

# I HEART RUBY'S CLAY STUDIO

Ceramics by Liz Worthy

with photographs of Ruby and her work by Bonita Cohn

May 29-June 10, 2013

These pieces are inspired by the history and community of Ruby's Clay Studio. In addition to stories from others and my own 13-year history here, the show includes results of a 17-question survey I created for this purpose and that was filled out by 39 members of the Ruby's community this April/May.

## Thank you Ruby's Survey Respondents. You rock!

Numbers in bold reference pieces in the show and I encourage you to peruse the gallery as you read. Pieces are arranged numerically clockwise. If you would like to purchase a piece, please see the price list and instructions.

### HISTORY



Ruby O'Burke grew up a Texas farm girl, moved to San Francisco in her 20's and established the Ruby O'Burke's Artists' Workshop in 1962 (1). An urban renewal project prompted Ruby to move the studio from Octavia Street to its present location in 1967. 552A Noe Street may once have

been a foundry, which would explain the lovely iron work that graces its facade (2, 3, 15, 63 underside, 64), a carriage house and/or a storage place for over-sized plumbing fixtures (6).

One Rubyite remembers Ruby as "a beautiful mixture of child and ancient one" (7). She had a cat named Kitty (49) and three diabetic daschunds (27). Part of the manager's duties was giving the dogs insulin shots (8).



### GLAZES

Ruby studied ceramics under Carlton Ball at Mills College and came to be known as the "Wizard of Glazes of Northern California" (9). Studio members could buy quart jugs of glazes she mixed. Choices were tenmoku, black, satin

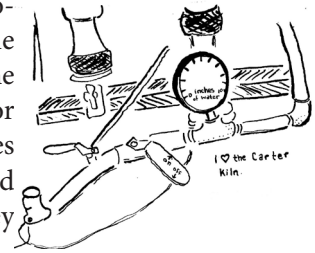


white, amblygonite, and maybe a copper red (10). Today, there are over twenty community glazes. Of these, 27% of Ruby's Survey Respondents (hereinafter referred to as RSRs) consider a Shino to

be their favorite (19). RSRs also reported favorite glaze combinations, including Jeff's Red under Sleeper Copper Red (12) and Kawai Blue (15) with Jeff's Red (11, 13). Glazes are mixed in the glaze kitchen, which is "not for casual use" (14).

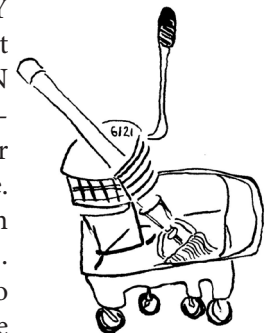
### FIRING

Ruby's has five kilns of various types (gas and electric) and sizes (25). Of these, the Carter (57) is most highly favored by RSRs with a 39% vote (19). Closest behind is the Larson at 26% (58). The Larson, the newest kiln at the studio, has a computerized control box (55, 56). In the 1970s, there was the Judd kiln (1, 9), which had a door that was constructed out of numbered bricks. Ruby fired the Judd single handedly into her 80's (1, 9). Rubyites have fond memories of group firings in the Olson (55), the kiln the Larson replaced, and for "the big old flaming ones down below which belched fire. We cooked a turkey over one once." (28)



### CLEANLINESS

"It's so clean!" reports one new member and RSR (28). A sign by the towels and aprons reads "...Leave your dirty clothes to be washed by the studio. It cuts down on the dust in the air we all have to breathe!!!!!" (45) When washing aprons, tying the strings together and not placing them side-by-side avoids a jumble (46). "Sponging and mopping CONSTANTLY" (36), "Cleaning up EACH AND EVERY GLAZE DRIP" (37), and not leaving "CLAY BAGS ON THE FLOOR. THEY CREATE DUST!" (47) are other secrets to Ruby's sparkle. Rubyites sometimes bring in their personal laundry (22). Multiple RSRs cite studio clean up day as their favorite studio memory (38, 39, 40).



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## THE HILL



Ruby's is located on Noe Street, between 18th and 19th streets. One Rubyite remembers the day she first made the steep climb (27). The hill can be challenging (24), especially if you're doing a 15-24 hour work session, reported by 27% of RSRs as the

longest span of time spent at the studio (21), or powering up the hill with your own muscle (16, 20). Still, when presented with options, RSRs prefer a couch (42%) (41, 42, 43, 44) or "its own reality TV show" (31%), over an escalator from 18th street up to the studio (17%) (60). Ruby's, located in the heart of the Castro, is less than a mile from home for 14% and between 1-7 miles away for 18% of RSRs (20).

## FOOD/DRINK

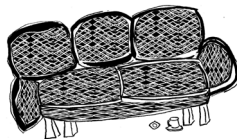
When RSRs need to refuel, 18% consider Spike's their usual place for coffee/tea. A remarkable 31% are not powered by coffee/tea (23). Kasa, while receiving only 5% of the coffee/tea votes, is the favorite food option (27%), preferred nearly twice over to the second place Buffalo Grocery (15%). Twelve percent of RSRs prefer to bring their food from home (61).

## FAVORITE AREA



Many a meal is enjoyed around the Ruby's kitchen table (52, 27). This area is lined with mailboxes, locker holder display shelves, and the lost-and-found (18). Atop the refrigerator are the late Kitty O'Burke's ashes (49) and a bust of Ruby (28).

A sign above the sink reads, "No clay clean-up in the kitchen sink! This sink is not plumbed for clay." (50). The kitchen, surprisingly, is only half as popular as the classroom area (compare 44% to 21%) (51, 53). Perhaps this is because it no longer has a couch (41, 42, 43, 44). "My workspace" ties for popularity (21%) with the kitchen as a favorite area of RSRs (53).



## THIS SHOW

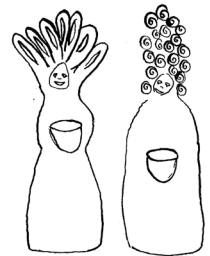
I made many of the pieces while sitting on this stool (30, 31, 32) in my workspace (29). Pieces were bisqued in the 7pm electric kiln (59), glazed in Kawai Blue Celadon (14), and fired to cone 10 in the Carter (57) (Thanks Tracey and Coco!). Finishing off the process was the decal firing, also in the 7pm electric (59).

## CONVERSATION



The classroom and kitchen areas are within audible range and conversation covers a variety of topics (62, 63). According to RSRs, 17% of conversations revolve around Sex and Relationships (54), 16% Strange and Disgusting, 15% Technical Ceramics Things, 13%

Food, 11% Current Events, 8% Art and Entertainment, 6% Parking, 5% Scheduling and Planning, 3% The Weather, and 6% Other (62, 63). "Other" might include rehashing studio drama (47, 48), "Strange and Disgusting", stories of the guy who would wash his hair in the toilet tank (3), and "Sex and Relationships", speculation on how far studio members have gone at the studio. According to self-reports by RSRs, results are as follows: 28% 1st base, 10% have experience a home run, 24% have struck out (sigh) (26). Leading many a conversation is Harry (34), who makes goddesses (33) as well as kombucha (35) and kiln room yogurt (33, 11). There is rumor of a Ruby's Gossip Club (17).



## COMMUNITY

Rubyites consider the studio their second home and fellow members, part of their family. Many have been here for well over a decade. RSRs remark: "I'm not sure where I would be without this place" (27), "I love the way the community supports members who are having sad times." (50) and "Ruby's is a special place and I've been blessed to know special people there." (28)

-Liz Worthy, May 2013

