"A Beautiful Spirit": Origins of the Archie Bray Foundation for the Ceramic Arts

by Rick Newby and Chere Jiusto

Origin is an eddy in the process of becoming.

—Walter Benjamin[1]

"You get notorious," said Peter Meloy, "when you start a pottery in the middle of the wilderness."[2] Meloy, at age ninety, was remembering the beginnings of his own backyard pottery in the late 1940s in the small town of Helena, Montana.[3] But he might as well have been talking about Helena's Archie Bray Foundation for the Ceramic Arts, which Meloy helped found in 1951.

Over the past half century, the Bray (as the foundation is familiarly known) has certainly achieved renown, and even a little notoriety, in the American ceramics world and beyond. That it has flourished for fifty years in the wilds of Montana, and that from its very beginnings it has played an important role in the development of contemporary ceramics, is cause for wonder, even astonishment. How was it that a band of strong-willed Montanans—in the midst of the conformist 1950s and with relatively little access to technical information about the making of pottery and ceramic sculpture—came to create this world-class haven for lovers and practitioners of the ceramic arts?

The search for origins, German cultural critic Walter Benjamin has written, "needs to be recognized as a process of restoration and reestablishment, but, on the other hand . . . as something imperfect and incomplete."[4] While much remains to be learned about the origins of the Archie Bray Foundation, our aim is to begin to restore and reestablish—to reinterpret and reinvigorate, with the aid of new research—the events of fifty years ago, when a brickmaker, a lawyer, and a salesman created a "place to work for all who are seriously interested in any of the Ceramic Arts."[5]

Ten Million Bricks

Western Clay Plays Role in Growth, Beauty of Capital City

—*Helena Independent Record,* July 22, 1945

The story begins in a rough-and-ready Montana gold camp that refused to dwindle and die. Instead of becoming a ghost town, Helena grew into a center for mining, transportation, and commerce, and it became Montana's territorial and then state capital. Situated on the eastern edge of the Rockies, the prospering town, originally constructed of wood and canvas, sought greater solidity.

Brick and stone homes and business blocks became symbols of status, and frequent fires (as many as nine in the mining camp's first decade, 1864–1874) prompted the town fathers to require that only masonry buildings be built

downtown. By 1869, Helena's business district boasted seventy-five structures built of granite and brick, and during the 1880s, the town's entrepreneurs displayed their wealth by commissioning lavish mansions, many of them built of brick, on Helena's prestigious west side.[6]

All this construction created a market for locally made brick, and in 1880, Nicholas Kessler, a local brewer and part-time maker of bricks since 1866, went into the business in a big way, buying a pair of brickmaking machines and launching Kessler Brick and Tile Works. At first, Kessler ran his brick works next to his brewery on the western outskirts of Helena, but in 1885, he purchased the neighboring brick business operated by Charles C. Thurston and moved his operation to Thurston's yard, just off today's Country Club Road.

In 1884, Charles Thurston had hired a skilled brickmaker, Charles H. Bray. Born in Tavistock, Devonshire, England, in 1864 (the year gold was discovered at Helena), Charles Bray had served an apprenticeship with a British brickmaker before coming to the United States in 1880. After Nicholas Kessler purchased the Thurston yard, he installed Bray as his plant manager. Bray enlarged and updated the plant, improving the kilns and adding a steam engine to power wet-mud brick presses and a dry-clay press. He also added sewer pipe and tile, decorative brick, and flower pots to the Kessler product line. The Kessler Brick and Tile Works prospered under Charles Bray's direction, and as Nicholas Kessler's son, Charles, would later assert, "No less than 90 percent of the brick of which Helena's buildings were constructed [was] made at these Brick Yards."[7]

By the 1890s, the only other brick and tile manufacturer in Helena was the Switzer Brick and Terra-Cotta Company, which operated 15 miles west of Helena, at Blossburg. The Blossburg clay pits produced a blue clay body of commercial quality, and in 1905, the Switzer and Kessler brickmaking operations merged, forming the Western Clay Manufacturing Company. Operating under the ownership of another Kessler son, Frederick, and Jacob Switzer, Western Clay retained Charles Bray as general manager. Bray kept the brickmaking operation—now consolidated at the Kessler yard, with clay coming from Blossburg by rail—up to the minute. He constructed beehive kilns that still grace the brickyard, as well as extensive drying sheds. A 250-horsepower Corliss steam engine ran the plant. Employing upwards of 50 workers, Western Clay produced fire, sidewalk, ornamental, paving, and pressed brick; culvert and sewer pipe; lawn vases and flower pots; clay tile; flue linings; and even hollow tile for grain silos. By 1918, production ran as high as ten million bricks and tiles annually.

A display of the range of clay products manufactured at the Kessler Brick & Sewer Pipe Works, Montana State Fair, ca. 1908. Montana Historical Society Photograph Archives (949-765).

In 1920, Charles Bray purchased the Switzer interest in the company, and eight years later, he bought out the Kessler family, becoming sole owner. Upon Charles's death in 1931, his son Archie stepped in as general manager and president of Western Clay.

Groomed to lead the enterprise in a new century, Archie Bray learned brickmaking at his father's knee, intuitively absorbing the nineteenth-century practices of molding and "burning" brick. He combined this practical knowledge with the technical training he received in the Ohio State University ceramics engineering program, reputed to be the finest in the nation. Archie continued his father's innovations, converting the coal-fired boiler and kilns to natural gas in 1931. And under his direction, Western Clay continued as Montana's preeminent brick producer, even at the peak of the Great Depression.

Only after World War II, with the rise of new building technologies and materials, did the demand for brick and other ceramic products begin to shrink. At this time, Archie Bray, a long-time patron of the arts, had become obsessed with a vision. Next door to the Western Clay plant, Archie would found a center for the ceramic arts with the support of friends who shared his vision and would help to carry it farther.[8]

Three Friends

> *. . . they were just plain three close friends. And they were the three trustees of the original Archie Bray Foundation when it opened.*
>
> —Betty Bray Galusha

A complex figure, Archie Bray was a hardheaded businessman who supported the arts and loved to garden, a member of Helena's cultural and business elites who delighted in meeting visiting celebrities dressed in his dusty brickyard clothes, "a resourceful man and very determined."[9]

As a young man, Archie had wanted to become a physician, but his father insisted that he be trained as a ceramic engineer. One family legend has it that the "bitter battle" of wills between father and son ended the day Charles Bray "took a buggy whip and whipped [Archie] until it cut the shirt off his back . . . from that time forth, it was understood that he would go and be a ceramic engineer, which he did."[10]

From an early age, Archie had also nursed a fond regard for the arts, especially the performing arts. This was another passion his family did not share or understand; the one concession Archie's parents made to his artistic bent was to allow him to take piano lessons. Music would continue to be Archie's first love—"He was a nut on symphonic and operatic music . . . he liked the French composers," recalled a friend—and as an adult, he traveled every winter to New York City to immerse himself in opera and the theater.[11]

Not content with finding culture elsewhere, Archie Bray sought to bring the "finer arts to his home town." For some six years, and at the same time that he worked long hours as manager of the brickyard, he single-handedly sponsored concerts in Helena. Sometimes he lost considerable sums, as when a savage Montana blizzard limited the audience for a vocal recital to thirty-two hardy souls. He was always, recalls his daughter, Betty Bray Galusha, "hocking the life insurance and mortgaging the house . . ." to cover such losses. Finally he linked his efforts to the national Community Concert Association series. The Community Concerts were "run as a business," a "saving grace" for the Bray family finances.[12] The series brought to Helena such luminaries as Nelson Eddy, Jascha Heifetz, and Paul Robeson, along with many lesser-known performers.[13] Always dressed in his dusty workman's clothes, Archie chauffeured the artists about town and befriended many of them, inviting them into his home. These brief but intense contacts meant a great deal to him, and sometimes, when he talked about the artists he had known, Peter Meloy later recalled, "Tears would almost come into his eyes."[14]

In 1936, Archie's passion for theater led him to Peter Meloy, future co-conspirator. That year, Meloy's brother Henry (known as Hank) had returned to the family ranch near Townsend, Montana (about thirty miles from Helena) to spend the summer painting and drawing. Educated at the Art Institute of Chicago, and later a painting instructor at Columbia University, Hank had brought his girlfriend home with him, a New York actress named Ruth March. Hank and Ruth hadn't enough money to buy return train tickets to New York, and in those Depression years, "there was no money in the family." But Ruth had just appeared in an off-Broadway play, *The Drunkard*, and the resourceful duo, with help from Peter and neighbors, put on the play in the loft of a horse barn, and the play raised the necessary train fare. Among those traveling from Helena to swell the audience was Archie Bray. A few days later, Archie and Norman and Belle Winestine, prominent members of Helena's small, tightly-knit intelligentsia, returned to the Meloy ranch to discuss bringing *The Drunkard* to Helena.[15]

Nothing came of the effort to take *The Drunkard* on the road, but these first encounters between Archie Bray and the Meloys bore fruit in the early 1940s, after Peter Meloy had settled in Helena.[16] Peter and Hank again crossed paths with the owner of the Western Clay brickyard; this time, a mutual interest in clay brought them together. The Meloys had been fascinated by ceramics since their youth. In Peter's telling, drought and the Depression had left the Meloy family with "plenty of free time," and so he and Hank had turned to digging clay from a clay bank they'd discovered on the ranch. Firing the pots they made in the ranch blacksmith forge proved a dismal failure, and by the time the Meloys again encountered Archie, they were determined to find a better way to fire their work. They visited the brickyard to buy clay from the Blossburg pits, and after Hank had sculpted a horse from this "very plastic" clay body, they asked Archie if they could fire it in one of the beehive kilns. Archie agreed. Though the firing wasn't entirely successful, it nonetheless launched the friendship between Archie and the Meloy brothers.

Hank Meloy spent most of each year in New York, teaching at Columbia and meeting many leading artists of the day, from George Grosz to Willem de Kooning. He painted prodigiously, according to Lela and Rudy Autio "sensitive landscapes and horses of rural Montana" as well as "urbane and lively studies of nudes and abstract color compositions." He continued to spend summers back home where, in addition to painting, he sculpted an occasional ceramic figure and decorated his brother's plates and bowls. He died suddenly in 1951, at age forty-nine.[17] Rudy Autio, another major player

in the Archie Bray Foundation story, attested that Hank was an artist of "sublime ability" who influenced the younger sculptor "profoundly."[18]

Peter Meloy, on the other hand, stayed in Helena and became a prominent attorney and district judge. He made pots in his off-hours and built a small ceramic workshop in his backyard, where he installed his own electric kiln, one of the first in Montana. Archie Bray spent many evenings with the Meloys, talking "about building the pottery . . . talking about music." Together they hatched a plan to start a pottery at the brickyard. "When I think back on [Archie's] visits," Peter Meloy has written, "it seems that he had found a place where he could give expression to his dreams."[19]

A second Montana potter was also serving as confidant for Archie's thoughts. Branson Stevenson of Great Falls was a man of many parts: world traveler, printmaker, painter, sculptor, potter, oilman, salesman, and inventor. He first met Archie in 1947. As Montana branch manager for Socony Vacuum Oil Company (later Mobil Oil), Branson visited the Western Clay plant regularly and sold Archie "steam cylinder oil and so forth." Always the art patron, Archie bought some of Branson's etchings, and the two men inevitably started talking about their growing interest in the ceramic arts.[20]

Stevenson had first studied pottery with Sister Mary Trinitas Morin, a Sister of Providence and the head of the Division of Arts at the Great Falls (Montana) College of Education, today the University of Great Falls. Educated at the Art Institute of Chicago and the Catholic University of America, where she received her Master of Fine Arts, Sister Trinitas was adept in many different media, mastering the arts and crafts of metal and ceramic sculpture, silversmithing, woodcarving, stained glass, pottery, weaving, and calligraphy.

