceramics at Alfred University and her MFA in ceramics at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. In addition to teaching in Cleveland, OH, she is a public and community artist, studio artist, and author. Cliffel received her BFA from the Cleveland Institute of Art in 1990. In addition to teaching workshops at colleges and universities across the country, teaching sculpture and ceramics to school-aged children, and participating in residencies and exhibitions, she is currently a full-time studio artist in Cleveland, OH. Chappell earned her BFA from the Cleveland Institute of Art and her MFA from the New York College of Ceramics at Alfred University. Chappell currently resides in Philadelphia, PA where she serves as an instructor at Maryland Institute College of Art and long-term resident artist and instructor at The Clay Studio.

It has been a crazy year and I am certainly thankful to have Northern Clay Center’s support and to have been a part of this community in 2020. I was fortunate to receive the Jerome Ceramic Artist Project grant earlier in the year through which I set out to research high-alumina clay bodies, new slips, and their interaction with the atmosphere of the kiln and soda ash. I have learned a lot and am thankful to be a part of such a thriving community and to be doing this exciting research! All of this research and work will culminate in an exhibition and talk at NCC. —Casey Beck, Jerome recipient

Emerging Artist Residencies

The Fogelberg and the Anonymous Artist Studio Fellowships supported three emerging ceramic artists through the provision of studio space for one year. The 2020 Fogelberg Fellowship was awarded to Minnesota artist Clarice Allgood. The Anonymous Artist Fellowships were awarded to Gabby Gawreluk and Jacob Meer.

Warren MacKenzie Advancement Award

The Warren MacKenzie Advancement Award (WMMA) is a travel/study grant launched in 2014 and complementing our other artist grants programs by providing important funding for current students or apprentices and recent graduates around the country, while honoring the late American master potter, Warren MacKenzie. The 2020 recipient was Ashton Keen and their research included a residency at Shigaraki in Japan.

The 2020 EAR & WMMA selection panel consisted of NCC’s Spring McKnight Resident artist Hyang Jin Cho of Fort Collins, CO; Ron Philbeck from Shelby, NC; and Michael Hunt from Bakersville, NC. Cho is a ceramic sculptor, researcher, and author who came to clay through studies varying in art history, archaeology, studio art. Having developed her work and artistic voice at various academic and residency venues, Cho has exhibited work, completed residencies and projects, and published in Korea, Japan, Germany, the Netherlands, and the United States. Philbeck is a functional potter drawing influence from the Leach/Hamada lineage of potters. In addition to his 20 years as a maker, Philbeck has been an instructor and demonstrating artist at numerous colleges, universities, and institutions; exhibited across the United States; and been named recipient of various awards and grants including the Arts and Science Individual Artist Grant in 1998, 2008, & 2014. Pursuing his passion for clay that developed in high school, Hunt build his studio and practice after immersing himself in residency, travel research, and an apprenticeship program with Onggi potter Oh Huang Jong. Hunt has taught numerous workshops at institutions like Penland School of Craft and exhibited his work in a multitude of exhibitions across the Unites States.

The final artist award made as part of NCC’s repertoire of artist grants was the Red Wing Collectors Society Foundation Award, which is granted annually, through a nominative process, to a potter or historian of pottery. Emily Price was the 2020 recipient.

2020 GRANT ARTISTS

43 artists, 22 from Minnesota

| Ted Adler | Elliot Corbett | Tom Hubbard |
| Clарice Allgood | Linda Cordell | Ashton Keen |
| Derek Au | Bryan Cizbesz | Keather Lindeman |
| Casey Beck | Andrea Leila Denecke | Roberta Massuch |
| Ashwini Bhat | Nick Earl | Ian Meares |
| Aaron Caldwell | Brett Freund | Jacob Meer |
| Alyce Carrier | Alessandro Gallo | Brad Menninga |
| Pattie Chalmers | Edith Garcia | Natalie Nicholson |
| Rebecca Chappell | Gabrielle Gawreluk | Donovan Palmquist |
| Soojin Choi | Guillermo Guardia | Rita Panton |
| Kelly Connole | Maia Homstad | Erin Paradis |
|                       |                   | Zoe Powell |
|                       |                   | Marcelino Puig Pastrana |
|                       |                   | Donna Ray |
|                       |                   | Peter Ronan |
|                       |                   | Ginny Sims-Burchard |
|                       |                   | Chris Singewald |
|                       |                   | Hidemi Tokutake |
|                       |                   | Leandra Urrutia |
|                       |                   | Lynn Wadsworth |

