

vessels  
of clay:  
silent  
con-  
nection  
and  
trans-  
formation



*vessels of clay:*

*silent connection and transformation*

amy bernard bryant  
jennifer h. cheh  
cirilo domine  
grace potter

curated by jennifer h. cheh

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december 6, 2025-january 31, 2026

Heartfelt thanks to FOCA for their support and belief in this project, and for providing the opportunity to share this collective body of work in dialogue with one another and the community.



Fellows  
of Contemporary  
Art

for my sister, minjung kim-  
whose light remains  
quietly  
present in all things  
meaningful.

## **Min's Elegy**

Françoise Nieto-Fong

I press a handful of black earth and watch.  
It comes together and falls apart like the days  
that remain. I scrape earth off my boot,  
earth you won't touch again.  
I must tend our native forest. A dove.

I wish I could rise you back like sour bread,  
breathe life into the satin ribbon of black hair,  
have us sit beneath the country Elm  
basking under the constellations'  
purple light. Ecclesiastes says there's a time  
for life and death. Sacred the word,  
I refuse to accept.

Tears rain. Brackish water. Ice cold.  
Salt of the bitter dust, melt snowflakes  
turned to hail. Light! Pierce a droplet  
of my tears, I bleed to know  
the only way to value life is death –  
Mysterious ways,  
those who die win eternal ageless breath,  
those who lose are left behind. Alive  
like mycelium in our forest, we must thrive.

*vessels of clay:*  
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*Vessels of Clay: Silent Connection and Transformation* brings together four artists working in clay, whose distinct practices converge in an exploration of self to lineage, sorrow to regeneration, earth to spirit, and absence to presence. Clay, as primal as it is transformative, becomes our shared language—one that resonates on both personal and universal levels, tracing the bonds that tie us: to one another, to the land, and to the unseen forces that shape our lives.

Here, clay bears the imprint of meaning. Earthy clays, infused with fragile remnants of shell and bone, form quiet exchanges between present and past, life and death; each repeated gesture signals continuity as much as creation. In our hands, it becomes a form shaped by ancestry and tenderness, by the natural world, and by the sanctity of space itself. Our works weave a chorus of voices, speaking to the multiplicity of being. We honor the tapestry of familial heritage—stories and traditions—while also drawing breath from resilience, transformation, and the natural world around us.

We navigate thresholds, capturing grief as it arcs toward renewal, revealing how new passageways of relation can be carved from profound feeling. Clay holds memory and holds space for us, as our hands hold earth. Ethereal forms emerge—pierced vessels and hollowed shapes that evoke cycles of loss and reverence, suggesting that absence itself may be a quiet thread binding us to the infinite.

The exhibition reveals clay's capacity to be both formless and formed, to hold the tangible and the transcendent. Four perspectives interlace into a single composition of textures, sculptural forms, organic patterns, and contemplative voids. Each work reflects on what unites us—honoring loved ones, tracing paths to healing, communing with the natural world, and attending to what cannot be seen—inviting the viewer into a meditation on fragile yet enduring, intimate yet expansive, living connections.

curated by  
jennifer h. cheh

amy bernard bryant



*bloodline-family of 3*  
2017-2025  
stoneware

Clay has woven in and out of Amy's life for 45 years, always returning to her. Her hands have shaped and reshaped the earth, forming vessels long before she fully understood their meaning. Over the decades, hand-building has remained her grounding practice—a conversation between material and maker, providing purpose and a reason to create.



Her *Bloodline* series reflects her family lineage as a first-generation Middle Eastern American, the daughter of Palestinian and Lebanese parents. She honors the resilience and diversity of her heritage through three distinct clay bodies, exploring texture and tone as metaphors for interwoven identities. The unglazed, raw clay embodies both strength and vulnerability, echoing the passage of histories across generations.

*Bloodline* is both a meditation and an offering—a way to connect the tactile, emotional, and ancestral landscapes that shape us, ensuring that the roots of history remain visible and honored.

*bloodline-sittah*  
*bloodline-jiddo*  
2017-2025  
stoneware

jennifer h. cheh

In 2015, while taking classes at a local pottery studio, Jennifer recognized a new dimension in her work — a tangible bond with clay that was both expansive and grounding. That recognition deepened her dialogue with the clay's responsiveness and wildness. Shaping by hand became a way to listen inwardly, to move through emotion with patience and touch — a medium for exploring polarities of form and formlessness, angle and curve, softness and hard edge.