An innovative and visionary artist with a fondness for found materials, Sister Trinitas was the first Montana educator to set up a kiln on a Montana college campus. During the late 1940s, she led students around the state to dig and test native clays, and according to her biographer, her example "stimulated the teaching of pottery in the schools." Besides teaching Branson the fundamentals of pottery, Sister Trinitas convinced him to study with Marguerite Wildenhain, the Bauhaus-trained potter whose school at Pond Farm, California, influenced many American potters from mid-century onward.[21]

Not a college graduate, Branson Stevenson prided himself on his "curiosity, individuality, enthusiasm and skill," and as an artist, his greatest strength was as a technician and innovator. Always seeking "new and practical ways of creating art and the tools to perfect his art," he made several technical contributions to his chosen avocation. Perhaps his most important was the wax-resist process commonly used today, which utilized a water-soluble wax, Ceremul A, that Branson marketed for Socony Oil. Used industrially for such things as coating milk cartons, Ceremul A in wax resist was far superior to the traditional paraffin for several reasons: paraffin had to be heated and was a fire hazard, was difficult to apply, and hardened quickly, while Ceremul A could be used straight from the container, brushed on easily, kept glazes from sticking to the waxed surface, and completely evaporated during firing, leaving behind only the potter's intended design.[22]

Besides his inventiveness, curiosity, and enthusiasm, Stevenson possessed a great gift for friendship. He maintained friendships, usually through extensive correspondence, around the globe, from Central America (where he had spent a part of his youth and young adulthood) to Japan to Great Britain. One of his correspondents was Bernard Leach, the British writer and potter. Early in 1950, Stevenson had read in *Time Magazine* that an exhibition of Leach's pots was traveling to Washington, D.C. Never shy, Branson wrote to Leach at his St. Ives pottery and asked if, during the following summer, the potter would be willing to loan the same group of pots to the Northern Montana State Fair at Great Falls. Leach agreed, and his work was an "outstanding feature" of the fair that summer.[23] Branson later attended a Leach workshop in Minnesota, and the friendship was affirmed, especially when Branson introduced Leach to Ceremul A, markedly easing the challenges of wax-resist decoration for the British master.[24] Leach would often trade his stoneware pots to Branson for supplies of the wax, which was not then available in England.[25]

In 1951, as Archie Bray set in motion his plans for a foundation for the ceramic arts, Branson began another extensive correspondence, this time with Archie, serving as sounding board for the brickmaker's plans, dreams, and frustrations.[26]

Two Brash Young Men and Their Teacher

> *We got this rumor that somebody up at this brickyard was thinking of building a pottery.*
>
> —Frances Senska

By 1951, the Helena potteries—Peter Meloy's modest backyard pottery and Archie Bray's grand dream (on the cusp of realization)—were indeed becoming notorious. That spring, two young ceramics-savvy Montanans, Rudy Autio and Peter Voulkos, drove up to Helena from Bozeman. They had heard through Peter Meloy that "there was a chance to work at a pottery." As Frances Senska, the pair's pottery teacher at

Frances Senska, the influential Montana educator who introduced Rudy Autio and Peter Voulkos to ceramics. Trained by European émigrés László Moholy-Nagy, Maija Grotell, and Marguerite Wildenhain, she brought their techniques and pedagogical approaches to her students at Montana State College (later Montana State University), Bozeman (ABFA).

Montana State College, recalled, Archie Bray immediately "latched onto [Autio and Voulkos], and they latched onto him, and they worked in a corner of the drying shed that summer." To pay their way, the young men worked in the brickyard during the day. At night, they turned their talents to making pots and ceramic sculpture from the Blossburg clay. And they jumped in to help Archie build the pottery he'd long dreamed of constructing next door to the brickyard.[27]

During the late 1940s, Autio and Voulkos, both veterans, studied art at Montana State College (MSC) in Bozeman, and they were lucky enough to arrive on campus in 1946, the same year as did Frances Senska, their first ceramics instructor. "I started teaching ceramics," recalled Senska, "with the merest little scrap of knowledge. I had had just two quarters of ceramics when I started teaching. I just learned it right along with the class."[28]

In fact, despite her relative inexperience, Frances Senska would introduce to Montana many of the aesthetic and pedagogical ideas brought to the United States by European artists who had fled their homelands during World War II.[29] Senska had received her training in fine arts at the University of Iowa, earning her B.A. in 1935 and her M.A. in 1939. She had first encountered clay in Africa where, as the child of Presbyterian missionaries, she had spent her first fifteen years. But not until World War II, during her Navy service, did she take her first pottery course, studying with Edith Heath at the California Labor School in San Francisco.

In the summer of 1946, just before coming to Bozeman, Senska took a second pottery course, this time from Finnish potter Maija Grotell at the Cranbrook Academy of Art, in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. Grotell believed that each potter should find his or her own approach ("I am against influence," she said), and she hesitated to critique her students' work, instead encouraging them to search and inquire. She taught, said Senska, "more by example, than by instruction."[30]

Another European emigré profoundly affected Frances's thinking about design and pedagogy. He was the Hungarian László Moholy-Nagy, the Bauhaus master who founded a New Bauhaus in Chicago in 1937. By the time Frances studied industrial design with Moholy-Nagy, the New Bauhaus had failed, and he was directing the Chicago Institute of Design, which bore the stamp of his program of "intellectual integration." Vehemently opposed to specialization (which he felt isolated people and deadened the emotions), Moholy-Nagy sought to produce "many-sided amateurs with their own ideas and practical skills." Frances embraced this attitude, calling him a great teacher because "he never told anyone anything couldn't be done. . . . He'd say, 'Well, try it,'" she recalled. "'You might find out something.'"[31]

Frances brought the hands-off teaching approaches of Maija Grotell and Moholy-Nagy to Montana State College, where she "instructed . . . told them things," but "didn't try to force any style." She could be directive, as when Peter Voulkos "was doing something he could just as well have done in high school industrial arts, and I said, 'You know, it's been done. Come into the twentieth century.'" And noted Frances, "He did!"[32]

Frances's teaching style worked perfectly for her two star students. Like many older students coming out of the military at that time—students who were, in the words of Marcia Manhart, "more self-assured than the usual undergraduates,"[33]—Rudy Autio and Peter Voulkos seemed remarkably focused. Frances recalled that both men "moved very fast into their own thing." Voulkos "always did everything just a little bit better than everybody else," while Autio was "inner directed" and often worked by himself—which was "perfectly all right" with Frances, who observed that he was already "an excellent craftsman"[34] and that "he's always been a mature artist, sort of quiet, polite, and curious."[35]

Both Voulkos and Autio were Montana natives whose parents had immigrated to the United States. Pete's parents, Efrosine and Harry, were Greek and had come to Bozeman in the 1920s. Harry was soon regarded as Bozeman's finest chef, while Efrosine raised the five Voulkos children. Pete was the family rebel, sometimes skipping school to play pool or fish in the nearby blue-ribbon trout streams, but during the Depression years, he labored extraordinarily hard, holding as many as five jobs at once to help support his family. In doing so, he developed an awesome capacity for work.

Physically powerful and mechanically adept, Voulkos sought a congenial career. Always a night person, he'd heard that "artists don't have to get up in the morning," and after serving in the Pacific theater as an Army Air Corps nose gunner, he returned to Bozeman and took advantage of the G.I. Bill, enrolling himself in the MSC art department. At first determined to become a commercial artist, he took painting courses from Jessie Wilber and Bob DeWeese, talented modernist painters who influenced and befriended the driven young artist. Wilber and DeWeese were soon disappointed, however, when in his junior year, Voulkos took his first ceramics course from Frances Senska.[36] "That was it," recalled Frances. "That's what he wanted to do."[37]

By the time he graduated from MSC in 1951, Voulkos was starting to sell his pots and to win awards in national competitions, including a purchase prize in the Fifteenth National Ceramic Exhibition (1950), Syracuse Museum of Fine Arts. In January of 1951, he went on to graduate school in ceramics at the California College of Arts and Crafts (CCAC), Oakland.[38]

Rudy Autio came from Butte, Montana, the brawling copper-mining camp known as the "Richest Hill on Earth." His parents, Arne and Selma, were natives of Finland, and Rudy spoke Finnish before he mastered English. A Navy veteran, he fell in love with and married a fellow MSC art student, Lela Moniger, a native of Great Falls, Montana.

Unlike Peter Voulkos, Rudy was not initially enraptured with clay. As he noted, "I was interested in becoming a sculptor, and I didn't care for this crafty stuff and making pottery."[39] His early work, Frances Senska remembered, had "this very strong northern, Nordic kind of imagery, a Finnish, almost Oriental look to it . . . always different from what everyone else was doing."[40] After leaving MSC in 1950 (he received a B.S. degree in Applied Art), Rudy went directly to graduate school in sculpture at Washington State University, Pullman. It was the summer after his first year at WSU—and Voulkos's at CCAC—that the two young men took that fateful trip to Helena and found themselves hard at work in Archie Bray's brickyard.[41]

Archie's Vision

> *According to leading authorities, Pottery, Inc., is the only place of its kind, not only in the United States but in the world.*
>
> —*Helena Independent Record,* October 7, 1951

While Peter Voulkos and Rudy Autio labored in his brickyard, Archie Bray, in conversation with Peter Meloy and Branson Stevenson, finalized his plans for "the first branch of the Archie Bray Foundation," which he called Pottery, Inc. In an undated letter to Branson, Archie described his vision for the Foundation:

> Somehow let's keep it all on the plane we dreamed—let's be practical too, let's keep it all in good fun, to roll along the whole idea built around—"A place to work for all who are seriously interested in any of the Ceramic Arts." To be high standards—to keep it nice—that it may always be a delight to turn to—to walk inside the Pottery and leave outside somewhere—outside the big gate—uptown—anywhere—the cares of every day. Each time we walk in the door to walk into a place of art—of simple things not problems, good people, lovely people all tuned to the right spirit. That somewhere thru it all will permeate a beautiful spirit . . . carrying on and forwarding the intentions, the aims and the life of the Foundation. Can we do it? What a joy it is to do it.[42]

According to the local paper, "Bray had dreamed and planned . . . for so long" that he needed no building plans for the pottery; "long before the structure was begun, he would explain [its floor plan] to friends by scratching it out on the ground with the heel of his shoe."[43]

The pottery building, as it emerged from Archie's imaginings, was to be well-equipped, featuring five rooms covering 2,400 square feet. A museum space would house exhibits and a library of ceramics books. The main pottery room would "contain wheels, drying racks, areas for sculpturing and tables . . . for handwork," while the kiln room would feature three gas kilns, including a salt kiln and a muffle kiln intended for porcelain and high-fire glazes. An electric kiln—cutting-edge technology for the time—would be used to test porcelains and Montana clays, and the glaze room came complete with a power-ventilated glaze booth.[44]

The pottery was merely the "first branch" of Archie's foundation, representing only a third of his expansive vision. He intended to build two more structures, one for painters and printmakers and the other for the performing arts. The

theater would seat 300 and host plays, theater workshops, and "concerts by small musical aggregations."[45]

