

CZASHKA ROSS

IN HER MIND'S EYE OVALS, COILS & HELIXES



PETERS VALLEY SCHOOL OF CRAFT

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Contact Peters Valley School of Craft for more information about this book and exhibition or our educational programs.

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CZASHKA ROSS

IN HER MIND'S EYE
OVALS, COILS & HELIXES

A Synthesis of the Work

The mind's eye has the ability to form mental images, either from memory or conjured from the imagination. In the work of Czashka Ross, we marvel not only at the ovals, coils, and helixes summoned from her mind's eye but at her masterful ability to interpret and reinterpret these patterns and forms in a multiplicity of materials and techniques. This exhibition, which includes works in clay monoprint, ceramic, glass, paper, and textile, presents a unique opportunity to experience art firmly rooted in the physical realm of process and material.

Ross is a relentless observer of the world around her. She perceives shapes and motifs, in both natural and built environments, with a keen focus: the coil of a garlic scape, the lines of a picket fence, the oval of a rubber band, the helix of a gnarled tree. She “holds each object in her mind's eye turning it round and around until it is known.” [1] She revels in the repetition of forms, in the sequencing of patterns, extracting their essence—the ways they define and delineate space. This unrelenting examination contributes to the rich and expressive visual language that informs her work.



The Object: A Visual Inspiration is made of fabric dye on rubber bands hanging from a pointed reed with encaustic. For over fifteen years this piece has been referred to as focus and inspiration for the artist.

[1] Unless otherwise noted, quotes are from the artist's statements and the author's interview with the artist.

But Ross does not only see. She is a maker and making is the bedrock of her studio practice. It is a practice that is open ended: Ross has an insatiable curiosity about materials and techniques. She delights in the challenge of working outside her comfort zone and is blessed with an innate bodily intelligence - an intuitive response to material - that has permitted her to master multiple mediums. Each technique and material has its own impetus and logic. [2] She fearlessly explores and exploits these expressive possibilities. "I never know what I am going to find," she recently noted.

Her creativity is inextricably linked to her craft knowledge and the ability to coax different forms and effects from different mediums. She exploits the unique characteristics of each to explore the complexities of the motifs she envisions. "Overlaying, overlapping, transposing, flipping, reversing, pushing, pulling – an extended synthesis of the form in question."

Reiteration is also key to Ross's practice: she often works in series – diptychs, triptychs, multiples - to better depict her analytical process, the way she studies shapes and forms from different angles and perspectives. Color, line, space, and composition reveal these differences. The motifs of her clay monoprints flow over and under multiple planes of different colors and patterns. The lines of her ovals, coils and helixes are well suited to contribute three-dimensional depth to a two-dimensional art. Her families of clay vessels reveal the fine possibilities of shape and form. The juxtaposition of varied renderings focuses the eye on the distinctions she has identified. Yet her configurations are dynamic - interchangeable, as the pieces relate to each other in manifold ways, making the work "vulnerable and in that almost alive," she explains.

Each series is a part of a process of invention and reinvention linked to material. Each clay monoprint pulled leaves a certain amount of pigmented residue that inevitably informs subsequent prints. Each ceramic vessel reveals a curve or an angle that is the point of departure for the next. Dynamic ovals spring from the surface of a clay monoprint and ripple on a textile. Ovals float hard and firm on glass. But when rendered in clay, they curl comfortably into carved vessel shapes.

The metamorphoses of ovals, coils and helixes within and across mediums, underscore the importance of craftsmanship.

As Peter Dormer explains, craft knowledge and the clarity of expression it brings are necessary to give conviction and authenticity to ideas. [3] While similar forms echo throughout the exhibit, they defy monotony. The choice of medium is never random. Each formulation is fresh and vibrant – a perfect marriage of material and the mind's eye.

M. Syracuse

[2] See Bruce Metcalf, "Craft and Art, Culture and Biology," in *The Culture of Craft*, ed. Peter Dormer (NY: Manchester University Press, 1997), 67-82. [3] See Peter Dormer, "The Salon de Refuse," in Dormer, *The Culture of Craft*, 2.

Artist's Statement

In my mind's eye, holding an object in my hand and turning it round and around until it is known. A snapshot of each view - then overlaying, overlapping, transposing, flipping, reversing, pushing, pulling, lateral movement – an extended synthesis of the form in question.

Making is the basis of my studio practice. Examination, reiteration, studying a shape or form in various materials and from different angles and perspectives.

