

# Reinventing the wheel

Artists indulge in a different type of pottery

**Autumn Phillips**  
4-Points

They call Slipcast the "bad boy" of ceramic arts. Laughed at by purists and not taught in most art schools, Slipcast is seen as industrial at best, kitsch and pedestrian at worst.

But next weekend, Jonathan Kaplan and Annie Chrietberg will present the first exhibit dedicated solely to the art of Slipcast. It will be the first exhibit of its kind not only in Steamboat Springs, but also nationally and internationally.

After its premiere, Kaplan and Chrietberg hope to make the Slipcast exhibit a biennial event, most likely displayed at national ceramics conferences. This will be the only year the exhibit will be held in Steamboat.

"This show is important in the world of ceramics. It will create a reference point," Chrietberg said.

"There is not a huge tradition in Slipcast other than making stuff," Kaplan said. "Right now (Slipcast artists) are creating their own tradition." And because

there is no tradition, it can be freeing for the artist.

Slipcast is

probably best known as the technique used in the mass production of ceramic objects such as toilets and sinks.

Liquid clay is poured into a plaster mold. The longer the clay is left to set, the thicker and stronger it becomes. As the clay wall thickens, the plaster absorbs water. As a result, the ceramic form shrinks and can be removed easily from the mold. From there, the process is similar to any other ceramic object. The clay is fired once, then glazed and fired again.

It is a good technique for creating a series or for creating an object out of clay that cannot be thrown on the wheel or hand built.

"Any shape you can envision, you can make with Slipcast," Kaplan said. Most often, the mold is made by pouring plaster around a found or created object.

"The art is not only in the technique, but in the conceptualization."

Typically, art students are taught that there is only one way to make a pot, Chrietberg said. "There is the myth of the ethical pot, and that (pot) is made on a wheel."

Most of the ceramic pieces chosen for next week's show are not "vessels" or made in the traditional sense of pottery. Even the more vessel-like pieces are sculptures made as commentary on the traditional vessel. The artists are from around the world.



"Implement #24" by Tsehai Johnson

## If you go

**What:** The Slipcast Object

**When:** Nov. 12 through Jan. 9, 2005, with an opening reception from 5 to 8 p.m. Nov. 12

**Where:** Depot Art Center, 1001 13th St.  
**Call:** 879-9008

The work in "The Slipcast Object" is edgy and experimental, diverging sharply from the pottery aesthetic Chrietberg likes to call "brown and round."

"Maybe it's because people making Slipcast objects don't get so caught up in the materials," she said. "Maybe making molds, you have to think about the shape of the object more than you do when throwing it on the wheel."

Ceramic artists working on a wheel often get caught up in the feel of the



"The Clouds" by Noh Kyoung Park

clay, Chrietberg said. It's a very sensual experience. Your hands are in wet clay, and the clay ends up directing what you are doing.

"On the other hand, Slipcasting is not sensual."

"The Slipcast Object," which opens at the Depot Art Center on Nov. 12, was juried by anthologized ceramicist Richard Notkin. Notkin's work is in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Carnegie Museum of Art, the Montreal Museum of Decorative Arts, the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam and the Shigaraki Museum of Ceramic Art in Shigaraki, Japan.

"Notkin is one of the only ceramic artists included in the all encompassing, freshman art history classes," Chrietberg said.

Although Kaplan and Chrietberg had never met Notkin in person, they knew his work well and took a chance in approaching him to jury the exhibit. He was responsive immediately.

Notkin will give a gallery talk and slide show on the night of the opening reception and will conduct a workshop, "Ceramic Sculpture: Concept and Technique," on Nov. 13 and 14.

From January to April, "The Slipcast Object" will travel to the Denver International Airport's exhibition space on the walkway connecting Jeppeson Terminal and Concourse A.



"Cervidae" by Mia Fetterman-Mulvey



"Tri-Hard" by Jen-Yu Lai



"Cowgirl" by Katy Rush

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