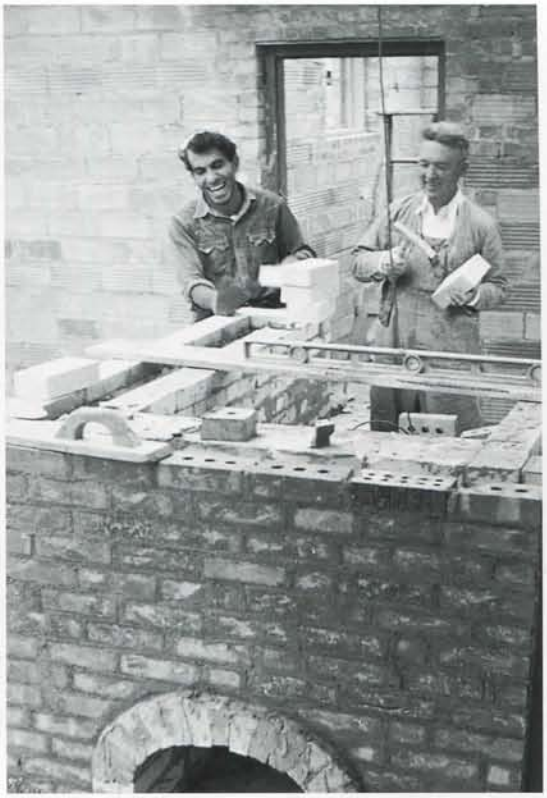
Given Archie's interest in the resurgence of the crafts, his vision may well have emerged out of his reading of the works of William Morris (1834–1896) and like-minded thinkers. The founder of the English Arts and Crafts movement, Morris had championed a return to beautiful works skillfully crafted by hand, as antidotes to the shoddy workmanship and inferior products of the Industrial Age. Almost certainly, Archie had read Bernard Leach's influential work, *A Potter's Book,* which carried forward Morris's ideas coupled with a healthy infusion of techniques and philosophical approaches from Asia. From its publication in 1940, *A Potter's Book* was considered the potter's bible, and Archie's friend Branson Stevenson corresponded regularly with Leach.[46] Leach's pottery at St. Ives, Cornwall, was considered a model for other studio potters, and it may well have served, at least in imagination, as Archie's ideal as he planned his own center.

As a practicing industrialist, Archie stood somewhere between Leach, who disdained industrial products and even modernist institutions like the Bauhaus that sought to bring art to the industrial process,[47] and figures like Bauhaus master Moholy-Nagy, whose slogan was "Not Against Technical Progress, But With It."[48] Archie initially insisted that "there would be no commercializing of the art output" from his pottery, but that when demand developed for multiples of an object created at the Foundation, "the molds are [to be] turned over to the Western Clay company . . . and there the production becomes a wholesale business."[49] As time passed, Archie refined his position regarding the development of commercial products at the pottery and, in fact, insisted that the artist-craftsmen and -women he hired devote a portion of their time to commercial work. This in turn led to tensions with the artists and frustration for Archie. At the Foundation's beginnings, however, everything operated on the level of idealism and good will and everyone involved pitched in wholeheartedly to help Archie realize his dream.

From the Ground Up

> *So one night [Archie] came out and said, "I've got the foundation laid for it."*
>
> —Peter Meloy

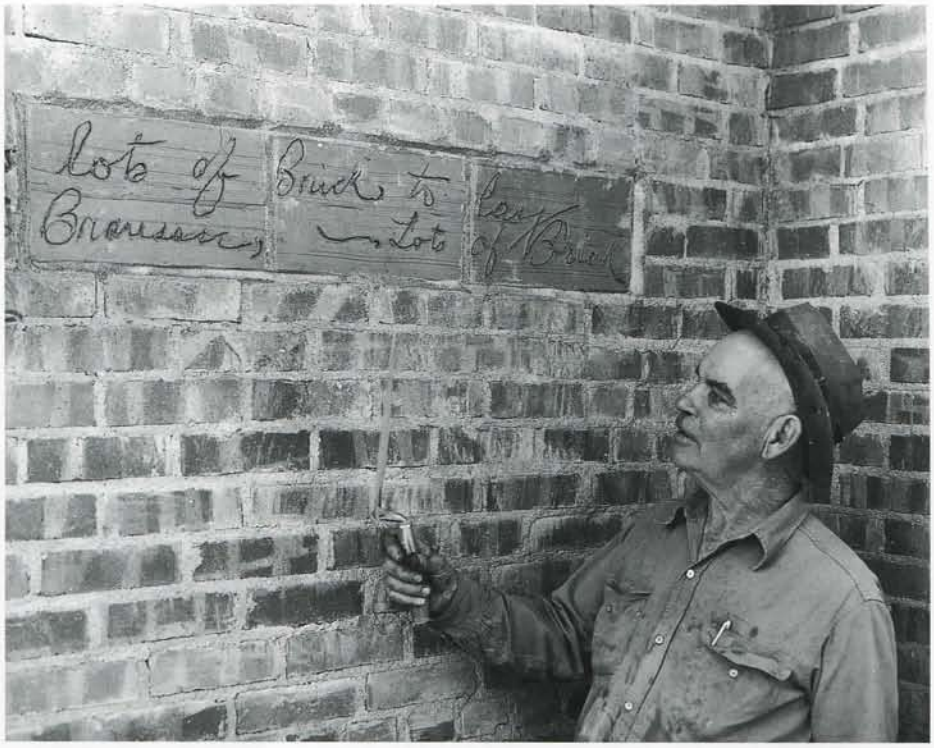
With the arrival of Peter Voulkos, Rudy Autio, and Kelly Wong, another MSC graduate hired for the summer of 1951, Archie had no need to put off building his long-envisioned pottery building. The three young artists pitched in, as did Branson Stevenson, who took "his three weeks of Socony vacation"



Many volunteers pitched in to build the Bray pottery in 1951. Here Branson Stevenson (right) and Peter Voulkos build the downdraft gas kiln (ABFA).

to help out, "laying brick, building the main stack and flues in the pottery, and working on the construction of the gas-fired, downdraft, open-fire kiln."[50] Interested members of the Helena community came out to lay a line of brick or two. Frances Senska and Jessie Wilber drove over from Bozeman, and Jessie contributed a special tile, which is still on the front of the pottery, that depicted kilns and "what would be happening in the building." Frances later wrote that "so many amateurs laid brick for those walls, it's a wonder they remain standing."[51] And in his letters to Branson that summer, Archie would frequently close with "Lots of Brick to Lay, Branson, Lots of Brick"—a litany that Branson inscribed on a tile he installed in the pottery's wall.

Voulkos recalls that he and Rudy made plenty of pots that summer from the local clays. They fired their pots in the beehive kilns, stacking them on top of the bricks to be fired and salting them along with the brick. As resident sculptor, Rudy also sculpted a "heroic" ceramic bust of Archie Bray, which made him look like "some sort of Roman senator."[52] They spent much of the summer "laying brick mostly, 'til we got up to where the roof plates go on." Then it was September, time for them to return to graduate school. Brickyard



Archie Bray, with trowel in hand, admires tiles inscribed, "Lots of brick to lay, Branson, lots of brick"—words that appeared frequently in his letters to Foundation cofounder Branson Stevenson, 1952. L. H. Jorud, photographer (ABFA).

carpenters "set up the roof," and by late October, Archie Bray's pottery was ready for its grand opening.[53]

Peter Meloy drew up the papers for the Archie Bray Foundation, naming Archie Bray, Sr., Peter Meloy, and Branson Stevenson as its first Board of Directors. With the paperwork begun and a roof on the pottery building, Archie set October 20, 1951, as the date for a gala opening dinner. Invitations went out to all those who had helped lay brick, to potters and artists in the region, and to local supporters. In photos of the opening banquet, some forty celebrants sit at formal, white-clothed tables set up in the pottery's main room. During the joyful evening, Charles Kessler offered a brief history of the brickyard,[54] and Branson Stevenson, serving as toastmaster, spoke about the Foundation and its aims. Archie later described Branson's remarks as "beautifully done, so very sensitive."[55] Peter Meloy presented Archie with a pot by Bernard Leach, and Rudy Autio unveiled an inscribed plaque, created in secret by Autio, Voulkos, and Meloy at the Meloy pottery, which read:

> The helpers in the building of this pottery dedicate their work to the sincere wish that the work produced here will be the result of a serious effort to create those fine things as are so much a part of the life and interests of the man who is making this pottery possible.

After dinner, Archie showed a film on making pots and conducted tours of the facilities. And Peter Voulkos "threw the first pot in the new building." One of those attending the dinner that night was a new arrival to the Archie Bray Foundation, a young California potter named Lillian Boschen.[56]

The First Resident Director

> *Miss Lillian Boschen . . . has arrived in Helena to take charge of the Archie Bray Foundation. . . .*
> —*Helena Independent Record,* n.d.

More than forty invited guests attended the gala opening dinner in the newly constructed pottery building, October 20, 1951. L. H. Jorud, photographer (ABFA).

Lillian Boschen, Peter Voulkos's fellow-student at the California College of Arts and Crafts, was invited to serve as the first resident director at the Bray pottery, 1951. She focused her efforts on production pottery, including the mugs on the bottom left shelves. See Plate 1 (ABFA).

In early October 1951, the Archie Bray Foundation issued a press release to announce that Miss Lillian Boschen would be teaching classes in "sculpting, hand-modeling, and wheel-throwing" at Pottery, Inc. Boschen had met Frances Senska while the two women were in the Navy, and like Voulkos, Boschen had studied at the California College of Arts and Crafts. She had also taken courses at the San Francisco Art Institute and at Mills College, working under Carlton Ball. Both Voulkos and Senska had recommended her to Archie Bray as a worthy replacement for Voulkos and Autio while they finished graduate school.[57]

Apparently, when Peter Voulkos headed back to Oakland for his final year at CCAC, Archie had not yet decided whether to invite him back to the Foundation. There never seemed to be a question as to whether Rudy Autio would come back the following summer as resident sculptor, but it appears that there was room (and funds) for only one resident potter, and Archie had to choose between Boschen and Voulkos. As early as late October 1951, Archie agonized over the decision in a letter to Branson.[58]

In early December of that year, Archie again pondered the decision candidly and at length, in another letter to Branson, and described why he had come to prefer Lillian:

> Her attention to detail which Pete did not display, her willingness to do little things which Pete would look on as a nuisance and her willingness to follow my directions which I *think* Pete would not.

On the other hand, Archie understood that Voulkos, with his charisma, extraordinary throwing abilities, and growing list of national awards, "could be played up as a feature . . . and to me this is a big factor, almost enough to determine my decision. . . . I want the place to as rapidly as possible become known as a real centre."

As he struggled with his decision, Archie began to think of "keeping both of them."[59] On December 17, he told Branson that he had wired Voulkos that "we would look for him here just as soon as he could come,"[60] but in another December letter to Branson, he reiterated how pleased he was with Lillian's work, teaching, and attitude, adding, "I can hardly afford a staff of 2 specialists."[61]

But by March of 1952, Archie was no longer getting along with Lillian Boschen. In a letter dated March 6, he told Branson, "She cannot see . . . that everything she does should be for the interest of the Foundation. The least direction on my part and she pouts and pouts . . . she wanted to go on filling the big kiln to her heart's content and to hell with what I wanted done" (which was to use the same kiln to fire an order of flowerpots for a local nursery). "Perhaps," Archie admitted to Branson, "I have handled labor too long, expect my decisions . . . to be followed—*willingly.*" He concluded ominously, "I will have co-operation or I will start anew."[62]

Lillian stayed on at the Bray into the spring, but by summer, her name no longer appeared in Archie's letters. She went on to open a pottery in Virginia City, Montana,

which she ran for several years.[63] Archie's frustrations with the artists in the pottery did not end with Lillian's departure.

