





COVER :: LEFT :: TOP :: Organic Dissolution, detail installation; porcelain, acrylic, kanthol wire, foam, thread; 2013

RIGHT:: Opening reception with Susan Beiner and Leigh Taylor Mickelson at the Clay Art Center; 2012

## ORGANIC DISSOLUTION

CLAY ART CENTER :: OCTOBER 13 – NOVEMBER 21, 2012
ART LEAGUE HOUSTON :: MARCH 21 – APRIL 26, 2013

As we continue to negatively impact the environment, in ways both known and unknown, by depleting the earth's natural resources and elements of color, plant structures are adapting and their energy of color is being released causing sterility.

In trying to balance these changes, we are controlling the growth and characteristics of plant life by promoting hybrids and germinating new plant species in laboratory controlled environments. The results of experiments in these artificial environments, which are reproduced repeatedly for our commercial needs, create a flora rich in color, but are artificial and sterile.

Because of our destructive greed and genetic engineering, the chemical makeup and nutritional value of our foodstuff is being altered. This raises concerns about the negative short and long term effects on the fragile ecosystem of humans, animals and plants. *Organic Dissolution* is a sign to us that plants' loss of pigment foreshadows future disruption of our ecosystem.

SUSAN BEINER









ON THIS PAGE :: Organic Dissolution, detail installation; porcelain, acrylic, kanthol wire, foam, thread; 2012 and 2013

OPPOSITE PAGE :: *Drawing 5*; graphite and watercolor on paper; 20 X 21 inches; 2012





TOP :: Organic Dissolution, detail installation; porcelain, acrylic, kanthol wire, foam, thread; 2012 and 2013 OPPOSITE PAGE :: Drawing 4; graphite and watercolor on paper, 38 x 37 inches; 2012

# WHITE THAT DOES NOT SIGNIFY PURITY 'ORGANIC DISSOLUTION' IS AT THE CLAY ART CENTER

New York Times

BY SUSAN HODARA, NOVEMBER 3, 2012

The centerpiece of *Organic Dissolution*,
Susan Beiner's solo exhibition at the Clay
Art Center here, emerges from the floor
like an unfolding porcelain garden. Curling
leaves reach out like fleshy tongues. Spiky
blossoms explode from barnacle-like buds.
Everywhere, petals, stamens and other floral
forms, along with sporadic ceramic screws
and bolts, shoot up from the work's depths
like grasping fingers and screaming mouths.

This elaborate installation, also titled *Organic Dissolution*, covers a platform, 8 feet by 8 feet, in the center of the gallery. Weighing more than 600 pounds, it rises into a mound about three and a half feet tall. It is a tumbling array of exotic growth, but except for daubs of faded purple, the entire work is white.

This absence of color is an expression of Beiner's concerns about the effects of human development on the natural world. "I was thinking about genetic engineering and cloning," she said. "We have new plant species being germinated in laboratories, and at the same time, we are depleting the earth's resources. I started imagining what might happen to plant life that has been processed to the point of becoming sterile."

"I'm grounded in ceramics," she said, "but I'm interested in plastics and other commercially made oil-based materials because they are so incredibly artificial."

Beiner said that lack of color makes *Organic Dissolution* her most ominous work to date. "I have used color for years and years," she said. "I don't really like white. I don't wear white. I don't even own a white T-shirt."

Nevertheless, white seemed an appropriate option for a commentary on the effects of manipulating nature through cloning and cross-pollination. "This piece, which is made of an organic material, is about that artificiality. At some point, there's just bleakness; there is no more pigment."

In addition to the porcelain, another white element is present in *Organic Dissolution*.

Strewed across its top and around its edges are nearly 1,000 small, flower-like white foam cones, their excessively long tufts of thread trailing behind them. "They are the blooms that are the result of all this," Beiner said, gesturing toward her work. "They have died and dropped to the ground. If I could, I'd have filled the whole space with them, so you'd be stepping on them and falling over them."

