

Ceramophile

Alfred Ceramic Art Museum





Cover – Detail: Patti Warashina, *Sentient*, 2001,
 low-fire clay, underglaze, glaze, mixed media
 34 x 12 x 8 inches, gift of the Estate of Nanette L.
 Laitman, 2021.17

Back Cover – Patti Warashina, *Sentient*, 2001,
 low-fire clay, underglaze, glaze, mixed media
 34 x 12 x 8 inches, gift of the Estate of Nanette L.
 Laitman, 2021.17

Facing page – Exhibition installation, *Nanette's Gifts*,
 February 25 – July 29, 2021
 Foreground: Ken Price, *Untitled*, 1992,
 polychrome glazed vessel, 5 x 7½ inches,
 gift of the Estate of Nanette L. Laitman, 2021.15

Above – Exhibition installation, *Nanette's Gifts*,
 February 25 – July 29, 2021

All the photography for *Ceramophile* is by
 Brian Oglesbee, unless otherwise noted.

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Backstory

The Helen E. Kruger Notebooks **By Margeaux Claude**

This past year has made us shift our relationship to work, access to information and what sharing physical space looks like. Artists are perhaps the best prepared to adapt to a constantly changing environment. Versatility is a keystone of an education or practice in fine art and craft.

Entering graduate school in 2020 during a global pandemic came with compromises. Limited access to museums and shows made me consider the riches in my own backyard. I found myself digging deeper and deeper into the archive of Scholes Library at the New York State College of Ceramics. What I uncovered was a sleeping giant. This abundant source of information is gently waiting for the seeker. Over one-hundred years of American ceramic history and research including the stories of individuals, their process and practice, are waiting to be read again. Among the archives' artifacts, personal letters, files and research are the students, faculty and technicians who expanded the scope of Ceramic Art, Ceramic Engineering and Ceramic Design in America. These stories and people where unknown to me and now carried additional significance.

A particular treasure excavated in the archives are the notebooks by Helen Elizabeth Kruger. I discovered Miss Kruger's story through research on Marion Fosdick. Helen Kruger was a favorite student of Fosdick and her dear colleague and painting professor Clara Nelson. Kruger obtained a Bachelor of Science degree in Industrial Ceramic Art from the New York State College of Ceramics at Alfred University in

1938 and, later, a Master of Education degree from Columbia Teachers College.

Kruger's notebooks, left to the archive by Chris Rossi a friend and neighbor, contain diligent notes and drawings on workshops with Bernard Leach, Shoji Hamada, Franz Wildenhain and Soetsu Yanagi. One such notebook includes sketches of pots she drew while a student. All of her study was likely under the direction of Marion Fosdick, Clara Nelson and Charles Fergus Binns who founded and developed the modeling and pottery curriculum in the Department of Ceramic Design. Kruger's notebooks also contain entries concerning historic art forms and philosophies of Black Mountain College. Her care and thoughtfulness has resulted in a detailed reflection on the ethos permeating the studio pottery of mid-century American ceramics. My favorite, from Kruger's notebooks is a quote from Confucius recorded in the pages on a Hamada lecture and demonstration. Implied in the scribbled notes is that Kruger is recording Hamada as he quotes Confucius: "The wise man is he who in his maturity makes informal use of the gifts with which he is born." Other pages included Hamada's commentary on Picasso's ceramics, throwing instructions from Marguerite Wildenhain and decorative slip demonstrations from Leach.



*Margeaux Claude, MFA candidate ceramic art, 2022
School of Art and Design, Alfred University, Reviewing Helen E. Kruger's, BS, AU, 1938, Notebooks, Scholes Library archives, Alfred University*

The value found in the Scholes Library artifacts dovetails with the work of the maker. Research in the maker's practice that is based in history provides the fertile ground into which we sow the seeds of the future. The process driven research of the maker informs the meaning found in the work of the historian as each discipline reciprocates equally the value of the other.

