

# Society: Previewing the Clay and Glass Festival

Sponsors and supporters of the Palo Alto Art Center Foundation had the opportunity to meet some of the exhibiting artists and to view selected clay and glass pieces at the Clay and Glass Festival champagne preview breakfast. About 80 artists were represented in the display of the best art of the July 12-13 festival.

On July 12, for the second year, more than 100 Foundation members and friends sipped mimosas, sampled a tasty brunch and talked with exhibiting artists in the historic Art Center courtyard.

In an interview earlier this week, Art Center Director Karen Kienzle said, "The Palo Alto Art Center is proud to host the annual Clay and Glass Festival -- the event draws more than 10,000 people to the Art Center to enjoy work in clay and glass by so many talented artists. Our members' preview breakfast provides a wonderful opportunity to kick off the festival and to get an exclusive preview of some of the very best work."

The 22nd annual festival juried 150 exhibitors. Founded in 1945 by Carlton Ball, who taught at Mills College, the original group was called the Association of San Francisco Potters and had 11 students and artists.

Now, the Clay and Glass Association has 500 members.

Artists' backgrounds are as varied as their artistic creations. Ceramist Lee Middleman of Portola Valley started in high tech before becoming an artist. He has been a fulltime artist for 12 years. He received lots of compliments on his green glazed Oribe Abora vase.

Barbara Vanderbeck of San Francisco is a lifetime artist and has participated in the festival for several years. Her "Tri Pod Totem" held fresh flowers.

April Zilber, who lives in Felton and formerly was a biochemist, has been involved in glass art since 1992. Her handsome fused and slumped glass flower screen in blue and white was a study in sophisticated simplicity.

Forrest Lesch Middleton, who is President of the Association of Clay and Glass Artists, is

from Petaluma. He has worked with clay since he was 14. Middleton said his "Minaret bottle" design was inspired by how commerce changes culture, particularly in the Middle East and the historic Silk Road.

Some of the guests enjoying a sneak peek of the varied contemporary and traditional clay and glass art included Jeanne Kennedy and Allan Rosenberg, Dorothy Saxe, Moo Anderson, Iris Korol, Susan Hyatt and foundation board members Bern Beecham, Becky and John Nelson, Carol and Don Kenyon, Arlene Gutowski, Marcia Pugsley and Bonnie Packer.

### Opening of 'Take Me Out'

It was a sold-out opening for Dragon Theatre's production of "Take Me Out" on July 11, the Tony Award-winning play by Richard Greenberg.

The play is presented in the 2nd Stage series sponsored by Dragon Theatre, which gives theater people a chance to produce their "dream shows."

"Take Me Out" was a groundbreaking milestone in 2003, when it explored events that ensued when a successful baseball player announced he was gay.

Producer Dale Albright said, "The play is about the courage to come out of the shadows into the light. I love everything about it. The language is gorgeous; it allows us to tell a story."

"Visually, it was a beautiful comedy drama," director Ken Sonkin said. "The story showed how all of the characters had the courage to come out of the shadows."

The play is set in the locker room of a major league team, and the players wear thongs.

Audience members were enthusiastic in their praise of the production, both the themes and the staging.

Irmgard Lafrentz, who is a hospitality and in-kind supporter, brought her son Daniel Lafrentz, a film producer for Web commercials and movies. She said she liked both baseball and the subject of coming out with "the combination of seriousness and not

overly dramatic." Daniel liked "the interesting parallel between our lives and the game."

All the characters were multidimensional, and all of the actors were very interested in portraying their complexities. Rory Strahan-Mauk, who played the racist, homophobic pitcher Shane Mungitt, said his character's evil was not malicious, but "a product of his environment," orphanages in the South.

"I had to do this show. It was fun, a great cast. I've done my dream show," Russell Johnson said (he played star batter Davey Battle).

Opening night attendees included Theatre Bay Area Executive Director Brad Erickson, with friends Bob Miller and Brian Protheroe.

The show is sold out for its remaining performances, today and Sunday. For information, visit <http://dragonproductions.net> or call 650-493-2006.

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