... but its two-dimensional representation can be seen in five drawings on the gallery walls. Done with graphite and purple watercolor, the drawings were another first for Beiner.

... I drew these while I was in the process of making the piece, and they became a translation of the sculpture into something flat and graphic.

The exhibition also includes eight smaller sculptural works. While similar to "Organic Dissolution" in their mix of organic and inorganic forms, these pieces are glazed with color.



Each of the other small sculptures, none measuring more than five inches in any direction, is titled *Remnant*. They are whimsical constructions partially wrapped with wire; some include bits of mortar and those foam cones. All were built with porcelain scraps from *Organic Dissolution*, and they mark yet another first for Beiner.

"I wanted to push myself with this project," she said. "I decided to use the leftover pieces that came off the installation as I was making it. I like their sloppiness — they look like things that shouldn't exist and be so beautiful."

Beautiful yet sloppy. Organic yet inorganic. Fertile yet devastated. Dichotomies like these suffuse Beiner's vision.

In her sculpture, she said, "I think the overabundance and obsessive quality enable me to incorporate both perspectives." She described the results as "cohesive chaos."

::6









# **CLAY ART CENTER**

BY LEIGH TAYLOR MICKELSON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Clay Art Center in Port Chester, NY presented Susan Beiner's
Organic Dissolution in October 2012. Beiner presented a large floor
installation "landscape" with the familiarity and character of the
natural, but injected with geometry, human order, and overtly
manufactured materials. Scattered amidst the hundreds of white
and off-white botanically inspired ceramic forms, were pure white
hand-sewn foam flowers. The simple flower forms, made out of
one of the most unnatural substances widely used today, drew us in
with their beguiling beauty and then boldly begged us to consider
whether the natural exists.

Dissolution is a word that can apply to many things; usually government, businesses, relationships and partnerships. It refers to what is left once something is broken up, dispersed or undone. Susan Beiner's wonderfully chaotic ceramic and mixed media sculptures explore the resulting state, or dissolution, of all that was once natural, but is now genetically modified or altered, manufactured or processed, manipulated or cloned. The floor of our gallery was transformed, creating a natural/unnatural environment that encouraged us to ask whether our industrial practices and culture of convenience has created a sterile, unhealthy environment for us to live in. Only in the asking can answers be found.

CLOCKWISE STARTING TOP LEFT::

Remnant 7, 3, 2, 1, porcelain, kanthol
wire, mortar; 5 x 5 x 5 inches; 2012



TOP:: RIGHT:: Organic Dissolution, detail installation; porcelain, acrylic, kanthol wire, foam, thread; 2012 and 2013

# INTEGRATION OF THE ARTIFICIAL AND THE NATURAL

BY JENNY ASH, VISUAL ARTS DIRECTOR, ART LEAGUE, TX

The hyper-colors that were present in Beiner's earlier installations, signifying a sense of life, had been totally bleached out and sterilized into varying shades of white, leaving behind a bleak, almost skeletal landscape of what once was, which explored the negative effects of biochemistry and genetic engineering on the natural world. In contrast however this white also evoked a sense of purity and innocence, as if nature had found a way to free itself from years of over-manipulation, wipe the slate clean and start again.

The integration of the artificial and the natural was also present in the materiality of Beiner's installations, combining the organic characteristics of clay with materials such as plastics and other commercially made oil-based materials. These combinations not only created an exciting, yet somewhat unnerving friction between the known and the unknown, it also tapped into a larger conversation about the potential impact of cross pollination on the world and it's future generations.



#### ARTIST BIOGRAPHY AND SELECTED EXHIBITION HISTORY

Susan Beiner :: Born in Newark, New Jersey, 1962

#### **EDUCATION**

1993 | Master of Fine Arts, Ceramics; University of Michigan, School of Art: Ann Arbor, MI.

1985 | Bachelor of Fine Arts; Rutgers University, Mason Gross School of the Arts; New Brunswick, NJ.

2006 - present | Associate Professor; Ceramics Department, Arizona State University; Tempe, AZ.