ARTIST SERVICES
Studio Program

Studio space and equipment access (such as wheels, kilns, and glaze booth) were provided to some 60 resident artists in 2020. The studio program is a community of makers with a breadth of life experience and background, bringing a chorus of unique voices to clay.

2020 proved challenging for NCC’s studio program with 17 weeks of the year operating at total closure, and 24 additional weeks at reduced capacity. 98% occupancy was maintained, with Zoom meetings conducted to build comradery; and three new artists joined the studio program in 2020. We are proud to share that amongst this group of artists, who traditionally have worked with in close quarters of each other, there were no confirmed cases of COVID in 2020. Three artists shared their 2020 experiences here:

I have been thinking about you two over the last weeks. You got handed a major responsibility just before this society-wide threat emerged. Your decisions tough though they were/are show your capacity in leadership. —Peter d’Ascoli

NCC is the greatest place on earth. Or, at least, the Twin Cities. —Nick Klofkorn

The love and support that I have gained from being a part of NCC’s community has been absolutely crucial to my development in the clay world. They have always been there to keep me on my feet so early in my clay career and I will forever have their guidance, resources and community to thank for the rest of my clay journey! —Olivia Tani

2020 STUDIO ARTISTS

60 artists, 49 artists from Minnesota

Clarice Allgood
Marion Angelica
Maggie Archbald
Pam Bonzelet
Liane Bromer
Evelyn Browne
Lynda Bucis
Alyce Carrier
Pattie Chalmers
Rebecca Chappell
Alex Chinn
Logan Chyla
Elizabeth Coleman
Joel Edinger-Wilson
Katharine Eksuzian
Paola Evangelista
Sara Fenlason
Gabby Gawreluk
Kim Hamilton
Carol Hanson
Rachael Hoffman-Dachelet
Maia Homstad
Molly Horton
Nick Klofkorn
Alex Lange
Rylie Lawrence
Robert Leider
Spencer Ludtke
Marta Matray
Kate Maury
Matt McCleod
Jacob Meer
David Menk
Sheila Murray
Ari Nahum
Joy Newmann
Natalie Nicholson
Claire O’Connor
Mami Oberpriller
Robyn Peterson
Marcelino Puig-Pastrana
Donna Ray
Kathryn Rosebear
Chris Salas
Debbie Schumer
Christopher Singewald
Audra Smith
Kate Smith
Phil Smith
Mic Stowell
Olivia Tani
Joe Tashjian
Jacob Thill
Beth Thompson
Brenton Titcomb
Zach Van Dorn
Katherine Van Dunyhoen
Joan Vande Kamp
Lynn Wadsworth
Mary Ann Wark
In 2020, NCC’s gallery continued to extend its representation of high-quality ceramics beyond its own store and website. Over 1600 hundred pots by Minnesota and Wisconsin artists (as well as others from outside the region who were guests of our 2020 American Pottery Festival) were for sale at the virtual ceramic conference of NCECA. Held annually in March, this conference typically provided us the opportunity to represent the fine craft of our region to a live international audience. In 2020, the in-person event was cancelled, and NCC swiftly moved (in just nine short days) to create a new online sales platform to share the work with a digital international audience. 2020 was the seventh year our sales gallery has been accepted to exhibit in the highly competitive NCECA Gallery Expo. Even though the event was moved to a virtual means, the Center sold nearly 200 pots, totaling over $12,000, providing an international audience with access to artists’ work as well as a means to keep critical income streams open to participating artists. This figure is a tremendous amount considering no in-person sales and the reality that we were in week two of a state lockdown.

