

## Carolina Clay Guild

### July Workshop

#### A Brief Review

by Molly Lithgo

Twenty-four participants enjoyed a very informative workshop recently presented by handbuilder, Hayne Bayless. Working with almost leather-hard slabs and various extrusions, Hayne constructs a wide range of both complex and simple pots. Like many potters, Hayne has an impressive selection of hand-made tools tailored to fit specific needs. Hayne also shared a vast array of hand-cut stencils cut with a variety of knives. He uses Tyvek (a vapor barrier paper used in the building industry) as a stencil material, which is strong, cuts easily and can be washed when decorating is complete. With the stencils, Hayne creates visual texture and pattern with black slip, which burns through the glazes during firing in his flat top reduction kiln. Hayne thrives on surface texture, often manipulated by stretching the clay.

Hayne demonstrated his belief that the "beauty of clay is in capturing and recording all the processes you have used in the piece."

Hayne Bayless is a full time studio potter. See more at: [www.sidewaysstudio.com](http://www.sidewaysstudio.com).

## How was Penland

by Molly Lithgo

This past spring, I was fortunate enough to participate in an 8 week Penland Concentration taught by the legendary Cynthia Bringle. Since my return, I have been asked the same question many times: "How was it?" The nutshell answer: "Good." One friend verbalized everyone's blank stare to that response: "That doesn't tell me anything!" Yes, I know, but there is so much to "how it was"; in which category does your interest lie? So, I'll take a stab at a very brief synopsis of 8 weeks at Penland.

For anyone interested in the history of the Penland School of Crafts in Penland, NC, that is easy to find on-line or in their catalog. Situated just 3 hours from Greensboro and next door to Spruce Pine and Little Switzerland, the Penland School offers courses in drawing, painting, printmaking, book-arts, metals/jewelry, wood, iron, glass, and CLAY. There are 2 clay studios, "upper clay" for throwing and "lower clay" (those students call it "deeper clay") for hand building. Most students stay on campus and most formal class schedules ran from 9/9:30 AM – 4:30 PM, M – F. All studios are open 24/7. Our class had 18 students, 2 of which were studio assistants. Ages ranged from 18 – 68, and all are serious potters with only a handful being full-time. (continued next column)

Anyone who has had even a 2-day hands-on with Cynthia Bringle has gotten a small taste of what it's like spending 8 weeks in her class. Cynthia's workshops and classes are completely different from any other I have experienced. Most workshops consist of the artist demonstrating and explaining very particular techniques used in their own work. Many of us have gained valuable and well-rounded knowledge from these workshops. Cynthia, however, focuses on materials and process, i.e., how to throw better pots; your pots. Cynthia generally did 2 demos per day. We began with cylinders: chose the largest amount of clay you comfortably throw with all the time, add 2 lbs to that and alternate throwing cylinders between the 2 amounts. You must cut each cylinder in half. When the walls are consistent every time, then increase each amount by 2 lbs and continue. Oh yea, do this in only 3 pulls. With no pugmill, we did a lot of re-wedging! This was our 1<sup>st</sup> week. Long about Friday, we began with 15 mugs, each with 3 pulled handles. This also took several days, with most folks working after dinner and on the weekend. Everyone in the class agreed that when focusing on all of this very basic throwing, it is surprising to see how much you don't know. Group critiques on our green ware focused on better handle shape, size and placement for each particular mug. We also incorporated playing with a variety of shapes and sizes, giving everyone the opportunity to experiment with new or difficult forms. A few concentrated on perfecting particular shapes. We were happy to progress to 15 "normal" mugs, pitchers, covered pitchers, lidded jars, and altered lidded vessels, casseroles, goblets, and tea pots. With each new form came group critiques of green ware and bisque ware. With 18 students and an instructor, we had to be selective on which pieces were glaze fired. The rest was recycled. About the 4<sup>th</sup> week, we took a break from all of this, as Cynthia had volunteered our class to make the 450 mugs needed for the Annual Penland Benefit Auction held in August. Several field trips and visiting artists throughout broke up our daily routine. We did several reduction firings, raku, and mid-way moved to salt firing and soda firing.

Then there's the "magic mountain". Eight weeks at Penland is very different than a 1 or 2 week summer session. Summer sessions are "fun", a great vacation or get-a-way. Eight weeks = intense, with constant information. In addition to class, weekday evenings consist of instructor, studio assistant, and co-coordinator slides from each discipline, panel discussions, visiting artist slides and the monthly Penland Gallery opening. Visits to other studio disciplines are strongly encouraged. It takes about 2 weeks to fully adjust to the new daily routine of being a full-time student, meals at certain times (which you don't have to give a thought to preparing), a new bed, new people (this concentration was Penland's largest ever with about 95 students), no traffic (Penland is a walking campus), no newspapers or TV, and only the cell phone/radio/ipod/etc. that you bring along. The pace changes. The focus changes. The daily priority changes. "Concentration" is the perfect description of this 8 week time period, as everyone is buried in their discipline.