STIRRING EMBERS

A WORKBOOK FOR A LIFE OF MAKING

THE RAY GRIMM LEGACY PROJECT

JERE GRIMM | ceramic, 2005
responding to Passionist priest
and geologian Thomas Berry:
"Let us renew our participation
in the grand liturgy of the universe."
Grimm family collection
Photo: Dan Kvitka

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THE RAY GRIMM LEGACY PROJECT

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a workbook as legacy

WHY A WORKBOOK? We meet people at their bookshelf — the place where autobiography is revealed through well-worn pages, books that open to certain passages, and whether notes flutter to the ground or are scribbled in the margins. Ray Grimm's bookcase is filled with the classics: Michael Cardew's *Pioneer Pottery*, Daniel Rhodes's *Kilns*, Hal Riegger's *Raku: Art & Technique*. This is the bookshelf of a teacher and a maker. Our primary goal was to add a new book to the shelf, one that Ray Grimm would keep at hand. A new kind of text book — not one with answers, but prompts for new questions. A book that brings inspiration to future generations of teachers.

On the inside front cover, Jere Grimm's sculptural pot reads: PARTICIPATION. This is the heart of the book. We chose a group of Oregon artists and makers who we feel share a kinship to Ray Grimm. We asked them to participate with their images as we sketch a portrait of an artist and the art region that he helped create. Former students wrote essays tracing lessons in the studio to their current practice as both artists and teachers. Ray's functional work was intended to be used, to be filled with food, to brew tea, to be filled with flowers. In the spirit of cross-pollination, we worked with makers who fill containers with their own alchemy: Teri Gelber of T. Projects blended a limited-edition tea that is inspired by Grimm's tea pot, and Cory Schreiber wrote a tomato sauce recipe in response to the Grimm family "tomato wars." We end with a series of Ray Grimm-inspired lesson plans. All of this reveals ways of considering legacy, not through direct influence, but the continuation of an artist's spirit.

The structure of the book, the very integrity of the project, is measured by the values articulated by the Grimm family. These values are woven in the fiber of a shared life together — making art, taking bike adventures, firing pots on the beach, agreeing and disagreeing in the day to day. We want to paint the picture of the long, rich life of the artist. No art world glamour or tortured genius, rather the joy that comes waking up in the morning and going to the studio. The constant curious response to: "What will happen if I put this into the fire?"

Tracy Schlapp and Daniel Duford

Photo: Dan Kvitka

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CREATING THE CONDITIONS TO LIVE AS AN ARTIST AND A TEACHER

ray's process, influence, and his hat rack

BY DALE RAWLS

AS AN ARTIST AND A TEACHER, I continue to reference Ray's intuitive approach from the design of his artwork to his inspired teaching. His work included clay vessels, sculptures, hot glass, and architectural commissions. His assignments required that his students develop a real understanding of materials, utilize higher-level craft, and rely on creative problem solving in an effort to make innovative, original artwork.

The ceramics classes at Portland State University (PSU) always had a waiting list. Classes were so full that students often arrived early to get a good wheel or a place to work. Ray thrived on the energy of many people actively engaged. The studio would be busy long before class actually started. Students knew Ray was coming by the sound of his wooden clogs echoing down the art department hall. When he entered the pottery studio, Ray would see, out of the corner of his eye, a student who was struggling on the wheel — the piece had a tell-tale ripple on the pot's side that predicted its demise. Ray would walk over and ask if he could show a technique. With permission granted, he dipped his hands into the slip bucket, picked up a rib tool, and turned his focus to the slumping pot. Neighboring pottery students stopped and watched, spellbound. The wobbling pot appeared way past salvage. As Ray worked, he explained his techniques. There was a point during this resurrection where he seemed connected to the pot, and unaware of the class. Work had come to a complete stop in the studio, and everyone watched. After a few moments, an elegant pot appeared before the speechless potter. Ray wiped off his hands and broke the silence by exclaiming, "Demonstration in ten minutes, now get back to work." The creative lessons had already begun.

How does a teacher continue to stimulate their own process while motivating students? Ray never suggested that his experience was the only way. Ray predisposed the creative process with three main components:

RAY GRIMM | hat rack in the Grimm home Photo: Dan Kvitka

CREATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING This meant finding new solutions, rather than repeating the same formula for each piece. He wanted students to be sensitive to both process and materials, as he felt the tension between design and fabrication should be reflected in the finished artwork. Ray thought about and planned his artwork with his drawings. Before he sat down at the wheel, took a gather of hot glass, began a sculpture, or began work on architectural commissions, his ideas began as small sketches, started on a napkin or on the back of scratch paper. Ray created the main gesture and worked out the scale, all in his drawings.

MATERIALS Developing good craft and seeing the possible variations with media, is essential for successful artwork. Ray hoped the technique would not obscure the nature of the material.

PLAYFUL AND CURIOUS On more than one occasion you could hear Ray exclaim, "Geezel peezel." This was usually in response to a creative curveball, or discovering a new approach. Because of his innate curiosity and playful attitude, Ray said more than once: "It is not how well everything goes. It is how well we deal with the surprises." Some of his signature work came from accidents and from his work with students. Adapting techniques and discovering how to combine different materials was important to Ray, as it was reflected in many upper-level assignments that required multiple mediums. Ray believed that it was important to maintain the essence of the original idea, and yet, remain open to what the process might introduce.

"It is not how well everything goes. It is how well we deal with the surprises."

Ray's hat rack (as well as the hats he made) combined his frisky approach along with his intuitive ability to work with and combine different materials. He loved wood and glass as they added the challenge of making attachments. Like Ray, I introduce a new unit to my students by showing intriguing artwork and asking, "What attracts you to this piece?" and, "How might you make this piece — and with what media?" Ray always encouraged me to work in a series. He often said, "There can be too many good elements in one piece that obscure the essence of the original idea." Ray believed that a series allowed you to develop the vocabulary and refine techniques over multiple pieces. Rather than just being clever, the work became a collaboration between materials, craft, and design.

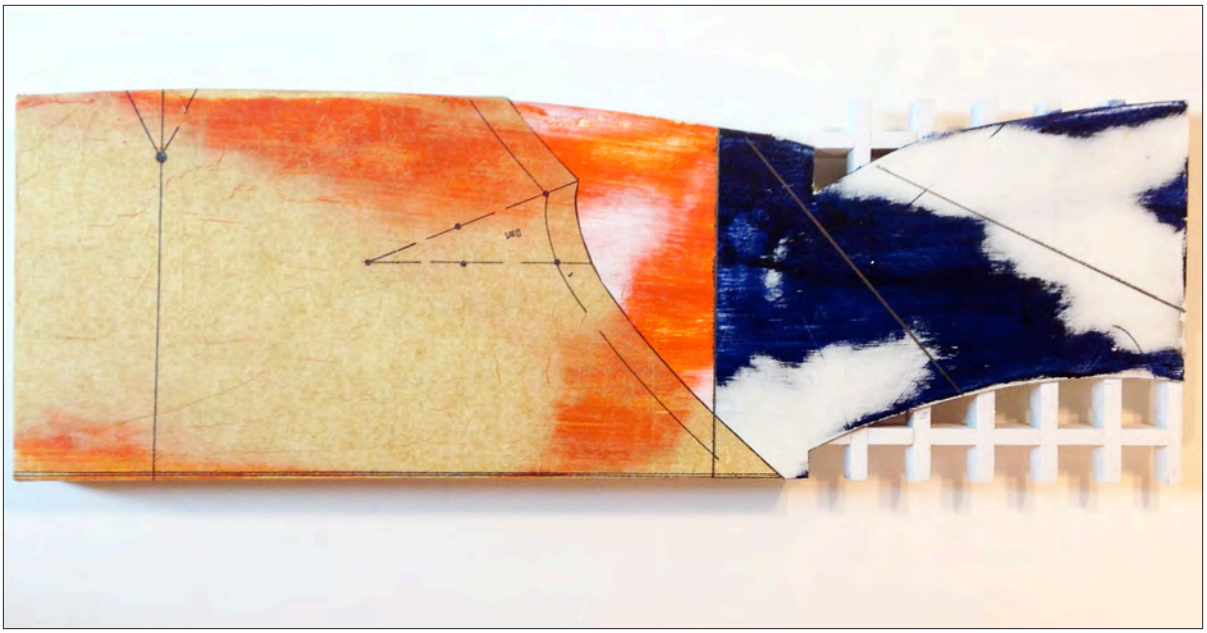
In front of the glass furnace, Ray made a gather of glass by shaping the glass on the pipe and watched

the form emerge. Ray might make thirty or forty blown forms in an attempt to find that singular form. When he opened up the annealing oven the next day, he continued to define the vocabulary for the hat racks. With this series, Ray's ability to work with multiple materials predisposes the synthesis of the hat rack's essential design elements. Ray created multiple glass orbs for the hat rack. His focus on scale, color, and texture became the vocabulary for this series. He never stopped paying attention to what the material revealed to him. His connection to the carved surface of the wood and the layers of milk paint became an essential element for connecting the differing media. The rectangular forms he carved and the way he surfaced the wood are enhanced with the warm and cool colors of milk paint. At first glance you might think that the carved forms are added to the larger piece of wood — much the way he might have added paddled slabs of clay, coated with colored slip. The rubbed layers of milk paint suggest that the surface is still in transition. The glass knobs capture the light and the carved wood becomes the rich fertile surface from which the orbs grow.

One of the first times I ever heard Ray become animated about a series, he was talking about the *Weed* sculptures. These combined thrown-clay spheres (some altered) with tall, thin metal rods or clay spheres hung by lines from the ceiling. He also cut out abstract metal shapes that gestured like outstretched foliage. The thrown clay orbs varied in size from six to sixteen inches in diameter. How he attached these to the metal was a key design opportunity. These orbs were raku-fired or down-fired in a stoneware kiln (later he would sometimes add glass appendages). The inspiration behind the *Weed* sculptures, came from his observations of adolescents — his teenaged children. Ray admired their emerging innocent beauty, fragile balance, and the accelerated growth. This work was incorporated in a hanging-sculptural installation at Sunriver Lodge, in Bend, Oregon and for many gallery exhibitions.

The Zen koan, "Who is being shaped — the potter or the pot?" rang true throughout Ray's creative life. After doing a workshop with Shoji Hamada, Ray helped introduce the Mingei philosophy from Japan. The Mingei philosophy emphasized the hand-made nature of craft and discourages the machine perfectionism emphasized by modern consumer culture. Mingei, Ray's design and his belief with the nature of materials, were all essential elements. He believed the material should reflect the process.

A student using a familiar technique or material could become stuck. Ray would suggest the student's idea was good, but maybe there was another way to get there. His inquiry might be: "What was your original idea? Is the technique or materials supporting your original idea?" Ray wanted students to develop a strong understanding of materials along with the elements of design. It did not matter if a student was struggling to make a balanced coffee mug or create a sophisticated sculpture. Ray wanted the student to be aware of both materials and process and not let the artwork become mechanical or redundant. The process should be revealed in the finished piece. Ray shared what he was doing with his own artwork and this influenced his student's work in both technique



Dale Rawls | *Wing Plan*, mixed media on panel, 8 x 24 x 1.5 inches, 2014 Photo: Dale Rawls

and materials.

Throughout assignments, Ray asked students questions about process. For example, "Will your piece fit into the kiln? How does that glaze support the form? Does this piece say the same thing from all sides?" He critiqued pottery with the same concerns he had for sculpture. Critiques were lively discussions and creative inquiries about process and shared techniques. No one was ever torn apart, but a lot of discussion revolved about the artist's experience with fabrication and design. He instigated trips to Contemporary Crafts Gallery to see national and Northwest artist's work. In the spring there was usually a weekend bike trip to an artist's studio. Community was developed right along with aesthetics and craft. Ray encouraged students to make their own tools, test local clays, and develop glazes. Upper-level students built experimental kilns and worked with hot glass. Ray's studio assignments included: ceramic vessels, furniture, mixed-media forms, clay sculptures, and always left room for personal innovation. These became essentials elements that inspired the creative work of many students at PSU. For many students the moment when they stopped being an art student and began their own studio practice was not always apparent.

Dale Rawls was Ray Grimm's studio assistant for several years. He received his BS from PSU in Ceramics, and his MA from Lewis & Clark College. Dale coordinated the Ceramics program and developed the Northwest Artists Clay Workshops at the Multnomah Arts Center from 1977-1983. He has taught Visual Arts and Ceramics at the Catlin Gabel School for 28 years and has shared The Riverhouse Studio with the visual artist, Barbara Rawls for the last 41 years.

RAY GRIMM
pitcher, stoneware, 8 inches
Photo: Dan Kvitka

a letter to ray

BY GINNY CAMPBELL ADELSHEIM

Dear Ray,
After your first class, I couldn't wait for ceramics each week. Your first throwing demonstration was spellbinding. I was awestruck watching your hands bear down on that solid, spinning lump of clay and literally "turn" it into a tall vessel — hollow, round, and elegant. You made it look so easy! Yet your focus was intense, your fingers tuned to every variation of thickness and symmetry, your eyes calibrating the form from top to bottom and back up again, your head tilted and moving in rhythm as you pulled up the wall.

How I wanted to do that!

I did learn to throw, and in the process I learned many other important lessons as well. One was to study and apply the aesthetic traditions of Japanese ceramics. For example, in determining the ideal height and angle of a foot or thickness of a lip, you drew our attention to the proportions of Japanese tea bowls, tea pots, and jars. I marveled at your deftness pulling a small handle from a blob of clay and applying it to a cup. You said a vessel must breathe and appear to float above the table. When I asked how to avoid throwing a pot with too thick a base, you said, "You won't know how far to go until you go too far."

We learned the importance of making a pitcher spout that poured without dripping, and you demonstrated many times how that was achieved. You used to say, "If you can make a good functional pitcher you can make anything."

One day, you brought in a pot made from a clay you had dug up on an outing. It was all bubbly and black, completely collapsed and melted onto the kiln shelf. Obviously, the kiln temperature was too high for the clay body. What an unforgettable lesson on what can happen when you don't know a clay's melting point.