We continued to represent a variety of makers ranging from emerging to established and represented a wide scope of ceramic art including clay bodies, firing methods, functionality, and aesthetic approach. Special Featured Artist shows introduced the work of artists not typically shown at NCC, as well as offered the spotlight to existing gallery artist to show a larger, more cohesive, body of work. We continued to accept donations from desirable collections and raised $3,977 through ReCollect, a secondary market sale of pottery, proceeds from which go to support NCC’s Emerging Artist Residencies program. Part of the success of this program is the continued support of generous donors of ceramics and a featured during the Holiday Exhibition. ReCollect is proving to be a sustainable program and will ensure the generous funding of our grant programs, and, while other for-profit gallery entities are pursuing similar models of secondary sales, ours remains the only iteration that devotes 100% of its profits to building the next generation of makers.

We continued to balance the national reputation and artists served through our gallery with our local community interest and neighborhoods, as we partnered with neighborhood businesses, the local Somali community, and engaged in allyship and the amplification of the work of our BIPOC communities. Before the pandemic closed our doors in the spring of 2020, the gallery hosted our Annual Chili Cook Off, and a reception to honor the Emerging Artists in the exhibition program. The gallery employed one student intern in 2020 to teach and share experience in all aspects of gallery business such as inventory, shipping, photography, social media marketing, publications content creation, customer service, writing, editing, and special events management. In a staff-wide effort to create means of virtual engagement, we created a new online sales gallery starting in March. This redirection of strategy and staff resources ensured meaningful engagement with our constituents, as well as kept income streams open for NCC and the artists in the sales gallery.

2020 brought with it a collaboration between United Airlines, The Vega Group, and NCC. United Airlines sponsored the project, which provided small ceramic snack bowls to each guest at their virtual mixology events across the country. NCC arranged for commissions with three Minnesota artists to create the small pots and paid them an 80% commission rate (25% higher than our standard arrangement). This project put the Minnesota art directly into the hands of 1,400 people in new markets, and not only raised visibility for each participating artist and the Minnesota clay community in general, but showed guests and leaders in the promotion, restaurant, and bar industries how art could be functional in everyday life.

Our year-end gallery sales totaled over $177,235, a 36.5% decrease compared to 2019’s sales, but 33.3% better than our revised budget projections. Considering that NCC’s brick and mortar location was closed a total of 21 weeks in 2020 (four of which were at peak holiday shopping times and 21 weeks total of the calendar year saw no in-person shopping in our galleries), along with the uncertainty of the economy and election, increased competition from online galleries and artists whose traditional methods of selling wares were greatly altered by the pandemic, NCC is pleased to have had such positive sales of gallery work, which provided much-needed dollars to working artists in these challenging times.

Our artists shared their gratitude:

I really appreciate your safety-minded practices in the gallery, your empowering engagement with your neighborhood and the consistency of excellence you put into the world. You rock!  
—Lars Voltz

This might be the most incredible thing I have seen an arts organization do since the beginning of COVID and the recent protests. As usual, you are amazing and NCC is still finding ways to raise the bar.  
—Forrest Lesch-Middelton in response to the news that NCC would redirect its American Pottery Festival print budget funds towards artist-designated social cause organizations.

Thanks so much for all your thoughtfulness, we know how incredibly difficult your decisions must be right now! Thank you for everything!!!!  
—Maggie Jaszcak

Thanks for this message and for all your forward and creative planning at such a challenging time. I admire you all and am grateful to be a part of NCC. There is hope. Thank you for our exchange. You are one in a million. I so appreciate NCC and hope for the best. You all do a great job and are conscientiously involved in the big picture.  
—Laurie Shaman
Thank you!