"And so I say—Problems"

> *I didn't want problems in my Pottery. I did so want it to always have a feeling for me of delight and pleasure. . . . Not a place of rules and conditions and situations and worries.*
>
> —Archie Bray, Sr., letter to Branson Stevenson, December 1951

Despite Archie's deep and very real passion for the arts and artists, and despite his eccentricities, such as always wearing his dirty work clothes, he was first and foremost a businessman with a deeply rooted work ethic. His daughter recalled that he "never slept . . . more than four hours, five hours in his life. . . . He got up at 5:30 [a.m.], 6:00, and went to work and came home perhaps 1:00 [a.m.], 2:00, and that was it."[64] With the creation of the pottery, his work load only increased, and as he struggled to make the pottery self-sustaining, his frustrations grew.

"These Potters are a problem!" Archie wrote Branson in April 1952. He could not understand their disdain for making flowerpots and other production ware.[65] According to Rudy Autio, "they were quite handsome products, [but] we didn't . . . particularly care for it. Turned out to be busywork and it . . . didn't really pay the bills . . . we wasted a lot of effort doing it."[66]

Archie was incensed, too, by Voulkos's night-owl approach to work—at 3 p.m., Archie once told Branson in disbelief, "Pete and Mrs. Pete are up town for *breakfast!!*"[67] Voulkos saw things differently. He would "work day and night," making his own pots and keeping up "a production on the side. . . . I would make a dozen of this, a dozen of that, a dozen of that every day. And then I'd work on my own things. Usually late at night." Between working on his own pots, teaching classes, and keeping up the production line ("I became very facile . . . to the point that it got to be a little boring. . . ."), Voulkos said he was working "about eight days every week."[68] Although he failed to recognize the strain that harsh working conditions and exhausting schedules placed on the artists, at one point, Archie did grant that, for Voulkos, "being behind is his way of getting things done."[69] But until the end of his life, Archie would complain to Branson about the potters' work habits.

The potters, on the other hand, did not like the Archie Bray Foundation policy that the Foundation receive all income from sales of the pots made on the premises, except for those created for "shows and exhibitions." And apparently, as artists with pride of authorship, they bridled at the suggestion that their individual work be stamped with the official ABF stamp.[70]

There were aesthetic differences as well as differences over how the Foundation should present itself to the larger world. Influenced increasingly by modernism and the sobering realities of the Atomic Age, Voulkos and Autio made what Archie dismissed as "ribs, guts and belly buttons Art." Their works of this period seem tame today, certainly when compared to the two artists' category-shattering work of the late 1950s and early 1960s, but to Archie, they were making "a lot of crooked crazy shaped pots."[71] Relatively minor scraps over the Bray's image and direction reflected the two artists' need to define themselves and their work against what they perceived as Archie and Branson's more craft-oriented and commercial approach. These struggles prefigured more profound battles to come, battles that would radically alter the character of American ceramic art.

The First Big Year

> *The artistic venture . . . now has the toehold it needs to expand and further develop.*
>
> —*Helena Independent Record,* n.d.

Meanwhile the Bray was becoming known as "a real centre," as Archie had hoped. Locally, the classes taught by Lillian Boschen and Peter Voulkos brought in enthusiastic students from Helena and the surrounding region, and Peggy Voulkos, Pete's wife, taught enameling classes and produced enameled ashtrays and other products to raise funds for the Foundation. Archie began working to obtain college-level accreditation for Bray courses. And despite the potters' resistance, he succeeded in developing a market for ABF production ware, which included flowerpots, honey jars, and ashtrays. Orders poured in for ashtrays and a planter and iron-tripod set (designed by Lillian Boschen) from shops in Texas and Oregon as well as from Gump's, the famous San Francisco gift store.[72] In downtown Helena, the bookshop of Susan Eaker, who was Archie's close friend, served as the local outlet for Bray products.

A skilled marketer, Archie hosted the Bray's first open house on January 1, 1952, and though the temperature was 12 degrees below zero, seventy-five people braved the elements for the event. "A lovely affair," Archie wrote Branson. "Everyone was pleased, stayed on and on. . . ." At least two visitors made donations to the Foundation fund, and the first person in the door wanted to buy an electric kiln for his wife and daughter.[73]

In both 1951 and 1952, the Archie Bray Foundation took its show on the road, traveling to the North Montana State Fair in Great Falls. In 1951, Autio and Voulkos demonstrated their throwing and sculpture techniques and displayed the "first salt glazed pottery ever produced in Montana." The following August, Rudy and Pete were joined by Peggy Voulkos and Doris Strachan (who had been hired for the summer as Pete's assistant), and the quartet of Bray residents showed fairgoers "clay working, wheel throwing, modeling, sculpture, enameling on metals, and firing."[74]

Closer to home, Archie continued his involvement with the Community Concerts series, and as the local paper reported, "every Community Concert artist . . . visited the pottery and inscribed his or her name on small ceramic tablets, which comprise the 'guest book.'"[75] A news photographer was often on hand, and features on the performers' visits regularly appeared in the local paper, helping to keep the Bray in the public eye.

Like Archie, Branson Stevenson had marketing in his blood, and during his travels across the United States, he persistently spread the word about the Archie Bray Foundation. Perhaps his greatest coup came in 1952 when, during a business trip to New York, he visited America House, the "leading craft shop" in the country and precursor to the American Craft Museum. There he met Mrs. Aileen Vanderbilt Webb, America House's founder and the force behind the American Craftsmen's Cooperative Council. Dedicated to "elevating the status of the crafts in America," Mrs. Webb invited the potters of the Archie Bray Foundation to display their wares at America House in a special exhibition.[76]

As events unfolded, the Bray exhibition, entitled *Potters and Glazes of Montana,* spent a month during the fall of 1952 at America House and then went on to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. According to the *Helena Independent Record,* the potters included in the show were Peter and Peggy Voulkos, Manuel Neri (who, like Voulkos and Boschen, had studied at the California College of Arts and Crafts and was visiting the Bray that year), Branson Stevenson, Maxine Blackmer, and several local potters taking classes at the Bray. Some of these Montana pots—along with others by Frances Senska, Jessie Wilber, and Peter Meloy—would later tour Europe and Asia in an America House–curated exhibition, *Handcrafts in the United States,* sponsored by the State Department.[77]

On October 18, 1952, the Archie Bray Foundation celebrated its dynamic first year with another banquet. Again, forty celebrants gathered in the pottery building. With the recent America House show under its belt and with Peter Voulkos continuing to win national prizes for his pots—his work appeared in seven exhibitions in 1952, from the Seventeenth Ceramic National at the Syracuse Museum to a one-man show at Gump's of San Francisco—the now-thriving Foundation could legitimately claim that it had "become known from coast to coast."[78]

Leach, Hamada, Yanagi

> *You know . . . we felt that a start had been made . . . that held out a greater promise than in any other place which we visited in America.*
>
> —Bernard Leach, letter to Peter Meloy, n.d.

Archie Bray and his fellow board members had always planned to sponsor workshops by renowned ceramic artists at the Foundation. Their first choice was Bernard Leach, the British potter, writer, and thinker who ardently championed the notion of the "artist-potter." In the artist-potter's work, Leach maintained, "there is a unity of design and execution, a co-operation of hand and undivided personality, for designer and craftsman are one."[79] This attitude was central to the thinking of the three founders, and they wanted to hear more.

In early 1952, Branson Stevenson learned that Bernard Leach would be touring the United States late in the year. Branson wrote to Leach, asking if he might be interested in making a stop at the Archie Bray Foundation to present lectures and demonstrate his approach to making pottery. On March 20, Leach replied cautiously, wondering if a Montana stop would conflict with another workshop arranged by Alix and Warren Mackenzie, which was already scheduled for St. Paul, Minnesota.[80] Branson assured Leach that a Helena workshop would not compete with the St. Paul event, since the two cities were more than 1,000 miles apart, and that the trip to Helena would not add further travel expense, because Leach could take the train to Montana and then go on to California at no extra cost.[81]

Leach discussed the matter with the Mackenzies, and on April 24, he wrote to Branson that since he was already visiting three "centres" on his tour—the scheduled stops were Black Mountain College in North Carolina, the St. Paul Gallery and School of Art in St. Paul, Minnesota, and Chouinard Art Institute, in Los Angeles—he felt that he shouldn't add a fourth without the consent of the original sites. And besides, he noted, he didn't think he wanted to face a fourth, "so I tentatively suggest that we might . . . come for a week just friendly-wise . . . to sit around and talk shop, from the warm side of the windowpane." In this letter, Leach told Branson that he was traveling with two Japanese friends—Shoji Hamada,

At the first Bray workshop, ceramic luminaries Bernard Leach (left), Soetsu Yanagi (center), and Shoji Hamada (right) pose with the Foundation's three trustees, 1952 (ABFA).

reputed to be Japan's leading potter, and Soetsu Yanagi, director of the Museum of Folk-craft in Tokyo.[82]

Branson wrote back immediately, conveying both his and Archie's delight and promising an "interestingly restful" time.[83] As things developed, the difficulties over a conflict with the other sites seemed to evaporate. Leach decided to go ahead and make the Archie Bray Foundation the fourth stop, where he, Yanagi, and Hamada would make a full presentation. In September 1952, Archie issued a press release announcing Leach's impending visit, scheduled for early December.[84] In a letter to Branson, Archie noted his intention to send personal invitations to "75–100 people we know—folks—potters who are truly interested."[85]

By the first week of December, when Leach, Hamada, and Yanagi arrived in Helena, sixty interested people had signed up for the workshop.[86] They came to Helena from as far away as Grand Junction, Colorado, though most hailed from Montana, with significant contingents traveling from Butte, Missoula, Great Falls, and Bozeman. Several were arts educators, including Frances Senska, Jessie Wilber, and Bob DeWeese of Montana State College, and Sister Trinitas from the Great Falls College of Education.

The two-day workshop, held over a weekend, featured throwing demonstrations (sometimes simultaneous) by Leach and Hamada, two lectures by Yanagi ("The Responsibility of the Craftsman" and "Mystery of Beauty," that Peter Meloy subsequently published as pamphlets),[87] and films and slides portraying the ceramic traditions of Japan and England.

