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JULY 29 - OCTOBER 7, 2018



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# THE LEGACY OF MAREJON SUE SHRODE JULY 29 - OCTOBER 7, 2018

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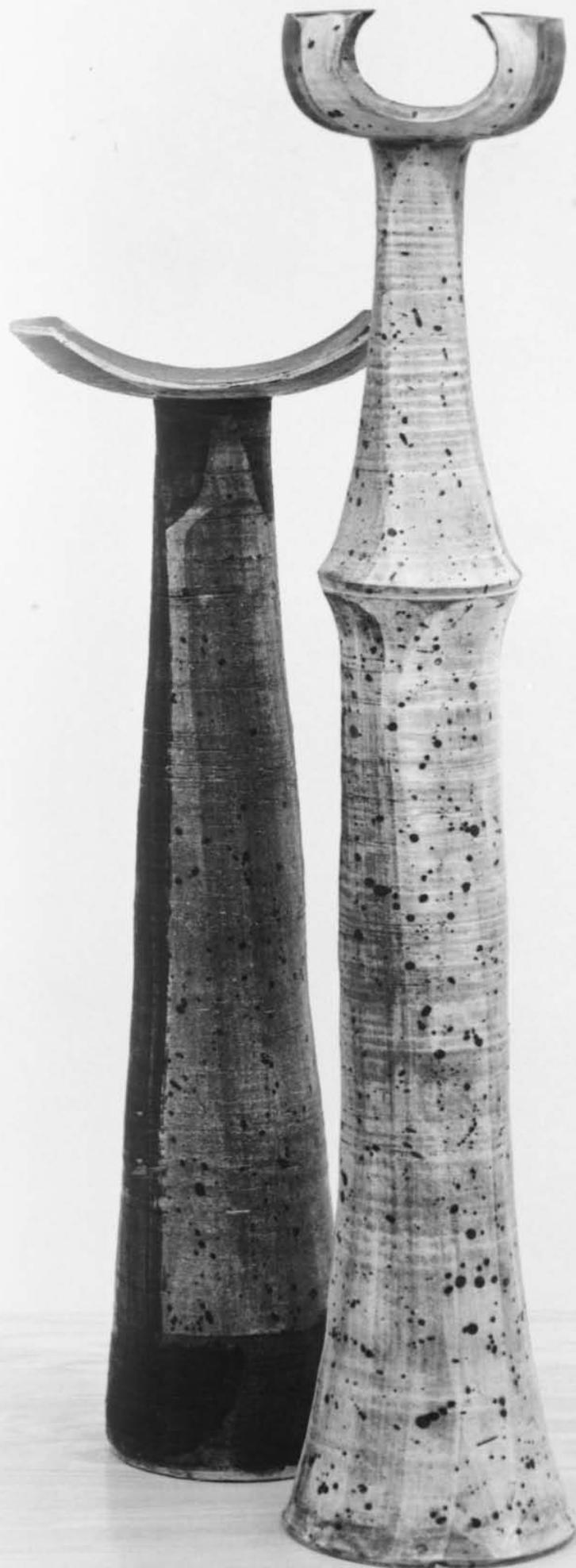
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## Introduction

These three essays outline the scope of what we know today about Marejon Sue Shrode and her incredible journey to Southern California to work with some of the most important artists of the day. The first essay sketches some of the key moments in Sue's 18 years working in Los Angeles and short bios on some of the key players in the Studio Pottery Movement. Carrie Gibbs, Director of the Shrode Art Center, shares personal memories of working with and getting to know Sue, and gives readers a better sense of who Sue was, as an artist, teacher, mentor, community patron, and as a person. The last essay traces some of the local and national exhibitions of which Sue was a participant over the course of her long career. This exhibition and booklet are dedicated to the memory of Marejon Sue Shrode (1924-2017).

## Marejon Sue Shrode in Southern California 1946 to 1964

by Rusty Freeman, Director of Visual Arts

When Marejon Sue Shrode moved from Mount Vernon in 1946 to continue her education, little could she have known that so soon after the war, an exciting and revolutionary world was beginning to unfold across the United States, and especially in her new home of Southern California.

Sue and her new California friend, Jane Heald would surf the crest of that revolutionary wave. The two young women would meet and work with some of the most important, and eventually, historically famous artists and teachers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. All were working in clay and forging a new movement in studio pottery. Bernard Leach, Shōji Hamada, and Soetsu Yanagi started a revolution in clay to revitalize traditional pottery-making with their holistic philosophy that merged work with one's identity.

Also critical to their Mingei philosophy was their push for a new appreciation of finding beauty in everyday, humble objects, such as a handmade bowl. Then there was Marguerite Wildenhain and her European-Bauhaus teaching methods and philosophy. And finally there was the charismatic Peter Voulkos who through the sheer force of his personality coupled with his fierce originality in making new clay-forms became the leading figurehead, and lightning rod, of the new clay revolution.