Pots From a (Social) Distance

[Images of pottery and people engaging with the pottery]

[Images of large wrapped boxes with maps and ribbons]

[Images of people interacting with the pottery and boxes]
2020 SALES GALLERY & AMERICAN POTTERY FESTIVAL ARTISTS

199 individuals

Melynn Allen
Clarice Allgood
Dan Anderson
Linda Arbuckle
Posey Bacopoulos
Heather Barr
Tom Bartel
Casey Beck
Sue Bergan
Ashley Bevington
Jason Bige-Burnett
Patty Bilbro
Randy Bill
Andy Bissonnette
Nick Bivins
Margaret Bohls
Birdie Boone
Robert Brady
Wayne Branum
Nathan Bray
Andy Brayman
Heather Nameth Bren
Richard Bresnahan
Bob Briscoe
William Brouillard
Lisa Buck
Troy Bungart
Alyce Carrier
Doug Casebeer
Kevin Caufield
Pattie Chalmers
Sarah Chenoweth-Davis
Alex Chinn
Linda Christianson
Sam Chung
A. Blair Clemo
Sunshine Cobb
Michael Coffee
Dick Cooter
Guillermo Cuellar
Andrea Leila Denecke
Josh DeWeese
Marc Digeros
Amanda Dobbratz
Justin Donofrio
Paul Dressang
Robin Dupont
Sanam Emami
Paul Estelman
Andrea Falconer
April D. Felipe
Robert Fishman
Donna Flanery
Jill Foote-Hutton
Jil Franke
Brett Freund
Stuart Gair
Willem Gebben
Brian Geier
Steve Godfrey
Katharine Gotham
Sylvie Granatelli
James Grittner
Martha Grover
Blanka Groves
Richard Gruchalla
Adam Gruezmacher
Guillermo Guardia
Rampini Gubbio
Perry Haas
Ursula Hargens
Vivica Heino
Otto Heino
Juss Heinsalu
Zak Helenske
Mike Helke
RH Hensley
Hoi an Hoard
Butch Holden
Alisa Holen
Bob Husbys
Cheryl Husbys
Janel Jacobson
Peter Jadoonath
Maggie Jaszczak
Tom Jaszczak
Danute Jazvevičiūtė
Eric Jensen
Shirley Johnson
Lydia Johnson
Sam Johnson
Randy Johnston
Jan McKeachie Johnston
Bill Jones
Doug Kaigler
Peter Kerner
Ani Kasten
Matt Kelleher
Gail Kendall
Kathy King
Maren Kloppmann
Karín Kraemer
Matt Krousey
Jamie Lang
Peter Leach
Haejung Lee
Forrest Lesch-Middelton
Simon Levin
Robert Lieder
Lung-Chei Lin
Suze Lindsay
Lee Love
Elizabeth Lurie
Kirk Lyttle
Gail Markiewicz
Ruth Martin
Andrew Martin
Sharlyn Martin
Marta Matray
Jordan McDonald
Linda McFarling
Kent McLaughlin
Melissa Mencini
Candice Meth
Ron Meyers
Catie Miller
Ernest Miller
Megan Mitchell
Masayuki Miyajima
Robin Murphy
Edward Neu
Mike Norman
Robert Nothouse
Huang Nuokan
Kip O’Krongly
Jeff Oestreicher
Ken Olson
Lisa Orr
Walter Ostrow
Brent Pafford
Linda Painter
Donovan Palmquist
Liz Pechacek
Doug Peltzman
Ronan Peterson
Craig Petey
Ian Petrie
David Pier
Joe Pintz
Liz Quackenbush
Ron Rael
Matt Repsher
Astin Riddle
Colleen Riley
Andrew Rivera
Georgina Riveros Pi
S.C. Rolf
Carrin Rosetti
Monica Rudquist
Brenda Ryan
Amy Sabrina
Hide Sadohara
Ted Saupe
Wade Scheel
Pete Scherzer
Tricia Schmidt
MJ Schmit
Debbie Schmer
Deborah Schwartzkopf
Brad Schwieger
Johanna Severson
Laurie Shaman
Sandra Shaughnessy
Andy Shaw
Joseph Sherman
Sandy Simon
Christopher Singewald
Joe Singewald
Audra Smith
McKenzie Smith
Zac Spates
Will Swanson
David Swenson
Olivia Tani
Mike Tavares
Alex Thullen
Sandra Torres
Bernadette Torres
Jason Trebs
Daniel Velasquez
Marjorie Wade
Holly Walker
Kurt Brian Webb
Christy Wert
Kat Wheeler
Betsy Williams
Michael Wisner
Dustin Yager
Judith Yourman
Leadership Transition
Through first quarter of 2020, NCC was still navigating a major leadership transition, with the former director, Sarah Millfelt, departing NCC after a 20-year career. NCC’s newly-hired director resigned in March, having spent mere months in the position. In an effort to maintain consistent organizational values, and to honor the current strategic framework goals, and meaningful institutional knowledge and experience, the board appointed Tippy Maurant (Director of Galleries & Events) and Kyle Rudy-Kohlhepp (Deputy Director of Operations, Director of Learning & Artist Services) as interim co-executive directors. Both went on to navigate unprecedented financial and organizational challenges. In November, the Board chose to implement an executive leadership team and appointed Kohlhepp as the permanent executive director and Maurant as deputy director/ director of galleries & exhibitions.