Working abstractly for 25 years, two and three dimensionally, I was using light, shadow, wood, metal, paper, interior and exterior (monolithic - architectural) space, creating patterns describing volume and structure. Over time, I used more permanent materials in larger three-dimensional wall pieces making shadows with anodized aluminum, cast bronze, patina, copper, and paint.

Mark making is very important. And then add pattern, the joining of many marks. Pattern takes on numerous different meanings. For example, pattern can serve as a marker, foreground, wallpaper, filler, background, etc., - depending on the comparative and relative sizes of the patterns and textures. Cutting out patterns for fabricating objects. Then recreating additional forms.

Line is addressed in 2 dimensions, i.e. a simple curve is a mark or can be attached to a line or shape. In 3 dimensions (real or referential) line can show movement, i.e. a spiral with a front and back loop depending on the value, a helix or flat plane in space, ovals in shallower space floating or grounded. Shapes overlapping edges and borders refer to the space beyond.

Diptychs, triptychs, multiples.

Then series, families, groups, polyptychs.

Various materials are engaged to pursue these focused studies. glass, clay, painting, woodcuts, monoprints, drawing. I have learned some of these processes in workshops at Peters Valley over the last 15 years.

OPPOSITE, TOP:
Woodfired Bowl
5" x 8.25"

OPPOSITE, MIDDLE:
**Small Raku Fired Bowl
with Two Handles**
3" x 4" x 7"

OPPOSITE, BOTTOM:
Raku Fired Tall Bowl
5" x 8.5"

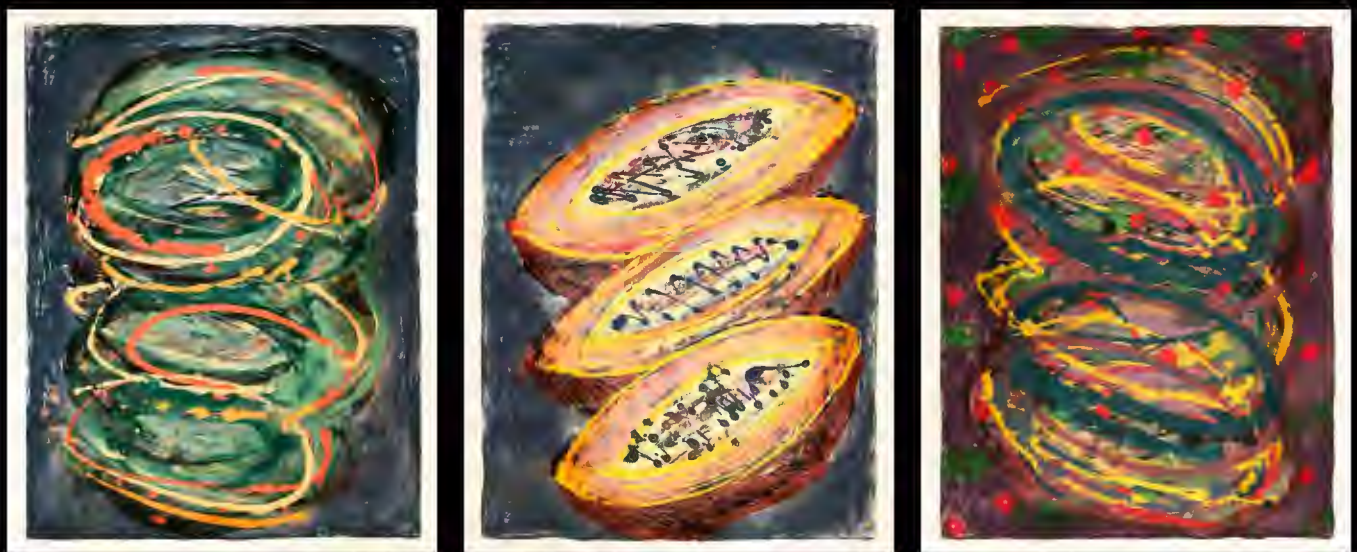


**1980 Exodus from Cuba
(Shrimp Boats)**

clay monoprints: artist quality pigments
mixed with very fine tile 6 China clay,
handprinted onto a non-woven synthetic
substrate (Reemay)
each image is 26.5" x 20.5"
framed 30.5" x 25.5"
quintych 30" x 120"



There were two periods of time in the six decade reign of Fidel Castro that people were allowed to leave Cuba freely. Freely is not quite the operative word because many people left in their families' fishing boats and many people perished while doing so. One of the Exodus dates was 1980 (another in 1991) when 125,000 people were allowed to leave. Almost 20% perished before they arrived half dead at their destination.



