



MILWAUKEE ART MUSEUM

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Chipstone Foundation Opens

Face Jugs: Art and Ritual in 19th-Century South Carolina

Exhibition Returns a Voice to Objects that Have Long Stood Silent

Milwaukee, Wis. – For the first time in nearly thirty years, *Face Jugs: Art and Ritual in 19th-Century South Carolina* brings together a comprehensive collection of early Edgefield face vessels from leading institutions and collectors. On view at the Milwaukee Art Museum from April 26 through August 5, 2012, the exhibition examines the face jug as a wondrous, albeit complex, object.

In the mid-nineteenth century, slaves in the Edgefield District of South Carolina began creating vessels with applied faces, a form now known as the face jug. The small vessel is turned stoneware with facial features—wide eyes and bared teeth—made of kaolin, a locally sourced clay. By the end of the century, African Americans were no longer producing face jugs. White potters appropriated the design, stopped using kaolin, and created similar objects mostly as whimsies. The vessels grew in popularity but had lost the symbolic power of their original form. Unfortunately, as time passed, the story mysteriously disappeared as well.

“The exhibition celebrates the aesthetic power of these potent art forms,” says Claudia Mooney, curator for the Chipstone Foundation. “It explores the different lenses through which to consider the vessels and their uses and, perhaps more important, their cultural meanings within a community of Americans that lived within the most challenging of circumstances.”

In light of new research, *Face Jugs: Art and Ritual in 19th-Century South Carolina* present the vessels within a context that takes into account the realities of slavery in the Southern United States, exploring their use as coded objects carrying hidden meanings.

“Few early American artifacts are as visually powerful and thematically complex as the diminutive stoneware face vessels made in South Carolina during and right after the Civil War,” says Jon Prown, director for the Chipstone Foundation. “Woven into their fabric are stories of cultural movement, human survival, spiritualism, and technological prowess that resonate as much today as they did 150 years ago.”

The exhibition is curated by Claudia Mooney, assistant curator at the Chipstone Foundation.

ABOUT THE CHIPSTONE FOUNDATION

The Chipstone Foundation is a decorative arts foundation whose mission is preserving and interpreting their collection, as well as stimulating research and education in the decorative arts.

ABOUT THE MUSEUM

The Milwaukee Art Museum's far-reaching holdings include more than 25,000 works spanning antiquity to the present day. With a history dating back to 1888, the Museum houses a collection with strengths in 19th- and 20th-century American and European art, contemporary art, American decorative arts, and folk and self-taught art. The Museum includes the Santiago Calatrava-designed Quadracci Pavilion, named by *Time* magazine as "Best Design of 2001." For more information, please visit www.mam.org.

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PROGRAMMING FOR *FACE JUGS: ART AND RITUAL IN 19TH-CENTURY SOUTH CAROLINA*

Gallery Talks with the Curator

Thursday, April 26, 6:15 PM

Tuesday, May 8, 1:30 PM

Tuesday, June 19, 1:30 PM

Tuesday, July 10, 1:30 PM

Face Jug Demonstration

Thursday, May 3, 1:00–2:30 PM and 5:00–6:30 PM

Potter Steve Ferrell of Edgefield, South Carolina, will demonstrate how the original face jugs were made, while discussing the objects themselves.

Kohl's Art Generation Family Sundays: Water, Earth, and Sky

Sunday, May 20, 10 AM–4 PM

Face Jugs Poetry Workshop

Sunday, June 24, 10:30 AM–12 PM

Chicago poet and teacher Orron Kenyetta will work with participants to create an epic poem based on the Edgefield face jugs. Advance registration required. Contact Janet Gourley at Janet.Gourley@mam.org or 414-224-3803.

Poetry Slam

Sunday, June 24, 1–3 PM

All local poets are invited to participate in this exciting event. The Poetry Slam will consist of two rounds in a standard format with a typical bracket setup. Poets have three to five minutes to deliver two poems: the first poem needs to interpret the realities around the meaning of face jugs; the second is the poet's signature piece. Judges will keep score in four categories: originality, creativity, presence, and effect. Advance registration required. Please contact Janet Gourley at Janet.Gourley@mam.org or 414-224-3803. A \$300 cash prize will be awarded to the winner. *Sponsored by the All Writers' Workplace and Workshop*

Coffee, Art, and Conversation: Brian Gillis

Saturday, July 21, 10:30 AM

Skype with Oregon-based artist Brian Gillis, whose interactive installation *Of Ghosts and Speculation: An Archive and a Mine* accompanies *Face Jugs*, for an informal discussion with curator Claudia Mooney. Through his work, Gillis mines socio-cultural issues that may have fallen on deaf ears, been buried over time, or simply obscured by something else.

HOURS AND ADMISSION

The Museum is open Tuesday through Sunday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and on Thursdays until 8 p.m. Admission is \$15 for adults; \$12 for students, seniors, and active military; and free for Members and for children age 12 and under.

The Museum is open Mondays 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. from Memorial Day through Labor Day.

The first Thursday of each month is Target Free First Thursday and admission is free for individuals (does not apply to groups).