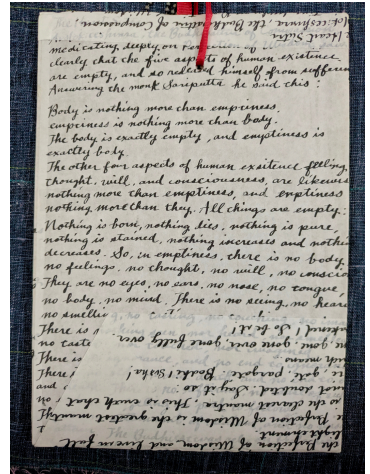
The *Kinship* series emerged from a personal in-between space — an osmotic membrane between profound pain and slow healing. In this space, deep feeling translated into sculptures that hold both sorrow and an opening to the world. The vessels seem to breathe in rhythm with her, carrying traces of mending, remembering, and beginning again — a quiet persistence reminiscent of roots working their way forward in the dark.

Born from tragedy, these quiet sculptures explore thresholds of balance. Undulating forms hold tenderness, activated by inlaid lines. In the repetition — in the carve and return — carving becomes ritual: an echo of cultural endurance and a sense of belonging. Each gesture holds memory; each form is a quiet act of resilience as life gently contorts toward light.



*kinship no.12, 2025  
no.03, 2023, no.11, 2024,  
stoneware  
carved, engobe inlay  
(clockwise)*

cirilo domine



nothing more than  
emptiness no.5  
2025  
gas fired clay  
shino/cobalt glaze  
blend

junko oki  
heart sutra  
(handwritten  
translation, excerpt)

Philippine-born American artist Cirilo's practice is encyclopedic rather than serial, bridging cultures and histories. His work reflects the exchanges, reciprocations, and returns between the Philippines, Japan, and the United States, acknowledging and revealing the wounds of history. Recognizing patterns of absences and translation, he consciously translates and mistranslates systematic virtues and perspectives to create new forms of understanding.

His recent work focuses on the familiar, classically shaped jars-vessels personified with human attributes: a belly, a foot, a shoulder, a mouth. These forms are opened, imploded, or



pierced with sharp-edged apertures that evoke the abyss, screams, or the cosmos-internal spaces that can be left empty or filled.

Each vessel offers possibilities: a simple arrangement of flowers nested within, a candleholder guiding a path, a nest for a small creature, or branches extending outward, intertwining into another scene.

With the world in chaos, *Nothing More Than Emptiness* reflects Domine's feeling, a contemplation on interior and exterior-on the space that holds and the form that contains, capturing both the emptiness and the quiet endurance of human experience.

*nothing more than emptiness no.6*, 2025  
gas fired clay  
shino/cobalt glaze  
blend

*nothing more than emptiness no.2*, 2025  
wood fired clay from  
cobb mountain  
art and ecology

Working from her studio amidst a coastal redwood forest, Grace makes ceramic sculptures focusing on themes of ecology and spiritual inquiry. Her practice centers intentional processes and a deep connection to place; the aesthetics of the work are determined by using locally sourced materials such as wild clay, ocean salt and wood for firing kilns.

Inspired by Robin Wall Kimmerer's *Braiding Sweetgrass*, the *Reliquary* series answers Kimmerer's call to enter into reciprocity with the more-than-human world through "everyday acts of practical reverence." Over the course of several months, Grace collected small dead animals, mostly insects, and crafted porcelain *Reliquaries* for their bodies. Each tiny entity is carefully gilded with copper leaf and fixed within the *Reliquary*. By using precious materials such as porcelain and copper, Grace calls into question what is culturally valued and why. The *Reliquaries* echo the forms of the bodies inside, bringing attention to the unseen impacts and inherent interconnection of every living being. Thoughtful and meticulous craft emphasizes the importance of all life, while also providing a moment of reflection to grieve what is lost in a human-centric paradigm.