Marejon Sue Shrode was literally an active participant and contributor to this major historical moment in the history of US art. Sue and Jane were well-known in Southern California as the "Potters of the Palisades."



Bernard Leach discussing technique with Sue Shrode (vest). Over Leach's shoulder, Richard Petterson and Jane Heald, 1950s.



Sue Shrode at the 1952 Leach-Hamada-Yanagi California Workshop with Shōji Hamada. Sue, far left; behind Sue, Jane Heald, Sue's best friend; then Richard Petterson, Scripps College professor; Shōji Hamada; and holding mirror, Roy Walker, San Francisco potter.

The nineteen-fifties were a period of great optimism and romantic visions of the future charged the air with new possibilities throughout the nation.

The greatest economic boom in history followed the end of The Second World War in 1945. The economic prosperity of the 1950s created hope, optimism, and excitement for the future. The world was ready. The GI Bill opened colleges to veterans and prefabricated houses ensured homes for everyone. Manufacturers surged the market with new appliances- all designed for a modern lifestyle of convenience and space-saving - everything was electric- dish-washers, clothes washers, dryers, irons and more. Perhaps the cultural turning point was the Television. In 1946, there were 6,000 TVs in use; by 1951 it was 12 million, and by 1955, half the US had a black and white set.

Culturally and politically, the 1950s witnessed the Korean War; the international Cold War and brinkmanship; the political machinations of Joseph McCarthy; the fearlessness of Rosa Parks; worrisome fallout shelters in nearly every backyard; and the early rumblings of Rock and Roll.

In the art world, the Abstract Expressionism of Jackson Pollock and Willem deKooning continued its rise to literally world dominance. Abstract Expressionism expressed the

anxiety of the Atomic Age and the rebel's stance against conformity through individual expression. Abstract Expressionism was an overwhelming influence on the emerging studio potters and its personal expressionism was wholeheartedly embraced.

Also affecting the art world was D.T. Suzuki's popular introduction of Zen Buddhism. Suzuki (1870-1966) taught at Columbia University from 1952 to 1957. Steeped in mystery, Zen is the total and unrelenting embrace of reality, the everyday. Suzuki declared that "Zen insists on handling the thing itself and not an empty abstraction." Zen charm wooed artists and writers like John Cage and Jack Kerouac. Zen's appeal to simplicity also motivated Yanagi's theory of the Mingei. Suzuki: "Simplicity of form does not always mean triviality of content." D.T. Suzuki was a teacher of Yanagi's.

The Fifties were a decade of great cultural fermentation and economic growth, and a fascinating prelude to the coming revolutions of the Sixties.

It was in Pacific Palisades where Sue met Jane Heald. The two of them began experimenting with their own glaze recipes and high fire reduction techniques and became among the first to do so in Southern California.



This elegant environment was how the Pasadena Art Museum displayed Sue Shrode's candleholder in the 1958 exhibition "California Design 4." Photograph by James H. Reed, Pasadena, CA



Mingei philosophy exalted simplicity. As D.T. Suzuki wrote "Simplicity of form does not always mean triviality of content." Hamada Shōji, Japanese, 1894–1978; *Flower Vase with Wax-Resist Design*, c.1950; Mashiko ware; stoneware with persimmon (kaki) glaze and wax-resist brushwork; 8 3/4 in. × 8 1/4 inches; Saint Louis Art Museum, Funds given by Bernard and Sally Lorber Stein and Museum Purchase 4:2000 © Estate of Hamada Shoji.

Sue helped co-found the Pacific Palisades Art Association as a Charter Member, later as President for a two-year term, and also served as Exhibition Chair.

In the Spring of 1949, Sue wrote to Bernard Leach asking for advice on her glaze recipes. By 1949, Leach was very well-known throughout the potters' world for his 1940 book, *A Potter's Book*. Her excitement could not have been more genuine as she wrote in her journal on Thursday, May 26, 1949, "Got our answer from Mr. Leach !!!! Just think, the foremost potter in the world & he took the time to answer my letter, Golly!" Sue goes on to write that Bernard Leach gave not only the recipe information, but also pointers on materials, firing instructions, and a few more suggestions. As Sue noted in her journal, "Honestly it was marvelous of him."

Sue and Jane would ultimately attend the 1952 workshop by Bernard Leach at Mills College in Oakland, California. Leach had asked Mills professor and artist F. Carlton Ball to enroll Sue and Jane in the workshop. As Sue would recall years later, "We [Leach, Sue, and Jane] struck up a great back and forth about what to do. Consequently, when he came to Oakland to teach a workshop at Mills College, Jane and I got in (I'm ashamed to say, ahead of a lot more

qualified people than we!)" Sue's modesty is genuine, but Leach's wisdom prevailed; he knew Sue and Jane had earned their place at the workshop. In fact, Sue and Jane were chosen to be Hamada's assistants during the workshop. Sue and Jane would glaze his demonstration pots, a sign of true collaboration and immense trust.