The ceramics studio was, by far, the most interesting place on campus. For one thing, it had a huge gas-fired kiln. When I became a ceramics assistant, I was allowed to fire the kiln by myself. Stacking the kiln was always a momentous occasion, filled with hope and anxiety. It took many hours to fire and cool and no pot would be the same when we unloaded it. We learned to accept failure when pieces didn't make it, but then a beautiful pot would emerge and make it all worthwhile. When the kiln was in reduction, it was

mesmerizing to look through the peephole at the deep orange flames swirling around pots, licking at them in search of oxygen. But I couldn't look for long or the fire would singe off my eyebrows. I was becoming a risk taker like you, because your attitude was that of an explorer — eager to try new forms, new materials, new ways of doing things. That all requires risk.

After I graduated and began life as a ceramist you remained my mentor. How grateful I am for your willingness to help me solve the technical problems that arose. When I made frantic phone calls about some piece that exploded in the kiln or cracked during drying, you always were encouraging and helpful. And in doing so, you helped me improve and move forward as a ceramist.

Ten years ago, you mentioned you were a Navy veteran of World War II. You spoke briefly of the horrific experience of being attacked at sea and your ship sinking. I was stunned by this recount of the

RAY GRIMM
teapot, ceramic, 10 inches
Photo: Dan Kvitka

Green-ware masks made by veterans in *Footsteps to Recovery* program at Portland's VA Hospital. Masks are drying on racks made by Ray Grimm. Photo: Ginny Adelsheim

hell you went through as a very young man. My context of you as an artist and teacher changed immediately. I tried to grasp the fear, grief, and anger you must have experienced in war and its aftermath. Reentry into society after experiencing war is a tremendous challenge for veterans. Some cannot find a way to heal and find purpose, due to the psychological, as well as physical wounds of war. But you did find a purpose through your commitment to becoming an artist and teacher. Your life is a testament to the tremendous power that creating has to heal and inspire us.

Now, ten years later, I teach ceramics in a group therapy setting at Portland's VA Hospital. The program is called *Footsteps to Recovery* and it is for veterans battling mental disabilities, often as a result of combat. It has been deeply satisfying to pass on the knowledge that you gave to me. Many vets have told me the feelings they have while working with clay. They say it gives them peace of mind and a deep sense of satisfaction to create something unique and three dimensional. And, in our most recent project, sculpting clay masks, they have found the experience to be truly cathartic.

Besides the many skills you taught, you inspired me by your deep connection to the natural world and your incorporation of it into your work and your entire life. That may be the most important lesson of all. These are the gifts that you gave me. Thank you, Ray, for being the best teacher I ever had. You set me on a course that has sustained and enriched my life for over fifty years, and who knows for how much longer?

In gratitude,
Ginny

Ginny Campbell Adelsheim has been working in clay since 1965. She studied ceramics with Grimm at PSU and received a BA in ceramics and sculpture. She and her former husband, bought nineteen acres on the south side of the Chehalem Mountains, where they founded Adelsheim Vineyards. In 1993, she co-founded FONDO Terracotta, a company that specializes in hand-built terracotta for exterior use – architectural ornament and tile, fountains, planters, and birdbaths. In 2008, she helped create the group art therapy program *Footsteps to Recovery* at Portland's VA Hospital. Adelsheim recently built a ceramic studio so she can once again get her hands into clay.

RAY GRIMM | embellishments in the studio, mixed metals, 1975 Photo: Dan Kvitka

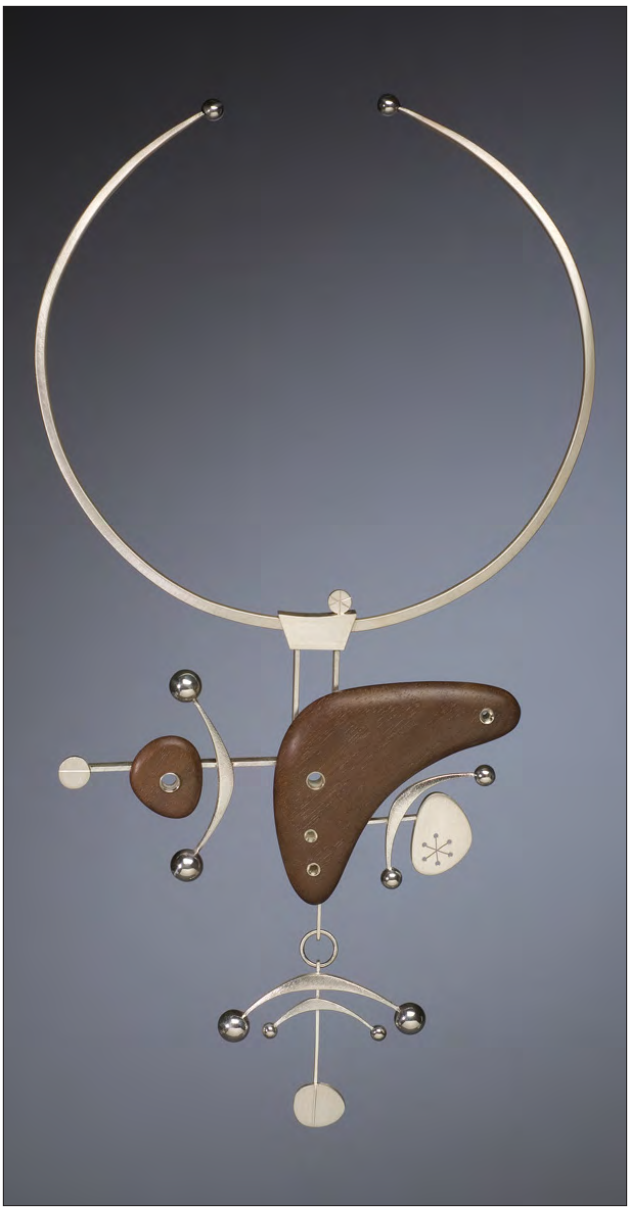
discovering my maker roots

BY KRISTIN MITSU SHIGA

I FIRST MET RAY AND JERE while I was still a student at Oregon College of Art and Craft. They had a small rental apartment attached to their home where many friends lived throughout the years, including a former partner who was close to the Grimms. I found them to be warm, generous people who lived the kind of lifestyle I aspired to — immersed in craft, and an integral part of the community. At the time, I was unaware of Ray's influence in the local and regional craft movement.

He was always quiet, leaving most of the talking to Jere, but he came to life if you asked him about the cup he was sipping tea from, or if he took you on a tour of the studio. I loved them both instantly.

Being surrounded by Ray's tools — many of which were homemade — sketches, postcards and his many collections of objects was inspiring and comforting to me. His studio felt like my studio, composed of many of the same elements despite the disparity in our mediums. There was evidence of play — of exploration as part of the creative process. Hits and misses. I could see his thought progression from inception to completed piece. There were small sculptures and ornaments occupying every open space.



KRISTIN MITSU SHIGA | *Astro* neckpiece, forged sterling and walnut
Photo: Kristin Mitsu Shiga

They may have been intended as maquettes, but functioned equally well as smaller-scaled explorations of his aesthetic. There was no unnatural separation between work based on scale or medium. It was all just Ray.

It wasn't until 2005, when I began work at Museum of Contemporary Craft (MoCC, now Pacific Northwest College of Art's Center for Contemporary Art & Culture), that I really came to understand the impact Ray has had on the craft movement in the Pacific Northwest. As the museum's gallery director, I was brought on and charged with designing the new retail gallery space in the Northwest Davis Street location. More importantly, I saw my role as reconnecting to the artists who built MoCC and to carry on the spirit of the organization throughout this transition. Ray and Jere's experience was invaluable to me in my work at the museum. I could expand on this important time and how much I learned during the process, but the truth is I felt like I learned the most about Ray when I ran into him a few years later.

"There was no unnatural separation between work based on scale or medium."

In 2008, I had earned my motorcycle license and was dream shopping for my first scooter. I found myself browsing at the Vespa showroom, Ray's stomping ground. While Ray's Vespa accident left him unable to ride, he frequented the dealership to admire the vintage scooters (in for service or resale) and to chat with staff and customers about a shared love of these beautifully designed Italian machines. Ray had attained a certain notoriety at the dealership as he worked his way into the hearts of many passersby. He was a fixture there. He didn't recognize me at the time (so out of context, I couldn't blame him). I actually got to speak with him as if I was just another customer. We spoke about his love of scooters, his love for design in all aspects of life, and for the mid-century aesthetics we share in our work. It was delightful.

I had not identified Ray Grimm as a direct influence in my work before being asked to participate in the Ray Grimm Legacy Project. Upon reflection, I find his influence was actually of even greater consequence to me personally, than what is reflected in my work. He and Jere were instrumental in the life I strive to craft every day. He was my teacher less formally than other students, but I hold his lessons dear.

Ray is one of my roots.

RAY GRIMM | beaded necklaces and pendant, glass, 1995. Photo: Dan Kvitka

Kristin Mistu Shiga feels there are many ways to tell a story. Sometimes words will suffice. Often, though, the right ones are hard to find. Shiga finds storytelling to be easier when she uses her hands to create an object. The result may be a wearable haiku, or some length of prose from which to pour tea, but each piece tells a story that can only be retold by the viewer. Her passion for the studio arts is matched only by her love of introducing them to others, and she has been teaching around the United States and abroad since 1996.

clay webs: ray grimm to thomas orr

BY DANIEL DUFORD

THOMAS ORR CREATES WALL PIECES, INSTALLATIONS, and some functional pottery, work that shares a characteristic crustiness with a sophisticated design. What you see in Orr's work is a studio practice of over forty years, steeped in all aspects of ceramics. Orr first studied clay in a required art class as he pursued a degree in oceanography. That first class set him on his life's course. While living in Northern California, Orr dug clay, built kick wheels and wood kilns. Generally, he followed the precepts of Soetsu Yanagi's book *The Unknown Craftsman*. For almost two decades he concentrated on studio pottery. In the 1990, he earned an MFA from Claremont College, and it was there he studied with and became dear friends with artist Paul Soldner.

Grimm and Orr share similarities in their teaching philosophy: Ceramics is best taught through experience. Orr's lineage traces from Paul Soldner to Peter Voulkos, two artists who taught like Grimm, and believed strongly in teachers working side by side with students. Grimm and Orr also share a veteran's past — Grimm served in World War II and Orr served in Vietnam. The experiences of battle affected both of them throughout their lives.

The history of twentieth century ceramics runs through higher education. It was not apprenticeships with venerable craftsmen or small craft centers that led to innovation in ceramic art, but clay departments in public universities. One can follow webs of influence from teachers to students who became teachers radiating out from certain programs. Both Grimm and Orr stand at the center of such webs.

Ask Orr about almost anyone in the ceramic world and he likely knows them. The connective tissue of the ceramic world is social. Everyone is probably one degree of separation from everyone else — close enough to pass around a clay tumbler hand to hand. When Orr came to teach in Portland in 1995 he brought some connections

THOMAS ORR | detail of *Growth*, ceramic, 12 x 16.5 x 4 inches, 2010 Photo: Thomas Orr

with him, and many were already here thanks to Ray and Jere Grimm. Grimm was a vital connection between the larger clay world and Portland when he was teaching at PSU. He brought such ceramic luminaries as Karen Karnes, Daniel Rhodes, and Paul Soldner. This important aspect of teaching can't be stressed enough. Visiting artists share valuable knowledge and different perspectives with the student. Their very presence makes visible the web of artistic connections. A student attending a workshop by Karen Karnes or Paul Soldner is engaged in more than stargazing. It is a glimpse of their future possibilities as artists.

Like Jere and Ray, Thomas and his wife Joanna Bloom met in the studio. Their partnership is rooted in the workshop. Bloom, a clay artist has an familial artistic family lineage. Her uncle is the painter Hyman Bloom, a contemporary of Jackson Pollock and Willem de Kooning, who painted until his death at ninety-six. He was a consummate studio artist. Orr and Bloom spent eighteen years enmeshed in the life of Oregon College of Art and Craft (OCAC). In 2013, Orr was awarded *emeritus* status which left them to pursue their most ambitious project to date.

The tenor of higher education changed drastically from the late 1950s when Grimm rolled into Portland to 2013 when Orr retired from OCAC. Teaching became equal parts teaching and administrative duties, in order to meet the requirements of higher education accreditation. Orr and Bloom created Ash Street Project as an alternative.

Ash Street is a mentorship program where an artist applies for one of four positions. Mentees work in the studio alongside Orr and Bloom. They create their own bodies of work and perform studio responsibilities: conducting tours; curating the attached gallery; and presenting an exhibition. Ash Street regularly hosts brown bag lunches with invited artists and curators, evening lectures, and demonstrations by visiting resident artists. Jean-Nicolas Gérard, a Provençal potter was a recent Ash Street visitor. Through the ceramic web, Gérard also befriended the Grimms during their travels in France in 1996. Ash Street hosted my own Reed College ceramic class to watch Gérard throw pots and give a slide lecture on his influences. Orr and Bloom have circumvented a calcifying university system and returned teaching to the studio. Young artists can learn in a way that demonstrates the fluidity between making, making a living, and living. The university system which (with the help of the GI Bill) oversaw a rich proliferation of ceramic programs is no longer a viable incubator for ceramic arts. Ash Street Project is the new wave of renewal occurring outside of official institutions.

Grimm and Orr's teaching approaches may seem radical now in the face of current academic practices. To the contrary, these are actually very old approaches. I am reminded of a memory Orr shared. From time to time, Grimm would ride his blue Vespa up the hill to OCAC to visit Orr while the kilns fired. For hours, the two would sit talking shop, sharing information, as cones dropped in the hot kiln. The kilns may have moved to a different location, but the time-honored lesson continues.

RAY GRIMM | Our Lady Queen of Peace Catholic Church facade, Portland, Oregon, stone mosaic, 12 x 60 feet, circa 1962
Photo: Grimm famly archive

landscape of the northwest

sea forms and rock formations: ray grimm's nature

BY LINDA TESNER

WHAT CAN ONE LEARN ABOUT AN ARTIST by looking at his work? In the case of Ray Grimm, the answer is both straightforward and complex. Grimm arrived in Portland in the mid-1950s, just as the modern craft movement was burgeoning, a young ceramic artist, a newly minted faculty member at Portland State University. He was also a husband, father, World War II veteran, outdoorsman, bicyclist, and pragmatist. An artist who eschewed painstakingly detailed sketches before he launched into a project, an aesthete who deeply appreciated the most humble of materials, a down-to-earth thinker and tinkerer who was passionately resourceful. These qualities and characteristics become visible in Grimm's sculpture.