The unexpected cease of in-person operations in March of 2020 required a drastic shift in the allocation of staff hours. To preserve one of NCC’s most valuable assets—the people who advance the mission—we engaged staff with new initiatives and a backlog of special projects. We proudly retained staff in their full capacity for the entirety of 2020.

This is clearer and better leadership than anything coming out of our federal government right now. There is not a sliver of daylight between NCC’s stated priorities and its actions. I am deeply impressed with the integrity and creativity of the people in this organization. If any of you decide to run for president, I will vote for you. Thank you so much for everything you’ve done to serve our clay community.
—Amy Boland, student

Seeding the Field for Diversity
Northern Clay Center continues to take critical steps toward seeding the field for diversity, and, specifically in the future numbers of pre-emerging ceramic artists. But, our results have had limited success, despite the resources we’ve devoted. We knew we have to continue growing the field through many channels of programming. To that end, we continued our relationship with Saint Paul College in 2020 (our partnership with Metro State was put on hold due to the pandemic), wherein their students, some of the most diverse populations in higher education in the Twin Cities, took courses at NCC for college credit. They were exposed to high-caliber ceramic arts and professional potential in the field, and our classrooms were filled with a range of diverse voices.

We brought distance learning to our lecture series a few years ago, via Zoom, and opened up entirely new audiences in the far corners of the state and across the country. As such, our staff were already well-versed in transmitting our in-house programs over the air ways. And, the audiences we are able to reach are not limited to those within our zip code!

Our exhibitions were thoughtfully conceived by a group of professional makers, gallery representatives, curators and critics via NCC’s new Artist Advisory Committee. This committee, and all of our juries, were intended to assure the rich resources NCC offers to the field of ceramics represent and support a broad and varied range of voices, providing a model now and for the future of ceramics.

Finances and Funding
Given the challenges posed during the 2020 calendar year, our year-end financials show few surprises. With realities of greatly diminished programming, a facility that was closed to visitors 40% of the calendar year, and the extremely limited enrollment due to MDH restrictions, NCC’s income for the year was down 41% from our original, pre-COVID budget projections. Specifically, we saw major decreases in outreach revenue/partner income (down some $70K from original budget); education/workshop fees (down almost 50% between the two categories); APF was down 12% from 2019, due to overwhelming demand for online works and strong presales; regular gallery sales were down 43% from the original budget, but despite the reality of a sales
gallery closed to foot traffic for four weeks during the holiday season, NCC’s sales in late November and throughout December aligned with 2019’s numbers. And, given the myriad COVID-inspired competing online sales from artists and institutions (both for- and non-profit), we are pleased with the year-end gallery income.