Personally, as a current graduate student in ceramic art, finding the archival materials stirred thoughts on changes to ceramic education and inspired my mission to understand more deeply the canon of a time and place that shaped what has come before me.

Discovering the stories and information in the Kruger notebooks reminds me that at an isolating time in human history we can look back at the achievements of important women such as Fosdick, Nelson and Kruger to gain inspiration.

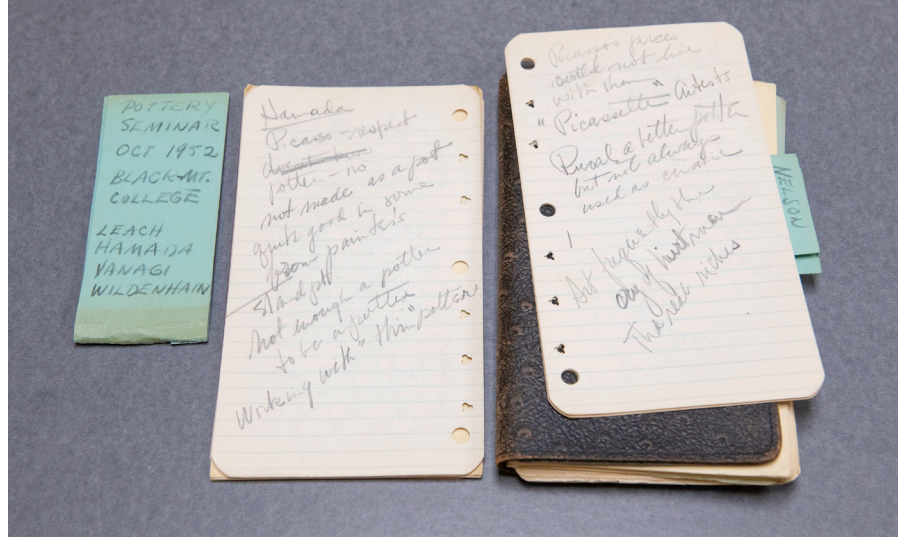


Helen E. Kruger, 1938, Scholes Library Archives, Alfred University, Photographer Unknown

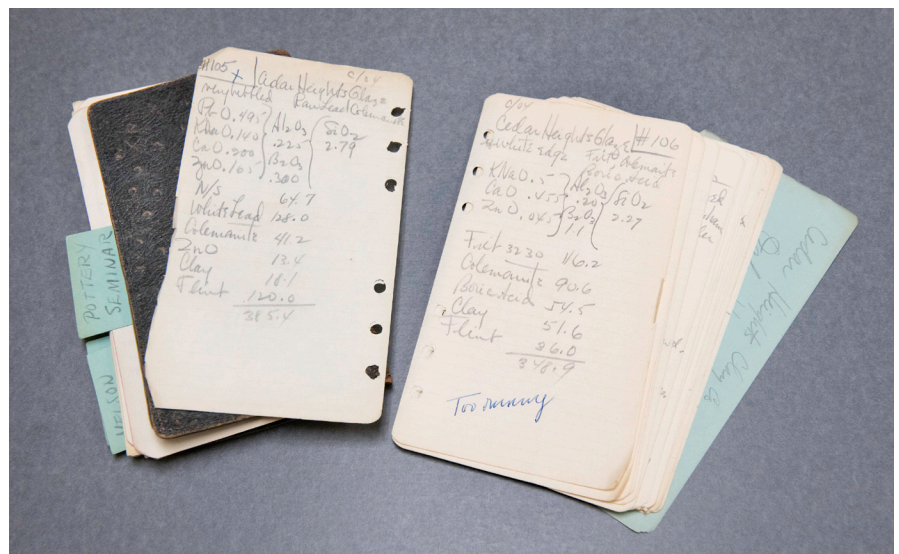
Their lesser-told stories and work as well as that of others like them are waiting to be discovered, written about and celebrated. We have been waiting for their accomplishments to come to light for far too long.