A Product of Life Experiences

Grimm's legendary frugality with materials (which yielded a tremendous facility with a wide range of materials) was borne of Grimm's life experiences. An enormously practical man, he and his wife Jere, raised six children on a teacher's salary and financial resources were chronically slim. Born in 1924 Grimm was one of six children raised during the Great Depression. His father's display design business (for department store windows) evaporated virtually overnight; Grimm recalled that, in 1929, his family bought a new car, only to have it disappear the following week. These experiences spawned in Grimm a deep respect for craft and a shrewd ingenuity. He was proud of the idea that he could not only "make do," but make beautiful and functional objects with humble and often recycled materials.

There was another notable experience, too, that laid a foundation for Grimm's lifelong zest for adventure, a sense of *carpe diem* that led Grimm to hike the Grand Canyon twice and, in the bicentennial year of 1976, to lead his sons on a bicycle trek of 1976.8 miles through America's heartland. Grimm, raised in the Midwest far from the closest seashore, was drafted at age eighteen into the Navy. His father had fought in World War I and experienced trench warfare. Grimm figured that if he were on a

ship he would at least get three meals a day and a place to sleep. His ship was involved in the Battle of Leyte Gulf, the first battle in which the Japanese carried out organized kamikaze attacks. Grimm was fortuitously below deck when his ship was hit. Although he was initially trapped, he managed to get off the ship and stayed afloat for three-and-a-half hours until he was picked up by a neighboring ship. Grimm had some backstories going into the attack. Because he had wanted to concentrate on playing chess, he had a fellow sailor attend required swimming classes for him. Grimm didn't really know how to swim. And, his life preserver had a hole in it. While he was in the ocean he periodically needed another survivor to hold him above water while he blew air into his own life vest. Jere posits that this hair-raising close call forged Ray Grimm's undaunted approach to life and a lust for boldly and brashly immersing himself in the world around him.

After Grimm was discharged from the military he headed to New York City, where he was enrolled in New York University but he was, in essence, embarking upon a sort of "vision quest" to figure out what he wanted to do with the rest of his life. In 1947, he happened to visit the Metropolitan Museum of Art during an exhibition of work by Croatian sculptor Ivan Mestrovic and was instantly engaged. Grimm was already taking drawing classes and had a lifelong love of working with his hands; overwhelmed with a sense of "I can do this," he returned to his hometown of Saint Louis, Missouri, and enrolled in the Washington University School of Fine Arts. It was there that he met a fellow student, Jere Meisel.

Grimm was hired at PSU in 1956 to set up a ceramics department. Family lore claims that, before Grimm was hired, art department chairman Fredrick Heidel delivered a stack of applicant portfolios to Lydia Herrick

RAY GRIMM | contact sheet, 1960
Photo: Grimm family archives

Hodge, founder of the Oregon Ceramics Studio (OCS) and asked to whom he should award the position. Hodge immediately recommended Grimm, not only based on his work but also because he had recently received a graduate degree in pottery from Southern Illinois University where he was a student of the legendary ceramist and teacher F. Carlton Ball (1911-92). Hodge recognized that just having been a student of Ball's augured well for Grimm's zealous teaching style. When the Grimms arrived in Portland, Hodge invited him to use the workspace on Southwest Corbett; by 1957 she had invited both Grimms to have a joint exhibition at OCS, the first of many exhibitions that presented the Grimms' work to the region.

Integrating Art and Architecture

It was likely at the Oregon Ceramics Studio/Contemporary Crafts Gallery that developer and philanthropist John D. Gray and his wife, Elizabeth "Betty" Gray, became acquainted with Grimm's work. In the 1960s, Gray was immersed in developing destination resorts in Oregon, inspired by his own family's love of backpacking and hiking in his native state. His first development, Salishan Lodge, is sited at Gleneden Beach. Once land devoted to dairy farming, the site is surrounded by the ancient coastal forest and the tranquility of Siletz Bay.

Today, in an era when regionalism and pride of place are the celebrated cornerstones of cultural tourism, it is difficult to remember that in the 1960s these were ground-breaking concepts. In the development of Salishan Lodge, Gray conceived a place where the beauty of the Oregon landscape and the creative output of Oregon's artists would be interwoven into an experience resonant with a unique sense of the locale. Gray engaged architect John W. Storrs, noted pioneer of the Northwest regional style of architecture, to design the property with individual guest rooms, each facing a spectacular natural vista. Landscape architect Barbara V. Fealy was hired to naturalistically interweave native plant materials — salal, huckleberry, conifer, and native azalea — into the resort and golf course design. And, simultaneously and innovatively, Gray selected a number of eminent Oregon artists to integrate artwork into the architectural design. A core design element of the main lodge and dining area are several carved wood geometric abstractions by the self-taught sculptor, LeRoy Setziol.

Jere Grimm recounts the rarefied experience of working with Gray not only on Salishan but Sun River and Skamania lodges as well. The developer encouraged the artists to collaborate even before the construction studs were in place. Gray's trailblazing approach to working with the artists was that he wanted their input from the beginning design concepts as opposed to thinking of artwork as applied decoration once the facilities were built. Gray was known to make visits to Grimm at his studio and

arrange for his plane flights to Sun River in order to involve the artist in fundamental design decisions. Jere Grimm affectionately jokes that Gray was "the Lorenzo de' Medici of Oregon" for his enthusiastic and consistent patronage of regional artists.

Grimm's major commission for Salishan Lodge is a large bas-relief installed on an exterior wall of a large stone-paved garden courtyard adjacent to the main lodge. The title of the work is *Sea Forms* and consists of an abstracted clay construction that evokes the rugged shoreline of the Oregon Coast. The ceramic landscape is mounted onto plywood, faced with thin sheets of shim brass — brass thin enough to cut with shears and vastly less expensive than a substrate of solid brass.

Sea Forms brings to mind an abstraction of Oregon's rocky shoreline. The central motif of roughly-hewn concentric circles — maybe the sun — lords over a tumble of rock forms. Upon closer inspection, ocean life is alluded to — clay forms mimic crustaceans clinging to jagged surfaces, scalloped forms suggest seashells whereas other shapes conjure anemones and starfish. Even

RAY GRIMM | *Sea Forms*, earthenware and brass over plywood, 4 x 13 feet, 1965 Photo: Robert M. Reynolds

the thinly applied earthenware glaze reveals the rough and gritty surface of the clay Grimm used, literally creating a "sandy" surface texture. The way that the metal background has discolored a bit, turning copper-green where rainwater has collected between the "stones," creates the effect of marine algae growing in the interstices between boulders. And the combination of original fire scaling and further weathering caused the brass background to acquire the dapple of a grey Oregon coast sky. But Grimm was most assuredly not a literalist. The landforms that grew from his hands accrue less from any deliberate, preconceived design that he devised than from the accumulated visual vocabulary that he inculcated from spending time in nature.

Inspiration and Materials

Around the time that Grimm created *Sea Forms* for Salishan, he was experimenting with Willamina clay at the Willamina (Oregon) Clay Products brickyard. He was already working at Willamina on some of their Liturgical Arts Guild projects. For example, he built a ceramic baptismal font at the brickyard since they could dolly the font right up into the kilns, impossible to do elsewhere because of the font's size. In testing the clay and kiln temperatures, Grimm became fascinated by some of the "klinkers," ceramic forms that came out of the kiln puffed up and porous, almost pumice-like. Over-fired to instability and nearly to the point of turning vitreous, Grimm immediately perceived the benefits of using this type of fired clay in bas-reliefs because the over-fired clay had become so lightweight. This method was not just a structurally sound solution to Grimm's ideas for wall sculpture. The element of chance (in the kiln) and the expectation of variation made the ceramic components ideal building blocks for compositions that evoke natural landforms.

Grimm returned to the idea of conveying the essence of the Oregon landscape in ceramic bas-relief repeatedly throughout his career. He took to naming these wall sculptures after Oregon rivers, mostly Pacific Coast rivers that originate in the Cascades east or south of the Willamette Valley: *Siuslaw* (1968), *North Santiam* (1968), *Umpqua* (1969), *The Little Nestucca* (1972). He also sought inspiration from the Columbia River Gorge, where dramatic columnar basalt and waterfalls suggested forms seen in *Wahkeena* (1969), *McCord Creek* (1995), and a series called *Fragments of the Columbia Gorge* (1995). Other reliefs evoke *Indigo Springs* (1985) and even the *Alvord* (1991), the vast, dry lake bed in Harney County, deep in the southeastern corner of Oregon.

Grimm's fascination with Oregon landforms and the way in which his love of the outdoors overlapped with this studio practice is not wholly unique for Grimm's generation of Oregon artists. The painter Carl Morris, known for his abstract paintings, was an avid fly fisherman, and many of his works, especially the Silver Creek Series, were inspired by the play of light over the surface of rushing

water. Others of Grimm's contemporaries — Nelson Sandgren, Charles Voorhies, LaVerne Krause, and Henry Kowert were other Oregon artists who transmuted the state's landscape into formally composed abstractions.

Public Art Projects

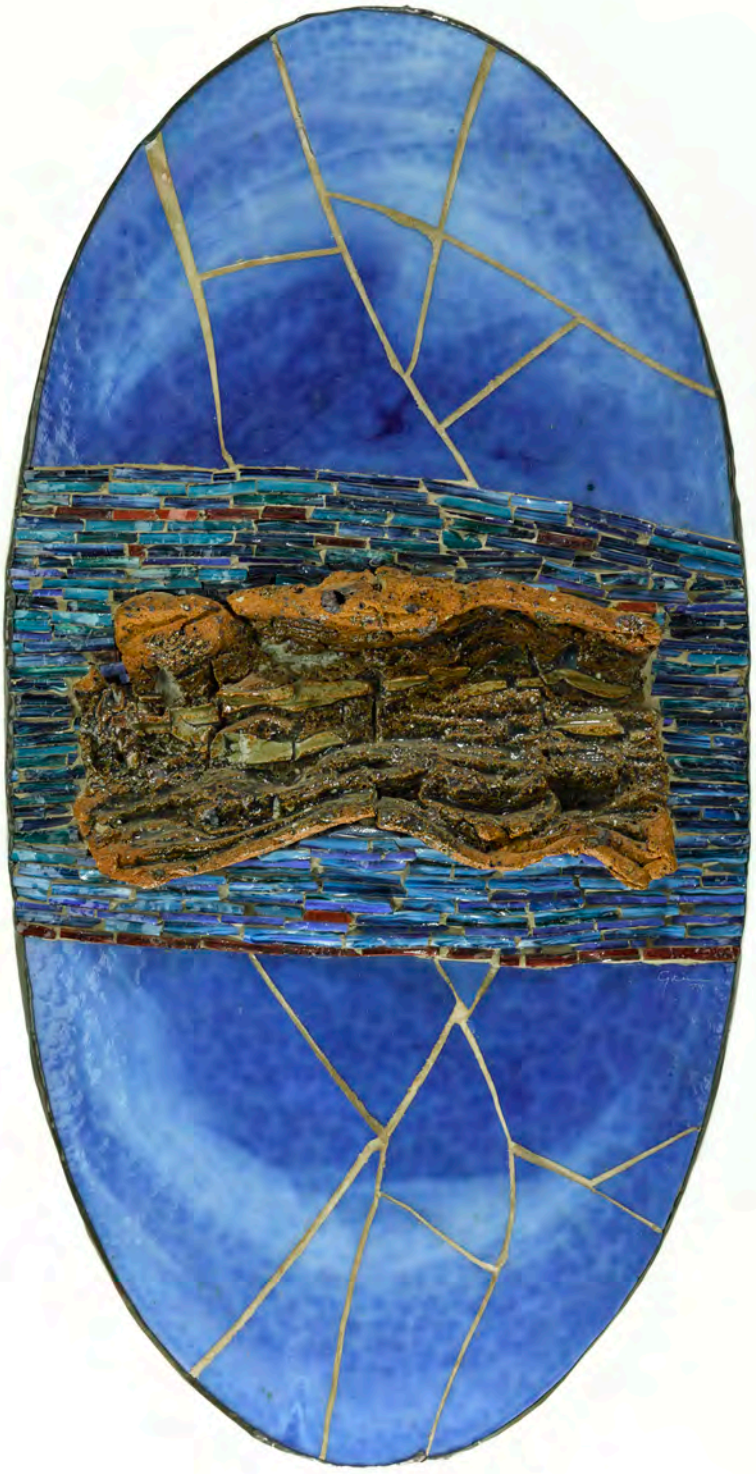
The idea of "public art" has evolved tremendously since Grimm was at the height of his career. Certainly Gray's influence contributed to the evolution of the visual landscape of Portland. Today, through the Regional Arts and Culture Council and the TriMet Public Art Program, the work of living artists is enthusiastically and even aggressively interwoven throughout the city's neighborhoods. But in the 1960s, especially before John Gray's trendsetting real estate developments, the integration of visual art and architecture was not as commonplace as it is today. Nonetheless, Grimm found himself involved in numerous architectural projects that paralleled his studio work.

Grimm designed architectural surface treatment and raku-glazed clay, copper, and brass light fixtures for new constructions, such as at the Mountain Park Recreation Center in Lake Oswego. He made new work — a hanging ceramic and wood sculpture — for the lodge at Gray's Sunriver Resort in Bend, Oregon as well as a new series of landform bas-reliefs for Gray's Skamania Lodge in Stevenson, Washington. He was also tapped to design a wall mosaic for the newly constructed Our Lady Queen of Peace Catholic Church on North Denver Avenue in Portland, Oregon.

Grimm's approach to crafting the mosaic for the church's 12 x 60 foot wall is yet another example of his creative frugality and deft ability to salvage materials. The church was already being built using dark and light shades of rock embedded into the concrete skin of the façade. Grimm commandeered the stones that were originally allotted to the span of wall where his artwork would be installed, then separated the gravel into piles according to color. From this limited but very rich palette, Grimm designed a trio of graphic trees of life that recall his *Weed* sculpture forms.

Grimm was both a product and a partisan of his time. His love for materials and his confident capabilities made him a deeply respected teacher and an impassioned contributor to the modern craft movement in Oregon. His collaborations, with Gray and others, led to a number of lasting sculptures, some of them tucked away in out-of-the-way places. Through Grimm's hands, the Oregon landscape is reinterpreted and celebrated.

Linda Tesner is the director of the Ronna and Eric Hoffman Gallery of Contemporary Art at Lewis & Clark College, Portland, Oregon.



