



Palo Alto  
**ARTCenter**

1313 Newell Road, Palo Alto, CA, 94303

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## **The Palo Alto Art Center Presents...**

**Winter 2008 Exhibitions / January 27 - April 27, 2008**

**~ *Masters in Ceramics, Enamel, and Fiber Art* ~**

***"From Fire to the Forefront: Selections from the Forrest L. Merrill Collection"***

***"Intertwined: Contemporary Baskets from the Sara and David Lieberman Collection"***

**~ Public Preview: January 27, 2008, 1:00-3:00 PM ~**

**PALO ALTO, CA** –Two prominent, private collections that focus on exceptional work by masters in ceramics, enamel, and fiber art will be showcased in the Palo Alto Art Center (PAAC) Winter 2008 exhibitions, January 27 through April 27, 2008. A public preview for the exhibitions will be held at PAAC on January 27, 2008 from 1:00 - 3:00 p.m. Admission is free. In addition, docent-led tours, "*Art Dialogues*," will be offered every Saturday during the exhibitions at 2:00 p.m.

*"From Fire to the Forefront: Vessels from the Forrest L. Merrill Collection,"* presents ceramic and enamel vessels from a Northern California collection that date from mid-century to the present. Curated by Signe Mayfield of the Palo Alto Art Center, artists featured in the Merrill Collection include Laura Andreson, Richard DeVore, Anne Hironnelle, Karen Karnes, Gertrud and Otto Natzler, Lucie Rie, June Schwarcz, Toshiko Takaezu, Marguerite Wildenhain, and Beatrice Wood.

*"Intertwined: Contemporary Baskets from the Sara and David Lieberman Collection,"* is organized from the Arizona collection by the Arizona State University Art Museum, Tempe, Arizona, and curated by Senior Curator Heather S. Lineberry with consultation from the artist/scholar Jane Sauer. Arizona art collectors Sara and David Lieberman have one of the most extensive collections of contemporary baskets in the country and will share the best of their collection with the public. *Intertwined* challenges perceptions about the art of contemporary basket-making. More than 70 works by regional, national and international artists show the breadth of the art form with traditional and functional works exhibited along with mixed-media sculptures. The artists have manipulated a range of materials like grasses, fish skins, porcupine quills, grocery bags, postcards and pistachio shells to create intriguing objects that push the boundaries of basket-making. These varied materials are used to make an astonishing range of figures including birds, lizards, a teapot and the human figure.

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**About *"From Fire to Forefront: Selections from the Forrest L. Merrill Collection"***

*"From Fire to Forefront: Selections from the Forrest L. Merrill Collection"* features ceramic and enamel vessels by masters at the forefront of their field, dating from mid-century to the present. Artists include Laura Andreson, Richard DeVore, Anne Hirondelle, Karen Karnes, Gertrud and Otto Natzler, Lucie Rie, June Schwarcz, Toshiko Takeazu, Marguerite Wildenhain, and Beatrice Wood.

Forrest L. Merrill's passion for collecting began with his first purchase as a teenager in Southern California. Since that time, he has collected select artists in depth. Merrill's holdings often reflect his geographical proximity to the artist. "Close to the kiln," the collector has had the first hand advantage of learning about the artist's intentions and newly developed advances in relation to the artist's personal stories, which have all helped him shape directions for his collection.

Merrill's holdings in ceramics by pioneers Gertrud Natzler (1908-1971) and Otto Natzler (1908-2007) alone ensure recognition of his collection's significance and his discerning eye. The exhibition features a selection culled from over 250 pieces by the Natzlers acquired by Merrill. As a master potter, Gertrud formed the ceramic vessels on the wheel. Otto, a master in chemistry and at the kiln, innovated a vast repertoire of over 2000 glazes with sumptuous color variation. He found the perfect glaze to create nuanced and highly individual vessels.

One of the leading couples in the modern ceramic movement, the Natzlers moved to the Los Angeles basin from Vienna in 1938. Former student of the Natzlers Beatrice Wood (1893-1998), is known for her signature luster glazes which are included in this exhibition. Laura Andreson (1902-1999), received instruction on throwing pots on a wheel from Gertrud Natzler in the late 1940s, about the same time as Wood. Andreson initiated the Ceramics Department at UCLA, where she taught for thirty-eight years, instructing over 5000 students and completing extensive glaze research. Often envisioning a shape with the primary inspiration in a glaze that varies from matte, stone-like surfaces to crystalline glazes, she became known for porcelain and stoneware in strong, minimalist forms associated with her Scandinavian heritage.

When Merrill moved to the Bay Area, he acquired a range of work by another influential teacher Marguerite Wildenhain (1896-1985). Her summer seminars at "Pond Farm" pottery combined disciplined training, integration of art and craft, and philosophy of her Bauhaus experience in Germany. Her ceramics were often canvases for drawing and narrative elements. In the Bay Area, Merrill has formed a dazzling collection with work by June Schwarcz (1918-) from Sausalito, California. Her expressionism and innovation earned her the accolade as the "Peter Voulkos" of enamels. Continually innovating as she approaches age 90 in 2008, she is a recent recipient of a grant from the Fleishacker Foundation.

Merrill has acquired signature work by nationally-recognized artists including Lucie Rie (1902-1995), Richard DeVore (1933-2006), Anne Hirondelle (1944-), Karen Karnes (1925-), and Toshiko Takeazu (1921-).