Margeaux Claude

Margeaux Claude started throwing stoneware pots on a kick-wheel at 14 and at 16 was working in a solo studio in New Zealand with porcelain. Later she went on to complete a BFA in Ceramics at the Kansas City Art Institute. In 2020 she was a Fulbright Student Scholar conducting ceramic research in Hungary. With a passion for product design, travel and cycling, she arrived in Alfred, NY. Margeaux is now a first year MFA Candidate in Ceramic Art at the School of Art & Design, New York State College of Ceramics at Alfred University.



Helen E. Kruger BS, AU, 1938, Notebook, Scholes Library Archives, Alfred University



Helen E. Kruger, BS, AU, 1938, Glaze Notebook, Scholes Library Archives, Alfred University



Helen E. Kruger BS, AU, 1938, Sketchbook, Scholes Library Archives, Alfred University

Friends of the Museum

Listed below are individuals and organizations who renewed, increased, returned or joined as new members, contributed to an acquisition, memorial, or capital campaign fund, provided in-kind services or contributed ceramic work to the permanent collection, from the period of March 1, 2020 – April 30, 2021.

It is not too late for you to join and help us provide a broader funding base for the Museum. Your membership contribution helps to fund our changing exhibition program, care of the permanent collection, and special educational events.

Visionary (\$10,000+)

D. Philip Baker and David R. Bender
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Brier Smith Turner and Family
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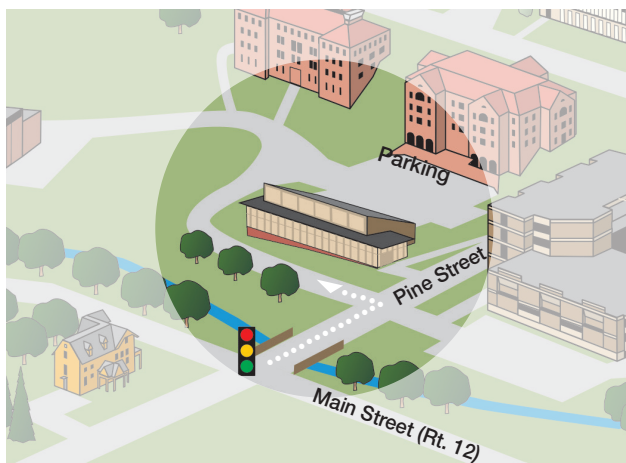
For membership information, please visit us at ceramicsmuseum.alfred.edu or see our Membership Card

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Directions

From Interstate 86, Exit 33 in Almond, follow signs to Alfred University. From Main Street in Alfred, turn left onto Pine Street at the traffic light, proceed across the bridge over the stream of consciousness and turn left immediately. The Museum will be on the right, and parking is behind the Museum.

Hours

Wednesday 10am – 5pm
Thursday 10am – 5pm
Friday 10am – 5pm
Saturday 10am – 5pm

Temporarily closed Sunday, Monday, Tuesday. Closed major holidays. Please call for exhibition information and closing announcements.

Admission

\$7 Adults (18-54)
\$5 55+
\$3 Local Residents, non-Alfred students with ID, alumni, AAA and Military
FREE 17 & Under, AU and A-State faculty, staff and students (with ID)

Admission is FREE for Museum members, ESMRP and NARM members year-round.

Tours: Group tours should be scheduled two weeks in advance.

Cameras: Photography is permitted only with handheld cameras and electronic flash in permanent collection exhibit areas only. No photos may be taken of traveling exhibitions. No photographs taken in the Museum may be reproduced, distributed, or sold without permission from the Museum.

Checkroom: All umbrellas, parcels and bags must be checked

Advisory Board

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Text: Wayne Higby
Text: Backstory by Margeaux Claude
Editor: Susan Kowalczyk
6/2021

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