Much has been made of the 1952 tour by Leach, Hamada, and Yanagi. Ceramic historian Garth Clark notes that the "seminars at the Archie Bray Foundation . . . and at Black Mountain College . . . proved to be particularly far-reaching." Frances Senska has called the Bray visit "very influential," while Rudy Autio terms it "very significant . . . at least for me."[88]

What was it that so impressed and stimulated the American ceramists who attended these workshops? After all, two years earlier, Bernard Leach had, as Frances Senska put it, "made everybody in the country mad" when he declared that he saw little potential in American ceramics, noting that its practitioners lacked a cultural taproot.[89] Young Americans like Senska saw their own predicament differently: "We came from so many different places, and could give our own spin to whatever we were doing. . . . [In America] you can select any tradition you want and follow it, or make up your own as you go along."[90] Rudy Autio said of Leach, "I don't think he had a great deal of respect for the American potter at the time, and . . . that's the reason we didn't like him." Peter Voulkos, while admitting that Leach had written a "brilliant book," said of the British potter, "He had this quasi-Oriental thing, but he was basically a jug maker from Europe."[91] Earlier in the year, at Black Mountain College, Leach had annoyed his hosts by being "rather stuffy and grand," at first refusing to throw any pots because the local clays and kilns weren't what he was accustomed to.[92] At Helena, Leach bemused the rough-and-ready Montanans by wearing his

tweeds and a tie even while throwing pots, and, Voulkos reported, he "never once . . . got a spot of clay on him."[93]

Certainly the philosophical approach of Soetsu Yanagi struck a chord. For Rudy Autio, who at that time "didn't care for this crafty stuff," this revelatory encounter with Yanagi introduced him to a cultural tradition in which "pottery making has been for centuries regarded as a true art, of equal dignity with the fine arts."[94] Autio recalled that Yanagi talked about "Zen and the art of gutsiness and of letting things happen. . . . There was total involvement, of making it right. . . . And simplicity, economy, no fussing. . . . I began to look at ceramic art in a more professional way." Autio also remembered that in "walking around the [brick]yard with Dr. Yanagi . . . I began to see how he appreciated things like salt glaze on sewer tile."[95]

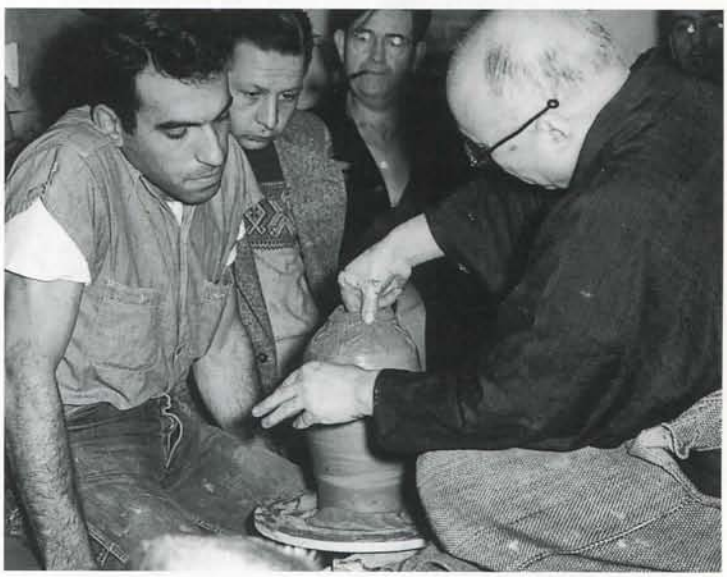
As a founder of the Mingei movement in Japan, which championed a "true craft . . . rooted in common, everyday utensils made by unknown craftsmen,"[96] Yanagi argued that individual artists should "brighten their goods rather than themselves." Yanagi was well aware of the forces that militated against such a return to selflessness—"We may call these modern times the Age of Signatures"—but still he called for setting the "individual artist free from his individuality." Only if craftsmen were to let go of their need to be recognized, Yanagi claimed, would society enter into a "golden age of craft . . . when beautiful unsigned goods [are] sold cheaply and widely used."[97] For many of the American potters in the 1952 workshops, and especially those like Voulkos and Autio, who were working hard to establish their reputations, Yanagi's vision must have seemed hopelessly utopian.

For both Autio and Voulkos, it was the living example of Shoji Hamada that most affected and influenced them. As he had at Black Mountain—where he used the "clay and glazes available" with sureness and delight[98]—Hamada proved wonderfully adaptable to local conditions in Helena. Frances Senska remembered that "they went out to do watercolors, and it was cold, and the water froze on the paper. And Hamada was so tickled [by the] effect of the watercolor freezing on the paper."[99] As Rudy Autio watched Hamada at the wheel, he "saw that there was more to pottery making than just making pots and selling 'em in some kind of dime store. I saw . . . the true connection with the work." After the workshop, Autio "tried to make Hamada pots for a while, and it didn't work all that well, but it did, in a way. And certainly left some impact."[100] Autio has said elsewhere, "Shoji Hamada, more than any other person, gave me an insight into what clay was about."[101]

But for Peter Voulkos, the example of Hamada was even more profound as well as more intimate. Because Hamada did not use a kick wheel—"he always used a Japanese wheel you'd turn by hand"—he asked Voulkos to kick the wheel for him. "I was right there," he remembers, "and had my head down with his, and he'd tell me to kick faster or slower, so I was just watching his hands. . . . How often do you get close to a living legend like he was?"

As the son of a chef, Voulkos had always paid attention to the deftness of cooks. "I'd watch short-order cooks. . . . They just had all this dexterity, as they walked by, they'd flip something over, they'd wipe something off, I always marveled at that." And like those short-order heroes of his youth, he observed that Shoji Hamada "never missed a stroke."

Technically, Peter Voulkos took a great deal from his encounter with Hamada. "I especially liked when he would decorate with his brushes using the slips right onto the greenware. I'd never seen that before. So I started using Japanese brushes all the time." He responded immediately, too, to the spontaneity that Hamada embodied, to the freedom of the master potter's forms. After the workshop, he remembered, "[my pots] started to loosen up a little bit . . . the forms started to change. I got to be able to handle more clay."[102] Gerry Williams, long-time editor of *Studio Potter,* has written that Voulkos's peers noted the "subtle softening changes" that appeared in the Montana potter's work after he witnessed Hamada's "casual but artful throwing" that December.[103]



At the first Bray workshop, Peter Voulkos kicks the wheel for legendary Japanese potter Shoji Hamada, 1952. To Voulkos's immediate left are Rudy Autio and Peter Meloy (ABFA).

Bernard Leach, upon hearing of Archie Bray's death in February 1953, wrote to Peter Meloy, sending his condolences—"We gained a real feeling of friendship & respect for Archie during those days in Helena"—and lauding the Bray Foundation. "You know," he continued, "that we felt that a start had been made under Pete Voulkos that held out a greater promise than in any other place which we visited in America."[104]

Architectural Ceramics

> *That was my picture of being a sculptor, to do heroic statuary for public buildings.*
>
> —Rudy Autio

From the beginning, pottery making had been a focus at the Archie Bray Foundation, but a second ceramic art form, murals made of fired clay, also played an important role in its first years. Rudy Autio single-handedly brought this emphasis to the Bray. Inspired while in graduate school by Mexican muralists Diego Rivera and Jose Clemente Orozco, Rudy began to develop the skills he needed to produce large-scale ceramic murals. Luckily for Rudy, "Archie was interested in my sculptural potential, so he used to go out talking to . . . people who wanted to buy his brick, and [he] says, 'I got a kid here that can make a plaque for you if you buy my brick.'" Archie's strategy worked, and often an architect or builder would receive, along with an order of brick, one of Rudy's sculptural wall pieces as a "kind of dividend."

Though he recalls his first efforts as being "pretty dismal," Rudy said he soon learned how to model and cast in terra-cotta and to create plaques and murals using carved brick.

> Carved brick, we got the idea of doing that over in the yard. . . . We altered the [brickmaking] machinery a little bit, and I . . . started to make some blocks that I set up on easels, and started to carve those. . . . That turned out to be a pretty good way of doing things . . . for buildings because they were structural at the same time [that] they were decorative. . . . Then they'd be fired in the brick kiln and I would number them and put 'em on a truck, deliver them to the site and they went up with the brick work. . . . Carved brick was a good thing for me, you know. It started to pay my way there for awhile.[105]

During the 1950s, Rudy created wall plaques for Montana State University's new humanities building in Missoula and for the veterinary research building at Montana State College, Bozeman, as well as for the First United Methodist Church in Great Falls, St. Gabriel's Catholic Church in Chinook, Gold Hill Lutheran Church in Butte, and other Montana churches, schools, libraries, and banks.[106]

Working in the brickyard drying shed, Rudy Autio created this carved brick mural for the Liberal Arts Hall at Montana State University (today the University of Montana), 1952. L. H. Jorud, photographer (ABFA).

Sadly, it was the opportunity to create a mural for the brand-new Charles Russell Gallery in Great Falls—a new museum devoted to the works of cowboy artist Charles M. Russell (1864–1926)—that brought the aesthetic and personal differences at the early Bray most clearly (and painfully) to the surface. Branson Stevenson, an acquaintance of Russell's and a close friend of his sole protegé, Joe De Yong, served as the first chairman of the museum's board, and with Archie's help, he convinced his fellow board members that a tile-and-brick mural—"the whole to be an abstract design"—would be just the thing for the museum's entrance. Almost immediately, conflict erupted over the mural's character. The museum envisioned a mural that included a replica of Russell's signature, but Peter Meloy, Peter Voulkos, and Rudy Autio all stated, "in one voice," that that was a "lousy idea" and would ruin the building.

Though Rudy recalls doing "a dozen or more sketches" for the mural and was conscious of the need to moderate his work for such a commission—"If I did something for architecture, I usually pulled my claws in a little. . . ."—Branson got involved, perhaps because the museum board disliked the younger artist's designs. In any case, Branson put forth his own design, and Voulkos and Autio (in Archie's testimony) declared that Branson's "[mural] design for the Russell

building was lousy, that it would hurt them to do it, that they would not put their name on anything of the sort," and that they would "go to Great Falls and tell the architect and the committee the whole thing was lousy." After further negotiations, Archie told Branson that the two young ceramists had come around, saying that they "would do the job—modified. Little angels, wings and all." But Archie also told Pete and Rudy to forget any modifications: "The thing has been booted around enough now, it stays as it is set now."

In a final letter to Branson, dated February 2, 1953, only eight days before his death, Archie revealed that the issue was still not settled. He hastened to assure Branson that Peter and Rudy had nothing but "respect and love for you . . . tho at times they do go off the deep end. . . . they are young and . . . sometimes without a grain of sense." Archie noted that he was glad that a design involving a horse had been vetoed. Ultimately, Rudy's "idea of the repeat pattern . . . done in Indian style" was the design approved by the museum.[107] The finished mural, as critic Matthew Kangas notes, features a "repeated eight-tile module, alternating black and red, using stylized prehistoric petroglyphs incised into wet bricks." Public art almost always involves compromise, but creating the Russell Gallery mural—though the result, in Kangas's words, was a "significant work"—must have left all parties feeling dissatisfied.[108]

Art for Art's Sake

> *No ribs guts and belly buttons—No ART!*
>
> —Archie Bray, Sr., letter to Branson Stevenson, January 23, 1953

Increasingly, the aesthetic and philosophical gulf widened between Archie Bray, who was rooted in nineteenth-century brickmaking traditions and steeped in Bernard Leach's theories of the "artist-craftsman," and Peter Voulkos and Rudy Autio, with their forward-looking, even revolutionary modernist sensibilities. Archie began to dislike the attention that Voulkos was receiving both locally and nationally. He felt that the focus of attention should be on the foundation that bore his name, or on his old friend, Branson Stevenson. In a January 1953 letter to Branson, he wrote:

> All of them can talk of Voulkos and Pete Meloy too, but the work you do . . . is so far ahead of any anyone is doing in all Montana! . . . But for fun let's be exact. Voulkos has 2 glazes. . . . No matter what shape, what size, what anything—maybe some red iron slip, then the 2 glazes. . . . But you have done more experimental work than they will ever accomplish. 45 glazes! Lovely colors. Lovely effects and shadings. Lovely shapes. A keen alert interest, always something new![109]

In early 1953, Branson published an article on his experimental approach, "Clays and Glazes of Montana," in *Craft Horizons;* and another Stevenson article, "Art from the Ground Up," appeared that spring in the *Quarterly of the Montana Institute of the Arts.* In both, Branson celebrated the many glazes he'd concocted from the "seemingly inexhaustible minerals of Montana's field and roadside" and he sought to share "some of our enthusiasm for this down-to-earthy art-craft."[110]

The young artist-craftsmen in residence at the Archie Bray Foundation did not share Branson's enthusiasm. Like many artists of their generation, including the abstract expressionists they would soon emulate, they were radically individualistic and sought a sophisticated expression, not something "down-to-earthy." In a 1954 article, also published in the *MIA Quarterly,* Lela and Rudy Autio profiled Peter Voulkos. They wrote:

> Pete has never made a fetish of glazing techniques. In fact, he does not do exhaustive glaze testing, relying instead on a half dozen glazes which he uses excellently. While he values a thorough knowledge of the technical end of pottery, the main objectives in his work are strictly esthetic. . . . There are few potters who have used native clays and earth glazes to the extent that Pete has used them. . . . Pete now thinks that digging clay is nonsense if it is cheaper and more practical to buy it. . . . In contrast . . . are the purists who dig and refine their clay . . . and perhaps spend so much time "grubbing the earth" they have little to show for their effort.[111]

The differences between the old and new guard—over artistic freedom, over Archie's push for production ware, over distinctions between art and craft—surfaced dramatically in Susan Eaker's bookstore in late January of 1953. In a letter to Branson, Archie wrote that Eaker, whose store was the Helena outlet for Bray production ware and who was Archie's confidant (and thus aware of his frustrations), had called the Foundation, asking for more enameled ashtrays made by a Bray volunteer.

