

*FLINTRIDGE FOUNDATION*



# Awards for Visual Artists

*2001/2002*

*EDITED BY*

Noriko Gamblin and Karen Jacobson

*WITH CONTRIBUTIONS BY*

Sheryl Conkelton

Noriko Gamblin

Flintridge Foundation  
Pasadena, California

This book is published on the occasion of the third biennial cycle of the **Flintridge Foundation Awards for Visual Artists**.

Published by the Flintridge Foundation, 1040 Lincoln Avenue, Suite 100, Pasadena, California 91103.

© 2002 by the Flintridge Foundation. All rights reserved.

The Flintridge Foundation does not retain reproduction rights for the illustrations appearing in this book. Unless otherwise noted, all works of art reproduced in this volume are from the collection of the artist.

ISSN: 1530-6682

ISBN: 0-9664721-2-8 (2001/2002 edition)

#### **Design**

SoS, Los Angeles

Printed in Germany by Cantz, in an edition of 3,500.

#### **Photo credits**

Bill Bachhuber: p. 8; Bliss Photography, courtesy of the Buck Collection: p. 54 (bottom); Brewer Photography: p. 25; Anthony Curiha: pp. 44, 46; Donna Endlich: p. 39; M. Lee Fatherree, Oakland: pp. 12-15; Brian Foulkes: pp. 20, 21, 22 (bottom), 23; courtesy Froelick Gallery, Portland: all photos of Rick Bartow's work, pp. 8-11; courtesy of Harry Gamboa Jr.: p. 55 (*A la Mode*); Lewis Watts: pp. 37, 38; Nancy Hirsh: p. 45; Mary Lee Hu: p. 43; Rebekah Johnson: pp. 9, 10 (bottom); courtesy of Koplin Gallery, Los Angeles: all photos of James Doolin's work, pp. 24-27; William Nettles: p. 53 (courtesy of Daniel Saxon Gallery, West Hollywood); Richard Nicol: pp. 28, 29, 30, 34 (top), 40, 42 (bottom); Gene Ogami: pp. 52, 54 (top); Douglas Parker: pp. 26, 27; © Regents, University of California, Lick Observatory, Plate Archive, p. 18 (top right); Adrian Saxe: p. 47; Wm. Stetz Design, courtesy of the California African American Museum: p. 36; YaM Studio: p. 22 (top); Douglas Yaple: p. 42 (top); William Ziegler: pp. 32, 33, 34 (bottom), 35.





# Adrian Saxe

*My ceramic work explores the possibilities of a meaningful and significant traditional art, open to all of its manifestations and implications in a rapidly changing postmodern global cultural arena. I make work that aggressively projects my sensibilities and formal interests while extending and critiquing the intellectual and formal traditions of art. I am the "village potter"—for the global village.*



2. *Untitled Ewer (Aubergine)*, 1982  
Porcelain, gold lusters; 10 x 8 x 3 in.  
Collection of George and Dorothy Saxe, Palo Alto, Calif.

1. *Untitled Thélère (PAA)*, 2000  
Porcelain, stoneware, rhinestones;  
13 3/4 x 8 3/4 x 4 1/2 in.  
Collection of Jerry and Lynn Howe Myers,  
South Pasadena, Calif.

3. Untitled Gold Bowl (Big Red), 1987  
 Porcelainous stoneware with raku  
 base; 17 x 19½ x 12 in.  
 Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Larry  
 Zellner, Franklin Lakes, N.J.



4. Untitled Ewer (St. Vincent), 1995  
 Porcelain and stoneware;  
 16½ x 11½ x 8½ in.  
 Collection of Jerry and Lynn Howe  
 Myers, South Pasadena, Calif.



# Adrian Saxe

NORIKO GAMBLIN

## Over the past three decades Adrian Saxe, one of the

foremost artists working in ceramics in the United States, has created a body of work so unique that it is often considered to be in a category of its own. His training was not unusual; he studied art at the University of Hawaii in the early 1960s and attended Chouinard Art School in Los Angeles from 1965 to 1969. But his interests in the medium ran counter to dominant trends in American ceramics of the 1950s and 1960s, which merged aspects of Japanese folk pottery with the robust physicality associated with Abstract Expressionist painting. Saxe, by contrast, was fascinated by traditional European and Chinese vessels (constructed through additive methods) and lacquerwork and, simultaneously, by Los Angeles's contemporary "finish fetish" movement, characterized by seamless, high-gloss surfaces that recall those of cars and surfboards.

In 1969, when financial difficulties forced him to leave school, Saxe supported himself by producing porcelain mugs as well as pottery that explored various historical genres and materials. The following year, he received a commission to make a group of jardinières for the Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery in San Marino, California, whose ceramic collections, both Asian and European, had been a source of inspiration since he first saw them as a teenager. The commission provided him with an opportunity to pursue his particular interest in Baroque and Rococo European ceramics, which included genres that were categorically dismissed by his contemporaries as moribund and irrelevant. The result of this engagement was a more fully articulated direction in his studio practice, toward more complex vessels that incorporated his reinterpretations of diverse ceramic traditions.

In 1973 Saxe began teaching full-time at UCLA, where he is now the head of the ceramics program. Having been captivated by animal motifs (such as rams and stags) found on European ceramics and silver, he began to produce vessels with lids topped by antelopes and other animal figures. Rendering the animals prominently, and in all their majestic angularity, he played off the incongruity between

the elegant, unwieldy "lifting devices" and the utilitarian conceit of the jar form. These "antelope jars" of the 1970s and early 1980s (see fig. 5) form the basis of Saxe's ongoing exploration of functionality in ceramics as an expression of aesthetic ritual—one with conceptual, rather than literal, ties to utilitarian concerns. It was in this body of work that he

also determined a personal approach to constructing meaning through sets of formal and thematic oppositions: natural versus cultural, geometric versus organic, static versus dynamic, traditional versus contemporary, East versus West, refined versus crude, high versus low, serious versus fanciful, precious versus cheap. These dualities appear as witty, often burlesque juxtapositions of contrasting elements, as exemplified by a ewer in the form of an eggplant with elaborate gold fittings (fig. 2). Yet they are integrated into works of remarkable presence, which, in their dialectical play, provoke reflection upon a broad range of cultural issues.

The sense of surprise and wonderment that precedes—and occasions—such reflection is due in large measure to the immense technical virtuosity evident in all of Saxe's work. It is a mastery that he has developed throughout his career

but that he pursued with particular rigor during the 1970s and 1980s, when he experimented with molds, glazes, and various firing techniques. His research took him to France in 1983 on a six-month fellowship to work as a visiting artist at the Manufacture nationale de Sèvres, whose technical attainments he had long admired. The residency resulted in his expansion and clarification of issues that lie at the core of his practice, including ceremonial function, luxury, presentation, and display. The work he has produced since that time reveals a staggering variety of new and hybrid forms—more organic and complex (see fig. 4), often featuring bases in dramatically contrastive styles and textures (see fig. 3). Rich in meaning and material, Saxe's creations continue to push his medium in new directions—formally, technically, and conceptually—challenging the viewer to think in new ways about the ceramic arts.



5. *Untitled Covered Jar with Antelope Finial*, 1973  
Porcelain and stoneware;  
19 x 6 1/2 in.  
Collection of Ken Deavers,  
Washington, D.C.