

RED LODGE CLAY CENTER



Ted Neal & Markus Urbanik
building kilns



Product of Richard Nickel's
Short-Term Residency



Tom Bartel & Ben Ahlvers
loading their work

The Decision

In 2005 David Hiltner committed to the endeavor that has become Red Lodge Clay Center, intending to augment the intense experience provided by academia. On the verge of applying for tenure at Wichita State University, David found himself with the opportunity to choose:

-continue pursuing a successful academic career, building a strong ceramic program and a private studio practice, thrusting young graduates into the world year after year

or

-while continuing his private studio practice, also establish a residency program where recent graduates can mature as professional artists; having the time and space to unpack portions of the recently absorbed, prodigious information of academia



Red Lodge Clay Center's Fox Studio

The Vision

Red Lodge Clay Center was always meant to be a place of development. Situated in a small tourist town at the foot of the Beartooth Mountains, the Hiltners wanted artists to have access to magnificent, contemplative spaces as well as modern, efficient, well-equipped studios. In six short years the vision has grown to encompass a gallery, a website with a national reputation for excellence, a community arts outreach program, a visiting artist program and three residency options for professional ceramists. The impressive growth of Red Lodge Clay Center can be attributed to three veins of vision and executed effort.



Long-Term Resident Martha Grover



Artist-Invite-Artist Group:
Brad Schwieger, Von VenHuizen, Ben Ahlvers, Nicholas Bivins, and Tom Bartel

Vision: Part I

The most important aspects of Red Lodge Clay Center's successes are found in David's own formidable skill sets and long-range vision. His path, from student to artist to professor, exposed him to a variety of learning environments as well as learning styles. His time as a professor also provided him with the opportunity to build and rebuild portions of studios. When the time came to build the Red Lodge Clay Center studio, he wanted to create a physical framework where exchange and sharing was not only possible, but actively facilitated. Of course, the greatest studio in the world won't be filled with energy if makers don't know about, which brings us to the final skills in need of mention: branding and networking. Both traits he honed while working in his family's welding business where he was given the opportunity to develop an intuitive design sense.

The core tenet adhered to throughout? "Do it well. Do it right."

With construction underway and ethos in heart and hand, David wasted no time in getting the Red Lodge Clay Center logo into, not only the Montana circuit, but also the national scene where his consistent professionalism quickly validated the residency program as a place to be, while his affable nature meant established ceramic artists, academics and administrators were more than willing to back the venture in myriad ways. Top ceramic studio artists sent their work to the gallery, where the 50% commission has always been

support for the residency programs and community arts outreach. Professors encouraged their best students to apply for residency. Seasoned kiln-builders loaned their expertise in adding to facility resources, while many other trusted voices advised, allowing David to partner their input with his own experience to make the best decisions for future success.



Founder and Executive Director David Hiltner building soda kiln with Matt Long and Frank Saliani.

Vision: Part II

For the next reason of success we must look to the familial bond and generosity the Hiltner's bring to every endeavor they pursue. David's wife Maggy Rozycki Hiltner is a successful studio artist, and together they are raising their family, welcoming all who pass through the Red Lodge Clay Center studio into their home and life in a very tangible way. Maggy is the behind-the-scenes partner who has many adjectives laid at her door: enthusiastic, passionate, pragmatic, visionary, tangential. It was Maggy who saw the potential for the space where the gallery now sits at 123 South Broadway Avenue in the heart of downtown Red Lodge. The location allowed a small town of 2500 to quickly assume ownership and a sense of pride in the new venture. The significant volume of the building provided living spaces for the initial resident artists, ample room for growth in gallery stock, areas to process work and orders, and a studio where residents could work and teach. It's no secret that ceramics can be a myopic world, for better and for worse. Those who are active in the field of ceramics have an intense passion for the material, theory and history. Sometimes our passion can blur our vision. Maggy, as a maker outside of ceramics, but no less passionate about the arts, keeps that vision a little clearer and delightfully off-kilter from the traditional plumbness of ceramic trajectories.

Vision: Part III

The third reason for Red Lodge Clay Center's inaugural and on-going success has to be the organizations ability to support and nurture those who contribute to the daily operations. David Hiltner has an inherent understanding of management on an interpersonal level. And while he is unwavering on the major cornerstones of his philosophies, he has a consistent and active respect for collaboration, input and communal assessment demonstrated through perpetually open dialogue.

The Evolution

Alluding to the core team in Red Lodge, leads us to the history, which is still short enough to allow for a quick sketch of past residents and staff who have all been integral contributors. Initially two residents were invited to Red Lodge: Stephanie Lanter and Frank Saliani. Their accommodations were modest compared to current residential facilities, but they willingly stepped into the unknown to build. Frank and Stephanie believed in the larger vision of Red Lodge Clay Center and they were valued allies, plumbing their resources to develop classes, gallery exhibitions, resident policies, organizational procedures, and spent countless hours laboring over the construction of new facilities. They were contributors to a vision larger than the individual studio practices they left behind. As artists, the disparate aesthetic of their creative output set a precedent Red Lodge Clay Center has continued to embrace. It is an intention to always present contemporary ceramics in its entirety, celebrating the diverse potential of the material through a choir of contrasting and complementary voices and hands.