In the mid-1950s, Shrode studied with Marguerite Wildenhain at Pond Farm, Guerneville, California. Sue was there for two consecutive summers, the first a nine-week workshop, followed by a six-week workshop the following summer. Wildenhain was highly regarded for her pedagogy of combining a strict regimen of practiced pottery techniques with that of a deep consideration of a philosophical and moral outlook on life itself.

Happening concurrently in the 1950s, Peter Voulkos began teaching at LA County Art Institute. It was about this time that Sue began exploring a more personal and expressionistic side of pottery. Sue was quoted in the March 1960



This square bottle was made at Hamada's celebrated studio in the pottery town of Mashiko, Japan. Hamada Shōji, Japanese, 1894–1978; *Square Bottle (tetsue kakubin)*, 1955; stoneware with colored glazes and iron decoration; 9 1/4 × 3 7/8 × 3 7/8 inches; Saint Louis Art Museum, Gift of Bernard and Sally Lorber Stein 20:1999 © Estate of Hamada Shoji.

issue of *Ceramics Monthly*. "Feeling that I have said all I could with functional shapes, for the time being, I have turned to a more sculptural approach to clay. The more removed from an actual vessel, the more one's mind is free to accept a non-functional shape."<sup>1</sup>

Around 1964, Shrode returned to Mt Vernon after living, working, selling her pottery, and exhibiting her art for 18 years in Southern California. Sue Shrode mastered the craft and philosophies of traditional pottery and the new expressionism exceedingly well. See Shrode's Exhibition History for further detail on her local and national exhibitions and the enthusiastic acclaim from her peers.

Sue Shrode embraced her hometown, its new museum, and her friends and community with her generous spirit and love of the arts. Sue is surely the most innovative artist Mt. Vernon has ever produced. In many ways, Marejon Sue Shrode has become the artistic heart and soul of Mt. Vernon.



Bernard Leach demonstration pot, wheel thrown by Leach; glazed and reduction fired by Jane Heald and Sue Shrode. Workshop at the Chouinard Art Institute, Los Angeles, 1952. Leach, *Pitcher, Tenmoku Jug*, 1952, ceramic. Collection of American Museum of Ceramic Art, Pomona, CA, 2011.2.0107

## WHO THEY WERE

**Bernard Leach** (1887-1979) played a major role in the history of U.S. ceramics during the 1940s and 1950s elevating the craft of pottery to its highest level and offering potters a holistic philosophy that merged art and life. Leach became well-known in Great Britain in 1940, when *A Potter's Book* was first published as it became "a blueprint among many potters for the counter-cultural search for a more meaningful, self-sufficient way of life."<sup>2</sup> His book also introduced Chinese, Japanese, and Korean pottery and aesthetics to a new generation. In 1946, the American edition of *A Potter's Book* was published and it became an immediate sensation. The American book was reprinted five times in the next six years (1947-1952).

Leach with Hamada and Yanagi were invited to give two US tours in 1952 and 1953. In 1952, the trio visited Mills College, Oakland; Scripps College in Claremont, California and Chouinard Art Institute in Los Angeles.

It was **Shōji Hamada** who breathed life into his live clay pot demonstrations which complemented the talks and lectures of Bernard Leach and Soetsu Yanagi.

Hamada (1894-1978) is widely recognized as one of the most influential Asian potters on the US studio pottery movement and the Mingei movement in Japan. Hamada knew of Leach's work in Japan and introduced himself and became life-long friends. Back in Leach's home Cornwall, England, Hamada and Leach built a kiln and established Leach's pottery business, which is still in existence today.

But it was their joint US tours with their friend Soetsu Yanagi, in 1952 and 1953, where they most influenced the US studio pottery movement. Traveling to multiple cities across the US conducting seminars and workshops they shared their philosophies that art and life can merge, that the everyday object holds great beauty, and that traditional pottery is a very important art form and must not be allowed to fade away in the modern world. There was a story of the return to essentials. Hamada lived this philosophy as no other. When Hamada returned home, he built a pottery in the town of Mashiko, an old pottery village itself, and encouraged others to look as he did to the earlier, humble works of folk art and rediscover their value. In Japan, Hamada was named a Living National Treasure and major museums around the world have collected his art, including the Saint Louis Art Museum.

Of the triumvirate, **Soetsu Yanagi** (1889-1961) was the

theoretical glue that held the material practice of Hamada together with the evangelicalism of Leach. Yanagi was a Japanese philosopher and teacher who founded the Mingei movement in Japan.

Mingei means “art of the people” and Yanagi developed the concept in the late 1920s and 1930s. Yanagi recognized the profound beauty to be found in the everyday objects created by anonymous craftsman for simply utilitarian purposes. In 1926, Yanagi began saving for posterity the common pots used by the average citizen during the Edo (1600-1868) and Meiji (1868-1911) periods which were being discarded as Japan modernized. In 1936, Yanagi founded the Japan Folk Crafts Museum in Tokyo.