Eaker wanted the ashtrays immediately, before the legislature adjourned and the legislative wives, her best customers, went home. And she made it clear, using Archie's

colorful phrase, that she wanted "no ribs guts and belly buttons—No ART!" Peter and Rudy went in to town to talk things over with Eaker. As Eaker told it, the Bray resident artists arrived empty-handed and started to argue with her, asserting that the "enamels should all be scrapped—no one should ever see them!" They declared that they "were not going to bastardize their art to suit people's taste." Archie reported to Branson that Eaker, who was locally famous for her excitability, "tore into them. . . . 'Who are you to set yourselves as the last word as to what is good or bad art? . . . What is to become of the institution you are working for?'" When Pete and Rudy told Eaker, "we don't intend to sell our art here . . . no store [in Helena] is worthy of it," Eaker became "overheated and practically showed them the door."

Archie asked Branson, "Why do they do it? . . . They have forgotten everything Leach and Hamada told them—forgotten why??" And to think, bemoaned Archie, that "Leach said Pete had promise." To make matters worse, he went on, "none of them now say Leach was so good," and in fact, one of them had gone so far as to call "Leach's stuff . . . crap!!!"[112]

In 1957, with ruthless candor, Peter Voulkos clarified his revolutionary position regarding the relationship between art and craft when he served as juror for an exhibition of works by the designer-craftsmen of the Mississippi Basin. Only three years after leaving Helena, Voulkos had become, according to the show's catalog, "Leader and envy of every pedestrian potter. . . . Vigorous breaker of meaningless boundaries, Scourge of the dull and too-often-repeated." In his juror's statement, he said:

> Lack of stimulation leading to lack of conviction, idea and intensification seem to be the general rule of the . . . show. . . . not only this show but most craft shows. . . . A few techniques at hand, seemingly passed off for art. . . . people associated with craft work tend to confine themselves in a very tight little sphere refusing for some reason the contamination of any of the fields of creativity.[113]

The Death of Archie Bray, Sr.

> *A kindly and conscientious man, devoted to his friends and his city, was Archie C. Bray, who died far too long before the three score and ten milestone of life.*
>
> —*Helena Independent Record,* n.d.

In January of 1953, Archie Bray somehow injured his leg and found himself in the local hospital with phlebitis. "I can't remember bruising [my leg]," he wrote Branson, "can't remember squeezing it, can't remember anything which would indicate an injury. I asked [the doctor] about long hours, overwork and all that. It is hard to say."[114]

After a month of enforced rest, during which he fought complications that included bouts of flu and pneumonia, he "seemed to be getting along fine." During that month, he did his best to keep the brickyard and Foundation running from his hospital sickbed. Finally, he was allowed to go home.

On the drive across town, Archie, Sr., asked his son a favor: "Drive me out to the brickyard, and let me take a look." Archie, Jr., recalled that he had just been "carefully admonished by the doctors . . . [to] take him directly home," and so he refused. His father lived "another three or four days," and "then all of a sudden," on the morning of February 17, 1953, Archie Bray, Sr., died instantaneously of an embolism. He was sixty-six years old.[115]

Archie was eulogized at length in the local paper as a prominent Montana "industrialist and ardent patron of the fine arts." He was remembered for his industriousness, his love of gardens and the performing arts, and his civic-mindedness. But perhaps most importantly, wrote his eulogist, "Mr. Bray died with his life's ambition partly attained in the establishment of Pottery, Inc., as part of the Archie Bray Foundation."[116]

Branson Stevenson and Peter Meloy served as pallbearers in Archie's funeral. Nearly fifty years later, Peter Meloy would say, "I want you to know that you've got to give Archie Bray a lot of credit. . . . The main thing is, two things, one is that Archie had the idea of art; secondly he had the clay."[117] Branson Stevenson remembered that "Archie wanted people to pass through the doorway into a place of art and appreciate the simple philosophies of art as people will do if they are of the same spirit. . . . Archie Bray's vision," added Branson, "became reality."[118]

In remembering Archie Bray, both Rudy Autio and Peter Voulkos understood clearly his importance to their own lives and to the history of American ceramics. Rudy recalled that though Archie sometimes found the young artists unmanageable and their art incomprehensible, he showed remarkable restraint, "considering his background and the way he saw art. . . . He knew art had to move. . . . He called the stuff that we did ribs, guts, and belly buttons. . . . He was pretty good. He didn't say much."[119]

And Pete acknowledged:

> [Archie] started a great thing. And was very instrumental for me, for Rudy, because he gave us a

Always passionately interested in the arts, Archie Bray looks on as Rudy Autio creates a sculpture of a mother and child on horseback, 1951 (ABFA).

> place to work . . . he was a very generous man in all ways. . . . He'd always stop in at the pottery, and he would bring us food. He was always getting imported foods. . . . And every time he'd get a big shipment in, he'd always throw a little bit our way . . . to us he was a hell of a great guy.[120]

The Foundation without Archie

> *Then, just by plain default, I found myself in charge of the brickyard and all the various other operations.*
>
> —Archie Bray, Jr.

Like his father before him, Archie Bray, Jr., had grown up in the brickyard. He had witnessed the building of the pottery as a young man, but he had never been an enthusiastic supporter of his father's foundation. In fact, in September 1952, Archie, Sr., had written to Branson Stevenson, "My son is terribly disturbed! He cannot see the possibilities [of the pottery]. . . . My son's opposition . . . in no way makes the task easy—I am tired of going upstream all the while." After Archie, Sr.'s death, however, Archie, Jr., honored his father's wishes and continued to support the pottery. "My father wanted it to continue," he said, "and I was going to do everything I could to see that he was not disappointed." Rudy Autio has said of Archie, Jr., "He was the one who saw to it that [the] Bray Foundation survived, more than anyone else . . . he was so loyal to the place, even though he didn't like it. . . . [After Archie, Sr.'s death] he came to me and told me 'We'll see that you're okay, don't worry about it.'"[121]

According to Autio, Rudy and Archie, Jr., had a good relationship, but Peter Voulkos found that, "after Archie died . . . I started getting these politically sort of off-beat pressures from the rest of the family, and they were very unsympathetic to this whole idea, and it became very tough and boring and monotonous."[122]

On the surface, at least, life at the Bray continued much as before. While Rudy worked on a variety of architectural projects, Pete maintained the line of Bray production ware and persevered in sending out his own work to competitions. In April of 1953, Voulkos's pots were featured in a solo exhibition at the University of Florida, Gainesville, and later in the year, examples of his work appeared in a pair of national exhibitions: *Good Design,* at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, and *Designer Craftsmen U.S.A. 1953,* in which he won first place in ceramics.[123]

Black Mountain College

> *Art does not seek to describe but to enact.*
>
> —Charles Olson[124]

Peter Voulkos's growing reputation led him, in the summer of 1953, to take part in a transformative experience, one that was "so beautiful and so new to me that . . . I just really got turned on."[125] Karen Karnes and David Weinrib, the ceramics faculty at North Carolina's Black Mountain College, invited Pete to spend three weeks teaching a workshop at the renowned (and impoverished) experimental college. Dominated between 1933 and 1949 by former Bauhaus master Josef Albers, Black Mountain College was, despite its small size and limited resources, a "unique creative community where the most vital work being done was in the arts."[126] When Voulkos arrived in early summer, the poet Charles Olson was directing the college, and a remarkable cast of American artists, including potters Karnes, Weinrib, and M. C. Richards, dancer/choreographer Merce Cunningham, composers John Cage and David Tudor, and painters Jack Tworkov and Esteban Vicente, made the place "just fantastic" for Voulkos. "Every night there was something happening . . . dance or readings . . . painting critiques and, you know, little sorts of seminars. . . . It was very exciting." When he arrived, Voulkos said he was making "pretty straight pottery, not very inspired." Voulkos said of his weeks at Black Mountain:

> Watching these pros in action . . . you begin to feel it. . . . They're loose, and . . . they begin to invent within their form. . . . Well, my total commitment kind of formed. . . . [T]hat whole Black Mountain

trip . . . put it all in context . . . really turning on about what form is about. . . . So that helped me . . . later when I . . . just forgot about that whole . . . idea of pottery being just . . . craftsmanship."[127]

At Black Mountain, Peter Voulkos made his own mark as an artist of remarkable skill and drive. He recalled that students as well as faculty would "come over and watch me. . . . They couldn't believe me, either."[128] Rector Charles Olson, a mythomaniac whose enthusiasms, according to Karen Karnes, were often out of proportion to realities, found in Peter the "personification of the American West," building up what one observer called an "elaborate iconography" around the young Montanan. Olson had assumed that his "dark looks and taciturn manner" signified a Native American heritage, and when he told Olson that he was Greek, the larger-than-life poet (he stood 6 feet 7 inches) "promptly restructured his theory, drawing Greco-Indian comparisons of mythic proportions."[129]

After his three weeks at Black Mountain, Voulkos drove up to New York City with fellow westerner M. C. Richards, who hailed from Weiser, Idaho. He stayed with Richards and David Tudor while he toured the city, where he recalled that he felt totally at home, as though he'd been there before. He visited the museums—"I'd never been in a museum"—and he "met . . . just about all the artists that were . . . important at that time," among them Willem de Kooning (who was "sort of aloof") and Franz Kline. Kline had been a hero to Pete, and he met and talked with the painter at the Cedar Bar, the famous hangout for abstract expressionist artists, where Kline was "holding forth every day."[130]

According to Rudy Autio, when Pete returned to Helena, "it was just like he was transformed. You could almost see it on his face, there was a kind of glow." Abstract expressionism, Rudy added, was "the glove [Pete] had to put his hand into." In Autio's telling, Voulkos's work "changed very dramatically, and he started, instead of these nice pretty bottles," to make wilder pots with a "whole bunch of different thrown elements [attached to] the main body . . . and cut walls." He continued to throw the Bray's production ware, and he was still making "pretty" pots for competitions. But like the artists he'd met at Black Mountain, Voulkos had begun to invent within his own form.

