

Ceramics

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Common Ground:

A Showcase of National Ceramics Artists-in-Residence

by Steven Hill



A common question lurking in the back of the mind for many recent graduates in ceramics is "where can I continue to develop my work before moving on to the next stage in my career?" The increasing competitiveness of graduate school demands a top-notch portfolio and most students never actually have a long enough gestation period during undergraduate school for their work to mature. Even those ceramists who are ready to try to become self-sufficient studio artists are faced with the cost of setting up a studio—a much greater cost than with most other media. The increasing number of residency programs at ceramics centers across the United States can offer one solution to these challenges.

A residency can provide a number of benefits for someone at this crucial point in his or her career. School is competitive, full of deadlines and pressure, while residencies tend to offer a more relaxed and supportive environment—just right for the ongoing development of ideas. Conversely, the nonstructured creative studio time of most residencies means that the participant must be self directed and motivated if their work is to grow. Although working as a resident artist comes with its own set of pressures, these

Mike Jabbur

Red Star Studios, October 2003–August 2005

Residencies can be the perfect opportunity for artists at a transitional point in their career to further their education, develop their artistic style and assemble a strong portfolio. My residency taught me much about the ceramics world, and contributed greatly to my acceptance at a graduate program. The mentoring of Steven Hill, coupled with the open sharing of ideas among studio members, students and interns, proved to make my residency at Red Star an invaluable experience. The family environment of this studio provides an atmosphere of comfort and exploration, encouraging freedom and growth. Being surrounded by professional potters, and having the opportunity to show work in a gallery setting, provides a taste of the life an artist lives—the diligent work ethic, the stresses of self-marketing, and the joys of a career full of passion and provocation.

Three canisters, to 9 in. (23 cm) in height, thrown and altered stoneware, soda fired to Cone 10 reduction, 2004. Jabbur currently resides in Athens, Ohio.