#### SELECTED ARTIST RESIDENCIES

2013 | International Ceramics Studio; Kesckemet, Hungary.

2008 & 2011 | Experimental Pottery Workshop; Jingdezhen, China.

2007 | European Ceramics Workcentre; Hertogenbosch, Netherlands.

2005 - 2006 | The Clay Studio; Philadelphia, PA.

#### SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2013 | Organic Dissolution, The Arts League; Houston, TX.

2012 | Organic Dissolution, The Clay Art Center; Port Chester, NY.

2008 | Synthetic Reality, Ceramics Research Center; Tempe, AZ (catalog).

#### 2005–2013 SELECTED INVITATIONAL/ GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2013 | Botanically Inclined, Morris Graves Museum of Art; Eureka, CA (catalog).

2012 | Innovation Creation: Ceramics Invitational, University of Central Missouri, Gallery of Art & Design; Warrensburg, MO Invite & Ignite, Watershed Center for Ceramic Arts; Brick Castle, ME

Lavish and Lush, Seattle Design Center; Seattle, WA. Baltimore Clayworks; Baltimore, MD.

Illinois Wesleyan University, Wakeley Gallery; Bloomington, IL. Science/Sense, Xavier Preparatory College; Phoenix, AZ. Ceramica Multiplex 2012, City Museum of Varazdin; Herzer

Palace, Croatia (August 25 – October 31, 2012) Kapfenberg, Austria, (November 16, 2012 – January 6, 2013).

4th Contemporary Clay Biennial, Western Colorado Center for the Arts; Grand Junction, CO.

2011 | Within the Landscape, The University of Akron; Akron, OH. Exposed, American Museum of Ceramic Art; Pomona, CA. Splendor, Roswell Museum and Arts Center; Rosewell, NM. Le Décor est Plante, Galerie Favardin & de Verneuil; curated

Exhibition at the Limogues Foundation; Bernardaud, France.

by Laurent de Verneuil; Paris, France.

Downtown; Philadelphia, PA.

2010 | Botanica, Hunterdon Art Museum, Center for Art, Craft and Design; Clinton, NJ.

Contemporary Forum Grant Winners Exhibition, Phoenix Art Museum; Phoenix, AZ.

XXIst Vallauris Biennale Internationale, Magnelli Museum, Ceramics Museum of Vallauris; Vallauris, France (catalog). Small Favors V, The Clay Studio; Philadelphia, PA. La Mesa, Santa Fe Clay, NCECA Philadelphia Marriott

Contemporary Forum Art Auction, Phoenix Art Museum; Phoenix, AZ.

Earth Matters, NCECA Invitational Exhibition, The Galleries at Moore College of Art and Design; Philadelphia, PA (catalog).

2009 | Illuminations, Simon Rock at Bard College; Great Barrington, MA.

The Familiar Unknown, Blue Star Art Center; San Antonio, TX (catalog).

of Wisconsin; Whitewater, WI.

SOFA, Chicago, represented by Next Step Studio; Ferndale, MI. The Margins, The Ice House; Phoenix, AZ (catalog). 39th Annual Ceramics Exhibition, Crossman Gallery, University

Small Favors IV, The Clay Studio; Philadelphia, PA. Beasts and Botanicals, Archer Gallery, Clark College;

Ceramics Invitational, Armory Art Center; West Palm Beach, FL. Beyond the Brickyard Exhibition, Archie Bray Foundation; Helena, MT.

2008 | Shared Journeys: Chinese/American Ceramic Art, Jingdezhen Ceramic Institute; Jingdezhen, China. All Fired Up – A Celebration of Clay; Westchester NY. The Art Gallery of Lyndhurst; Tarrytown, NY. Small Favors III, The Clay Studio; Philadelphia, PA. Full and Spare, Florida State University, Museum of Fine Arts; Tallahassee, FL (catalog).

2007 | Contemporary Castings, University of Richmond Museums: Richmond, VA.