Rudy, too, was stimulated by the ideas Peter brought back from North Carolina, though he himself had "been doing things with slab construction all the time. . . . since I was doing sculpture. I wasn't a potter." Abstract expressionism was most definitely "in the wind," with its emphasis on gesture and the "emotional spirit of the moment."[131]

Marguerite Wildenhain

[Marguerite Wildenhain] *was pretty arrogant, and she didn't like the fact that she was being outclassed by our growing and famous Peter Voulkos.*

—Rudy Autio

After the death of Archie, Sr., the Bray continued to host workshops by well-known ceramic artists. Between 1953 and 1956, Antonio Prieto, Carlton Ball, Kathleen Horsman, and Rex Mason all presented successful workshops at the Helena pottery, and up-and-coming ceramic artists such as Robert Sperry and Muriel Guest spent time there making pots. But perhaps the most important workshop, after the Leach/Yanagi/Hamada visit, was the 1954 visitation by the legendary Bauhaus potter and proprietor of Pond Farm, Marguerite Wildenhain. Though Wildenhain's visit produced a negative reaction, it had a positive impact. It helped to push forward the ceramic revolution just begun by Peter Voulkos and Rudy Autio. For the young ceramists, Wildenhain proved an articulate and powerful enemy against whom to define their emerging positions as avant gardists of clay and propagandists for total aesthetic freedom.

In 1919, Marguerite Wildenhain had been among the very first pottery students at Germany's Bauhaus. Its main campus was at Weimar. For practical reasons, the Bauhaus pottery had been set up at nearby Dornburg under the direction of veteran potter Max Krehan and Master of Form Gerhard Marcks, a sculptor. Krehan, "unaware of the current debates about art and society," ran the workshop on a traditional apprenticeship model, and Marcks, more conservative than his Bauhaus peers, had little faith in the latest progressive thinking about education.[132] According to Frances Senska, who had studied with the Bauhaus potter at Pond Farm in 1950, Wildenhain disliked another Bauhaus master, the pedagogically progressive László Moholy-Nagy, because, in her view, he was "too naive" in his willingness to let students "try anything."[133]

The Marguerite Wildenhain who arrived in Helena in May 1954 for a weeklong workshop was, according to Rudy Autio, arrogant, authoritarian, and intolerant. Rather than let students "try anything," she insisted that there were "certain ways you hold your hand. . . . And there was nothing in between that she would allow, you know, 'my way is the only way.'" She believed firmly in a long apprenticeship, "six or seven years under a tough master before we knew what the hell we were doing," and she was offended by these young Montana upstarts who "just went ahead and did it."

To add insult to injury, Wildenhain, in Rudy's opinion, "couldn't throw as well" as Pete, and someone in the workshop audience called out, "'Ah, Pete can do better than that,' . . . and she was just livid." Soon, Rudy continued, "People were gathering around Pete and kind of ignoring Marguerite. . . . He was the new guy, the new kid on the block who was doing real well." As Pete remembers it, Marguerite "had this feeling that I was a sort of troublemaker, that I'd thrown something into the stew that shouldn't be there."

In Rudy's assessment, "it was a funny workshop. I did admire a few things. . . . She could throw her work very thin . . . and she could pull handles in a very nice way." But her "strict philosophy of having to apprentice" and her dogmatism made no sense to Autio and Voulkos, who were "into dogma-free living and being able to express yourself any way possible."[134]

The End of an Era

> *But the whole thing changed at that point, you know, after Archie had died.*
>
> —Peter Voulkos

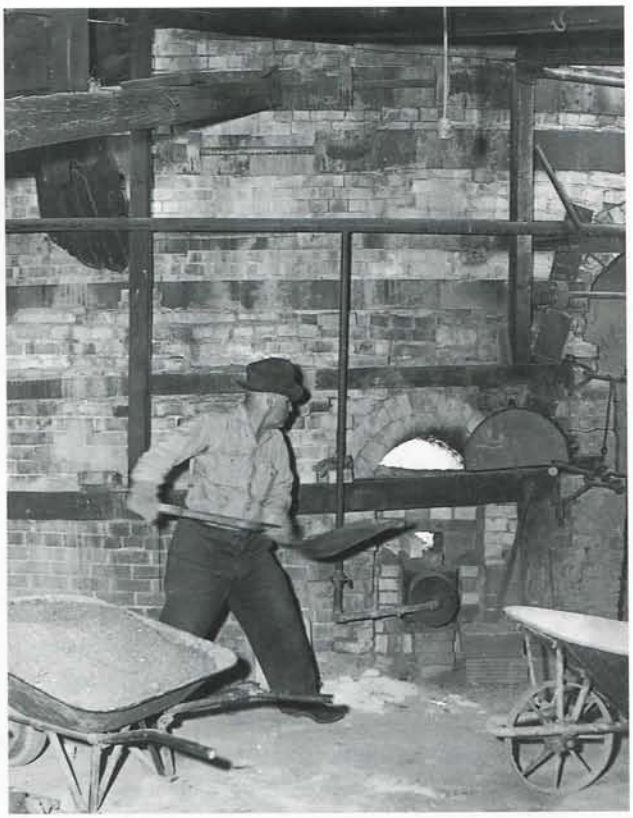
Relations between Peter Voulkos and Archie Bray, Jr., continued to be strained, and in mid 1954, when Pete received an offer from Millard Sheets to head up the new ceramics program at the Los Angeles County Art Institute, he jumped at the chance. At the Otis (as the institute is popularly known), Voulkos proceeded on the path he'd begun in Montana. He ran his program, in the words of Rose Slivka, "in his usual style, as a free-wheeling place where energies and enthusiasms were high and contagious and everyone there caught the spirit."[135] Pete continued to spend summers at the Bray, at least through 1955, and in 1975, he returned to Helena in triumph, as perhaps the most famous ceramic artist in the world, to teach his own workshop.

Archie, Jr., and Rudy respected each other, and Rudy stayed on as resident director of the pottery through 1956. Soon after the Wildenhain workshop, two of the potters who attended, Jim and Nan McKinnell of Seattle, moved to Helena to work at the Bray. Both proficient potters, they had just returned from a two-year European tour, during which they had "studied under master potters in France, England, and Scotland." The McKinnells taught the community classes and helped Rudy make the production ware. A ceramics engineer, Jim tested clays for the brickyard, and as Archie, Jr., remembers, he "contributed a good . . . bit." The McKinnells did not consider themselves avant-garde artists, and their work, noted Archie, Jr., "appealed more to what people did want."[136]

On occasion, tension developed between Jim McKinnell and Rudy because, though Rudy was in charge, Jim was "well trained, and . . . he was a little contemptuous of us because we were totally ignorant about technical shit." Jim, Rudy remembers, "didn't feel that he had to nourish the glaze problems of everyone . . . 'cause he was sort of paying his way here . . . and helping a lot." But, adds Rudy, "during those hard days at Bray's, you know, cold, it was winter, and we were crammed together, and it was a dusty little pottery shop, and every day we'd be there close to each other, and after a while, little things would start to get in the way, your morale kind of went down." Some of the stress was caused, in Rudy's recollection, because the resident potters "didn't know where the money was coming from . . . it got too tight."[137]

Finally weary of "making $200 a month and trying to live on that," Rudy decided to leave the Bray. Peter Voulkos had been encouraging him to move to Los Angeles, and Rudy took his young family to California. Though a number of Los Angeles architects were interested in his carved-brick murals, and he soon found a job in a kiln factory as a lab technician, Rudy stayed only a few months. Homesick for Montana and determined to work as an artist, he sent a telegram to K. Ross Toole, director of the Montana Historical Society, and Toole hired him on the spot to create exhibits and work as a curator. In 1957, Carl McFarlane, president of Montana State University at Missoula, offered Rudy a position teaching ceramics in the art department. Rudy accepted, and as he put it, a "whole new world began over here."[138] From 1957 to his retirement in 1984, Rudy Autio influenced generations of ceramic artists—as a dedicated teacher, and in Michael Rubin's opinion, as a "clay artist, painter, and visual innovator."[139] Rudy, too, would return to the Bray. In fact, he remained a staunch supporter through the years, teaching workshops, serving on the Foundation's board of directors, and regularly donating his art to Foundation fundraising events.

In May 1957, the McKinnells left the Archie Bray Foundation to set up a studio in Deerfield, Massachusetts. With Archie, Sr., and the first resident artists gone, the stage was vacated, ready for the next era—and the next set of players—in the history of the Archie Bray Foundation.



Hard at work, Archie Bray shovels salt into one of the brickyard beehive kilns. Salt introduced into the firing causes silicon in the clay to flux, which creates a glassy coating on the work. *Helena Independent Record* photo (ABFA).

"thru it all will permeate a beautiful spirit"

> *To make the origin gain ground: vocation of all origin.*
>
> —Edmond Jabès[140]

Despite the battles over aesthetics and work habits, despite the cold and the financial challenges, the first years of the Archie Bray Foundation established, in an astonishingly short time, all the elements that today make the mature Foundation, in Rudy Autio's words, a "very important center." First and foremost, the vision that Archie Bray articulated in his letters to Branson Stevenson, and during those evenings at the Meloy home, remains as vital at the start of the twenty-first century as it was fifty years ago.

Still what Archie Bray conceived as "A place to work for all who are seriously interested in any of the Ceramic Arts," the Bray welcomes, just as it did in the early 1950s, ceramic artists from across the United States. And just as Archie, Branson, and Peter Meloy invited masters from England, Germany, Scotland, and Japan to present workshops and work in the pottery, so does the current Bray maintain an international character, with ceramists visiting from Siberia and Thailand, Korea and Finland, Rumania and Taiwan.

Archie Bray, by treating ceramic sculptors and makers of pots as equals, established an inclusiveness that transcends genres. And the early battles over distinctions between art and craft, between "lovely" glazes and "crooked crazy shaped pots," have sensitized the place to the need for tolerance, rendering it truly welcoming to all aesthetic approaches.

Idealistic and practical, good fun and a place where much good work is done, the Archie Bray Foundation for the Ceramic Arts today stands as a worthy memorial to the "life and interests of the man who [made] this pottery possible." It is, indeed, a "place of art—of simple things [and] good people." And though there will forever be problems, "thru it all" still permeates that beautiful spirit of which Archie Bray dreamed fifty years ago.

Notes

1. Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* (London: New Left Books, 1977), 45.

2. Peter Meloy, conversation with Chere Jiusto and Rick Newby, July 2, 1998. In August of 1998, Peter Meloy, the last surviving cofounder of the Archie Bray Foundation, passed away. We dedicate this essay to his memory.

3. Peter Meloy, interview by Martin Holt, Helena, MT, June 19, 1977, Archie Bray Foundation for the Ceramic Arts Archives, Helena, MT (hereafter ABFA).

4. Benjamin, *Origin of German Tragic Drama,* 45.

5. Archie Bray, Sr., letter to Branson Stevenson, 1951, ABFA.

6. Chere Jiusto, *The Heart of Helena* (Helena, MT: Montana State Historic Preservation Office, 1989), 5; Marguerite Greenfield, *The Old Fire Bell on Tower Hill* (Helena: Committee on Landmarks, n.d.); and Paula Petrik, *No Step Backward: Women and Family on the Rocky Mountain Frontier, Helena, Montana, 1865–1900* (Helena: Montana Historical Society Press, 1987), 6–7, 14–15.

7. Charles N. Kessler, "A few remarks at the occasion of the opening of the First Branch of the Archie Bray Foundation, at the Western Clay Manufacturing Company Plant, west of Helena, Montana," October 20, 1951, ABFA.

