

The 1993 NCECA Clay National

by Richard Zakin

The 1993 NCECA Clay National was held in the San Diego Museum of Art. The Gallery was spacious and well lit, and the placement of objects seemed thoughtful. The work seemed to me to be of genuinely high quality, manifesting great personal involvement—in one way or another—with the ceramic medium.

Many pieces appealed to me a great deal. Among these were:

Pod 18 by Phyllis Kudder-Sullivan. This was a somewhat amorphous form made from woven clay coils. This was perhaps my favorite piece in the show—elegant, containing much more air than clay, poetic and inward looking. Its technical means were simple, but I found its concentration quite riveting.

Demon/Girl Bottle by Kirk Mangus. This highly carved bottle was tough, compressed, and heavy; it had a great deal of highly condensed energy. Its simple but persuasive surface and the deep grooves cut in the body showed a great love for the clay.

Bowl #23 by Karen Thuesen Massaro. This piece was a porcelain bowl with underglaze drawing. Its mood was cool, hard edged, elegant, conscious of the weight of history on the craft (there



Demon/Girl Bottle, Kirk Mangus, 1992, clay, wood-fired, 15.5 x 12 x 8"

were echoes of the painting of Paul Klee and the china of Royal Copenhagen). Massaro, too, is in love with the clay, though this love is more softly (but no less ardently) proclaimed.

Ewer by Peter Pinnell. This piece was marked by a slightly unsure juxtaposition of elegant with awkward forms. In the end I was not persuaded by the formal inconsistencies. However, it was finished with a surface that was so striking and so self-contained that I found myself quite taken with the piece.

Budding Form #5 by Jamie Walker. This truly amazing piece was lurid, ugly, and heavy. The surface was covered with loopy designs remembered



Pod 18, Phyllis Kudder-Sullivan, 1992, ceramic, 6.75 x 23 x 11.5"



Bowl #23, Karen Thuesen Massaro, 1992, porcelain, 5 x 12.75"