

TONI ROSS  
Touchstones



wood fired and shino glazed stoneware, 2009, heights from 12 ½ to 23 in

Opening September 3 and on view through October 5, The Drawing Room presents two concurrent exhibitions -- **Toni Ross: *Touchstones*** and **Jean Pagliuso: *The Raptor Suite: seven owls & The Poultry Suite: large-scale prints***. A separate press release is available for Jean Pagliuso's exhibition.

With this collection of recent sculptural stoneware that includes painterly wall tablets, exquisite boxes and both oval and towering vessels, Ross emerges as a powerful sculptor who constructs her forms with coils, rolled slabs and by throwing on the wheel. Her command of the dazzling shino glaze technique animates the forms' nuanced surfaces and accentuates their elegant silhouettes.

Trained in ceramics, sculpture and painting, Ross came to her work in clay respectful of the medium's history of traditional functional forms. Captivated more recently by the painterly possibilities for surface palette and texture available in shino, a 16<sup>th</sup> century Japanese glaze, Ross' innovative experimentation with the chemistry of her glazes and the balance of elements in the salt and wood firings has sparked a sensitive merging of the sculptural forms and the painted glaze that wraps them.

In this rich and varied body of work Ross presents bold abstract forms with ambitious scale as well as tiny sake cups, miniature paintings in the round. The collection of sake cups honors the lineage of Japanese wheel throwing as well as the metaphysical and aesthetic pleasures of holding a beautiful and delicate sipping vessel. In a group of small two-dimensional paintings on clay, Ross cuts and tears the pliant medium into tablets that are meditations on the square in crackled, milky and quartz-like glazes of sage and rust. A group of regal lidded boxes in a nuanced, lustrous palette evokes Mesopotamian tomb treasures.

The oval non-functioning vase forms with painted collars that accentuate the geometry of the openings, sometimes completed with rectangular heads, recall Cycladic profiles. The surfaces of these memorable shapes record the volatile atmospheric conditions in the gas and/or salt fire kiln as well as the flow of glazes in curved, expressionist paintings.

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Living and working in Wainscott, Ross brings the year-round inspiration of her natural environment to her process (as when her precious glazing may evaporate or be trapped by unforeseen events), and sees nature as her collaborator. Accepting the uncontrollable outcomes in the kiln, she takes the Zen approach to her ceramic adventure and works with the surprises brilliantly. In the largest abstract sculptures, in which she used power sanders to grind off evidence of a curdled glaze, Ross reveals the rich gray and salmon surfaces that exist beneath the shino glaze. Born out of a unique combustion of glazes and firing atmosphere, each form has a story to tell that seems ancient.

Toni Ross, known also as a restaurateur, has exhibited her ceramics widely. Her work will be included in an upcoming exhibition focused on ceramists working with shino glazes at Baltimore Clayworks.

**Gallery hours: Monday, Thursday, Friday & Saturday 11-5; Sunday 11-4**

For further information or reproductions, please contact Susan Papa at 631.324.5016 or [info@drawingroom-gallery.com](mailto:info@drawingroom-gallery.com).