RAY GRIMM | *Indigo Springs*, rolled glass mosaic and clay, 23 x 15 inches, 1985 Photo: Hank Keeton, SeeingTao.com

witnessing the unfolding

BY CHRISTA GRIMM

DAD WAS VERY PROCESS ORIENTED. I love how he would abandon control — let the material influence the outcome of his work: the way the consistency of the clay directed him; the different debris he threw into the garbage can when raku firing; or how he used a 2 by 4 to hit the edge of a pot "just right." I love how he created a conversation, or feeling between materials by combining different textures, such as a bamboo handle on a teapot. His very geological bas-relief work juxtaposed smooth and rough, ceramic and glass mosaic, like a river running through the rock. He had such a playful enthusiastic inquisitiveness, as if he was playing with old friends.

I feel my dad enter my work, when I explore medium with that similar curiosity. How does it feel? What urges come out of that? It is expressed via the thickly loaded brush, or subtle variations in hue and transparencies of color, or the warm and cool values side by side. I like to paint large paintings so that long brush strokes come from an internal movement deep within my body. The painting arrives as a co-creation between myself and "happenstance," through the materials and movement. In this way, the creative impulse follows the directions given by material and textures. I feel like I am simply a witness to something that has arrived.

CHRISTA GRIMM | *Cabin Bound*, 17.75" x 11.5", acrylic
Photo: Dan Kvitka

Christa Grimm, the daughter of Ray and Jere Grimm, brings intuition and fluid movement to her landscape paintings. She has created many large-scale public installations in Oregon, including: The Casey Eye Institute, and the Salem Hospital, and most recently a street mural in Portland at Southeast 30th and Belmont in Portland, Oregon.

podiums, pods, and kinetics

BY DANIEL DUFORD

CITIES AND NATURE ARE OFTEN considered in opposition to each other. For many artists, especially those living in the Pacific Northwest, city streets and mountain ranges are part of a continuum. I look at two contemporary artists, David Eckard and Pete Beeman in relationship to Ray Grimm's public art. Like Grimm, David Eckard makes every part of his multi-media constructions — from welding to sewing to drawing and painting. David is his own fabricator. Pete Beeman has similar chops to Eckard's but due to the scale of some of his most ambitious public works, Beeman relies on a trusted team of engineers and fabricators. What all these artists have in common is an approach to public space that is interactive. Another commonality is their use of biomorphic forms.

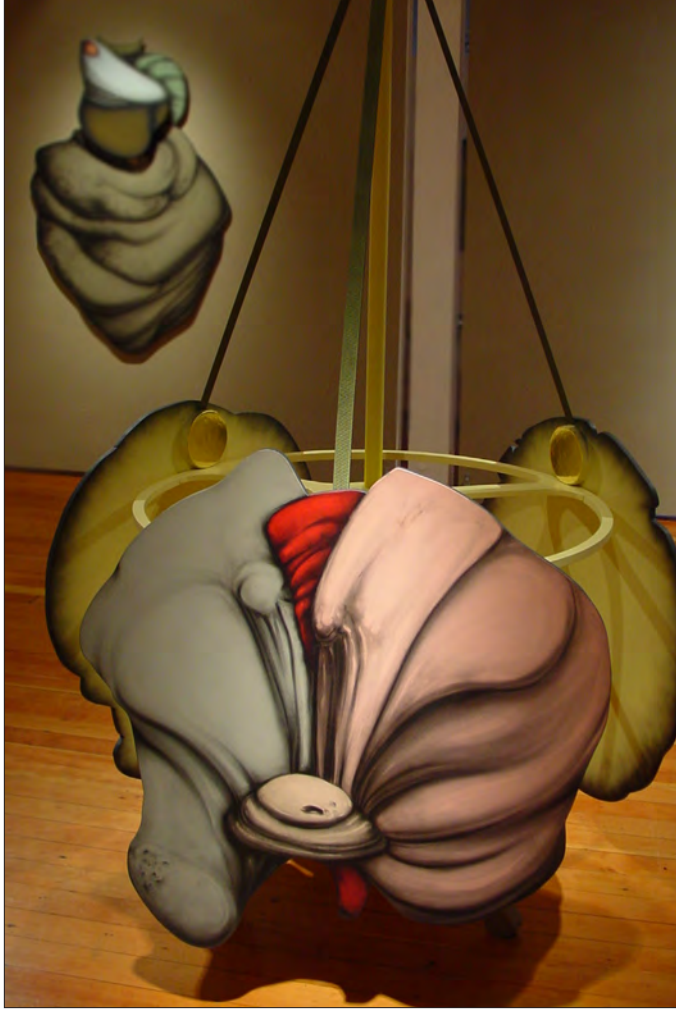
RAY GRIMM | study for Salishan Lodge, mixed media, 25 x 18 inches, 1964 Photo: Dan Kvitka

In Eckard's case nature is as much an interior as exterior affair, internal organs (muscle groups) morph into mountain ranges. For Beeman natural and mechanical forms merge. An absurdist streak runs through both Eckard and Beeman. In the end, Eckard and Beeman make public works that enliven and activate civic spaces. Their projects exist for a living city.

David Eckard was raised on a farm in Iowa. His rural upbringing informs his exquisitely crafted sculptural objects. The objects suggest fantastical farm implements or devices for unknown rituals. The theatricality of Eckard's work manifests in elaborate public performances and videos all created with the same unerring sense of the crafted object.

Like Ray Grimm, Eckard is as much a teacher as a practicing artist. Eckard's work begins in the materials — welded metal, painted wood, sewn leather. He exemplifies the life of the practicing artist-teacher. In his new house there is already an accumulation of hand-welded hooks and studio-fashioned architectural details.

Eckard's paintings and drawings feature abstracted forms that at times could be dissected muscles or ancient menhirs lining a rustic landscape. In the interplay between the sculpture and drawings (sometimes they are one in the same) the invoked landscape is one of a haunted town square. In Eckard's 2005 performance, *Podium* he pulled an elaborate rolling podium equipped with a yellow bullhorn through Portland. He reclaimed civic space with a roving temporary public art. In his work nature is represented as much as an inner state as it is a public spectacle.



DAVID ECKARD | *Bon bon bon* from *Liveries (summer stock)*, latex paint and charcoal on wood, gold foil, belt, 77 x 43 x 43 inches 2007 Photo: David Eckard

David Eckard's work includes two-and three-dimensional installations that often manifest in elaborate public performances and videos all created with the same unerring sense of the crafted object. Eckard is the recipient of the 2010 Hallie Ford Fellowship, a Bonnie Bronson award, and a Regional Art & Culture Fellowship. His work has been shown nationally. He is an associate professor of art at Pacific Northwest College of Art in Portland, Oregon.

OMEN DESIGN GROUP: DICK PONZI, RAY and JERE GRIMM, and ROGER SHEPPARD | *Weather Machine*, public art in Portland's Pioneer Courthouse Square, kinetic bronze sculpture, 30 feet, 1988 Photo: Dan Kvitka

Public art lives in a changing society and it tends to be more collaborative than most studio work. The beacon, *Weather Machine* in Portland's Pioneer Courthouse Square performs a two-minute sequence including trumpet fanfare, a spray of mists, and flashing lights. One of three animals appears to represent the day's weather. When the call to submit came up, Dick Ponzi invited his life-long friends Jere and Ray Grimm, along with their neighbor, Roger Sheppard, to form a team.

Ponzi, the Grimms, and Sheppard became a jazz quartet, as they riffed off one another to solve a quixotic engineering puzzle to create the 30-foot high piece. The combination of kinetics, sculptural form, and engineered interactivity produced great challenges, such as fitting three life-sized animals into a small half dome. The resulting work now engages the public on a daily basis in Portland's living room.

Pete Beeman knows a thing or two about kinetics. His own iconic public sculpture, *Pod* sits just a few blocks away across from Powell's City of Books. The 30-foot high sculpture couples a pendulum (the pod below) and a spring (the tubes above) to create its unusual motion. The tallest of the public can push the pod form on the bottom to set the work in motion. Beeman has a mechanic's mind and an artist's heart. His approach to public art is to engage the audience with interactivity. But Beeman is not always a single creator. He relies on fabricators, engineers, and assistants to carry out his kinetic dreams. Mostly what you see in the work of Pete Beeman is generosity towards the audience at large, an insatiable, mechanical curiosity, and technical verve. *Weather Machine* and *Pod* no longer need their authors. They now belong to the hearts of the public.

PETE BEEMAN | *Pod*, various metal components, 30 x 14 x 14 feet, 2002 Photo: supplied by Pete Beeman

Pete Beeman builds sculpture in Portland, Oregon and New York City. Educated at Brown and Stanford Universities in art, engineering, and design, his work is often kinetic, industrial and playful. He builds useless but functional objects, and thinks a lot about how our culture rates the utility and necessity of an object. Beeman considers the mechanics of a thing as integral to its beauty.

fire

EXPLORING
THE MELTING POINT

RAY GRIMM | first glass furnace in the Glass Shack at Portland State University, circa 1967
PHOTO: Grimm family archives

a studio potter's lessons

BY DANIEL DUFORD

HERE ARE SOME LESSON PLANS vis-á-vis conversations with friends and former students of Ray Grimm:

1. Make sure every student has a bicycle. Pack enough food and supplies for a few days. Ride from Portland to the Oregon Coast. Make camp. Build primitive raku kilns on the beach fire, all day and return.

2. Go to a conference in Seattle to learn the basics of glass. Return to Portland and create a hot shop with rudimentary materials. Collect a particular green glass beer bottle to melt and reuse for your glasswork. Inspire several students to become glass artists.

3. Ride your bike into the studio building, put on your favorite clogs and light your homemade pipe. Say nothing as you throw several large vessels and students work around you. Let students watch as you make architectural commissions, experiments for the house, and pots for an exhibition. Repeat until students don't even realize that they've just learned things that will guide them through their entire lives.

From the following rubric assess the success of the experience:

The Nomadic Kiln class taught by Daniel Duford at Leland Iron Works, Oregon City, Oregon Photo: Daniel Duford

RAY GRIMM | Firing on the beach with students and collecting firewood for the Cannon Beach Haystack raku-kiln building workshops 1970-75, 1980-83
PHOTO: Grimm family archives

a. Is the lesson how to build a kiln? Or making something from materials at hand? Is the long bike ride essential to learning? Wouldn't it have been easier to take a van or stay at home? Did you notice how everyone worked together at about mile ten?

b. Shouldn't you have more training in glass before setting up a shop? What is being an expert anyway? Did you learn about glass or the possibility of doing something yourself?

c. Why doesn't the teacher tell you step-by-step what he's doing? Are you paying attention?

d. Putting ideas in the form of a multiple choice bullet point is anathema to Ray's teaching. Not everything is quantifiable. Teaching is a living act. We can still learn from Ray and his objects and his examples, not as a historic exercise but as an act of artistic creation in the here and now.

There is an old saw that those who can't do, teach. Those who perpetuate this platitude have clearly never taught. For Grimm, teaching and studio work were equally intertwined. Teaching is itself an art. It requires you to both subsume your ego for the sake of your students, and believe in your own moral and aesthetic compass, so as to impart a real viewpoint to students. The best teachers are eternal learners. A great teacher nurtures a living thing that grows inside the student. Ray was a great teacher. He never stopped experimenting in the studio and by example infected his students with boundless curiosity.

I have taught art at a college for eighteen years. When I started, I saw myself as artist first and teacher second. In my dreams of artistic glory, I would be liberated from the grind of teaching. I would blissfully work in my studio, art world laurels resting at my feet. A funny thing happened on the way to that dream. I realized that teaching not only taught me more than I can learn on my own, but was paramount to my studio work. My teaching is enriched by a serious studio practice and that studio practice is enriches my teaching. The complete picture of me as an artist includes my role as a teacher. The things an artist makes are the artifacts of a life spent in dynamic creation. That creation includes the transmission of the art spirit to a younger generation.

The Grimms met in art school in Saint Louis. As Jere Grimm described it, they were part of a "mutual admiration society of two." Ray Grimm was the teacher's assistant and she was a student ten years his junior. It was in the milieu of education that the two met and fell in love. Historically, Saint Louis was a place where the South and North met, gateway to the West, a jump-off point for the Oregon Trail. When Grimm was offered and accepted a job at Portland State University in faraway Oregon, they were entering *terra incognita* and the beginning of their life work.

Portland in the 1950s was not today's Portland. There were no fawning articles in the *New York Times*,

no influx of young hip kids moving away from New York to set up shop in Portland. Portland was a roughneck western town. It could simultaneously embody down and out seediness, as well as uptight primness. The art scene consisted of a handful of artists and a couple of small institutions. Like many western cities, Portland was a town that attracted outliers who wanted to do things their own way, but still wanted some of the big city amenities and sophistication. In short its makeshift, can-do attitude prevailed in the local art world. It was out of this leaven that Ray Grimm grew his life. I think it is safe to say that the Grimms quickly became part of nascent art organizations in the city and helped build the foundation of quintessential Portland.

Grimm had seen a picture of the facility where he thought he was going to teach. It looked pretty good. Certainly up to snuff with what he was familiar with in Saint Louis. When the Grimms arrived at PSU they discovered that the facilities they had seen were in fact those of University of Portland across the Willamette River. What they encountered was a nondescript brick building with a freight elevator that led up to the soon-to-be ceramic department. At the time, PSU was a fledgling state college. There was not much of an art department. So began Ray Grimm's great work.

There are two possibilities in the public memory for founders of programs. The first is canonization.

RAY GRIMM
tea bowl, raku-fired ceramic
4 inches, 1975
Photo: Dan Kvitka

Buildings get named and dedicated, portraits hang in the hall of said building, maybe a history is written. This first road is open to a handful of lucky founders. The second possibility is absorption and forgetting. That road is silted over like an archaeological site.

"The lesson comes from building, doing, and figuring it out myself."

The igniting spirit of a program becomes so camouflaged by the founder's own dedication that the program seems as if sprung from the ether. Ray fits into this latter category. He helped to create the PSU clay and glass programs, (the glass being one of the earliest hot shops in the Northwest). In a sense, this set of circumstances was Ray's great luck because he was given the opportunity to create something from nothing. Jere Grimm is quick to give much credit to Fred Heidel who hired Ray and who was the object of Ray's great admiration, respect, and gratitude, in her words: "Fred (a fine artist himself) gave his teachers great respect and freedom. And Fred also saw that Ray got financial grants for workshops, corners to use for studio when he was developing his *Weed* sculptures, and space for the Glass Shack."

