

# Nature, Sculpture, Abstraction And Clay: 100 Years Of American Ceramics

By Tiernan Alexander

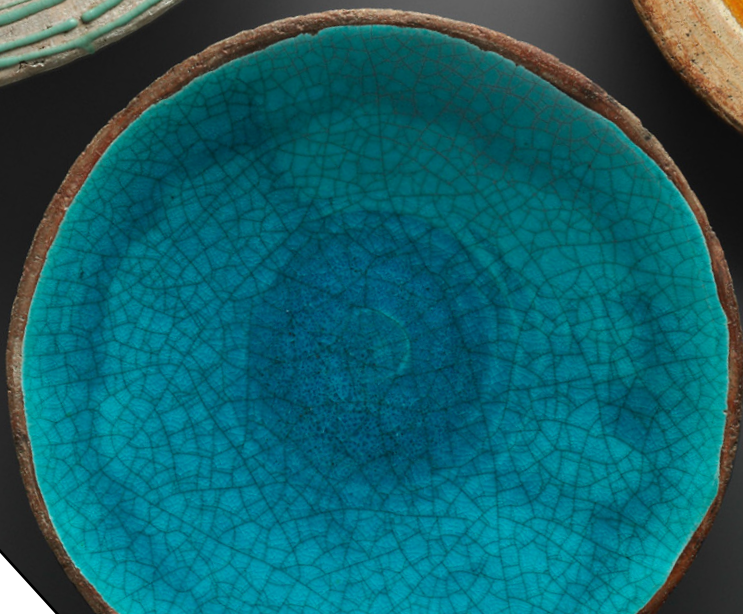




*Previous page; Seed jar by Dorothy Torivio (1946–2011), Acoma Pueblo, N.M., 2001. Coil-built earthenware, 3½ by 3¼ inches. Gift of James and Margie Krebs.*

*Bottle by Beatrice Wood (1897–1998), 1960–68. Earthenware with turquoise crater glaze, 10 by 4 inches. Gift of Leith Speiden.*

A new exhibition that opened in January and runs until January 3, 2016, at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (MFA) explores ceramic art from the late Nineteenth Century to today—from the Arts and Crafts movement to midcentury Modernism to studio craft and contemporary practice.




*Desert  
bowls by  
Glen  
Lukens  
(1887–1967),  
1935–45. Smallest  
3¼ by 14¾ inches,  
largest 4¾ by 22 ½  
inches. Gift of Philip Aarons  
and Shelley Fox Aarons in honor  
of Jules and Jeanette Aarons.*



*Gourd-shaped vase form by Gertrud Amon Natzler (1908–1971) and Otto Natzler (1908–2007), 1958. Earthenware with sulphur crater glaze, overall 11½ by 5 5/8 inches. Gift of Philip Aarons and Shelley Fox Aarons in honor of Jules and Jeanette Aarons.*

Outstanding works that display the transformative nature of clay include objects drawn from the MFA's rich holdings as well as a number of local private collections. The exhibition features more than 70 works organized into three thematic sections:

A ceramic vase with a wide, shallow body and a flared rim. The interior is a solid, dark greenish-brown color. The exterior is decorated with a 'cuerda seca' pattern, featuring thick, dark brown outlines that create a network of irregular, organic shapes. These shapes are filled with a light green glaze, while the spaces between them are filled with a vibrant blue glaze. The overall effect is a complex, abstract design that resembles a stylized landscape or a cellular structure. The vase is set against a plain, light gray background.

*Vase decorated by Sara Galner (1894–1982),  
made by Paul Revere Pottery of the Saturday  
Evening Girls club (Boston, 1908–1942),  
October 1913. Glazed earthenware with cuerda  
seca decoration, 2¾ by 8 inches. Gift of Dr  
David L. Bloom and family in honor of his  
mother, Sara Galner Bloom.*

Sculpture and Abstraction, Nature and Landscape and Surface and Decoration. Many of the objects have never before been on display in a museum, with the majority making their MFA debut.

Pushing the boundaries between functional and sculptural, the works demonstrate unprecedented experimentation not only with forms, colors and glazes, but also with the role of clay as an artistic and sculptural medium. Highlighting the connections between contemporary art and the art of the past, the exhibition explores each generation's distinct style, examining how

*Vases by Fong Chow (b 1923), made by Glidden Pottery, Alfred, N.Y., 1940-1957. Glazed stoneware. Gift of Philip Aarons and Shelley Fox Aarons in honor of Jules and Jeanette Aarons.*



*"The Pines" tile designed  
by Addison B. LeBoutillier  
(active in Boston  
1872–1951),  
manufactured by Grueby  
Faience Company (active  
1894–1909) or Grueby  
Faience and Tile Company  
(active 1909–1919),  
1906–20. Pressed and  
glazed earthenware, 1 by  
12¼ by 12¼ inches.  
Anonymous gift in  
memory of John G. Pierce.*



has been redefined as an artist and how ceramics have been redefined as a vehicle for artistic expression. Diverse highlights include “The Pine” tile manufactured by Grueby Faience Company around 1906-20, “Gourd-shaped vase form (model

no.J821)” by Gertrud and Otto Natzler from 1958 and a newly acquired porcelain sculpture, “December” (2013) by Cheryl Ann Thomas. For information, 617-267-9300 or [www.mfa.org](http://www.mfa.org).

*“Float/Aloft” by Adrian Saxe (b 1943), about 1989. Glazed porcelain with luster, 30 inches. The Daphne Farago Collection.*