Mastery In Clay, The Clay Studio; Philadelphia, PA. Faculty Exhibition, ASU Art Museum; Tempe, AZ. Drawn To Between, Goodall Gallery; Louisville, KY. Out of Hand, Society of Contemporary Craft; Pittsburgh, PA. Tea, Santa Fe Clay; Santa Fe, NM.

2006 | Craft Forms Invitational, Wayne Art Center;

Art of The Teapot, Lux Center for the Arts; Smithville, TN. Mastery in Clay, The Clay Studio; Philadelphia, PA. Nature/Culture, Santa Fe Clay; Santa Fe, NM. The Yixing Effect: Echoes of the Chinese Scholar, Holter Museum

The Art of the Teapot, Kalamazoo Institute of Art; Kalamazoo, MI. Watershed 20th Anniversary, The Society of Arts and Crafts;

SOFA/Chicago, Ferrin Gallery; Northampton, MA.

2005 | Mastery in Clay 2005, The Clay Studio; Philadelphia, PA. Clay From Molds, John Michael Kohler Arts Center; Sheboygan, WI.

Human Nature, Gormley Gallery, College of Notre Dame; Baltimore, MD.

XXX. Santa Fe Clav: Santa Fe. NM. Excess, The Clay Studio; Philadelphia, PA.

of Art: Helena, MT.

### SELECTED PUBLIC AND CORPORATE COLLECTIONS

American Museum of Ceramic Art; Pomona, CA. Archie Bray Foundation for the Ceramic Arts; Helena, MT. ASU Art Museum, Ceramics Research Center; Tempe, AZ. The Clay Studio; Philadelphia, PA. Currier Museum of Art; Manchester, NH. Danmarks Keramikmuseum; Guldagergard, Denmark. Detroit Institute of Arts Museum; Detroit, MI. Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco: San Francisco, CA. Jingdezhen Ceramics Museum; Jingdezhen, China.

Kerameikon, Croatia Ceramics Association; Verazdin, Croatia. Long Beach Museum of Art; Long Beach, CA.

Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Los Angeles, CA.

Princessehof Keramiek Museum; Leeuwarden, Netherlands. Racine Art Museum; Racine, WI.

Renault, Corporate Design Techno Centre; Guyancourt, France. Roswell Museum of Art; Roswell, NM.

San Angelo Museum of Fine Arts; San Angelo, TX. Scripps College; Claremont, CA.

XL Screw Corporation; Wheeling, IL. Yixing Ceramics Museum; Yixing, China.

#### AWARDS

2009 | Artists Grant, Contemporary Forum, Phoenix Art Museum; Phoenix, AZ.

2008–2009 | Centennial Professorship Grant, ASASU; Tempe, AZ.

2007 | Artists Grant, Arizona State University Herberger College of the Arts; Tempe, AZ.

Best Artwork, Arizona State University; Tempe, AZ. Mini Grant, Arizona State University Herberger College of the Arts: Tempe, AZ.

2006 | Honorable Mention, The 4th World Ceramic Biennale; Icheon, South Korea.

Independence Foundation Artist Grant; Philadelphia, PA.

#### SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY | BOOKS AND CATALOGUES

Adamson, Glen and Davira Taragin; Tea Anyone?, The Donna Moog Collection, Racine Art Museum; Racine, WI, 2003, p.31. Brown, Glen; 500 Sculptures, Lark Books 2009, pp. 198, 293. Burkett, Richard; Masters of Porcelain, Lark Books 2008, pp. 128-135.

Cees Van 't Veen, Princessehof Leewarden; Deliciously Decadent Tableware of the 20th and 21st Centuries, 010 Publications; Netherlands, 2004, pp. 26-27, 92. Clark, Garth; The Artful Teapot, Watson-Guptill Publications,

1999, pp. 97, 100, 220. Cooper, Emmanuel; Contemporary Ceramics, Thames and

Hudson Ltd.; London, England, 2010. pp. Ferrin, Leslie; Teapots Transformed, Guild Publications,

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Fountain Sikes, Toni; The Best of New Ceramic Art, Guild Publications, 1997.