People with money were able to fly out, but the number was greatly restricted by the flights that were available. In the artwork itself, the second and fourth pieces are a reference to the small fishing boats being buffeted. The first, third and fifth pieces all describe different weather conditions at the time on the open seas.



Turbulent Bucking



Hovering in the Marsh at Dusk



Wind Throughout the Night



Over the Seas



More Torment 'til Freedom

Why Clay Prints?

I never had particularly expected to do clay prints as a large component of my artwork.

Bit by bit, I was drawn into it and now it's huge for me.

Half printmaking / half painting.

Fluid, flexible, spontaneous.

Being able to work and rework, intensify, add depth, in a 2-D and 3-D way.

So many marks agitatedly working.

I love going into the studio and boom,

I'm right there.

Moving.

Part of that connection and continuity is working in series.

I work around an idea until it solves itself.

I think, make, continue working, and then curate.

Technique for Clay Mono Prints

China clay which is very fine is mixed with pigments then applied to a clay slab. The substrate of the finished print is Reemay, a product that is manufactured as a filter for air conditioners. Its very function as a filter for dust demonstrates its intrinsic qualities firmly holding the china clay, the vehicle for the colored pigment, to the substrate.

Each print pulled leaves a certain amount of residue which subsequently informs the following print pulled. No two are alike.

I work on clay monoprints during the winter in my studio, moving among 3 different sizes of clay slabs.

NEXT PAGE LEFT:

Under Observation

clay monoprints: artist quality pigments mixed with very fine tile 6 China clay, hand-printed onto a non-woven synthetic substrate (Reemay)
each image is 20.75" x 26.75", framed 25.75" x 31.75"

1. Pretense
2. Spectators
3. Marching

NEXT PAGE RIGHT:

Dancing in the Coals

clay monoprints: artist quality pigments mixed with very fine tile 6 China clay, hand-printed onto a non-woven synthetic substrate (Reemay)
each image is 15" x 33", framed 20" x 38", triptych 61" x 38"

1. Friendly Fire
2. Crumbling Symbols
3. Pompeii





1-50 friendly fire

Jackson Pollock 1950 Museum



1-50 Drinking Symbols

Jackson Pollock 1950 Museum



1-50 pompaic

Jackson Pollock 1950 Museum

Coils



Families

Coils twisted and forced by an inner tension; wrapped tight, like ropes around an invisible force.

In finding their way, the push and pull forces curl into carved vessel shapes.

Each of these vessels is a container, a shell, a record of what was happening at the formative moment of its creation.

But the story doesn't end there. It has actually just begun.

The moment when each shell or vessel comes into contact with another, it becomes part of the dynamic gathering of its alikes.

The vessels, shells, containers come together as parts of dynamic unions / gatherings.

Families provoking, interacting, influencing, complimenting each other.

Configurations are interchangeable as pieces relate to others in many different ways.

This aspect of the work makes it almost alive, yet very vulnerable.

The symbiosis of these gatherings, unions, and congregations is what binds them together into sculptural installations.











Habitats/Remainders

Habitats structures remainders leftovers

Pieces after the article of clothing is cut out

Things that would be swept up off the floor

Sun exposure

The idea was a gift from my son. He was heading west to the desert and he talked about the sun, the heat, and the sand.

Infiltration.

It made me think of equatorial countries.

Cut out pieces of 1-inch foam in huge triangles (to later fit together) laid out on a large green grassy surface in a park in the east.

No windows. Only a door. (The image of this gave me the idea for the Habitats).

These would travel flat and then be assembled.

Individuals would fit out the insides.

So much construction waste in the United States.

Could it become something valuable for somebody else?

So I started with my edges, trimmings, and extra corners, to fabricate these structures which I call Habitats/Remainders.

I imagine dwellings quickly assembled with construction excess.