Throughout the 1950s, **Marguerite Wildenhain** (1896-1985) stood with the major forces in the world of US ceramics. Wildenhain worked with Leach, Hamada, and Yanagi at Black Mountain College in North Carolina in 1952. Leach, Hamada, and Yanagi along with Peter Voulkos visited her pottery school Pond Farm in Guerneville, California. Richard Petterson, Head of the Ceramics Department at Scripps College in Claremont, California first invited Wildenhain to lecture there. More teacher than proselytizer, Wildenhain was an inspiration to many. As one student noted, “In 1952 no one could touch Marguerite as the ‘total’ potter.”<sup>3</sup>



Shōji Hamada demonstration pot, wheel thrown by Hamada; glazed and reduction fired by Jane Heald and Sue Shrode. Workshop at the Chouinard Art Institute, Los Angeles, 1952. Hamada, *Teapot*, 1952, ceramic. Collection of American Museum of Ceramic Art, Pomona, CA, 2011.2.0107



Quintessential Mingei. Sue Shrode, *Olive Celadon Bowl*, 1950, celadon. Collection of Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, Nebraska, Purchase Award, Midwest Utilitarian Design, 1951.53.

Wildenhain’s pedagogy required total commitment from the student. She saw making pottery not only as a livelihood, but as a way to becoming a complete and well-rounded person. From the Introduction to her book, ***Pottery: Form and Expression***, “[I]t is not enough to teach techniques. We want to develop young people for a wholesome and hopeful generation, -- for a generation which believes in the value of the humanities, which will face the problems of our time honestly and without fear, with the deep will to understand other men and to learn to build a better future.”<sup>4</sup>

Wildenhain’s moral philosophy for the potter was just as ambitious and demanding as her pedagogy, “This daily struggle with his work, this closing himself up with his innermost self in a laboring toil of concentration and coordination, the challenge of the difficulties with materials and methods- all cannot help but develop in the craftsman qualities of endurance, self-discipline, patience, healthy self-criticism and the ability of focusing his total capacity on one great aim.”<sup>5</sup>

Wildenhain developed summer-long workshops that became known as “an essential rite of passage” among studio potters and ceramic instructors.

Sue Shrode stated that her time with Wildenhain was well spent and that she learned how to throw the perfect pot at Pond Farm. Sue and Marguerite struck up an enduring friendship.

The scandalous trailblazer **Peter Voulkos** (1924-2002) began as a traditional potter who was admired for his elegant and functional earthenware. From 1949 to 1955, Voulkos won many awards for his ceramics and his technical expertise. In the early 1950s, Voulkos would meet



Sue Shrode (white blouse) in group exhibition with Peter Voulkos (behind Sue). The "Earth & Fire" exhibition at Bullock's department store in downtown Los Angeles, 1957. Back row: Voulkos, Raul Coronel, Louisa King, Al King, Malcom Leland, Jerome Ackerman, Evelyn Ackerman, Ed Traynor. Middle row: Sue, Bernie Kestor, exhibit co-organizer, Viveka Heino. Floor: John Harding, Otto Heino, John Mason. Standing: Susan Peterson, exhibit co-organizer. Photo by Bath & Wiener, Los Angeles

Bernard Leach, Shōji Hamada, Soetsu Yanagi and Marguerite Wildenhain. An invitation in 1953 to teach at the Black Mountain College introduced Voulkos to fellow teachers Robert Rauschenberg, John Cage, and Merce Cunningham, who were themselves soon to become some of the most groundbreaking and innovative artists the world had ever seen. Soon after, Voulkos was invited to New York City to meet some of the key artists working in the field of Abstract Expressionism—Willem deKooning, Philip Guston, and Franz Kline. Their aesthetic outlooks of creativity and risk Voulkos embraced heartily and would from then on greatly affect his outlook on art and life.

In 1954, Voulkos was invited to teach at the Los Angeles County Art Institute (now Otis College of Art and Design), and it was here that he experimented in clay with the immense scale and spontaneity that he admired in the Abstract Expressionists. It is hard to overstate the influence Voulkos had on the field of ceramic art and sculpture. Ceramics would never be the same.

Throughout the fifties, Marejon Sue Shrode exhibited alongside Peter Voulkos in many of the same group art exhibitions.

Two other people deserve recognition for their early and enthusiastic support of Sue Shrode in California— F. Carlton Ball and Richard Petterson.

**F. Carlton Ball** (1911-1992) was a native Californian, respected artist, and college professor. Ball taught at Mills College in Oakland from 1939 to 1950. Ball started the Mills College Ceramic Guild in 1942. It was Ball who invited Bernard Leach to Mills in 1950 and again in 1952 where Sue Shrode would first meet Leach, Hamada, and Yanagi.