Hunt, Bill; 21st Century Ceramics, The American Ceramics Society, 2003, p.16.

Lark Crafts; The Best of 500 Ceramics, New York, 2012, p.320. Lauria, Jo; Color and Fire: Defining Moments in Studio Ceramics 1950–2000, Los Angeles County Museum of Art and Rizzoli International Publications, 2000, pp. 198, 200, 2003. Mackey, Maureen; Experience Clay, Wyatt Wade Publications,

2003, p.112. Mathieu, Paul; Sexpots, Rutgers University Press, 2003, pp. 197-198.

Meilach, Dona; Teapots: Makers and Collectors, Schiffer Books,

Nouvel Object IV, Designhouse Inc., South Korea, 1999, pp. 26–27. Ostermann, Matthais; The Ceramic Surface, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002, p218.

Peltier, Yves; Biennale Internationale Creation Contemporaine et Ceramique, Somogy Editions de Art, 2010. pp. 114-115.

Piepenburg, Robert; The Spirit of Clay, Revised Edition, Pebble Press Inc., 1998, pp. 124-131, 368.

Sweet, Marvin; The Yixing Effect: Echoes of a Chinese Scholar, Foreign Language Press, Beijing China, 2006, pp. 164–165. Taylor, Louisa; Ceramics Bible: The Complete Guide to Materials and Techniques, Chronicle Books, San Francisco, 2011. P. 137. Tourtillott, Suzanne; 500 Tiles, Lark Books, 2007, pp. 218, 275, 408.

Tourtillott, Suzanne; 500 Cups, Lark Books, 2005, pp. 82, 380. Tourtillott, Suzanne; 500 Bowls, Lark Books, 2003, pp. 46, 158. Triplett, Kathy; 500 Teapots, Lark Books, 2002, pp. 25, 32, 229. Yilong, Hua; Works By Ceramic Artists From Around The World, Shanghai Fine Arts Publications, China, 2006, p. 213.

#### PERIODICALS AND REVIEWS

Balzar, John; "An Artful Appreciation of Crafts," Los Angeles Times, May 5, 2004, pp. 1, 6.

Brown, Glen; "Susan Beiner's Synthetic Reality: Biotechnology, Nature, Creativity," Ceramics Art and Perception, 2009, issue 78, pp.23-27.

Brown, Glen; "Earth Matters," Ceramics Art and Perception, 2010, issue 82, pp. 86-88.

Buck, Andrew; "Organic Dissolution," Ceramics Monthly Magazine, March 2013, pp. 44-46.

"Ceramics Art and Perception," June 2005, issue 60, pp. 41–46.

Ching, Albert; "Ceramic Meets Organic," Scottsdale Tribune, March 15, 2008, p. A22.

Clark, Garth; "Tea for Arts Sake," Kerameiki Techni, International Ceramic Art Review, October, Issue 41, pp. 16-22.

Crawford, Lynn; "Bombs and Paper," MetroTimes, September 10-16, 1997, p. 34.

"Fun, Funky and Functional Teapots," Ceramics Monthly Magazine, February 1999, p.12. Goddard Dan; "The Familiar Unknown," Sculpture Magazine,

October 2010, Vol. 29, No. 8, p. 77.

Hakanson Colby; Joy. "Dysfunctional Sculpture Thrives on Dislocated Perceptions," Detroit Art News, September 20, 1999.

Hakanson Colby, Joy; "Outrageous and Out There, this art merges form, function," The Detroit News, August 8, 2000, p. 27 D.

Hodara, Susan; "White that Does Not Signify Purity," The New York Times; November 4, 2012, Arts section, p. 9. Indyke, Dottie; "The Craft of Contemporary Art," Focus/Santa Fe Magazine; August/September 2004, pp. 26-29.