I teach in a very different time than Ray. I'm reminded of Tony Soprano's line in the first episode of *The Sopranos*: "It's good to be in something from the ground floor. I came too late for that and I know. But lately, I'm getting the feeling that I came in at the end. The best is over." In the 1950s and 1960s the GI Bill swelled the art departments of American colleges. The American middle class enjoyed a historic high as government money supported public institutions. This condition dovetailed with various underground movements such as the Beats and a new interest in contemporary crafts. As a result the two decades from the late 1950s to the middle 1970s witnessed some of the most influential and innovative art educational programs of the twentieth century. The teachers driving these programs grew up in the Depression. This was a generation that was either directly or indirectly transformed by World War II. By the mid-1980s art programs became more professionalized as the power in art institutions turned from the educators themselves to career administrators. The kind of experimental teaching that Ray did with his classes would never be allowed now without reams of release forms.

I have never taught without a syllabus. Over the years that I taught at Pacific Northwest College of Art my syllabi grew in response to accreditation concerns. It was not unusual for a syllabus to be eight- to ten-pages long and contained learning outcomes, grade expectations, various institutional warnings

RAY GRIMM | Collecting wood on the beach for the kiln, Cannon Beach, Oregon, circa 1975 Photo: Grimm family archives

with each week practically planned down to the minute. Today's students expect a schedule and paperwork. When I asked Jere if Ray left any lesson plans or syllabi, she laughed and said no. She went on to say, "I do remember many long nights in those early days of teaching: he would block out periods of time; shape what he wanted to demonstrate; ideas he wanted to get across; when to teach glaze calculation. Long and careful evenings of planning went into those days of teaching, but it wasn't formalized into a document that has survived to the present." That just wasn't the way things were done. I asked for some glaze recipes and received the same answer. I understand the institutional necessity for these documents in contemporary education. But I can't help but feel that a pendulum has swung too far towards caution. I've watched as older colleagues (maybe they were the same age as Ray's first generation of students) bristle at the administrative load and retire in disgust.

I've listened to stories about Grimm's life, looked at the work on his studio shelves, picking up his pots — as I think about his work and his legacy, I realize what Grimm teaches me without access to his notes. The lesson comes from building, doing, and figuring it out myself. While I'm experimenting and failing I learn much more then I set out to know. There is something to be said about passing on distilled information with its ease of transmission and predictable outcomes for success. This gives a student confidence that she can actually achieve something. But of equal importance is the questioning of assumptions that lead to new discoveries. Maybe I didn't miss anything. It's up to me to build my ground floor over the solid ground of Ray Grimm's example.

traces of the fire: three contemporary artists

BY DANIEL DUFORD

FIRE IS A NOUN, IN MOST CASES. To a ceramist it is one of the most important verbs of the craft's lexicon. Before transformation in the kiln, clay is just mud. Without the intense heat from a firing, glaze can't melt. It remains in its native state. The artists in this section all take on the symbology of transformation. Bruce Conkle creates objects that suggest morphing materials. His sculptures often utilize ice or smoke to suggest the mutability of nature. Autumn Higgins combines three-dimensional form with two-dimensional imagery. That relationship of pictures on pots goes back to the beginning of ceramic history. Victoria Christen's sturdy and gestural pots exemplify ceramic's ability to capture the quickness of the potter's mark through firing. Her work in response to Ray Grimm explores the shard, another of ceramics' enduring metaphors. All these artists understand fire's power.

RAY GRIMM | tea bowl, raku-fired ceramic, 4 inches, 1975 Photo: Dan Kvitka

AUTUMN HIGGINS | *Window* tea set, porcelain Photo: Autumn Higgins

FAMILIAL RECIPROCITY. A rough raku tea bowl speaks to a clean-lined tea cup with crisp graphics. The tea bowl in question is by Ray Grimm. It has Grimm's finger traces on the fluted foot and pinholes revealing the open toothy clay on the gray, carbon-kissed bottom. The white glaze is striped with leaf green and brick red brush strokes. The tea bowl is a quintessential raku pot – rustic, quick and handed. The cups and teapot are by Grimm's granddaughter Autumn Higgins. Higgins grew up with her grandparent's emphasis on making and craft. With an MFA from Louisiana State University and a recent residency at Northern Clay Art Center in Minnesota, Higgins is a mature artist in her own right. While her work relies on a clean, graphic sensibility you can still see the DNA from pot to pot. Similar muted colors and an emphasis on function connect grandfather and granddaughter. The kiln, like the hearth (they are intimately connected, one fire much hotter than the other) is where stories are passed on, lessons learned. Pass the cup, take a sip, and turn up the kiln. Objects as much as people carry knowledge from one generation to the next.

Autumn Higgens was born into a family of artists – daughter of painter Christa Grimm and granddaughter to Jere and Ray Grimm. She understands the importance of art objects in one's life. She started with small projects in her grandparent's studio and has always had an affinity for ceramics.

RAY GRIMM | *Tree Forms* maquette, brass shim stock over plywood, raku-fired Willamina clay, 20 x 12 inches, 1974
Finished piece part of the collection of the Wertheimer family 6 x 4 feet. Collaboration with Barbara Feeley Photo: Grimm family archive

BRUCE CONKLE MAKES STRANGE things. Smoking trees, bronze snowmen and parlors for Sasquatch are among the objects in Conkle's oeuvre. What distinguishes his work is its absolute adherence to its own rules. The natural world informs his sculptures — a natural world threatened by environmental degradation and peopled by sprites, monsters, and avenging spirits. And let us not forget the humor. Conkle's work is absolutely rooted in materiality. Natural forms exist throughout Ray Grimm's sculptures and pots as well — trees, waves and hills. Ray's approach to clay accentuated its tendency to mimic biomorphic forms. You can see it in the clay tree forms and you can see how two artists of different generations could tap into a deep, common well and create two works that can speak to each other across time. Scale and material change the meanings of each piece but not, to borrow from the images themselves, the roots.

BRUCE CONKLE | *Cloud Tree*, incense burner, bronze and silver leaf
7 x 6.5 x 5.75 inches Photo: Marne Lucas

Bruce Conkle declares an affinity for mysterious natural phenomena such as snow, fire, rainbows, crystals, volcanoes, tree burls, and meteorites. He examines contemporary attitudes toward the environment, including deforestation, climate change, and extinction. Conkle's work often deals with the human place within nature, and frequently examines what he calls the "misfit quotient" at the crossroads. Conkle received a 2011 Hallie Ford Fellowship and an Oregon Arts Commission Artist Fellowship. His 2012 show *Tree Clouds* was awarded a project grant from the Regional Arts and Culture Council.

VICTORIA CHRISTEN | response to Ray Grimm's ceramic spheres, ceramic tile, 2016
Photo: Dan Kvitka

WHAT IS A POT, IF NOT ARCHITECTURE in miniature? Pots enclose space like rooms. Materials reflect or absorb light. This is as true of a brick wall as it is of an earthenware coffee cup. Victoria Christen is a consummate potter. Her loosely thrown and altered earthenware cups, bowls, plates, teapots, and platters are meant for daily use. Her vessels are liquid in nature – forms bulge slightly with undulating lips and loose painterly decoration. Christen made the piece above specifically in response to Ray's architectural work. She knew Ray and Jere well. They have a mutual friend in common, the Provençal potter Jean-Nicholas Gérard. Gérard's infectiously rough-handed slipware owes a debt to both Japanese country pottery and French modernism. The bond between the Grimms, Christen, and Gérard exists in the studio and the life of the objects that emerge from the studio. If a pot is scaled to the hand and the mouth, what is a pot scaled to the rest of the body? Pots are as much about space as is architecture. In response to Ray's exploratory teaching methods, Christen has chosen to deconstruct the vessel and use that other essential metaphor of ceramics, the shard.

Victoria Christen emphasizes the beauty and significance of daily rituals. She intends for her pots to embody her experiences, attitudes, and values. The work is both thrown and constructed, intuitive and patterned, self conscious and flamboyant – references to her seamstress mother's use of patterns and tucks in her creations, to her father's work as both a machinist and maker of folk art.

RAY GRIMM | raku-fired ceramic installation, 1975 Photo: Dan Kvitka

RAY GRIMM
from the *Weeds* series
1960
Photo: Grimm family archive

material sensibility

EXPLORING AN ARTIST'S CURIOUS NATURE

regarding weeds

BY DANIEL DUFORD

RAY GRIMM'S *WEEDS* SERIES UPENDS THE MATERIAL expectations of clay. Large round ceramic vessels become airy through suspension on thin metal tendrils. The forms have all the earthbound roughness expected from clay. Yet, the metal structure inverts the weight and they become like seed heads awaiting an autumn wind. In ceramics, gravity and density are the default position. Ceramists have been trying to figure out ways to circumvent those conditions for millennia. Look at the huge Aztec ceramic figures with large ornate headdresses or ancient Chinese sculptures of horses and dogs that hold their weight on thin brittle clay feet. When Ray Grimm was making this work, artists like Peter Voulkos and John Mason in California were famously pushing ceramic forms to their structural limits. Other artists like Rudy Staffel thinned out clay to its most translucent state. Grimm's own mentor, Carlton Ball, experimented with unorthodox methods of forming and shaping clay. Grimm, like all of these other artists, benefitted historically from an opening up of simultaneous influence from Japan and American modernism. *Weeds* speaks as much about material, as it does form.

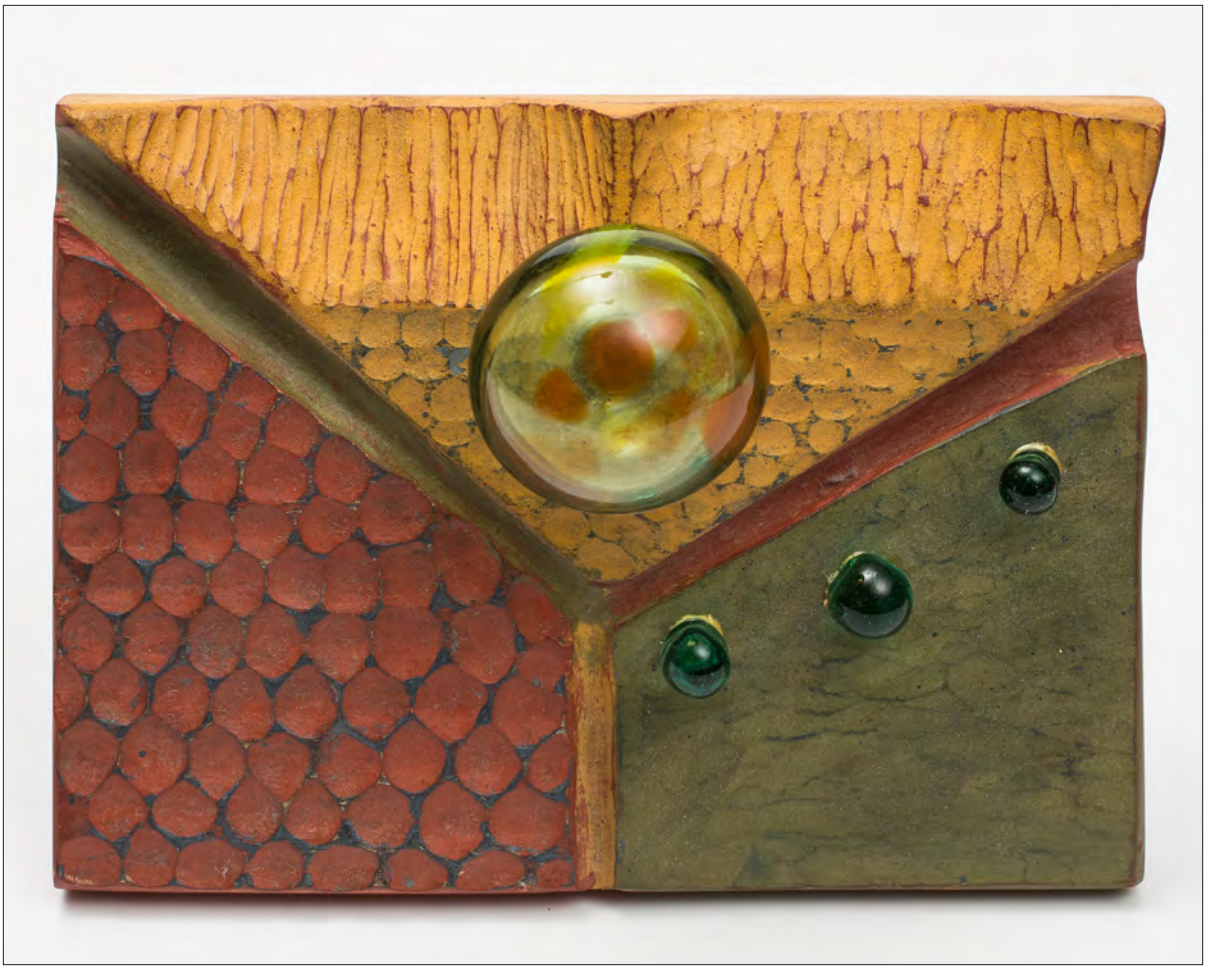
In his 2007 book *The Craftsman*, Richard Sennett says, "This is the craftsman's proper conscious domain; all his or her efforts to do good-quality work depend on curiosity about the material at hand." Material consciousness was the hub of the wheel in Grimm's teaching and studio work. He stressed that the only way to know a material was to push it, stretch it, break it, and see what happens. The mainstream of contemporary art shifted in the past thirty years from studio-based, material-centered work to a "post-studio" conceptual "practice." In the current milieu artists project manage concepts, rather than make objects. Handwork is disdained as retrograde. This is all changing. Grimm's material consciousness is making a lot of sense right now. Aside from the explosion of ceramics in contemporary art galleries and the swelling of academic ceramic studios across the country, the rise of art stars such as Nicole Eisenmann, a 2015 winner of the MacArthur "Genius Grant" and an unapologetic humanist painter points to a craving for artists to return to basic materials.

Portland has always been a bastion of the handmade and downbeat. Artists who decamped to the Rose City from larger metropolitan centers usually did so for the access to cheap property. But the real reason to start a community is for the camaraderie with fellow travelers interested in the castoff, the homemade, the earthy. There is a self-conscious move away from power centers to create new structures. Environmentally aware, many Portland artists made a vocation out of using materials that speak to the body while pointing to the natural world. Grimm and his contemporaries helped set the stage for this condition.