A few other positive results from 2020 can be shared: our individual contributions were 9% higher than budgeted, due to unprecedented numbers of donations from students when spring quarter classes were cancelled and students were asked to put their fees towards a future quarter or to donate outright. And, expenses ended the year at 23% below budget. For those staff members whose day-to-day responsibilities are dictated by activity and visitor levels, their responsibilities shifted to support areas such as COVID preparedness and cleaning, and NCC’s major shift to online content development and engagement. Fundraising, in particular, showed an increase in employee-related expenses, with expenses in this category topping out at 125% of budget, but this is due costs associated with a fundraising consultant who was hired to buttress the efforts of the interim executive directors.

The Clay Center ultimately ended the year in the red for a third year in a row (our budgeted deficit was $172,067; actual was $243,570). NCC has historically treated both building and equipment depreciation as cash expenses in an effort to plan for future and necessary acquisitions of equipment and building modifications. Our year-end depreciation expenses totaled $104,247; if we didn’t treat these as cash expenses, our year-end would reflect a substantially smaller deficit. NCC has, for many years, mindfully planned for requisite facilities and equipment acquisitions, for dips in programming, and for emergencies such as the pandemic. As such, we have slowly built our reserve funds which allow us to continue operations until our income-generating programs, and the world climate, are more stable. In 2017, NCC invested $1 million of its reserves into an RBC Wealth Management Brokerage Account; since such time, the market has continued to experience dramatic fluctuations; one positive addition to NCC’s year-end financials was a gain of $114K in this area.

Cumulatively in 2020, NCC paid out over $382,542 in support to artists (unfortunately, our lowest year since 2003), but given major decreases in payout to teaching and gallery artists (obviously due to COVID), we are not disheartened as our total payout to artists since 1995 now totals over $10.2 million. In 2020, we served 339 artists (a decrease of 23% from the previous year). Of these artists, served through access to studio facilities, teaching opportunities, participation in exhibitions, selling work, and grant programs, 12% were artists of color and 46% were from the state of Minnesota.

### 2020 YEAR-END BALANCE SHEET

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>ASSETS</th>
<th>$1,250,273</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Current Assets</td>
<td>$1,250,273</td>
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<tr>
<td>Noncurrent Assets</td>
<td>$2,964,173</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOTAL ASSETS</td>
<td>$4,214,446</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LIABILITIES</th>
<th>$1,250,273</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accounts Payable</td>
<td>$92,122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Liabilities</td>
<td>$3,333,820</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrestricted Net Assets</td>
<td>$2,689,207</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Without donor restrictions | $2,689,207 |
With donor restrictions    | $1,099,297  |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOTAL LIABILITIES &amp; NET ASSETS</th>
<th>$4,214,446</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

HIGHLIGHTS, CHANGES, AND CHALLENGES
COVID put a strain on the physical connection between individuals, and fear and uncertainty were perpetuated by this strain. With ten months of the calendar year occupied by social distancing, and, in some cases, isolation, so many organizations were forced to halt operations and furlough substantial numbers of staff. Northern Clay Center was not one of those organizations. We proudly celebrated, engaged, and preserved the most critical resource we have: the people who enable our mission. We provided opportunities for creative expression that didn’t require the traditional approach, but still reached those for whom these opportunities have the mightiest impact. Many of those individuals shared their experiences with us and we’ve included the impact throughout this report. These experiences were made possible by a small army of talented and committed staff, board and volunteers, who enabled NCC to navigate the calendar year and demonstrate its tenacity, its loyalty to the community, and its willingness and ability to adapt and change.