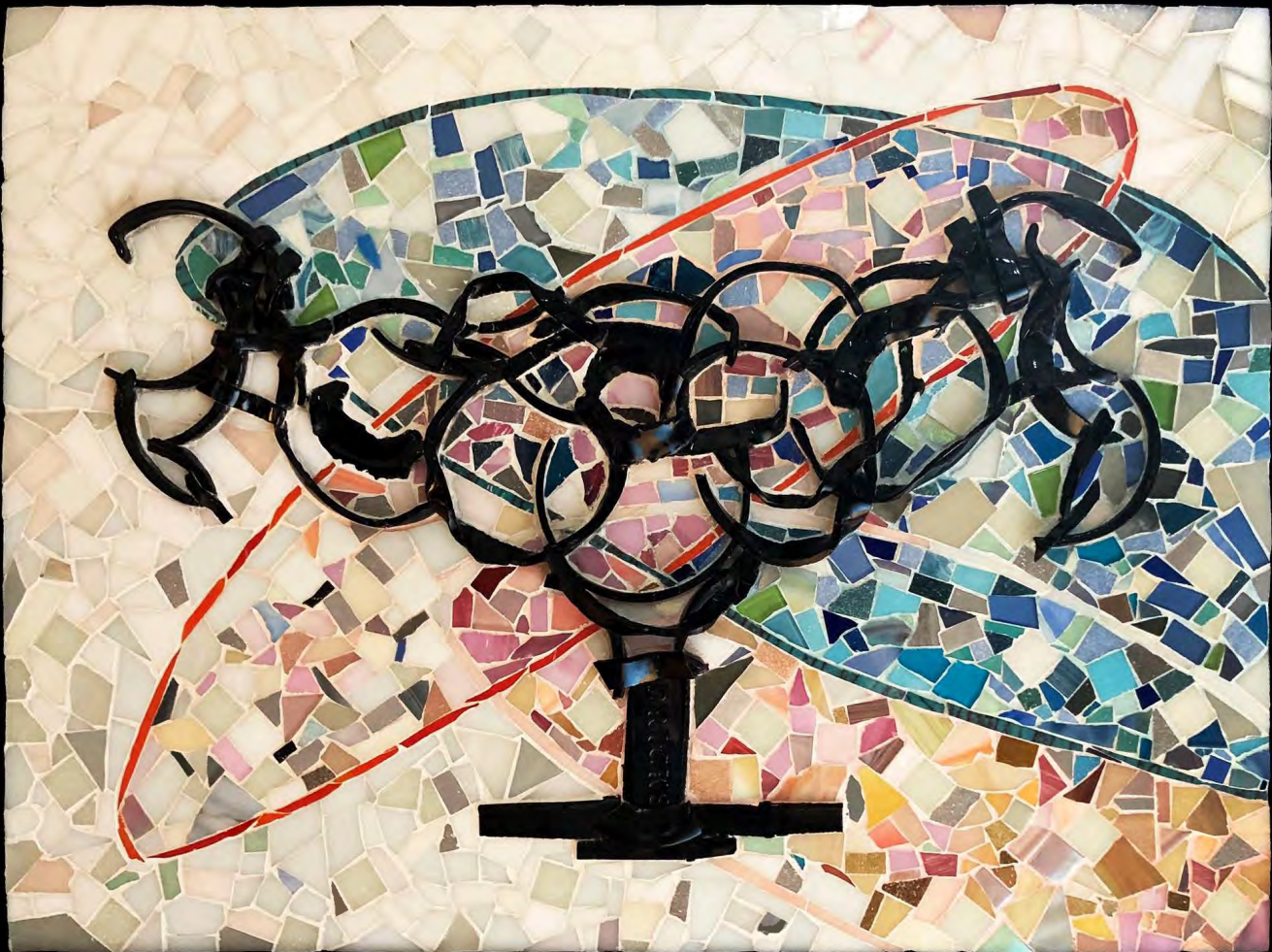
Shipped to countries where individuals are in need of shelter from sun & rain.





