

# LENNY, MITZI, & CO-CONSPIRATORS



February 14 - March 25, 2022

## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

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Leonard Dowhie is part Loki and part Bugs Bunny, or he at least functions as the mercurial trickster for our visual artistic community here at USI. His personality is charming while simultaneously being a bit gruff. His artwork is alluring while sometimes being iconoclastic. He uses the primordial medium of clay as a soapbox to comment on the incredulous social conundrums he finds himself witnessing, while also being conscious of the medium's beauty and the aesthetic qualities of the surfaces and forms he works on.

Lenny is an invested scholar of ceramics, whose role as a teacher and mentor at USI has transmuted into his role as director of the New Harmony Clay Project. The program has hosted and encouraged a growing list of skilled artists from around the globe, many of whom are represented in this exhibition through their works assembled in the Blaffer Collection. Mitzi Davis, the program manager for the NHCP, has been integral to the center's day to day success. Having her work and the work of former NHCP residents alongside Lenny's is an important contextual signifier of his long held role shaping the artistic culture of Southern Indiana.

I am truly happy to see this exhibition come to fruition after being delayed for nearly two years because of this ridiculous and tragic pandemic we have experienced. Enjoy the exhibition and lose yourself within the craft, mirth, outrage and humanity you may find imbued in the works on display.

### **Brett Anderson**

Director, McCutchan Art Center/Pace Galleries  
Associate Professor of Art, Printmaking  
University of Southern Indiana

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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It always takes a village to put these exhibitions and catalogs together. Lenny, of course, has been a delight to work with and get to know better through this exhibition. Mitzi Davis deserves photo credit for nearly all images in this catalog, except those images shot by Lenny, as well as high praise for her great installation of both her own work and most of the works from the Blaffer Collection. Thank you to Anne Dowhie for being my point of contact when Lenny was hard to reach. Her sharp sensibilities influenced the layout of the exhibitions and she deserves full credit for the display of vessels from their personal collection that is also available to visitors of these galleries.

We generously thank the Robert Lee Blaffer Foundation for the use of their collection of works by New Harmony Clay Project residents. Susan Sauls and the USI Collections made the loan of View from my Room #2 to the exhibition on short notice. Thank you, David Huebner and my crew of hard-working student assistants. Thank you to the fine designers and technicians at Creative and Print Services for being so flexible to our needs. And Chuck Armstrong deserves thanks for the many design iterations and edits this short catalog endured.



**VIEW FROM MY WINDOW, HANGZHOU, CHINA**

Pastels on Arches  
41" x 23"

*Cover Image:*

**JOSEPH, JESUS, AND ANIMAL MAGNETISM**

Cast & altered porcelain figures, underglazes, glazes, decals and luster  
Each figure is 12" tall





## 92 DINNER CONVERSATIONS (THAT WILL NEVER HAPPEN)

Cast & Shot dinnerware  
4' x 3' x 3"

## FISH MONGER, TAIWAN

Pastels on Arches  
31" x 22"



**ST. MICKEY OF THE LAND MINES**

Cast and Constructed Whiteware  
20" x 15" x 7"



### ARTIFACTS TPOT

SolidWare, Carved Whiteware Clay  
& Lots of Lead Glaze  
20" x 7" x 5"

### THE WALK TO MY STUDIO, HANGZHOU CHINA

Cast & Constructed Whiteware slip,  
32" x 19" x 3"



**BLUE BOY TPOT**

Cast and Constructed Whiteware  
17" x 14" x 8"

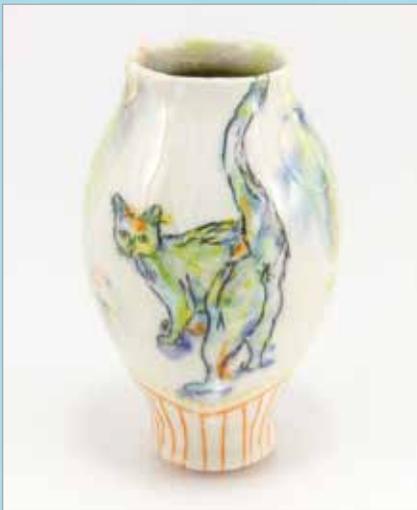


**SPINAL TPOT WITH THE  
OFFENDING GOLD PART**

Constructed Whiteware Clay  
14.5" x 4" x 4"

## MITZI DAVIS

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My ceramic work embodies whimsy and youthful delight. I seek to capture humorous observations and playful details that reconstruct various interpretations of domesticity, ritual and shelter. Using the interrelationship between individual memories and cultural influences, whether it's fond recollections of childhood bedtime stories, Saturday morning cartoons, or daily chores, I reconstruct narrative scenes to express visible and imaginary tensions in my work.