*reliquary for a moth,  
reliquary for a praying mantis,  
mausoleum for a fly  
2023  
porcelain, glaze, found insects,  
copper leaf*

## ARTISTS

AMY BERNARD BRYANT (b. 1964) began her formal education in clay at Bennington College in 1983, where she studied ceramics and participated in a study abroad program in Paris the following year. She earned an Associate Degree in Interior Design from San Diego Mesa College in 1996 and a Bachelor of Arts with an emphasis in Interior Design from San Diego State University in 1999.

She spent more than twenty years working as an interior designer in San Diego. This experience honed her understanding of form, space, and materiality—insights that continue to inform and inspire her work as a ceramicist. Her return to clay reflects an enduring pull toward the tactile and the timeless, where form becomes a way of honoring her heritage.

“the material imagination  
is a means of going from  
the absence of being to the  
presence of things.”

—gaston bachelard  
*the poetics of space*

JENNIFER H. CHEH (b. 1965, Seoul, Korea) is a ceramic artist based in Los Angeles. Raised in New York, she navigates the intersection of two cultures, a duality that informs her attention to beauty in everyday life. She holds a BFA in Environmental Design from Parsons School of Design and an M.Arch from the Southern California Institute of Architecture, 1994. Her architectural training informs her approach to clay—drawing on structure, proportion, and the relationship between form and space, and guided by a sensitivity to line and rhythm.

Influenced by her heritage and by ancient and modern visual languages, Cheh’s work blurs the boundary between art and utility. She embraces the contrast between delicate porcelain and earthy stoneware, creating vessels that reflect the layered, shifting space between cultures. Through hand-building, she welcomes imperfection and chance, finding quiet energy and moments of insight in each piece.

Her work was recently included in the group exhibition *(BE)LONGING: Asian Diasporic Crossings* at ReflectSpace Gallery, Glendale Central Library, 2024. For the past two years, she has taught hand-building at the same studio where she first began her clay practice, continuing her work while sharing her knowledge with others.

CIRILO DOMINE (b. 1969, Philippines) earned his MFA from the University of California, Irvine, 1996 and his BA from the UCLA, 1993. His work traces histories of displacement and transformation, exploring absence and presence in forms that hold both emptiness and potential. Informed by *Chado* (the Way of Tea), which he has studied for more than fifteen years, his practice links narratives across time and place, creating intersections of culture, history, and personal experience.

Domine received a Getty Undergraduate Grant and interned at the Museum of Jurassic Technology in Venice, CA. As a curator, collaborator and activist, he has also worked with the L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center's Advocate Gallery.

He has had solo exhibitions at Deepriver; Commonwealth and Council; the MAK Center at the Schindler House; Pinta Dos / Philippine Expressions Gallery; and the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center. His work has also been included in group exhibitions at the Broad Museum; Wende Museum; Palm Springs Museum; Del Vaz Projects; Modeka Gallery Manila; Art Salon Chinatown; and Sotheby's Institute of Art.

GRACE POTTER (b. 1996, Knoxville, TN) is an artist and educator based in Mendocino, California. She received her BFA in Ceramics, with minors in Art History and Anthropology, from the University of Colorado Boulder, 2018. Working from her studio amidst a coastal redwood forest, Potter makes sculptural ceramic vessels that focus on and examine the intersections of ecology, material, and reverence.

Her work has exhibited in galleries and museums across the country, including the University of Colorado Boulder Art Museum, CO; Blue Spiral 1, NC; and Mainsite Gallery, OK. She has been awarded several residencies both nationally and internationally, including Township 10, Asheville, NC; laRex L'Atelier, St. Raphael, France; and the Mendocino Art Center, CA. In addition to her studio practice, Potter works as Instructor of Record and Ceramic Technician at the Mendocino College Coast Campus.

“remember the plants,  
trees, animal life who all  
have their tribes, their  
families, their histories,  
too. talk to them, listen to  
them.”

joy harjo

*excerpt from remember*



## Fellows of Contemporary Art

Fellows of Contemporary Art (FOCA) is a non-profit, independent, and membership-based organization that supports contemporary art in California.

Curators Lab Exhibitions support emerging and mid-career artists by awarding grants to emerging curators who develop and present exhibitions in support of a curatorial thesis. In keeping with FOCA's historical goal to provide documentation of each exhibition, curators produce a catalog of their choice and clarify their process of conceptualizing and organizing each exhibition. Exhibition installations and events are also documented through photographs, videos, and currently Zoom recordings posted on FOCA's website.