Ball taught studio ceramics across the country at several universities including Southern Illinois University Carbondale and University of Southern California, and his main contributions to studio ceramics include teaching and his early support for the Japanese folk pottery. He wrote two books on pottery and many articles for *Ceramic Monthly*, of which at least two featured Sue Shrode in a leading role.

**Richard Petterson** (1910-1996) was a major player on the California Studio Pottery scene. A native of the state, Petterson was the Head of Ceramics Department, Scripps College in Claremont, California for 38 years. He also served for 30 years as Director of Exhibitions for the Los Angeles County Fair, a critical venue in the early years of studio pottery for reaching a national audience. Rick Petterson was an early and enthusiastic supporter of the traditional pottery as well as the creative, expressionistic work being made by Marejon Sue Shrode in the 1950s in Los Angeles. ■



Peter Voulkos, *Plate CR1056-W*, 1992, wood-fired ceramic. Loan courtesy of Sherry Leedy Contemporary Art Gallery and Voulkos Family Trust, Kansas City, Missouri

**Endnotes**

- 1 Jerome Allan Donson, "Arts of Southern California," *Ceramics Monthly*, March 1960, p. 17.
- 2 Emmanuel Cooper, *Bernard Leach: Life and Work* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2003), xiv-xv. Accessed December 2017, <http://www.chipstone.org/article.php/154/Ceramics-in-America-2004/Bernard-Leach-in-America>.
- 3 Janet Koplos and Bruce Metcalf, *Makers: A History of American Studio Craft*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010), p. 199.
- 4 Marguerite Wildenhain, *Pottery: Form and Expression*, (New York: American Craftsmen's Council, 1959), p. 9.
- 5 Wildenhain, pp. 15-16.

## *It Was Never Just About Her*

by Carrie Gibbs, Director Shrode Art Center



I remember meeting Sue at the old art center, when we were located at the north end of Cedarhurst's campus in a large, metal, pole barn building. Sue was a tall, classy, elegant, older woman who carried herself like a leading lady from an old black-and-white movie. She had an air about her, a sense of noble blood, but was kind, humble, down-to-earth, and unpretentious.

To my surprise, this elegant lady drove a station wagon from the late 1970's with a wood panel down the side. She always parked in the back parking lot of the old art center. Sue would enter through the back door and make her way to the fibers classroom with her canvas tote bag containing whatever current project she was working on. The weaving room had half a dozen floor looms, weaving materials, plenty of table space, and sinks for dying fabric. Sue would come to the art center every Thursday for the Fibers et al Club meetings (formerly The Spiderwoman Fiber Arts Guild.) She had her own set of keys to the art center, having been a trusted weaving teacher for over 20 years.

Our friendship, both personal and professional, began when I was hired as Director of Cedarhurst's Creative Art Center in 2006. I had known Sue for over 10 years before her passing in 2017. We worked together on many different projects and I always enjoyed our weekly conversations when she attended fibers club. When I was expecting my son Cypress, Sue hosted a baby shower for us and the members of the fibers club at her home. I felt as though I knew her well, but have come to realize that there was a whole other chapter to Sue's life that I wasn't aware of.

Co-curating this exhibition has given me a rare opportunity to get to know Sue better. Researching Sue's exhibition history alongside Rusty Freeman, Cedarhurst's Director of Visual Arts, I have learned of her success as an artist during her years living in California. Throughout the 1940's and into the 1960's Sue studied with some of the premier potters of our time; living legends, Jedi masters in the ceramic field, so to speak. She exhibited her artwork alongside the best of the best and had many, many accolades from many different exhibitions and art shows.

Sue portrayed herself to be just like everybody else, interested in arts and crafts, dedicated to preserving those creative traditions, and always excited to share and teach anyone interested in learning too. She never put herself on a pedestal above anyone else. She would have probably been embarrassed by "what a fuss" we are making over her artwork and this exhibition. But, I am proud to be part of the team that is placing her and her artwork on a pedestal in Cedarhurst's Main Gallery and properly honoring her legacy and the impact it has made to our community.

In 2007, Cedarhurst's Executive Director, Sharon Bradham, met with me to explain the upcoming "Arts for All" six-million dollar capital campaign, which included plans to build a new addition onto the Mitchell Museum, as well as relocate the art center to the former administration building which would expand and add new classrooms. It was such an exciting time to work at Cedarhurst and a great opportunity for my career to oversee this kind of major transition of the art center. Not only was our physical space changing but so would our programming and entire operations. Sharon shared that Sue Shrode had donated one



Sue working at what she loved, making art. Old Art Center, February 22, 2007.  
Top left: Carrie and Sue at the dedication of the Shrode Art Center 2008.