The catalogue for *"From Fire to Forefront: Selections from the Forrest L. Merrill Collection"* has received special support by an anonymous donor.

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***About "Intertwined: Contemporary Baskets from the Sara and David Lieberman Collection"***

Arizona art collectors Sara and David Lieberman have one of the most extensive collections of contemporary baskets in the country. For the past 40 years, the Liebermans have created strong collections of ceramics, baskets and contemporary art. Originally from Minneapolis, the couple permanently relocated to Arizona in 1996, where they became active in the arts and education communities. The Liebermans strongly supported the development of the Arizona State University (ASU) Art Museum Ceramics Research Center, which exhibited their ceramics collection in 2003.

*Intertwined* challenges perceptions about the art of contemporary basket-making. More than 70 works by regional, national and international artists show the breadth of the art form with traditional and functional works exhibited along with mixed-media sculptures. The artists have manipulated a range of materials like grasses, fish skins, porcupine quills, grocery bags, postcards and pistachio shells to create intriguing objects that push the boundaries of basket-making.

"Sara and David Lieberman, with their impeccable eye and passion for contemporary craft, have assembled one of the best collections of contemporary baskets in the country," stated Heather S. Lineberry, who curated the ASU exhibition, along with nationally-known contemporary fiber artist and scholar, Jane Sauer. "The more than 150 baskets in their collection were first collected for their function, appeal and grounding in ancient traditions. But their selections soon included new works of great vitality that were more about expression and communication rather than function."

*Intertwined* is accompanied by a full-color catalogue with additional essays by Los Angeles artist Ferne Jacobs and scholar Kenneth R. Trapp, former Curator for the Renwick Gallery of the Smithsonian American Museum and the Oakland Museum of California. With the *Intertwined* exhibition, the Palo Alto Art Center is pleased to present work by San Francisco Bay Area-based pioneers in the field including Ed Rossbach, Kay Sekimachi, Lillian Elliot, Gyöngy Laky, and Katherine Westphal. Among the 70 works in the exhibition is traditional work by Native Americans and innovative work by major contemporary figures, expanding the very definition of a basket. These artists include Dorothy Gill Barnes, Carol Eckert, John McQueen, Ferne Jacobs, Norma Minkowitz, John Garrett, and others. The exhibition also features exceptional holdings by masters from Japan, including Nagakura Kenichi, Jiro Yonezawa, Hisako Sekijima, and Yamaguchi Ryuün.

"*Intertwined* will be a visual feast with highly textural, colorful and boldly shaped sculptural forms suspended from the ceiling and hung on walls, in addition to traditional settings," added Lineberry. "The exhibition and its accompanying catalog, with essays by Kenneth R. Trapp and Ferne Jacobs, provide an international look at contemporary basket-making and its current level of innovation and experimentation."

Other artists in the exhibition include Kate Anderson, Dail Behennah, Nancy Moore Bess, Mary Black, Sally Black, Jerry Bleem, Jan Buckman, Jane Chavez, Jill Nordfors Clark, Noboru Fujinuma, Shokosai Hayakawa, Elsie Holiday, Hideaki Honma, Kazuaki Honma, Jan Hopkins, Lissa Hunter, Kiyoma Iwata, Nancy Koenigsberg, Leon Niehues, Pearl Nuvangyaoma, Lindsay K. Rais, Fran Reed, Hideho Tanaka, Tsuruko Tanikawa, Lisa Telford, Maseo Ueno, Dawn Walden, and Mika Watanabe.

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*"Intertwined: Contemporary Baskets from the Sara and David Lieberman Collection"* was organized by the ASU Art Museum and made possible in part by Sara and David Lieberman; a grant from the Friends of Fiber Art International; Twin Rocks Trading Post, Barry and Steven Simpson, Bluff, Utah; Tai Gallery, Santa Fe, New Mexico; Mobilia Gallery, Boston, Massachusetts; Arizona Designer Craftsmen; and, the Friends of the ASU Art Museum. The exhibition at the Palo Alto Art Center is sponsored in part by the generous support of the Palo Alto Art Center Foundation, Lois and Ed Anderson, Susan Beech, Jan Schachter, Kay Sekimachi, and the Garden Court Hotel, Palo Alto.

***About the Palo Alto Art Center***

The Palo Alto Art Center (founded 1971) is a nationally acclaimed, regional visual art center whose exhibition program focuses on documenting – and celebrating – the art and artists of the San Francisco Bay Area. The Center's mission is to foster creative process and thought by forging a greater appreciation and understanding of the visual arts through exhibitions, studio experiences and related educational programs. The Palo Alto Art Center, Division of Arts and Culture, City of Palo Alto, is funded in part by support from the Palo Alto Art Center Foundation and the Arts Council Silicon Valley, in partnership with the County of Santa Clara and the California Arts Council. The Center is open to the public without charge from 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday; 1:00 - 5:00 p.m. Sunday; and 7:00 -10:00 p.m. Tuesday-Thursday. The Center is located at 1313 Newell Road, Palo Alto, CA 94303. For further information: Phone: (650) 329-2366 / Email: [artcenter@cityofpaloalto.org](mailto:artcenter@cityofpaloalto.org) / Website: [www.cityofpaloalto.org/artcenter](http://www.cityofpaloalto.org/artcenter)

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