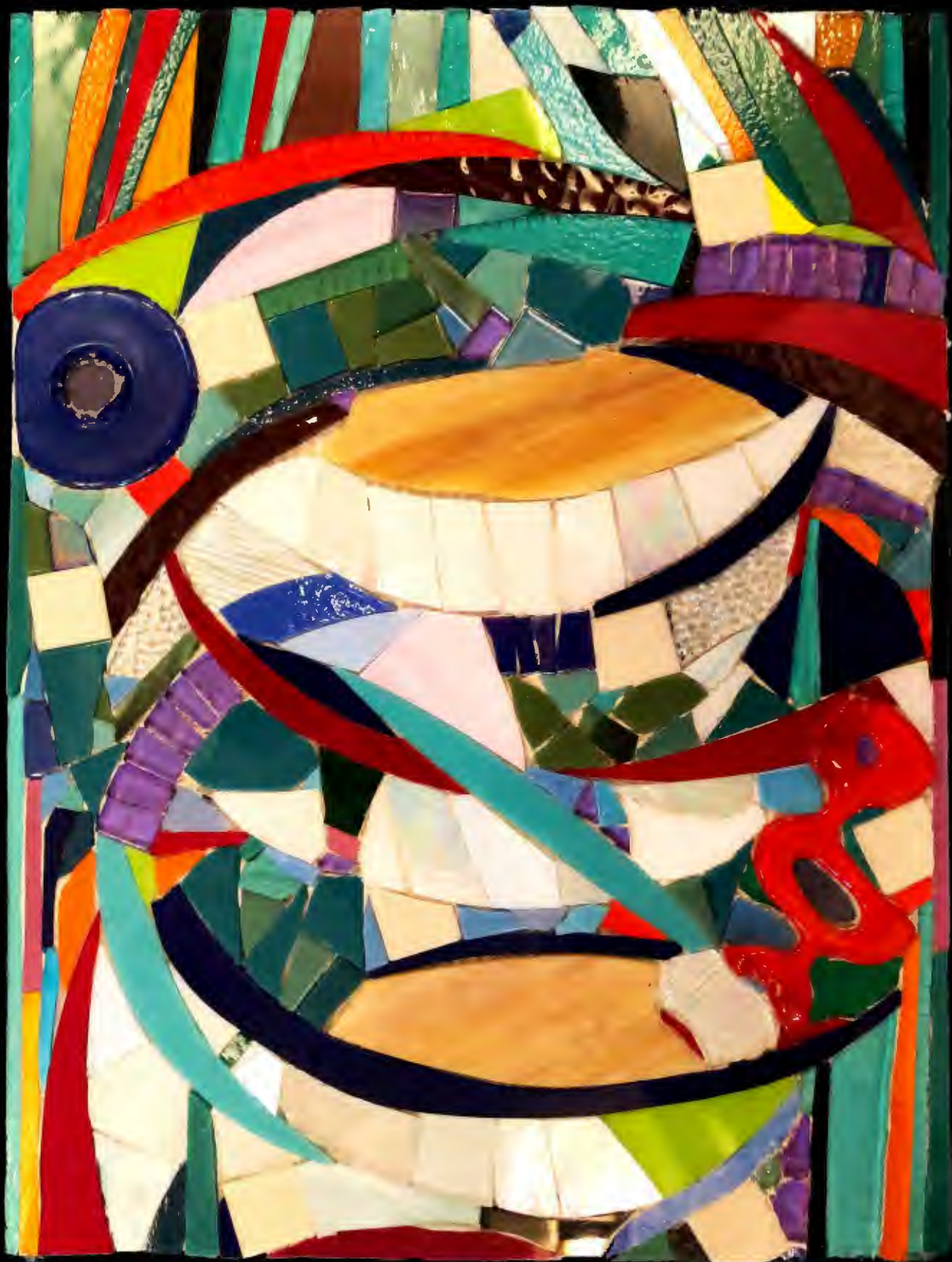
Glass

Starting with something so rigid and crispy as glass I wasn't sure how to make it flow and have fluid direction. The vivid colors, translucent variations, hues, tones and the reflections kept pushing me forward and luring me in. Hooked. Takes lots of patience to cut and fit but it's always so rewarding. It was once liquid, so I imagine that as I move forward.