Sue Shrode, *Moon House*, 1957, stoneware  
Museum Purchase, Cedarhurst Center for the Arts, Mount Vernon, IL, 2006.09

million dollars to the campaign and specifically wanted to ensure the future of the art center. After construction was completed in the summer of 2008, the Creative Art Center would be renamed the Shrode Art Center. I was literally awestruck. Sue!? Sue Shrode!? The retired weaving teacher that comes every Thursday and drives the brown station wagon!? Yes, Sue Shrode. Her humble nature and kind spirit never flaunted her wealth and never alluded to her being able to make a generous donation of this caliber. It took quite a lot of persuasion for her to agree to have the building named after her. She didn't want anyone to think that she thought of herself as better than. I am so glad we were able to sway her opinion. The art center should be named after Sue and we can now celebrate her legacy every day.

Sue had many artistic chapters to her life. Before teaching weaving and fiber art classes at Cedarhurst she taught ceramics every Wednesday and Thursday night at the Mt. Vernon Art Guild (formerly located on South 10<sup>th</sup> Street.) The guild eventually moved and morphed into Cedarhurst's Creative Art Center in the 1980's.

It seemed as if every few years or so Sue

would get bit by the "curiosity bug" and take up a new hobby, or creative pursuit. Just during the years I knew her she pursued and successfully mastered, 2-dimensional digital art, digital art inspired fiber works, knitting wire jewelry, beading, Zen-tangle drawing, and glass fusing. Throughout her creative history Sue experimented with welding, mixed media, batik, weaving, pottery, stained glass, mosaic, drawing, jewelry and much more. Sue had a curiosity that never aged and kept her forever young. Her curiosity is the primary reason the Art Center has a glass fusing studio today. Sue came to me in 2010 with a book about glass fusing and said "Carrie, I want to learn how to do glass fusing." I said, "Oooo! That looks fun! I think you should go for it!" Then, Sue said "But, I want you to teach it to me..." I said, "What!? But, I'm a ceramic artist? I haven't studied glass." Sue said, "Well, I guess you will just have to learn. I want you to take classes, learn what kind of tools we will need and what kind of kiln, and then teach me. I'll help sponsor and set-up the studio." Little did I realize Sue's mastermind at work and her foresight in my professional development. She saw the bigger picture and saw the future of a new glass program for Cedarhurst and the art center.

In 2011, I attended Craft Alliance Center of Art & Design in St. Louis where I studied glass fusing methods and consulted with them on the proper ways to start a new studio at Cedarhurst. In the matter of a few months and a few, private weekend workshops, we started a glass fusing studio! It was great fun working with Sue as we chartered this new studio space. It was like being art detectives venturing out into new, unknown creative territories. There was this excitement of trying something new, experimenting, succeeding, failing, and trying again. We practiced and test fired several different kinds of glass together taking meticulous notes, and eventually writing the Introduction to Glass Fusing I & II curriculum.



Sue was known as one of Mount Vernon's best art teachers. Here, Sue stands with her fellow weavers of the Spiderwoman Fiber Arts Guild. From left to right: Sue Gates, Mary Krutsinger, Patsy James, Jean Crane, Kella Marchal, Irma Gibson, and Sue Shrode. African Belt Jacket weaving class, c. 1982.

While researching Sue's exhibition history, I came across an article Sue had written in 1950, "With A Potter's Wheel." She would have been 26 years old. This paragraph quote captures her amazing creative spirit and contagious energy. Sue submitted the article to her college alumnae newsletter. Sue graduated in 1944 from Bennett College, Millbrook, NY.

*I found me another pottery fiend (with a kiln) [Jane Heald] and together we started out on our respective wheels. It was fun and all highly unorthodox, for we had to learn by experience, and any books we could find in the library. We wanted to do it, and by golly, we did! The disappointments were amazing, the calamities numerous. Jane's dog ate six pots she had sitting out in the sun to dry. But cry? No! You learn to laugh about those things – hysterically.*

Sue Shrode, *The Bennett Bulletin*, vol.XV, no. 4, April 1950

Sue maintained that same creative spirit and excitement throughout her entire life. The creation of the Glass Fusing studio at the Art Center, while in her late 90's felt the same way.

Sue was an educator as well as an artist. It was never just about her. Sue could have set up her own home-glass-studio and kept this new art form to herself. She could have become the premiere fused-glass artist of Mt. Vernon and the surrounding region. But, she wanted to share her passion with everyone. She wanted anyone interested to have a chance to learn, too. Sue understood how to build an artistic community and thrived off those relationships. Artists have a need to share stories as well as their creative

successes and failures with others. It fuels their work and drives them to keep creating. The clubs at the art center are not just about socializing with others who share a similar craft or hobby, but it is about building relationships and learning together. The fiber club that Sue attended faithfully on Thursdays, for many, many years became part of her family and Sue was part of theirs. The Art Center affinity groups (Cedarhurst Quilters, Fibers et al, Mt. Vernon Woodcarvers, The Basketweavers and Clay Club) meet routinely and have this wonderful "emotional side effect" which creates many life-long friendships.

