

Clay Times Three: The Tale of Three Nashville, Indiana, Potteries

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Clay Times Three has something significant to offer a varied audience of instructors and students, ceramic artists and hobbyists, collectors and regional historians. This book explores the prolific lives of three studio pottery workshops: the Brown County Pottery, operated by Helen and Walter Griffiths; Martz pottery, produced by Karl Martz and his wife Becky Brown; and Brown County Hills Pottery, run by local potter Claude Graham and owner Carolyn Ondreika. Forty-two black-and-white photographs and one hundred forty color reproductions come together to illustrate a full artistic narrative of the Nashville area of Indiana.

The images of ceramic works represent the distinct and evolving styles and influences of several artists as well as the strong traditions observed by others. The paths of the three potteries interconnect in unpredictable ways and their stories reveal an amicable atmosphere in which the methods of the local artisans are embraced. Included are many engaging accounts about the organizers of the potteries. The collecting interests of patrons and how they in turn have impacted the workshops is another fascinating inclusion.

There is something wonderfully industrious and Midwestern about these potteries that is fittingly celebrated here. The lives of the artists illustrate how knowledge and ingenuity can aid with the precarious balance of home life, business interests, creative endeavors, and creative growth. These artists are entrepreneurs with a sense of community leadership and camaraderie who reap the reward of their hard work by making a living in their chosen field. Dialogue about arts pedagogy that takes place between experienced artists and the young art students who come to the potteries to intern adds a philosophical dimension. An account of using a horse to operate a pug mill to process clay that comes straight from the ground for traditional salt fire whiskey jugs gives a concrete sense of the traditional methods employed. Clay bodies, glazes, surface decoration, kiln firing methods, and studio setups are described and are contextualized with carefully identified photographs. Other accounts discuss the impact that exhibiting and visiting galleries in Chicago, New York, Indianapolis, and Asia have on the artists' development of ideas and distinctive series of works. This visual record book would be a welcome addition to collections featuring ceramic art, studio experience, and the business of collecting ceramics.

PAMELA AYRES (January / February 2011)

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