Staff
Leah Hughes, Executive Director (to February)
Heather Barr, Sales Gallery Associate (to October)
Casey Beck, Sales Gallery Associate
Alison Beech, Community Engagement Manager
Jordan Bongaarts, Exhibitions Associate (from October)
Ciara Cagemoe, Sales Gallery Associate (from October)
Mackenzie Catton, Program Associate
Amanda Dobbratz, Marketing & Technology Manager
Jessie Fan, Bookkeeper
Stephanie Lenertz, Sales Gallery Coordinator
Robert Lieder, Outreach Technician
Samantha Longley, Education Coordinator
Tippy Maurant, Director of Galleries & Events (to February),
   Interim Co-Executive Director (from March)
Emily Romens, Galleries Manager
Kyle Rudy-Kohlhepp, Deputy Director (to February),
   Interim Co-Executive Director (from March)
Audra Smith, Studio Manager
Jennifer Tatsuda, Business Manager (to July)
John Thew, Business Manager (from July)
Zach Van Dorn, Building Maintenance Technician
Joel Edinger-Willson, Education Technician and Resident Artist
### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

(served all or part of 2020)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amanda K. Anderson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bryan Anderson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nan Arundel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary K. Baumann</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craig Bishop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heather Nameth Bren</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evelyn Browne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nettie Colon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sydney Crowder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nancy Hanily-Dolan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonita Hill, M.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrick Kennedy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mark Lellman</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kate Maury</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brad Meier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philip Mische</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debbie Schumer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rick Scott</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paul Vahle</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### VOLUNTEERS

61 individuals

The facility closures and necessary social distancing measures implemented by NCC obviously affected our visitorship, artist and student access to the studios, and volunteer efforts at the Center. A typical year finds well over 200 bright, talented and committed individuals serving NCC in myriad roles—as clay camp assistants, facility monitors in the absence of staff, event support, and administrative and professional volunteers. Nevertheless, our 2020 efforts were generously supported by some 61 volunteers who contributed over 2000 hours (that’s the equivalent of a full-time staff member!) We are grateful for their commitment to our organization during what was an incredibly challenging year.
INSTITUTIONAL AND INDIVIDUAL DONORS

Thank you, sincerely, to all the institutions and individuals who offered unwavering support of our 2020 operations. A year unlike any we could have predicted, our efforts to keep our doors open, our kilns firing, and our community rich with clay resources were waylaid with numerous facility closures, development and adaptations of countless COVID response plans, and attempts to transition what we do from in-person to online means, and the list goes on. Your flexibility towards the spending of your dollars, your comfort with the uncertainty of how we would thrive under a new reality, and your trust in the passionate individuals who lead this fine organization were all key to our survival in 2020, which, in turn, enable us to gift the gift of creativity and the healing nature of art to those who needed it most. We were honored to have you as our partners in what will likely be remembered as our most challenging year to date in our organization’s history.

INSTITUTIONAL DONORS

AmazonSmile
Anoka-Ramsey Community College
Anonymous
Aroha Philanthropies
The Boss Foundation
Harlan Boss Foundation for the Arts
Brackers Good Earth Clays Inc.
Breadsmith
Patrick and Aimee Butler
Family Foundation
Continental Clay Company
Constance Mayeron Cowles and Charles Fuller Cowles Foundation
Cox Insurance Associates, Inc.
Lewis and Dianne Damer Fund
Walter McCarthy and Clara Ueland through the Greystone Foundation
John L. and Catherine J. Hill Charitable Gift Fund

LACOSTE/KEANE Gallery
Longfellow Grill
The McKnight Foundation
John A. & Karen J. Meslow Charitable Fund
Minnesota State Arts Board
Peregrine Capital Management, Inc.
Fund of The Minneapolis Foundation
Printing Enterprises, Inc.
Prospect Creek Foundation
RBC Foundation — USA
R.E. Swager Family Foundation
Red Wing Collectors Society Foundation
Riverland Bank
Robert Steinman Family Charitable Foundation
Smith Sharpe Firebrick Supply
Sociable Cider Werks
The Stablish Foundation

Target Foundation
Tradition Capital Bank
Trax Gallery
U.S. Bank Foundation
Veto Design
Archie D. & Bertha H. Walker Foundation
Wells Fargo Foundation Minnesota
Windgate Charitable Foundation
Zipps Liquor