The second year Frank and Stephanie were able to focus more on their personal studio practices. Frank created slip-cast modular, geometric sculptures in a tightly conceived palette. Stephanie combined fetishized ceramic objects covered in crocheted layers, exploring multi-tiered concepts of culture and impulse. They were joined by Tara Wilson, a successful atmospheric potter with a national reputation for pillowing, feminine, functional forms, and Dawn Holder, an installation artist with a sense of the fantastic; incorporating video, performance and all manner of other mediums into her ceramic objects. It was a group brimming with divergent experience, opinions, styles, and solutions. It also was a model, solidifying a pattern Red Lodge Clay Center would continue to follow in the coming years.



Red Lodge Clay Center Gallery

Also joining the team in 2006 was Anthony Schaller as the first Gallery Coordinator. Working collaboratively with David, the two combined their connections to build a solid

stable of represented artists in the gallery. In 2008 Tawni Shuler joined the staff as Programs Coordinator, implementing visions of community outreach as yet unrealized. Tawni added her own voice to Red Lodge Clay Center programming, strengthening community ties and loyalties with her passion for arts outreach. She organized the new residents (Martha Grover, Ryan Olsen, Paige Wright and Ernest Forward) drawing on their strengths to develop an improved curriculum.

The 2007-08 Resident Artists were the first to move into the new studio just five miles outside of town in Fox, Montana. They were also the first to live in what is now known as the Salmon House; a large, two-story stucco home built in 1937 providing two single apartments and one shared apartment. Comfortable in their new home and town the residents continued contributing to the construction and maintenance of Red Lodge Clay Center, even as they labored in their individual studios. Their parting contribution for future residents was a test kiln, purchased with proceeds from the first Fox Studio Pottery Sale, conceived of and executed by the residents. Martha, Ryan, Paige and Ernest also marked the end of their year with the first official Resident Exit Show. Inaugural residents had individual exhibitions in addition to intermittent roles as curators. As the gallery's reputation grew, the schedule became standardized and the residents were able to more fully utilize studio time to develop their own bodies of work. A group exit show is a familiar tradition, and it relieved the residents from the magnitude of a one-person exhibition, allowing for experimentation and exploration over the course of their year, rather than wrote execution of known forms and ideas.



Salmon House
Long-Term Residential Housing



Red House
Short-Term Residential Housing

Nicholas Bivins, Kyla Strid, Eva Champagne and Carolyn Baginski arrived in Red Lodge the following year. They moved into a fully equipped studio. with three atmospheric kilns, five electric kilns, a stocked glaze kitchen, a pristine wood shop and state-of-the-art ventilation and drainage. 2009 was a year full of transitions, even as the mechanisms of Red Lodge Clay Center began to settle into a standardized pace. Tawni Shuler moved on to teach at Utah Valley University. The position she left transformed when Markus Urbanik joined the staff as Program and Facilities Coordinator; at this point Red Lodge Clay Center's facilities included the studio, the gallery and two dwellings. Markus' passion for teaching, mechanical aptitude and diligence were a welcome addition and continue to make him an invaluable part of the culture at Red Lodge Clay Center. While the full-time staff evolved (Anthony also moved on to other projects this year) the residents were, not only the heart

of 2009, but also the stabilizing force of most day-to-day gallery operations and community programs.

By the summer of 2010 Jill Foote-Hutton was hired as the new Gallery Coordinator and the departing residents made sure the transition was seamless. Jill brought her sense of social engagement, commitment to education through curating and a passion for ceramics to the gallery. Her egalitarian philosophy permeates exhibitions and aligns with the Red Lodge Clay Center mission as she curates emerging or unknown ceramists alongside leaders in the field, diversifying the stock as much as possible to show the breadth of the field, welcoming all questions and encouraging patrons to redefine themselves as collectors with the latitude to make a variety of acquisitions possible. It is an inclusive philosophy, fully supported by the Hiltners and aligning with Markus' community based partnerships and programs.

In 2010 Brett Kern, Allen Chen, Jonathan Fitz and Daniel Garretson came. Another group with completely divergent styles: Brett as the consummate technician, slip-casting any form while avoiding the often cool, aloofness that can come with such proficiency. Allen was the inventor, creating elaborate processes and pushing materials beyond their limitations resulting in dynamic, balletic installations. Daniel was the sole potter in the group, committed to a minimal palette of color and form and dedicated to function. Jonathan was the mad-scientist turning surface into form who dutifully chronicled every test and eventually turned his mad eye to vessels.

In these five years the residents were encouraged to take every opportunity to develop their voice as contributing teachers, curators, designers, and managers. With the arrival of each group, the town of Red Lodge has learned to eagerly anticipate the new influx of ideas and skill sets. Red Lodge Clay Center residents have consistently transitioned successfully to teaching positions, active studio practices, graduate programs or other competitive residencies.