When Dana Lynn Louis arrived in Portland in the mid-nineties, she entered a small city in the process of artistic fermentation. Louis's work is deeply steeped in the rigors of the studio. Using clay, glass, rope, and other materials to create elaborate installations, Louis roots her work in the confluence of materiality and the spiritual. She has been involved with environmental activism and maintains a connection with art centers in Mali in West Africa. It is not a stretch to see the biomorphic forms throughout the installation *Draw* as sharing DNA with Grimm's *Weed* sculptures. In both, there remains a fundamental respect for the primal form — the jar and the bottle — and then those primal forms are upended and rethought. When weight and form defy expectation, it opens up other qualities such as delicacy

DANA LYNN LOUIS | *Draw*, installation, mixed media, 2013
Photo: Dana Lynn Louis

Dana Lynn Louis maintains a rigorous studio practice that engages architectural space, glass, light, and shadow. The results fluctuate between intimate domestic-scaled pieces, to interdisciplinary performance collaborations, and large-scale public works that energize and alter the experience of an environment. Louis is inspired by the timeless and fascinating systems of the body, the natural and constructed worlds, and their interconnection. She shows at Laura Russo Gallery in Portland, Oregon.



RAY GRIMM | *Why*, mixed media, 6.5 x 9 inches, 2007 Photo: Dan Kvitka

and translucency. Like the *Weed* sculptures, *Draw* allows gravity to dictate the gesture of the heavy glass forms, and in so doing, a visual sense of weightlessness occurs. A short circuit in perception focuses the viewer's attention on the sculpture in a new way. Also like Grimm, Louis utilizes common materials alongside her own handmade glass forms. The plain aspect of the parts create a dazzling new configuration.

When you enter a Dana Lynn Louis installation you are called upon to consider your bodily relationship to the space. But more importantly, the visual and material signposts point beyond human history and force you to consider micro-vistas and macro-views. Biomorphic forms ask the viewer to look beyond human history. This ends up being the most humane art. Why weeds? Why strands of globules that recall frog eggs and DNA? The forms are one signifier but they depend on material consciousness to complete the circuit of meaning. The material is integral to the meaning of the work.

WHITNEY NYE | *Funhouse*, broomstick handles, glass, wood on plywood
20.5 x 17.5 x 1.5 inches, 2014 Photo: Whitney Nye

Whitney Nye's work is deeply affected by the texture, hues and sensations of the world that surrounds her. Working in different mediums, Nye's thematic approach consistently examines patterns of repetition. She explores the rhythms and pauses of our natural world, becoming a conduit for their character. Travel of all kinds is a key influence and source of inspiration. Nye is a graduate of the University of Oregon. She shows at Laura Russo Gallery in Portland, Oregon.

The ceramic studio was Grimm's central domain but he was endlessly curious about other media. A partial list that occupied Grimm throughout his lifetime: wood, glass, metal, milk paint, bamboo, and leather. This wasn't limited to artwork. He made chicken coops, bike bags, hats, tongs, hat racks, and door pulls. In mass media, popular images of artists can show a foppish prig who refuses to muddy the distinction between "life" and "art," someone overly precious about every creative act. Most real artists are like Grimm. These artists understand the context in which an object lives. That doesn't dampen the enthusiasm for experimenting and making other things. It is a continuum. There is no artificial separation between modes of creation. Joy and curiosity drive the creative act more than careerist maneuvers.

Grimm was preoccupied with wood and milk paint. He made many relief sculptures that were the closest he got to being a painter. In a case of parallel evolution, Whitney Nye's *Funhouse* a wood and glass piece from the exhibition *Gleaning* appears sprung from Grimm's piece *Why*. Nye grew up in Bend, Oregon and came to Portland about the same time as Louis. Her background is in craft — having trained at Penland and Oregon College of Art and Craft. In both pieces, design is in part determined by media. Design elements such as repetition and color are derived from the media itself. Manipulating preexisting material becomes a collaboration in

a different way than say, raw clay. Raw clay comes with its possibilities and limitations intact but is still fundamentally formation by the hand. Clay can be made to look like other things. Found wood or glass comes with a story and personality. The artist needs to dance with what exists and test the boundaries of what can be left intact and what taken away.

In Nye's work frugality becomes a form of elegance. Humble mediums broadcast a political stance — about resource usage, privilege and human connection. Grimm's frugality was historic consequence. Growing up during the Depression his earliest lessons were about thrift. He maintained that spirit throughout his life.

Grimm's approach to understanding different media was to work in series. By utilizing the repetition of forms (the *Weed* sculptures are one such example) over several pieces, Grimm got to the heart of what a material could do. Another example of this approach can be seen in his use of Willamina clay — clay dug locally from a brickyard. When over-fired slightly, the clay would bloat. He pushed the clay beyond its vitrification point and liking the results used it "wrongly." Because he learned what the clay could do, he made decisions based on the material; not preexisting criteria. Potter Lillith Rockett, like all potters, works in series as a matter of necessity. One thing wheel work teaches you

RAY GRIMM | goblets, 5.5 inches, 1971 Photo: Bill Bachhuber

LILITH ROCKETT | large mala with wheel-thrown porcelain beads, each unique in form, 36 x 14 x 3 inches Photo: Lilith Rockett

is the importance of repetition. The opening up of the ball of clay on the wheel to create like shapes takes repetition. Very rarely does a potter sit down to make one cup or one vase. Generally it is twenty, forty or sixty of a given shape.

Rockett is not a production potter. The distinction being that a production potter makes a series of production ware and tries to replicate each piece as closely as possible. Production pottery is as close you can get to mechanization without the machine. Rockett uses the wheel to think through forms. She makes a series in the way that Grimm made a series. Vessels made in a series are not clones of each other but a big family. Some might seem like twins but mostly the pieces are individual siblings with defining traits. Grimm and Rockett share a work ethic, but aesthetically are in different neighborhoods. Where Grimm liked brown and red stoneware with gypsum pop-outs and rough hewn lines, Rockett works primarily in porcelain. Her vessels have elegant lines and simple attachments. But like

Lilith Rockett works primarily in porcelain. Her work, created by hand on the potter's wheel, reveals a deep interest in the subtle qualities of the material: translucency, fluidity, density, and the velvety softness of an unglazed polished surface. Rockett's forms are grouped in social arrangements. The groupings use both containers and pedestals and endeavor to create a ceremonial tone. As sculptural objects, the simple shapes are intended to evoke rather than impose: archetypal forms exploring ideas of balance, cohesion, tension, and celebration, leaving an open-ended impression suggesting the beginning of a conversation. The conversation continues as the objects gain purpose in use. All of the work is intended for use in a domestic setting.

Grimm, Rockett understands that it is in the series that true knowledge of a form and clay emerge.

Finally, the term "mixed media" can refer to almost anything. The term emerges out of modernist artistic practice that broke with material purity inherited from the French Academy. It used to be that a painter painted, a sculptor maybe worked in stone and clay, but always made sculptures. Potters made pots. Like all attempts to categorize; the borders were always porous. Mixed media also brought in the possibility for materials other than accepted art supplies. This could include newspaper collage, store-bought objects, and repurposed manufactured fabric. By the time Grimm made the *Weed* series, this was common practice. Even in *Weeds* and various bas-relief work Ray did all the making. He was a maker by temperament. Bringing in other media and using it "wrong" or in other words subverting your perceptions of said material creates a sharpening in looking. What is that material doing? Seeing happens in the brain after all, not in the eyes.

Cynthia Lahti's mixed media sculptures in vessels pull off some of the gravity-defying expectations of the *Weed* sculptures. Lahti creates small gestural figures and vessels crowned by collaged photographs. The collision of two-dimensional imagery and sculptural physicality create an electric dissonance. The face of a figure is completed not by artistic rendering but by roughly collaged photography. What was once received as a flat image becomes a three-dimensional entity. What emerges is a hybrid with a poetic sensibility. Disparate parts form rhythmic breaks visual tempos within one sculpture. The lightness of the paper in contrast to the hardness of the ceramic creates a frisson. In the end this is the magic that can happen when disparate media are mixed. Looking at four years of Lahti's sculptures employing this method, you see the line of inquiry running through each piece. The inquiry occurs in the studio.

How a material is deployed in a given object depends on a number of factors. Clay, Grimm's first love, can do many things. Clay is mimetic, meaning that it records impressions. A gear rolled over the shoulder of a pot becomes a decorative element. The original action is duly noted by the clay. In fact one of clay's most beguiling quali-

RAY GRIMM
ceramic vase, 6 inches
Photo: Dan Kvitka

ties is impression. Squeeze a ball of clay and your gesture remains. Grimm employed this quality, often using materials at hand — gears, bicycle chains and branches. Clay appears to be easy to build (until you try something large or add attachments). But it can also be recalcitrant and pissy. It can fall apart as it dries, or bloats and cracks in the kiln. It slumps. Clay spalls inexplicably. A day on the wheel can yield one perfectly good vase but bear witness to several disasters. Only through a vigorous exploration of material can an artist really know what the stuff can do. And only with that knowledge can an artist make the stuff dance.

Jere Grimm has said that Grimm was "not a word guy". The current art school approach to material sensibility is trust words, more than silence. Most students are trained to intellectualize before even touching a tool. This would suggest (and is certainly implied in the hierarchy of higher education) that material sensibility is not a type of intellectual activity. Not being a word guy does not mean that you are not a thinker. I find often that the opposite is true. Words often get in the way of true meditation. Here I will turn to an art form that relies completely on words: poetry. Poets love words. Words are their primal material. Like potters, sculptors and painters, poets understand that words are malleable and must be tinkered with in silence to fully understand how to employ them. Material consciousness means that theorizing comes through by working with a medium. Ray understood that no artist could make an object without first being intimately engaged with all the strengths and weaknesses of a given material. He also understood that when you really know your stuff, sometimes a weed is just the thing you need.

CYNTHIA LAHTI | *Brown Bathrobe*, ceramic and found image, 18 x 13 x 9 inches, 2015 Photo: Cynthia Lahti

Cynthia Lahti creates works of art that resonate with honesty and reflect the beauty and chaos of the world. Her art is influenced by human artifacts from ancient times to the present, as well as by personal experiences and emotions. She works in various media, including drawing, collage, and sculpture. Currently she is focusing on ceramic sculpture based on expressive images of the figure she finds in a variety of source materials. Each sculpture expresses an intense inner psychological state, its surface effecting a fluctuating quality, part beautiful, part grotesque. Lahti is a 2013 Hallie Ford Fellow.

RAY GRIMM | portrait, 1956 Photo: Grimm family archives

cross-pollination

ARTISANS CONSIDER GRIMM'S WORK ON THE TABLE AND IN THE WORLD

the tomato wars

RAY GRIMM | annual tomato sauce canning, 2005 Photo: Grimm family archives

BY JERE GRIMM

There was almost nothing about "Tomato Wars" that Ray didn't love. Making food was part of the art of living. Every fall our family would gather to make our own tomato sauce. Two or three families, children running between our feet, helping and learning the fun of working together. The opportunities were all there — unfolding into a day-long series of problem solving; semi-disasters and resource recovering; hand-making new tools to measure the height of the tomato sauce cooking; organizing working lines of chopping, grinding, stirring, filling jars; and, oh joy, when one of the sauce making machines would break down and Ray would get to fix it! And at the end, the gleaming quart jars quietly lined up on the basement shelves awaiting the days of rain (and maybe snow), securing our winter sustenance. And for Ray, it was almost as good as the time his dad scored a bargain on a case of canned pears in 1932. Pears were stored in the fruit cellar of his parent's home on Lindell Avenue in Saint Louis, Missouri.

all-purpose tomato sauce

BY CORY SCHREIBER

RAY GRIMM | daily pot with bamboo handle, 6 inches Photo: Dan Kvitka

This sauce can adapt to various uses in your kitchen. It is best made with summer tomatoes that contain a fair amount of juice for flavor as the tomatoes cook down.

A more reduced thicker sauce for pasta or pizza. A thinner sauce if coating a piece of seared fish filet or meat, finished with butter. The sauce could also be finished with chopped olives, capers and anchovies, transforming into a Puttanesca variation.

1 medium sized sweet onion, peeled and finely chopped
3 cloves of peeled garlic, minced
2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
3 pounds of plum or San Marzanno tomatoes cut in half
6 leaves fresh basil or thyme
Salt to taste

In a large saucepan heat the olive oil and add the onions and garlic, sweating over medium-high heat for a few minutes. Add the tomatoes stirring while the tomatoes begin to release their water content. Bring to a simmer, then lower heat and cook, stirring occasionally, until much of the excess liquid has cooked off and the tomatoes begin to dry and show some thickening, about 20-25 minutes, depending upon the tomatoes.

Transfer tomatoes and any juices to a food mill set with the finest strainer or press through a strainer with fine holes to capture the seeds and skin. Return the sauce to the stove and cook down to desired consistency. Finish with the basil leaves if desired. Season with salt to taste.

Fourth-generation Portlander, Chef **Cory Schreiber** grew up working in Old Town in his family's oyster bar. When he opened Wildwood restaurant in Portland, he rapidly become a leading figure in the region's bustling culinary scene – winning the James Beard Award in 1998 for Best Chef: Pacific Northwest. Schreiber's cuisine emphasizes organic produce prepared in ways that allow the natural beauty and flavors of the ingredients to shine forth, unobstructed by fussy embellishments.

t. project's ray grimm blend

BY TERI GELBER

When I was asked to create a tea blend for the Ray Grimm Legacy Project, I was honored. I realized the challenge was not based on a person's individual palate, as when I create a proprietary blend, but rather on a specific green teapot in PNCA's Center for Culture & Art's collection. For the tea base, I vascillated. Black. Green. Black. Green. China? Japan? India? Studying his work, it became clear that Ray felt a close kinship to the Japanese potters of the early and mid-twentieth century. I discovered that he drew inspiration from Shoji Hamada and other reknown Japanese potters. So, I decided on Hojicha tea.

Hojicha has a deep, earthy personality with delicious toasty qualities. It's not categorized as a "green" tea and doesn't resemble in color or flavor the sencha teas for which Japan is so famous. Made with the last harvest in autumn (called bancha or "people's tea"), Hojicha is accessible and affordable for daily use in Japan. I read that Ray was a big-hearted, friendly person and this tea leaf, neither noble nor rare, seemed the right fit. Once the fresh tea is picked and dried, the leaves and stems are roasted over charcoal or high heat in a porcelain container, leaving less caffeine in the tea and imbuing it with a light smoky tone and deep brown colors.