8. For our discussion of the history of Western Clay Manufacturing Company, we are indebted to Fred Quivik, whose study, *The Western Clay Manufacturing Company: An Historical Analysis of the Plant and Its Development* (Butte, MT: Renewable Technologies, Inc., 1985), proved invaluable. See also "Bray Was Born While Miners' Picks Tapped Golden Flood of Last Chance," *The Townsend* (MT) *Star,* undated clipping, scrapbooks, ABFA; Duane W. Bowler, "Western Clay Plays Role in Growth, Beauty of Capital City," *Helena Independent Record,* July 22, 1945; Archie Bray, Jr., interview by Martin Holt, Los Angeles, CA, August 3, 1978, ABFA; and Chere Jiusto, "Brickyards to Potshards," *More From the Quarries of Last Chance Gulch* (Helena: *Helena Independent Record,* 1995), 106–109.

9. Archie Bray, Jr., Holt interview, ABFA.

10. Archie Bray, Jr., Holt interview, ABFA.

11. Archie Bray, Jr., Holt interview, ABFA; "Archie Bray, Sr., Helena Industrialist and Patron of Fine Arts, Dies at Home Today After Illness," *Helena Independent Record,* February 17, 1953; Al Gaskill, "The Man in the Brown Derby," *Helena Independent Record,* April 17, 1960; and Meloy, Holt interview, ABFA.

12. Archie Bray, Jr., Holt interview, ABFA; and Betty Bray Galusha, interview by Martin Holt, Denver, CO, May 10, 1978, ABFA.

13. Archie Bray, Jr., Holt interview, ABFA; Betty Bray Galusha, Holt interview, ABFA; and "Members of Community Concert Association Have Been Given Opportunity to Enjoy Big Names of Entertainment World," *Helena Independent Record,* undated clipping, scrapbooks, ABFA.

14. Peter Meloy, "Archie Bray and The Archie Bray Foundation," unpublished reminiscence, July 1997, ABFA.

15. Meloy, "Archie Bray and The Archie Bray Foundation," ABFA; Peter Meloy, interview by Chere Jiusto and Rick Newby, July 2, 1998, ABFA; Meloy, Holt interview, ABFA; and Alexandra Swaney, "The Queen of Social Logic: The Life and Writing of Frieda Fligelman," *Writing Montana: Literature under the Big Sky* (Helena: Montana Center for the Book, 1996), 103.

16. Peter Meloy maintained a lively interest in the theater, and between 1939 and the early 1940s, he directed the Helena Little Theatre. See Vivian Paladin and Jean Baucus, *Helena: An Illustrated History* (1983; Helena: Montana Historical Society Press, reprint 1996), 185.

17. See Donna Forbes, Rudy and Lela Autio, and Gordon McConnell, *Henry Meloy: Five Themes: 1945–1951* (Billings, MT: Yellowstone Art Center, 1990); and *Henry Meloy: Notes, Henry Meloy: Non-Objectives, Henry Meloy: Landscapes,* and *Henry Meloy: Portrait Drawings,* all published by the Henry Meloy Educational Trust, Helena, MT, n.d. The bulk of Henry Meloy's artistic output not in private hands is held by the School of Fine Arts, The University of Montana, Missoula.

18. Rudy Autio, artist's statement, *Northwest Ceramics Today* (Boise, ID: Boise State University, 1987), 8.

19. Meloy, Holt interview, ABFA; and Meloy, "Archie Bray and The Archie Bray Foundation," ABFA.

20. Branson Stevenson, interview by Martin Holt, Great Falls, MT, August 2, 1978, ABFA; and Herbert C. Anderson, Jr., *The Life, the Times and the Art of Branson Graves Stevenson* (Raynesford, MT: Janher Publishing Inc., 1979), 213–214.

21. Sister Providencia, *Life Sketch of Sister Mary Trinitas Morin, F.C.S.P.* (Great Falls, MT: College of Great Falls, 1965); and Anderson, *Branson Graves Stevenson,* 223, 224.

22. Anderson, *Branson Graves Stevenson,* 223–224, 229, 240.

23. "Famous Ceramic Artists Hold Seminar at Helena," *Great Falls Tribune,* undated clipping, scrapbooks, ABFA.

24. Stevenson, Holt interview, ABFA.

25. Anderson, *Branson Graves Stevenson,* 224.

26. Archie Bray, Sr.'s letters to Branson Stevenson, dating from early 1951 to February 1953, survive in the Archie Bray Foundation Archives and provide invaluable insight into Archie's thought processes from the time the Foundation began until his death. It appears that Branson's letters to Archie have not survived.

27. Rudy Autio, interview by Chere Jiusto and Rick Newby, Missoula, MT, November 3, 1998, ABFA; Frances Senska and Jessie Wilber, interview by Martin Holt, Bozeman, MT, July 16, 1979, ABFA; and Peter Voulkos, interview by Martin Holt, Oakland, CA, August 7, 1978, ABFA.

28. Senska/Wilber, Holt interview, ABFA.

29. See Marcia Y. Manhart, "The Emergence of the American Craftsman—à la BA, BFA, MA, and MFA," in *A Neglected History: 20th Century American Craft* (New York: American Craft Museum, 1990), 21.

30. Susan D. Harris and Ted Vogel, *Heroes, Icons, History and Memory: 1998 NCECA Honors and Fellows Exhibition,* Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth (National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts, 1998), 87–88; Garth Clark, *American Ceramics: 1876 to the Present* (London: Booth-Clibborn Editions, 1987), 270; and Frances Senska, interview by Chere Jiusto and Rick Newby, Bozeman, MT, June 9, 1998, ABFA.

31. Senska/Wilber, Holt interview, ABFA; Senska, Jiusto/Newby interview, ABFA; Marcia Y. Manhart, "Charting A New Educational Vision," *Craft in the Machine Age: The History of Twentieth-Century American Craft, 1920–1945* (New York: Harry N. Abrams/American Craft Museum, 1995), 69; and Krisztina Passuth, *Moholy-Nagy* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1985), 205–6.

32. Senska, Jiusto/Newby interview, ABFA.

33. Manhart, "The Emergence of the American Craftsman," 23.

34. Senska/Wilber, Holt interview, ABFA.

35. Frances Senska, interview by Matthew Kangas, Bozeman, MT, August 5, 1982, quoted in Matthew Kangas, *Rudy Autio Retrospective* (Missoula, MT: School of Fine Arts, University of Montana, 1983), 7–8.

36. Rose Slivka, "The Artist and His Work: Risk and Revelation," in Rose Slivka and Karen Tsujimoto, *The Art of Peter Voulkos* (Tokyo/Oakland, CA: Kodansha International/The Oakland Museum, 1995),34–35.

37. Senska/Wilber, Holt interview, ABFA.

38. Slivka and Tsujimoto, *The Art of Peter Voulkos,* 161.

39. Autio, Jiusto/Newby interview, ABFA.

40. Senska/Wilber, Holt interview, ABFA.

41. Kangas, *Rudy Autio Retrospective,* 5–8, 69.

42. Archie Bray, Sr., letter to Branson Stevenson, n.d., ABFA.

43. Dorothy Helton, "Pottery, Inc., Is Realization of Years of Planning by Archie Bray, Patron of Arts," *Helena Independent Record,* October 7, 1951.

44. "Pottery Building, Composed of Five Rooms, Offers Serious Artists Facilities for Every Type of Ceramics," *Helena Independent Record,* October 7, 1951.

45. Helton, "Pottery, Inc., Is Realization."

46. The first letter surviving in the Archie Bray Foundation Archives, from Bernard Leach to Branson Stevenson, is dated March 15, 1951, but internal evidence indicates that the two men had been corresponding for some time before that date.

47. Bernard Leach, *A Potter's Book* (1940; Levittown, NY: Transatlantic Arts, 1976), 14–15.

48. László Moholy-Nagy, "Education and the Bauhaus," in Passuth, *Moholy-Nagy,* 346.

49. Dorothy Helton, "Pottery, Inc. Has Enjoyed Widespread Recognition During Its First Big Year," *Helena Independent Record,* undated clipping, scrapbooks, ABFA.

50. Anderson, *Branson Graves Stevenson,* 227.

51. Senska/Wilber, Holt interview, ABFA; and Frances Senska, "Pottery in a Brickyard," *American Craft* 42:1 (February/March 1982): 33.

52. Autio, Jiusto/Newby interview, ABFA. Rudy Autio's bust of Archie now rests in Robert Harrison's *A Potter's Shrine* on the grounds of the Archie Bray Foundation.

53. Voulkos, Holt interview, ABFA.

54. Charles N. Kessler, "A few remarks at the occasion of the opening of the First Branch of the Archie Bray Foundation," ABFA.

55. Archie Bray, Sr., letter to Branson Stevenson, ca. October 26, 1951, ABFA.

56. "Pottery, Inc., Dedicated During Banquet in New Building Saturday Evening; Forty Attend," *Helena Independent Record,* October 28, 1951.

57. "Young Woman Has Arrived in City To Take Charge of Archie Bray Foundation," *Helena Independent Record,* undated clipping, scrapbooks, ABFA.

58. Archie Bray, Sr., letter to Branson Stevenson, October 26, 1951, ABFA.

59. Archie Bray, Sr., letter to Branson Stevenson, December 2, 1951, ABFA.

60. Archie Bray, Sr., letter to Branson Stevenson, December 17, 1951, ABFA.

61. Archie Bray, Sr., letter to Branson Stevenson, December 1951, ABFA.

62. Archie Bray, Sr., letter to Branson Stevenson, March 6, 1952, ABFA.

63. Senska/Wilber, Holt interview, ABFA.

64. Betty Bray Galusha, Holt interview, ABFA.

65. Archie Bray, Sr., letter to Branson Stevenson, April 10, 1952.

66. Autio, Jiusto/Newby interview, ABFA.

67. Archie Bray, Sr., letter to Branson Stevenson, April 10, 1952.

68. Voulkos, Holt interview, ABFA.

69. Archie Bray, Sr., letter to Branson Stevenson, November 5, 1952, ABFA.

70. Archie Bray, Sr., letter to Branson Stevenson, December 1951, ABFA; and Archie Bray, Sr., letter to Branson Stevenson, Spring 1952, ABFA.

71. Archie Bray, Sr., letter to Branson Stevenson, December 23, 1952, ABFA.

72. Archie Bray, Sr., letter to Branson Stevenson, 1952, ABFA.

73. Archie Bray, Sr., letter to Branson Stevenson, January 1, 1952, ABFA.

74. *Great Falls Tribune,* August 6, 1951; and Helton, "Pottery, Inc. Has Enjoyed Widespread Recognition During Its First Big Year," *Helena Independent Record,* undated clipping, scrapbooks, ABFA.

75. Helton, "Pottery, Inc. Has Enjoyed Widespread Recognition During Its First Big Year," *Helena Independent Record,* undated clipping, scrapbooks, ABFA. Apparently the ceramic guest book has been lost.

76. "Artists and Advocates: Craft in the Machine Age," *Craft in the Machine Age,* 249.

77. Anderson, *Branson Graves Stevenson,* 229; *Great Falls Tribune,* June 22, 1952; and "Exhibit of Montana Made Pottery From Archie Bray Foundation Being Shown in New York City," *Helena Independent Record,* August 31, 1952.

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80. Bernard Leach, letter to Branson Stevenson and Archie Bray, March 20, 1952, ABFA.

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91. Rudy Autio and Peter Voulkos, interviewed in the video, *Revolutions of the Wheel: The Great Move West,* vol. 2 (Los Angeles, CA: Queens Row, 1998).

92. Martin Duberman, *Black Mountain: An Exploration in Community* (1972; New York: W. W. Norton, 1993), 364.

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