Being an artist is a blessing in many ways. Working on creative projects gives us something to look forward to and be excited about when life is stressful, traumatic or unsure. Art has a way of keeping us going in troubled times. It helps occupy our mind with productive ideas, questions and queries. What color should I glaze my pot? What happens if I overlap the blue glaze with the green glaze? What will I create today? Art can provide a mental focus when we need it most. Creating art is a way to be expressive. Whether life is going great and we are full of happy energy or sad, dark and stressful energy we can continue moving forward, continue making, and continue discovering.

Sue and I shared many conversations that I will always treasure. I looked up to her as a mentor but she always treated me as an equal. We would talk about her artwork and she would push me for an honest critique, no matter how harsh it might seem. She wanted to know if her work was growing in the right direction by golly and don't sugar coat it! Sue and I would also discuss current exhibi-

tions at Cedarhurst and the work of other artists. I was honored that Sue respected my opinion and treated me as though we were on the same level. She encouraged me as an artist as well as in my career as Director of the Shrode Art Center.

After viewing this exhibition I hope visitors feel as though they have gotten to know Sue better. I hope people will tell her story with pride. Cedarhurst, the city of Mt. Vernon, IL, and the entire Southern Illinois region are lucky to have had such a great talent choose to live here and dedicate her life to the Arts. Her educational spirit of sharing the arts with everyone, in a quiet and humble way, is truly inspirational. ■



Sue Shrode at an early 1970s Cedarhurst Craft Fair with the Goldman family- Jack (beard) with daughter Lisa; Joan to Jack's left; son Paul (striped shirt) to the left of Joan; and son Eric (striped shirt) just over Sue's shoulder.

## Marejon Sue Shrode Exhibition History

Compiled and annotated by Rusty Freeman, Director of Visual Arts

- 1949** By September of 1949, Jane Heald and Marejon Sue Shrode had exhibited at the California State Fair at Sacramento and the Los Angeles County Fair at Pomona [dates unknown]. A small notice in *The Palisadian* said the two were “promising young ceramists”, and “have been conducting original research in glazes and already have received recognition in this field.” *The Palisadian*, September 23, 1949.
- Also by September 1949, Sue had had her “first exhibit at the Otis Art Institute.” Reported by Clara McClure, “Palisadians Busy Creating Home-made Artistic Pottery,” *The Santa Monica Outlook*, September 23, 1949.
- 1950** “Contemporary Artists Exhibit,” Wilson Building, Pacific Palisades, California. Artists: Ruth Wilde, weaver; George Roosen, potter; Frank Weir, potter; Arthur Adair, watercolor; J.B. Blunk, silver craftsman, Jane Heald, potter, and Sue Shrode, potter. Organized by Sue and Jane, two “widely-known ceramic and pottery artists.” June 11-30, 1950.
- 1951** Los Angeles County Fair, “Covered Jar” by Sue Shrode.
- 1951** “Scripps College Annual Ceramic Invitational.” *The Santa Monica Outlook* reported August 30, 1958 that Sue Shrode had exhibited in the Scripps College Ceramic Invitational every year starting in 1951, seven straight years. Richard Petterson was the Head of the Ceramics Department at Scripps, and a supporter of Sue’s art.
- 1951** “The Midwest Utilitarian Design” exhibit. Joslyn Art Museum, accepted 3 works: *Covered Jar*, *Bottle*, and *Incised Stoneware Bowl*, which earned an Honorable Mention. Joslyn purchased the Bowl for their permanent collection. March 21, 1951.
- 1951** “Watercolors and Pottery,” Jane Heald, Don Williams, Marejon Sue Shrode, Wilson Building, Pacific Palisades, California December 7-28, 1951
- 1951** California State Fair. Sue earned “Third Place” for “Stoneware Bowl.” From this exhibition, the Selection Committee for the 1951-52 National Traveling Show of California Crafts chose Shrode’s *Porcelain Covered Jar with Inlaid Design*. Richard Petterson, Director of Arts and Crafts for the Los Angeles County Fair Association called this exhibition “California’s Best.”
- 1952** California State Fair at Sacramento. Honorable Mention earned for Sue’s “most outstanding effect in glaze for your stoneware casserole in cane basket.”
- 1952** Sue in “Syracuse National Show.” [This nationally-travelling show was referred to by several different titles].
- 1952** “Milba Lloyd and Sue Shrode,” window exhibit, Wilson Building, Pacific Palisades, sponsored by Pacific Palisades Art Association. Milba Lloyd, a British sculptor was well-known in Los Angeles and England. *Pacific Palisades Post*, July 3, 1952.
- 1952** Los Angeles County Fair Association, Purchase Award. One of 44 artworks to be on exhibit on national tour of museums for the next two years. Fair officials called Sue’s artwork a “distinguished example of ceramic work.” Sue earned an “Honorable Mention.”
- 1952** Los Angeles County Fair, Pomona, California. September 12-28, 1952. Jane Heald and Sue Shrode invited to show their stoneware. The Bay Area News reported August 28, 1952, that Sue and Jane have had their art displayed at the Los Angeles County Museum and the Syracuse Traveling Exhibitions, and a number of galleries.
- 1952** “Scripps College Annual Ceramic Invitational.”
- 1953** “Scripps College Annual Ceramic Invitational.”
- 1954** “Scripps College Annual Ceramic Invitational.” *Ceramics Monthly*, July 1959, This exhibit noted in the article by Carlton Atherton, “Pottery Today- for Show or Use?”
- 1955** “Scripps College Annual Ceramic Invitational.”