RAY GRIMM | tea bowl, raku-fired ceramic filled with T. Project Ray Grimm blend tea, 4 inches, 1975
Photo: Dan Kvitka

I stared at the stoneware tea pot to inspire and direct me, as I composed. The green colored glaze reminded me of new tips on the cedar limbs in the spring, so in went cedar tips. To spice up the blend, I threw in dried ginger. And finally, I added rose petals to represent Portland, where Ray spent most of his life making art and friends. Like the rose bushes in our fair city, Ray Grimm will be a part of Portland's cultural history forever.

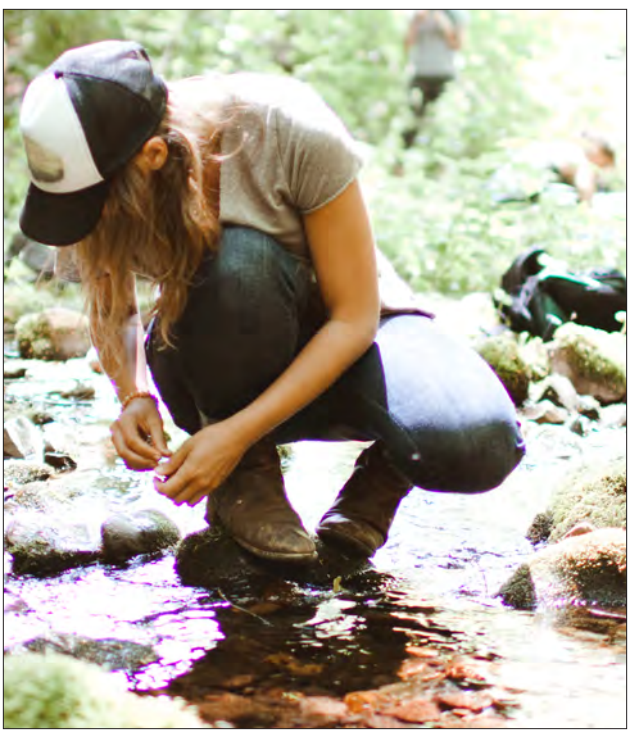
T. Project is a small-batch tea company based in the beautiful Pacific Northwest. Teri Gelber's passion for flavor and scents, her vision of beauty, her love of quality craftsmanship and her admiration of the botanical world all meld into one cup of tea and the many lovely things that accompany it. All of her teas, spices, herbs, and flowers are carefully sourced to infuse only the very best botanicals.

RAY GRIMM | Teapot, stoneware, 7.5 x 7.5 inches, 1970
Collection of PNCA's Center for Contemporary Art & Culture (formerly Contemporary Crafts Gallery, which became Museum of Contemporary Craft in 2007) Gift of Jere and Ray Grimm Photo: Dan Kvitka

working with the natural world

BY DANIEL DUFORD

What do you do if you need cabinet handles in the kitchen? Sculpt and fire them. Handles for a teapot? Steam bamboo handles. What if you find yourself dissatisfied with the traditional teaching cul de sac — you crave using an outdoor classroom and the raw materials of the earth? Why you make your own school, of course. After a few years of making the rounds as an adjunct professor, Chelsea Heffner decided to create Wildcraft Studio School. Similar to Grimm's impulse to create the Glass Shack, Heffner's school allows her to teach closer to her interests. She moved to White Salmon in the Columbia River Gorge and started offering classes that combined her love of traditional craft with her desire to recover technology and materials from the wild. Working with crafts people from all over the region, Heffner and her colleagues pass along traditional knowledge: cedar hat weaving, hand-carved spoons, knives, and scoops; Kalapuya basket weaving; natural plant dyes; clay digging in the Columbia Gorge. Heffner understands one must construct one's life from the resources at hand, and like Grimm, she sees the value in trailblazing when the path no longer fits.



WILDCRAFT STUDIO SCHOOL | Weaving at the Portland studio Photo: Lindsay Seligman
Mineral harvest near Carson, Washington Photo: Micah Fischer

RAY GRIMM and JERE GRIMM | black pot with Hilary Horvath floral arrangement, ceramic, 8 inches Photo: Dan Kvitka

Hilary Horvath gathers materials from the natural world in her work. A Midwestern transplant, she is inspired by the landscape and by local growers to create floral arrangements. She responded to the Grimm black pot with its solid base, as she designed a late summer bouquet of dahlias, foxglove, and garden roses. The somewhat lacey bouquet plays off the grounded Gilgama-fired ceramics. Foxglove reach up echoing the spirals on the pot and the soft leaf tips echo the scriffito work on its body.

the creative partership

A CONVERSATION WITH JERE GRIMM

RAY & JERE GRIMM
mixed media, circa 1992
Skamania Lodge, Stevenson, Washington
Photo: Dan Kvitka

RAY and JERE GRIMM | Thurman Street Co-op, Portland, Oregon, 1997 Photo: Grimm family archive

BY DANIEL DUFORD

I sat with Jere Grimm to talk about the life she shared with Ray Grimm. The two met in Saint Louis and have been collaborating ever since: art, family, and life. The black pot is the most direct illustration of their artistic collaboration. Like their kids, the pot is equal parts Ray and Jere. In this edited interview, we speak about the early days in Portland, the artistic community, and the institutions that grew out of their long and rich partnership.

BEGINNINGS

DD: How was art a part of meeting Ray — did it feel like art would be part of your future?
JG: We met in art school when I was a freshman. He was a GI and thirty. Ray had been in the sculpture program at Washington University [in Saint Louis] for two years before I got there. He was the TA and I thought he was in charge. And that's how our lives started and it never changed. So, art was going to be part of our future, too.

DD: How did you influence each other, in those early days?

JG: Ray's little phrase was that we had a "mutual admiration society." He thought I was the best sculptor in class and I thought he was. So that worked. And he always had kind of a quirky approach to projects. He was very serious about his work. We made a good match because we just both had the same level of energy and dedication. We just wanted to be there all the time and got acquainted working on projects at night. We never went out on a date, until we got engaged and that date was a disaster, because we had to get all cleaned up and figure out what to talk about.

DD: What brought you all to Portland?

JG: Ray went to SIU [Southern Illinois University] for graduate school. When he finished the one-year program with Carlton Ball[1], the PSU job was the first available. Ball said, "Grab it." So, out we came with a two-year old and a four-month old. I feel like I was in a covered wagon coming across the country. We came through Idaho, crossed the Oregon border, while I-84 was under construction. We would have to stop for thirty minutes then go by caravan around [the Dalles Dam project.] I later realized that was about a year before Celilo was drowned — we could have seen Celilo Falls.[2] This was the summer of 1956. So we pulled up to Portland State and here's old Main and here's Lincoln High. I think they had just started putting up girders the first quarter for the next building. And we looked around, "Oh, okay. This is it." and I think, "I sure hope there is a freight elevator, because ceramics is on the third floor." The entire school was in Lincoln Hall. This was the first year they had students graduating with degrees, and it was also the first year they had a ceramics department. So, they were pioneers.

CRAFT AND ART IN PORTLAND

DD: What was Portland like in the 1950's?

JG: It was very different. The [Portland Art] museum had an artist membership and they actually met at the museum, my memory is once a month or once every two months. And artists actually had some input. They had annual shows, I think, juried shows. I can remember attending a few of the meetings along with folks like with Dick Muller and Louis Bunce and Mike Russo.[3] The Portland Potters [now Oregon Potter's Association] were really active the year we arrived. Bill Wilbanks got wind of Ray and beat on the door and said, "You have to come to the Portland Potter's meeting." The Portland Potters would have sales every year in the Park Blocks. Leta Kennedy from the Museum Arts School [now, Pacific Northwest College of Art] was a part of it. It was a pretty busy bunch. They would have sales at

1 | F. Carlton Ball (1911-92) was an influential potter and teacher, author of *Making Pottery without a Wheel*.

2 | Celilo Falls was an ancestral fishing ground on the Columbia River. The falls were continuously fished for almost 11,000 years. In 1957, the Dalles Dam was completed, creating a reservoir that inundated the old fishing grounds.

3 | Dick Muller (1928-91) was one of the first faculty members in PSU's art department. Louis Bunce (1907-83) and Modernist painter Michele Russo (1909–2004) were influential Portland painters who taught at Pacific Northwest College of Art for many years.

the Rose Festival. I don't know what year it was but we went to the first American Craftsmen's Council.[4]

DD: Were the artists all trying to build a market and framework to work in?

JG: Yes, that's probably a good way to describe what was going on at that time. There were just the very beginnings of a community of craftspeople forming. The other connection that was really important was Northwest Designer Craftsmen in Seattle. And there was a close association through Contemporary Crafts Gallery. And actually I should mention, Lydia Hodge who headed the Oregon Ceramic Studio.[5] Lydia really wanted Ray to get more involved there.

DD: And this was up on Corbett Avenue in Southwest Portland?

JG: Right, and I vaguely remember that she was trying to get him to work there part-time. I think Ken Shores was doing all the firing.[6] Then through that channel we got very connected with the Northwest Designer Craftsmen. Ray would show at the Henry Gallery [The University of Washington, Seattle.] LaMar Harrington, the director there was a great supporter of Ray's and wrote the definitive history of contemporary Northwest ceramics

DD: So it's pretty small here in Portland, but clearly there was a connection to Seattle. Did artists know each other or were there factions such as Modernists versus crafts people?

JG: I think things centered on the institutions. Museum folks collaborated with one another and PSU faculty collaborated together. Ray saw more of the potters and the craftsmen, because they were sharing new techniques and equipment. I don't know how soon Ray got acquainted with George Wright, but George was, in my mind, the patron saint of Oregon potters.[7] He and Ray collaborated closely. They would be out at George's place in Manning, Oregon building kilns and making pots with student groups and visiting potters. George's place was the center of a ceramic fire storm — and Ray and George were in the middle of it all stoking the fire.

DD: There are a lot of kilns out there.

JG: Yes there were. They would be out there building kilns and taking people out there to fire pots and build sculptures. Once, Bridget [McCarthy] — who headed Oregon School of Arts and Crafts [now, Oregon College of Art and Craft] organized a field trip with Ray and George and a couple students and toured all of the traditional potteries and brickyards in the area. They did that kind of thing often.

DD: I'm curious about the history because it's interesting to hear that the Catholic Church was so involved in supporting these artists...

JG: Well, it was all because of Jim Hunt. Jim Hunt was a fellow who owned a Catholic Bookstore and he was well aware of what was going on in Europe — the reconstruction after the Second World

4 | The first American Craft Council was held in Asimolar, California in 1957.

5 | Lydia Herrick Hodge (1880-1960) helped to create the Contemporary Craft Gallery (which became Museum of Contemporary Craft)

6 | Ken Shores (1928-2014) was an influential ceramist and teacher who taught at Lewis & Clark College.

7 | George Wright (1917-2012) created the Art Farm in Manning, Oregon – a site with a multitude of of wood-fired kilns.

War. Contemporary European artists were getting involved with those church constructions, so he formed what he called the Liturgical Arts Guild. It was Ray and me, Lee [Kelly] and Bonnie [Bronson], Roy Setziol,[8] and our neighbor Roger Sheppard — a craftsman who was doing a lot of the metal work. We would all collaborate. We'd sit down with the architect and work out the interiors, (mostly interiors) together, and it was pretty exciting. There was just a buzz going on at that time.

DD: When did that end?

JG: Liturgical Arts Guild? Probably later in the 1960s. Sounds like we were busy enough right?

THE ARTISTIC LIFE — TEACHING AND RAISING KIDS

DD: You talk about raising kids and making, which leads me into my next question. This is clearly a really warm home. You talked about other PSU people around the studio so making things in and out of the studio, this energy seems to inform your whole house. What was the atmosphere like when the kids were young? In terms of the whole sense of making....

JG: Aside from the unpredictable chaos, there was a kind of organized chaos all the time centered around making and building things. If the kids weren't building go-carts then we would put them to work assembling the Christmas cards we sold through the Catholic bookstore. We had to keep them busy and occupied!

DD: You had a studio that you shared — the kids would be in and out?

JG: Yes, the kids were always in the studio often at the same time Ray was working on his art. Both Ray and I grew up with the philosophy that the faculty should be working alongside their students — and in this case, their kids.

DD: Well, looking around the house and all the things that are made, and then thinking about kids growing up here…. I'm just thinking about what it was like for the kids? They had two parents who were artists. They had all these other artists around. And then you had your other family of kids, the PSU students. At that time the relationship with students, did you have students coming to the house?

JG: Yes, Ray had habit of bringing home both stray students and anyone biking through town with loaded panniers. It didn't matter that the house was already full. Many of Ray's former students who were "adopted" are considered to this day members of the family to this day.

WORKING TOGETHER

DD: Describe some of your studio collaborations with Ray.

JG: After retiring from PSU, Ray was focused on two things: throwing wonderful shapes for our collaborative black pot project; and brush painting on more functional tableware. The black pots evolved out of the first firing of the completed Gilgama kiln, which was a very communal activity. During the

8 | Lee Kelly is a sculptor living and working in Portland, his wife Bonnie Bronson (1940–1990) was a painter and sculptor. LeRoy Setziol (1915-2005) was a well-respected wood sculptor in the Pacific Northwest who completed many architectural commission

first fire, when they achieved temperature, the firebox was filled with fresh wood and all the ports sealed. For three days it sat smoking and carbonized everything black as coal. Ray and I loved the black and started burnishing pot surfaces, the very fine particulates in the slip achieve a high gloss. Ray applied the slip and burnished. I carved symbolic images into the unfired pot. We built on the other's work — a stepping off point to the next stage. During that period, I was intrigued by the ancient labyrinth patterns of the early Greeks and the mythic images of water I saw during our month long travel in the Mediterranean. So, these burnished pots became my canvas, and the Gilgama kiln became the fire that rendered them to stone.

DD: Did collaborating on the black pots lead to other projects you worked on as a team?

