

From the Editor

You could say that **“CLAY AND WORDS”** is the theme of every issue of this journal. *STUDIO POTTER* was founded in the belief that the words of makers, set alongside what they made, had something to add to the evolving idea of what it means to be a studio potter in the twentieth – and now the twenty-first – century. Although many makers are drawn to clay because it is “not about words,” studio ceramics as we know it – a discipline chosen rather than inherited – originated among educated people who brought reading, writing, and discussing into the studio. Since then, the clay world has been well-supplied with great talkers, inspired storytellers, and incisive (if unofficial) critics. *STUDIO POTTER* has aimed to capture that conversation – and to egg it on: to make what had traditionally been an oral history into a visual-and-written thing, flung far beyond the studio into the narrative and idea-pool of our field.

The backdrop to all this is a literate culture many centuries old in which history, new ideas, and values are transmitted in written form. Though we have chosen to commit our ideas to a visual and tactile medium, we all dwell in this culture. Clay and words sometimes seem, and perhaps are, different languages: different orders of information and experience. In fact, recent cognitive and neurological research has suggested that different parts of our brains are firing when we are reading, talking, or handling clay. Yet clay and words touch at many points and in many ways. Narrative or text-bearing ceramics – words *on* clay – are an obvious example. But words *about* clay – and words as their own juicy selves – also come into play. Critical and philosophical writing, fiction – and, of course, the news – flow through our studios and our supposedly non-verbal processes, and are bound to influence them, for better or worse. Like a spear-thrower extending the arm’s leverage, words and clay can transport each other’s meanings in new forms and surprising directions. Words add loft to the objects, and clay lends physicality to the common language of our species.

– MB

STUDIO POTTER is a non-profit organization which publishes journals, produces educational programs, and provides services to the international community of ceramic artists and craftspeople.

A professional journal, *THE STUDIO POTTER* is published twice a year and focuses on critical issues of aesthetics, technology, history and personal development. It is aimed at a discerning readership of ceramists, educators, and others committed to supporting work and dialogue. By fostering innovation and creativity as well as respect for tradition, the organization endeavors to improve the quality of life and work for studio potters.

STUDIO POTTER welcomes hearing from potters, artists, scholars and educators with special interests in writing and reporting on topics and events in ceramics.

STUDIO POTTER BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

Harriet Brisson, Josephine Burr, Rostislav Eismont, Linda Hillman, CHAIR, Lynn Gervens, Diane Welden Housken, Meghan Jones, Jon Keenan, Kristen Kieffer, Lucy Lacoste, Maureen Mills, Tom O'Malley, Jane Prentiss, Paula Sibrack-Marian, Judith Schwartz, Nancy Selvage, Audrey Sylvester, Gerry Williams, Marian Woodruff.

BELOW: Clay tokens from *Before Writing, Volume One: From Counting to Cuneiform* by Denise Schmandt-Besserat, p. 22.