Community Classes



Annual Exit Show



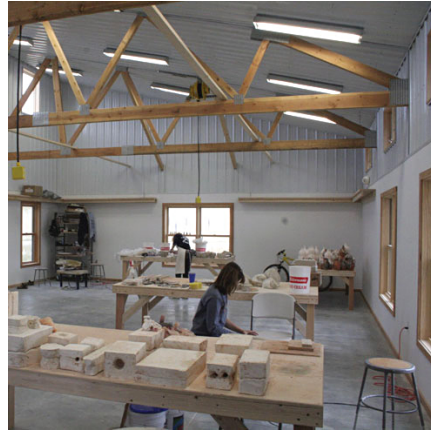
Kiln Building

The most recent group of residents: Katie Coughlin, Undine Brod, Andrew Gilliatt and Andrea Moon, were again diverse in their experience and aesthetic; probably more diverse than any group thus far. The diametric perspectives were put to use tightening standards in processing work in the gallery, capitalizing on community outreach efforts, and building the patron database. Most importantly, they refocused clarity on the role residents have played at Red Lodge Clay Center and expanded the ideal. Andrea seized the conversation

generated by her resident group and created an opportunity for everyone. Taking assessment of past success and future potential of the Residency Program she proposed a new permanent staff position to David. In August 2012 Andrea became the first Residency and Communications Coordinator of Red Lodge Clay Center. Andrea naturally assumed the role of advocate and conduit, for and between administration and residents, the title and appointment of responsibilities sanctioned the role.



Glaze Kitchen



Short-Term Resident Wing



Long-Term Resident Studios

Realization

All of these hands and many others continue to contribute to Red Lodge Clay Center. The programs are more established and the package offered is better known. Long-Term Residents, in exchange for 20 hours of work per week, receive a private studio space, housing and a monthly stipend. Materials and firing fees are offered at cost and residents are invited to present their work for gallery representation throughout the year and each residency concludes with a much celebrated exit show in the loft gallery. Each year there are more exhibition opportunities coordinated for the residents outside of Red Lodge, meeting two goals: promote developing professional artists, educate students and the general public on the potential of the ceramic arts.

In addition to the Long-Term Residency Program Red Lodge Clay Center has also established a strong Short-Term Residency rotation. September through May a variety of artists come to work in the south wing of the Fox Studios, contributing to the energy and defining each Long-Term Residency with their input. Short-Term Residents stay anywhere from as long as three months to as short as two weeks and live in a second accommodation provided by Red Lodge Clay Center for a modest rate, while the studio space is considered a gratis contribution to the development of their art.

The final leg of Red Lodge Clay Center Residency Programs is the Artist-Invite-Artists Short-Term Residencies. AIA groups provide an option for makers seeking a brief interlude from the customary solitude of private studio practices or makers who invest a majority of their time in academia or arts administration. Red Lodge Clay Center invites these individuals to coordinate their artist peer groups year round. The AIA Program has been so successful that the summer schedule is booked two years out.

The community has an ever-increasing demand for classes with three sessions offered annually. Almost every class has a waiting list. More importantly and central to the heart

of Red Lodge Clay Center's mission is a consistent intent to develop teaching skill sets in residents who choose to pursue that path. Outreach Programs evolve with resident input and each year we serve a growing audience. At least twice a year there are free two-day demonstration workshops presented by nationally recognized ceramic artists, including: Kurt Weiser, Ron Myers, Diego Valles of Mata Ortiz, Randy Johnston and Jan McKeachie Johnston, Matt Wilt and many more.



Randy Johnston & Jan McKeachie Johnston Workshop



Mata Ortiz Workshop, Diego Valles

The gallery now represents over 80 ceramic artists and prides itself on the diversity of styles available. Because the Hiltners had the foresight to locate Red Lodge Clay Center in a destination location, many visitors who would have a limited experience with ceramics, now have a the opportunity to see and touch a wide range of ceramic objects. The objects available in the gallery are a snapshot of contemporary ceramic activity, relevant to student, master and novitiate. And all of the works are available for viewing and purchase on the Red Lodge Clay Center website, another example of the Hiltners' foresight and perhaps a fitting way to conclude the current tale.

Every piece of work presented in the gallery is available online. Every event, from workshops to openings, is documented online. Every resident who passes through the Red Lodge Clay Center studio will be represented online in perpetuity. The website is not only a main revenue source for all the programming offered, but it is also an accessible educational tool for students of ceramics around the world and a key tool in the successful branding of Red Lodge Clay Center.

In 2013 Red Lodge Clay Center will be seven years old and will celebrate the birthday with the second Bi-Annual Juried National focused on showcasing diversity and quality. Ever evolving, Red Lodge Clay Center will remain dialed-in to the core mission: provide a place for professionally minded ceramic artists to create new work and share with our resident artists and the general public the importance of art in our everyday lives.

-Jill Foote-Hutton
2012