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Patrick Hall and Lynda Weinman Ceramics

'Kindred Spirits' Exhibit at Sullivan Goss

By Josef Woodard

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Kindred Spirits, on view at Sullivan Goss through May 24, is a sculptural garden of earthly delights celebrating the collaborative ceramics made by Patrick Hall and Lynda Weinman. Each piece marries one of Hall's elegant and symmetrical bases to a top section created by Weinman using computer-aided 3D modeling. While Hall's vessels follow the venerable ceramic art tradition of vases and bowls, Weinman's quirky contributions put a different spin on the idea, reimagining vessels that resemble the anatomical tubes that carry blood, or perhaps cephalopod tentacles, or even the stems of exotic plants.



"Collaborative work #26," 2021, from Kindred Spirits

Weinman, a local luminary and highly successful internet education entrepreneur will be familiar to many of you as a generous sponsor of — among many other things — the Santa Barbara International Film Festival and UCSB Arts & Lectures. Since selling *Lynda.com* in 2015, her instinct for teaching, learning, and creation has led her to become increasingly involved in ceramics. Beginning just over a year ago, in the last months of the pre-pandemic, her artistic plot thickened when she started avidly pursuing — and really pioneering — the nascent technology of 3D printing ceramic art.

Enter veteran ceramicist Patrick Hall, a designer, architect, and passionate ceramic artist going back four decades, who has kept his Clay Studio in Goleta open for many years. A still-new partnership with gifted — and generous — neophyte Weinman resulted not only in the unique collaborative body of work on exhibit at Sullivan Goss, but also in the evolution of Hall's original Clay Studio into a vast new 28,000-square-foot structure at the rural-ish end of Fairview Avenue.

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Great potential will be unlocked once the Clay Studio opens to the public and gains traction with its grand plan of offering educational services, two dozen artist studios, exhibition spaces, and more, all in a ceramics center that seems destined to become world-renowned. As Sullivan Goss owner Nathan Vonk effused last week, surrounded by this octopus's garden of sculptures, the newly fortified Clay Studio "is going to create its own gravity very quickly."

Although modern ceramics have not always been appropriately valued or extensively displayed by galleries and museums, there have always been exceptions, especially on the West Coast. Those who have embraced the ceramic medium and infused it with wit, wisdom, and themes beyond well-crafted surfaces and objects include Ojai's late, great centenarian Beatrice Wood and other such art world denizens as Peter Voulkos, Viola Frey, and Robert Arneson.

In *Kindred Spirits*, we see an enlightening and witty example of the actual and theoretical merging of arts, craft, invention, and technology. The latter, of course, has long been Weinman's world of choice, now paired with a newfound love of clay and what might be done with it. Among the pieces here, bearing numbers rather than titles, "#29" includes knobby whorls on the surface of Weinman's work, as if taking the challenge to keep an organic air in her art, despite the digital toolkit she relies on.

Diversity and continuity are to be found in this introductory sampling of the Hall-Weinman partnership. Works "#18" and "#23" suggest variations on the more

conventional ceramic model of jug-like vessels, while “#20” explodes that underlying form, its “handles” evoking fanciful cake icing touches.

Things tubular and twisty that perhaps allude to petrified life forms and that resist neat geometry or ceramic cliches consistently inform Weinman’s input. They respond to Hall’s refined shapes most dramatically in pieces like the tall “#28,” in which a fluted gesture tops Hall’s clean and rounded black base with its sumptuous surface glaze. Her large olive-colored, clenched tree-trunk-like form consumes the middle of the work’s vertical spread, reminding us that something fresh and whimsical and yet graceful is going on. Digitally driven art has rarely looked so tactile and generally delicious. The technological reinvention of clay rules in this gallery show, in a tendency that’s set to expand soon at Clay Studio in Goleta.

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