Sue presenting a talk and demonstration in February 1957 for the Pacific Palisades Art Association



Sue Shrode and Jane Heald in their Pacific Palisades studio, 1950s

- 1956** "Scripps College Annual Ceramic Invitational."
- 1957** Scripps College 14th Annual Ceramic Invitational. The Los Angeles Times reported that "expressionism has arrived in the medium with a clear-cut swing from the functional and classical." From 500 works of art and 125 artists, the LA Times singled out Sue Shrode of Santa Monica (one of her "Moon" or "Stacked" Houses), Peter Voukos, Paul Soldner, Malcolm McClain, Kenneth Price, Toshiko Takeazu, and Helen Watson.
- 1957** "Design in Earth and Fire." April 8-21, 1957. An exhibition collaboration of the Southern California American Ceramic Society and Bullock's Department Store of Los Angeles. It was thought to be the largest exhibition of ceramic art ever staged in Los Angeles as 400 artworks were shown. [Yet, see above- 500 works]. Organized by Susan Peterson, Chair of the Design Division and Associate Professor of Fine Arts at the University of Southern California, and Bernard Kester, Chair of the Convention and Instructor in Arts at UCLA.
- 1958** The Santa Monica Outlook reported that Sue Shrode currently had three art works in "California Design VI" which toured several West Coast museums. August 30, 1958.
- 1958** "Scripps College Annual Ceramic Invitational."
- 1959** "Scripps College 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Invitational Ceramic Exhibition"
- 1959** "California Design 5." The Pasadena Art Museum selected three candleholders by Sue for the traveling version. The museum secretary wrote in blue ink at the bottom of the formal, typed letter on museum stationery: "Can they hold you down now that you are a TV actress?" No doubt a reference to a televised interview or demonstration of which this short personal note is the only reference. February 14, 1959.
- 1960** "Arts of Southern California VI: Ceramics," February 7-28. Sponsored by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, shown at the Long Beach Museum of Art. 42 ceramists chosen out of 81. Sue Shrode's slab constructions (Moon or Stacked House) was exhibited. This exhibit toured nationally to several states concluding at Stanford University Art Gallery, March 1961. *Ceramics Monthly*, March 1960.
- 1966** "Sue Shrode" [exhibit title unknown], Mt. Vernon Public Library. Ceramics were shown.
- 1971** "Sue Shrode" exhibit title unknown, Illinois Power Company, 306 East Broadway, Centralia, Illinois.
- 1973** "Mid-States Craft Exhibition" 13th Annual. February 11-March 11, 1973. The Evansville Museum of Arts and Science, Indiana. Sue Shrode, *Hand Pierced Chain*, sterling silver. Emily C. Byers Memorial Purchase Award for their permanent collection.
- 1976** Mt Vernon Art Guild Exhibit. October 16 – October 17, 1976. Times Square Mall, Mt Vernon. Judge- Clyde Lawter, artist, Paducah. Sue Shrode, "Red Zinger," double woven-rayon and wool.
- 1981** "Mid-States Craft Exhibition" 21st Annual Competition, February 15-March 22, 1981. The Evansville Museum of Arts and Science, Indiana. Sue Shrode, Mt Vernon, IL. *Brown on Blue*, cotton and wool. Juror, Marlene Gabel, Director, Contemporary Crafts Association and Gallery, Portland, Oregon.
- 1981** John A. Logan College acquired one of Sue Shrode fiberworks for the permanent collection.
- 2000** "Spotlight Exhibit: Sue Shrode" May 9 – June 9, 2000. Cedarhurst. Ceramics, weaving, and jewelry shown.
- 2006** "Sue Shrode: Early Ceramics and Recent Digital Images" Cedarhurst. *Moon House*, 1957, purchased for permanent collection.
- 2012** "Pretty Pink," 2012, embroidery. Acquired for Cedarhurst permanent collection. Subject matter of the embroidery is flowers, peonies that were grown from seeds that Sue harvested from her grandfather's peonies, [may have been maternal grandfather, Walter Scott Fly]. The peonies were photographed by Sue, which she scanned and then worked the scanned image through a computer program turning it into an original embroidery pattern.



Sue Shrode with her groundbreaking candleholders and over her left shoulder, a version of her innovative stacked house series, 1957



Sue Shrode, *Pretty Pink*, 2012, embroidery, Gift of the artist, Cedarhurst Center for the Arts, 2012.12

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