My current work incorporates layers of imagery that focus on the personification of animals and ubiquitous animal sacrifice. I explore a narrative that incorporates creatures that are redolent on roadsides and found in the "windshield phenomenon" to represent what is unwanted, overlooked, or misunderstood. Like a favored childhood cartoon, I arm these "scapegoats" with a surplus of weaponry befitting their idiosyncrasies and wait to see if retaliation will occur.

# THE NEW HARMONY CLAY PROJECT



Founded by Professor Lenny Dowhie in 2015, The New Harmony Clay Project (NHCP) is an International Artist in Residence program housed in the Sarah Campbell Blaffer Pottery Studio in New Harmony, Indiana. The program fosters an environment that supports the investigation of new ideas and work of ceramic artists. Additionally, NHCP supports this mission through the residency, educational and public events programming. For more information go to: <https://nhclayproject.org/> or check us out on Facebook or Instagram.

One outgrowth of the NHCP has been the development of a permanent record of our resident artists in the form of a permanent collection. Thus, we are pleased to present many of the pieces from that collection as an adjunct exhibition to the main presentation.

*Top Left:* Donna Causland, **COMING TO TERMS WITH HENRY**  
*Top Right:* Yoko Sekino-Bove, **EYE OF GOD DICE**

*Middle Right:* Marina Kunchinski, **FORCE MULTIPLIERS**  
*Bottom Right:* Alicia Porter, **UNTITLED**

## ARTIST'S STATEMENT

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When Brett first proposed this exhibition some 2 or 3 years ago, we didn't envision a world shutting down around us with the largest worldwide pandemic since the 1918 Spanish Flu. As a result of delays caused by Covid and other circumstances, the show evolved to be a more inclusive exhibit as well as one that focused upon parts of the Lenny & Anne Dowhie collection which will eventually be coming to the University as part of our donation of art to USI.

I have been working with mud for just over 50 years starting in 1970 when some graduate students challenged me to take their class. The rest, as they say, is history. I have had the great fortune and pleasure to have worked with, known, and revered many of the giants in the field of ceramics: Don Reitz, Val Cushing, Victor Spinski, Rudy Autio, Dick Hay and so many more. All those artists influenced and helped me with my career. I have also been extraordinarily fortunate to have been invited to participate in numerous Artist in Residence programs around the world meeting and working with experts from around the globe. Fifty years is a long time, and yet the act of creation is still as exciting to me now as it was in 1970. I am also grateful I have been able to share my journey with hundreds upon hundreds of students here at the University of Southern Indiana as well as students and artists everywhere I traveled.

Most of my work has been directly or indirectly a response to the personal and the political. Personal in that many works reflect my response(s) to what was happening to me at the time. And politically, even though much of my work used a vessel format as the basis for the sculpture, I would often directly attempt to confront the viewer by challenging him or her to think more deeply about the ideas I was examining. For example, "92 Dinner Conversations that will Never Happen" presents the viewer with the familiar (an American Flag motif) as well as with the less familiar, but recognizable, bullet holes. The "flag" is displayed upside down which according to flag code section 36, U.S.C. chapter 10, "an upside-down flag is a signal of dire distress in instances of extreme danger to life or property". With the dinner plates, the idea of dinner and conversation is implied however the number of bullet holes represents the insanity of the culture of guns and the killings that happen every day. Thus no more dinner conversations. Perhaps the piece will cause a viewer to think more seriously about the issue of gun violence.

Other works have more (or less) subtle references to the politics of the day, and I hope that viewers will enjoy seeking out other works and assess what they represent beyond a pretty glaze, decal or "trick of the trade".

Finally, my thanks to Brett Anderson, Chuck Armstrong, Mitzi Davis, Anne Dowhie and all the gallery staff & USI faculty who made this exhibition possible.



**Kenneth P. McCutchan Art Center**  
**Palmina F. and Stephen S. Pace Galleries**