

EXHIBITIONS / EVENTS

2014 Regis Master: Adrian Saxe

May 9 - June 29

Emily Galusha Gallery

Opening Reception: Friday, May 16, 6 - 8 pm (On view beginning May 9)

Untitled Ewer (Twister with Apatite II), 2004 - 2010, porcelain, stoneware & mixed media, 16" x 9" x 5".
Photo by Anthony Cunha.

Adrian Saxe is Northern Clay Center's 26th Regis Master; he is one of two ceramic artists bestowed with the title in 2014. The other, Walter Ostrom, will be featured in an exhibition in fall of 2014. The *Regis Masters Series* began in 1997, and honors senior artists who have had a major impact on the development of 20th and 21st century ceramics. The *Regis Masters Series* was originally supported by Regis and Friends and continues today through generous support from Anita Kunin and the Kunin Family, in honor of the late Myron Kunin, a philanthropist and former owner of the Regis Corporation.

Adrian Saxe will add his story to a limited oral history of a senior generation of ceramic artists on Saturday, June 21, at 2 pm, with a free public lecture at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, in the Pillsbury Auditorium.

Born in 1943, Adrian Saxe was exposed to art at an early age. His mother was a colorist for the Walt Disney Studio in Burbank; his parents shared with him their respect for handmade objects. As a child, he experimented with clay from his backyard; he later had his first formal experience with ceramics during a summer session at the Otis Art Institute in Los Angeles, in 1957. For several years, in academia and on his own, Saxe continued his clay exploration and later attended the Chouinard Art School in Los Angeles, CA, from 1965 - 1969. He was an Instructor of Art at California State University in Long Beach for a year in 1971. He later received his BFA from the California Institute of the Arts in Valencia, CA, in 1974, and prior to completing his BFA, he became Professor of Art (and later Head of Ceramics) at the University of California, Los Angeles, where he still teaches today.

An artist of many honors and distinctions, Saxe was the recipient of a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship; he was named a Fellow of the American Crafts Council, and a Guggenheim Fellow; he was awarded a 2013 Masters of the Medium Award by the James Renwick Alliance of the Renwick Gallery at the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington, DC.

His work is collected and exhibited extensively by dozens of museums, including the De Young Museum in San Francisco; The Gardiner Museum of Ceramic Art in Toronto, Ontario; the ASU Museum of Art at the Herberger College of the Arts in

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Tempe, AZ; the Smithsonian CooperHewitt at the National Design Museum in New York, NY; the Racine Art Museum in Wisconsin; the National Gallery of Australia in Canberra; the Museum of Contemporary Ceramic Art in Shigaraki, Japan; and the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. His solo exhibitions date back to 1973 with such highlights as the Frank Lloyd Gallery in Santa Monica, CA; Garth Clark Gallery, New York, NY; and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. His work was previously exhibited in the Twin Cities at the Walker Art Center as part of the *Dirt on Delight: Impulses that Form Clay* exhibition, originally produced by the Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA) in Philadelphia, PA.

Called the “postmodern ceramicist par excellence” by Edmund de Waal,¹ Saxe weaves the past and the present, tradition and pop culture, and ceramic process and function into his forms. Saxe’s career in clay has been cyclical, having explored in his early years site-specific sculpture, later the vessel, and still later a combination of the two. He began his work in clay in the 1960s, with the creation of site-specific sculptures that included multiple, large modular ceramic objects. Later, in the early 1970s, he became interested in the social, political, economical, and theoretical context of pottery and has since focused his efforts on the creation of ceramic vessels. In the early 1980s, he received a French Ministry of the Arts Fellowship at the Atelier Experimental de Recherche et de Creation de la Manufacture Nationale de Sevres in Paris, a surprise to Saxe as the award typically was made to painters, architects, and sculptures. His work was described as “sculpture whose subject is pottery”² by the French Ministry of Culture. This yearlong fellowship afforded him with concentrated time away from life distractions, time in which to re-evaluate work with the vessel form and his “attempt to redefine the relevancy of ceramics and the decorative arts in contemporary art.” Of particular interest and influence to him during his study was the Rococo art form of ormolu, an 18th century process for the application of fine, high-carat gold to a bronze object.

Saxe’s interest in “objects with implied or imagined capability to facilitate the attainment of one’s own desires” led to the creation of a body of work in the 1990s that included magic lamps and mixed-media fetishes that explored irrational desire in objects of agency (wishing wells, fortune-telling contrap-

tions, chalices employed by the Roman Catholic Church, and good luck talismans, among others). Later, he returned again to his interest in small objects “best experienced as an intimate encounter in private spaces” — objects whose own viewing requirements are much different from Saxe’s large and theatrical works from earlier years.

Today, his work is a marriage of sorts between these small, intimate objects, wildly ornate in nature, and his earlier, larger sculptures and installations. This contemporary body of work explores Saxe’s fascination with the ways in which people define value and keep score, and “how our society constructs meaning in its visual culture and how it rewards irrational significance.”

Join us for the opening reception of Saxe’s work on Friday, May 16, from 6–8 pm. The exhibition will include a survey of work from Saxe’s long career in clay (with new work too). Saxe will not be present for the opening, due to teaching commitments, but will be present on June 21 for his Regis Masters lecture at the MIA. The lecture takes place in the Pillsbury Auditorium at the Minneapolis Institute of Art on Saturday, June 21, at 2 pm. This event is free to the public. The lecture is co-sponsored by The Minneapolis Institute of Arts. Works in the exhibition are made possible by Adrian Saxe and Frank Lloyd Gallery (Santa Monica, CA).

¹Edmund de Waal, *20th Century Ceramics*, Thames & Hudson, 2003:202.

²Adrian Saxe, Artist Statement, 2013. All further quotations are from this artist statement.