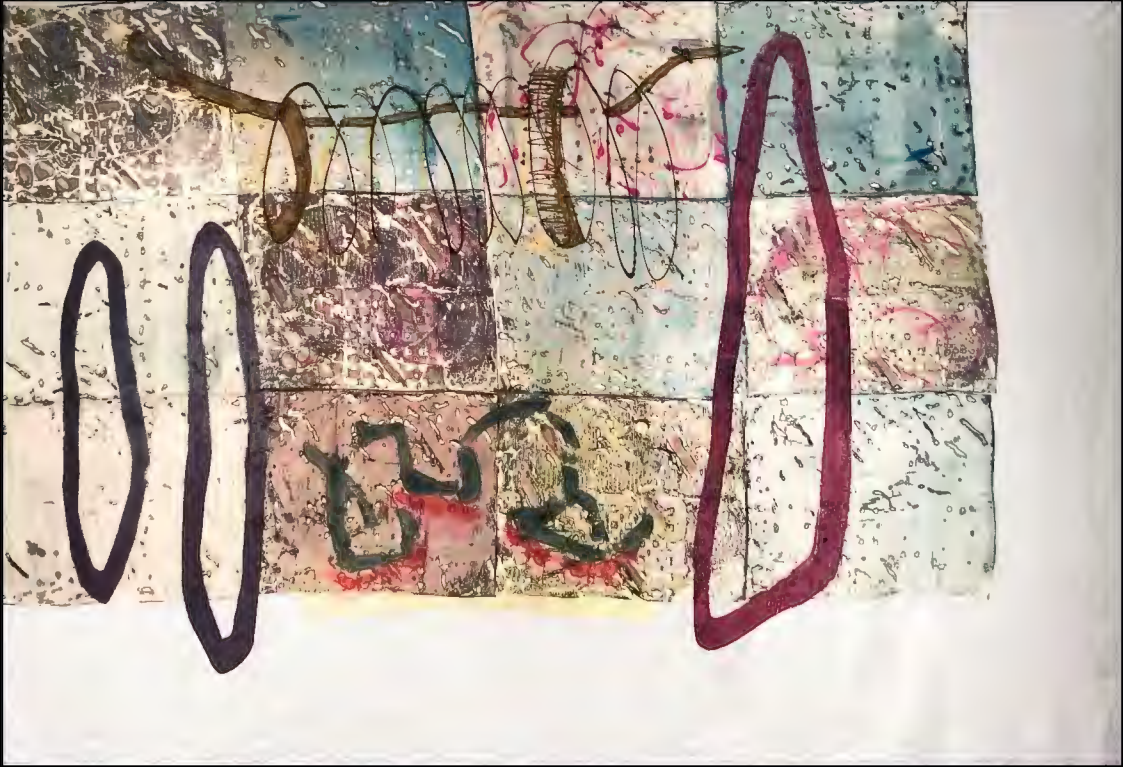












The Dig
1,000 Years Between Layers

On an ongoing basis I make coils and loops and overlay extruded pieces accumulating many of these forms over a given time. I then make a composite piece of which this is one. I like the loose way in which the individual pieces interact and can be quite similar but also very different from each other. It will never be duplicated again and I will start fresh when I do the next one.





Where He Was Laid

high fire stoneware, anagama fired
5" x 6" x 3"



Green Beaker

raku fired
5" x 2.5" x 3"



Medium Narrow Rectangle

wood fired stoneware
5.5" x 3" x 1"



Family Group: Three Coiled Multi Lobed Pots

high fired stoneware with black diamond inclusions in two smaller pots
total size 6" x 9" x 9"



Four Coiled Pots in Family Grouping

high fired stoneware
total size 5" x 8" x 7"



Vitrine: Majolica Tile with Two Coiled Pots

high fired square shot glass with porcelain addition and two coiled pots with black diamond inclusions.
tile size 6.5" x 6.5"



Vitrine: Majolica Tile with Pyramid Dot Textured Box Vessel and Coffin Model Box with Top

high fired square with porcelain and black diamond inclusions
tile size 6" x 6"



Quintet

anagama fired stoneware with encaustics
5.25" x 17"



Three Loops in Summer Colors

majolica - terra-cotta
8" x 3"



Raku Box

raku fired clay
6.5" x 3.75" x 4"



Raku Urn

glazed raku clay
7.5" x 7"



Spiral Box

high fire clay with oxide decoration, slip interior
8" x 8" x 2.5"



Knard Bowl: Inside Out

anagama fired

4" x 7" x 8"



The Kylix Series #18: Spiral

fused slices of Hendricks Gin bottle with mosaic background

image 17.375" x 23.5"

framed 21.75" x 27.75"



Restricted Sweeping Views

laminated glass

20" x 14"



Green Curl Squashed

stained glass

12.5" x 12.5"



Painted Object

fired oxides, stained glass

12.5" x 12.5"



Spun

mosaic collage of various stained glass ties and two additions of slumped glass

image 16" x 12"

framed 17.5" x 13.5"



Face to Face

indigo/black fabric dye print on rag paper

image 30" x 22"

framed 36" x 28.5"

Drum Roll

mixed media collage of various papers, PVA glue, markers, ink, watercolor, screen print ink, gel

12" x 12.5"