JG: Yes, and I can think of one in particular. In 1992, John Gray called up Ray and invited him to propose a major sculptural work for his new lodge [Skamania was under construction at that time] in Stephenson, Washington. And while he was really flattered to be asked, he had some initial hesitation to take on a clay project. At that time he was shifting his work to other materials like glass and mosaic (Ray had developed asthma as a result of breathing clay dust for thirty-five years.) But, we were really excited about the opportunity because the setting was magnificent from a geologic standpoint and Ray was fascinated with the landforms. We proposed a collaboration to Gray and he thought it was a great idea.

At that time, I had a clay studio in the Thurman Street Co-op so we hatched a plan in which I could execute the clay work with his guidance, while he did all the glass mosaic work, the mounting of the pieces, and the patina work on the brass backgrounds. We met John at Skamania when there were still open studs and construction everywhere. His first thoughts were bas-relief work applied to upper level walls in the main lobby. We wandered through the large spaces and

TOP: JERE GRIMM | clay sketch from ancient figure in the Louvre, ceramic, 8 inches
Photo: Dan Kvitka

BELOW: RAY & JERE GRIMM | black pot, ceramic, 12 inches
Photo: Dan Kvitka

turned to the open breezeway leading from the main lobby to the conference center where we saw the lengthy eye-level wall.

We sat down at home (sketch pads everywhere) blocking out the proportions of the space. Our drawings flowed from thinking of a single massive central figure to making a series of plaque that echo the vast length of the Gorge. Well, smaller scale and in fired clay! (Laughs) During the design process, we learned of the legend of Tamana, the Chinook story of the Bridge of the Gods. I was excited about carrying an ancient story into the project and into the Lodge. The clay was fired in the Gilgama kiln at George Wright's place and then Ray applied his skill with glass mosaic and patina. The collaboration was complete.

I actually don't think there was ever a time we weren't collaborating, on art and in life. What I most appreciated about every project that we worked on together is that it was a true partnership of equals — two professional artists, parents, and community members working together to get things done.

DD: Let's talk glass for a bit.

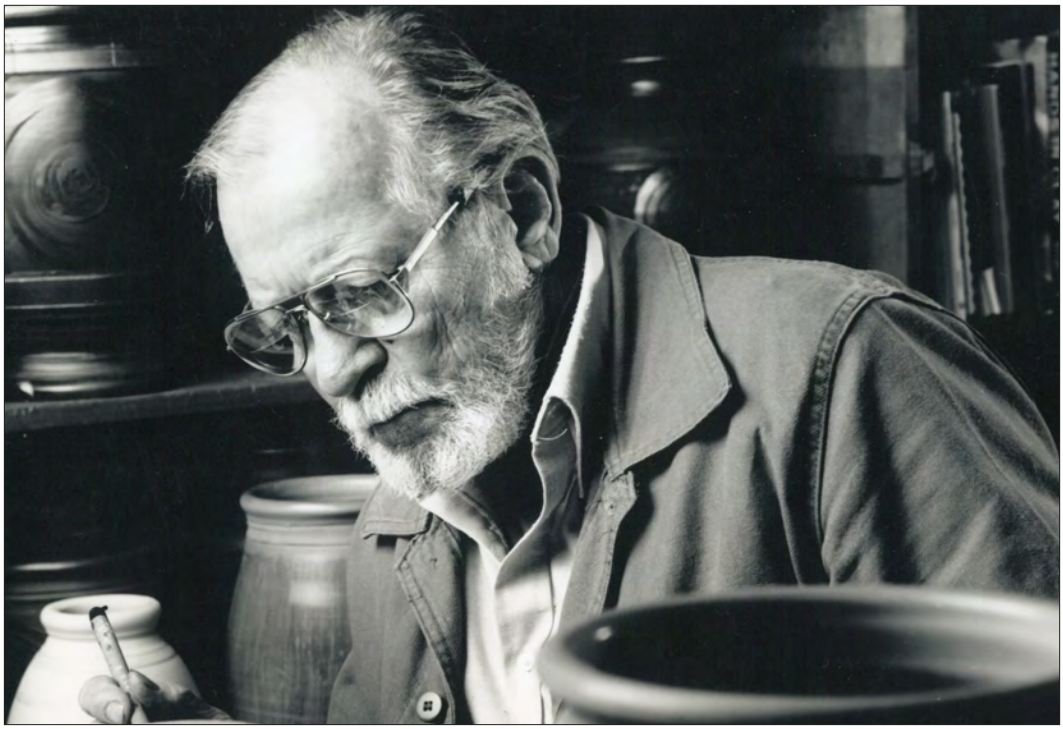
JG: Ray became fascinated with glass. Fred Heidel was doing some fused glass sculpture, he was going to Amsterdam to execute glass sculpture.[9] He and Ray had such a wonderful relationship. Fred was working in glass and Ray was paying attention and either Fred or Beth Fagan [*The Oregonian* art critic] became aware of what was going on in the workshops in Toledo, [Ohio] with Harvey Littleton [University of Wisconsin-Madison art professor.] Beth was friends with many in the Portland arts community. She was a very important piece of the whole puzzle. And so Fred got a grant for Ray from PSU to attend one of these important glass workshops. When Ray returned in 1967, he set up the Glass Shack at PSU behind the gymnasium using materials he could scrounge. There wasn't a lot of money for this type of project in the art department, so it was largely built and operated by students. Everyone was learning by doing. Thus began one of the very first hot glass studios in Oregon.

DD: And this is pre-Seattle glass [Pilchuck Glass School] right?

JG: All those people — Marv Lipofsky was in the same group as Ray — all went and set up glass in the departments where they landed. Tom McGlauchlin gave workshops for Ray when they got a few things going. Then Dan Schwoerer came from Wisconsin.[10] He had worked with Harvey and he was a graduate student, so he helped build a lehr [a temperature-controlled kiln for annealing objects made of glass]. Nobody would let that happen now. (Laughs.) He had non-registered people there. They didn't pay any tuition. They didn't register. Fred put up with it, and Ray encouraged it.

9 | Fred Heidel (1915-2000) was trained as a painter, but began working in glass in the 1968. He was also a professor at PSU.

10 | Dan Schwoerer, Ray Ahlgren, and Boyce Lundstrom founded Bullseye Glass Co. in Portland, Oregon.



RAY GRIMM | portrait, 1998 Photo: Grimm family archive

LEGACY

DD: What do you think Ray's legacy is in the Pacific Northwest?

JG: Ray was not a self-promoter. He was a collaborator. That is why he brought so many important clay artists to this area. Peter Voulkos, Daniel Rhodes, Paul Soldner, Mutsuo Yanagihara, Peter Lane all came for one- and two-day workshops and opened up those workshops for the community to attend. The greater legacy is his teaching. I was thinking Ray and I were both middle children (I think birth order is pretty important). Somehow middle children to me say "collaborators" — for survival. He grew up in the middle of this herd of people and I think that the class or the teaching setting was kind of natural for him. It was hard for him because he struggled academically growing up but I think the reason he could get beyond that was because of the energy and excitement in the collaborative setting of the group of students.

DD: Looking at contemporary art in Portland or the way that Portland art has manifested, do you see some of the foundation that you and Ray helped lay?

JG: I'd like to think that Ray and I have contributed to the vitality of the artisan community in this region. I think Ray's teaching style and his passion for making are woven into the fabric of this place. We try to be resourceful folks who don't need multi-national corporations to make the things we need, and that is the definition of a sustainable, artisan community. I think this is alive and well in Portland today.

RAY GRIMM
portrait, 1975
Photo: Grimm family archives

lesson plans

FOR STUDIO ARTISTS, FACULTY, AND STUDENTS

getting started

BY DANIEL DUFORD

CLAY DIG Clay of some kind exists all over the earth. You can determine whether or not you have clay by wetting the mud and balling it up. Does it hold its shape? Does it bend without cracking? If so you probably have clay. Now you need to test it. Have your students make test tiles and fire the clay to different temperatures. How much does it shrink? How does it change color?
You can locate clay deposits by consulting a local US Geological Survey map.

BOOKSHELF Daniel Rhodes, *Clay and Glazes for the Potter*
Hal Riegger, *Primitive Pottery*
https://www.goshen.edu/art/DeptPgs/rework.html

PRIMITIVE FIRING Grimm often did raku firings on the beach. New ceramic students often find the firing process mysterious. A pot is made and then disappears into the kiln room only to reappear a few days later transformed. Pit firing and raku are a direct lesson in the metamorphosis of firing. Students get to see the transformation happen in front of them. They also begin to understand the relationship between fuel and heat. Most importantly, everyone loves a big fire. It's the perfect opportunity to sit around the flames and tell stories.

BOOKSHELF Hal Riegger, *Raku: Art and Technique*
Michael Cardew, *Pioneer Pottery*
Walter Parks, *The Miracle of Mata Ortiz*

MATERIAL TESTS How do different materials work under the same conditions? How can one medium contain a different meaning than another one? Choose a simple idea for a series. For instance think of Grimm's *Weed* sculptures. Now take your idea and execute in five different materials. Think about how each material demands different techniques. What are the advantages and disadvantages in each material? After you've made the similar shapes in each material make three more pieces in which you mix the media. By the end you've created a series of artworks with a similar theme and you understand better what you want from each. How did your idea change and evolve with the material?

BOOKSHELF Frank O'Hara, "Why I am Not a Painter" from *The Collected Poems of Frank O'Hara*
David Pye, *The Nature and Art of Workmanship*
Werner Spies, *The Sculptures of Pablo Picasso*

BUILD YOUR WHEEL I call this "build your own wheel", but I should call this one "build your own tools". Grimm's studio was filled with his own handmade tools. A precision-made tool fresh from master toolmakers is pretty nice to have, but a tool will always dictate how you use it. Begin simply. Need a needle tool? Stick a nail into a wine cork. Use simple materials such as wire, willow, branches,

gears and bike chains. See what you can make and how the tool changes your making. Now go bigger. Try a potter's wheel. As a class project, have your students build a wheel and tools before they learn how to throw. Will it be a kick wheel, a treadle wheel, or a Japanese-style, stick-operated wheel? How does the tool change your work?

BOOKSHELF Philip Whitford and Gordon Wong, *Handmade Potter's Tools*
Peter Korn, *Why We Make Things and Why it Matters*
MC Richards, *Centering in Pottery, Poetry and the Person*
http://www.motherearthnews.com/diy/pottery-kick-wheel-plans-zmaz70ndzgoe.aspx

A RIDE OR WALKABOUT Most learning happens outside of the classroom. Field trips build group bonds and open up students to peripheral experiences. Use the journey itself for studio thinking. Grimm often took his class on long bike trips to do pit fires. The ultimate goal was to get to the site for firing. Riding a bike in a group is part of the learning. Take your class on a long bike ride or if that's not possible a long walk. (Perhaps you can combine this with a pit firing or a clay dig?) Have students work in teams to gather materials for the destination. Make site specific sculptures at your destination using only what was gathered. Now, and this is very important, do not allow students to photograph their sculptures. Have them make several observational drawings of the sculptures. During your next class, students have to remake their sculptures based on their drawings using materials in the studio. How did the whole trip inform their thinking? How did the trip and site influence the form of their sculptures?

BOOKSHELF Henry David Thoreau, "Walking" from *Walden*
Annie Dillard, *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*

CONSIDER THE BOWL So your students have been struggling to center the clay and make a pot. Now you have finished pots with successful glazes. What next? A pot is an admirable thing on its own. You can admire it for its formal qualities. It will be just fine on a pedestal. But really a pot, especially a bowl, wants to live in the world. Have your students design three different bowls: a large serving bowl, a single soup or rice bowl, and a small tea bowl. Now break them up into groups so they can create a menu to accompany the bowls. What are some considerations? One approach: go completely seasonal and local; another would be to stick to a traditional cuisine. Students should consider the interplay of color and texture between the food and the bowls. How does the bowl feel in the hands when full or hot? What sorts of utensils are used for serving and eating? How do they sound and feel against the surface? Everyone should cook and eat together taking turns being cook, server and clean-up crew.

BOOKSHELF Okakura Kakuzo, *The Book of Tea*
Deborah Madison, *Vegetable Literacy*
Octavio Paz, "Seeing and Using: Art and Craftsmanship" from *Convergences*

Daniel Duford is an artist, writer, and Visiting Associate Professor of Art at Reed College, Portland, Oregon. Duford and Tracy Schlapp collaborate on projects under the name Cumbersome Multiples.

RAY GRIMM | large rope-handled vase group, 45 inches
Collection of Ron M. Werner and Scott McCoy
Photo: Ron M. Werner

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This book is dedicated to all the makers, creators, fixers of this world.

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We are deeply grateful to all.
The Ray Grimm Legacy Project

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PNCA's Center for Contemporary Art & Culture
Jordan Pieper

The Ford Family Foundation was established in 1957 by Kenneth W. and Hallie E. Ford. Based in Roseburg, Oregon, its mission is "promoting successful citizens and vital rural communities" in Oregon and Siskiyou County, California. For more information about the Foundation's Visual Arts Program please visit www.tfff.org.

RAY GRIMM (1924-2012) brought a sense of adventure and deep curiosity to his artistic practice and to his community. Among the vanguard artists who built Portland's craft community, Grimm was at the hub of the ceramic and glass arts. The story of Ray Grimm reveals the rich life of an artist. This is a portrait of a man who lived the everyday joy that comes from waking, going into the studio, and asking, "What will happen if I put this into the fire?"

This workbook is one that Ray would have had on his shelf – a book intended to be dog-eared, notations written in the margins. Contemporary Oregon artists, former Grimm students, and local artisans contributed to the story. All share values Grimm held as an artist and a teacher: the importance of material sensibility and resourcefulness, the studio as community, and the marriage of art and craft.

THE RAY GRIMM LEGACY PROJECT aims to honor the life, work, influence, and legacy of Raymond Grimm, a pioneer in the vibrant crafts movement in the Pacific Northwest through the second half of the twentieth century. All proceeds from the sale of *Stirring Embers* go to the Ray Grimm Legacy Project to carry out its educational, artistic, and cultural mission. The Ray Grimm Legacy Project is a project of the Charitable Partnership Fund, a publicly supported, 501(c)(3) charitable organization.

Above: RAY GRIMM | Portrait 1956 Photo: Grimm family archives
Cover: RAY GRIMM | Don Quixote plate, stoneware, 6.5 inches, 1956
Collection of Pacific Northwest College of Art's Center for Contemporary Art & Culture
(formerly Contemporary Crafts Gallery, which became Museum of Contemporary Craft in 2007)
Donor unknown Photo: Dan Kvitka

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