"Inspirations from Denmark," The Concord Journal; January 22,

Knaff, Deborah; "Uncommon Artforms Converge at Exhibit," Riverside Free Press Enterprise; December 14, 2000, pp. D6, D8.

Lauria, Jo; "Clay and the Nature of Things," Ceramics Art and Perception; March 2003, issue 51, pp. 88-91.

Levin, Elaine; "Eco Rhythmics: Color and Texture in Clay," Kerameiki Techni, International Ceramic Art Review; December 2002, Issue 42, pp. 50-54.

Littman, Margaret; "Cozying up to Teapots," American Style Magazine; No. 35, Winter 2003, pp. 74-81.

Menconi, Lila; "Garden State," Phoenix New Times; May 1-7 2008 pp. 45, 47.

Sessions, Billie; "Too Much is not Enough," Ceramics Monthly Magazine; March 2006, pp. 40–44.

Sedgwick Coble, Sarah; "Review Clay Art Center," American Ceramics Magazine; February 1998, p. 52.

Stevens, Dennis; "Coincidentia Oppositorum: The Ceramics of Susan Beiner," Ceramics Art and Perception; December 2003, No. 54, pp. 52-54.

Talley, Dan; "NCECA Invitational 2010: Earth Matters," Ceramics Monthly; June/July/August 2010. pp. 26-29.

Torribio-Bond, Sarah; "College Gets Fired up about Ceramics Show," Claremont Courier; January 25, 2003, pp. 3,9.

Vanesian, Kathleen; "Form and Dysfunction: The Synthetic Reality of Susan Beiner," Ceramics Ireland, 2010, Issue 25. pp. 37-39.

Voynovskaya, Nastia; "Susan Beiner's Other Worldly Flora," Hi Fructose Magazine, May 2013.

Wallace, Kevin; "The 2003 Scripps College 59th Ceramic Annual," Crafts Arts International Magazine, No.58, 2003, pp. 89–92.

Wallace, Kevin; "The Inspired Vessel," Craft Arts International Magazine, No.61, pp. 83-87.

Wollman, Anne; "After Palissy: Bernard Palissy's Aesthetic Four Centuries Later," Ceramics Art & Perception, Issue 60, 2005, pp.41-46.

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION ::

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OPPOSITE PAGE LEFT :: RIGHT :: Remnant 4, porcelain, kanthol wire, mortar; 5 x 5 x 5 inches; 2012 :: Organic Dissolution, detail installation; porcelain, acrylic, kanthol wire, foam, thread; 2013

John Michael Kohler Arts Center; Sheboygan, WI.







OPPOSITE PAGE :: Drawing 6; graphite and watercolor on paper; 84 x 42 inches; 2013

TOP :: Organic Dissolution, detail installation; porcelain, acrylic, kanthol wire, foam, thread; 2013

BOTTOM :: Susan Beiner sketching Drawing 5; graphite and watercolor on paper, 20 x 21 inches; 2012

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# WITH APPRECIATION

SUSAN BEINER

Organic Dissolution was a year-long project, which took form by many hands. The repetition and scale of various parts came about through the efforts of several people.

Foremost, thanks to Leigh Taylor Mickelson from the Clay Art Center in Port Chester, NY, and Jennie Ash, The Art League, Houston, TX for the opportunity to exhibit a new installation in their gallery spaces.

Thanks to Alecia Zirignon and Nora McGinnis for sewing thousands of white foam pieces, and Caitlin Applegate of the Clay Arts Center for her assistance in the NY installation. Special gratitude goes to Evan Pomerantz for his long hours of assistance with the TX installation and for continuous support on so many other projects. Special thanks to Heather Le Fur, my associate and friend for designing this catalog.

Finally, I would like to thank Nevin for his belief in my vision along with friends and family for their constant support.

So it is with renewed energy and focus of mind that I challenge myself and enter into my new studio lab to continue my pursuit of the answer to the critical question of how "human-engineered" or so-called hybrid plant life can offer sustainability to our fragile planet, the only hope of mankind everlasting.





:: 14

:: 15



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