Crepe Sketchbook

deconstructed screen print, fiber reactive dye, printed and stencilled through silk screens

43" x 63"



Three Loops on a Blue Ribbon

marbleizing on charmeuse silk

41" x 48"

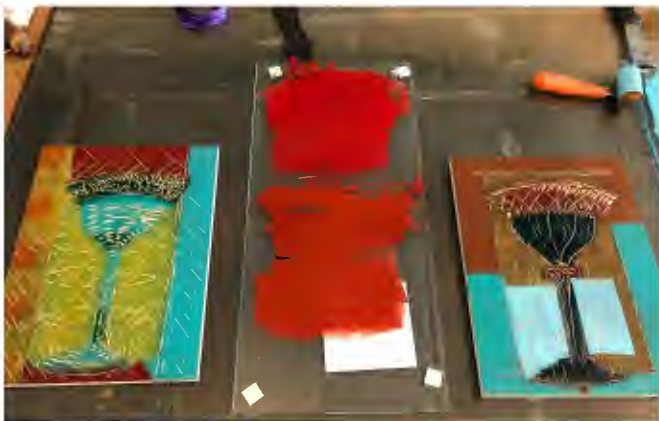
About Czashka Ross

Czashka Ross is a Canadian artist living in the United States since university.

Ross graduated from The Cranbrook Academy of Art with a Master of Fine Arts. Between the two years at Cranbrook, she taught for a year at Purdue University and received a National Endowment for the Arts Apprenticeship Grant to work at Twinrocker Handmade Paper mill in Brookston, Indiana. After Cranbrook, she pursued a post-graduate Fellowship to research traditional western-style hand papermaking in 5 different European countries while living in France for the year. She has lived and worked in New York City for most of her years as an artist.

Ross has lectured and taught at numerous art schools and several museums in Canada, France, and the United States. She has commissioned works displayed in California, Long Island, NY, Pennsylvania, and Segovia, Spain. Her work has been exhibited in Canada, France, Germany, Japan, and the United States.

Since the 1990's she has worked extensively at Peters Valley in various studios continuing her practice.



Peters Valley School of Craft

The thriving community of creative minds at Peters Valley School of Craft has played a proud and vital role in the field of fine craft for almost 50 years. Its educational programs and workshops have provided an environment for professional artists to pass on their skills and knowledge to the next generation of makers. Peters Valley promotes the values of traditional craftsmanship and creative expression through adult summer workshops, youth programs, artist fellowships, assistantships, and exhibitions. These programs often act as stepping stones for emerging artists as they enter the world of contemporary craft. Peters Valley creates a venue for makers of different disciplines to develop professional relationships and lasting friendships. The facilities are nestled in the fields, forests, and streams of the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area. They were once part of the charming and leafy farm village of Bevens. The historic buildings now serve as gathering places for craftsman, artists, environmentalists, and makers of all kinds, to thrive in a community of like-minded individuals. Maintaining studios in disciplines including Fine Metals, Blacksmithing, Ceramics, Fiber/Surface Design, Fiber/Structure, Photography, Woodworking, and Special Topics. Peters Valley is committed to expanding the perspective of craft and highlighting the importance of making by hand.

Sally D. Francisco Gallery

The Sally D. Francisco Gallery is part of Peters Valley School of Craft and provides visitors with the opportunity to view the work of makers of all kinds. The goal of the Sally D. Francisco Gallery is to create an appreciation of fine craft through a robust exhibition program. It provides a venue for artists to display and sell their work. The craftsman's creativity and knowledge stimulates curiosity enriching the lives of visitors.

Made possible in part by funds from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, a Partner Agency of the National Endowment for the Arts.

THE NEW JERSEY CULTURAL TRUST

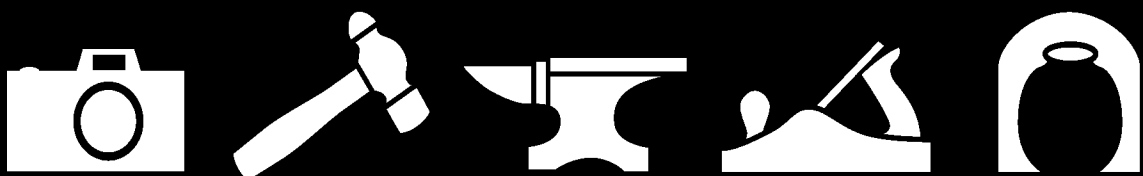


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